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ORTON'S
EXPOSITION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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VOL. IV.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF

THE OLD TESTAMENT,

WITH DEVOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL

REFLECTIONS

FOR THE USE OF FAMILIES.

BY THE LATE REV. JOB ORTON, S.T.P.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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BY ANDREW KIPPIS, D.D. F.R.S.,

AND AN INDEX OF MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE NOTES AND
REFLECTIONS.

VOL. IV

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AN EXPOSITION
OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE BOOK OF EZRA.

INTRODUCTION.

AT the close of the last Book we had an account of the Jews being in captivity at Babylon ; and have no further historical account of them. The behaviour of many of them there was very bad, as appears by Ezekiel ; yet they were reformed from idolatry, and never fell into it again. Their captivity in Babylon was a means of spreading the knowledge of God there, as appears from the history of Daniel, who, with several others, were promoted to considerable posts in the kingdom ; and this was the dawning of their deliverance. This Book is generally supposed to have been written by EZRA. The latter part undoubtedly was ; but, I think, not the former ; for EZRA, as appears from chap. vii. 1., did not come to Jerusalem till several years after. The whole Book shews the liberty granted by Cyrus to the Jews, after seventy years' captivity, to return to their own country ; whereupon there returned above forty thousand, most of whom were of the two tribes, but many also of the ten. In the first place, they restore the worship of God : and for that end build the altar of burnt offerings ; that so they might make daily expiation for their sins, and intercession for their wants ; and also laid the foundation of the temple ; wherein being opposed by the Samaritans, and slanderously accused to the King of Persia, they are commanded to desist for the present ; but afterwards, being encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, they advance in their former work, obtain a new commission and authority, and proceed to the finishing of it. After this EZRA is sent by Artaxerxes with a large commission to manage and govern all things for the welfare and interest of the Jews ; who was attended by many others, and they carried great

treasures with them, and offerings to the temple. When they were come to Jerusalem, the Princes inform EZRA of great abuses both among priests and people, by marrying heathen idolatrous wives, contrary to the law, which EZRA bewails in prayer to God, and reforms.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter we have the proclamation of Cyrus for the building of the temple; the people provide for the return, and Cyrus restores the vessels of the temple to Sheshbazzar.

1 **N**OW, in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and [put it] also in writing*, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which [is] in Judah†. 3 Who [is there] among you of all his people? *of the ten tribes, as well as of Judah and Benjamin; for he had Assyria and Media under his power, where many of them were; his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which [is] in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he [is] the God) which [is] in Jerusalem; he gives them leave, and urges them to go, and prays for their success.* 4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, *for want of necessaries for his journey, let the men of his place, either the public officers, or their neighbours, as the Jews had behaved well to the heathen during their captivity, help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the*

* Jeremiah had foretold the destruction of the king and empire of Babylon, (Jer. xxix. 10.), and the return of the Jews after seventy years. This was accomplished at the death of Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. v. Upon the conquest of Babylon, Cyrus made his uncle Cyaxares, there called Darius, the Median king of Babylon. He reigned two years, and after his death, Cyrus took the kingdom himself, and reigned over all Persia and the country that had been subject to the kings of Assyria and Babylon; and in this first year of his reign he issued this proclamation.

† Cyrus had knowledge of the true God, and had seen Isaiah's prophecy of him, Isa. xl. 23. xlv. 1—4. This was shewn him by Daniel, as Josephus says. Therefore, in gratitude to God, who had given him success, and agreeably to his commands, he was determined to fulfil the prophecy.

free-will offering for the house of God that [is] in Jerusalem, *given by those who chose to stay behind.* 5 Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all [them] whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which [is] in Jerusalem. 6 And all they that [were] about them, *their neighbours,* strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, *helped them with provisions and accommodations for their journey,* besides all [that] was willingly offered.

7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; *Nebuchadnezzar had looked upon them as sacred things, and had taken care of them. It was a singular providence that they were kept so long, considering their great value.* 8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah*. 9 And this [is] the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives, 10 Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second [sort], four hundred and ten, [and] other vessels a thousand, *or rather, by thousands.* 11 All the vessels of gold and of silver [were] five thousand and four hundred; *the larger vessels are only specified here, the rest are lumped together.* All [these] did Sheshbazzar bring up with [them of] the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us adore the exact fidelity of God to his promises. *When the time to favour Zion, the set time, was come, he remembered her.* This should induce us to reverence him, should encourage our own faith in him, and to hold fast the profession of that faith without wavering; for *faithful is he that hath promised, and will also do it.*

2. We learn to adore the power of God over the spirits of

* The name was the same as Zerubbabel, one being his Babylonish and the other his Jewish name. He was a prince of Judah by birth, and made captain of those who chose to return.

men, in stirring up that of Cyrus, a heathen, and the hearts of his own people, to overcome all their temptations to stay in that country, and undertake so difficult a work. *He can do what he pleases in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.*

3. We infer, that the exaltation and possessions of men are owing to God. This Cyrus gratefully acknowledged, saying, *The God of heaven hath given me the kingdoms of the earth. He putteth down one and setteth up another. Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south.* This shows the reasonableness of praying that God would prosper our works; and the duty of thanksgiving, when he makes our way prosperous; of our obligations to serve him; and to render unto him according to his benefits.

4. Let us heartily wish and pray for the presence of God with all those who are sincerely desirous to build his house: so Cyrus did. It is a good work, though a difficult one. They will find many discouragements from themselves, and from the temper and circumstances of the world. Let us pray that the *Lord may be with them*, and encourage them in all the ways that are in our power. God's ministers should be especially ready to shew a good example on such occasions, be the first to lead in every good work, and employ all their authority and influence to quicken and animate others.

5. This should lead our thoughts to the gospel offers, and the redemption granted by our Lord Jesus Christ. Sinners are slaves, and have long been the captives of Satan. Christ proclaims liberty; to him all authority is given to do so. He urges and beseeches them to go up to the new Jerusalem; he intercedes that God may be with them; he encourages them, and furnishes them with all necessary supplies for the way. Too many stay behind, and love their slavery too well; but others go; and this is to be ascribed to God's influence on their spirits; *the work is of grace.* Let us hear Christ's voice, thankfully receive his offers, and earnestly pray that we ourselves, and all about us, may be disposed to *ask the way to Zion with our faces thitherward; and join ourselves to God in the bonds of an everlasting covenant.*

CHAP. II. and CHAP. III.

In these two chapters we have an account of the number that returned from the captivity; the building of the altar; the offerings are renewed; and the foundation of the temple laid, amidst the rejoicing of some, and the weeping of others.

☞ *The former part of this chapter may be passed over, and the reader begin at ver. 68.*

1 **N**OW these [are] the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; 2 Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: 3 The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. 4 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. 5 The children of Arab, seven hundred seventy and five. 6 The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua [and] Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. 7 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 8 The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. 9 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. 10 The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. 11 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. 12 The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. 13 The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. 14 The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. 15 The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. 16 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. 17 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three. 18 The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve. 19 The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three. 20 The children of Gibbar, ninety and five. 21 The children of Beth-lehem, an hundred twenty and three. 22 The men of Netophah, fifty and six. 23 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. 24 The children of Azmaveth, forty and two. 25 The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth seven hundred and forty and three. 26 The children of

Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. 27 The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two. 28 The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. 29 The children of Nebo, fifty and two. 30 The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six. 31 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 32 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. 33 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five. 34 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. 35 The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty.

36 The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. 37 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. 38 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. 39 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.

40 The Levites: the children of Jeshua, and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four. 41 The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight. 42 The children of the porters, the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, [in] all, an hundred thirty and nine.

43 The Nethinims: the children of Ziba, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth, 44 The children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padou, 45 The children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub, 46 The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmal, the children of Hanan, 47 The children of Giddel, the children of Gabar, the children of Reaiah, 48 The children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam, 49 The children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai, 50 The children of Asnah, the children of Mehumim, the children of Nephusim, 51 The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, 52 The children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, 53 The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah, 54 The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.

55 The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda, 56 The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, 57 The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami. 58 All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, [were] three

hundred ninety and two. 59 And these [were] they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, [and] Immer : but they could not show their father's house, and their seed, whether they [were] of Israel : 60 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two.

61 And of the children of the priests : the children of Habalah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai ; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name : 62 These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found : therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. 63 And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.

64 The whole congregation together [was] forty and two thousand three hundred [and] threescore, 65 Beside their servants and their maids, of whom [there were] seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven : and [there were] among them two hundred singing men and singing women. *The whole number that returned were not quite fifty thousand ; whereas in Jehoshaphat's time they were two hundred thousand fighting men.* 66 Their horses [were] seven hundred thirty and six ; their mules two hundred forty and five ; 67 Their camels, four hundred thirty and five ; [their] asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

68 And [some] of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which [is] at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God, *that is, for supplies*, to set it up in his place, *where it formerly stood.* *This was a token for good, that they took pleasure in the stones thereof.* 69 They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, *about seventy thousand pounds**, and one hundred priests' garments. 70 So the priests, and the Levites, and [some] of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities. *Some of the other tribes, who were dispersed in their own country, came up and settled with their brethren.* *Soon after this, they all assembled together, built an altar, kept a feast, and laid the foundation of the temple.*

CHAP. III. 1 And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel [were] in the cities, the people gathered

* It may be here remarked, that the Jews were not entirely slaves in Babylon ; they had liberty to traffic and get money for themselves. Some of this was presented to them by the Chaldeans when they came away, and much by their brethren who stayed behind.

themselves together, as one man to Jerusalem*. 2 Then stood up Jeshua† the son of Jozadak, *who was the high priest*, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel‡ the son of Shealtiel, *who was the captain or governor, under the king of Persia*, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, *that they might have public worship before the temple could be got ready*, as [it is] written in the law of Moses the man of God. 3 And they set the altar upon his bases, *or, upon its old foundation*; for, *or rather although*, fear [was] upon them because of the people of those countries§; and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, [even] burnt offerings morning and evening. 4 They kept also the feast of tabernacles *and atonement*, as [it is] written, and [offered] the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required; *all the sacrifices for every common day, for every sabbath, and for every feast day*. 5 And afterward [offered] the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a free-will offering unto the LORD. 6 From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not [yet] laid.

7 They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters, *to make preparation and provide materials for the work*; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar-trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, *as Solomon did*; according to the grant that they had of Cyrus, king of Persia, *who had commanded these people to assist them*.

8 Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, *(the first being taken up in preparing the ground, providing materials, and celebrating their feasts)*, in the second month began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD,

* Though they were dispersed for a while about the country, to cultivate some land and prepare their habitations, yet they unanimously came together in the seventh month, at the feast of atonement and tabernacles.

† Or, Jo-hua, *Hag.* i. 1., *Zech.* iii. 1.

‡ Called Zorobabel, *Matt.* i. 12., *Luke.* iii. 27.

§ This intimates that they were not so solicitous to fortify themselves, as to enjoy the divine protection.

to encourage the workmen, and promote the work in the best manner they could. 9 Then stood Jeshua, the Levite mentioned in ch. ii. 40., (not the high priest), [with] his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, [with] their sons and their brethren the Levites. 10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel; they celebrated this event with great joy, while the sacrifice was offering. 11 And they sang together by course, that is, alternately, answering one to another, in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because [he is] good, for his mercy [endureth] for ever toward Israel*. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, [who were] ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: 13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off†.

REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is good to enter upon new settlements with solemn devotion. Our first care should be to build an altar and begin with God; especially when peculiar difficulties and hazards are before us. When going into new settlements, relations, occupations or houses, we should take God with us; keep up a sense of his

* Their subject were those psalms of David, especially the hundred and thirty-sixth, where this is the chorus. Those who had skill expressed their joy in music, and others by shouting.

† All this was very natural. The young people, who were bred up in Babylon, had only heard of the former temple, and were glad to see one now erecting. But some of the old people, who remembered the first, wept; partly on account of its destruction, and the calamities of the nation, which now came fully to their remembrance; and partly to think how far this would come short of the former; for though it had the same dimensions, the stones were less costly, and it had not such ornaments. But especially as the chief things were wanting, the ark, and the Shekinah, the Urim, and the holy fire, and the spirit of prophecy. As it was but between fifty and sixty years since the first temple was destroyed, many might remember this. Had Ezra forged the books of Moses and the rites of the Jewish worship, as some have intimated, here were enough to discover the fraud, and it is not likely he could have engaged so many priests and Levites in it.

presence, and our dependance on him; and this will make every thing go on prosperously.

2. No fear of enemies ought to retard us in the service of God, but, on the contrary, excite us to it. Fear should drive us to our knees, to make God our friend; for *he shall be kept in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on God. Happy is he who trusts in the Lord, for he shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. Psalm cxii. 7.*

3. Let us labour to do the duty of every day in its proper course and order. So these Jews did, *ch. iii. 4., as the duty of every day required*; with prudent thought and forecast. Let us think what is the duty of every day to God and man; what our stations and circumstances call for; and what is the proper business of every day. The Lord's day is for devotion and religion; in working days, we must keep up secret and family prayer; a sense of God; and be diligent in our callings. There are duties of prosperous and afflictive days. It is a great part of christian wisdom and prudence to think of these things; and it will tend much to the order, regularity, credit, and happiness of our lives and families to do so.

4. Let us all do what we can in our several stations to set forward the work of God's house, and promote the interest of religion. Magistrates, like Zerubbabel, and ministers, like Jeshua, should act vigorously, and encourage others. It is the business of every one to do something; the poorest and meanest may be helpers by their prayers, examples, and exhortations. And those in better stations, by all those means, and by their purses too, should strengthen others' hands; set forward every good design, and quicken others to love and to all good works.

5. When God gives us a prospect that he is raising his temple and reviving religion, let us praise him for these mercies. We should not despise the day of small things; but rejoice in every appearance of the divine favour. Though the circumstances should be distressing, and the work great and hazardous, still let us *give thanks to God, for he is good.* This should be the burden of every song, on earth and in heaven too. O that our hearts were always in tune for it!

6. How different is the most joyful day of the church on earth, from its triumph in heaven! This motley scene is an emblem of what will happen amidst the church's greatest prosperity and triumph on earth. Many weep, while many rejoice. We must expect a mixture of joy and sorrow in this world. Let us learn

to weep, as though we wept not; and to rejoice as though we rejoiced not; and long for that day when the spiritual temple shall be finished; when the top stone shall be laid with rejoicing, and not one weeping eye or sorrowful heart be found in all the general assembly of the church of the first-born in heaven. In the prospect of this, *Let us give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever.*

CHAPTER IV.

The building is hindered by those whose assistance the Jews had refused; they write to Artaxerxes; who orders the progress of the work to be stopped.

1 **N**OW when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin* heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel; 2 Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye [do;] and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither; *they wanted to partake of the privileges granted them by Cyrus, with whom the Jews seemed to be a favourite people. They praised their religion and their zeal, and professed to worship the same God as they did, but said nothing of the other gods which they worshipped with him.* 3 But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. *They refused for two reasons; because they were not of the same religion, but worshipped other gods as well as Jehovah, and because Cyrus had granted a license only to the Jews, and therefore they would not give him offence by taking those people into alliance with them.* 4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, *by false reports, slanders, and threatenings,* and troubled them in building, *hindering them from getting materials, and provision, enticing away the workmen and the like,* 5 And hired coun-

* These adversaries of the Jews were the nations which the king of Assyria had sent to people the land of Israel, and were afterwards called Samaritans.

sellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, *bribed some of the king of Persia's counsellors and officers in these parts*, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia*. 6 And in the reign of Ahasuerus, or *Cambyzes, the son and successor of Darius*, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they [unto him] an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem, *but they did not prevail with him to grant any prohibition*. 7 And in the days of Artaxerxes, or *Smerdis, his successor, whose reign was but a few months*, wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter [was] written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue, *in the Syrian characters and words; or rather, it was interpreted from the Syrian tongue into the Persian*. 8 Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort: 9 Then [wrote] Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; *the chief men of the nation united to send it*; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, [and] the Elamites†, 10 And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper ‡ brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria and the rest [that are] on this side the river, and at such a time. 11 This [is] the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, [even] unto Artaxerxes the king; *and a very artful one it is; there is some truth, but much falsehood, and more suspicion*; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time. 12 Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city; *this was partly true, as some of their last kings had rebelled against the king of Babylon*; and have set up the walls [thereof,] and joined the foundations; *this was false, for they had not yet attempted to build the walls*. 13 Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up [again, then] will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, *they will set up to be independent*, and [so] thou shalt en-

* Their solicitations had no effect in the time of Cyrus, who was much prejudiced in their favour; yet there was but little done; the Samaritans drew off the working people, and prevented their having materials; the officers of Cyrus were corrupted. All these discouragements, and their own growing indolence, prevented the work going forward with any vigour.

† These are names of towns in Assyria, whose inhabitants were transported to people the land of Israel.

‡ He was a person of eminence, employed by the king of Assyria to conduct and settle this colony.

damage the revenue of the kings. 14 Now because we have maintenance from [the king's] palace, *receive a salary from the court**, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king; 15 That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city [is] a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed; *there was some truth, but much falsehood, in this; they had rebelled latterly, but in former times they were obedient enough, and there was no such attempt as they pretended.* 16 We certify the king that, if this city be builded [again,] and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river; *they will conquer all the adjacent country, or drive them to rebellion against the Persian king.*

17 [Then] sent the king an answer unto Rhehum the chancellor, and [to] Shimshai the scribe, and [to] the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and [unto] the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time. 18 The letter which ye sent unto us, hath been plainly read before me, *probably read in the council.* 19 And I commanded and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and [that] rebellion and sedition have been made therein; *an instance or two, just before the destruction of the city, had laid this odious character upon them.* 20 There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, *David and Solomon*, which have ruled over all [countries] beyond the river; and toll, tribute and custom, was paid unto them, *as now, to the king of Persia.* 21 Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until [another] commandment shall be given from me. 22 Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings? 23 Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter [was] read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. 24 Then ceased the work of the house of God which [is] at Jerusalem. *There was nothing in the king's orders about the temple; but the Samaritans prevented that work as much as possible, having a spite against it; they thought if that was rebuilt, and the worship con-*

* In the margin of our bibles it is, *we are salted with the salt of the palace.* Some suppose that their stipend was in salt, which they sold; or salt may be put for provisions in general.

timed, it would be a fatal blow to their superstition. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia; *Darius Hystaspes, who succeeded Cambyses about two years after the last decree.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE work of God seldom goes on but Satan will stir up enemies to oppose it. When God had stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, to grant them such an edict, they thought themselves happy; but they find enemies at home, first to cajole, and then to terrify them, and they used all the arts of cunning and falsehood to effect their purposes. Religion will meet with struggles and opposition; the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman are still at variance; and those who are remarkably zealous for God will be sure to meet with discouragements. If we have less of this than our fathers had, it is not because Satan and the world are mended, but because our zeal is less, and our opposition to Satan's kingdom not so formidable.

2. We are taught hence, not to wonder if false accusations and slanders are thrown on the faithful servants of God. It has been so of old; the enemy is the accuser of the brethren, and too many now are like him, accusing them of being enemies to Cæsar, seditious and rebellious. They have need of the wisdom of the serpent and the innocence of the dove to guard against such designs. Let us faithfully attend to the present duty, *the duty of the day in its day*; and trust in God to deliver us from those who shoot out their arrows, even bitter words, against us.

3. Having all from God, let us not see him dishonoured without vigorous endeavours to prevent it. The argument of these officers, ver. 13., was good in itself, but ill applied. If they thought themselves obliged to support the honour and revenues of the crown, because they had their maintenance from the king's palace, surely we who have our maintenance from God, owe all to him, and depend on him for all we wish and hope, should not see or hear him dishonoured without resenting it, endeavouring to remove it, and labouring to the utmost to promote his glory.

4. It is a great satisfaction to good men that the Lord reigneth; since the greatest of men are easily imposed upon, and liberty stands but on a weak foundation. This idle, false letter answered the end designed by it: the king of Persia ordered the buildings to cease, because the city had an ill name, and several hundred

years before there had been mighty kings in it. Kings must often see with other men's eyes, and therefore are liable to judge wrong : false representations of things are often made to them, and therefore appear in a partial light. Let us therefore rejoice in God's universal government and influence over the spirits of princes ; and seek to him for the continuance of our liberties, civil and religious, and in the enjoyment of them endeavour *to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.*

CHAPTER V.

In the last chapter the Jews were discouraged from building the temple, through the misrepresentations of their enemies ; but here we find the work going on again.

1 **T**HEN the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that [were] in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, [even] unto them*. 2 Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which [is] at Jerusalem : and with them [were] the prophets of God helping them ; *attending the building every day, assuring them of God's protection, and animating them by pious discourses and predictions. Upon this it is probable the Samaritans renewed their complaints against them to Tatnai, who was governor of this province under the Persian king.*

3 At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall? 4 Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building? *The meaning of this is, we told them not only of our commission, but of the persons who were employed, and gave them a list of their names.* 5 But the eye of their God, *his particular providence,* was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them

* Artaxerxes was dead, yet they neglected the building ; upon which God smote them with barrenness in the land ; the harvests and the vineyards failed ; God sent his prophets Haggai and Zechariah to inform them of the cause of this calamity ; and to quicken them to the work, they assured them of God's presence and favour, and of prosperity both in the building and in the country.

to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they, *Darius and his council*, (*ch. vi. 6.*), returned answer by letter concerning this [matter.]

6 The copy of the letter that Tattai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which [were] on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king. *It contains no slander or misrepresentation, but plain information of a matter of fact, and an honest inquiry about their commission:*

7 They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus: Unto Darius the king, all peace. 8 Be it known unto the king, that *having heard complaints that the Jews were building and fortifying their city*, we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands. 9 Then asked we those elders, [and] said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls? 10 We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that [were] the chief of them. 11 And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up; *this was a particular and a modest answer, without any complaint of the oppositions and slanders of their enemies.* 12 But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. 13 But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon, [the same] king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God. 14 And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that [was] in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto [one,] whose name [was] Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; 15 And said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that [is] in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place. 16 Then came the same Sheshbazzar, *in consequence of this decree*, [and] laid the foundation of the house of God which [is] in Jerusalem. And since that time even until now hath it been in building, and [yet] it is not finished. 17 Now therefore, if [it seem] good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure-house, which [is]

there at Babylon, whether it be [so,] that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter*.

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE prophets of God should be very solicitous to build his house, and animate others to it. Thus Zechariah and Haggai did. When the number of worshippers, especially of those who join themselves to the Lord in covenant, increases, when religion revives, and sinners are converted, and saints grow in knowledge and piety, then the building of the spiritual temple goes on and prospers. God's ministers should be greatly concerned about this themselves, and every one should join hand in hand to promote it; those in private stations of life, by exhorting one another daily, and animating each other to every good word and work.

2. The zeal of one or two good men employed in the service of God, may be of extensive and lasting benefit; the zeal of these two prophets brought the work about. And this answers those objections generally made against such zealous attempts, that we are too few, and that it will signify nothing. It is our duty to exert ourselves; we know not what God may do for us or by us. The greater negligence there is in others, the greater zeal we ought to show. We shall probably be successful; but if not, *we shall in no wise lose our reward*; for God will remember all our works of faith, and labours of love.

3. Success in all our undertakings, especially in those for the divine honour, must be ascribed to the eye of God upon us. He restrains our enemies, turns their hearts, quickens our own spirits, and makes the work prosperous. If we thrive in business, if our fortune grows, it is to be ascribed to God; especially if religion increases in our souls, or families, or neighbourhood, divine grace is to be thankfully owned. Let us be sensible of our dependance upon God; abound in prayer, and seek assistance and success from him, who is *the author of every good and perfect gift*.

4. We are taught to speak of God in expressions of humble veneration, and never be ashamed of doing this before strangers or enemies. The Jews here did so, saying, *The great God, the God of heaven and earth*. It is a prevailing iniquity of the present day that the name of God is profaned, and used very lightly or irreve-

* Here it will be proper to read the whole prophecy of Haggai, and the beginning of Zechariah, which are the best comments on this part of the history.

rently, even by some who would dread an oath. It is good to keep up a continual reverence of him, and to teach our children to use his name with awe and solemnity: for *he is great, and greatly to be feared.*

5. The servants of God should never be ashamed to own their relation to him. The Jews here acknowledged themselves to be so before these men. We have no reason to be ashamed of it; for it is indeed our greatest honour. Sinful shame is the greatest enemy to our own progress in religion, and the support of it in the world: and therefore should be diligently guarded against. When the honour of God is concerned *the righteous should be bold as a lion.*

6. A humble sense of those sins which have brought afflictions upon us, should be retained when the afflictions are graciously removed, as the Jews did, *v. 12.* It is good to remember former follies and iniquities, in order to keep us humble, and thankful for divine goodness in removing our afflictions, and to teach us to be candid and compassionate to others.

7. Let us, as St. Peter exhorts, *be willing to give a reason for our religious conduct and hope with meekness and fear.* With meekness as opposed to resentment, and with fear as opposed to rashness and abuse, and thereby giving our enemies an handle against us. The Jews here give a particular account of their principles, their relation to God, the intent of their building, &c.; and thus should we be ready to do, endeavouring to understand our religious principles, the reason of our faith and hope, and conduct, and give them with all meekness and charity, without abusing and reviling others. This will be to the honour of our profession, and give those who differ from us a better opinion of our principles and practice.

8. We learn to report the principles and actions of others with great candour, however their religious sentiments may differ from ours. Thus Tatnai, though a heathen, was an equitable, generous man, and made a fair representation of the state and principles of the Jews; neither reviling, nor slandering, nor misrepresenting them. It is much to be wished that all christians were as careful not to misrepresent their differing brethren. The plague of the church, and the ruin of charity and good neighbourhood, has been occasioned in a great measure by misrepresenting those who differ from us, and ascribing to them principles or consequences which they do not hold. It is lamentable that the zealots of all parties have got such a trick of lying for the truth. Let us avoid and abhor this; speak the truth in love, and be always ready to do to others, as we would have them do to us.

CHAPTER VI.

We had an account in the former chapter of Tatnai's letter to Darius, and have here the effect of it.

1 **T**HEN Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. **2** And there was found at Achmetha, or *Ecbatana*, in the palace that [is] in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein [was] a record thus written. *It was an instance of Darius's wisdom and goodness, that he did not presently issue a decree against them; but, as the roll was not found at Babylon, he ordered further inquiry to be made.* **3** In the first year of Cyrus the king, [the same] Cyrus the king made a decree [concerning] the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, [and] the breadth thereof threescore cubits; **4** [With] three rows of great stones, *pillars to support the building, or the apartments adjoining*, and a row of new timber; and let the expenses be given out of the king's house*: **5** And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which [is] at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon be restored, and brought again unto the temple which [is] at Jerusalem, [every one] to his place, and place [them] in the house of God. **6** Now [therefore,] Tatnai governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which [are] beyond the river, be ye far from thence: **7** Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place; *give the Jews no disturbance, but suffer, yea and assist them, to build the house on the old spot.* **8** Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews *whose names had been given in to the king*, for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, [even] of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered; *furnish them with materials and*

* It appears from hence that Cyrus ordered it to be built at his own charge; but the Jews did not make use of his bounty, lest they should offend the Samaritans. It was carried on at their own cost till Darius renewed the grant out of the public revenue.

money. 9 And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which [are] at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail: 10 That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons; *which no doubt they did; and it is remarkable that the reign of this king was a long one, thirty-six years, and very prosperous; and the crown continued long in his family.* 11 Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this; *whoever acted contrary to this decree, was to be hanged at his own door, and his house destroyed and never rebuilt.* 12 And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people that shall put to their hand to alter [and] to destroy this house of God which [is] at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed*.

13 Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shethar-boznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily. 14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo; *these prophets encouraged them by representing the wonderful goodness of God in exciting the king of Persia to shew them such favour.* And they builded, and finished [it,] according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes the king of Persia. 15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king, *about four years after the decree; they were in all nearly twenty years about it, the work being retarded by the treachery of the Persian officers, by the enmity of the Samaritans, and their own great indolence, for which the prophet Haggai reproved them.*

16 And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy, 17 And offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hun-

* This is a very remarkable addition; he pronounces an imprecation on those kings and people that should obstruct the work, whom he could not restrain by his authority; and he likewise bound his successors to observe his decree, and encourage these people.

dred lambs, *this was a small number compared with what Solomon had offered at the dedication of the first temple; but it was suitable to their circumstances, and equally acceptable*; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel*. 18 And they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which [is] at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses. 19 And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth [day] of the first month. 20 For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them [were] pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. 21 And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat †, 22 And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful; *given them occasion of great joy, and quickened their spirits to rejoice in it*, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria ‡ unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how wonderfully God over-rules the designs of his church's enemies for its benefit. The Samaritans probably instigated the governor to oppose the Jews and make this inquiry, and this turned out to their advantage; thus God *takes the wise in their own craftiness*. Many things, which seem at first, threatening and alarming, tend to the furtherance of the gospel and the increase of the church. *Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.* Judges xiv. 14.

2. Let us bless God for those laws and records to which we owe the security of our public liberty. It does not depend upon

* Some suppose that the hundred and forty-sixth, hundred and forty-seventh, and hundred and forty-eighth psalms were composed and used on this occasion, as in the Seventy they are called the psalms of Haggai: this is not unlikely, as they are suitable enough to it.

† There were many proselytes among them, who were cleansed from their pollutions, and became entirely subject to the law of Moses; and were probably influenced to this, by the wonderful appearances of Providence for them, and the remarkable favour of the king of Persia to them.

‡ Darius is called the king of Assyria, because he ruled over these provinces, which formerly belonged to the king of Assyria. In Nehemiah he is called the king of Babylon for the same reason. But these kings and their subjects having been their greatest enemies, these titles might still be used.

the pleasure of our governors, or even of our king; it is founded on the laws of the realm; and the record is secured, and can easily be applied to, when our liberties are attacked or threatened. These are mercies which demand gratitude to God. *The lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage.*

3. Let us remember to pray for our king and his family, under whom we enjoy our liberty. Darius knew the Jews were a praying people, and had a great and powerful God, and therefore he desired their prayers. This is a duty we owe in honour and gratitude to them; and to which we are obliged by the laws of christianity. *I exhort therefore 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 under them; that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

4. There is reason for the greatest of kings to fear the God of heaven. Their lives and the happiness of them depend on his pleasure. Darius was a wise prince, and this was an instance of his wisdom. It is much to be wished that all kings and governors would follow his example, for their own sakes, and for the sake of their subjects.

5. Let us rejoice in God's goodness to us, though it should not be equal to what our fathers enjoyed. The Jews dedicated the temple with joy, though the building was inferior, their number less, and the sacrifices fewer, than in the first temple. We must not despise the day of small things, but give glory to God for what we see of his power and taste of his goodness, and be careful to improve it.

6. When we approach to God in the solemnities of his worship we should be careful to purify ourselves; our lives from pollution, and our hearts from wickedness; so these Jews did. Let us also separate ourselves from the pollutions of others, and seek the Lord and serve him in his own appointed way; then will our service be acceptable, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

7. Let us trace up all the benefits we enjoy by our fellow creatures to the turn God gives to their hearts, ver. 22. An important truth, which we need to be frequently reminded of: the hearts of kings are in his hands. When we meet with a favourable reception from others, or good success in our business, or respect and kindness in the world, gratitude to those from whom we receive these favours is a duty, but let us trace the stream through the several channels to the fountain, to God, *the author of every*

good and perfect gift, whose kingdom ruleth over all, and who does what he pleases in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world.

CHAPTER VII.

We have here some account of Ezra; the commission of Artaxerxes to him; and his reflections upon it.

1 **N**OW after these things, *about eighty years after their first going up, and about sixty years after the temple was finished*, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, *that is, Longimanus, the grandson of Darius**, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, 2 The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Abitub, 3 The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, 4 The son of Zeraiiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, 5 The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest: 6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he [was] a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given; *not a transcriber, but an expert, skilful teacher of the law*: and the king granted him all his requests, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. 7 And, *having information that the temple was built, and the worship regularly performed*, there went up *with him* [some] of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. 8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which [was] in the seventh year of the king. 9 For upon the first [day] of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first [day] of the fifth month, came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. 10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do [it,] and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments; *this was taking the right method; he first sought and studied the law, then practised it, and then taught it to others.*

11 Now this [is] the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, [even] a scribe of

* From this time Daniel's seventy weeks began, or seven times seventy, or four hundred and ninety years. Let it also be remembered, that this Artaxerxes was Esther's husband; which may account in some measure for his great kindness to the Jews.

the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel. 12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, *that is, who has other kings tributary to him*, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect [peace,] and at such a time. 13 I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and [of] his priests and Levites in my realm, which are minded of their own free will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee; *lest any should make a scruple of going, lest Cyrus's decree should be reversed, I make a decree, and give them leave to go.* 14 Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, *by whose advice the decree was made*, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which [is] in thine hand; *to inquire whether every thing was conformable to the Mosaic law, both the priests, the worship, and the sacrifices;* 15 And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation [is] in Jerusalem, 16 And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, *any way procure to be contributed by any of the king's heathen subjects*, with the free-will offering of the people, and of the priests, *who stayed behind*, offering willingly for the house of their God which [is] in Jerusalem: 17 That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat offerings, and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which [is] in Jerusalem. 18 And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren *the priests*, to do with the rest of the silver and gold, that do after the will of your God; *let it be applied to some sacred use.* 19 The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, [those] deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. 20 And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow [it] out of the king's treasure-house. 21 And I, [even] I, Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which [are] beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily, *even* 22 Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing [how much*.] 23 Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently

* This was a remarkable and wonderful grant in their favour; but the king prudently limited the quantity of provisions, that no difference might arise between them.

done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? *for the omission or performance of any part of his worship, through the king's neglect.* 24 Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them. *This was a privilege they had not enjoyed before since the captivity. It was a wise provision, as it prevented the priests from being unreasonably burdened or diverted from their proper business.* 25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that [is] in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that [are] beyond the river, *within the province of Judea*, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know [them] not; *he had commission to restore their ancient method in judging and governing by their own laws.* 26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether [it be] unto death, or to banishment; or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

27 Blessed [be] the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put [such a thing] as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which [is] in Jerusalem: 28 And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God [was] upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me*.

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM hence we are taught to acknowledge the providence of God in our safe and prosperous journeys (*ver.* 9), in directing our way, preserving us from evil, and prospering our undertakings. His favour is to be sought when we are going out, and to be owned when coming in. The circumstances of our journeys should be carefully recollected, that God may have the glory of all our mercies.

2. In Ezra we see a good example to christians, and especially to ministers. He sought the law, made it his study; formed his notions and sentiments from it, and reduced all to practice. He

* The concluding verse shows that Ezra wrote this part of the book. The king's decree is in the Chaldee language, but these verses in the Hebrew.

did not waste his days in trifling, especially not in hurtful, things. Thus should we study the law of God, practise its precepts ourselves, be conformed to the rule, and then teach others; ministers, their people; parents, their children; and christian friends, one another; and be careful that they may see their own exhortations illustrated and enforced by a good example. For all this the heart must be prepared, purified, quickened, and encouraged, and the Spirit of God sought; for *the preparation of the heart, and the success of all our endeavours, are from the Lord.*

3. Learn of this heathen prince, diligently to do what the God of heaven commands; out of gratitude to him, because it is our duty and our interest, and lest wrath should be against us, and our children. Let us do it diligently and with pleasure, for *his commands are not grievous, and in keeping them there is great reward.*

4. Our favour with others, and success in business, are to be ascribed to the good hand of God. Ezra talked like a wise and good man, like one who had studied and understood the law of his God, when he ascribed the king's encouragement to God's interposition; and concludes, instead of God save the King, with *blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart.* It is an honour to be employed for his service and to his glory; and when he gives ability and opportunity, the favour should be gratefully owned. The first rise of good thoughts in our minds, or in the minds of others, comes from him, and is to be ascribed to the Lord our God, who putteth such a thing into our hearts; even to him, *from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.*

CHAPTER VIII.

We have in this chapter the names of those who went up with Ezra; their preservation in their journey, and arrival at Jerusalem.

1 **T**HESSE [are] now the chief of their fathers, and [this is] the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king. *Their names are set down to preserve their memory to future generations.* 2 Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the

sons of David; Hattush. 3 Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males an hundred and fifty. 4 Of the sons of Pahath-moab; Elihoenai the son of Zerachiah, and with him two hundred males. 5 Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males. 6 Of the sons also of Adia; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males. 7 And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males. 8 And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males. 9 Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah, the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males. 10 And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males. 11 And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males. 12 And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males. 13 And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names [are] these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males. 14 Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy males. 15 And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava, *not far from Babylon*; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi; *none of the Levites, as distinguished from the priests, for several of them were. This was a great fault, for they should have been among the first to have gone.* 16 Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, men of understanding, *or influence among them.* 17 And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief, *the principal person among the Levites*, at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, [and] to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God; *and expected from his authority and influence that he would be able to persuade some to come to him.* 18 And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and, *or even*, Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen; 19 And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty; 20 Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for

the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims : all of them were expressed by name *. 21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance †. 22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way : because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God [is] upon all them for good that seek him ; but his power and his wrath [is] against all them that forsake him. *He did not ask for a guard, because it would have looked like a distrust of God's care of them, of which he had gloried before the king ; who might have imagined all had been a vain boast, if after this he had desired a guard.* 23 So we fasted and besought our God for this ; *what he could not seek from the king he asked from God :* and he was entreated of us ; *he gave them some sign or assurance that their petition should be granted.* 24 Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, 25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, [even] the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel [there] present, had offered ; *that they might have no excuse if any were embezzled or lost.* 26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, [and] of gold an hundred talents ; 27 Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams ; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold. 28 And I said unto them, Ye [are] holy unto the LORD ; the vessels [are] holy also ; and the silver and the gold [are] a free-will offering unto the LORD God of your fathers ; *these are the reasons why you should be careful of this treasure.* 29 Watch ye, and keep [them] until ye weigh [them] before the chief of the priests, and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, † Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD. 30 So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to

* The Gibeonites were originally devoted to this service ; but many of them being destroyed by Saul, there were not sufficient left for the temple service. David appointed others, and called them Nethinims, that is, persons given or devoted, namely, to the service of the sanctuary in some of the meaner offices.

† Ezra being the leader of this colony, had authority to command whatever he pleased for the good of the people ; he therefore proclaimed a fast, to humble themselves for their sins, that they might carry none with them into their new settlement, that they might seek God's direction and protection in their journey, his guardian care of them and all they had. And the reason why he was more solicitous to secure the divine favour, was, that he had no guard with him, as he might have had if he had asked the king.

bring [them] to Jerusalem, unto the house of our God. 31 Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth [day] of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way *. 32 And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days, *to refresh ourselves after a journey of four months.* 33 Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God, by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him [was] Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them [was] Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites; 34 By number [and] by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time. 35 [Also] the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, *the children of the captivity, as they are often called,* offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, *to express their gratitude to God for their safe and prosperous journey, and in remembrance of their brethren who stayed behind,* twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he-goats [for] a sin offering: all [this was] a burnt offering unto the LORD. 36 And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river, *that they might know the king's pleasure:* and they furthered the people and the house of God; *they wisely and dutifully obeyed the king's order, and furthered the work which Ezra had so much at heart.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE hand of God is to be thankfully acknowledged in supplying his churches with useful ministers. Ezra was concerned that no Levite was in his company; and when he obtained some, he ascribed it to the favour and influence of God. To him we should look for faithful labourers; and when such are sent, and the churches are supplied, the praise is due to him.

2. It is good *in all our ways to acknowledge God,* and seek a

* No doubt the bands of robbers would frequently lie in wait for them through so long a journey, and with so great a booty, to the value of about seven hundred thousand pounds; but God either struck a terror into their enemies, or led the Jews some other way, so that they escaped. All Artaxerxes' army could not have secured them so well as this invisible protection.

right way from him : to seek for ourselves direction and preservation, success in our affairs, and a blessing upon our families and substance. Without his blessing, there is no comfort in relative life ; our substance will waste and perish, or afford us no satisfaction. If we desire his favour, we must put away iniquity, be humbled for our sin, *and in every thing, by prayer and supplication, make known our requests unto God.*

3. If we desire the friendship of God, we must be devout and obedient. It is an important remark of Ezra's, *v. 22, the hand of God is upon all them for good that seek him* ; on those who are employed in his worship, in studying and observing his laws ; for it is opposed to forsaking him. The hand of God is for good to those that do so, but his almighty wrath is infinitely dreadful against all his enemies. The surest and safest way to be easy, honourable and happy, is to make God our friend, to live near to him by devotion, and be faithful to his covenant.

4. We learn, from this example, to manifest lively faith and confidence in God, and not be ashamed to own it before the greatest of men. Let us show that our talk of trust in God, and our belief of his power and providence, influences our conduct, restrains us from unreasonable fears of men, and makes us bold and resolute in the discharge of our duty. Let us openly acknowledge our regard to God and dependance on him, as Ezra did before the king ; and speak of God's testimonies, though kings should hear.

5. In all trusts that are reposed in us, it is our wisdom and duty to be faithful and punctual. The care of Ezra in weighing out the vessels to the priests, and their care to deliver them by weight to those appointed to receive them, suggests to us how prudent and necessary it is, in all affairs, where things of value are concerned, to be exact and punctual. This is especially necessary for persons in trade ; and would prevent many contentions and differences. Every wise and prudent man will use such methods as to free himself from all suspicion ; and it becomes us all *to exercise ourselves daily to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards all men.*

CHAPTER IX.

Complaint is made to Ezra of a great fault among the people, and he is greatly affected with it.

1 **NOW** when these things were done, *after Ezra had shewn his commission, and it appeared that he had power to redress abuses, and enforce the observation of the law of Moses, the princes, that is, some of the princes who were zealous for the reformation, came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, who should have set a better example, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, [doing] according to their abominations, [even] of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.* 2 For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of [those] lands; *instead of expressing a becoming detestation of their idolatry, they have entered into an alliance with them: this was contrary to their law, it debased the holy seed, was a distrust of Providence, because they thought by such marriages to procure wealth and protection to themselves, and it endangered both themselves and their posterity of falling into idolatry: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass; they set the bad example, and therefore others would not reform*.* 3 And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, *the usual marks of grief and displeasure, and sat down astonished, that they should be so forgetful of the law, and ungrateful to God their deliverer.* 4 Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice †.

5 And at the evening sacrifice I rose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God, 6 And

* This is a proof that the law of Moses was exactly restored, and not corrupted by Ezra, else he would scarce have left such an unpopular law, the urging of which was likely to give so great offence; and it plainly appears that they all allowed these precepts to be genuine, and no contrivance of Ezra's.

† He now probably read and explained the law to them, and those who trembled or heard with reverence, joined him.

said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over [our] head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. 7 Since the days of our fathers [have] we [been] in a great trespass unto this day, *we have followed their steps*; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, [and] our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as [it is] this day; *the dreadful effects of which are not yet quite removed*. 8 And now for a little space grace hath been [showed] from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail, *that is, a constant and sure abode*, (*Isa. xxii. 23.*), in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. 9 For we [were] bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem; *to build the temple and the walls of Jerusalem, and be an hedge of protection about us from our enemies*. 10 And now, O our God, what shall we say after this, *what excuse have we to make for this transgression?* for we have forsaken thy commandments, 11 Which thou hast commanded by thy servants, the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. 12 Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave [it] for an inheritance to your children, for ever; *he repeats the warning of the law, to affect himself and his hearers more powerfully with their guilt and danger*. 13 And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities [deserve,] and hast given us [such] deliverance as this; 14 Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations; wouldst not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed [us,] so that [there should be] no remnant nor escaping? *Since our sufferings have been so great, though less than our iniquities have deserved, and we have had such wonderful appearances of Providence for us, we have the greatest reason to fear that our destruction will*

be entire and inevitable if we persist in our wicked ways. 15 O LORD God of Israel, thou [art] righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as [it is] this day: behold, we [are] before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this. *He concludes with acknowledging God's righteousness, that is, as some understand it, his mercy, that they were not utterly destroyed; or, his righteousness in continuing them under some difficulties and discouragements: as their iniquity was too evident to be denied, so it was too great and shameful to be defended or excused.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. It is matter of great shame and lamentation when God's professing people do not separate themselves from the appearance of sin, and the danger of infection from it. It was sad that the priests and princes should choose daringly to violate the law of God. There is scarce any thing by which the interest of religion and the cause of God are more injured, than by those who are professors of religion marrying into profane and irreligious families. There is little comfort in such relations; and great danger of being corrupted, and of having children neglected or seduced. But the God of this world blinds the eyes; and makes the safety of the soul, and the support of religion, too often the last things to be thought of, when they or their children are entering upon new relations in life.

2. Those who tremble at the word of God, should lament the sins of others, and begin to oppose their progress. When God is dishonoured, and the souls of men injured, or likely to be so, it should grieve the hearts of all who fear God or dread his wrath. We should behold transgressors with grief, and heartily join with all those who are desirous of opposing the progress of sin, as these persons did with Ezra, that we may assist them, keep them in countenance, and strengthen one another's hands in such an important work.

3. Deep humility and shame become us all when we acknowledge our sins before God. We should blush inwardly at our guilt, folly, and rebellion; should appear before him in the most humble posture, and be covered with confusion of face. This is an essential ingredient of true repentance; and if we thus humble ourselves before God, we may hope for his pardoning mercy, and that he will exalt us in due time.

4. When God removes his afflicting hand, and gives us a little revival, it may reasonably be expected that we should be humble and watchful. Ezra intimates that this might have been expected in consequence of what God had done for them. The patience and mercy of God towards us, in removing any calamity we have laboured under, and in granting us ease, health, liberty, and other comforts of life, should lead us to repentance and reformation; make us dread sin, and be solicitous to serve and please him.

5. The word of God, known and declared among us, is an awful aggravation of guilt, if we act contrary to it. Ezra quotes the law and repeats the commandment, that *sin might appear exceeding sinful*. The law is in our hands, to direct our steps and keep us from sin; and if we overlook this, and persist in evil ways, great is our guilt, there is no cloak for our sin. *That servant who knows his master's will and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.*

6. Relapses into sin, after affliction and humiliation, are exceedingly provoking to God, and merit his peculiar displeasure and our utter ruin, *v. 13, 14*. The design of national or personal afflictions is to take away sin; and if we have acknowledged this, and professed repentance, yet return to folly, we may expect the anger of the Lord to increase, and that our plagues shall be made wonderful. Oh that we may consider this! lest God rise up to plead his cause against an hypocritical nation, and utterly destroy us.

7. It becomes a penitent to give judgment against himself, and glorify God even while he condemns him, *v. 15*. This will show that his heart is truly humble, that pride is in some measure subdued, and that he accepts the punishment of his iniquities. This is giving glory to God, and the sure way to obtain his forgiveness and help. Let us then own that *the Lord is righteous*; this will promote, as well as manifest, our humility and patience; it will quicken us in our return to God and duty, and dispose him to return to us in a way of grace and mercy.

CHAPTER X.

In the last chapter we saw how Ezra was affected with the sin of the people; here we see the effect his concern had, and the redress of the abuse.

1 **N**OW when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children; *the uncommon dread and grief and confusion of so extraordinary a person, which was observed by those who were present at the evening sacrifice, and who reported it through Jerusalem, brought many together; and they also were much affected,* for the people wept very sore. 2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, [one] of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. 3 Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that trembled at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. 4 Arise; for [this] matter [belongeth] unto thee: we also [will be] with thee: be of good courage, and do [it.] *This is a bold and honest speech; and remarkably so, as his father, who was still living, and several of his uncles, had been guilty in this matter, v. 26.* 5 Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to his word. And they sware. *He solemnly admonished them of their duty in the name of God, and bound them by an oath to the performance of it.*

6 Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib, *that he might there consult with the priests and Levites about executing this counsel:* and [when] he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away. 7 And *in consequence of this consultation,* they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should

gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; 8 And that who-soever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away; *be excluded from the societies of the Jews, and all the privileges of their nation and religion.* 9 Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It [was] the ninth month, and the twentieth [day] of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, *about the temple*, trembling because of [this] matter, *at the reflection of their transgressions*, and for the great rain, *which they considered as a token of the divine displeasure against them, it being probably unseasonable at that time of the year.* 10 And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. 11 Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. 12 Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do. 13 But *as the people [are] many, and [it is] a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither [is this] a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing; we propose another method of doing it, which is this;* 14 Let now our rulers of all the congregations stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us; *the people were to come by their cities to Jerusalem, and their elders and judges with them, to testify who had transgressed, and see that the intended reformation was made*.*

15 Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this [matter:] and Meshullam and

* The remainder of this chapter is taken up with an account of the persons concerned in seeing the reformation completed, and of those who had transgressed; and it is melancholy to find so many of the priests and leading men involved in this transgression. We find no particular account how the affair was conducted. It seems probable, that if any of these foreign women would have embraced the Jewish religion and put away their idolatry, they might have been retained, except in the case of the priests, to whom such a liberty could not have been allowed: undoubtedly, those who were sent away had a proper provision made for them. Shechaniah proposed putting away the children, but Ezra, in v. 11., says nothing about them. It is probable they were detained and instructed in the knowledge of the law. Had not this resolute step been taken, the purity of the Israelitish nation would have been soon and very greatly corrupted.

Shabbethai the Levite helped them. 16 And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, [with] certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by [their] names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. 17 And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.

18 And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives: [namely,] of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. 19 And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and [being] guilty, [they offered] a ram of the flock for their trespass. 20 And of the sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah. 21 And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziab. 22 And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elasa. 23 Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiab, (the same [is] Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. 24 Of the singers also; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri. 25 Moreover of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiab, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah. 26 And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah. 27 And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. 28 Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, [and] Athlai. 29 And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth. 30 And of the sons of Pahath-moab; Adna and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. 31 And [of] the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiab, Shemaiah, Shimeon, 32 Benjamin, Malluch, [and] Shemariah. 33 Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, [and] Shimei. 34 Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel, 35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh, 36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, 37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau, 38 And Bani, and Binnui, Shimei, 39 And Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah, 40 Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, 41 Azareel, and Shelemiah. Shemariah, 42 Shallum, Amariah, [and] Joseph. 43 Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah. 44 All these had taken strange wives: and [some] of them had wives by whom they had children.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WHEN men are humble and contrite, it is an hopeful circumstance that they will reform what is amiss; *there is hope in Israel concerning this thing*. There is no expectation of a thorough reformation, till the heart is sensible of the evil of sin, and deeply humbled for it. Professions of concern and promises of reformation are little to be depended upon till then. *Godly sorrow alone worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.* 2 Cor. vii. 10.

2. The zeal and courage of Shechaniah was very honourable and worthy imitation. Though his father and uncles were guilty, yet, when the honour of God and the purity of his religion was concerned, he boldly declared his detestation of such practices, and his desire to have them rectified. A good example to all, especially to young people, not to be ashamed to appear on the Lord's side, though their seniors and near relations may be corrupt or lukewarm. It will be much to their honour, and God will own and honour them for it.

3. When we are sensible of the evil of sin, vigorous resolutions should be taken against it, and executed without delay. Ezra, and those who joined with him, struck while the iron was hot. All possible despatch is necessary in those cases where men's passions are apt to get the better of their reason. It is necessary in all cases where reformation is concerned. We should be resolute, to part even with what is dearest to us, and to do it immediately, lest the mind change and circumstances alter. *I made haste, says David, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*

4. Solemn covenant transactions with God should seal and confirm our resolutions of amendment. These people swore to do it, and offered up a sacrifice for their trespass. The heart is treacherous; therefore when a good resolution is formed, we should bind ourselves solemnly to the Lord. This strengthens good resolutions, prevents our returning to folly, and will be a happy means of securing us from future temptations. We should be able to say with David, *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*

THE BOOK OF N E H E M I A H.

INTRODUCTION.

THE history of Nehemiah is peculiarly worthy of our regard; the story itself being remarkable, and the manner of relating it particularly pious and pleasing. He was a man of eminent devotion, and of great courage and zeal; no historian is fuller of sentiments of piety and devout acknowledgments of the hand and care of God. He came up to Jerusalem thirteen years after Ezra, and succeeded him in the government. The commonwealths of Greece and Rome were now come to considerable eminence. Plato, Demosthenes, and other celebrated names in the heathen world, were now living; but the character of Nehemiah far exceeds them all.

CHAPTER I.

Nehemiah, understanding by Hanani the misery of Jerusalem, mourneth, and fasteth, and prayeth for them.

1 **T**HE words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah, *rather, the actions and history of Nehemiah, who was a favourite officer in the Persian court.* And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, *which answers to our November,* in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, 2 That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and [certain] men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem; *what state the people and the city were in.* 3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province [are] in great affliction and reproach; *exposed to the scorn and reproach of neighbouring nations: the wall of Jerusalem also [is] broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire; they have no wall or gate for their security; these still*

continue in ruins, though the temple is rebuilt. 4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned [certain] days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

5 And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God *, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: 6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. 7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses, *which conduct hath brought this calamity upon us.* 8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, [If] ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: *he here pleads for mercy because God had fulfilled his threatening, and scattered them in their captivity:* 9 But [if] ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, [yet] will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there; *thus reminding God of his promise to bring them back again.* 10 Now these [are] thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand, *first from Egypt, and then from Babylon.* 11 O LORD, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer †.

* This was a common title of God after the captivity. He was great compared with idols, or with the greatest kings, and humbly to be worshipped by all the world.

† Many of the Jews were advanced to considerable posts in Babylon and Persia. This was wisely designed by Providence, that they might be of service to their brethren both in Babylon and Judea. It is an instance of great modesty in Nehemiah that he never relates these circumstances till he is in a manner forced to it in this connexion. It may seem strange that so good a man had not taken the first opportunity to return to Jerusalem; but the king seems to have been very fond of him, as appears in the next chapter, and Providence designed him as an instrument of reviving and strengthening the interest of Israel.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us learn from Nehemiah's example, to cultivate a sincere and affectionate love to our country, even when it is in the most afflicted circumstances. He was a great favourite with his master, yet was concerned for the welfare of Jerusalem; he knew it could not be in a very flourishing state, yet was concerned to know about it. It is lawful and profitable for us, like him, to inquire concerning the state of our country, especially the state of the church and religion, that it may direct us what to pray for in its behalf, and excite our endeavours to do good.

2. Times of public affliction should fill our hearts with sorrow, and engage us to deep humiliation and solemn devotion. Though Nehemiah was easy and happy at court, yet when he heard of the distress of Jerusalem, ver. 4., *he wept and mourned, and fasted, and prayed.* It is lamentable indeed when men have no concern for the interest of religion, and can hear of the desolation of the sanctuary, and the decay of religion, without sorrow, humiliation, and prayer. How unlike this good man are they *who dwell at ease, delight themselves in the pleasures of sense, and drink wine in bowls, but are not grieved at the afflictions of Joseph!*

3. Whenever we approach God's presence, let us endeavour to affect our hearts with a sense of his majesty and excellency, and remember that he is *a great and terrible God*, to be adored with the profoundest reverence, and not to be mocked or trifled with. Let us thus *sanctify the Lord of hosts in our hearts, and worship him with reverence and godly fear.* Yet remembering at the same time that *he is faithful and merciful, that we may come boldly to the throne of grace, to seek mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

4. Let us observe the correspondence between the providence and the word of God, as Nehemiah here did, ver. 8., in scattering and recovering the people. The scripture is a key to providence; and providence is often the best interpreter of scripture; they mutually illustrate each other, and show that both are from the LORD. This will tend to confirm our faith in both, and excite a becoming regard to God's word, and the operation of his hands; it will teach us both to plead his promises, and his former appearances for us, as Nehemiah did.

5. Whatever acceptance God gives us with others, especially with persons of rank and influence, it should be employed for his

glory. Nehemiah had no preferment to ask for himself; he wished to employ all his interest in the king for God's honour and the happiness of Israel, and knew he could use it to no better purpose. Let us likewise esteem it our greatest honour to serve the Lord; and when he gives us favour in the sight of men, let us consider it as a valuable grant, and to be employed for the glory of him who gave it us.

CHAPTER II.

In the last chapter we left good Nehemiah in great distress, on account of the report that was given him; in this we have the beginning of the honours conferred upon him, and the dawning of glory upon Israel.

1 **AND** it came to pass in the month Nisan*, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, [that] wine [was] before him: and I took up the wine, and gave [it] unto the king. Now I had not been [beforetime] sad in his presence; *he had been used to wait on the king with a cheerful air*; 2 Wherefore the king, *observing the change*, said unto me, Why [is] thy countenance sad, seeing thou [art] not sick: this [is] nothing [else] but sorrow of heart. 'Then I was very sore afraid, *lest the king should suspect me of some treasonable design, or the courtiers should oppose the proposal I was going to make*, 3 And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, [lieth] waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire†? 4 Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven; *breathed up a sudden ejaculation to God, to direct my thoughts and words, and to incline the king's heart to grant my request*. 5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have

* It was in November he first heard the report, but he had no opportunity of applying to the king till March, four months after.

† Nehemiah addresses the king with great respect, and with the usual compliments. He says not a word of religion, or the divine worship at Jerusalem; for though the king had a veneration for the God of the Jews, yet the company about him were idolaters: he therefore prudently insists upon something common to all. Men in general have a great love for the monuments of their ancestors, and naturally regard their country and sepulchres. This intimates that his ancestors were citizens of Jerusalem, and that he probably was one of the royal family.

found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldst send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. 6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him *,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time; *a short time perhaps, after which he returned to the king, and then was sent a second time to the governor.* 7 Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; *finding the king so complying, and the queen's influence so great, he petitioned for a safe conduct, and necessaries for his journey:* 8 And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which [appertained] to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into; *for the gates and courts of the temple, and the house for the residence of the Persian governor.* And the king granted me according to the good hand of my God upon me; *to this he ascribes all his success.* 9 Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me. *This was more than he desired, and showed the king's regard for him, and gained Nehemiah respect.* 10 When Sanballat the Horonite, or Moabite, (*Isa. xv. 5.*), and Tobiah the servant † the Ammonite, heard [of it,] it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man *with so much authority* to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. 11 So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days, *to observe the state of things, and how the governors and priests behaved.*

12 And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me, *in whom I could confide*; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither [was there any] beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. 13 And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. 14 Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but [there was] no place for the beast [that was] under me

* This was the more remarkable circumstance, as it was not common for the king and queen to be together in public; but she seconded the request, and besought the king to consent. It seems evident to me that this was Ahasuerus, Esther's husband; if so, it was no wonder that she was ready to further this affair.

† He had been a servant or slave, but was now advanced to some considerable post. Both of these were probably governors of some neighbouring provinces.

to pass. 15 Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and [so] returned. 16 And the rulers, *the governors of the king of Persia, who might have obstructed the work*, knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told [it] to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work. 17 Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we [are] in, how Jerusalem [lieth] waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach; *that we may not be exposed to the scorn and insult of the enemy, nor liable to any sudden attack.* 18 Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me; *of his kindness and the authority and commission he had invested me with.* And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for [this] good [work;] *they immediately resolved to build, and encouraged one another in this good work.* 19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian*, heard [it,] they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, *as if it was a vain and foolish attempt*, and said, What [is] this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? *They tax them with intending to throw off their subjection, and set up for themselves.* 20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of Heaven *who is more powerful than your king, hath given us authority, and he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem: you have no relation to our God; are not of our religion or nation; and therefore have no business to inquire about it.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. IT may be inferred from this chapter, that courts are not exempt from the invasions of grief, nor can the favourites of princes escape the common sorrows of life; neither will the presence and honour of their sovereign prevent them from feeling it. The court of heaven is the only court where there is no sorrow of heart.

2. We are taught to inquire into the distresses and sorrows of others, though our inferiors. It was great humanity and good

* Here another person is mentioned with the two former, who was probably the king's governor in Arabia.

nature in this king to do so; and it is peculiarly our duty, as christians, to our servants and inferiors. We should not say, *what is it to us*, but inquire into the causes of their grief, that we may if possible remove them, or at least alleviate their sufferings by our pity; and thus *bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*.

3. It is a good thing often to think and speak of our fathers' sepulchres; not their estates, or honours only, but their tombs, where they are gone, and how employed, and what becomes of their bodies, and how quickly we shall go to them. The grave is the inheritance of all their children. We should not be ashamed of such pious and generous sentiments in the presence of the greatest men or princes; they are highly becoming and useful.

4. Let us hence learn the benefit of ejaculatory prayer, that is, the sudden darting of the soul or wishes towards God, as the word signifies. It is an excellent way to keep up communion with him; it hinders no business; it interrupts no innocent pleasures; it keeps a sense of religion uppermost, fits us for more solemn exercises of devotion, and secures the divine assistance, presence, and help, in every difficult and perplexing case. Thus saith the Lord, *acknowledge me in all thy ways, and I will direct thy paths*. Prov. iii. 6.

5. We should acknowledge the good hand of God in the favourable turn he gives to the hearts of those we depend on, or expect benefits by. We should acknowledge also that it is he who puts good purposes into our own hearts, and enables us to behave so as to gain favour. This is a lesson which often arises from this book, and is most important and worthy our regard.

6. When we are undertaking any business of consequence, wisdom and prudence are necessary to direct. Nehemiah considered first, the state of things, and afterwards, privately consulted some before he opened the scheme to others. We should take time to think of, weigh and digest, any plan for the public good, or our own interest. It is prudent to conceal our schemes till they are formed to some degree of maturity; and we should guard against pursuing rash and hasty measures, which may disappoint our schemes, and expose the authors of them to neglect and contempt.

7. See how much one active man may do to promote reformation. The Jews neglected the wall; but as soon as Nehemiah came and quickened them, they were all ready and vigorous; they only wanted one to set them on. This answers the common ob-

jection which is made for beginning a good work, I am but one, what can I do? More than you think of; at least try what you can, and strengthen one another's hands in the work of God, for, ver. 18., it is a good work; and God will prosper the work, and reward the labourers.

8. Let us cheerfully depend on God, and not be discouraged from prosecuting good undertakings by the scorns and insults of bad men. No good work will go on without enemies. They will laugh us to scorn; but let not this move us. Remember that we are God's servants, engaged in his cause; that he will prosper us; and we shall have a portion and memorial in *the new Jerusalem, the city of the living God, which abideth for ever.*

CHAP. III. and CHAP. IV.

The third chapter is wholly taken up with an account of the building of the wall. In the fourth, we have an account of the opposition they met with, and the methods which were taken to prevent its success.

1 **T**HEN Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel; *dedicated it to God's service by prayer, and such other rites as were appointed, as the first fruits of all the rest of the building.* 2 And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri. *The names in this and the following verses are so particularly set down, because it was a work of great virtue, as it was an honour and security to the country; and also of great piety, as it was an holy city, and a defence to the worshippers of Jehovah: it was an honour to be employed in it, and a noble example to their posterity.* 3 But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who [also] laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 4 And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Mesheza-beel. And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana. 5 And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord. 6 Moreover the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam

the son of Besodeiah ; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 7 And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the governor on this side the river. 8 Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of [one of] the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall. 9 And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem. 10 And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even over against his house. And next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hashabniah. 11 Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahath-Moab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces. 12 And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Halohesh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters. 13 The valley gate repaired Hannun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah ; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate. 14 But the dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Beth-haccerem : he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 15 But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah ; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David. 16 After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk the ruler of the half part of Beth-zur, unto [the place] over against the sepulchres of David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty. 17 And after him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah in his part. After him repaired their brethren, Bavai, the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of Keilah. 19 And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armoury at the turning [of the wall.] 20 After him Baruch the son of Zabbai, earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning [of the wall] unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. 21 After him repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah the son of Koz another piece from the door of the house of Eliashib, even to the end of the house of Eliashib. 22 And after him repaired the priests, the

men of the plain. 23 After him repaired Benjamin and Hashub over against their house. After him repaired Azariah the son of Maa-seiah the son of Hananiah by his house. 24 After him repaired Bin-nui the son of Henadad another piece, from the house of Azariah unto the turning [of the wall,] even unto the corner. 25 Palal the son of Uzai, over against the turning [of the wall,] and the tower which lieth out from the king's high house, that [was] by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh. 26 Moreover the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel, unto [the place] over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out. 27 After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel. 28 From above the horse gate, repaired the priests, every one over against his house. 29 After them repaired Zadok, the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate. 30 After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zaph, another piece. After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber. 31 After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son, unto the place of the Nethinims and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner. 32 And between the going up of the corner unto the sleep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

CHAP. IV. 1 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. 2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, *to the chief men, and especially the commanders and governors in that part of the country, who had mustered all their forces to invade the Jews and hinder their work,* and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? *He made a jest of their despatch, as if they intended to finish, and keep a feast of dedication, in one day:* will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? *as if he had said, They must give the stones life and reason to join themselves, if they would make anything out of this rubbish.* 3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite [was] by him, and he said, Even that which they build *is so feeble, that* if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. *But Nehemiah, instead of answering these fools according to their folly, directs his prayer to God, that he would hear and return their scoffs on their own heads.* 4 Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in

the land of captivity: 5 And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked [thee] to anger before the builders*. 6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work; *they went on cheerfully notwithstanding their jeers.*

7 But it came to pass, [that] when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, [and] that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth; *when they found that bantering would not do, they took up arms;* 8 And conspired all of them together to come [and] to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. 9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them, *that they might not surprise us. But now two difficulties arose, one from their friends:* 10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and [there is] much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall: *they began to murmur, and complained that there was so much rubbish they could never be able to clear it, which was enough to discourage them all. Another difficulty arose from their enemies, who had formed a secret design to surprise the city and murder the inhabitants, of which they had notice from the Jews who dwelt among these people or on the frontiers.* 11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. 12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, *that is, they said so often and assuredly; an abrupt form of speech, intimating their great danger;* From all places whence ye shall return unto us [they will be upon you.]

13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, [and] on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD [which is] great and terrible, *whose assistance you may depend upon;* and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. 15 And it came

* Nehemiah urges this argument, to show that he did not pray against them out of a principle of private revenge, but because they had provoked God, by ridiculing and discouraging this work, which was designed for his honour, and the safety of his people.

to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, *that we had got intelligence of their design*, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. 16 And it came to pass from that time forth, [that] the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers [were] behind all the house of Judah. 17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, [every one] with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other [hand] held a weapon*. 18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and [so] builded. And he that sounded the trumpet [was] by me, *to give the alarm if needful*. 19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work [is] great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. 20 In what place [therefore] ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us, *that by being united, we may make a better stand against our enemies; and our God shall fight for us*. 21 So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. 22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, *not in the suburbs and villages where they used to lodge, but in the city*, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. 23 So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, [saving that] every one put them off for washing; *either to make them clean, or on occasion of some ceremonial pollution*.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are taught from both these chapters, that where the service of God or our country require it, we should all join hearts and hands in so good a work, as these people did. The priests began and set a good example; the tradesmen, goldsmiths, merchants, and apothecaries, all joined, and some ladies contributed

* This was not literally the case, or they could not have worked; but they relieved one another, and their arms lay ready before them, to seize at a moment's alarm.

to this good work, v. 12. This is a good example of zeal, generosity, and public spirit, which it will be our honour as christians to imitate; and we should go on cheerfully in it, notwithstanding all discouragements, v. 6.

2. Let us not wonder if we meet with indignation and contempt in our endeavours to serve the interests of religion. Nehemiah experienced much of this; and such is the wickedness of the world, it will always follow resolution and zeal; but *let none of these things move us*. He that scorneth the scorner, will approve our faithful services, and succeed and reward our humble and zealous attempts to do good in our generation.

3. We see what to do when we are insulted or bantered for our religion, namely, fly to God by prayer. Though we cannot recommend Nehemiah's as a pattern for ours, as it seems rather contrary to the spirit of the gospel; yet let us *commit our ways unto God*. We may honestly pray for the shame and disappointment of those, who would injure the cause of religion, and who discourage those that zealously espouse it. And besides exercising prayer and watchfulness, we should behave prudently, so as to give no offence.

4. The fear of God is the best remedy against the unreasonable fear of men. The fourteenth verse contains good advice in dangerous times. Those who by faith see God to be great and terrible, will see the church's enemies mean and contemptible, and not be afraid of them. *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread*, Isa. viii. 13., then you will have nothing else to fear.

5. See what precaution is necessary in going on in God's work, and endeavouring to build up his house. We must work and watch at the same time, as our spiritual enemies are ever ready to attack us. We must guard against them; *take the whole armour of God*, and still work on, without being discouraged. We should join together, strengthen one another's hands, and so further the good designs we have at heart. Danger should not intimidate us, but prudence should warn us against being secure.

6. We learn to endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and faithful servants in his family. In Nehemiah and the people we see a noble instance of self-denial. Those who would promote the cause and interest of God, must learn to deny themselves, to suffer hardships, to do and to bear what may be disagreeable to flesh and blood. They must guard against luxury;

against nice and delicate dispositions, and a fondness for bodily indulgences. For if any man would come after Christ, be eminent in piety, and greatly useful, *let him deny himself daily, take up his cross, and follow his master.*

CHAPTER V.

In which a complaint is brought to Nehemiah of the hardships of some of the people ; he redresses the grievance, and shows a very generous and public spirit.

1 **AND** there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews ; *a complaint of some of the poor Jews against their richer brethren.* 2 For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, [are] many: therefore we take up corn [for them,] that we may eat, and live ; *they were obliged to buy corn at an unreasonable price for the supply of their families.* 3 [Some] also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. 4 There was also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, [and that upon] our lands and vineyards. *They did not complain of the king's tribute, because that was customary through all the provinces ; but that they were forced to borrow upon usury, which was contrary to their law.* 5 Yet now our flesh [is] as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children : and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and [some] of our daughters are brought into bondage [already :] neither [is it] in our power [to redeem them ;] for other men have our lands and vineyards. *They urge that there was no natural difference between them and their brethren, as both were Jews, enjoyed the same relation to God, and the same privileges ; yet they were obliged to sell their children for slaves, and had no power to redeem them, because their money was gone, and their estates mortgaged.*

6 And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. 7 Then I consulted with myself, *that I might not speak rashly,* and I rebuked the nobles and the rulers, *the chief men who had done this,* and said unto them, Ye exact usury every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them, *gathered all*

the people together, to shame these oppressors. 8 And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews which were sold unto the heathen, *had been instruments of redeeming Israel from bondage, having probably purchased some who were sold as slaves; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? must we redeem them again for you?* Then held they their peace, and found nothing [to answer;] *knowing that it was directly contrary to the laws of God,* Exodus xxii. 25., Lev. xxv. 35. 9 Also I said, It [is] not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? *reminding them what an evil thing it was in itself, and how scandalous in the eyes of their neighbours, who would reproach them with inhumanity, and entertain an ill opinion of their religion.* 10 I likewise, [and] my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. *He, and others engaged in public business, might demand supplies as a reward of their diligence and care, but they waved their right, and he desired they would do so too.* 11 Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive-yards, and their houses, also the hundredth [part] of the money*, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. 12 Then said they, We will restore [them,] and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. *The usurers, struck with this remonstrance, promised to restore all, without demanding any interest.* Then, *while they were in this good mind,* I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. 13 Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out and emptied; *he predicted by this external sign, as the prophets used to do, that they would lose all they had if they did not perform their promise.* And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD; *they consented to the imprecation, and praised the Lord, who had given them such a governor, and had put it into the minds of their richer brethren to submit to his determination.* And the people did according to this promise.

14 Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, [that is,] twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the gover-

* The hundredth part was what they paid every month; so that these oppressors demanded twelve per cent. for the money lent.

nor; *he and his deputies (for part of this time he was not in Judea) had not taken the allowance granted by the king to the governor; but he had lived on his own estate, and on the salary of his place, as cupbearer to the king.* 15 But the former governors that [had been] before me were chargeable to the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God*. 16 Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land, *which he might have had of the poor at an easy price, and laboured without wages:* and all my servants [were] gathered thither unto the work. 17 Moreover [there were] at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that came unto us from among the heathen that [are] about us. 18 Now [that] which was prepared [for me] daily [was] one ox [and] six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine; *these were the provisions of his table:* yet for all this required not I the bread, *the common salary,* of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people; *it was with difficulty they supported themselves and paid the tribute to the king.* He then concludes with an humble application to God, from whom alone he expected his reward, saying, 19 Think upon me, my God, for good, [according] to all that I have done for this people. *He does not prescribe what God should do for him, only that he would think of him, and that was enough.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE learn hence the dreadful effects of scarcity, and what great reason we have to be thankful for plenty. To be under the necessity of borrowing money at extravagant interest, and mortgaging children for slaves, was very grievous; and more especially when they were at the same time liable to the oppression of the rich. It becomes us to be thankful for fullness of bread, and to *bless the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits.*

* Some of the Chaldean governors had done this, but undoubtedly not Ezra and Zerubbabel, during the captivity; for it is not likely that so large a province, in which there were so many people left, would be so long without a governor. These took provisions from the people, and demanded forty shekels of silver; probably so much a-day, that is, about five pounds a-day, for extraordinary expenses and wages; and comived at the exactions of their servants. But he did not so; being influenced by the fear of God, and love to him, and his country.

2. When we are angry at others, it is good to consult with ourselves before we speak. Nehemiah's indignation was very just, yet he restrained the working of it, till he had considered what it was best to say and do. Let us, like him, endeavour to restrain angry passion, till we have consulted with ourselves how far it should be allowed to rise, how it should shew itself, and what is the most prudent method to be taken to redress the grievance or irregularity we are displeased with. *Be ye angry and sin not.*

3. A regard to the credit of religion should restrain us from that which is unjust and dishonourable, v. 9. It is a duty particularly incumbent upon christians to avoid every thing which would bring a reproach upon the gospel: and nothing will be a greater or more just one, than being cruel and oppressive, grinding the face of the poor, or the want of justice and charity. Let us cultivate these virtues, that we may *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

4. We should be willing to recede even from our just right, when it is greatly injurious to others, especially to the poor. On this principle Nehemiah acted, and he exhorted the rich Jews to follow his example. He gave up his salary when the times were hard; and required the Jews to restore the mortgaged lands, without principal or interest, when their brethren could not pay. Rigorously to exact just debts, when persons are unable to pay, or when it cannot be done without ruining their families, is very unbecoming christians. And though usury is not unlawful to us, as it was to them (for particular political reasons), yet exorbitant usury, and taking advantage of the necessities of the poor, is highly scandalous, it is our duty to lend freely, and to *give, hoping for nothing again*; remembering that awful text, *they shall have judgment without mercy who have shewed no mercy.* Jam. ii. 13.

5. The fear of God is an excellent preservative against all oppression, injustice, and meanness of conduct; v. 15. *He did not so*, not for fear of men, or to gain their applause, but for conscience sake. Those who fear God will neither be cruel nor covetous; they will neither do that which is ill, nor that which is mean; but act with integrity, generosity, and good nature. When they act otherwise, there is no fear of God before their eyes.

6. We here see that it may sometimes be necessary and useful for a person to relate his own good deeds. Nehemiah undoubtedly did it with this good view, to excite the Jews to be kind to

their poor brethren, and leave an example to succeeding governors to be generous, hospitable, and compassionate. But it must be done with the utmost caution, to keep down the rising of pride and vain glory, with a solicitude to give God the glory of all the good we have done, and with a conviction, that *after all we are unprofitable servants*, and can plead no merit at his hands. It ought to be our chief concern to approve ourselves to him, and to secure his favourable thoughts of us; and if he thinks upon us for good, we shall want, and indeed can desire, no more.

CHAPTER VI.

An account of the methods taken by the enemies of the Jews to prevent their finishing the wall, by terrifying the governor and workmen, when they durst not attack them.

1 NOW it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and [that] there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) **2** That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in [some one of] the villages in the plain of Ono: but they thought to do me mischief. **3** And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I [am] doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? *They could have no business with him of so much importance as that he was now engaged in.* **4** Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner. *They were unwearied in their attempts to get him into their power; for they thought if the gates were finished, they should never be able to get into the city, or prevent the flourishing of the Jews.*

5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; **6** Wherein [was] written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu, or Geshem, v. 2., saith [it,] *is ready to prove it*, [that] thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. **7** And thou

hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, [There is] a king in Judah : and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. *Probably Sanballat pretended special kindness and respect in informing him what was laid to his charge ; and sent the letter open, that every one might see what he was accused of.* Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together, *how to wipe off the suspicion, or prevent the report from spreading farther.* Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. *Nehemiah charges them with falsehood, as there was nothing done which* could give any suspicion of rebellion, and not any prophet to encourage such a thing.* 9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done ; *this was their real design.* Now therefore, [O God,] strengthen my hands, *that I may encourage others, and finish the work.*

10 Afterward I came into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, *whom Nehemiah took to be his friend, and who [was] shut up ; kept himself in confinement as a token of what Nehemiah ought to do ; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the door of the temple : for they will come to slay thee ; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. He thought Nehemiah would become contemptible by shutting himself up in the temple, or perhaps he intended to seize him there, and deliver him to his enemies.* 11 And I said, should such a man as I flee? *I, who am a governor, who have hitherto showed courage, and ought to set an example of it ; who have professed confidence in God, and have been assisted and defended hitherto ? and who [is there,] that, [being] as I [am,] would go into the temple to save his life ? I will not go in ; I will still rely on God, and on the fidelity and courage of the people*.* 12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him ; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me : for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. *It was probably told him by some true prophet that he was a tool of Sanballat, and pretended to prophesy, not in order to secure, but to betray, him.* 13 Therefore [was] he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and [that] they might have [matter] for an evil report, that they might reproach me. *His design was to make him sin against God, and dishonour himself,*

* This was a noble reply : had he retired, the people would probably have dropped the work, or laid aside their arms, and then the enemy would have come and destroyed their work and them.

either by cowardice, or not daring to stand the accusations, that they might reproach him, as being guilty of what they had charged him with. 14 My God, Think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear. He did not think it fit as a judge to punish them, or complain of the neighbouring governors to the king of Persia; but he would have all know that he depended on the power of God alone to finish the work.

15 So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth [day] of [the month] Elul, in fifty and two days. *This was very soon, but there is nothing incredible in it, considering their number, their zeal in the work, and that the wall was not entirely razed by the Chaldeans, but only broken down in places.* 16 And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard [thereof,] and all the heathen that [were] about us saw [these things,] they were much cast down in their own eyes, *were discouraged and ashamed of their opposition:* for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God. 17 Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and [the letters] of Tobiah came unto them. *There was a number of false brethren among the Jews, who kept correspondence with the enemy.* 18 For [there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he [was] the son in law of Shechaniah, the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. *The reason was that he and his son had married daughters of Israelites: so dangerous were these marriages with foreigners.* 19 Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. [And] Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear. *They had the impudence to take all occasions of praising him to Nehemiah's face, who knew his wickedness; and they informed him of Nehemiah's schemes and intentions; and Tobiah wanted very much to make him do something to disgrace himself.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. We are here taught, that great pretensions of friendship, such as were made to Nehemiah, are not always to be depended upon. Their design seems to have been either to destroy or to disgrace him; *their words were softer than oil, but treachery and war were in their heart.* Let us not wonder if we meet with

treacherous and designing men; and to prevent the ill consequences of deceit, let us join the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove.

2. The courage and steadfastness of Nehemiah is worthy the imitation of all christians. The answer he gave his enemies is very proper for us to give, when attacked by the temptations of Satan, or wicked men; he was employed *in a great work*. The business of religion is the most important work; let it not cease that we may go into bad company, or for the sake of compliment or ceremony. *Shall such persons as we are, flee*, who profess the religion of Jesus, and are his by solemn engagements? we who have families that will be influenced by our example? Let us be resolute that we will neither do that which is evil, or decline that which is good, on account of any solicitation or importunity whatever.

3. When any attempts are made to weaken our hands, let us earnestly pray that God would strengthen them. This is a proper petition when we are entering upon duty, when surrounded by enemies, when temptations present themselves, especially at a time *when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold*. We have need of strength to stand resolute; it is a great comfort to reflect that God is able and willing to strengthen us; and that those who come to the throne of grace, *shall find grace to help in time of need*.

4. How melancholy is it when the sacred character is abused to countenance deceit and mischief! Some who pretended to be prophets of God, endeavoured to hinder his work, and to destroy his faithful servants. Too many, under the name of christian ministers, have told mischievous lies in the name of the LORD; have persecuted, and endeavoured to destroy, the best of men. Others, by pretending to extraordinary devotion and revelations from heaven, have deceived persons, who, like Nehemiah, have been remarkable for wisdom and goodness. Let us be cautious, that we are not imposed upon; and *try the spirits, whether they are of God*; for even Satan can put on the form of an angel of light.

5. Steadfastness and resolution in a good work will overcome all difficulties, and at last be crowned with success. Had Nehemiah been discouraged and intimidated by these various artifices, perhaps all the glory of Jerusalem had been injured; but his steadfastness brought the work to perfection. Let those who are desirous to serve God themselves, and promote the interests

of religion, be resolute in the good cause. Let no allurements draw them aside, let no threatenings or banterers dishearten them : and let us all learn from this example, *to be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

CHAPTER VII.

Which is principally taken up with the register of the people.

1 **N**OW it came to pass when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, 2 That I gave my brother Hanani, and Haniah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem : for he [was] a faithful man, and feared God above many. 3 And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot : and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar [them] : and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one [to be] over against his house. 4 Now the city [was] large and great : but the people [were] few therein, and the houses [were] not builded.

5 And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein, 6 These [are] the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city ; 7 Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number [I say,] of the men of the people of Israel [was this ;] 8 The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. 9 The children of Shephathiah, three hundred seventy and two. 10 The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two. 11 The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand and eight hundred

[and] eighteen. 12 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 13 The children of Zattu, eight hundred forty and five. 14 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. 15 The children of Binnui, six hundred forty and eight. 16 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and eight. 17 The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty and two. 18 The children of Adonikam, six hundred threescore and seven. 19 The children of Bigvai, two thousand three score and seven. 20 The children of Adin, six hundred fifty and five. 21 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. 22 The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty and eight. 23 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and four. 24 The children of Hariph, an hundred and twelve. 25 The children of Gibeon, ninety and five. 26 The men of Beth-lehem and Netophah, an hundred fourscore and eight. 27 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. 28 The men of Beth-azmaveth, forty and two. 29 The men of Kirjath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and three. 30 The men of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. 31 The men of Michmas, an hundred and twenty and two. 32 The men of Beth-el and Ai, an hundred twenty and three. 33 The men of the other Nebo fifty and two. 34 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 35 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. 36 The children of Jericho, three hundred, forty and five. 37 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and one. 38 The children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty. 39 The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. 40 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. 41 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. 42 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.

43 The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, [and] of the children of Hodevah, seventy and four. 44 The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred forty and eight. 45 The porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, an hundred thirty and eight.

46 The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hashupha, the children of Tabbaoth, 47 The children of Keros, the children of Sia, the children of Padon, 48 The children of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Shalmal, 49 The children

of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, 50 The children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, 51 The children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Phaseah, 52 The children of Besai, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephishesim, 53 The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, 54 The children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, 55 The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Tamah, 56 The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.

57 The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Perida, 58 The children of Jaala, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, 59 The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Amon. 60 All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants [were] three hundred ninety and two. 61 And these [were] they which went up [also] from Tel-melah, Tel-haresha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, nor their seed, whether they [were] of Israel. 62 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred forty and two.

63 And of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took [one] of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name. 64 These sought their register [among] those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. 65 And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood [up] a priest with Urim and Thummim.

66 The whole congregation together [was] forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, 67 Besides their man servants and their maid servants, of whom [there were] seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women. 68 Their horses, seven hundred thirty and six: their mules, two hundred forty and five: 69 [Their] camels, four hundred thirty and five: six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses.

70 And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold, fifty basons, five hundred and thirty priests' garments. 71 And [some] of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred pound of silver. 72 And [that] which the rest of the people

gave [was] twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand pound of silver, and threescore and seven priests' garments. 73 So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and [some] of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel [were] in their cities.

CHAPTER VIII.

The solemn manner in which the law was read and attended to; the orders given to the people to express an holy joy on this occasion; and their solemn observation of the feast of tabernacles. The last clause of chapter vii. should have been the beginning of this.

1 **AND** *when the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities, and all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the spacious street that [was] before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe; presented him with their pious entreaty, desiring him to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel, and which was required to be read every seventh year at the feast of tabernacles. Deut. xxxi. 9. 10.* 2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month *before the feast of tabernacles began; they set about this good work on the new moon or feast of trumpets.* 3 And he read therein before the street that [was] before the water gate from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people, [were attentive] unto the book of the law. *This is a general account of what was done; the particulars follow.* 4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit, or *gallery*, of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shemah, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseith, on his right hand; and on his left hand Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, [and] Meshullum. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up *to show their reverence for the word of God:* 6 And Ezra blessed the LORD,

the great God. *He began with a solemn adoration of God for giving his law, and prayed for his blessing to attend the reading and explanation of it.* And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands, *expressed their concurrence with great affection*: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with [their] faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseith, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law*: and the people [stood] in their place, *listening attentively to the law and the explanation* †. 8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused [them] to understand the reading; *they read with a clear voice, and distinct pronunciation; explaining the meaning, design, and spiritual intention, of the law.*

9 And Nehemiah, which [is] the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day [is] holy unto the LORD your God: mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law; *the people wept on account of the ignorance in which they had so long lived, and their violation of the law, though it was a festival day, and ought to have been kept with rejoicing.* 10 Then he said unto them, *about noon,* Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day [is] holy unto our LORD: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength. *He exhorts them to keep the feast, that is, the feast of trumpets, (Lev. xxiii. 24.), and relieve their poor brethren; and do all with holy joy, considering the great things which God had done for them. This was proper in itself, would make them cheerful in duty, fortify them against their troubles, and secure that blessing of God, which was promised after keeping the feast with gladness.* 11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day [is] holy; neither be ye grieved; *what Nehemiah said to those who could hear him, the Levites repeated to the rest.* 12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them *better than before.*

13 And on the second day were gathered together the chiefs of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto

* These probably read and explained it in their turns, being too much for one man to read and explain it for six hours together.

† Probably after Ezra had set them in a method, he divided the people into companies, for the convenience of hearing the better.

Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law*. 14 And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month †. 15 And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as [it is] written. So the people went forth, and brought [them,] and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. *All this was within the city, none were made without, for fear of their enemies.* 17 And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness; *no feast since Joshua's time was kept with such solemnity, cheerfulness and devotion.* 18 Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God ‡. And they kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day [was] a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

REFLECTIONS.

1. To have the holy scriptures in our hands, and helps to understand them, should be esteemed a very great blessing. These people were wise, because they had the law read and explained to them. This shows how blameable the church of Rome is, in keeping the scriptures from the common people,—that there was a particular appointment in the law of Moses, for keeping up and spreading the knowledge of it. Its preachers should know how to teach, not to hide, the knowledge of God. Ministers and the bible are the joy of God's Israel. Let us be thankful for them.

2. We are taught by this example, that the reading and ex-

* The second day was no festival; but their zeal was so great, and they were so desirous to understand the law, that they came for further instructions; yea, the priests and the Levites came to learn their own duty more perfectly than Ezra, and particularly those duties which were to be performed in this month.

† This was the feast of tabernacles, or booths, in commemoration of their dwelling in tents in the wilderness.

‡ The law did not expressly appoint this; but the warmth of their zeal made them desirous of improving this opportunity to know more of the law.

pounding the scriptures in public assemblies is an important and useful exercise; it is doing great honour to God and his word, and is much for the edification and instruction of the church. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.* It is the business of ministers to read the law, to give the sense of it according to their best abilities, and cause the people to understand the meaning; and to enforce on their consciences the duties required in it. It is to the honour of many churches that this practice is still retained among them; and it is much to be wished that it was as general as it is proper and useful.

3. Heads of families should bring their households with them to the public worship of God, that they may join in devotion, and hear the divine law. The congregation assembled were men and women, and those children who could understand any thing. Children are early capable of receiving instruction; and even before that period are capable of receiving some impressions of the seriousness and solemnity of worship on their minds, which may be of great importance to them in future life. Parents should therefore bring their children with them as soon as they know how to behave properly, and not disturb those who are near them, and should endeavour to instruct them in the nature and design of these services. Servants also should attend upon the worship of God; for detaining them at home on one part of the Lord's day, when there is no absolute necessity for it, is very injurious to them, and contrary to the will of God. The rule under the law was, (*Deut. xxxi. 12.*), *Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of his law:* and the same reason for it holds good under the gospel.

4. We ought to exercise ourselves to religious services with great seriousness and solemnity, *v. 5, 6.* Nehemiah began with prayer, the people joined, and used a very reverent posture. It is very proper when we take the word of God into our hands, to begin with devotion, to be thankful for it, and pray for wisdom to understand and improve it. There is a peculiar propriety in beginning our public worship with prayer for the divine presence, assistance, and blessing; and those persons are worthy of blame who are seldom in time to join in that act of devotion in the solemn assembly.

5. It becomes us when the word of God is read and ex-

pounded, to pay the utmost attention to it, *v. 7*. Notice is taken that *the people stood in their place*; there was no moving about, shifting their places, or any other marks of irreverence or inattention. On the contrary, *v. 3.*, Notice is taken that *the people were attentive to the book of the law*: a good pattern for us all. When God speaks, it is fit his creatures should give attention. Looking about to observe who comes in, is highly indecent; it is an affront to God, whose word we read, disrespectful to those who read and explain it, and depriving ourselves of the benefit we might gain by it. Let us all learn by this example, to *give diligent heed to the things that are spoken*.

6. We learn the benefit of holy joy, and keeping holy days with cheerfulness. Sabbaths, or holy convocations, ought to be kept with joy; the mind should be cheerful and thankful. Joy in God and his goodness, especially in giving us spiritual blessings, should be maintained; *the joy of the Lord is our strength*. It is our duty to go on with vigour and despatch; this will support and encourage us under adversities, and secure his blessing; *for he meets those that rejoice in him, and work righteousness*. We are allowed to *eat the fat and drink the sweet* on holy days; but it should be done with moderation, lest it make us drowsy, and unfit us for religious exercises, and should always be attended with charity to the poor. We should send portions to those who have not our plenty. Works of charity are peculiarly proper on solemn feast days; and the goodness of God to us should make us bountiful and charitable to our poor brethren. We serve a good master, who loves to see his servants cheerful, easy, and happy; and nothing will contribute more to this than to do all in our power to make our devotion lively, and our charity warm and extensive. God loves a devout worshipper and a cheerful giver.

CHAPTER IX.

Gives an account of a solemn fast, and the humiliation of the Levites and the people.

1 **N**OW in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackcloths, and earth upon them*. 2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers†. 3 And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God [one] fourth part of the day; and [another] fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God; *they read and explained the book of the law for three hours, and then had solemn devotions for three hours more.* 4 Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, [and] Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God. 5 Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, [and] Pethahiah, said, Stand up [and] bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise: *they called upon the people, who were now prostrate on the ground, to stand up and praise the Lord, and directed them how to do it‡.* 6 Thou, [even] thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all [things] that [are] therein, the seas and all that [is] therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee; *they began with adoring God, as the creator and preserver of the universe, and the object of worship both of angels and men; and then briefly recited the history of God's wonderful*

* They had observed the feast of tabernacles; and having heard the law read, were so humbled under a sense of their breach of it, that they piously set apart this twenty-fourth day as an extraordinary fast.

† There was now a further reformation of their intermarriages with the heathen, which had been contracted since that general reformation we had an account of in Ezra. Those stood at a distance from the rest, and lamented their own sins, and the sins of their fathers, by whose ill example they had been led to these practices.

‡ Probably the whole multitude was divided into many congregations, with a Levite or two to preside over each. Then follow the heads or particulars of their prayer, which the Levites enlarged upon, or else it would not have taken up so much time.

appearances for their nation, particularly in choosing Abraham, and entering into covenant with him. 7 Thou [art] the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; 8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give [it, I say,] to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou [art] righteous: 9 And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea; 10 And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as [it is] this day. 11 And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. 12 Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. 13 Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: 14 And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: 15 And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. 16 But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, *showed great ingratitude and obstinacy,* 17 And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: thou [art] a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and *therefore* forsookest them not. 18 Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This [is] thy god that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations; 19 Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. 20 Thou gavest also thy good

Spirit to instruct them, *as a spirit of prophecy*, and withheldst not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. 21 Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, [so that] they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. 22 Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners; *that is, thou didst drive the nations who possessed these lands into corners, giving them an easy conquest of their country*: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan. 23 Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess [it.] 24 So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would. 25 And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness; *were thankful at first, but soon rebelled*. 26 Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations. 27 Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee thou heardest [them] from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, *or judges*, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. 28 But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore ledest thou them in the hand of their enemies, *the Philistines*, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest [them] from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies; 29 And testifiedst against them that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them, *that is, be a happy man*;) and withdrew the shoulder, *like refractory oxen*, and hardened their neck, and would not hear. 30 Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the

deople of the lands: *that is, the Chaldeans, who had got possession of all the neighbouring country.* 31 Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou [art] a gracious and merciful God*. 32 Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. 33 Howbeit thou [art] just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: 34 Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them. 35 For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. 36 Behold, we [are] servants this day, and [for] the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we [are] servants in it; *we pay tribute to a foreign prince, the king of Persia:* 37 And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we [are] in great distress: *the king had power to employ them in his works or wars; had power to demand their tribute in cattle, or order them to be employed about his works; they were now tenants to the king of Persia, whereas formerly they held their land under God alone.* 38 And because of all this we make a sure [covenant,] and write [it;] and our princes, Levites, [and] priests, seal [unto it;] *upon the whole, they resolved to renew their covenant with God for better obedience, as the only way to procure perfect deliverance. This public instrument would be a witness against them if they were disobedient, and would convict them of impiety, injustice, and treachery, if they returned to idolatry and wickedness again.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. SOLEMN seasons of public humiliation, in times of public calamity, are very proper and becoming. When deliverance is

* In the following verses they lament the sins which exposed them to these calamities, and entreat God's pity on them in their present afflicted state.

wrought, to express our thankfulness for it, and to guard against those sins which might prevent the happy consequence of it, is our duty and interest. Reading the law, and praying, are the proper work of a fast day; we should read the law to direct our prayers; and in prayer we should humble ourselves for every breach of the law, and beg wisdom and grace to keep it better for the future.

2. Serious and honourable thoughts of God should be maintained whenever we approach him, *v. 5, 6, that his glorious name may be exalted.* The noblest creatures cannot praise him as he deserves, cannot make him more excellent. He is not only above our blessing and praise, but above *all* blessing and praise. We should consider him as the creator and preserver of the whole. Angels worship him, and therefore he is worthy of our highest reverence. We should take the utmost care to possess our minds with great, noble, and honourable thoughts of God when we approach to him; then we shall do it with humility, and with thankfulness for his condescension and grace, in encouraging and accepting our unworthy supplications.

3. The circumstances which our fathers experienced, should be recollected by us. We should be thankful for favours bestowed on them, in the benefits of which we share. We should lament their ingratitude, and disobedience, that we may act differently. This will tend to encourage our own better obedience, and our expectation of help in time of need.

4. The goodness of God in giving us laws and ordinances ought to be reflected upon with peculiar thankfulness, *v. 13,* and particular notice is taken of the sabbath, *v. 14.* It was a singular and valuable gift, a sign between God and them, that they were his people, and the worshippers of the true God. He gave them also his good Spirit to instruct them. This blessing we have particular reason to be thankful for. The laws of Christ are right, true, and good; are not so burdensome and grievous as the Jewish laws; the sabbath is continued, and the observation of it enforced by the authority of Christ, and in commemoration of his resurrection; his good Spirit is given to instruct us; and we have the hope of the heavenly Canaan. These mercies are of great value, ought to be recollected every day, and should be acknowledged with peculiar thankfulness in our public assemblies; and let it be remembered, that they will greatly aggravate our guilt if we are disobedient and irreligious.

5. With solemn exercises of devotion it is proper to enter into

solemn engagements to be the Lord's, *v.* 38. *Because of all this thy mercy, and our disobedience, we make a sure covenant.* When we are convinced of the evil of sin, we should solemnly engage to have no more to do with it; when we have recollected the mercies of God, we should bind ourselves to make all suitable returns, and promise and engage to keep God's commands. This we have frequently done; let us often reflect upon it; and *having sworn, let us perform it, that we will keep God's righteous judgments.*

CHAPTER X.

The names of them that sealed the covenant, and the points of it.

1 **N**OW those that sealed [were,] Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, the son of Hachaliah, and Zidkijah, 2 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, 3 Pashur, Amariah, Malchijah, 4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, 5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, 6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, 7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, 8 Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah: these [were] the priests. 9 And the Levites: both Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel; 10 And their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, 11 Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah, 12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, 13 Hodijah, Bani, Beninu. 14 The chief of the people; Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, 15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, 16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, 17 Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur, 18 Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai, 19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, 20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, 21 Meshezabeel, Zadok, Jaddua, 22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, 23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub, 24 Hallohesh, Pileha, Shobek, 25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, 26 And Ahijah, Hanan, Anan, 27 Malluch, Harim, Baanah.

28 And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; 29 They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord,

and his judgments and his statutes; 30 And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons: 31 And [if] the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, [that] we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and [that] we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt. 32 Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; 33 For the shew bread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy [things,] and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and [for] all the work of the house of our God. 34 And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring [it] into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed, year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as [it is] written in the law; 35 And to bring the first fruits of our ground, and the first fruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD: 36 Also the first born of our sons and of our cattle, as [it is] written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: 37 And [that] we should bring the first fruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine, and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. 38 And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. 39 For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where [are] the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.

CHAPTER XI.

The rulers, voluntary men, and the tenth man chosen by lot, dwell at Jerusalem ; a catalogue of their names.

1 **AND** the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem : the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city ; and nine parts [to dwell] in [other] cities. 2 And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

3 Now these [are] the chief of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem : but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, [to wit,] Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants. 4 And at Jerusalem dwelt [certain] of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the children of Judah ; Athaiah the son of Uzziab, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalaleel, of the children of Perez ; 5 And Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiab, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni. 6 All the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem [were] four hundred threescore and eight valiant men. 7 And these [are] the sons of Benjamin ; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiab, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jesaiah. 8 And after him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred twenty and eight. 9 And Joel the son of Zichri [was] their overseer : and Judah the son of Senuah [was] second over the city. 10 Of the priests : Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin. 11 Seraiah the son of Hilkiab, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub [was] the ruler of the house of God. 12 And their brethren that did the work of the house [were] eight hundred twenty and two : And Adaiab the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchiah, 13 And his brethren, chief of the fathers, two hundred forty and two : and Amashai the son of Azareel, the son of Ahasai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, 14 And their brethren mighty men of valour, an hundred twenty and eight : and their overseer [was] Zabdiel, the son of [one of]

the great men. 15 Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni; 16 And Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites, [had] the oversight of the outward business of the house of God. 17 And Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, [was] the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: and Bakbukiah the second among his brethren, and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. 18 All the Levites in the holy city were [two] hundred four score and four. 19 Moreover the porters, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren that kept the gates, [were] an hundred seventy and two.

20 And the residue of Israel, of the priests, [and] the Levites, [were] in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance. 21 But the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel: and Ziah and Gispa [were] over the Nethinims. 22 The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem [was] Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micah. Of the sons of Asaph, the singers [were] over the business of the house of God. 23 For [it was the king's commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day. 24 And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zerah the son of Judah, [was] at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people. 25 And for the villages, with their fields, [some] of the children of Judah, dwelt at Kirjath-arba, and [in] the villages thereof, and at Dibon, and in the villages thereof, and at Jekabzeel, and [in] the villages thereof, 26 And at Jeshua, and at Moladah, and at Beth-phelet, 27 And at Hazar-shual, and at Beersheba, and [in] the villages thereof, 28 And at Ziklag, and at Mekonah, and in the villages thereof, 29 And at En-rimmon, and at Zareah, and at Jarmuth, Zanoah, Adullam, and [in] their villages, at Lachish and the fields thereof, at Azekah, and [in] the villages thereof. 30 And they dwelt from Beer-sheba unto the valley of Hinnom. 31 The children also of Benjamin from Geba [dwelt] at Michmash, and Aija, and Beth-el, and [in] their villages, 32 [And] at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, 33 Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, 34 Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, 35 Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen. 36 And of the Levites [were] divisions [in] Judah, [and] in Benjamin.

CHAPTER XII.

The priests which came up with Zerubbabel, and the succession of high priests.

1 **N**OW these [are] the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua : Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, 2 Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, 3 Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, 4 Iddo, Ginnetho, Abijah, 5 Miamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, 6 Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah, 7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, Jedaiah. These [were] the chief of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua. 8 Moreover the Levites : Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, [and] Mattaniah, [which was] over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren. 9 Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, [were] over against them in the watches.

10 And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada, 11 And Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua. 12 And in the days of Joiakim were priests, the chief of the fathers : of Seraiah, Meraiah ; of Jeremiah, Haniah ; 13 Of Ezra, Meshullam ; of Amariah, Jehohanan ; 14 Of Melicu, Jonathan ; of Shebaniah, Joseph ; 15 Of Harim Adna ; of Meraioth, Helkai ; 16 Of Iddo, Zechariah ; of Ginnethon, Meshullam ; 17 Of Abijah, Zichri ; of Miniamin ; of Moadiah, Piltai, 18 Of Bilgah, Shammua ; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan ; 19 And of Joiarib, Mattenai ; of Jedaiah, Uzzi ; 20 Of Sallai, Kallai ; of Amok, Eber ; 21 Of Hilkiyah, Hashabiah ; of Jedaiah, Nethaneel.

22 The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, [were] recorded chief of the fathers : also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian. 23 The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, [were] written in the book of the chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. 24 And the chief of the Levites : Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise [and] to give thanks according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward. 25 Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, [were] porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates. 26 These [were] in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe.

27 And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought

the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and with singing, [with] cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. 28 And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi; 29 Also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem. 30 And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall. 31 Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great [companies of them that gave] thanks, [whereof one] went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate: 32 And after them went Hoshaiah, and half of the princes of Judah, 33 And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam, 34 Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, 35 And [certain] of the priests' sons with trumpets; [namely,] Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph: 36 And his brethren Shemaiah, and Azareel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them. 37 And at the fountain gate, which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward. 38 And the other [company of them that gave] thanks went over against [them,] and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces, even unto the broad wall; 39 And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the prison gate. 40 So stood the two [companies of them that gave] thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me: 41 And the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, [and] Hananiah, with trumpets, 42 And Maaseiah and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah, [their] overseer. 43 Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

44 And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the first fruits and for the

tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited. 45 And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, [and] of Solomon his son. 46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old [there were] chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God. 47 And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified [holy things] unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified [them] unto the children of Aaron.

CHAPTER XIII.

The three foregoing chapters consist chiefly of the names of the priests and Levites, their distribution, the provisions made for them, and their procession in dedicating the new built wall. In this chapter we have an account of the abuses that had crept in among the Jews during Nehemiah's absence, and his zealous redress of them.

1 **O**N that day, *some festival or sabbath day, when the law was read*, they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; *they should not be incorporated with the people; they might worship the God of Israel, and bring sacrifice, but not intermarry with the Israelites*; 2 Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. 3 Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude, *all who were born of strangers*.

4 And before this *separation was made*, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, [was] allied unto Tobiah, *an Ammonite, and an enemy to God's people*: 5 And he had prepared for him a great chamber, *had taken down the partitions between several smaller chambers*, where aforetime they laid the meat-offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil,

which was commanded [to be given] to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests. 6 But in all this [time] was not I at Jerusalem, *or he durst not have made it*: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days, *probably about five years*, obtained I leave of the king; 7 And, *hearing of this evil*, I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Elia-shib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. 8 And it grieved me sore, *that such a man should be permitted to lodge in the temple, and that by the high priest*: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. 9 Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers; *sprinkled the chambers with the waters of purification as appointed in the law*: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense, *its old and proper furniture*.

10 And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given [them;] *either the people did not pay the Levites their portion, or it had been applied by the high priest and his relations to some other purposes*: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field, *to their own estates in the country, to get their living there*. 11 Then contended I with the rulers; *earnestly expostulated with them and reprov'd them*, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them, *the Levites*, together, and set them in their place; *restored them to the exercise of their office*. 12 Then brought all Judah the tithes of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries; *they brought cheerfully when they saw they would be applied as the law directed*. 13 And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah; *trusty persons, in the room of those who had not been faithful*: and next to them [was] Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office [was] to distribute unto their brethren. 14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof; *graciously receive my sincere endeavours for thy honour and service, and deal with me accordingly*.

15 In those days saw I in Judah [some] treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all [manner of] burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day, *contrary to the law*:

and I testified [against them] in the day wherein they sold victuals. 16 There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. 17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, *because they connived at this, else the people durst not have been guilty of it*, and said unto them, What evil thing [is] this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? 18 Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath; *was not this one of the crimes for which they were carried captive? therefore it is aggravated guilt, and exposes us to greater punishment*. 19 And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, *allowing none to pass but those that came to worship*, and charged that they should not be open till after the sabbath: and [some] of my servants, *on whose fidelity I could depend*, set I at the gates, [that] there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. 20 So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice, *and exposed their ware in the fields*. 21 Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do [so] again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no [more] on the sabbath. 22 And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and [that] they should come [and] keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day, *because the people would pay more regard to them*. Remember me, O my God, [concerning] this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy; *in this he pleads no merit, but only for sparing and pardoning mercy*.

23 In those days also saw I Jews [that] had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, [and] of Moab, *notwithstanding their solemn engagements and covenant*: 24 And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people; *the children being mostly with their mothers, had learned their language*. 25 And I contended with them, *reproved them sharply*, and cursed them, *denounced the curses of God's law against them*, and smote certain of them; and plucked off their hair; *ordered some of the chief and most audacious of them to be whipped, and their hair to be cut off, which was a token of great infamy among the eastern nations*, and made them swear by God, [saying,] Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their

daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves; *he took a solemn oath of them that they should put away their wives.* 26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin; *and if he was seduced, how could they think to preserve their integrity?* 27 Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives? *shall we connive at this mischief, and thus in effect justify you in your crimes?* 28 And [one] of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, [was] son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me, *from the temple and priesthood, and all the privileges of an Israelite**. 29 Remember them, O my God, *and punish them according to their deserts*, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites, *by which they were bound to observe the laws of the priesthood, one of which was, that they were to marry virgins of their own people.* 30 Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, *that is, all strange wives*, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business; 31 And for the wood offering at times appointed, and for the first fruits; *he appointed the priests and Levites to discharge their proper offices, and appointed provisions for them.* Remember me, O my God, for good; *concluding his history by recommending himself and all he had done to God's gracious acceptance †.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE see here the dangerous consequences of being *unequally yoked with unbelievers*, or those who have no real religion. How dishonourable was it to the servants of God! how uncomfortable to themselves! how injurious to their children? who were likely

* Josephus says that this man's name was Manasseh, that he went to Samaria, and his father in law, Sanballat, by his interest with the Persian prince, got leave to build a temple on mount Gerizim, like that at Jerusalem; that he made his son in law high priest, and many that married strange wives went after him, and others also who had violated the Jewish law, and deserved punishment; so that it became a receptacle for apostate Jews; and this occasioned that enmity between the Jews and Samaritans which continued till Christ's time.

† About the time that Nehemiah was making this reformation, Malachi prophesied; for he reproves the people, and particularly the priests, for the same crime which Nehemiah is here correcting and punishing.

to learn the language of Ashdod, that is, profane and sinful discourse. No advantages in external circumstances will make such a choice or relation in life a wise one, where there are not the apparent marks of true religion.

2. Those who have the interest of religion at heart, will be concerned that God's ministers may have a comfortable maintenance. No wonder the house of God was forsaken, and its services poorly performed, when the provision of the priests was withheld! It was time for the Levites to go to their farms, and pursue any secular employment, when they must starve at Jerusalem. It is the will of Christ that *those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel*. A scandalous maintenance will often make a scandalous minister; and if ministers have any ingenuity and gratitude, the more cheerfully their salaries are paid, the better their work will be done.

3. The profanation of the sabbath is a great and growing evil, and it becomes every wise and good man to labour to redress it. No wonder Nehemiah's righteous soul was grieved, when he saw the sabbath profaned, and made a day of trade and merchandise! It was no wonder that the people of Tyre should be bad; but this is not what the Israel of God, who were just come out of captivity, should have been. We are bound by this law; and those who follow their callings, or, as it is expressed in ver. 17., *sell victuals on the sabbath day*, are, I apprehend, criminal, and offend both against the laws of God and our country. The power of religion will always decline where sabbath sanctification is neglected.

4. Those who desire to promote reformation, should be zealous and resolute, and not be discouraged though but few should join them, and they should meet with much opposition. Nehemiah had great difficulties to encounter; not only the men of Tyre, whose gain would be lost, but the people of Israel, yea, priests and nobles; and yet, having reason, and the law of God on his side, *he set his face like a flint*, and all opposition fell before him. His zeal should enkindle ours, and his success animate our hopes. Vice, if resolutely opposed, is weak; and if we boldly appear on the Lord's side, he will prosper us; at least we shall have the satisfaction of having done our duty, and *our peace will return into our own bosoms*.

5. Deeds done for the house of God, and the offices and ordinances thereof, are good deeds, and such as he will accept and reward. We should contribute cheerfully towards the building of suitable places of worship, to the support of God's ministers,

which are designed to restrain vice, and encourage virtue and piety. We may reflect on these things with pleasure. God records them in the book of his remembrance; and *he is not unrighteous to forget any work or labour of love.*

6. Whatever we do for God and religion, let us remember, that we *are still unprofitable servants.* Nehemiah's humility is as remarkable as his piety and zeal. He pleads no merit; he prays God to remember him, and to *remember him for good; to spare him according to the greatness of his mercy.* Let us likewise keep up the remembrance of our sinful defects, and our need of God's abundant mercy. It is he that inclines us to do good, assists and succeeds us in it. To him, then, let us give the glory; and humbly hope for our reward from the riches of his mercy; always saying with the humble apostle, concerning any thing we do for the service of God, *not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS book contains the narrative of a plot laid against the Jews to destroy them; and the very wonderful appearance of Providence in defeating it. The book was probably written by Mordecai, who bore a principal part in the history which it contains. It is very extraordinary that there is no mention of the name of God in it; considering how remarkably his providence appeared in behalf of the Jews, and how constantly other inspired writers take notice of the divine interposition. It certainly contains an illustrious instance of God's singular care of his church in its greatest difficulties; and how he disposes of all affairs and events, so as to promote his own glory, and the welfare of his church and people; it also furnishes many very useful instructions.

CHAPTER I.

In which we have an account of Ahasuerus's royal feast; his displeasure at the queen for refusing to appear at it; and her punishment.

1 NOW it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this [is] Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, [over] an hundred and seven and twenty provinces*:) 2 [That] in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which [was] in Shushan the palace, *that is, when the peace of the kingdom was restored, and he was settled upon the throne,* 3 In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, [being] before him; *his courtiers and officers of state, and the powers of Persia and Media, or the*

* Learned men are divided in their opinions who this prince was; but it appears plain to me, that he was the same person who is called Artaxerxes in the book of Ezra, and who was such a friend and patron to the Jews.

princes of those countries which were under his military command, were present: 4 When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, [even] an hundred and fourscore days *. 5 And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, *not only to the inhabitants of Shushan, but to many out of other provinces who were collected on this occasion*, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace: *according to the custom of eastern princes, under magnificent pavilions, erected for this purpose;* 6 [Where were] white, green, and blue, [hangings,] fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds [were of] gold and silver, *that is, the couches on which they reclined were studded with gold or silver, or overlaid with plates of this metal, and stood upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble.* 7 And they gave [them] drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king. 8 And the drinking [was] according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure; *none were compelled to drink, every one was left to his own liberty; and if any one drank to excess, it was his own fault.* 9 Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women [in] the royal house which [belonged] to king Ahasuerus †. 10 On the seventh day, *at the conclusion of the feast*, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, 11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty: for she [was] fair to look on; *having drunk too much, the king forgot his own state and that of the queen's; it was extravagant and foolish for him to insist upon her appearance before all this company, especially as it was contrary to the custom of the country.* 12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment

* This was designed as a display of his majesty and wealth, for six months together, the governors and officers taking it in their turns to feast with the king. It was done in Shushan the palace, of the beauty of which many ancient histories speak very highly.

† Agreeably to the custom of the eastern nations, the wives of the princes and great men feasted by themselves. Thus, while the king showed the honour of his majesty, the ladies showed the honour of their modesty, which is the majesty of the sex.

by [his] chamberlains*: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him: *he that had rule over an hundred and twenty-seven provinces, could not rule his own spirit; but he had so much reason left as to call a council.*

13 Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, *who knew what was done in former times, and what was fit to be done on all occasions,* (for so [was] the king's manner towards all that knew law and judgment: 14 And the next unto him [was] Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, [and] Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, *were admitted to his presence on all occasions,* [and] which sat the first in the kingdom;) 15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains? *is there any precedent, that we may proceed according to the usage or law of the kingdom?* 16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes †, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that [are] in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus; *he represents the queen's conduct not only as a high affront to the king, but to the princes, and all the people. It was a bad example, especially if the ladies about her encouraged the refusal.* 17 For [this] deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, *it is impossible it should be concealed,* so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not; *they would take encouragement from this great example to despise their husbands.* 18 [Likewise] shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus [shall there arise] too much contempt and wrath; *contempt in the wives, wrath in the husbands, and great and unhappy contentions in families; therefore,* 19 If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her

* The queen refused to come, probably out of modesty, or imagining that it was only a drunken frolic; but she was undoubtedly to blame. It would have been no reflection on her modesty, as it was done only in obedience to his commands.

† Memucan is mentioned last; he was probably the youngest privy-councillor, and therefore speaks first; as the custom of our judges, that they may not be influenced by the opinion of their seniors.

royal estate unto another that is better than she. *This was artful advice; for had she recovered the king's favour, his freedom might have cost him his life.* 20 And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small, *and not dare to disobey, when they saw that the queen herself was divorced for it**. 21 And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: 22 For he sent letters unto all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, *in the language of the people inhabiting the country, that both men and women might understand it*, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that [it] should be published according to the language of every people. *Thus the king made this law in a heat, and put it out of his power to revoke it, which it appears from the next chapter he would gladly have done.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how much of the vanity of the world appears amidst all its glory. When Ahasuerus was making this great feast, with all his splendour and magnificence, and every heart admiring his grandeur and bounty, the disobedience of his queen tarnished it all: and those who were astonished at his power, majesty, and splendour, would depart and say, What advantage is it to Ahasuerus to rule so many provinces afar off, if he cannot command at home? In vain doth he boast of governing so many thousands, when he is thus checked, repulsed, and disappointed in his own house. What little dependance is to be placed on external grandeur, when such various and sometimes trifling circumstances may spoil and embitter it. A little rudeness, or unkindness in those whose affections we depend upon, may destroy all our comfort, while in the greatest splendour and amidst the highest gratifications of ambition and pleasure.

2. We may observe, that it was a good custom which was practised at Ahasuerus's feast of compelling none to drink more than they liked; and it is a good pattern for us all to imitate.

* It is not unlikely but this privy-councillor had more authority in the royal cabinet than he had at home, and made a state affair of a private difference, in order to procure a royal edict to restore his own lost authority.

Who can but blush when healths are forced at christian banquets, while the civilities of a heathen prince allowed this liberty! Many think they never make enough of their friends unless they tempt them to eat and drink to excess; but this is doing them the greatest unkindness. May we all guard against such cruel kindness; and while we are desirous to be temperate in all things ourselves, let us do nothing to make our friends otherwise.

3. See how unwise it is to form positive determinations while we are under the influence of tumultuous passions. Had the king taken time to cool before he made the decree, he had not experienced the uneasiness which he afterwards felt. When men are merry with wine, the passions get the better of reason, they form rash resolutions, and do what they wish a thousand times never had been done. This should be a caution against intemperance, and a hint to those whose passions are naturally strong, to guard their minds and tongues with double diligence when their hearts are warm within them; and in all affairs of importance to deliberate calmly, and to determine without being too peremptory.

4. Observe how much a little obstinacy and ill-humour may affect the future happiness of life, especially in the married relation. It becomes all persons, more especially husbands and wives, to guard against all differences and quarrels, particularly before company; than which nothing is more scandalous. This unalterable decree of the king of Persia, that *every man should bear rule in his own house*, is likewise an unalterable decree of the King of kings, and a rule of the gospel; and the peace and happiness of families would be very much secured, if the apostle's precept was observed, *Let every man love his wife as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.* Eph. v. 33.

CHAPTER II.

We had an account in the last chapter of queen Vashti's divorce; in this we find Esther chosen to succeed her.

1 **AFTER** these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her; *the king was in a great strait*

between the return of his passion for Vashti, and the remembrance of her undutiful behaviour, and his decree; his servants therefore propose an expedient to divert his thoughts, and to furnish him with a new queen. 2 Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king: 3 And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hegai, *or Hegai*, v. 8., the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given [them:]

4 And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

5 [Now] in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name [was] Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite*; 6 Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah, *or, Jehoiachin*, 2 Kings xxiv. 6., king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. 7 And he brought up Hadassah, that [is] Esther†, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid [was] fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

8 So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also *among the rest* unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. 9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, [which were] meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best [place] of the house of the women; *he gave her proper attendants, and the best apartments in the seraglio.* 10 Esther had not showed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not show [it,] *lest she should be contemned, and looked upon as no better than a slave.* 11 And Mordecai *followed her with great solicitude*, and walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

* This Kish was his great grandfather, who was carried away in the Babylonish captivity.

† Hadassah was her Hebrew name, and Esther her Persian name.

12 Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, [to wit,] six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with [other] things for the purifying of the women;) 13 Then thus came [every] maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house. 14 In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail, the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. 16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which [is] the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign; *the same year in which he granted a commission to Nehemiah to repair the walls of Jerusalem.* 17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. *All the rest were considered as the king's wives, and were not allowed to marry any other, and they and their children were supported by him.* 18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, [even] Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, *either of taxes, or an act of grace for prisoners and debtors, and gave gifts to the new queen,* according to the state of the king. 19 And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, *for a second trial, lest she should be hated for the sake of her nation, or envied for her good fortune,* then Mordecai sat in the king's gate. 20 Esther had not [yet] showed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

21 In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus; *they formed a conspiracy against the king, and*

probably were the creatures of *Vashti*, who was incensed at her divorce. 22 And the thing was known to *Mordecai*, who told [it] unto *Esther* the queen; and *Esther* certified the king [thereof] in *Mordecai*'s name. 23 And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; *the information appeared to be well grounded*; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written, *the circumstances were recorded*, in the book of the chronicles before the king.'

REFLECTIONS.

1. THOSE who have early been left orphans, should reflect on the care of Providence in raising them up guardians and friends. It was happy for *Esther*, when in a strange land, to find so faithful and tender a guardian as her cousin *Mordecai* was. Those who have found, in relations, or friends, persons who acted with the tenderness and kindness of parents, should thankfully own the goodness of God. This should be a motive to all to be the friends of orphans, that they may live to see the good effects of their care and charity. Such works are very benevolent, and pleasing to God, who hath taken it among the titles of his honour, to be *the father of the fatherless*, and hath commauded us *to be merciful, as he is merciful*.

2. Let young people learn from this story, to reverence, love, and regard those, who show a real concern for their welfare. *Esther* paid great regard to *Mordecai*'s advice; even after her advancement she did as he directed her. It is happy for young people when they know who are their friends; and it is the wisdom of youth, (especially those who are fatherless,) to hearken to the advice of kind and faithful friends, to submit to their direction, and retain a grateful sense of their kindness, even when they do not any longer need the continuance of it.

3. The method taken to please and gratify the king, leads us to reflect on the necessity and excellency of the Christian revelation. When so many persons were, in a manner, sacrificed to his pride and lust, and deprived of the comfort which arises from such regular marriages as Christianity recommends, it shows the excellency of that religion, which checks disorderly lusts, reduces marriage to its primitive institution, and has such a tendency to sanctify men throughout, in body, soul, and spirit.

4. An easy, moderate, contented temper in young people, bodes

well as to their future advancement. It is observed that Esther was contented without all that apparatus of perfumes, dress, and ornaments which the other women had; and it was no wonder that this recommended her first to the king's officers, and then to the king himself. Fondness for dress, ornament, and show, is a sign of a light, trifling mind. Those who are most fond of these things generally defeat their own ends, and render themselves contemptible in the eyes of those whom they desire to please and allure. Virtue, modesty, and good-nature, are the truest charms.

“ It is the artless catch the game;
And they scarce miss who never aim.”

5. God can make the disorderly affections and dispositions of the human mind answer his own wise and gracious purpose. We hear nothing yet of Haman and his plot; but God is here taking methods to defeat it, before it was formed. Vashti's rage, the king's inordinate passion, the choice of virgins, the chamberlains' treason, all subserve the divine purposes. It is a comfortable thought that God knows how to over-rule the lusts and passions of men to answer his own purposes, and bring about the happiness of his church and people. In this we may rejoice, that though *there are many devices in the heart of man, the counsel of the Lord that shall stand.*

CHAPTER III.

We have here Haman's advancement by the king; he is despised by Mordecai, and for that reason seeks revenge upon all the Jews.

1 **AFTER** these things, *about five years after his marriage with Esther*, did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite*, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that [were] with him. 2 And all the king's servants, that [were] in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did [him] reverence†. 3 Then the

* Or, the Amalekites; he was descended from the kings of that country, among whom Agag was a common name.

† It is difficult to account for Mordecai's conduct. I should apprehend it was a kind of idolatrous worship that was to be paid to him; because there would have

king's servants, which [were] in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment? *They expostulated with him, to make him sensible of his danger and his duty.* 4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand; *to see whether Mordecai would persist in his refusal, and whether such behaviour would be borne with: for, that it might not appear to be from pride and stiffness, but from a principle of religion that he refused, he had told them that he [was] a Jew.* 5 And when Haman, *who had not observed it till somebody gave him notice of it,* saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath; 6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; *he scorned so poor a revenge as destroying him only; for they had showed him the people of Mordecai, and he determined to destroy the whole nation, whom he knew to be his enemies, and perhaps knew likewise what they had done to the Amalekites formerly:* wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that [were] throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, [even] the people of Mordecai, *even those in Judea, for that was a province of Ahasuerus's kingdom.*

7 In the first month, that [is,] the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that [is,] the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, [to] the twelfth [month,] that [is,] the month Adar*.

8 And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws [are] diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it [is] not for the king's profit to suffer them; *speaking of them with the utmost contempt, as a despicable and proud people, who would live according to their own laws.* Therefore, 9 If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents† of silver to the hands of those that have the

been no need of a new command from the king concerning him, if it were only the usual form of respect to a prime minister. There might also be a personal reason, because Haman was an Amalekite, an accursed nation, which the Jews were commanded to blot out the remembrance of from under heaven. *Deut. xxv. 19. Exodus xvii. 14.*

* This was done to find out a lucky day, making sure of success in his application to the king. It was a very remarkable providence that it fell twelve months after, as Mordecai, Esther, and the other Jews, had time to concert measures to defeat his scheme.

† As their destruction would be a considerable loss to the royal revenue in their tribute, he proposes to give a sum equal to two millions one hundred and nineteen

charge of the business, to bring [it] into the king's treasuries. 10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. 11 And the king said unto Haman, 'The silver [is] given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee. *This was strange conduct in the king. He prudently consulted before he put away Vashti; he made inquisition into the conduct of the conspirators, before he condemned them; here he regarded nothing, but made a general decree, and gave Haman all the spoils for his own use.* 12 Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that [were] over every province, and to the rulers of every *people of every* province, according to the writing thereof, and [to] every people after their language; *it was written in the language and character of every people, that they might understand it; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring.* 13 And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, [even] upon the thirteenth [day] of the twelfth month, which [is] the month Adar, and [to take] the spoil of them for a prey: *it was a great motive to them to take up arms against the Jews, that the king had remitted the money promised; and therefore Haman allows it to those who should destroy them.* 14 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day. 15 The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace; *it was either first published there, or passed before the king's councils.* And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed; *the Jews there were greatly distressed; the inhabitants also were fearful of the consequence of the massacre, and the growing power and pride of the prime minister; and others who were allied to the Jews, or friends to them, were greatly concerned at this bloody edict.*

thousand pounds, if we suppose they were Babylonish talents; but if Jewish talents, twice as much. This he probably intended to raise out of the spoils of the Jews.

REFLECTIONS.

1. A GOOD man will bring religion into the common affairs of life, and carry the ordinary forms of civility no further than is consistent with that. It was not pride or stiffness which influenced Mordecai, but a principle of conscience, for which his memory is worthy of reverence. It suggests a useful hint to us, to make the word of God the standard of politeness and good breeding, at least so far as never to contradict its rules. This will prevent fulsome flattery, and all mean and sinful compliances, the injuring of our health, the wasting of time, or neglecting religious services, to please and humour any persons, be they ever so great and eminent. A wise and good man will never pay any compliment to the injury of his conscience, and to displease Him who is higher than the highest, and whose favour is all in all.

2. We infer how unhappy it is for a nation to be under an arbitrary prince, whose will is his law, and who can do what he pleases with the liberties, lives, and properties of his subjects. Would one think that this was the same man who granted the decree to Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem? but there was no regard to God or religion in either case; that was made to gratify one favourite, this, so contradictory, to gratify another. When a proud, malicious, revengeful man is the favourite of an arbitrary prince, what dreadful mischief may he not do! All these people were to be destroyed, only to gratify his malice; and this easy, weak prince, at once gave way to it. We have every reason to be thankful that we are not under such a government. It is our duty to pray that kings and all in authority may be wise and good, and truly concerned for the happiness of mankind; that their subjects may *lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.*

3. How miserable is that mind which is under the influence of pride and revenge. What a wretched, restless principle is pride! How astonishing, that Haman should ever form such a cruel and diabolical scheme! There is great reason for us all to watch against the rising of pride and revenge, for they may transport persons to commit the most horrid and bloody excesses. Let us endeavour to subdue every such turbulent and wretched disposition, and learn, from the precept and example of Christ, that

humility and readiness to forgive injuries, which will most effectually secure our own comfort; for if we indulge pride and revenge, no one suffers by it so much as ourselves.

4. It is common for the people of God to be slandered, to prepare the way for their destruction. The Jews were represented as a proud and obstinate people; factious in the Persian state, though, for aught that appears, they were peaceable, good subjects, and sought the peace of the country in which they were settled. But it is on these principles that persecutors in all ages have grounded penal laws against conscientious men. It is upon Haman's principles that the many popish conspiracies and massacres have been founded; upon these principles, too, protestant dissenters have been, in former ages, represented as enemies to the church and state, and in consequence of that been fined, imprisoned, banished, and destroyed. Let us thank God for our liberties, and that those who delight to asperse and vilify others can, under our present happy constitution, do nothing more.

5. We are taught to own the determination of Providence in the most casual events. Haman, according to the superstition of the east, would find out a lucky day to destroy the Jews; and God ordered it to be twelve months after the plot was formed, that there might be time to defeat it. The providence of God will appear in the course of the story to be indeed wonderful; and it suggests to us Solomon's observation, that *the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.* Prov. xvi. 33.

6. God for a while may leave his people in the greatest danger, that he may display his power the more remarkably and effectually in their deliverance. It was no wonder that the Jews and all their friends were perplexed, when they were all condemned as sheep to the slaughter, and had no apparent means of escape. When the church is in the greatest distress, God seems sometimes to retire, that when he appears it may be with greater lustre, to the confusion of his enemies and the joy of his friends. This thought should keep up our courage in the darkest prospects, and when our apprehensions are most dismal; for we shall see in the course of this history, as in many other instances, that *God taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and ensnares the wicked in the works of their own hands.*

CHAPTER IV.

We had an account in the former chapter of the king's bloody decree; and in this we are told how the Jews were affected with it.

1 **WHEN** Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry*; 2 And he came even before the king's gate, *that his cries might reach Esther's ears*: for none [might] enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth†. 3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, [there was] great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. 4 So Esther's maids, and her chamberlains came and told [it] her, *as a piece of common news, that Mordecai was in mourning; for she, living retired, did not know what had passed, or the reason of his lamentation, but supposed some calamity had befallen him.* Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him; *she sent him a change of raiment that he might come to court, and take his place as usual*; but he received [it] not. 5 Then called Esther for Hatach, [one] of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it [was,] and why it [was.] 6 So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which [was] before the king's gate. 7 And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, *his refusal to bow to Haman, and what followed thereon*, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them. 8 Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to show [it] unto Esther, and to declare [it] unto her, and to charge her *in the name of God, and as she loved her people*, that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her

* Mordecai was particularly affected with it, because the edict arose from his conscientious scruples.

† This custom is still preserved in the east; none are admitted into the king's palace in mourning, lest they should disturb their pleasures, and put them in mind of sickness and death.

people. 9 And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

10 Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; 11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, *of whatever quality*, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, *without a particular license*, [there is] one law of his to put [him] to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live; but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days; *therefore she had no other means of speaking to him but at the hazard of her life, and she had reason to fear, lest she had lost his affection, and that her petition would not be granted.* 12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words. 13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. 14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, [then] shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for [such] a time as this*? 15 Then Esther bade [them] return Mordecai [this answer,] 16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat or drink three days, night nor day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which [is] not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish; *she at length resolves to comply, and being thus recommended to God, she would go in to the king. If she perished, it would be a satisfaction to perish in so good a cause, and for so worthy an end. This implied a great regard to the God of Israel, a concern to do her duty, and to engage his assistance, and a resolute submission to his divine will.* 17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is a great satisfaction to good men, that the law of God is not like the laws of the Persian court. There was no attending

* He here insists upon her going in to the king; urging that she would share in the general destruction, that even her rank would not exempt her; and with a noble triumph of faith adds, that God would deliver his people some other way. He apprehended, that while the rest escaped, God would take her and her family off for want of zeal for his cause and people; and that she ought rather to think that God had advanced her to be an instrument of their deliverance.

there with mourning, or any kind of sorrow. But God allows, invites, and encourages afflicted souls to come to him. His law runs thus, *Is any man afflicted? let him pray. Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee.* The law of the Persian court was, that no man should come to the king without express leave, on peril of his life: a bad law for themselves and their king too. But the King of heaven bids us always welcome; allows the poorest and the meanest to draw near, to come boldly, with humble confidence, to the inner court, the holy of holies, through the blood of Jesus. Let us be thankful for these privileges, and use them, lifting up holy hands, and cheerfully pour out our complaints to the Lord.

2. God often brings his people into affliction that he may engage them to pray. The Jews were perhaps too ready to forget God while they were in prosperity, and wanted the religious advantages which they had enjoyed in Judea. God brought these dangers on them to rouse their attention, and to promote and quicken their prayers. One end of affliction is to bring us to our knees, to promote humility, and fervency in prayer. *In their affliction they will seek him early.*

3. When we are in deep distress, or have great undertakings, before us, it will be our wisdom to engage the prayers of others. Esther, when thus distressed for herself and her country, and tortured with a mixture of hope and fear, desired the prayers of all the Jews. Those who know what devotion is, what prayer has done, and what it can do, will be desirous of, and thankful for, the prayers of their brethren. But those who desire the prayers of others should not think that enough, they should be careful to pray for themselves. Esther engaged her maidens in this work. 'Here, (as Mr. Henry observes,) is an example of a mistress praying with her maids, worthy the imitation of all good women who are heads of families, or when their husbands are abroad, or will not discharge this important duty; the sin and neglect of one will not excuse the other.'

4. Every one ought to consider why God placed them in such or such circumstances, and employ their interest and advantages for his glory and the good of others; v. 14. We may not know at first what end Providence designs in our relations, and circumstances, and should therefore observe the leadings of it; and whenever opportunity of service offers, should earnestly embrace it, justly supposing it is the intention of God we should do so.

Every truly good man will watch for opportunities of usefulness, and carefully improve them.

5. It may sometimes be our duty to expose ourselves to the greatest dangers for the preservation and happiness of others. It was undoubtedly Esther's duty to enter in unto the king, and save the lives of so many thousands of her nation and of God's people, whatever had been the consequence. Providence may sometimes bring us into such circumstances; we may be called to hazard our comforts and even our lives, for the good of our brethren, and a christian should not shrink back. We ought, says the apostle, *to lay down our lives for the brethren*; and his love should constrain us to it *who gave his life a ransom for many*.

CHAPTER V.

At the close of the last chapter we left the Jews fasting and praying, to engage the favour of heaven; we have here Esther's suit to the king, and the kind reception he gave her.

1 **N**OW it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on [her] royal [apparel], and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house, *where he could see every one who came in*. 2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, [that] she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that [was] in his hand, *as a sign of his favour, and to invite her approach*. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre, *in token of subjection, and thankfulness for his favour**. 3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what [is] thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom †. 4 And Esther answered, If [it seem] good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him, *when she intended to*

* Josephus describes the splendour of her dress, and her appeal to God that it was not out of vanity; but being struck with the majesty of the king, and a fear of his displeasure, she fainted in the arms of her attendants: this touched the king so, that he ran to her and took her in his arms with great tenderness. See also the fifteenth chapter of Esther in the Apocrypha.

† This is a proverbial expression, similar to that of Herod, in *Mark vi. 23.*, as much as to say, I will grant any thing in reason, because thou art so dear to me.

*request some farther favour**. 5 Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman *immediately complied with her request, and* came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

6 And the king said *again* unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What [is] thy petition? and it shall be granted thee : and what [is] thy request? even to the half of the kingdom, it shall be performed. 7 Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request [is ;] 8 If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said†.

9 Then went Haman forth that day, joyful and with a glad heart ; *pleased that he was in such favour with the queen as well as the king* : but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai ; *when Mordecai heard of the queen's favourable acceptance, he put off his sackcloth, and came to his place at the king's gate ; but still refused to bow down to Haman, notwithstanding the bloody edict.* 10 Nevertheless Haman refrained himself *from sudden revenge, put aforce upon himself* ; and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife. 11 And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all [the things] wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. 12 Haman said, Moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself ; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king. 13 Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate ; *to see him continue his place at court, is as odious as if I had lost my all.* 14 Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits, or *twenty-five yards, high, that it may be the more conspicuous,* and to-morrow

* It was prudent in Esther not to open her mind at once, and to try the king how far he stood affected to her ; for if he refused this favour there would be no hope of the other ; she might endear herself to him the more by the entertainment, and she would farther please him by inviting his favourite.

† Perhaps the queen's heart failed her at this time ; or she might hope that at another entertainment the king would be still more affectionate and ready to grant her request ; she might expect that Haman would grow more proud and insolent, and so be more easily ruined ; and the king's mind be prepared by the expectation of some great and important petition. Above all, God might order it thus, that Mordecai's honour might be displayed in the mean time, and the way be open to his advancement, and Haman's ruin. See chap. vi.

Speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon; do not wait till the general destruction of the Jews, but rid thyself of this enemy immediately; you will then have a fair opportunity of soliciting this, and it will be easily granted: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet, which you will enjoy with double pleasure when this your enemy is slain. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made, little thinking that he himself should hang upon it.

REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE the advantage of prayer. Esther and her countrymen fasted and prayed. It gave her courage when she committed her ways to God; and it will embolden us to do any thing for him. He heard and answered her, and inclined the king to be favourable. God magnifies his mercy towards us when we are most humble and diffident. This is a great encouragement to pray. The golden sceptre is always held out; God's chief favourite is our friend and advocate: therefore *let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.*

2. The hearts of kings, even those who act most arbitrarily, are in the hand of the Lord; he can easily direct them to answer his wise purposes, and by his influence on their minds, often outdoes the fears or hopes of his people. Let us then wait on him by whom kings reign, and who does what he pleases among the greatest and most powerful of the children of men.

3. We here see the misery of a proud, envious, ungovernable spirit. Haman had every thing he could desire, riches, honours, a large family, and the king's favour. A small part of this would have satisfied any reasonable, modest man: but all was nothing to him, because only one man denied him the respect and homage he expected. It is of little consequence what such men have, if they have not every thing. The proud and envious will always have something to make them uneasy. May we guard our hearts against such a wretched disposition, or else we shall have no true enjoyment of what we possess, but *have our hearts pierced through with many sorrows.*

4. Here is an affecting instance of the vanity of all earthly grandeur. See how little a thing may spoil the enjoyments of the greatest affluence, dignity and pleasure. We cannot find perfect contentment in these things. Every man, be he ever so rich or

honourable, and have he ever so many external comforts, has some mixture or other to embitter them: it is often seen where men endeavour to conceal it. There is no true satisfaction to be had but in God, and his favour; and he who is truly wise will seek it there only, and there he will surely find it. *His favour is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life. Psalm xxx. 5. lxiii. 3.*

5. It is very unhappy for a man, when his wife and friends are counsellors to do wickedly. Had Haman's wife and friends been religious, or even prudent persons, had they been true friends to him, they would never have given him such advice; instead of encouraging and indulging those malignant passions, they would have endeavoured to moderate and restrain them. But many think it a kind of complaisance to their relations and friends to give them pleasing rather than profitable advice, and encourage those dispositions they should endeavour to correct. It is sad indeed when a man's enemies are of his own household, and his bosom counsellors are counsellors of iniquity. The truest friendship is to endeavour to promote in others quietness, meekness, patience, and a humble spirit, without which they can never be happy. *He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

CHAPTER VI.

We left Haman pleased with the thoughts of destroying his enemy Mordecai; but a wonderful turn of affairs here opens in favour of the Jews.

1 **O**N that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king*. 2 And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus; *it was a remarkable providence that the servants should light upon this place.* 3 And the king said, What honour and dignity

* One would rather have expected that he would have called for music; but his mind was composed, and at leisure for a more profitable entertainment; he called for a journal of the most material occurrences of his reign, in which they were used to insert what services were done for the king, and what rewards and honours were conferred in consequence.

hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him*.
 4 And *when it was morning*, the king said, Who [is] in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. *The king was resolved immediately to show his grateful sense of Mordecai's fidelity, while Haman's malice had brought him early there to seek Mordecai's destruction.* 5 And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in, *he is one of the properest persons to consult with.*

6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? *There is a certain person deserves some special token of my favour, what shall be done to him to raise his character to uncommon glory? The king would not have asked the question, but have ordered such honours as he thought proper, had not Providence intended that Mordecai should have the greatest honour, and Haman the greatest mortification possible.* Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself, *considering in what high favour I stand with the king and queen?*
 7 And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, 8 Let the royal apparel be brought which the king [useth] to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: 9 And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man [withal] whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour†. 10 Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, [and] take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: *how confused and thunderstruck must Haman be at such an order; and the king, perhaps seeing his disorder, is very peremptory in the command; let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.* 11 Then took Haman the apparel and the

* Some think some reward had been ordered, but through the ill-will of Haman, or some other courtiers, he had been deprived of it. Perhaps the account of rewards conferred upon others, led the king to ask what had been done for him.

† Haman considered that he did not want money, nor could he have a greater post, and therefore proposes the highest honour he could conceive. There seems to have been nothing but the sceptre that he did not think it proper to invest himself with; and probably thought it would be an agreeable circumstance to have Mordecai hanged to grace the cavalcade.

horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour. *Haman instantly obeyed the order, and it may be easily conceived what looks passed between them. Mordecai now began to lift up his head, and concluded that he had not fasted and prayed in vain.*

12 And Mordecai came again to the king's gate; *he did not spend the rest of the day in mirth and gaiety, but came to his place at the king's gate: but Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered, with all the tokens of sadness and dejection of spirit.* 13 And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every [thing] that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him*. 14 And while they [were] yet talking with him came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared. *Being thus extremely mortified, and being discouraged by these discourses of his privy counsellors, he was not eager to go; Providence ordered that he should be seized with this panic, and meet with this mortification just before he went to the banquet and Esther fixed her charge upon him; but indeed his cause was so bad, that if he had been in the same good spirits, as in the morning, we could hardly think he could have been capable of making a defence to any purpose.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here shown some further instances of the vanity of the world. Ahasuerus, with all his pomp and grandeur, who commanded one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, could not command one hour's sleep; that is often the happiness of the poor, when it is denied the rich and the mighty. Haman, disappointed in his favourite schemes, shows the vanity of ambition, and the uncertainty of all hopes which depend on the caprices and humours of men.

2. Gratitude for public services and benefits, is always becoming, though not always met with. Mordecai's fidelity and kindness to

* They probably grounded this opinion upon recollecting some remarkable providence in favour of the Jews, and the destruction of those who had sought their ruin, as, in the case of Daniel and the three Jewish youths. Such interpositions led them to conclude that they were more immediately under the care of heaven, and therefore that all their enemies would fall before them.

the king was forgotten, and was not at all likely to save him from destruction. This is too much the case in the courts of princes, where the greatest friends and benefactors often meet with less favour and kindness than flatterers and knaves. It was proper in Ahasuerus to reward Mordecai; better late than never. It is much to be wished that princes may have wisdom to see, and honesty to advance, real merit, and reward faithful services. 'This is a comfort to God's faithful servants, that there is no unjust or partial proceedings in the court of heaven; *He is not unrighteous to forget any works or labours of love.* There is, in allusion to the chronicles of kingdoms, a book of remembrance written by him; and though *when they have done all, they are unprofitable servants, yet they shall not by any means lose their reward.*

3. See how wretchedly the pride of men's hearts deceives them. Observe the vanity of Haman, in ver. 6. *Now Haman thought in his heart, to whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?* he thought much better of himself than he deserved, because the king esteemed him, and courtiers bowed to him: *he thought himself some great one,* and in a state of security. Thus it is through pride that many think themselves wise, and pious too; and because they meet with esteem and respect from others, imagine there is something uncommonly valuable in themselves, and that none are like them. We need to search and try, to watch over our hearts, and not be deceived by our own judgments, or even the judgments of others concerning us; but daily pray that God, *who cannot be deceived,* would *search and try us, and see if there be any evil way in us.*

4. It is an admirable thing for a person to bear honour and advancement humbly: Mordecai was a remarkable instance of this. It was as great a force upon him to march through the city with the state of a king, as upon Haman to conduct him, and be his lackey. Honour is well bestowed on those who know how to bear it meekly, without growing proud and insolent in consequence of it. This is the character of the saints and angels in all their exaltation; they are eminently humble, and amidst all the pomp of heaven, acknowledge themselves *less than nothing, and vanity.*

CHAPTER VII.

Esther sues for her own life, and the lives of her people; and the king causeth Haman to be hanged on his own gallows.

1 **SO** the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. 2 And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What [is] thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, [even] to the half of the kingdom: *the king by thus renewing his desire to know what her request was, gave her greater courage to make it.* 3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request*: 4 For we are sold, I and my people to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish †. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, *as we might some way or other have been redeemed,* although the enemy could not counter-vail the king's damage; *the king would not have gained so much by it, as he would have lost.* 5 Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? *It seemed incredible that any should entertain such a thought as to destroy a whole innocent nation.* 6 And Esther said, the adversary and enemy [is] this wicked Haman ‡. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen; *and well he might be so when he saw his danger, when he found the queen was a Jewess, and the king was enraged.*

7 And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath [went] into the palace garden; *no doubt in strong commotion, arising from love to his queen, from the conduct of Haman, and that he should be so imposed upon as to be engaged in so odious a design:* and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the

* The king no doubt expected some importunate petition for wealth, or honour, or the advancement of some of her friends, and must be much surprised when she only begged for her life, and the deliverance of her people; his rage against her enemies must rise in proportion to her humility.

† Haman offered a great sum for them; if they were guilty, they should have been slain without it; if innocent it was horribly wicked to devote them to destruction, and it was at the price of innocent blood.

‡ Esther found no reason to fear speaking plainly; she, therefore, fixed her charge upon Haman. He used to be called high and mighty, noble, great, and magnificent; but she gave his true character in one word, this wicked Haman.

queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king; *he now became an humble petitioner to Esther, seeing by the king's countenance as he was going out, that he was violently angry.* 8 Then the king returned out of the palace garden, into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther [was;] *he found Haman in the posture of suppliant, fallen at the queen's feet as she reclined on her couch, and probably embracing them.* Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house*? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face, *because they looked upon him as a condemned person, whose sight was offensive to the king.* 9 And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, *who had probably been to fetch Haman, and had seen the gallows, and been told who it was designed for,* said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman; *he was forward to tell the king this, for a person of so haughty a behaviour as Haman was, could not be beloved. This completed his crime, that he intended so shameful a death for a man, to whom the king was so much obliged.* 10 Then the king said, Hang him thereon †. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified; *and in his cooler moments he could not but approve of what he had done.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is common for men to startle at those evils which they may have been the authors of. The king asks, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? but he forgot that he himself passed that decree a little before. He was shocked to think that any man could be so wicked, when he himself had been accessory to it. This is the case of some who lead others into sin by their ill advice or ill example; who corrupt their principles, or countenance their vices; they are accessory to all the mischief they do. This should make us very cautious how we abet or countenance any bad design; how we say

* The king could hardly suppose that Haman had such an intention; but his passion had so blinded him that he put the worst construction upon every thing; and justly did Haman fall under a false pretence, who would have destroyed many thousands by a false accusation.

† In the east, persons are executed as soon as they are condemned.

or do any thing to encourage malignant and revengeful passions in others; for they may produce effects which will fill us with horror when they come to light, and bring an insupportable burden on our conscience.

2. See the justice of God in humbling and destroying a proud and revengeful persecutor. He who expected all men should reverence him, and had contrived the destruction of Mordecai and all the Jews, even he is brought to *sudden destruction in a moment, and utterly consumed with terrors: his evil doings come upon his own head. The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead; into the pit which he digged he is fallen himself, and in the snare which he laid is his own foot taken.* God has often in like manner confounded and destroyed proud oppressors; and the enemies of his church have great reason to say, *the Lord is known by the judgments that he executeth.*

3. If the wrath of an earthly king is so dreadful, what a fearful thing is it to fall into the hands of the living God! The wrath of a king, says Solomon, is as messengers of death. It was so in the present case. The supreme, universal King judges and condemns no man in a passion, for *he cannot be tempted of evil; but when he maketh inquisition for blood, and riseth up to judge the earth, he will execute wrath upon all his enemies: and who can abide the fierceness of his indignation? Who can stand before him when once he is angry?* But we may say in this case, as the apostle says of the punishment which earthly rulers can inflict, *Wilt not thou be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.*

CHAPTER VIII.

In the former chapter we had the execution of Haman; in this we are informed what became of his plot.

1 **O**N that day did the king Alasuerus give the house, or *forfeited estate*, of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he [was] unto her, *and of all his kindness, which was not known before, except by some of her confidants.* 2 And the king

took off his ring which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai, *and thus made him prime minister in Haman's room.* And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman, *made him steward of her estate.* 3 And as the danger was not yet over, Esther spake yet again before the king, *without being called,* and fell down at his feet, and besought him *even* with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. 4 Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king, 5 And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing [seem] right before the king, and I [be] pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which [are] in all the king's provinces: 6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred, *even should I myself be spared?*

7 Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, *who was now come in,* Behold I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews; *they might therefore conclude that he would deny them nothing that was necessary for their preservation.* 8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, *in as particular and strong a manner as you please;* in the king's name, and seal [it] with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse; *giving Mordecai authority to do every thing he could to make the former decree of none effect.* 9 Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that [is,] the month Sivan, *about two months after the former decree passed,* on the three and twentieth [day] thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which [are] from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language. 10 And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed [it] with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, [and] riders on mules, camels, [and] young dromedaries; *in the most expeditious methods possible, that they might have time to prepare for their defence:* 11 Wherein the king granted the

Jews which [were] in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, [both] little ones, and women, and [to take] the spoil of them for a prey *, 12 Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, [namely,] upon the thirteenth [day] of the twelfth month, which [is] the month Adar. 13 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province [was] published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. 14 [So] the posts that rode upon mules [and] camels went out, being hastened, and pressed on by the king's commandment; *orders were sent forth, and a strict charge given from the king, to be as expeditious as possible in conveying and dispersing them.* And the decree was given at Shushan the palace; *it was signed by the king's councillors, as the former edict had been.*

15 And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple, *with the pomp and state of prime minister:* and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad *at his advancement, and at Haman's fall.* 16 The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour: *they had great joy among themselves, and were much respected by all the people.* 17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day; *they entertained themselves and one another upon this joyful occasion; thinking it would discourage many of their enemies, and that they should be able to deal with the rest.* And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them, *being now under the patronage of Esther and Mordecai; and one would hope that some became proselytes out of regard to their God, and in consequence of these wonderful appearances of his providence for his people.*

* The substance of this new edict was, That forasmuch as the Jews had been formerly condemned upon a misrepresentation, they were hereby empowered to rise up in their own defence against all that should assault them in consequence of the former decree. And secret orders were no doubt sent to all the governors of the provinces, to discourage any attempts upon them. This shews the absurdity of this law of the Persians; the king was now forced to allow of a civil war, and permit the Jews and their enemies to take up arms by his authority to combat against it. It is a rule in our constitution, that no law, by any word or sanction, become unrepeatable; though, if I remember right, there is a clause in the act of settlement, which makes it high treason to propose the alteration of the succession in the present royal house. This comes nearest to the law of the Persians.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE here see how suddenly God can change men's circumstances. Haman, so lately in the highest honour, and possessed of the greatest wealth, is hanged, and his estate confiscated; Mordecai is advanced to his honour, and made manager of his fortune. So unstable is worldly grandeur, so uncertain the continuance of poverty and meanness. *The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.* May we labour to secure true riches, which cannot be taken away, and honour that can never be lost.

2. Let us cultivate a tender concern for the happiness of our country and people. Esther expressed her concern to the king in a very moving manner. She did not weep when she petitioned for her own life; but was deeply afflicted by the calamities which threatened her country and people. This is a becoming disposition. It is an unhappy thing when men are so selfish as to forget or overlook the concerns of the public, and not to feel amidst its calamities and dangers.

3. From the care taken to transmit these edicts to every province and people in their own language, we are led to reflect on the absurdity and iniquity of the Romish church, in locking up the scriptures in an unknown tongue. It is the wisdom of all governments to promulgate laws in such a way, that all may know them, and understand their design. Sad indeed is it, when the laws of God are concealed from those for whose benefit they were designed. This shews the iniquity of the Romish church; how censurable it is, and how inconsistent its doctrines and practices are with the rules of the gospel. *He that walketh in darkness will not come to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.*

4. When the righteous are in authority the people rejoice. When upright men, persons who have the real interest of their country at heart are promoted, it gives joy to all who are wise and considerate. *The city of Shushan wns glad.* They knew the character of Mordecai as illustrated by the different character of Haman, and that he would seek the public good. Let us pray that such may be promoted among us; and those may fill public posts who will be zealous and faithful in discharging their duty.

5. The joy of God's people often rises in proportion to their

sorrows. There was great lamentation and distress among the Jews when the first edict was issued; but when the second was known, light and gladness, joy and honour. *They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.* The brightness of harvest is illustrated by the former gloom. Thus the rest and happiness of the future state of God's people, will be greatly enhanced by the sorrows and afflictions they experienced in this distant world.

6. It is happy when the deliverances and prosperity of the church tend to bring others into it. Such an event is more likely to take place at such a time, than when in distress. But it is more desirable that they should be brought from principle to know God and their duty, and walk in the way of his precepts. We should pray that this may be the case among us, that God *would add to us such as shall be saved*; and let us maintain an holy cheerfulness and joy, than which nothing will contribute more to recommend religion, and bring others to think favourably of it and embrace it.

CHAP. IX. and CHAP. X.

An account of the deliverance of the Jews, and the execution done upon their enemies. The Jews were to stand upon their own defence, but not make any attack upon those who were peaceable and quiet. The greatness of Mordecai.

1 **N**OW in the twelfth month, that [is,] the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews, *some of Haman's party, who were so enraged at his fall and the disappointment of their hopes, that they could not help shewing their indignation,* hoped to have power over them, and to have destroyed them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;) 2 The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people; *the opposing party lost much of their courage and influence, since there were such alterations in the king's councils in favour of the Jews.* 3 And all the rulers of

the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king,* helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them; *the prime minister being of their religion was of great advantage to the Jews, and disheartened their enemies.* 4 For Mordecai [was] great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater; *it was soon known who was the favourite at court, and he was renowned not only for his dignity, but for his wisdom and justice.* 5 Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them. 6 And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men; *who probably had been stirred up by Haman's sons to revenge their father's death if they died in the attempt.* 7 And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha, 8 And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha, 9 And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha, 10 The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand. 11 On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.

12 And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now what [is] thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done. 13 Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan, to do to-morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. 14 And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons. 15 For the Jews that [were] in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand. 16 But the other Jews that [were] in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand*, but they laid not their hands on the prey, *lest they should be thought selfish, and that they had slain some on that account. They had a commission to slay women and children,*

* The ancient Jewish writers say that most of these were Amalekites, which is not unlikely, as Haman might have introduced great numbers of them into the provinces, and they would be peculiarly inveterate against the Jews.

chap. viii. 11., *but they were humanely spared, and none were destroyed but those who took up arms against them. This shows what multitudes of the Jews were still left.* 17 On the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. 18 But the Jews that [were] at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth [day] thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth [day] of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. 19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwall'd towns made the fourteenth day of the month Adar [a day of] gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another; *a day of thanksgiving and praise to God, and feasting one another, and sending portions to the poor, that they might share in their joy.*

20 And Mordecai, *in order to perpetuate the remembrance of this,* wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that [were] in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, [both] nigh and far, 21 To establish [this] among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly, 22 As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor. 23 And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them; 24 Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that [is,] the lot to consume them, and to destroy them; 25 But when [Esther] came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. 26 Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and [of that] which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them, 27 The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their [appointed] time every year; 28 And [that] these days [should be] remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; [and] that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews,

nor the memorial of them perish from their seed. 29 Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim. 30 And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, [with] words of peace and truth, 31 To confirm these days of Purim in their times [appointed,] according as Mordecai the Jew, and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for the seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry. 32 And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

CHAP. X. 1 And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and [upon] the isles of the sea. 2 And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? 3 For Mordecai the Jew [was] next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may here observe God's favourable interposition for his people. He gave them success against their enemies, by striking a panic into their opposers; and made way for their comfortable settlement, by removing so many of their enemies. All centre in this grand design, to promote the knowledge and worship of God in the nations where they were scattered; to which these wonderful scenes of providence would no doubt greatly contribute.

2. The practice of the Jews in establishing the feast of Purim, suggests the propriety of keeping anniversary days in commemoration of great and wonderful deliverances. Whether any prophet encouraged them in it, is not easy to say; some might be yet living, as Malachi; but the order was commendable. Many have argued from hence the right of our national establishment to appoint holy days, or days to be kept sacred in remembrance of some circumstances in our Lord's history, such as his birth, death, resurrection, ascension, &c. But it should be remembered that this was only a human institution, a commemoration of a national

deliverance, like the fifth of November with us. The Jews never instituted days for the remembrance of those blessings, for the commemoration of which particular days were set apart, by God himself. The Lord's day is the only holy day of divine institution; and no man has a right to institute any other. However, as they may be kept to some good purpose, we should not censure those who choose to keep them. It is to be wished that they may be kept with piety, holy joy, and liberality to the poor.

3. The character of Mordecai, as here related, is very honourable; and it would be well if all ministers of state were like him. Notwithstanding his exaltation, he kept to his principles and practices as a Jew; he was not solicitous about aggrandizing his own family, but promoted the public good; he was celebrated through the provinces for his wisdom and justice; he was especially kind to the Jews; not only as his people, but as the people of God; *speaking peace to them*, in an humble, condescending manner. Let us be thankful that we live under a government where the wealth and peace of the people are sought, and no tribute laid but by our representatives. We have rest from our enemies, and have no bloody edicts against us. May God long continue our public mercies, and enable us to *lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.* Amen.

THE BOOK OF

JOB.

INTRODUCTION.

WE are now entering on those books which are called poetical ; because they were written for the most part in verse or metre. The first is that of Job. It was no doubt given by inspiration, as it is quoted by St. Paul, with this mark of authenticity,—it is written. It is also referred to by St. James ; and was always reckoned by the Jews as a part of their sacred canon. I make no doubt that there was such a person as Job. He was probably descended from Nahor, Abraham's brother ; and is expressly mentioned by Ezekiel and St. James. Neither do I doubt that the historical part of the book, contained in the two first and the last chapters, in general, is true ; the rest is poetical. There might be some interviews and arguments between Job and his friends, which may have furnished the poet with materials to enlarge upon.

There have been great debates among learned men, when this book was written, and by whom. Most have supposed that it was written by Moses, which they have principally grounded on the long life of Job, as in and after Moses' time men's days were shortened. But Job might live at or before the time of Moses ; and the general knowledge of his history might be retained, and this poem written, many ages after. I am inclined to think it was written by the prophet Ezekiel, who might here represent himself as moderator, and call himself Elihu, who by several expressions, particularly in chapter xxxii. 15, 16, 17, seems to intimate that he was the author of it. Elihu is called the Buzite, and Ezekiel, it is said, was the son of Buzi. Ezekiel is also the first writer who mentions Job. The poem was finished and in great request in the time of the captivity, and the subject was extremely proper, in allusion to which it was called Job's captivity. What confirms me in this opinion is, that there are many words in this book which were used by none of the sacred writers till about the time of the captivity. There are also many Syriac and Chaldee words, which are never found in the more ancient sacred writers. Particular mention is likewise made of several constellations in the heavens in chapter xxxviii., which were not known to the Israelites, by such names, till their acquaintance with

the Chaldeans, and are not mentioned in Scripture but by some of the later prophets, particularly Amos. I shall not enlarge upon the different opinions concerning the language in which it was written. The copy which we are in possession of, seems evidently to be a translation from some other language.

As to the book itself, it is undoubtedly a piece of dramatic poetry. An ingenious writer has observed, "that the several answers to Job's pleas make three distinct acts, Elihu's reply a fourth, the Deity concluding in the fifth; the historical parts at the beginning and the end are a kind of prologue and epilogue," which, like those of the ancients, are plain narrations, illustrating the poetical parts. The regularity of its composition is another considerable proof of its being written so late as I have fixed it.

There are differences likewise about the design of the book. Bishop Warburton supposes it to be an allegory, written by Ezra, to prepare the Jews for that unequal providence under which they were to come after the captivity. He supposes that Job signifies the Jews; his friends and neighbours, the Samaritans, and other enemies of the Jews; his wife, their strange wives, &c. Others (especially Dr. Worthington, in his Dissertation on the Book of Job,) think it was designed to represent man in his original, his fallen, and his restored, state. I prefer the former opinion; that it was written by Ezekiel, to comfort and encourage the people during their captivity, to teach them to bear their afflictions with patience, to guard against intemperate sallies of passion, and any hard conclusions against themselves, because they were afflicted; to warn men not rashly to pronounce on the divine judgments, and to assure the Israelites of the happy issue of their captivity.

I shall only observe further, that the book is extremely difficult and obscure. No one of the sacred books has suffered more by time than this; and as it seems to be a translation from some other language, the original of which we have not, this increases the difficulty.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter we have Job's character and prosperity; the permission given to Satan to afflict him; an account of his sufferings; and his behaviour under them.

THERE was a man in the land of Uz, *in the northern part of Arabia, east of Canaan*, whose name [was] Job; and that man was perfect and upright, *he was sincere and without guile, both*

towards God and man, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil; he avoided all evil, and the fear of God was the principal thing that led him to it. 2 And his piety was remarkably rewarded by a large family, there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. 3 His substance also, his great wealth, (which in those early days chiefly consisted in cattle,) was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household of servants to manage his business; it appears also that he was in very great authority as a magistrate; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. 4 And his sons went and feasted [in their] houses, every one his day: and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them; there was great friendship and affection among his sons: and they feasted with each other on their several birth-days, and invited their three sisters to the entertainment. 5 And it was so, when the days of [their] feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, called them together to attend religious services and sacrifices, and to come prepared for such solemnities, and he rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings [according] to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, have done or spoken something unbecoming religion, and cursed God in their hearts*. Thus did Job continually.

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them†. 7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it, with restless malice to do mischief. 8 And the LORD said unto Satan, to humble his pride, and anticipate his accusation, Hast thou considered my servant Job, and set thy malignant heart upon him to hurt him? Dost thou not know that [there is] none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? 9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? is he not mercenary in his religion? hast thou not abundantly rewarded him for all his seeming piety? 10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his

* The original here means, bade farewell to God, or renounced him in their hearts.

† This story is parabolical. It is designed to represent God's universal providence, and that control which he has over all good and evil spirits, and all events. By the sons of God are meant the angels, who came to give account of their respective charges, and receive new commissions.

house, and about all that he hath on every side? so that I could not hurt him, though I have attempted to do it; thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. 11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, destroy his substance, and he will curse thee to thy face, openly blaspheme thy name and deny thy providence; (the phrase is much stronger here than in ver. 5.) 12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath [is] in thy power; I give thee leave to try and afflict him; only upon himself, his own person, put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD, to execute his malicious design.

13 And there was a day when his sons and his daughters [were] eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them: 15 And the Sabeans, a number of Arabian robbers, fell [upon them,] and took them away; there was no fault in the servants, they were diligent and faithful; yea, they have slain the servants who resolutely defended them, with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 16 While he [was] yet speaking, and Job was reflecting on the inhumanity and wickedness of those people, there came also another, and said, The fire of God, that is, lightning, is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 17 While he [was] yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and so compassed them on every side, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 18 While he [was] yet speaking, there came also another, the most doleful messenger of all, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters [were] eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, a whirlwind from the south, (Zech. ix. 14.), and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. It was indeed a heavy stroke to lose his children; all of them, when he most needed their assistance; and when they were feasting too, which he knew was a dangerous time. 20 Then Job, with great composure and piety, arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, the usual marks of mourning, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, reverently adored the divine majesty, and submitted to his will,

notwithstanding those dark dispensations ; 21 And he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, destitute of all things, and naked shall I return thither, to the earth, the common womb or receptacle of the dead. Overlooking second causes, he acknowledges that the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the LORD ; I own his goodness, as well as his justice, and bless him in taking away, as well as in giving. 22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly ; he behaved much better than Satan imagined he would. But this remark, and the repetition of it, in chap. ii. 10., warn us to expect a very different behaviour in the poem.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE observe that the general character of Job is truly amiable ; he was sincere in all his professions of religion, upright in all his transactions with God and man ; he dreaded and avoided every evil thing, *even the appearance of evil*. The fear of God was the principle from which his religion and obedience flowed. Let us emulate this character. He that would be happy, must be upright ; must *depart from evil, and do good*.

2. Pious parents are much concerned for the spiritual welfare of their children. It was a pleasure to Job that his children were grown up, were in easy circumstances, loving one another, and feasting together. But it was a dangerous time ; therefore he watched over them, prayed for them, and undoubtedly, added solemn warnings and admonitions. Let christian parents act thus, follow their children with tender concern, especially at seasons and in circumstances peculiarly dangerous to religion ; pray with them and for them ; exhort them, and watch over them daily. Then they will be likely to have comfort in them while they live, and submit to God's will, and rejoice in their happiness, when they die.

3. This parable suggests to us some encouraging and instructive views of God's providence. Angels are his willing servants, receive orders from him, and make reports of their expeditions. Satan is his slave ; he can do no more than what God permits. Encouraging thought ! that *God does what he pleases among the armies of heaven*, and the hosts of hell ; restrains the malice of the devil, when he sees it best ; and employs his angels for the good of all his servants and people.

4. God's care of and regard to good men is very great. *He made an hedge about Job*; an hedge of providence about his natural life and substance, an hedge of divine grace about his spiritual life; he was *kept by his mighty power*. He speaks of him with approbation and honour. *Hast thou considered my servant Job*, how dear he is to me, how precious in my sight, above all princes and potentates on earth? 'To be good, is the way to be honourable in God's sight, and to secure his favour, which is life.

5. The best of men may be charged with being hypocrites and mercenary people. Satan could not charge Job with doing evil; therefore he charges him with mean and selfish ends in doing good and serving God. Satan insinuates such temptations to the minds of God's people, and often gives them much distress this way. The wicked often charge this on the good, and God afflicts them, to show that their religion was sincere; and by their patience and steadfastness in afflictions, they know themselves, and the world knows, that they were upright. If we enjoy this satisfaction, the censure of wicked men is not worth regarding; *the testimony of a good conscience*, that we serve God in simplicity, is a balance against all their insinuations.

6. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job; be ye also patient, brethren*. This is St. James's reflection; and a natural and important one it is. Afflictions, yea, heavy afflictions, may come upon the best of men, one upon the heels of another. See here how we should behave under them. Let our hearts be humble under humbling providences; endeavour, like Job, to compose our minds by proper considerations; own the hand of God in giving and taking away our possessions and children. Let no affliction unfit us for, or hinder us from, prayer. Job worshipped God. *Is any afflicted? Let him pray*. Such have peculiar need and peculiar encouragement to do it. We should learn, like him, to keep our tempers calm and unruffled; to keep up good thoughts of God, and communion with him: this will be to our honour in his account. Thus all afflictions will work together for good; and *those light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work out for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory*.

CHAPTER II.

In which Job being further afflicted in his person, his wife tempts him ; and his three friends visit him.

1 **AGAIN** there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD, *desirous to get his commission against Job enlarged.* 2 And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it, *to find opportunity to exercise my power.* 3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job? *upon trial, art thou not convinced that [there is] none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause; notwithstanding his sore trials, he continues still as dutiful to me, and as fearful of sin as ever.* 4 And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, *that is, one skin of his cattle after another, (in which a great deal of their wealth consisted)* yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life; *he will submit to any loss or evil to save his life; Job is not yet touched in the tenderest part; while in health, he is still easy and happy.* 5 But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, *afflict him severely in his body, and he will curse thee to thy face; he will renounce his allegiance to thee, and deny thy providence.* 6 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he [is] in thine hand; but, *or only, save his life.*

7 So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils, *or fiery blisters, from the sole of his foot unto his crown, all over him.* 8 And he took him a potsherd, *or broken pitcher, to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes, as an expression of his sorrow and humiliation*.* 9 Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? *As if she had said, thy religion is certainly vain; what folly is it to persist in God's service, when thou wilt get nothing by*

* We meet with a similar instance to this in Homer; and the custom is still retained among the eastern nations.

*it, but thus miserably perish? curse God, and die; bid farewell to him, though thou die for it**. 10 But he, instead of repining against God, gave her a very severe and just rebuke, and said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh, like one of no religion, like an infidel, or an idolater. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? not take afflictions patiently, yea, thankfully, considering all that prosperity we have so long enjoyed together? In all this did not Job sin with his lips, but spake like a wise and good man.

11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite†: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him, notwithstanding the poverty to which he was reduced. 12 And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not till they were told who he was, (so much was he transformed by his sorrows) they lifted up their voice, and wept, cried aloud for astonishment and grief; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven; sprinkled dust towards heaven, which fell upon their heads; an usual token of mourning and sympathy with the afflicted. 13 So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, till his grief was a little assuaged, and none spake a word unto him, by way of argument or dispute: for they saw that [his] grief was very great; this shewed their affecting sense of his afflictions.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us reflect on the malice of Satan. What attempts he makes to destroy the comfort and peace of God's people; how desirous he is to have a further commission. What methods did he use to torment this holy man! he leaves him indeed his tongue, in hope that he would blaspheme God with it. Though this story is a parable, yet we have the greatest reason to believe that Satan is restless and busy to tempt and hurt us. St. Peter intimates this, and grounds upon it that important advice, *Be sober,*

* This perhaps was his greatest affliction; his wife, who should have been a comfort to him, being exasperated at her own share in this calamity, behaved in such a waspish and furious manner, that Chrysostom, one of the fathers, very complaisantly supposes, that it was impossible any woman could behave so, and that it was the devil himself in the shape of Job's wife.

† These were persons of note in neighbouring provinces, and descendants of Abraham from Tamah and Shuah, who were his grandchildren.

be vigilant, because your adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

2. The principle of self-preservation is very strong in the human mind; and those evils which afflict our persons are most grievous and intolerable. This needs not be enlarged upon, only observe, that when visited with pain and sickness, we have great need, with peculiar care and earnestness, to *watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation.*

3. How unhappy is their case whose nearest relations aggravate their afflictions, and are their counsellors to do evil. Job's ter-magant wife used him very unkindly; and not only so, but she advised him to renounce his religion. It is too common for husbands and wives to charge the calamities of the family upon one another. None are greater objects of pity than they who are thus unequally yoked. Satan's policy is to tempt us by those who are dearest to us; but let us all be upon our guard, and never be led by the persuasions and entreaties, much less the violence and passions, of our nearest relations, to do or say that which is evil, or give up any branch of religion. If those who are dearest to us speak wickedly, or attempt to weaken our regard to religion, let us faithfully reprove them, as Job did his wife, and not suffer sin upon them.

4. A sense of the divine goodness in the many mercies we have enjoyed, and do enjoy, should make us patient and contented under affliction. It was a noble sentiment and a just expostulation of Job; *What! shall we receive so much good from the hand of God; good that we never deserved, and have often forfeited; and shall we not receive evil? evil that bears so small a proportion to our mercies, and is so much less than our iniquities deserve? It is very ungrateful and base to forget the goodness and mercy we have enjoyed, and murmur under afflictions. Let us be willing to receive evil as well as good; since both come from the hand of a Being of perfect justice, power, wisdom, and goodness, who intends all for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.*

5. To visit and comfort the afflicted is a necessary part of friendship and religion. Job's friends came to mourn with him, and to comfort him; this was particularly commendable, because he needed their assistance, and was poor, and could not reward it. They made an appointment to come, which showed great respect. It was peculiarly agreeable, because the rest of his friends forsook him; and he met with ill treatment from others. Let us cultivate a tender, compassionate spirit; esteem it *better to go to the house*

of mourning than to the house of feasting ; and weep with those that weep. Thus only can we be esteemed true friends. Nay, without this tenderness and sympathy, we are strangers to that pure and undefiled religion, of which James speaks, and which consists in visiting the afflicted, the widow, and the fatherless : but by imitating this example, we serve our friends, we satisfy conscience, and we please our great Master, who will make this a part of his commendation of the righteous in the great day, *I was sick, and ye visited me.*

CHAPTER III.

We are now entering on the poetical part of this book. It is to be remembered that these words were not actually spoken by Job and his friends ; he uttered some mournful complaints, and his friends argued with him on the topics here insisted upon ; but they are dressed up in poetical language, which is sometimes difficult to be explained ; the anguish of Job's spirit increased to such a degree, that in this chapter he breaks out into passionate complaints.

1 **AFTER** this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day, *his birth-day.* *It had used to be a day of joy, but now he wished he had never been born.* 2 And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night [in which] it was said, There is a man child conceived ; *he wishes it might be forgotten, as if it never had been.* Let that day be darkness, *a thick horrible darkness ;* let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. 5 Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it, *claim it as their own,* let a cloud dwell upon it ; let the blackness of the day terrify it, *render it terrible to men.* 6 [As for] that night, let darkness seize upon it ; *an extraordinary darkness, without the least glimmering of light :* let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months ; *let it be blotted out of the calendar.* 7 Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein ; *let none ever meet to feast or make merry in it.* 8 Let them curse it that curse the day, *those whose business it is to say the most pathetic things against an unfortunate day,* let them dart out all their arrows against that day ; who are ready to raise up their mourning, *that is, who raise up against a man the most terrible evils, which like that destructive*

animal leviathan, or the crocodile, as in the margin, are ready to swallow him up. 9 Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark ; let it look for light, but [have] none ; neither let it see the dawning of the day ; *let not one star appear, nor the smallest gleam of light :* 10 Because it shut not up the doors of my [mother's] womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes ; *because it did not keep me from feeling this bitter sorrow.* 11 Why died I not from the womb ? *why was I not buried in the womb ? or [why] did I [not] give up the ghost when I came out of the belly ?* 12 Why did the knees prevent me ? or why the breasts that I should suck ? *Why was any care taken, or sustenance given, to support a life that would be so miserable ?* 13 For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept ; then had I been at rest, *and felt none of these miseries ;* 14 With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves ; *I should have been buried among noble and princely ancestors ;* 15 Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver ; *who had chains and crowns buried with them, and who lay in pomp and quiet :* 16 Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been ; as infants [which] never saw light ; *as a still-born child, not numbered among men.* 17 There the wicked cease [from] troubling ; and there the weary be at rest : *in the grave cruel oppressors cannot trouble, nor the oppressed be troubled.* 18 [There] the prisoners rest together ; *the captive and slave have rest there, though they had none on earth ;* they hear not the voice of the oppressor, *to check and threaten and torment them.* 19 The small and great are there ; and the servant [is] free from his master ; *there all distinctions cease.* 20 Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter [in] soul ; 21 Which long for death *exceedingly, but it [cometh] not ;* and dig for it more than for hid treasures ; *who would be glad to dig their own graves, and be better pleased to find a grave than to find a mine of gold ;* 22 Which rejoice exceedingly, [and] are glad, when they can find the grave ; *and as it were dance in their own funeral procession ?* 23 [Why is light given] to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in ? *who knows not which way to turn himself, and finds no comfort but in the grave ?* 24 For my sighing cometh before I eat, *before my meat ; I dread to take that which will support such a wretched life ; or it brings to mind the happy hours when my children were fasting around me ;* and then my roarings are poured out like the waters, *in the greatest abundance.* 25 For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me ; *I was always afraid*

of a change in my circumstances, and of being censured as an hypocrite, and, lo, it is come to pass. 26 I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came; in my greatest prosperity I did not live secure, as wicked men do, nor promise myself the continuance of it, but rather was in continual expectation of trouble.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE absurdity and folly of a fretful, complaining temper, is beautifully exposed in this chapter, by the words which the poet puts into Job's mouth. Those wishes, strictly speaking, were senseless. Yet something like this is too often the language of many who, when they meet with trouble, are perpetually complaining and wishing those things had never been which are, and that things were which never will be. All this arises from ignorance, pride, and impatience; it is quarrelling with the supreme Governor of the world, dishonouring human nature, teasing themselves, and making their own wounds wider and deeper. Yea, many utter such complaints under afflictions which they have brought on themselves, and wish eagerly for death, when they above all others would be shocked at its approach, and most willing to have it delayed.

2. We may reflect on the providence of God in the helpless state in which children are born; and the care of them which he has put into the hearts of parents. Did not the knees prevent them from falling, and the breasts give them suck, how soon would the spark of life be quenched? Human creatures are brought forth and continue long in helpless circumstances, to strengthen their parents' affections to them, by the services they are obliged to do them, to give them an opportunity of forming their minds as reason opens, and to promote the gratitude and duty of children. The care of providence in preserving us through the helpless state of infancy should be thankfully acknowledged; and next to God, gratitude is due to our parents, whom we ought with all tenderness and affection to requite.

3. The thoughts of a perfect repose in the grave, is some comfort to those in affliction. There the body rests, free from pain, sickness, and sorrow, from hardships and sufferings, from

* Some understand it, that he could not recollect and settle his spirits after one calamity, but was terrified with the report of another; he had not time to pause and consider, before a new shock came. This is mentioned as an aggravation of his distress, and the reason of his complaints.

oppression and persecution. And the thought will indeed be comfortable, if we take care to secure the happiness of the soul, that it may *enter into peace*, and enjoy *the rest that remaineth for the people of God*.

4. The ceasing of all distinction in the grave, shows us how unbecoming pride and arrogance are. Do the rich and the poor meet there? do the small and the great, the servant and the master, lie down and rest together without distinction? How unbecoming then are those haughty airs, and that tyrannical treatment, which the rich and the great, which princes and nobles and masters too often manifest to their subjects, servants or children, yea, to all the poor! Were men but to consider their common end, those who have power would be humble, moderate, kind, and benevolent; and those who are in subjection would be patient and content; especially when we take in the thoughts of another world, where God shall judge and treat men according to their real characters, and not their rank, distinction, or circumstances here on earth; for *he will judge every man according to his works*.

5. Let us learn from the whole, to guard our tongues and hearts, especially in seasons of affliction. This poetical description of Job's complaints intimates to us, how prone even good and upright men are to be impatient, to vent unbecoming complaints, and to talk in an irrational, foolish manner. We have need to keep our mouth as with a bridle, to keep our hearts with all diligence, that we speak not unadvisedly with our lips, or suffer our hearts to repine. Though we are now in safety, have rest and quiet, troubles may come. Let us labour in patience to possess our souls, and make the best of a troublesome life. Be it ever so afflictive, we have opportunity of glorifying God, and of advancing in religion, of promoting and adorning it, and preparing for a better life. Else we shall have reason hereafter to take up these complaints, and utter them with great and everlasting anguish: for *better would it have been for men that they had never been born, or died as soon as born, than lived irreligiously, and treasured up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath*.

CHAPTER IV.

In this chapter the dialogue begins between Job and his friends. They argue, that if Job had been an upright man, he would not have been so heavily afflicted: this he denies; and the debate is carried on between them till Elihu moderates it, and God is introduced in all his majesty to determine the cause. All the remarks that have been made by commentators concerning the manner in which Job's friends treated him, and his behaviour towards them, have no foundation, since it is evident the whole is dramatic and poetical, and the author put into their mouths what he thought most likely to illustrate his argument, to impress the reader, and answer the end for which he wrote the book. This thought should be continually borne in mind.

1 **THEN** Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, 2 [If] we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking? *intending an apology for speaking what he feared would be disagreeable; but he expresses a greater regard for truth and usefulness, than for what would please.* 3 Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. 4 Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. *He gives just commendation of Job's friendly attempts to support and counsel others, to uphold the weak and feeble knees which sunk and trembled under their burdens.* 5 But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled; *thou dost not practise thy own lesson; thus insinuating a reflection on Job's character.* 6 [Is] not [this] thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways? *is not this a time to exercise thy piety, patience, and hope*?* 7 Remember, I pray thee, who [ever] perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? *consult thy own observation, and give one instance in which a person was thus afflicted who was not guilty of some heinous crime?* 8 Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same; *many wicked men cut off, and reaping the due reward of their iniquity.* 9 By the blast of God they perish, *by some terrible storm which God raised up against them,*

* Should not thy piety be thy confidence, and the uprightness of thy ways thy hope?—SCOTT.

and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed, *by his anger, or by some secret judgment.* 10 The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken; *not only such wicked men as are weak, but the strongest, stoutest, and fiercest, with all their dependants, are destroyed by God.* 11 The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad*. 12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof; *some precious instruction concerning the will and word of God.* 13 In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, *it happened in the night, when all was silent, and my thoughts were composed; then* 14 Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake, *I was seized with violent dread.* 15 Then a spirit † passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: 16 It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image [was] before mine eyes, [there was] silence, and I heard a voice, [saying ‡,] 17 Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man, *the greatest and most accomplished man, as the word signifies,* be more pure than his Maker? 18 Behold, he put no trust in his servants, *no such trust as if they were absolutely perfect and infallible;* and his angels he charged with folly, *or vanity, who, though good in themselves, and free from sin, yet being liable to err, may be said to be charged with folly when compared with unerring wisdom.* 19 How much less doth he put any such trust [in] them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation [is] in the dust, [which] are crushed before the moth? *poor, weak, frail creatures, who are more easily crushed than a moth, that feeble and contemptible insect.* 20 They are destroyed from morning to evening; *continually dying and passing away:* they perish for ever without any regarding [it;] *they never return to the world again, and this is so common that it is scarcely attended to.* 21 Doth not their excellency [which is] in them go

* Tyrants and oppressors are here described by lions; and five different words are used for lions, some say, to express the fury and cruelty of oppressors. He intimates not only that they should be destroyed, but their descendants should be reduced to low circumstances, and wander about destitute, seeking food and finding none. He illustrates and confirms this, by an account of a remarkable vision he had seen. There has been much trifling among commentators about the time when Eliphaz saw the vision, the nature of the apparition, the manner, the scenery, and design of it. But it seems to be a beautiful effort of the poet's imagination, and contains a plain reference to the manner in which God often revealed himself to his ancient people in visions and dreams.

† The original here signifies a wind, like that which used to precede the appearance of the Shekinah, or visible manifestations of God to his prophets.

‡ Some would render it, *I saw no image, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying.*

away? they die, even without wisdom; *whatever was excellent in them dies with them; they moulder to the dust, like the brutes that have no understanding.* The design of all this was to rebuke Job's complaints and discontent, to show what incompetent judges weak, frail men are of the proceedings of the infinitely wise, pure, and holy God; and in this view it is very much to the purpose.

REFLECTIONS.

1. JOB's benevolent and friendly conduct in prosperity, is worthy of our imitation. Though he was honourable and rich, a man full of business, who had great and numerous affairs to manage, yet he was disposed and found time to go among his neighbours, to talk with them about their souls, and visit, direct, and comfort them under their afflictions. Thus should we do; instruct the ignorant, reprove the impatient and discontented, *lift up the hands that hang down, strengthen the feeble knees, and say unto them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong.* This is a duty we owe to God and our fellow christians, and is an essential part of pure and undefiled religion.

2. It is easier to give good instructions than to take them. Job did not practise his own lessons so well as he should; and this is too common a case. Those who are ministers are conscious of their weakness, and how difficult it is to behave as they exhort others to do. This should be a motive to them and to christian parents, and to all, who by their office or relations are instructors of others, to be peculiarly watchful over their own conduct, lest they give occasion for that reproof, *thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?* Ministers desire the prayers of their people that their example may teach as well as their doctrine, and that they may be abundantly comforted of God under their afflictions, that they may be able to comfort others with the like consolations.

3. We are taught that the connexion between sin and misery is inseparable, *v. 8., Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.* This is an awful truth. It does not always appear in this world, though it would generally do so, if we could see men's hearts, and know what they feel in their conscience. But it is undoubtedly true, if we take in the whole of men's existence. Good men, though ever so much afflicted, shall be finally happy; and the wicked shall reap the fruit of their

doings. This is the language of the New Testament, and let us attend to it. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for what a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

4. The majesty of God, and the meanness of man, are both very great, but never appear more so than when compared together, as they beautifully are in the passages we have been considering. God employs many servants, to display his glory and widely to diffuse happiness; but puts no absolute trust in them. The greatest, brightest, holiest angels are chargeable with possible and comparative folly; and all sink infinitely beneath his glory. *What is man, when compared with Him!* a weak, frail, dying creature. And shall a creature so far below the angels, so infinitely below the Almighty, pretend to quarrel with his providence, to arraign his proceedings, censure his conduct, and act so, as if he was more just and pure than God? What shameful arrogance! what abominable impiety! Let the thoughts of God's immense greatness and glory, his perfect justice, and unspotted purity, check every murmuring, repining thought; and bow all our souls in humble submission to his will. We need no vision to teach us so plain a lesson; our own infirmities, and the death of our neighbours from morning to evening, speak it loudly; and if we do not attend to and learn this lesson, all our excellency will vanish; we shall die without wisdom, and shall be finally miserable, without hope and without end.

CHAPTER V.

In which Eliphaz proceeds with the same argument, that afflictions, such as Job's, are a proof of hypocrisy; he therefore advises him to repent, and return to God; and assures him of returning prosperity, greater and more secure than his former was.

1 **CALL** now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn? *examine the opinions of others, the holy beings, or angels, who have seen the revolutions of ages, and all the saints on earth, let them all produce an instance of a godly man punished as thou art.* 2 For wrath, *the wrath of God,* killeth the foolish man, and envy, *or indignation,* slayeth the silly one. 3 I have seen the foolish taking root *and flourishing:* but suddenly I cursed his habitation; *I judged him unhappy, saw a curse*

hanging over all that belonged to him, and this will be thy portion. 4 His children are far from safety, *they are exposed to great dangers and calamities, and they are crushed in the gate, by the hand of public justice, neither [is there] any to deliver [them.]* 5 Whose harvest, *though fenced about ever so strongly, the hungry, whom she had oppressed, breaks through the fence, and eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorus, and the robber swalloweth up their substance, any part that might remain. He has a reference to Job in all these remarks, and reflects severely upon his supposed character.* 6 Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, *by chance, or only from second causes, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;* 7 Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward; *it is as natural for him to fall into it as the sparks to mount, and his afflictions are as numerous as they; naturally arising from his circumstances and condition on earth, and his connexions with others; therefore it is unbecoming to murmur and repine.* 8 I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause; *were I in your case, I would seek relief from him, I would refer myself to his providence;* 9 Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number; *he is, therefore, able to help those that seek him, and punish those who rebel against him:* 10 Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields; *he is good to all his creatures:* 11 To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety; *he can exalt the poor to wealth, and place the oppressed in security.* 12 He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform [their] enterprise; *cannot raise themselves to power, or execute their designs.* 13 He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong; *he makes artful and insinuating men miscarry in their most sanguine expectations, and hasten their own ruin.* 14 They meet with darkness in the day time, and grope in the noon day as in the night; *they are confounded in the plainest things, and see not their danger though others do.* 15 But he saveth the poor, *him that humbles himself and seeks to God, from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty; from open violence, and the deceitful mouth of flattery and calumny.* 16 So the poor hath hope, *he need not despair, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth; proud oppressors should not boast themselves, because they shall be soon mortified and confounded; therefore on all occasions God is a fit object of thine addresses and confidence.* 17 Behold, happy [is] the man whom God correcteth, *so as to convince and*

humble, as the word signifies: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty; count it not a terrible evil, or useless and unprofitable; but esteem it a privilege, a means of happiness and improve it accordingly: 18 For he maketh sore and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole, like a tender and skilful surgeon. 19 He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee; if thou wilt take this course amidst all the troubles that surround thee, he will be at hand to help and deliver thee. 20 In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword. 21 Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, from slander: neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh; of ruin by calumny or false accusations. 22 At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh; amidst these thou shalt be composed, courageous and cheerful; neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth, wild beasts, or serpents, as some understand it. 23 For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field, safe from any mischief by them: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee; own thy dominion, and peaceably submit to and serve thee. 24 And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle [shall be] in peace, free from the invasion of robbers, and other calamities, and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin; search thy habitation, and find thy affairs prosperous and thy expectations answered; thou shalt not err or miscarry, or meet with disappointment. 25 Thou shalt know also that thy seed [shall be] great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth, numerous and prosperous, notwithstanding thy present bereaved state. 26 Thou shalt come to [thy] grave in a full age, not by untimely death, but in a good old age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season, when it is carried home fully ripe. 27 Lo this, we have searched it, so it [is;] we are fully convinced of the truth of it, on the most diligent search; hear it, and know thou [it] for thy good; thou art concerned in it, apply it therefore to thyself, and regulate thy conduct accordingly.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is profitable to observe the ruin of prosperous sinners, and make useful reflections upon it. We have seen what Eliphaz here remarks, *the wicked taking root, and flourishing,*

* This is quite a different word from the former, and implies, invasions, tempests, robberies.

looking gay, thinking themselves secure, blessing themselves, and others blessing them, and ready to envy them. But by an eye of faith we see their habitation under a curse; and often with an eye of sense we have seen it executed; their glory vanished, their families brought to ruin! Let us consider such scenes, that we may not envy the prosperity of the wicked, but rest in the Lord, and keep his way.

2. The providence of God in managing the affairs of this lower world should be carefully and seriously observed. *He doeth great and wonderful things, unsearchable, and innumerable.* That consideration should fill us with awe and veneration. *He gives rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.* He exalteth the poor, and bringeth down the rich; disappoints the schemes of cunning men, and turns them to purposes directly contrary to their own designs. This is applied by the apostle Paul, (1 Cor. iii. 19.), to the heathens being deceived and beguiled by their own philosophy, which they opposed to the gospel, which yet spread in opposition to it. Such interpositions of providence are very encouraging when times are dark, and the circumstances of the church and world seem discouraging to those who wish prosperity to both.

3. This chapter gives a just idea of the nature of afflictions, of their design, and the proper manner of behaving under them. Afflictions are from God. They do not come by chance or fortune; we are to look beyond second causes to him. They are the common lot of men, fatherly chastisements, and are intended for our good. Our duty under them is to pray, to seek to God for the removal of them, or for direction, assistance, and support under them, and that we may get good by them. We are to commit our cause to God; to pray to him to interpose and help us in his own time and way. The apostle applies this and the similar advice, *Prov. iii. 11.*, to all christians, *Heb. xii. 5, 6.* Let us not forget the exhortation which speaketh unto us as unto children. *My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Let us improve our afflictions to further our repentance and holiness; then happy shall we be, and *all shall work together for our good.*

4. Prosperity should be sought from God, and his hand acknowledged in it. He alone *can deliver from trouble, from the sword, and famine, from vexing calamities, and* (which is one of the worst troubles) *from the scourge of the tongue.* When he does so, it

becomes us to be very thankful. If he preserves us in journeys, *keeps our bones that none of them are broken, and we find our tabernacles in peace* at our return; business prosperous, and all without sin, it is peculiarly happy, and we should give glory to God, our preserver and benefactor.

5. We may reflect, that application is the life and soul of preaching. Eliphaz says, ver. 27., *Hear it, and know thou it for thy good.* This is in effect the language of ministers; it is their business to search diligently; to explain duty clearly, and to suit their discourses to the circumstances of their hearers, and come home to their consciences. It is the duty of hearers to apply all to themselves, to consider their own concern in it. It is not sufficient to hear it in general, to know the meaning and design of what is said; but to know it for themselves. Is it true in itself, and a truth that concerns me? *We know it for our good,* and we know it for ourselves. Let it be our care to apply the reasonings, exhortations, and reproofs of our ministers to ourselves; to *consider what they say, and may the Lord give us understanding in all things.*

CHAPTER VI.

We have here Job's reply to Eliphaz; in which he observes, that his sorrow was greater than he apprehended; he repeats his wishes for death; reproves his friends for their uncharitable censures; and advises them to consider, reflect, and reason more justly.

1 **BUT** Job answered and said, 2 Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! *O that some equitable judge would weigh my sorrow and my complaints together, which you think are so unreasonable.* 3 For now it, *that is, my sorrows and afflictions,* would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up, *that is, I want words to express my grief.* 4 For the arrows of the Almighty [are] within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; *arrows dipped in poison, which occasion violent burning pains, in the New Testament called fiery darts; and the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me, like a mighty army surrounding me on every side.* 5 Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder? *It is no virtue*

in you to forbear impatience and complaint; even the brutes are easy and quiet when they have plenty of provisions. It is easy for those who neither feel sickness nor want, to read lectures of submission and patience. 6 Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there [any] taste in the white of an egg? *A reflection upon Eliphaz's discourse, as quite insipid and unsavoury, as wanting both wisdom and experience, therefore ungrateful and distasteful.* 7 The things [that] my soul refuseth to touch [are] as my sorrowful meat: *your comforts are but sorrowful meat, I find as little relish in them, as a man who is sick, and overwhelmed with grief, finds in his meat.* 8 Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant [me] the thing that I long for! 9 Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off! *His great leading desire was death, that God would let go the arrow that would cut him off at once; it is an allusion to ver. 4.* 10 Then should I yet have comfort; *the thoughts of my approaching death would comfort me in all my sorrows; yea, I would harden myself in sorrow; I would resolutely and undauntedly endure any sorrow in order to my end: let him not spare; I would not entreat him to spare me, but would be content that he should afflict me as much as he pleases; for I have not concealed the words of the holy One; I have faithfully maintained his truths, and instructed others in his will.* 11 What [is] my strength, that I should hope; and what [is] mine end, that I should prolong my life? *Do not blame me for desiring death; I have no hope of better days, that should make me willing to live.* 12 [Is] my strength the strength of stones? or [is] my flesh of brass? *I must quickly die by my disease, and therefore may well wish for a speedy death.* 13 [Is] not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me? *Though I am in a very helpless state, I am not delirious; I know what I say and think, and my wishing for death is no sign of guilt or folly.* 14 To him that is afflicted pity [should be showed] from his friend; but he *who shows no pity forsaketh the fear of the Almighty: inhumanity is impiety.* 15 My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, [and] as the stream of brooks, *which are full of water in winter, they pass away**; 16 Which are blackish by reason of the ice, [and] wherein the snow is hid; *which spread so wide when the ice and snow are melted, as to make a flood: but* 17 What time they wax warm, they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place; *in hot*

* This is a beautiful simile, to describe the pretensions they had made, the great expectations he had formed from them, and the failure of them.

weather, when they are most wanted, they are vanished and gone.

18 The paths of their way are turned aside ; they go to nothing, and perish ; *you can scarce tell where their channel ran.* 19 The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. *The Arabians who travelled from place to place, or caravans of merchants, who traversed the deserts, when parched with thirst repaired to the place where the brooks used to be, and found nothing but sand, no water at all.* 20 They were confounded because they had hoped ; they came thither, and were ashamed. *To apply this to his friends, he adds,* 21 For now ye are nothing ; *ye have deceived my expectations, and afford me no comfort at all ; ye see [my] casting down, and are afraid, lest I should prove a burden to you, and therefore you turn strangers to me.* 22 Did I say, Bring unto me ? or, Give a reward for me of your substance ? 23 Or, Deliver me from the enemy's hand ? or, Redeem me from the hand of the mighty ? *I asked you for no presents, nor for assistance to recover my substance ; surely then you might have given me a few good words.* 24 Teach me, and I will hold my tongue : and cause me to understand wherein I have erred : *intimating that he did not despise good advice, but was open to conviction ; if they would convince him of his error, he would make all the acknowledgments they could desire.* 25 How forcible are right words ! *Solid arguments have a marvellous power to convince and persuade men : but what doth your arguing reprove ? your words are not convincing.* 26 Do ye imagine, *have you artfully contrived together,* to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, to censure me for a few hasty and passionate words, [which are] as wind, and only the speeches of one who wants a little respite from his sorrow ? 27 Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, oppress me, a helpless person, with your bitter censures and calumnies, and so add misery to my misery, and ye dig [a pit] for your friend, design mischief against me. 28 Now therefore be content ; be not so rash as to condemn me, but deal more kindly with me than you have done hitherto ; look upon me ; for [it is] evident unto you if I lie : consider me well, both what I am, and what I have said, and what my condition is ; you will easily find it out if I speak false, or maintain a bad cause. 29 Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity ; yea, return again, give the matter a fair hearing, and do not take up a hasty suspicion, for my righteousness [is] in it, upon further examination you will see that I am right. 30 Is there iniquity in my tongue ? *have I spoken any thing that is untrue ? cannot my taste discern perverse things ? cannot I discern between*

truth and falsehood? therefore you should be very careful not to speak from prejudice against me.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE see here, that a sense or apprehension of the divine displeasure, is the bitterest circumstance in any affliction. This is expressed very strongly, *v. 4., The arrows of the Almighty are within me. The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?* This should teach us to *stand in awe, and not sin*, that we may have peace in our consciences; and while we enjoy that, other afflictions will be comparatively light.

2. We are taught that great pity is due to those who are afflicted. God hath implanted compassion in our nature; and it is our duty to cherish the workings of it, to show it by friendly visits and kind words to our afflicted friends; patiently hearing their complaints, and making allowances for their infirmities; and endeavouring by all prudent methods to comfort and relieve them. Without this, we show there is but little of the fear of the Almighty in us: inhumanity is impiety. As fellow mortals, liable to the same sufferings, and especially as fellow christians, who are members one of another, it becomes us *to be tender-hearted, pitiful, courteous, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.*

3. We are taught, that adversity is the trial of friendship. Then we have an opportunity to know who are real, and who are pretended, friends. Too many are *like deceitful brooks*; they make a fair profession, and our expectations are raised; but when we most want them *they fail*; and the disappointment will be great and grievous in proportion as our expectations were high. This should teach us *to cease from man*, and not expect too much from fickle mortals. Let us seek the divine friendship. While men prove as deceitful brooks, we shall find him *a fountain of living water, and a present help in every time of need.*

4. A fair trial and examination of men's characters would prevent uncharitable and groundless censures, and moderate those which are just. A candid mind will be willing to examine, to be informed, and will hope and believe the best; and it becomes those who suspect the character of others, to avoid confident charges, or spiteful insinuations; to judge, and examine, and reason the case with those they think wrong; for *right words are*

forcible, to set themselves or their brethren right, and prevent or remove an evil suspicion.

5. It is very comfortable when we are charged with, or suspected of, any thing that is evil, to be able to offer our character and conduct for a fair trial. When friends censure us, or misrepresent us, while we are conscious of our integrity, we should offer our behaviour to a full examination; and an ability to do this will afford us satisfaction and peace, whether they will enter into it or not. That we may enjoy this peace, *herein let us exercise ourselves daily, to keep consciences void of offence both towards God and man.*

CHAPTER VII.

Job goes on with his reply to Eliphaz.

1 [IS there] not an appointed time to man upon earth? *an appointed warfare or struggle?* [are not] his days also like the days of an hireling? *spent in toil, but at length coming to a period?* 2 As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, *as a slave, working in a hot day, desires a cooling shade*, and as an hireling looketh for [the reward of] his work, *earnestly longs for his wages, so do I; and the reason is, because* 3 So am I made to possess months of vanity, *that is, of labour and sorrow*, and wearisome nights are appointed to me, *when others have rest from their labours.* 4 When I lie down, I say, *When shall I arise, and the night be gone; and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day; my nights are restless and uneasy, through pain of body, or disquieting thoughts; and no wonder, for* 5 My flesh is clothed with worms, *which breed in my sores, and clods, or scabs, of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome.* 6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope; *my happy days are all gone, and there is no likelihood of their return.* 7 O remember that my life [is] wind, *quickly gone: mine eye shall no more see good, I shall no more return to prosperity.* 8 The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no [more:] *my friends and acquaintances shall quickly lose sight of me: thine eyes [are] upon me, thou frownest upon me, and I [am] not; I am suddenly vanished out of the world.* 9 [As] the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, *when dispersed by the sun: so he that goeth down*

to the grave shall come up no [more] *to live in this world.* 10 He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more, *but shall receive another owner and inhabitant.* 11 Therefore, *since there is no hope of my condition being better here,* I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul; *I will give vent to my sorrows.* 12 [Am] I a sea, or a whale, so unruly, *that nothing but such strong chains of affliction can tame or rule me,* that thou settest a watch over me? *to keep me from escaping out of my troubles.* 13 When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; *when I expect comfort there,* 14 Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions, *frightful imaginations, which keep my eyes awake, or if I sleep, quickly awake me in horror and confusion.* 15 So that my soul chooseth strangling, [and] death rather than my life: *I am almost strangled with grief. Oh that it would fully do its work, and put an end to this miserable life.* 16 I loath [it;] I would not live away; *I dread a long continuance of these afflictions;* let me alone; for my days [are] vanity; *I have no pleasure in them; they are continually passing away; Oh make them not more miserable!* 17 What [is] man, that thou shouldst magnify him? *shouldst honour so inconsiderable a creature by contending with him?* and that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him? 18 And [that] thou shouldst visit him every morning, [and] try him every moment? *shouldst try him with new afflictions, and put his strength and courage to proof so often?* 19 How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle*? 20 I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? *teach me how to regain thy favour, O thou observer of men!* why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, *so as to level all thine arrows at me,* so that I am a burden to myself? 21 And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity†? for now shall I sleep in the dust; *wilt thou not so far forgive me as that I may die and be released, and sleep comfortably in the grave?* and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I [shall] not [be;] *I shall be beyond the reach of any other calamity.*

* This refers to the disease affecting his throat or jaws, and his desire of a short respite to swallow down his spittle.

† Dr. Kennicott supposes that Job addresses these words to Eliphaz, and not to God; as much as to say, You say I have sinned; but granting this, what have I done against thee, O Eliphaz; thou watchful observer! and why not rather overlook my transgressions, and pass by my iniquity?—ED.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may observe, that Job's complaints and expostulations do not countenance an impatient and fretful spirit. It is necessary that we should be reminded of this, because persons in affliction are too ready to manifest such a spirit, and to think themselves vindicated in it by the example of Job; and we have often heard the example of this good man pleaded to justify very unbecoming language from persons under afflictions. If these were Job's own words, there were no foundation for the plea. But they are to be considered as a poetical description of his imperfections; they are only the author's words. Job might in general utter some complaints; and the author of the book enlarges upon them, and dresses them up in poetical language; and all with a design to illustrate the general argument and intention of the book, and the more plainly to shew us how common, and yet indecent and ungrateful, a fretful and impatient spirit is. In this light we should consider them, and to such purposes improve them.

2. We have an instructive view given us of human life, and the condition of man upon earth. He is appointed to a warfare; a continued struggle with afflictions and temptations; he is like a slave, or day-labourer, that is to work a whole day, till the evening comes, when his work shall be examined, and he shall receive his reward. Human life is short, *like the wind*, that passes away swiftly; *like a weaver's shuttle*, thrown to and fro; the threads are continually going off, till all are gone, and the scene closes. A man's life is *like a cloud or vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away*. God looks upon them, and they are not; one look of his brings men to the dust, and their places in the house, or shop, the town, or the church, *know them no more*; and are filled by others, who enter into their habitations and possessions. All this is very instructive and practical; and teaches us *to fight the good fight*, and work while it is day, in expectation of the promised reward; to redeem our time, and every day to prepare for death: and (as friends, houses, wealth, and all earthly things must be left behind us, and we return no more to them,) *to lay up treasures in heaven; to use the world as not abusing it, and to seek an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*.

3. The hand of God is to be acknowledged in all our afflictions. If we *possess mouths of vanity, and wearisome nights*, it is God who appoints them to us. Are our days full of labour and sickness? are we kept awake in the night by pain? or if we sleep, are we terrified by dreams, and awake wearied and fatigued rather than refreshed? it is God's ordering. It is good to see and consider our afflictions as the appointments of his providence; and from thence to conclude, that they are appointed for some wise and good end. He thus gives us an opportunity of glorifying him, and adorning religion, improving our graces, and doing good to others, by patience, submission and thankfulness. If we are not thus afflicted, let us be thankful; bless God that our days are comfortable and useful; and that we lie down at night, *and our sleep is sweet unto us*. Once more,

4. Whatever our afflictions are, it is good to think of our sins, and be humble and penitent for them. Job is represented as acknowledging his offences, and entreating forgiveness; and this should be our temper. It is the design of affliction to bring us to it. It is a good saying of Mr. Baxter, 'when God afflicts a man, it is as if he called him by name, saying, Oh such a one, repent, be awakened, be humbled, be serious.' Let our complaints be turned into penitent confessions, and we may hope for mercy and forgiveness from Him who is the preserver and saviour of men. *By affliction shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is the fruit, to take away sin.*

CHAPTER VIII.

Bildad, who was descended from Shuah, one of Abraham's sons by Keturah, defends Eliphaz's speech, and asserts that Job and his children were punished for their wickedness; and that this is God's usual way of dealing with hypocrites, except they repent, yet upon repentance they may expect happiness. He begins with reproving Job's ungoverned passions.

1 **T**HEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2 How long wilt thou speak these [things?] and [how long shall] the words of thy mouth [be like] a strong wind? *violent and impetuous, not sparing even God himself*. 3 Doth God pervert judgment? *as thy words seem to imply*; or doth the Almighty, *who can be under no*

temptation to do it, pervert justice? 4 If thy children have sinned against him in some heinous manner, and he have cast them away, suddenly destroyed them, for their transgression; yet, 5 If thou wouldst seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty, instead of complaining; 6 If thou [wert] pure and upright; of a sincere heart and blameless life, as thou pretendest and wouldst be thought to be, surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness, that is, thy righteous habitation, prosperous. 7 Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase; though thou art now reduced very low, yet thy prosperity should be greater than ever it was. For the truth of this he appeals to antiquity. 8 For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers: 9 (For we [are but of] yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth [are] a shadow, in comparison of our forefathers:) 10 Shall not they teach thee, [and] tell thee, and utter words out of their heart? they who made prudent observations, and carefully set their hearts to consider the meaning of providence? 11 Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? By this beautiful simile he illustrates the speedy destruction of sinners; they grow up like rushes and flags, when they have mire and water, but, 12 Whilst it [is] yet in his greenness, [and] not cut down, before the scythe cuts its down, it withereth before any [other] herb for want of moisture; so the prosperity of the wicked soon decays for want of God's blessing. 13 So [are] the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: 14 Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust [shall be] a spider's web; his vain hope like a spider's web, which he spins out of his own bowels, may spread wide, and he may amuse himself with it, but shall be easily dissipated and destroyed. 15 He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure; that is, he shall trust to the multitude of his children and servants, and his great wealth, and endeavour to strengthen himself by rich and potent alliances, but all will disappoint him. 16 He [is] green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden. Nay, to illustrate it by another comparison, though like a tree which seems green before the sun, and shoots forth strong branches. 17 His roots are wrapped about the heap, [and] seeth the place of stones; he takes root in the firmest earth, and knits himself to the stones and rocks, so that it seems almost impossible to remove him; nevertheless, 18 If he destroy him from his place, then [it] shall deny him, [saying,] I

have not seen thee. *God can and will pluck him up by the root, and there shall be no remains of him, no remembrance that he ever appeared so strong and fair.* 19 Behold, this [is] the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow: *this is the issue of the flourishing estate of the wicked, and the pleasure they took in it; and out of the earth, from whence he was rooted up, shall others (not of his own family) grow and flourish in his stead.* Bildad then reminds Job of what he was attempting to prove. 20 Behold, God will not cast away a perfect [man,] neither will he help the evil doers: *nor will he leave thee, if thou repent and art upright,* 21 Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing; *till thou shalt be so remarkably blessed and favoured, as not to be able to contain thy joy.* 22 They that hate thee and rejoice at thy fall, shall be clothed with shame, *shall be confounded at thy returning prosperity;* and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought, *so as not to be able to hurt thee.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. SINCE life is so short, it is our wisdom to trace out the sentiments and experience of former ages; to consult those who have lived before us, to observe their opinions, and inquire into their history of events, and their remarks upon them, and compare them with the events of our day, to illustrate the providence of God. In this view books are excellent and useful; especially the sacred scriptures, which are an authentic history of the most ancient and remarkable events, and *were written for our instruction, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

2. Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of hypocrisy and impiety. If it be asked, why men are so wicked and deceitful? the answer is, *they forget God,* forget that he sees and knows them, is perfectly acquainted with their words and actions, and *knows the things that come into their hearts, every one of them.* Let it be our care not to forget God; but to *have the desire of our souls towards him, and the remembrance of his name.* That we may prevent sin, and promote holiness, *we should set the Lord always before us, continually act as in his presence, and endure, as seeing him who is invisible.*

3. *The hope of the hypocrite shall perish;* it is all cobweb, light and thin, easily broken and blown away; or, if it continue through

life, will at last be utterly destroyed by the besom of destruction : yea, though it seem as firm as a deep-rooted tree, and rise ever so high, and spread ever so wide, it will be plucked up by the righteous hand of God. And the higher the hypocrite's hope rises, the greater will be his disappointment and misery. Let us then dread hypocrisy ; *let integrity and uprightness preserve us.* For, on the other hand,

4. *God will not cast away an upright man.* The Lord loveth and will protect *the righteous* ; not indeed from all temporal evils, (for whom the Lord loveth he some way or other chasteneth,) yet he will do no man any wrong, nor lay upon any men more heavy afflictions than they deserve, or than will be for their good, v. 3. Though he may cast such an one down, yet he will not cast him away ; his afflictions, if patiently endured, and faithfully improved, will turn to his benefit ; and at length (perhaps in this world, but surely in the next,) *God will fill his mouth with joy, and his lips with rejoicing.* These remarks in this chapter are confirmed by David's observations in *Psalm xxxvii.* 35—37. *I have seen the wicked in great power : and spreading himself like a green bay tree : yet he passed away, and lo ! he was not : yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. But mark the perfect man, and behold the upright : for the end of that man is peace.*

CHAPTER IX.

Job illustrates and confirms what Bildad had said of the power and justice of God, and applies all this to his own case, in many expostulations and complaints.

1 **T**HEN Job answered and said, 2 I know [it is] so of a truth ; *allowing the truth of what Bildad said, but adding, how should man be just with God? Shall a mortal, miserable man pretend to charge God with injustice in any of his proceedings?* 3 If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand ; *not one crime of a thousand will he be able to reply to.* 4 [He is] wise in heart, and mighty in strength, *the all-wise, almighty God : who hath hardened [himself] against him and hath prospered? who can wage war with God, and come off victorious?* 5 Which removeth the mountains, and they know not : which

overturneth them in his anger *by earthquakes*. 6 Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof, *the lowest parts of the earth which hold up the rest*, tremble. 7 Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, *it becomes quite clouded*; and sealeth up the stars, *hides them from our sight*. 8 Which alone spreadeth out the heavens *like a tent*, and keeps them spread out, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea, *treads them down, or keeps them within bounds*. 9 Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south*. 10 Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number, *these and other wonders innumerable*. 11 Lo, he goeth by me, and I see [him] not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not; *I understand not his providential dispensations; I see second causes, but no further*. 12 Behold, he taketh away *any thing, or all, that a man hath*, and who can hinder him? who will say unto him, what doest thou? *who can or dare call him to account?* 13 [If] God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him; *those who attempt to help, help in vain; or, those who join to help one another against him are disappointed*. 14 How much less shall I answer him, [and] choose out my words [to reason] with him? *who am a poor, forlorn creature; and have neither friend nor helper; how can I think to plead my cause, or move him with persuasive language?* 15 Whom, though I were righteous, [yet] would I not answer; *I durst not do it, being terrified by his majesty*: [but] I would make supplication to my judge; *I would only open my mouth to supplicate and petition*. 16 If I had called him into judgment, and he had answered me, *appeared with me at the bar*: [yet] would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice, *for the sake of my prayers, while these afflictions continue*. 17 For he breaketh me with a tempest, *unexpectedly, violently, and irrecoverably*, and multiplieth my wounds without cause, *without any extraordinary guilt, as far as I am conscious to myself*. 18 He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness, *brings one trouble upon another*. 19 If [I speak] of strength, lo, [he is] strong, *too strong for me to contend with*: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time [to plead?] *what judge is above him to appoint a time for hearing the cause*. 20 If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: [if I say,] I [am] perfect, it shall also

* These names are put in by our translators. Arcturus may refer to the stars about the north pole; Orion, to the stars in general which rise in winter; and Pleiades, to those which usher in the spring, chap. xxxviii. 31. The chambers of the south, are the southern hemisphere, which is hid from the inhabitants of the north, like a secret chamber.

prove me perverse; *there would be something or other in my plea, on which to ground a charge against me, if he should deal with the utmost rigour.* 21 [Though] I were perfect, *innocent of such great crimes as may deserve such exemplary judgments,* [yet] would I not know my soul, *I would not insist upon my innocency;* I would despise my life *while it is so miserable, and not think it worth contending for.* 22 This [is] one [thing,] therefore I said [it,] he destroyeth the perfect and the wicked; *this is still my opinion, that the innocent often suffer with the guilty* *. 23 If the scourge slay suddenly, he, *not God, but it, the scourge,* will laugh at the trial of the innocent †. 24 The earth is given into the hand of the wicked, *wicked men are often advanced to dignity and power:* he covereth the faces of the judges thereof, *wicked tyrants often lead to execution judges and patriots; a remarkable instance of the scourge smiting the innocent;* if not, where, [and] who [is] he? *if God does not permit this, who does? certainly none else could manage the affairs of the world after this manner, but he.* 25 Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good; *my days of comfort have been swifter than the speediest messenger; they have fled away, they have seen no good.* 26 They are passed away as the swift ships, or rather, *rush boats, or coracles, on the rapid river:* as the eagle [that] hasteth to the prey; *an hungry eagle, that cuts the air with the swiftest motion.* 27 If I say, I will, or I soon shall, forget my complaint, I will leave off my heaviness, and comfort [myself] *in hopes of better days; alas,* 28 I am afraid of all my sorrows, *my grief destroys my hope, and all my sorrows crowd in upon me: besides,* I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent; *wilt not declare me innocent by removing my affliction, I have no hope that thou wilt appear for me.* 29 [If] I be wicked, *if I must be treated as a wicked man,* why then labour I in vain? *then it is in vain for me to endeavour to clear myself, and maintain my own innocency.* 30 If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, *clear myself from all imputations and fully prove my innocence;* 31 Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, *into the deepest afflictions, and mine own clothes shall abhor me, make me abhorred by myself and friends.* 32 For [he is] not a man, *a mortal man,* as I [am, that] I should answer him, [and] we should come together in judgment, *that we should dispute upon*

* The question was not, Whether good men were ever afflicted, but whether God ever utterly destroyed a good man by any remarkable overwhelming calamity, which Job maintains, and his friends deny.

† This is a beautiful figure, in which the scourge is represented as taking pleasure in smiting all alike.

equal terms at some judgment-seat. 33 Neither is there any days-man betwixt us, [that] might lay his hand upon us both; *no arbitrator to oblige us to stand to his award, and add sanction to it.* 34 Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear, *the dread of his great power and majesty,* terrify me: 35 [Then] would I speak and not fear him, *that is, speak freely before him;* but [it is] not so with me, *I have no composure or fortitude of mind*.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us treasure up in our minds these noble sentiments of the wisdom, power, and majesty of God. The description of God is eloquent, beautiful, and instructive; they need no commentary, but deserve to be had in remembrance, that we may exalt and sanctify the Lord of hosts, who hath made the heavens and earth, who has all nature under his government, *and who does what he pleases in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.*

2. Learn the vanity and madness of rebelling against God. He is infinitely wise to know, and mighty to defeat, the designs of his enemies. *Who ever hardened himself against God, and hath prospered?* and where is the instance of any one rebelling against him that was not confounded and destroyed? who have not at least paid dear for their folly and rebellion. We have many remarkable instances, in Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, the old world, and the angels that sinned; which should make us *stand in awe, and not sin.*

3. A consciousness of God's greatness and our own imperfection and guilt, should make us silent and patient under his rebukes. The passionate expressions which the poet puts into Job's mouth, are designed to caution us against such language, and the temper from whence it flows. Many weighty thoughts are suggested to inculcate patience. *There is no contending with God; we are guilty; we cannot answer for one sin of a thousand; if we justify ourselves, our own mouths will condemn us.* Let us then *be still, and know that he is God,* that we are sinners, and that amidst the heaviest afflictions, *he dealeth not with us according to our sins, neither rewardeth us according to our iniquities.*

* It appears to me that the impropriety of some of these sentences, and the indecency of these complaints, is their beauty; for they are designed to show into what irregularity of temper persons in affliction are liable to fall; how their passion carries them headlong, and how ready they are to charge God foolishly; which suggests a very useful caution to us.

4. The swift passing away of our time ought seriously to be considered. Job's remarks are applicable to the days of all men. They are gone *like a post, a ship, or an eagle*, and there is no recalling them. We have little need of pastimes, as they are called; but great need to redeem time, to husband and improve it well. Be not fond of earthly things, that are so soon gone, nor sink under afflictions, that shall so soon be over. Let us remember, that as fast as time flies away, so fast eternity comes on, and that awful day which will fix our state for ever.

5. Persons under heavy afflictions and trouble of spirit, are much to be pitied. The beautiful description of the tossing and inquietude of a troubled mind naturally suggests this thought to us. Such know not how to speak, or how to pray. Friends advise them to it, and blame them for not doing it; but it is not so easy as people imagine. A troubled mind sees it fit it should be done; and attempts it, but in vain. Let us pity such, and pray for them; and pray for ourselves, that God would not lead us into temptation, but grant us that sweet composure, which will make our afflictions sit light; and without which we may soon grow a burden to ourselves and to all about us. The general lesson from the whole is, *in your patience possess your souls*.

CHAPTER X.

Job proceeds with his heavy complaints; pleads with God; and wishes for death.

1 **MY** soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul; *let loose the reins to my embittered spirit, and venture the issue.* 2 I will say unto God, *Do not condemn me, do not quite cast me off, and treat me as a wicked man; show me wherefore thou contendest with me, what are the crimes for which I suffer more than others.* 3 [Is it] good unto thee, *pleasing and delightful, or just and equal*, that thou shouldst oppress? that thou shouldst despise the work of thine hands, *deal with me as if I were not worth regarding*, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked? *that is, seem to favour their designs and undertakings.* 4 Hast thou eyes of flesh, or seest thou as man seeth? *as if he had said, Thou dost not judge as man does, only by the outside, but seest my heart, that I am not wicked,* (ver. 7.),

therefore why dost thou thus afflict me? 5 [Are] thy days as the days of man? [are] thy years as man's days, *dost thou need length of time to discover my character?* 6 That thou inquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin? *that thou puttest me as it were upon the rack, to discover my guilt.* 7 Thou knowest that I am not wicked, *that I am not an hypocrite, as my friends intimate; but if thou wilt deal with me as such, none can help me;* and [there is] none that can deliver out of thine hand. 8 Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together, round about, *therefore thou knowest me perfectly and intimately;* yet thou dost destroy me, art *cutting me off by afflictions.* 9 Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; *as the potter shapes the clay, so thou hast wonderfully fashioned me;* and wilt thou bring me into dust again? 10 Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? *thickened the soft matter, and liquid substance whereof I was made, and brought it into a consistence. A beautiful image to represent the formation of a child in the womb.* 11 Thou hast clothed me with skin and with flesh, and hast fenced me, *secured my vital parts,* with bones and sinews. 12 Thou hast granted me life and favour, *that is, the comforts of life,* and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit; *thy good providence and care hath still supported and preserved me.* 13 And these [things] hast thou hid in thine heart; *thou canst not have forgotten this; and yet I know that this [is] with thee, that my affliction comes by thy direction; and this I find so difficult to reconcile with creating and preserving goodness.* 14 If I sin then thou markest me *narrowly,* and *I find by experience that thou wilt not acquit me from the punishment of mine iniquity.* 15 If I be wicked, wo unto me, *I must expect worse evils still:* and [if] I be righteous, [yet] will I not lift up mine head; *I dare not plead it, or take comfort in it:* [I am] full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction; *consider my case, if it is not as bad as I represent it.* 16 For it increaseth. Thou huntest me as a fierce lion *does his prey:* and again thou showest thyself marvellous upon me; *when I hoped for an end of my troubles thou sendest more, and fillest me with astonishment and horror.* 17 Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, *the tokens of thy displeasure,* and increasest the effects of thine indignation upon me; changes and war [are] against me; *though my troubles change, each wars against me, and no change is for the better.* 18 Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost *as soon as I came into life,* and that no eye had seen me! 19 I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from

the womb to the grave, *then I should have escaped these calamities.* 20 [Are] not my days few, *almost ended?* cease [then, and] let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, *let me have a little respite before I die;* 21 Before I go [whence] I shall not return, [even] to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; 22 A land of darkness, as darkness [itself; and] of the shadow of death, *as dark as dark can be,* without any order, and [where] the light [is] as darkness; *where there is nothing but perpetual and uninterrupted darkness.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. To deprecate the divine pleasure, and seek instruction, is very proper under afflictions; that God would not correct us in anger, nor give us up as incorrigible, nor quite cast us off; but continue the sense of his love, acquaint us with the cause of our afflictions, what particular sins we ought to mortify and subdue. The bitterness of afflictions should make us sensible of the insupportable terrors of the divine wrath, and the great evil of sin which exposeth men to it.

2. Let us always be careful to remember that God is not like man, that he hath not eyes of flesh, *and seeth not as man seeth;* that his days and years are not like ours; he sees in darkness, *darkness and light are both alike to him;* he sees all things, we, but a few, and those imperfectly. His eyes are never closed in darkness as ours soon will. *Man looketh at the outward appearance, but God searcheth the heart.* Our days are short, and soon finished, his are eternal. He needs not length of time to open new scenes, and make any new discovery; to him every thing is present, and nothing old or new. Let this thought dwell upon our minds, and teach us to reverence and adore the infinite and eternal, the omniscient and omnipresent Spirit.

3. It is a happy thing when afflicted of God, or censured of men, to be able to appeal to God, and say, *Thou knowest I am not wicked.* I am a sinner, a guilty creature, but am not an hypocrite, devoted to sin, and an enemy of God and goodness. God knows whether this be the case with us; and to be able to make the appeal to him will give us support and comfort, and fill us with joy, whatever we suffer, or however we are treated.

4. The providence of God in the creation and preservation of man, ought to be remembered and seriously acknowledged. His wisdom, power, and goodness are displayed in making us of clay, and producing human creatures in so astonishing a manner; their

bodies are *fearfully and wonderfully made*. Our life, our comforts, and the continuance of them, are owing to his friendly and daily visitation. Let us give glory to God, our father, and serve him with body and spirit, which are his.

5. We are taught that a sinful state is a very woful one. What Job says of himself, is applicable to all; and we should each make the reflection with application to ourselves, *If I be wicked, wo unto me*. Many woes attend wicked men at present; but more and greater hereafter, even eternal ones; and those who have been born of religious parents, enjoyed great advantages, and made a solemn profession of religion, have peculiar reason to say this. Wo, yea, ten thousand woes, to such, if after all, they prove wicked. Once more:

6. The close of the chapter gives us an instructive view of death. It is leaving this world and all its concerns, and going to the land of perfect and unmingled darkness: and we are never more to return; never return to the comforts or pleasures of life; never return to a state of trial, so as to mend a bad life, or improve and make better a good one. Let this teach us to work while it is day, to improve life while it is continued; then though the body be lodged in a dark and silent grave, our separate spirits will remove to the land of light: that light *which is sown for the righteous*: and we shall be so well pleased with the glorious and happy change, that we shall never once desire to return hither any more.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter contains the speech of Zophar, another of Job's friends.

He is called the Naamathite, from a town called Naamath, which we read of in Joshua xv. 41. He accuses Job of talking idly and irreverently; he gives a noble description of God's greatness and immensity; and offers Job some good advice.

1 **T**HEN answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, 2 Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? *is talking sufficient to prove his innocence?* 3 Should thy lies, *thy false assertions concerning thyself and God*, make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, *speakest scornfully of God and thy friends*, shall no man make thee ashamed? 4 For

thou hast said, My doctrine [is] pure, *what I maintain concerning God and his providence, in the afflictions of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked, (chap. vi. 10., ix. 22.), is free from error,* and I am clean in thine eyes, *that is, in the eyes of God, and chargeable with no gross crimes.* 5 But O that God would speak, and open his lips against thee, *that is, speak in a solemn manner, and show thee thy error;* 6 And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that [they are] double to that which is; *all thou canst know of him is not half of what he is.* Know therefore that God exacteth of thee [less] than thine iniquity [deserveth;] *that thou hast deserved far more than he has laid upon thee.* 7 Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? *the secrets of his providence, and the reasons of his proceedings?* 8 [It is] as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? *as soon might you measure the height of heaven, and the depth of hell.* 9 The measure thereof [is] longer than the earth, and broader than the sea; *it is absolutely boundless.* 10 If he cut off, *take away our relatives or comforts,* and shut up, *confine us by afflictions;* or gather together *many afflictions, as a hunter gathers beasts or birds in his net,* then who can hinder him? 11 For he knoweth vain men, *the vanity and folly of men:* he seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider [it,] *and reckon with them for it?* 12 For vain man would be wise, though man be born [like] a wild ass's colt; *an ignorant, untractable creature, yet he pretends to be wise, and to arraign the proceedings of the Almighty*.* 13 If thou prepare thine heart, *where all religion must begin,* and stretch out thine hands toward him, *pour out fervent, earnest prayer;* 14 If iniquity [be] in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles; *cleanse thyself and reform thy family,* 15 For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; *thou shalt be free from these dreadful boils;* yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear; *be established in a safe condition, and have a composed mind, through the assurance of God's favour:* 16 Because thou shalt forget [thy] misery, [and] remember [it] as waters [that] pass away, *which once rose high, but are quite gone:* 17 And [thine] age shall be clearer than the noon day; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning; *thou shalt*

* Wild asses are creatures of much more fire and spirit than ours; it is a proper similitude to represent the impetuosity of temper common among men in affliction, which leads them to censure even God himself, though they are very incompetent judges of his proceedings.

blaze out more than noon; the remainder of thy days shall be full of prosperity. 18 And thou shalt be secure because there is hope of *God's love and favour*; yea, thou shalt dig [about thee, and] thou shalt take thy rest in safety; *thy person and property shall be secure, and thy mind serene.* 19 Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make [thee] afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee, *or, as in the Hebrew, entreat thy face, (Psalm xlv. 12.), desire thy favour and friendship, because of thy eminent felicity.* 20 But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, *be disappointed of the happiness they looked for, and they shall not escape, like a man who sees pressing danger near and cannot escape it, but falls under it by his own fear*; and their hope [shall be as] the giving up of the ghost, *or, a puff of breath that is quickly gone, and will never return again.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. HERE is a specimen of the temper with which most disputes are managed. In the language which the poet puts into the mouth of Zophar, he represents Job as a man of no wisdom or principle; a man that loved to hear himself talk, and yet said nothing to the purpose. He misinterprets what he said, and wishes God would speak; being sure that he would argue on his side of the question. This is commonly the temper of disputants, either in writing or conversation: they charge one another with ignorance and impertinence; put the worst colour on what their antagonist says, and are very confident that God would take their part in the debate. Let persons of warm tempers carefully avoid debates; and let all who are engaged in a dispute, even upon the most common or trivial subjects, *set a watch upon the door of their lips*, lest they displease God, injure their brethren and themselves, and even the very cause they would defend.

2. Let the depths of divine wisdom and justice, be always remembered by us, especially in times of affliction. Let us remember, that there are secrets of wisdom with God, far above our comprehension. The greatest part of what we know, is less than the least part of what we are ignorant of. Let us adore the judgments we cannot comprehend. We know little of God's nature, or the design of his providence; therefore let us never prescribe to him, or quarrel with him. *He exacteth less than our iniquities deserve.* A thought this, which, if encouraged, will silence all

our murmuring; for *wherefore should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?* when, under the heaviest afflictions, *God deals not with us after our sins, neither rewards us according to our iniquities.*

3. Let our own ignorance and vanity likewise be remembered, especially in times of distress. After our most laborious inquiries, *we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection. Vain man thinks himself wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt*; an ignorant, untractable creature. Let us not value ourselves on our own wisdom, when surrounded with so many mysteries that we cannot fathom. Young persons especially should guard against pride and conceit; and let their parents be watchful to subdue their spirits, and teach them knowledge and humility. Let us all remember our weakness and ignorance; that instead of prescribing to God, we may *be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live.*

4. The instructions here given to Job are proper for all, but more especially for afflicted persons, to attend to. It is our duty to pray, to live near to God, and to *prepare our hearts* for his service; else we shall neither be comfortable to ourselves, nor pleasing to him. We should *stretch out our hands* with fervour of spirit, *and put iniquity away from our hearts and our houses* with detestation, and with a resolution never more to permit its return. Then may we hope for prosperity and comfort; at least we shall have a foundation for cheerfulness within, and a hope for futurity; a cheerfulness that will not be lost, and a hope that will be crowned with everlasting enjoyment.

CHAPTER XII.

Job replies to Zophar in this and the two following chapters. He censures him and his other friends, defends himself, and gives a sublime and noble description of God's sovereignty and dominion.

1 **AND** Job answered and said, *in an ironical way,* 2 No doubt but ye [are] the people, *the only wise and understanding men,* and *when you are gone out of the world* wisdom shall die with you. 3 But I have understanding as well as you; I [am] not inferior to you; *I have ability to judge of these matters equal to yours:*

yea, who knoweth not such things as these? *even the meanest understand that God is infinite in wisdom, power, and justice; but that is not the question between us.* 4 I am [as] one mocked of his neighbour, delivered over from one neighbour to another, as a jest that is to go round the company; who calleth upon God, and he answereth him, or rather, he calleth to God, and let him answer him; (thus Eliphaz had insulted him, chap. v. 1., and thus Zophar, chap. xi. 5.), and thus the just upright [man is] laughed to scorn; *this is no new thing, the best of men have been served so.* 5 He that is ready to slip with [his] feet [is as] a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease; *he who is brought into a precarious and perishing condition, though he formerly shone like a lamp, is despised; when he loseth his external splendour and grandeur, he loseth the honour that used to be paid him; they who are in prosperity regard him like the snuff of a lamp just going out.* 6 The tabernacles of robbers, they and their families, prosper, and they that provoke God are secure, *they neither feel nor fear evil; into whose hand God bringeth [abundantly,] even of those things which they abuse to affront and provoke him.* 7 But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: 8 Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee; *this is so plain that the brute creatures teach thee this; they all serve the wicked, and contribute to their convenience and luxury.* 9 Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this? *it is plain God hath appointed it should be so;* 10 In whose hand [is] the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind; *who is the sovereign disposer of all the creatures, as well as of mankind.* 11 Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat? *cannot my understanding judge and determine of words and arguments, as my palate does of meat? As much as to say, If you had a true taste for rational discourse, you would pay a greater regard to what I say.* 12 With the ancient [is] wisdom; and in length of days understanding; *there is wisdom among men, especially among aged men; how much more with the eternal God!* 13 With him [is] wisdom to contrive, and strength to execute; he hath counsel and understanding. 14 Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; *he destroys men's comforts, and they cannot be recovered: he shutteth up a man in prison, or affliction, or puts a yoke on his neck, as the word signifies, and there can be no opening, none can restore to liberty and happiness, unless he please.* 15 Behold, he withholdeth the waters, *that is, the rain,*

and they, *that is, the springs*, dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth, *overthrow the banks, and carry all before them.* 16 With him [is] strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver [are] his; *though some are wiser than others, drive on their schemes, and think to make others their property, he is above them, and can frustrate their designs**. 17 He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, *as at his victorious chariot*, and maketh the judges fools, *so that they form bad schemes, and pass wrong judgments.* 18 He looseth the bonds of kings, *he deprives them of that majesty and authority which should keep their people in awe*, and girdeth their loins with a girdle; *brings them into a servile condition, or into prison.* 19 He leadeth princes, *the greatest ministers of state*, away spoiled, *he takes away their authority and honour*, and overthroweth the mighty, *those who were endowed with great power.* 20 He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged, *on whose lips persuasion seemed to hang; he confounds their mind with unexpected calamities, so that they seem to be infatuated.* 21 He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty; *destroys the most powerful alliances and confederacies.* 22 He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death, *discovers the most secret and artful plots.* 23 He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them [again;] *whole nations, as well as particular men, are under his control; he can destroy them by war or pestilence, enlarge their boundaries, and drive them into corners again.* 24 He taketh away the heart of the chief people of the earth, *that is, the wisdom of the most eminent men*, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness [where there is] no way, *that is, in such confusion that they know not which way to turn.* 25 They grope in the dark without light, *like blind men*, and he maketh them to stagger like [a] drunken [man;] *all their motions are uncertain, like those of a man in liquor, who knows not what way to take.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us learn to abate our pride of knowledge and learning. Too many, especially some of better education and understanding

* Bp. Sherlock thinks this is a reference to the fall, to the serpent's deceiving Eve, and both being subject to the control of God.

than their neighbours, are ready to think *they are the people, and are wiser than all men*; that they have made a monopoly of wisdom, and that when they are dead all wisdom will be gone, and none left on the earth. To guard us against such arrogant conceits, we should consider that God distributes understanding among all men. Many are our equals, many are our superiors. There were wiser men before us, and will be wiser men after us. Let us not then be proud of our wisdom, especially not mock and despise others, as if they had not understanding as well as we. He is truly wise and honourable who is truly humble; and no man's ability seems so conspicuous as his, over which humility casts a mild and gentle shade.

2. It is very common for those who are in trouble to be despised by those who are in prosperity. When men fall into affliction, their former excellency and usefulness is forgotten. When their light, which was before admired, grows dim, or is removed into obscurity by sickness or calamity, they are despised; others look scornfully upon them; forget the rank they once held, and the lustre they displayed. Let afflicted persons expect disrespectful treatment, and bear it with patience; and let those who are in prosperity guard against censuring or neglecting the afflicted; for they may soon take their place, and will probably be treated with greater slight and contempt, on account of their insolent and unkind behaviour to their afflicted brethren.

3. The universal influence of God over his creatures should be seriously and constantly remembered. *v. 10.* All derive their being from him, are supported by him, and are under his direction; their comforts and lives are at his disposal. When he pleaseth, princes lose their dignity and authority, the wise and experienced their skill, the orators their eloquence, the politicians their art, the mighty their strength, the general and soldier their military skill and prowess. Nations are by him multiplied or diminished, exalted or depressed: *he setteth up and pulleth down* princes, discovers the deepest plots, and confounds the most artful schemes. The history of every nation is a commentary on this noble and beautiful passage, especially that of our own nation. But, as Mr. Henry observes, the glorious revolution by King William, to which we may add the succession and establishment of the present royal family, is as happy an exposition as ever was given of this discourse of Job. This should comfort us amidst all our alarms and dangers, and encourage us in every future circumstance. that God knoweth what men intend, and can over-rule all

for our benefit: and he will over-rule it for the happiness of his church and people. Let this then be the constant matter of our joy and triumph, *Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!*

CHAPTER XIII.

Job proceeds in his reply, and charges his friends with ignorance and falsehood; maintains his own integrity, and carries his cause before God.

1 **LO**, mine eye hath seen all [this,] mine ear hath heard and understood it; *what I have asserted I know to be true, or had it from credible authority.* 2 What ye know, [the same] do I know also: [I am] not inferior unto you. *I am as capable of judging as you are.* 3 Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God; *I desire to appeal to God, to plead before his omniscience.* 4 But ye [are] forgers of lies, ye [are] all physicians of no value; *your conclusions are false, you prescribe bad remedies, or misapply good ones, and thus increase the disease you pretend to cure.* 5 O that ye would altogether hold your peace; and it should be your wisdom; *your silence will be a better proof of wisdom than such arguments.* 6 Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips. 7 Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him? *cannot God be justified in these dispensations, without your charging me with hypocrisy, or using pious frauds?* 8 Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God? *is he unjust, that you must favour his side? will you think to please him by censuring me?* 9 Is it good that he should search you out? or as one man mocketh another, do ye [so] mock him? *would it be for your advantage that he should scrutinize your arguments and the principles from whence your censures flow? do you think by pretences to piety to flatter and deceive him?* 10 He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons, and design to gratify him by my unjust condemnation. 11 Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you, and make you tremble to deal unjustly, and to think he needs your patronage? 12 Your remembrances [are] like unto ashes, *your remonstrances, or the most*

memorable things you say, are as easily scattered as ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay; the strength of your arguments are like heaps of clay, or sand, which cannot support what is laid upon them. 13 Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what [will;] *I will speak my mind, whatever is the consequence.* 14 Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth? *why is my desire so violent that I am ready to tear my flesh with my teeth, and put my life in mine hand? go in continual danger of death, through my heavy afflictions?* 15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, *and express my confidence in him to my last breath:* but I will maintain mine own ways before him. 16 He also [shall be] my salvation: *I am confident he will vindicate me;* for an hypocrite shall not come before him. 17 Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with your ears; *let me desire your further attention.* 18 Behold, now I have ordered [my] cause, *pleaded it with sincerity; and I know that I shall be justified.* 19 Who [is] he, *in heaven or earth, [that] will plead with me?* for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost; *my impatience for a trial is so great, that if it hath not vent it will destroy me.* Then, turning himself to God, he adds, 20 Only do not two [things] unto me: then will I not hide myself from thee, *but come boldly into thy presence to plead for myself.* First, 21 Withdraw thine hand far from me, *thy correcting hand, and deliver me from outward troubles;* and secondly, let not thy dread make me afraid, *thine awful, tremendous appearance terrify my mind.* 22 Then call thou, *bring thy charge,* and I will answer: or let me speak, *suffer me to make my complaint,* and answer thou me. 23 How many [are] mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin; *surely they must be very great and uncommon, if all this is a punishment for them, as my friends would have me believe.* 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy? *on account of which of them dost thou turn away, as a judge who will not hear a criminal plead, and treatest me as an enemy?* 25 Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? *canst thou get honour by a contest with such a mean, impotent creature as I am?* 26 For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth; *the whole score of my sins is brought against me, and thou goest as far back as my youth to trace them out.* 27 Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, *and I can no more escape than a malefactor in these circumstances,* and lookest narrowly unto all my paths, *all the steps that I have trod and for-*

gotten, and thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet, so that thou canst trace them all back for months and years past. 28 And he, *that is, man in general*, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is moth eaten, *the longer it is worn, the worse it grows; and this is remarkably my case under this affliction.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here taught, that the cause of God needs neither falsehood nor passion to support it. Job's expostulations with his friends in the beginning of the chapter, naturally suggest this observation. *To speak wickedly for God, or talk deceitfully for him*, is the highest affront to his wisdom and righteousness. Pious frauds, as they are called, are infamous things; and all those passions which break out in defence of religion, and end in destroying or slandering others, are not of a religious kind, but the contrary; for *the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

2. *Is it good that God should search us out?* This is a question we should often put to ourselves. Should we be willing and desirous that our secret actions, words, and thoughts should be laid open, the principles on which we act be known? This indeed is good to upright souls, but brings confusion upon the hypocrite. Remember, God will search us out, and reveal us at last; and *judge the secrets of all hearts*; therefore pray now, *Search me, O God, and know my thoughts.*

3. The dreadful excellencies of God should fill us with holy awe. In him dwelleth all excellency, beauty, and perfection; but considering his supremacy and universal dominion, his power and justice, even his excellencies are dreadful. All should promote our desire to please him, and our dread of offending him. Let us therefore *fear the Lord and his goodness.*

4. It becomes good men to maintain their trust in God in the greatest extremity, *even though he slay them.* Though they should be called to give up liberty, comfort, and life, for truth and righteousness, still they should hope in God; and believe that *all will work for good.* They should rejoice in him, when there is nothing else to rejoice in; for *he will be our salvation*, yea, our everlasting salvation.

5. True penitents desire to know the worst of themselves; how many their transgressions and sins are. But hypocrites are afraid

to know this ; they endeavour to fly from themselves, and banish all serious thought. Sincere christians are willing to know what sins they are chargeable with, what they are easily beset by and are most liable to, that they may confess them, and guard against them for the future.

6. The terrors of the Lord are very dreadful to good men. It is no uncommon thing for them to feel them; *his dread makes them afraid; he hideth his face.* Two things afflict them, outward and inward trouble; and the last is the worst to those who value God's loving-kindness above life. He sometimes afflicts their spirits, as well as their bodies, to humble and prove them, and make them better. Let not good men be overwhelmed when that is the case; but more earnestly pray, *There are many that say, who will show us any good, and remove bodily evil from us? O lift up upon us the light of thy countenance! this shall put joy and gladness into our hearts.*

7. Sin adds to the bitterness of every affliction, *v. 26., He makes us to possess the iniquities of our youth.* The sins of youth are the smart of old age; though repented of and forgiven, yet the remembrance of them is painful. This should be a caution to young people *to look well to their ways, and flee youthful lusts.* God marks your steps, my young friends; *sets a print on your heels.* If you take false steps, wander from the way of the righteous, and walk with sinners, you will hereafter find that he has *looked narrowly unto your path;* and *for all these things he will bring you to judgment;* and when the troubles of life, and the infirmities of age come, the remembrance of these things will fill you with bitterness and shame. Let this thought teach us all to avoid sin, that we may have peaceful consciences, and enjoy the approbation of our Judge; that we may lift up our face with comfort to him, *and not be ashamed at his coming.*

CHAPTER XIV.

In which Job pleads with God the shortness of life; that there is no return from the grave; he begs a release by death; and expresses his hope of a resurrection.

1 **MAN** [that is] born of a woman, *every man that cometh into the world, [is] of few days, and full of trouble.* 2 He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; *however beautiful, he soon withereth*: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. 3 And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? *canst thou concern thyself so much for a poor, distressed, dying creature, and by the severity of thy dispensations oblige me to plead with thee?* 4 Who can bring a clean [thing] out of an unclean? *who can bring a perfect creature out of a mean and sinful one?* not one; 5 Seeing his days [are] determined, the number of his months [are] with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass; *seeing the days of all men are confined to so short a time*; 6 Turn from him, that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day; *do not overwhelm me with afflictions while life is continued, and I shall meet death with as much pleasure as the hireling, or day-labourer, meets the shadow of the evening.* 7 For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. 8 Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; 9 [Yet] through the scent of water, *any moisture that comes near it, it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant.* 10 But man dieth, and wasteth away, *cannot revive again, as a tree or plant often does*: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where [is] he? *the greatest and the meanest of men, as the original signifies, wither and die alike, and are gone beyond recovery.* 11 [As] the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; *as water left behind by the sea at high flood, soon dries up, and land-floods vanish and are gone*: 12 So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens [be] no more, *till the end of all things, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep, as they now are*; therefore let me enjoy a little ease and rest while here. 13 O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret from all these scenes of sorrow, *which seem to be the effects of thy anger, until thy*

wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me *to raise me up again!* He then adds, *with a surprise of faith and pleasure,* 14 If a man die, shall he live [again?] *shall it indeed be so? then* all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come; *all the days of my warfare, as the word signifies, till death remove me hence; after that,* 15 Thou shalt call me out of the grave, and I will answer thee *with joy and triumph; springing up at thy call, and coming forth to a new life;* thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands; *thou wilt not leave the work of thy hands to perish in the grave. But though it shall be so well with me then, yet now it is otherwise,* 16 For now thou numberest my steps, *all my wrong steps:* dost thou not watch over my sin, *to punish me for it?* 17 My transgression [is] sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity, *all ready to be produced against me; thou takest care that none shall be lost.* 18 And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, *gradually wasteth away,* and the rock is removed out of his place. 19 The waters wear the stones: thou wastest away the things which grow [out] of the dust of the earth; and thou destroyest the hope of man; *so thou deprivest me of all hope of ever returning into this world again.* 20 Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth out of this world by death: thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away; *a beautiful and striking allusion to the paleness and blackness of a corpse.* 21 His sons come to honour, and he knoweth [it] not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth [it] not of them; *his knowledge of this world is lost, and he is no way affected by what happens to his family.* 22 But his flesh upon him, *that is, while his flesh is upon him he shall have pain,* and his soul within him shall mourn, *particularly when he is in the agonies of death. These various circumstances are thrown together to vindicate his desire of death, and in the mean time to obtain an alleviation of his grief.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE have here an affecting and instructive view of human life. *It is short, and full of trouble; frail, as a flower, hasty, as a moving shadow.* Let us expect our share of trouble, and not sink under it when it comes. Let young persons set out in life with low expectations from this world; for every day will bring some toil and trouble and sorrow with it. Let us endeavour to bring our minds to our condition; and secure a peaceful conscience and the divine favour, which is the best, the only support, under it.

2. Here is an instructive view of death. It is a removal out of this world, and there is no recovery, like that of a plant, which may grow again: it is a great and awful change; the body changes its appearance when sick, especially when it has been a little while dead. The soul rémoves to a new world, to new work, new company, and has no more concern with what is done on earth. Let us think of this change, get ready for it, wait patiently till it comes, and in a word, so live, that it may be a happy and glorious change to us.

3. We have an instructive view of the grave. It is an hiding-place to God's people; a shelter from every storm. When oppressed with calamity, or when God foresees distress coming, then he sends them away, lodges them safe in the grave, locks them up there, and hides them from thousands of sins, sorrows, and distresses, which they foresaw not. The grave is a chamber of repose to the saints. It is God's work to hide men there. Let this reconcile good men to an abode in the grave; and teach them silence and submission when their pious friends are lodged there. Once more,

4. We have here an instructive view of the resurrection. *Man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens are no more; then he shall rise.* God calls, and each of his servants answer, readily and joyfully, "Here I am." God will have regard to the work of his grace in the heart, and the work of his hands on the bodies of his saints, and will awake them again to a new and immortal life. The well-grounded expectation of this, is very comfortable to the saints under all the afflictions of life, and in the near views of death. Let us all be thankful for the gospel, which throws such light on these important and interesting subjects; and *seeing we expect such things, let us daily and seriously consider what manner of persons we ought to be, in all holy conversation and godliness.*

CHAPTER XV.

Eliphaz in this chapter reproves Job for his folly, impiety, and arrogance; and describes the case of prosperous sinners, secretly glancing at the case of Job.

1 **THEN** answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said, 2 Should a wise man, as thou pretendest to be, utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? utter vain words, and satisfy his

mind with pernicious sentiments and vehement expressions? 3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good? *with such weak arguments as are unable to prove the point in question?* 4 Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God; *thou art a man of great impiety, or thou couldst never talk thus.* 5 For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, *it is evident from thy own words,* and thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty; *coverest thy impious principles and opinions with fair pretences of piety and respect to God.* 6 Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee; *it is not our surmise, but thy own words that prove this,* 7 [Art] thou the first man [that] was born? or wast thou made before the hills? *that thou thinkest so highly of thyself?* 8 Hast thou heard the secret of God? *art thou of his cabinet council?* and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? *is all wisdom in thee?* 9 What knowest thou, that we know not? [what] understandest thou, which [is] not in us? *retorting Job's words upon him, chap. xiii. 2.* 10 With us [are] both the grey-headed, and very aged men, much elder than thy father, *and therefore by thy own argument, they should know more than thou.* 11 [Are] the consolations of God small with thee? *the consolations which we offer thee and thou despisest?* is there any secret thing with thee? *any secret comfort which nobody else knows, and for which thou rejectest these comforts of God?* 12 Why doth thine heart carry thee away? and what do thy eyes wink at, *in a manner so concited and contemptuous,* 13 That thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest [such] words go out of thy mouth? *that thou speakest against God with so much anger and pride?* 14 What [is] man, that he should be clean? and [he which is] born of a woman, that he should be righteous? *thou forgettest thine original, or thou wouldst not talk thus.* 15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; *he employs them, but puts no such confidence in them as if they were unspotted and infallible;* yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight; *the heavenly inhabitants are not absolutely pure.* 16 How much more abominable and filthy [is] man which drinketh iniquity like water? *eagerly and greedily, and without any concern.* 17 I will show thee, hear me; and that [which] I have seen I will declare, *which therefore may be depended upon:* 18 Which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid [it] *from their children, but have declared as a matter of great certainty and importance:* 19 Unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them; *these wise men and their fathers were persons of great*

authority, power, and wealth in the places of their abode. 20 The wicked man travaileth with pain all [his] days, *he is continually uneasy, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor; he knows not how long he shall live, and enjoy his prosperous estate, and so is in continual fear of a change.* 21 A dreadful sound [is] in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him; *his guilt makes him timorous and suspicious.* 22 He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness; *like thee, he is dispirited, and thinks he cannot escape, and shall never come out of trouble, and he is waited for of the sword; the sword is as it were looking for him, to fall immediately upon him.* 23 He wandereth abroad for bread, [saying,] Where [is it?] he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand; *at length the judgment of God shall come upon him, and he shall be ready to beg his bread, and expect every day that death shall surprise him.* 24 Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle, *who surrounds the enemy with a numerous force, and leaves no way to escape. Nor can we wonder at his punishment when we view his crime.* 25 For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty, *desperately opposes God in all things.* 26 He runneth upon him, [even] on [his] neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers, *or on the spikes of it, which enter into his heart. To this daring impiety he is encouraged by his prosperity, and that luxury to which he is accustomed:* 27 Because he covereth his face with his fatness, and maketh collops of fat on [his] flanks. 28 And he dwelleth in desolate cities, [and] in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps; *he is glad to shelter in desolate places, even in those which his own tyranny and oppression have made desolate. For it is certain that* 29 He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth; *he shall lose every thing that he gloried and prided himself in; and when his misfortunes are come upon him,* 30 He shall not depart out of darkness, *he shall never get out of trouble; the flame shall dry up his branches, his children, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away; the tempest he shall raise shall quite carry him away.* 31 Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity, *the greatest height of fortune; for vanity shall be his recompense; he shall meet with nothing but disappointment, one vanity after another, and all vexatious.* 32 It shall be accomplished before his time, *before he expected it, and his branch shall not be green, his prosperity shall end before*

his life. 33 He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive; *his children, his substance, his projects, shall all wither, and not come to maturity.* 34 For the congregation of hypocrites, *that is, all the partners of his iniquity,* [shall be] desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery, *the houses he built by fraud and injustice.* 35 They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit; *they plot mischief against others, but it comes upon themselves; their projects, when they come to the birth, bring forth the ruin of the projectors.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE here see a beautiful specimen of the ill language which disputants often give one another. Instead of attending to the merits of the argument, they charge each other with folly and conceit; commend themselves, and plead that reason and antiquity, the fathers and doctors of the church, are all on their side. This is a common case, and should teach us, whenever we are arguing with others, especially when pleading what we think the cause of God and truth, to keep our spirits calm, and see that our words be peaceable, as well as pure.

2. We see that a source and sign of wickedness is *casting off fear, and restraining prayer before God.* The fear of God is the most needful principle, and prayer the most needful practice; for there is no religion where there is no fear of God, and no fear of God where there is no prayer to him. Restraining prayer is a strong expression. Prayer is so natural, there are so many circumstances which do as it were extort it, that the man must do violence to his own mind who restrains it. It is extremely bad indeed, when those who have been used to pray leave it off; it is a sign that they have lost all sense of goodness, and are in the high way to utter destruction.

3. *The consolations of God are not small,* and should never be thought so by us. They are rich, and great, and various; suitable to every distressed case. It is an affront to God, and an injury to ourselves, to despise them and neglect to seek them. Some *secret thing* is too often put in their stead; the wealth or pleasures of the world. But these never satisfy the soul; and when their help will be most wanted, their emptiness will be most apparent. Happy they, who value and seek divine comforts! for *in the mul-*

titude of their thoughts within them, those comforts will delight their souls.

4. Let us entertain serious thoughts of the majesty and purity of God, and the meanness and sinfulness of man. He is infinitely pure and perfect; *the heavens are not clean in his sight.* Angels and glorified saints are comparatively unrighteous, and not to be trusted; he needs not their services, and *is exalted above all their blessing and praise.* On the contrary, man is unclean, and loves iniquity, swallows it eagerly, and commits it with greediness. These are good reasons why we should think most highly of God, and most humbly of ourselves; why we should be patient under afflictions, and labour to be pure and holy, that we may be like God, and the objects of his favour and love.

5. The miserable condition of wicked men, however prosperous, should make us dread their character. Here is a most beautiful description of the continued tossing, uneasiness, and disquiet, that there is in a sinner's heart. He is full of inward fears and alarms, perpetually uneasy, apprehending danger where there is none, and fearing much where there is little to be feared; and though he endeavours to drive away his fears and troubles, they rush upon him with greater force. Oftentimes the judgments of God bring shame, poverty, pain, and misery upon him in this world; yet all this *is but the beginning of sorrow.* Attend then to that weighty lesson, in *ver. 31., let not him that is deceived trust in vanity,* in his amusements, or his wealth, especially when that is ill gotten, for it will yield him no satisfaction, but expose him to a thousand vexations, and sink him into that darkness, trouble, and anguish, from which he shall never return.

CHAPTER XVI.

Job here complains of the ill usage of his friends; largely represents the melancholy condition he was in; but still maintains and pleads his own innocence.

1 **T**HEN Job answered and said, I have heard many such things: 2 Miserable comforters [are] ye all; *these are only idle repetitions, and increase, instead of lessen, my misery.* 3 Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? *it is*

great folly and confidence to repeat such impertinent things over and over again. 4 I also could speak as ye [do:] if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you; *I could insult and mock you.* 5 [But] *I would not do it,* I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage [your grief;] *I would do all I could to comfort and support you; but* 6 *Though I speak, and have complained of my trouble and defended my innocence,* my grief is not assuaged: and [though] I forbear, what am I eased? *though I am silent, yet am I accused and condemned.* 7 But now he hath made me weary; *God hath tired me out with successive troubles:* thou hast made desolate all my company; *my children and servants are destroyed, my relations and friends are unkind.* 8 And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, *though I am not old,* [which] is a witness [against me:] and my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face, *shows plainly the greatness of my afflictions and miseries.* *As for Eliphaz,* 9 He teareth [me] in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; *he tears my character and treats me with rage and cruelty;* mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me; *looks as if he would dart lightning from his eyes to destroy me; yea, there are many who have done so;* 10 They have gaped upon me with their mouth, *like wild beasts;* they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully, *treated me with scorn;* they have gathered themselves together against me; *or, as it may be rendered, they have like wild beasts filled themselves with me, eaten me up and devoured me.* 11 God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked to use me at their pleasure. 12 I was at ease, *in prosperous and healthy circumstances,* but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken [me] by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, *as a strong man would a child,* and set me up for his mark, *to shoot his arrows at.* 13 His archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare, *afflicts me with pains and torment of body;* he poureth out my gall upon the ground; *he has mortally wounded me, as if my bowels were shed upon the ground; I am quite in a hopeless condition.* 14 He breaketh me with breach upon breach, *as the walls of a town are broken down by some mighty engine,* he runneth upon me like a giant, *and I can make no resistance.* 15 I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, *I am glad even of sackcloth to cover my broken skin,* and defiled my horn in the dust, *all my authority and honour is lost.* 16 My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids [is] the shadow of death, *I look like a dying man;* 17 Not for [any]

injustice in mine hands, *it is not because I have done injustice to any man*: also my prayer is pure; *it proceeded from a sincere and upright heart, like water flowing from a clear fountain.* 18 O earth, *if I have been guilty of bloodshed, or any injury to men, conceal it not, but disclose it, cover not thou my blood, let me die a violent death, let me have no burial, let the dogs lick my blood, and let my cry have no place, let neither God nor man regard my complaints; but these imprecations are all needless, for* 19 Also now, behold, my witness [is] in heaven, and my record [is] on high; *the great God is witness of my sincerity and innocency.* 20 My friends scorn me: [but] mine eye poureth out [tears] unto God; *amidst all this scorn I appeal to God, and entreat him to vindicate me.* 21 O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man [pleadeth] for his neighbour! *I am so sure of the goodness of my cause, that I wish for nothing so much as to have it fairly tried, as causes are tried among men.* 22 When a few years are come, then I shall go the way [whence] I shall not return; *this is my comfort under my afflictions, that I shall soon die, and get for ever out of the reach of them.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM hence we are taught, that when we see persons afflicted, it is good to *put our souls in their souls' stead*; to think how we should be affected with such distresses, and how we should expect and like to be treated. This would prevent our doing or saying any thing to aggravate their affliction; and engage our friendly attempts to strengthen them with good words, and by kind offices to assuage their grief. In this and every instance of social duty, *whatever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also the same unto them.*

2. These mournful complaints, should make us very thankful that this case is not ours. To have acute pain of body, joined to the loss of substance, and of near relations, and all this aggravated by the scorn and unkindness of friends, is as deplorable a case as we can well conceive, and should excite our gratitude to God for his distinguishing goodness to us.

3. It is a great comfort to good men to be able to appeal to God for their integrity and piety; especially when they are slandered by men. If we can truly say that no injustice towards men is in our hand, and that our devotions have been pure and sincere, we may comfortably pour out our prayer before God, and depend

on him to vindicate our character, when men censure us. Let us then so act that we may always be able to say, *My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high.*

4. The view of death, which is given in the close of the chapter, should never be forgotten. A long and important journey is before us; we must leave every thing behind, houses, substance, friends, and body too; the separate spirit must go to another world, to a state of happiness or misery. This way we all are to go, in a few years at most, perhaps a few days. There is no putting off the journey when the summons comes; we can never return, either to improve a good state, or mend a bad one. Let us think of this, and prepare for it; that the expectation of it may not be our terror but our joy. *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, for there is neither knowledge, nor device, nor working in the grave, to which thou art going.*

CHAPTER XVII.

In this chapter Job, from the consideration of his approaching death, earnestly desires God to judge his cause; because his friends were unfit for it, and had passed such censures upon him, as well as given him foolish advice, to hope for prosperity, when he had nothing to expect but death.

1 **MY** breath is corrupt, like oil in a lamp that is just going out, my days are extinct, cut off in the midst, the graves [are ready] for me, I am just going to the sepulchre of my fathers. 2 [Are there] not mockers with me instead of friends? and doth not mine eye continue in their provocation? my thoughts are so fixed on them that I can think of nothing else. 3 Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who [is] he [that] will strike hands with me? therefore, Lord, do thou undertake my cause, and appoint some one to do right on both sides. 4 For thou hast hid their heart from understanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt [them;] these are incompetent judges, therefore thou shalt not exalt them to this honour. 5 He that speaketh flattery to [his] friends when he should reprove them, even the eyes of his children shall fail, in vain expectation of meeting with a sincere friend. 6 He hath made me also a by-word of the people, that is, Eliphaz hath made me contemptible; and

aforetime, or before them, I was as a tabret, *I was argued with only to make them diversion.* 7 Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members [are] as a shadow; *sorrow hath almost blinded me, and shrunk me to a shadow.* 8 Upright men shall be astomied at this *my affliction and ill-treatment*, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite, *and oppose the pernicious^t inferences he may draw from my sufferings, and the censures he may throw on God and religion because I am thus afflicted.* 9 The righteous also shall hold on his way, *he shall not be moved by my sufferings, or my friends' censures*; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger; *shall persevere and improve in religion, notwithstanding his own sufferings.* 10 But as for you all, do ye return, and come now; *consider the matter over again*; for I cannot find [one] wise [man] among you, *who judges aright of the merits of the case: but do it quickly, for* 11 My days are past, my purposes are broken off, *I am a dying man, my projects and designs are all come to an end*, [even] the thoughts of my heart; *in the Hebrew, the possessions, the things which my heart was most fond of.* 12 They change the night into day, *my calamities deprive me of rest by night: the light [is] short because of darkness, neither can I enjoy the light by day, through the darkness and gloominess of my thoughts; there is a perpetual night in my mind.* 13 If I wait, *for prosperous days, as you would have me, lo, the grave [is] mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness; I expect nothing but the grave, where I shall rest in quietness.* 14 I have said to corruption, *Thou [art] my father: to the worm, [Thou art] my mother, and my sister; I have made myself familiar with these objects, knowing that I am appointed to corruption and death.* 15 And where [is] now my hope *which you would have me entertain?* as for my hope, who shall see it? *who shall see the happiness you encourage me to expect?* 16 They shall go down to the bars of the pit, *I and my hope together shall go down to the bars of the pit, which nothing shall be able to break open, when [our] rest together [is] in the dust; you and your encouragements, I and my hopes, shall all be lodged together in the grave, and therefore I cannot entertain them.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. PARENTS out of regard to their children should be upright and conscientious, ver. 5. Men that have been given to flattery and deceit, injure their children; others are ready to think they will

take after their fathers; or through resentment of what they suffered by the father's treachery, will neglect the children. The ill-gotten gain of parents affects the credit and comfort of their posterity, and often brings a blast on all they have; and children are too apt to learn their pernicious ways. Let parents be careful therefore to set a good example before them, to abhor dishonesty, fraud, lying, and flattery, as they desire their children should be honest and sincere, and meet with friends and helpers when they are no more.

2. We learn to make a good use of the sufferings of others, especially of good men. There is something mysterious in such providences; the best of men may wonder why God inflicts such sufferings, or permits others to do it. Let the tribulations of Job, and other holy men, teach us to judge rightly of divine dispensations: not to conclude that persons are wicked, because they are afflicted. And this should also teach us resolutely to oppose those who would draw consequences from their sufferings, dishonourable to God and injurious to religion. Let us not be discouraged by what they or we suffer, but make it our care to hold on our way, and grow stronger and stronger. This is the duty of every one; and such steadfastness and perseverance in religion is the best proof of our sincerity being accepted of God.

3. The speedy approach of death, and the great change it will occasion, should lead us to make it familiar to our thoughts. The graves are ready for us; let us labour to be ready for them. Death breaks off all our schemes, and purposes for this world; we can then do nothing for posterity or for God; therefore we should be diligent, and form such purposes and lay the chief stress on such, as death, instead of breaking, will complete. *The grave is our house*, the house of our fathers, the only sure possession; and we shall quickly go to it. Let us make the thought familiar. Amidst the most agreeable relations in life, let us remember to claim kindred with the grave, and say to corruption, *thou art my father*. Let us think daily, especially at night, when we lie down upon our beds, how soon we may make our bed in darkness; that we may secure a happiness beyond the grave, and a joyful resurrection for this frail, vile, dying body.

4. It is no uncommon thing for very good men to conclude their case to be desperate and hopeless, especially when under the power of melancholy, or some other heavy affliction. So Job did; and talks again and again in this gloomy strain. But it appears upon the whole that he was mistaken. Let this be a caution to

us, not to indulge a melancholy, desponding frame; and when any of our friends are in such unhappy circumstances, instead of mocking them, and increasing their distress, let us try every method of persuasion and encouragement, to lighten their burden and restore their joy. This is at once a substantial proof, and a noble exercise of a good understanding. *Bear ye one another's burdens* therefore, *and thus fulfil the law of Christ.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

Here Bildad reproves Job for his scornful answers, and his impatience under the dispensations of Providence; he confidently asserts that wicked men are always miserable, and therefore Job must be wicked.

1 **T**HEN answered Bildad the Shubite, and said, 2 How long [will it be ere] ye make an end of *these captious and peevish* words? mark, and afterwards we will speak; *it will answer no good purpose to argue, unless you will attend better, and pay greater regard to what is said.* 3 Wherefore are we counted as beasts, [and] reputed vile in your sight? *you have no reason for such an opinion, and it will be in vain to argue if you think so.* 4 He teareth himself in his anger, *fretfulness and impatience only gall and chafe his mind*: shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place? *shall God alter the rules of his proceedings, which are fixed and unchangeable as the earth itself? He then enlarges on the misery of the wicked?* 5 Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine; *nothing shall remain of all his honour, joy, and prosperity to comfort him.* The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him; *the lamp they hung over his tent to spread a cheerful light, and all the glory of his family, shall be put out and become contemptible.* 7 The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down; *his boldest attempts shall not retrieve his circumstances.* 8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare; *he is entangled with difficulties, and every step exposes him to them.* 9 The gin shall take [him] by the heel, [and] the robber shall prevail against him; *he shall be taken like a wild beast or bird in a net, and so become an easy prey to designing men.* 10 The snare

[is] laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way; *he shall not foresee his danger, but fall into it before he is aware.*

11 Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet; *he shall run from place to place for safety, but snares and terrors beset him on every side, so that he shall not escape.*

12 His strength shall be hunger-bitten, *shall decay for want of food,* and destruction [shall be] ready at his side; *mischief attends him wherever he goes.*

13 It shall devour the strength of his skin: [even] the first-born of death shall devour his strength; *some terrible disease, like a furious beast, exceedingly hungry, shall seize upon him, breaking his ribs, and grinding to pieces his more substantial bones.*

14 His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, *his family shall be ruined,* and it shall bring him to the king of terrors; *hasten his death, and bring him to the most dreadful of all his enemies.*

15 It, that is, destruction, shall dwell in his tabernacle, because [it is] none of his, *being obtained by injustice and oppression:* brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation; *sulphur and lightning shall destroy it, and it shall become like Sodom.*

16 His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off; *he shall never be restored to his former prosperity, nor shall it ever be enjoyed by his family.*

17 His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street; *though once famous in public places, he shall be quite forgotten, or only spoken of with infamy.*

18 He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world, *as a filthy, offensive thing.*

19 He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings; *neither son, nor grandson, nor any relation to keep up the memory of his former grandeur.*

20 They that come after [him] shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted; *future times shall hear of it with astonishment and awe; or, as an ingenious critic renders it, "the Westerns shall be astonished at him, and the Easterns be possessed with horror."*

21 Surely such [are] the dwellings of the wicked, and this [is] the place [of him that] knoweth not God. *In all this he seems to glance at Job's case, and the calamities that had come upon him and his family.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE have a just idea of the misery which attends passionate people, in v. 10. The violence of any passion, whether of love or hatred, desire or fear, especially of anger, brings torment to the

mind which is under its influence, tears and injures the bodily constitution, especially tears the soul, destroys its composure and peace, and is injurious to every good principle and disposition. Let us labour after a calm and even temper; and if we desire our own happiness, let us *in patience possess our souls*.

2. The view here given of death, as the king of terrors, is very awful and very instructive. Death is a king of great authority, and universal sway. He is indeed a king of terrors to the wicked; all his forerunners and attendants are terrible. He removes them from every thing they love and rejoice in, to every thing they fear and abhor; from all their happiness, to great and everlasting misery. He is in some measure a king of terrors to good men; but Christ has taken away his chief terrors, controlled his power, abolished his tyranny, and made him a friend. Let us then reverence, love and serve the Captain of our salvation; and employ our lives in his cause. Then we shall be more than conquerors over the king of terrors, *through Him that hath loved us*. Observe,

3. The misery of wicked men in this world, and how it should make us afraid of this character. Bildad's remarks are both beautiful and just, though falsely applied to Job. His light shall be exchanged for darkness; his pleasure, joy and hope are all fading; the things he pleased himself, entertained others, and made a fine shew with, are all vanishing, all shall be put out; no solid joy, or well-grounded hope be left; his guilty conscience arms terrors on every side; there is no avoiding them, no bearing them. He entails dishonour and misery on his family, and drowns himself in everlasting destruction. *Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God. Let us therefore stand in awe, and not sin; but endeavour to know and serve God; for godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

CHAPTER XIX.

Here Job answers to what Bildad had said; he renews his complaints of the unkindness of his friends, and of his miserable condition; he entreats their pity, and hopes for restoration, which will turn to their confusion.

1 **T**HEN Job answered and said, 2 How long will ye vex my soul *with your censures and reproaches*, and break me in pieces with words? 3 These ten times have ye reproached me, *that is, many times have ye advanced the same charges against me*: ye are not ashamed [that] ye make yourselves strange to me, as *if I was a stranger, and my former manner of life was utterly unknown to you*. 4 And be it indeed [that] I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself; *I have suffered enough already, and you need not make my case worse by your reproaches*. 5 If indeed ye will magnify [yourselves] against me, and plead against me my reproach; *if you will still plead my calamity as a ground to condemn me, let this answer suffice you*; 6 Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net; *God has brought unavoidable miseries upon me, so that I am closed up by them, like a bird or fish in a net*. 7 Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but [there is] no judgment; *I am ignorant of the cause of them, and therefore can have no redress, which makes my case the more pitiable*. 8 He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths; *if there is any way to extricate myself, I cannot see it*. 9 He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown [from] my head; *all my dignity and authority is lost*. 10 He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree *plucked up by the roots*. 11 He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as [one of] his enemies; *he hath done all this with such violence, as if he was extremely incensed against me*. 12 His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle; *a whole army of calamities surround and attack my defenceless habitation*. 13 He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me; *my neighbours and acquaintance act as if they did not know me*.

14 My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me; *my relations by blood, and my familiar friends, refuse the common offices of friendship.* 15 They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight; *those who have been hospitably entertained by me, yea, my domestic servants, count me as a stranger.* 16 I called my servant, and he gave [me] no answer; I entreated him with my mouth, *as if he had been my master.* 17 My breath is strange to my wife, though I entreated for the children's [sake] of mine own body; *my wife will not come near me, though I entreat her by the memory of our dear children.* 18 Yea, young children despised me; *orphans that I had nourished and educated;* I arose, and they spake against me; *I arose to invite them, and they gave me reproachful language.* 19 All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me; *those with whom I was most familiar, and in whom I placed the greatest confidence, abhorred me, and became my enemies.* 20 My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth; *in consequence of all this, I am reduced to a skeleton, and have nothing left but my lips to complain with; therefore,* 21 Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me; *since I meet with pity nowhere else, do you at least pity me.* 22 Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh; *as if you had as much right to afflict me as he, and were not satisfied with my flesh, but would devour me alive?* 23 Oh that my words, *that is, my protestations of my own innocence and integrity,* were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! *inscribed on some durable substance*:* 24 That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! *alluding to the custom of putting inscriptions on stones or rocks.* 25 For I know [that] my redeemer liveth, and [that] he shall stand at the latter [day] upon the earth: 26 And [though] after my skin, [worms] destroy this [body,] yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; [though] my reins be consumed within me†. 28 But ye should say, Why persecute we him, *let us wait*

* Printing was not known to the ancients.

† There are great debates among the learned, whether Job refers in the twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, and twenty-seventh verses to a resurrection of his body from the grave, or to his restoration to prosperity, which would be a proof of his righteousness. It is a very difficult question. The passage is very obscure in the original, as may be seen by the many words which our translators have been obliged to insert to make up the sense. If it is interpreted of the Resurrection, he declares his belief, that not only his separate spirit should remain, but that his flesh should

a while, seeing the root of the matter is found in me? a principle of true piety, which you ought to cherish, though I have many failings. 29 Be ye afraid of the sword, instead of threatening me, look to yourselves, lest the judgments of God seize upon you: for wrath, that is, the wrath of God, [bringeth] the punishments of the sword, or some other dreadful calamity, that ye may know [there is] a judgment more righteous and equitable than yours.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE here see that the unfaithfulness and unkindness of relations and friends, is one of the most cutting afflictions; there is none that Job more pathetically bewails, and under which he more earnestly entreats the pity of his friends. When men are in affliction their friends often forsake them, their relations prove unkind, and those who should support and pity, reproach or desert them. Let this teach us to cease from man, and not raise our expectations too high from any friend or relation. When such afflictions befall us, let us own the hand of God, and be more zealous to secure his friendship; he hath said to every one of his faithful servants, *I will never leave nor forsake thee.*

2. Job's expressions of an expected restoration, will naturally lead our thoughts to the general resurrection, if they do not immediately refer to it. We christians know assuredly that there shall be a resurrection of the dead; that good men, if they are never restored to health and prosperity here, shall rise again at

be recovered, and that at last he should see God appearing to plead his cause, though not only his flesh but his very vitals were consumed. To this interpretation it is objected, that the Jews seem to have had very imperfect notions of a resurrection; they never quote this place as a proof of it; that Job, not being of the family of Jacob, it is not likely that the author of the poem should put words into his mouth so expressive of a resurrection. Besides, Ezekiel, who was probably the author of this book, illustrates the restoration of Israel from captivity, by the vision of dry bones recovered; which throws a light upon this passage; and Zophar's argument in the next chapter, seems to be levelled against Job's expectation of temporal prosperity returning.

On the other interpretation the words will stand thus, *For I know that my deliverer, (that is, out of this calamity) is the living, (that is, the living God) and at the latter end, (day is not in the original) at the end of this debate, he will stand upon the dust, (to plead the cause in my favour.) Nay, after this skin of mine is consumed away, (by grief and sorrow), yet in my flesh (which I shall recover again) shall I see God, whom I shall see, (not for myself but) on my side (as the word is elsewhere rendered), that is, as my friend and comforter, and mine eyes shall behold, and not a stranger (divested of compassion like you); notwithstanding my very reins are consumed within me; though I am reduced to the greatest extremity, and just dying.*

The ingenious Mr. Thomas Scott, in his Appendix to the book of Job, vindicates the former sense, as referring to a resurrection. Dr. Kennicott gives the latter translation of it.

the last-day. Though worms destroy their bodies, Christ shall renew and change them, and they shall see him appearing as their redeemer. Let us be thankful for the clear discoveries of the New Testament on this important head; and give diligence to secure an interest in this living redeemer; that when he appears the second time, it may be to our complete and everlasting salvation.

3. Let us be careful not to persecute our brethren, especially if we have reason to believe *the root of the matter is in them*. To persecute even wicked men, with bitter censures and reproaches, is not likely to do any good; but it is highly criminal and abominable to treat those so, who appear to have a sincere principle of religion and regard to God, though they are chargeable with folly, weakness, and mistakes. Let us therefore pity their affliction and infirmity, and endeavour to promote their progress in religion, their peace, and their hope. To excite us to this, let us remember there is a future judgment, and that hard reproaches and unkind usage, are then to be accounted for, as well as profaneness and hypocrisy. *Seeing then that we look for the coming of Jesus Christ, let us give diligence to be found of him in peace with God and with one another, and every way without spot and blameless.*

CHAPTER XX.

Zophar goes on to assert as before, that prosperous sinners are always miserable; that they shall be forced to restore their ill-gotten goods; shall entail a curse on their families; and that they are in continual fear and danger.

1 **T**HEN answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, 2 Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for [this] I make haste; *he draws an argument from what Job said in the close of the last chapter. As I would avoid the judgments of God, and not be an accomplice in thy crime, I must say what my inward convictions of mind suggest to me.* 3 I have heard the check of my reproach, *and this might put me in a rage, but I will restrain myself,* and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer *rationally and calmly.* 4 Knowest thou [not] this of old, since man was placed upon earth, 5 That the triumphing of the wicked

[is] short? *Job having allowed that wicked men prosper in this world many times, Zophar maintains that it is but for a while, all their prosperity and joy are but uncertain things; and the joy of the hypocrite [but] for a moment?* 6 Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; though he arrive at the highest pitch of greatness, and overtop all mankind; [Yet] he shall perish for ever like his own dung, in the most contemptible manner: they which have seen him, shall say, Where [is] he? those who envied or feared him shall say, Where is he? what is become of him? 8 He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night; all his former honour and happiness is but like the joy of a dream. 9 The eye also [which] saw him with envy shall [see him] no more; neither shall his place any more behold him. 10 His children shall seek to please the poor, and his hands shall restore their goods; he shall be poorer than the poorest; his children shall be glad to be servants in the families which he oppressed, and be obliged by public justice, or the racks of conscience, to restore the goods of which he wronged others. 11 His bones are full [of the sin] of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust; the pain and anguish of youthful sins shall stick by him, and bring him to the grave. 12 Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, [though] he hide it: under his tongue; 13 [Though] he spare it, and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth to suck out its sweetness, though he is told of its poisonous quality: 14 [Yet] his meat in his bowels is turned, [it is] the gall of asps within him; it becomes bitter, painful and destructive, torments his conscience, and destroys him. 15 He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly; force him to part with them with a violence like that with which the stomach throws up what oppresses it. 16 He shall suck the poison of asps: the viper's tongue shall slay him; his riches shall be poison to him, and his agonies be like a man whose whole mass of blood is envenomed by a poisonous serpent. 17 He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter; his expectations shall be disappointed, he shall lose all the fine things he hoped for. 18 That which he laboured for shall he restore, and shall not swallow [it] down: according to [his] substance [shall] the restitution [be,] and he shall not rejoice [therein;] restitution shall devour his substance, his ill-gotten goods shall bring a curse on all the rest, so that he shall have no comfort in them; and the reason is,

19 Because he hath oppressed [and] hath forsaken the poor; [because] he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not; 20 Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, he shall not save of that which he desired; *his conscience shall be uneasy, and he deprived of all his desirable things.* 21 There shall none of his meat be left; therefore shall no man look for his goods; *nothing shall be left for him to subsist upon, and no one desire to be his heir.* 22 In the fullness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits; *the greater abundance he has gained, the more shall he be distressed by his own conscience: every hand of the wicked shall come upon him, being obliged to restore to some and being plundered by others.* 23 [When] he is about to fill his belly, [God] shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, *he shall have no comfort in his enjoyments while they are continued; when he is about to eat, God shall set another dish before him, full of his wrath, and shall rain [it] upon him while he is eating, and thinks himself most secure.* 24 He shall flee from the iron weapon, [and] the bow of steel shall strike him through; *when God is armed against him, he shall not escape; if he flies from the sword, the arrow shall follow and pierce him.* 25 It is drawn, and cometh out of the body; yea, the glittering sword cometh out of his gall: terrors [are] upon him: *though mortally wounded by divine judgments, other terrors shall walk over him, and trample upon him as he lies wounded and expiring.* 26 All darkness [shall be] hid in his secret places; *all kinds of grievous calamities shall follow him to those secret places where he retires to hide and secure himself: a fire not blown, a pestilence or burning fever, shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle: his posterity also shall inherit the curse.* 27 The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him; *extraordinary calamities from heaven shall even proclaim his iniquity to all about him, and the earth shall rise up as unable any longer to endure a wretch who is such a reproach and burden to it.* 28 The increase of his house shall depart, [and his goods] shall flow away in the day of his wrath; *shall roll away like water when God manifesteth his wrath against him.* 29 This [is] the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God; *he hath appointed it to him, and will bring it upon him.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WHENEVER we answer in any argument or debate, let it be with the spirit of our understanding; be careful rightly to understand, and duly consider what has been said, and what we have to reply, and never to answer in haste or passion. This is peculiarly necessary when we think we are reproached; as many call the most friendly check a check of reproach, and think a passionate answer justifiable. Calm deliberation and cool answers are the only likely way to find out truth, to vindicate our characters, and silence reproaches.

2. Let young people learn the danger of youthful sins, especially of fleshly lusts, which are sins that easily beset them; else they will probably have their bones full of them. Gluttony and drunkenness, whoredom and debauchery, bring upon men such diseases as are painful to them all their lives after; and if they do not (as they generally do) cut short their days, yet they entail pain, sorrow and misery upon them. Young persons should be careful to flee youthful lusts, and not indulge any sensual gratifications; for however pleasant they may think such sins in the commission, *they will be turned to the gall of asps within them, and they will mourn at the last, when their flesh and their bodies are consumed.*

3. Honesty is the best policy; the surest way to preserve and increase what we have, and afford us comfort in the use and enjoyment of it. The description here given of the miserable condition, the contempt, poverty, and ruin of oppressors, and those who by fraud and dishonesty increase their substance, is very beautiful and moving, and ought to make us afraid of unjust gain, and lead us to practise only fair, upright, and honourable methods of increasing and preserving our substance.

4. The frequent descriptions given in this book of the inward misery and utter ruin of prosperous sinners, furnish us with repeated and very necessary cautions *to seek a better and an enduring substance.* They may promise themselves great things, and by their oppression, hypocrisy, and fraud in their dealings with others, they may expect rivers of wealth and pleasure. But the voice of conscience will not be drowned, nor the anger of God escaped. Zophar's application of these remarks to Job was unjust; but take the wicked in the whole course of his distress, and what is here

said of the righteous vengeance of God inflicted on him, will be certainly and strictly true. When we read what is the portion and inheritance of the most prosperous sinners, let us dread their condition, and seek a better portion, an interest in God and the Redeemer; and an inheritance in heaven, which, as it is incorruptible and undefiled, will never fade away.

CHAPTER XXI.

Job here comes close to the point in debate between him and his friends, and begins by desiring a patient hearing.

1 **BUT** Job answered and said, 2 Hear diligently my speech, and let this be your consolations, *it is all the comfort I have to expect from you.* 3 Suffer me that I may speak; *do not interrupt me, hear me attentively;* and after that I have spoken mock on. 4 As for me, [is] my complaint to man? and if [it were so,] why should not my spirit be troubled? *my complaint is to God, and therefore you should not pronounce sentence; but if it was to man, there is sufficient reason for it, because you reproached me.* 5 Mark me, and be astonished *at the miseries that have befallen me,* and lay [your] hand upon [your] mouth; *be silent from reproach and wait the issue.* 6 Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh; *I am astonished at the recollection of my own great and aggravated miseries.* After this introduction, he asserts that Zophar's proof of the misery of the wicked is not universally true. 7 Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? *if what you say is true, how come the wicked to enjoy so much wealth, honour and power, and that to old age?* 8 Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes; *they see their children and grandchildren happily settled, and very prosperous.* 9 Their houses [are] safe from fear, neither [is] the rod of God upon them; *no man attacks them, neither does the immediate hand of God visit them.* 10 Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf; *their herds and flocks increase, and they meet with no disappointment in them.* 11 They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance; *they are healthful and merry.* 12 They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound

of the organ ; *they themselves abound in sensual delights.* 13 They spend their days in wealth, *their whole life is full of plenty and pleasure,* and in a moment go down to the grave, *without languishing, pain, or sickness, scarcely feeling themselves dying ;* 14 Therefore, *as a consequence of this,* they say unto God, Depart from us ; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. 15 What [is] the Almighty, that we should serve him ? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him ? *this is in effect their language, they think they owe him no service, and shall not be better for paying homage to him.* 16 Lo, their good [is] not in their hand ; *they are not prosperous, or cannot secure it without God :* the counsel of the wicked is far from me ; *I will never join with them in such impious sentiments, speeches, and practices.* 17 How oft is the candle of the wicked put out ? and [how oft] cometh their destruction upon them ? [God] distributeth sorrows in his anger ; *this is, not so frequently as you suppose, yet it is sometimes the case.* 18 They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away, *that is, light, worthless, and easily dispersed.* 19 God layeth up his iniquity, *that is, the punishment of his iniquity,* for his children : he rewardeth him, and he shall know [it ;] *you will say, if God does not punish him, yet he layeth up punishments for his children : I say, no ; he oftentimes rewards the sinner himself, so that he knows and feels it.* 20 His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty ; *he sees himself sinking and perishing under that wrath, which he would not before fear, and falling into destruction.* 21 For what pleasure [hath] he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst ? *the thought of his house's prosperity, when he is dead, is no comfort to him.* 22 Shall [any] teach God knowledge ? *direct his counsels, and tell him when and how to punish the wicked ?* seeing he judgeth those that are high, *princes and angels, therefore surely he knows how to judge us.* 23 One dieth in his full strength, *in the Hebrew, in his very perfection, or, in the strength of his perfection,* being wholly at ease and quiet. 24 His breasts are full of milk *and other juices,* and his bones are moistened with marrow. 25 And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, *after long pain and languishing,* and never eateth with pleasure. 26 They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them ; *there is no distinction between them here, so that we cannot tell good or bad by such events.* 27 Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices [which] ye wrongfully imagine against me ; *I know what you are ready to suggest,* 28 For ye say, Where [is] the house of the prince ?

and where [are] the dwelling places of the wicked? *what difference is there between Job under his calamity, and these wicked men he has been describing? To which he answers,* 29 Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens, *the continued prosperity of the wicked, in many cases, is so obvious, that the first passenger could inform you of instances of it, there were such plain tokens of their prosperity; but there is no doubt* 30 That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath; *they are preserved from common calamities here, to be punished in the other world.* 31 Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him [what] he hath done? *his power is so great that none dare tell him of his faults to his face, nor punish him for his wicked actions.* 32 Yet shall he be brought to the grave *in pomp*, and shall remain in the tomb, *in a stately monument.* 33 The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him, *he shall rest in the grave as other men do*, and every man shall draw after him, as [there are] innumerable before him; *he suffered nothing but what other men have done before him, and all that succeed shall suffer after him.* 34 How then comfort ye me in vain, *with vain hopes of recovering my former prosperity if I repent*, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood? *since it appears by common experience, that good men are often in great trouble, while bad men thrive and prosper in the world? You ill discharge the part of friends; you betray truth and piety, under pretence of defending it; and reproach and vex your friend, under pretence of comforting him.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE providence of God in suffering the wicked to prosper, and in afflicting the righteous, is often very astonishing to good men, and hath in all ages been a stumbling-block to them. We are too apt to judge by present appearances. Certainly God sees and hates their wickedness, and will punish it; but he bears long with them, waits with patience for their repentance, and makes use of them to serve his own purposes; and he will make their punishment more conspicuous and instructive hereafter. Let us *judge nothing before the time*, but *rest in the Lord and keep his way*; and remember these two maxims that are most plain and most important, that it shall be upon the whole *ill with the wicked, and well with the righteous*, whatever the former enjoy, whatever the latter may endure.

2. There may be much wealth and pleasure in families where there is no religion. We see multitudes, whose houses are safe from fear, their children healthful and gay; they have their balls and assemblies, mirth and music, and all the delights of sense; yet they forget and affront God. Such were the gentry in the days of the author of this book; and would to God ours in the general were any better. In their families, *the voice of prayer and praise is not heard*; their children are not taught devotion, humility, and industry. How wretched are such families, with all their riches and all their mirth. Let this thought cure us of too great an attachment to the wealth and pleasures of life; and teach parents to train up their children to something better than getting money, singing, dancing, and the like; and to *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*.

3. See to what heights of impiety and profaneness prosperity often leads men; they say unto God, Depart from us; think they have no concern with him, and because they will not walk in his ways, *do not desire the knowledge of them*. They think they owe nothing to the Almighty, and therefore will not pay him homage. The language of their heart is, What signifies praying? it will not pay debts, nor portion children; and only serves to make men melancholy. Thus most of the rich and the gay think; at least thus they act. But let this counsel be far from us. Let us not say as they say, nor do as they do; let us take pleasure in serving God and praising him. Let us *earnestly desire the knowledge of his ways*, and resolutely walk in them. Then, whatever we lose or suffer for religion, we shall enjoy the favour of God and everlasting happiness; and instead of being brought forth to execution in the day of God's wrath, we shall be brought forth to eternal life, joy and triumph.

4. The different seasons and circumstances in which men die, is a call to us to be always ready. *Some die in their full strength*, in the highest degree of health, when they think least of death, and imagine they have many prosperous years to come; others after long pain and languishing. Let us remember that we must die. Innumerable multitudes are gone this road; all that are now alive, or shall hereafter live, must come after us. Let this engage us to *apply our hearts to wisdom*, and lay up treasures in heaven, which will never decay, and secure fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

CHAPTER XXII.

Eliphaz, supposing that Job had accused divine Providence, in suffering the wicked to prosper and the righteous to be afflicted, vindicates the justice of God; charges upon Job many heinous sins; shows how such sinners have been punished; and offers some excellent advice.

1 **T**HEN Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, 2 Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? *if thou art righteous, God is no gainer by it, he is not obliged to reward thee.* 3 [Is it] any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? *is it any addition to his perfect happiness?* or [is it] gain [to him,] that thou makest thy ways perfect? 4 Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? will he enter with thee into judgment, *and crush thee lest thou shouldst grow too powerful for him?* 5 [Is] not thy wickedness great? and *are not* thine iniquities infinite? *and therefore thou needest not wonder at thy sufferings.* 6 For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought; *with great oppression hast taken a pledge for such a trifle as is not worth contending for;* and stripped the naked of their clothing; *stripped those of clothing who had scarce enough to cover their nakedness.* 7 Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry; *thou hast been cruel and unkind to the distressed.* 8 But [as for] the mighty man, he had the earth; and the honourable man dwelt in it; *thou hast been unjust as a magistrate, favouring the rich and great.* 9 Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken; *thou hast weakened and oppressed these, and rendered them more incapable of helping themselves than they were before.* 10 Therefore snares [are] round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee; 11 Or darkness, [that] thou canst not see; and abundance of waters cover thee, *therefore all these calamities are come upon thee; darkness and confusion overwhelm thee, so that thou hast no comfort, nor any way to extricate thyself.* 12 [Is] not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are! 13 And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? *God is infinitely great and majestic, and thou seemest to infer that he is not able to discern;* or 14 Thick clouds [are] a covering to him, that he

seeth not; and he walketh in the circuit of heaven; *he is too much taken up with the affairs of heaven, to take notice of what is done on earth.* 15 Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? *hast thou ever attended to what God did to the men of the old world?* 16 Which were cut down out of time, *before their time in the course of nature was come,* whose foundation was overflowed with a flood, *whom the flood swept away.* 17 Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them; *they said as the wicked do now, and yet thou sayest such persons prosper.* 18 Yet he filled their houses with good [things,] *and therefore showed his presence and observation by his agency:* but the counsel of the wicked is far from me, *I abhor the thought of such impiety and ingratitude, as much as thou dost.* 19 The righteous see [it,] and are glad: and the innocent laugh them to scorn; *probably referring to Noah and Lot, who derided their neighbours' ridiculous censures of Providence and rejoiced in the displays of the divine justice.* 20 Whereas our substance is not cut down, *we who are godly are still secure,* but the remnant of them the fire consumeth; *as the wicked of Sodom whom God utterly consumed.* 21 Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee; *therefore labour to gain a greater acquaintance with God and his ways, and be at peace with him by true repentance, thereby all prosperity shall come unto thee.* 22 Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart; *be concerned to learn his will, to remember it, and live suitably to it.* 23 If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, *and soon feel the comfortable effects of it;* thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles, *the punishment of iniquity shall be removed from thy tabernacle.* 24 Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the [gold] of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, *to secure thy wealth,* and thou shalt have plenty of silver. 26 For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God: *instead of doubting of his care, thou shalt have inward satisfaction in his love and favour, and lift up thy face in cheerful expectation of his protection and blessing.* 27 Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows; *God shall hear thy prayer, and thou shalt have cause and a heart to be thankful on that account.* 28 Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways; *thou shalt be able to accomplish thy schemes, and have success and comfort in thy proceed-*

ings. 29 When men are cast [down] then thou shalt say, [There is] lifting up; *thou shalt have courage and comfort thyself, and be able to encourage others; and he, that is, God, in answer to thy prayer, shall save the humble person.* 30 He shall deliver the island of the innocent, *or, the innocent shall deliver the island, that is, the whole country when it is in danger: and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands, by thy sincere prayers and holy life**.

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE all-sufficiency of God for his own happiness, is a very useful and instructive thought. He is infinitely perfect and happy. It is no gain to him that we are righteous; he can be no man's debtor. It is therefore great condescension in him to require and encourage our service; and all his rewards must be of grace, and not of debt. He does not punish or afflict men for fear of them; we can do him no harm; therefore he most kindly intends our benefit, and we ought patiently to submit.

2. How may the best of men be falsely accused! and that not only by the bad, but by those who upon the whole are wise and good. These charges against Job are unjust; his character was quite the reverse; he was an upright magistrate, just and kind and pious. This reflection is designed to teach us how common it is even for good men to think worse of one another than they deserve, and to caution us against uncharitable censures. *The devil is the accuser of the brethren*: let us not be like him, and imitate him in this dirty work. And when we are falsely accused, let us not revile again; but, with Christ, *commit our cause to Him who judgeth righteously.*

3. A sense of God's infinite grandeur and majesty, should never lead us to think he is unacquainted with us, or unconcerned about us. He is indeed *in the heights of heaven*, and higher than the stars. Heaven is the immediate residence of his glory, and the stars are but the pavement of his palace. This should lead us to address him with the greatest reverence; and still remember, that *he can judge through the dark cloud.* It is no burden or disparagement to him to govern the world; for *all things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*

4. Those who may differ and dispute about some matters of

* This was fulfilled when Eliphaz and his friends were delivered by Job's prayers; and so it was a prophecy which he little thought of.

religion, should join in condemning atheism and impiety. Eliphaz protests against entertaining the counsel of the wicked; he abhorred their sentiments and ways. There are some important principles which we should still abide by, when we differ about lesser matters, such as, that God is omnipresent, righteous, and good; that religion is reasonable and necessary. Let us appear strenuously, and join heartily, in this righteous cause. This will prevent our differences from becoming irreconcilable, and our disputes uncharitable.

5. Let all of us, especially those that are in affliction, attend to and learn this useful lesson. It is excellent advice which Eliphaz here gives to Job, *v. 21*. Let us endeavour *to acquaint ourselves with God*; to know more of him, his nature, and will, by meditation and prayer, and the study of his works, his providence, and his word. Let us submit to his law; treasure it up in our memory, and regulate our tempers and lives by it. Thus shall we probably enjoy prosperity; if not, we shall have what is much better, delight in God, comfort in approaching him, and a well-grounded hope of his favour, which will be a cordial under every affliction, a balance for every loss, and a source of comfort and joy even in death itself.

6. We learn, that eminently good men are public blessings; of great service to society, by their prayers for it, and their sedate and cheerful deportment: by keeping up the spirit of others in troublesome times, and their devotion and holy behaviour: this is so pleasing to God, as to engage him on that account, to send blessings on the nation or society to which they belong. As we love ourselves, our family and country, let us labour to have our hands pure, our prayers sincere and serious, and our whole conduct unblameable, honourable, and useful. Then shall we deliver our own souls, and contribute to the deliverance and happiness of all about us.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Job does not here make a direct reply to the discourse of Eliphaz, but wishes for a fair hearing; laments that he cannot see God appearing for him: comforts himself with the consciousness of his integrity: but complains that God denies him the consolation of clearing up his innocence, or of ending his afflictions by death.

1 **THEN** Job, *hearing his character still censured, and his discourse perverted,* answered and said, 2 *Even to day [is] my complaint bitter; notwithstanding your promises and consolations, I still have reason to complain: my stroke is heavier than my groaning can express.* 3 *Oh that I knew where I might find him! [that] I might come [even] to his seat! The name of God is omitted to increase the pathos. If he will not come down to me, I would go up to him, and present myself before his splendid throne.* 4 *I would order [my] cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments: this is a military phrase; I would marshal my cause, have a whole army of arguments, and bring them forth in a regular manner.* 5 *I would know the words [which] he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me; I long for his judgment, and would diligently attend to it.* 6 *Will he plead against me with [his] great power? No; but he would put [strength] in me; he would not use his power to oppress, but to assist me, and would pass sentence according to his clemency.* 7 *There the righteous might dispute with him? so should I be delivered for ever from my judge; there I might argue my cause, and be delivered from his condemning sentence. But my wishes are vain: for* 8 *Behold, I go forward, but he [is] not [there;] and backward, but I cannot perceive him; though he is every where present, yet I cannot see him appearing to plead for me; I am so hurried and discomposed by my affliction, that I am all confusion; I look* 9 *On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold [him:] he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see [him:]* 10 *But he knoweth the way that I take; this is my comfort, that he approves the course I have walked in: [when] he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold; my innocence shall be cleared, and my virtue shall be established by the trial.* 11 *My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined; I am conscious I have imitated*

God, being a follower of him. 12 Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; *I have ruled my life by all the intimations of the divine will; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary [food:] treasured them up as my richest dainties.* 13 But he [is] in one [mind,] and who can turn him? *or rather, he is the only one supreme Being, and [what] his soul desireth, even [that] he doeth; he governs himself by unalterable rules, and I cannot think to move him by my expostulations.* 14 For he performeth [the thing that is] appointed for me, *continues his determined purposes not to relieve me: and many such [things are] with him, that he will not give a man the reason of.* 15 Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him, *overwhelmed with his majesty and power.* 16 For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me; *instead of coming into his presence with cheerfulness, my heart is quite weakened and broken:* 17 Because I was not cut off before the darkness, [neither] hath he covered the darkness from my face, *so that it is matter of lamentation that I was not cut off by such darkness as now overwhelms me: for even death is denied me in the midst of death itself.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. It is no uncommon thing for good men, when in distress, to be quite at a loss to understand the providence of God. They go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but they cannot perceive him, v. 8. This arises partly from the nature of God, the depth of his counsels, and the unsearchableness of his judgments, and partly from the hurry and discomposure of their own spirits. Yet still they perform the thing appointed. Afflictions are sent in such number and measure as infinite wisdom ordains, and therefore undoubtedly are for the best.

2. It is allowable for afflicted persons humbly to plead their cause with God; to be particular and importunate in their requests; to fill their mouths with arguments, and urge them before the throne of grace, provided it be with a due sense of God's absolute power and unsearchable wisdom, and a patient resignation to his will.

3. It is comfortable to good men under afflictions, to have a consciousness of their own integrity. *God knows the way they take,* the course in which they have walked; and though they

have taken some false steps, yet that upon the whole *they have not declined from his ways*. Let us endeavour to trace his moral excellencies, to walk in his steps; and by a holy walk and conversation, endeavour to secure this comfort to ourselves.

4. Let all, and especially afflicted persons, cherish an high esteem for the word of God, as their necessary food; as necessary to support and comfort the soul, as food is to strengthen the body; to sustain the spiritual life, as food doth the natural life. Let us *hunger and thirst* after the word of God; earnestly desire and diligently seek it; highly prize it, heartily delight in it, and carefully treasure it up in our hearts. Then God will be our guide in prosperity, and our cordial in every distressing scene.

5. The end and use of afflictions should be seriously considered, v. 10. God designs to try us, to examine and bring into light and strengthen our virtues in the furnace of affliction; if it is properly improved, we shall come out as gold refined and purified. Let this be our prayer and endeavour, *that the trial of our faith may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ*.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Job here comes to the very hinge of the controversy between him and his friends; he directly answers their assertions concerning the present punishment of the wicked, by mentioning several kinds of wicked people, who, instead of being made an example of vengeance, lived in plenty, and died in ease.

1 **WHY**, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days? *if, as you say, God always punishes the wicked in this world, since he knows all things, and is a witness to the greatest wickedness, why do not those who know him, (truly pious and good men), see the triumph of his wrath and vengeance on the wicked?* 2 [Some] for instance remove the land marks; they violently take away flocks, and feed [thereof;] *defraud persons of their inheritance and substance in an open, notorious manner.* 3 They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge, *whose labour is all they have to support themselves with.* 4 They turn the needy out of the way; *they make the needy forsake the common road, for fear of meeting*

with them: the poor of the earth hide themselves together, as afraid to appear in their presence. 5 Behold, [as] wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work; rising betimes for a prey: the wild Arabs did so: the wilderness [yieldeth] food for them [and] for [their] children; they go out to rob, plunder, and murder, with as little shame as labourers to their daily business; and thus they support their families even in the wilderness. 6 They reap [every one] his corn in the field: and they gather the vintage of the wicked; they make incursions upon neighbouring countries, steal away their corn, and gather grapes, without considering who is the owner. 7 They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that [they have] no covering in the cold; they strip even the poor reaper and labourer. 8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter; they are so much set on their villany, that they lie all night on the mountains to watch their prey, and are glad to creep into a cave for shelter. 9 They pluck the fatherless from the breast, sell the child for a slave, and make the mother work, and take a pledge of the poor; take away their garments to pay a trifling debt. 10 They cause [him] to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf [from] the hungry; if he hath gleaned a sheaf of corn, he violently takes it from him; 11 [Which] make oil within their walls, [and] tread [their] winepresses, and suffer thirst; they deprive labourers and servants of their pay, and will not allow them to refresh themselves with the things they are preparing. 12 Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly [to them,] does not make them immediate examples of his justice. 13 They are of those that rebel against the light, endeavour to conceal their wickedness; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof, like owls and bats sitting where it cannot reach them. 14 The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy as he goeth to his work, and in the night is as a thief, waiting to rob others as they return. 15 The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth [his] face; wraps his face in his cloak, so that if he should be met, he may not be known. 16 In the dark they dig through houses, [which] they had marked for themselves in the day time; they mark the place where to enter, in the day time, and at night break in: they know not the light. 17 For the morning [is] to them even as the shadow of death: if [one] know [them, they are in] the terrors of the shadow of death; they fear the light of the morning should dis-

cover them, and if they are known they are in the agonies of death.

18 He [is] swift as the waters; the pirate who robs on the sea is so; their portion is cursed in the earth; whatever land they have is neglected and runs waste, and they betake themselves to this way of living: he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards; he gives up all the innocent pleasures of husbandry for a life of rapine.

19 Drought and heat consume the snow waters: [so doth] the grave [those which] have sinned; notwithstanding their wickedness they die by insensible degrees, and gently decay, as snow water sinks into the ground.

20 The womb shall forget him, his mother shall not remember him on account of any honour attending his death; the worm shall feed sweetly on him, he shall become their prey; he shall be no more remembered but with infamy; and his wickedness shall be broken as a tree, or violently destroyed, as a tree that is broken off from the place where it grows.

21 He evil entreateth the barren [that] beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow; he insulteth and oppresseth the barren and the widow, who are proper objects of compassion.

22 He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no [man] is sure of life; he overcomes the mighty, and no man can stand against him.

23 [Though] it be given him [to be] in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes [are] upon their ways; notwithstanding all his wickedness he is in safety and rests secure, though the eyes of God are on all his ways.

24 They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all [other,] and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn; they are sometimes taken off by a sudden stroke that gives them no pain, like ears of corn cut down in a moment.

25 And if [it be] not [so] now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth? if these things are not so, do you disprove them, and confute my reasonings. And indeed this was the matter in question, and there was no room to charge this discourse as being foreign and impertinent.

REFLECTIONS.

1. IN all our debates upon the providence of God, let us remember and acknowledge his omniscience. No being is hidden from him; his eyes are upon men's ways: a truth so evident, that we cannot but acknowledge it. The times of all men are in his hands, and the various events of their lives. He sees all the wickedness of men, and knows their ways, therefore it is a just

conclusion that he has wise and good ends in not immediately punishing them: the delay is not for want of knowledge or power. Some such first principles, firmly established in our minds, will help us to understand, at least to reconcile us to many difficulties and mysteries in the conduct of Providence.

2. *Say not the former times are better than these*; for it is by no means universally true. What variety of wickedness was there in old times! and how many different sorts! There is scarce any now, but what is pointed out even in this chapter: the same lusts and passions in wicked minds produce the same dreadful effects; though it is matter of lamentation that there should be such wickedness, deceit and cruelty at any time, especially under the gospel dispensation.

3. See what great labour and pains are necessary to be wicked. How much care and contrivance does it cost wicked men to conceal their designs, and to accomplish their purposes. *They rise up early and sit up late*, and submit to many hardships and inconveniences. They take great pains to disguise themselves; and have many anxious fears lest a discovery should take place. Half these pains in a lawful calling and honest labour, would make them as rich, and much happier; yea, half the cares and thoughts and pains would have saved their souls. Shall wicked men submit to all this to gratify their lusts, and shall we grudge diligence, care, and pains, to serve God, and save our souls? God forbid!

4. Let us *judge nothing before the time*. When we see the wicked prosper, and such sinners as these living in plenty and worldly honour, and dying in peace, and perhaps, spoken of honourably by many survivors, let us not say, *God seeth not, nor regardeth*. Remember what reason hints to us, and what scripture assures of, that *God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and render to every man according to his works*. The future state will set every thing to rights. In the mean time let us not envy the portion of sinners, but seek one infinitely better; that when all their evil deeds are called over, censured, and punished, we may have praise of God, and enter into our Master's joy.

CHAPTER XXV.

Bildad could find nothing to reply to the point in debate ; but apprehending that Job had boasted too much of his own righteousness, and spoken irreverently of God, he here checks him for it ; and represents the greatness of God, and the meanness of man.

1 **T**HEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2 Dominion and fear [are] with him, *that is, God; supreme authority to give laws and dispose of his creatures; therefore he ought to be worshipped, and spoken of with the greatest reverence; he maketh peace in his high places; not only do the heavenly bodies obey his orders, but his angels most calmly consent to his service, and submissively bow to his will; they never clash or contend with each other; his presence imposes upon them a most respectful silence; and wilt thou clamour against him on earth, and quarrel at his dealings with thee?* 3 Is there any number of his armies? *the creatures here below are his armies, and all the hosts of heaven are under his command, therefore it is in vain to think of contending with him; yea, he is infinitely good as well as great, and upon whom doth not his light arise? his sun arises and shines, he bestows his favours and extends his providence to all men.* 4 How then can man be justified with God, *and accounted innocent at his tribunal?* or how can he be clean [that is] born of a woman? *how can a creature descended from weak, impure, and guilty mortals, boast of righteousness and purity before this glorious majesty?* 5 Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not: yea, the stars are not pure in his sight; *when compared with him, there is darkness and imperfection in the brightest luminary; even in those which men admire, and which some of them worship; all disappear before his perfect lustre, as the sun obscures all meaner lights.* 6 How much less man, [that is] a worm; and the son of man, [which is] a worm? *how can he compare with God in purity, man that is a worm, a moth, or small insect, and the son of man, which is a worm, that is, a mite, and can scarce be discerned? How can he pretend to be pure before God, who is a weak, defiled creature; vanity while he lives, and corruption when he is dead.*

REFLECTION.

THIS short chapter is extremely useful, as it inculcates this truth, which we have all great need to learn and lay to heart, that God is infinitely and incomprehensibly great; that we are weak, mean, and polluted. Let us think of him as perfectly pure, outshining the sun in lustre; as *the Father of lights*; as the universal Lord. Innumerable hosts are at his command; all obedient and submissive to his will. He is therefore *greatly to be feared*. Let us think of God in this light, and learn to think meanly of ourselves, as *vanity, darkness, and nothing* in his sight. Let us see how little reason we have to be proud; how unbecoming pride is for a worm; how much it is our wisdom to submit to him who is almighty. He sees many sins and corruptions in us, which we see not in ourselves; and therefore we may well tremble to appear before his tribunal. Farther, let this lead us to admire and adore the divine condescension in taking notice of us; and, above all, to acknowledge the grace of Christ Jesus in becoming a man of sorrows for our sake. David, speaking of the Messiah, says, *Psalm xxii. 6., I am despised, a worm, and no man*; (it is the same word in the original as that which is used here.) This was the most remarkable display of divine love to sinners. Let us make such thoughts familiar to our minds, and often make that reflection to which David alludes, *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* *Psalm viii. 4.*

CHAPTER XXVI.

Job observing Bildad wandering from the point, derides his affectation of wisdom, and shows him that he was as capable of talking of these things as himself.

1 **BUT** Job answered and said, 2 How hast thou helped [him that is] without power? *that is, Eliphaz, who was borne down by my arguments*; [how] savest thou the arm [that hath] no strength *as if he had said, Thou art a noble ally in this cause, a mighty*

support to the argument! 3 How hast thou counselled [him that hath] no wisdom? surely *Eliphaz is very unhappy to have so bad a defender!* and [how] hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is? *alluding to the shortness of his speech.* 4 To whom hast thou uttered words? *am I ignorant of these things?* and whose spirit came from thee? *dost thou speak by inspiration? Bildad had spoken of God's majesty in the heavens; here Job in an exalted strain goes on to observe other instances of it.* 5 Dead [things] are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof; *great gigantic things, as vast fishes, and the like.* 6 Hell [is] naked before him, and destruction hath no covering; *he displays his power in the unseen world; not only in the grave, but in the world of separate spirits, and in hell itself.* 7 He stretcheth out the north, *the whole expanse of heaven,* over the empty place, *the abyss or chaos,* [and] hangeth the earth upon nothing; *supports it, and keeps it in its place, notwithstanding its motions and revolutions.* 8 He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; *as in a bag, or leathern bottle, which prevents the rain from coming down violently, and causes it to distil in drops;* and the cloud is not rent under them. 9 He holdeth back the face of his throne, [and] spreadeth his cloud upon it; *conceals his brightest glory from human eyes, which are incapable of beholding it.* 10 He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end; *keeps the sea in bounds as long as the world shall stand.* 11 The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof; *the highest, strongest mountains, called the pillars of heaven, as the clouds seem to rest upon them, these tremble with earthquakes.* 12 He divideth the sea with his power, *raiseth high waves which look like deep furrows,* and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud, *maketh it calm again; or rather, here is an allusion to his dividing the Red sea and striking through the proud; in the original it is Rahab, that is, Egypt.* 13 By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens, *adorned them with so many bright luminaries;* his hand hath formed the crooked serpent, *the constellation so called, or the milky way*.* 14 Lo, these [are] parts of his ways, *the outlines or sketches of them:* but how little a portion is heard of him? *his wisdom is unsearchable: but the thunder of his power who can understand? it is as impossible to be traced, or discovered, as to resist the stroke of his arm, or withstand his thunder.*

* Bp. Sherlock thinks this is an allusion to Satan, appearing in that form to tempt Eve.

REFLECTIONS.

1. IT may be here observed, that useful truths may not always be to the purpose. Bildad hath some just and noble thoughts: the premises are good, but the conclusion wrong; it was not adapted to Job's case, nor suited to comfort him. He should have set before him consolations, rather than the majesty and terror of the Lord. It should be our care that our addresses to our friends, especially to those in affliction, may be suitable, *a word spoken in season*. This should be the peculiar study of ministers; and they should pray that God would give them the tongue of the learned.

2. Let us contemplate the omniscience and majesty of God. It is a useful and instructive subject. He sees all things, in heaven and earth; the deep places and repositories of the dead, and therefore he can raise them. *Hell is open to him*. Let us reverence his power, who supporteth the earth. It hath no prop but omnipotence: a man cannot hang a feather upon nothing, but God supports the earth. He formed the heavenly luminaries, he garnished them. Let this lead our thoughts to the almighty Architect: he can *shake the pillars of heaven, keep the sea within bounds, and in his hand are the deep places of the earth*. *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be feared*. His power is vast, his understanding infinite. *Who would not fear thee, O King of nations!*

3. We should remember and consider that we know but little of God at best. After the most diligent inquiries, the helps of reason, scripture, history, and observations, we know but a small part, only the outlines. His wisdom is infinite; his works, and the wonders contained in them, are innumerable. Let us guard against presumption, in arraigning his proceedings, and not determine positively upon a plan which we see but little of. Let our understanding and conscience pay the highest veneration to God. 'The more seriously we contemplate his nature and his works, the greater reason we shall have to admire and adore, and to say with the apostle, *O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out*.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Job in this chapter proceeds to assert his innocence; represents the doom of hypocrites, and the misery of the wicked, who are often, but not always, destroyed by signal judgments.

1 **MOREOVER** Job continued his parable*, and said, 2 [As] God liveth, [who] hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, [who] hath vexed my soul; *as God liveth who hath afflicted me, and taken away the comforts of my life;* 3 All the while my breath [is] in me, and the spirit of God [is] in my nostrils; 4 My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit; *as long as I live I will not vindicate myself, if guilty; or accuse myself, if innocent.* 5 God forbid that I should justify you, and confess the guilt with which you charge me: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. 6 My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach [me] so long as I live; *I am determined to maintain and defend my innocence, and never say or do any thing for which my conscience may upbraid me.* 7 Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous; *I can wish no greater mischief to my worst enemy, than to be wicked; and therefore I do not approve of it, whatever you may think of me.* 8 For what [is] the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, *though he grows rich and great, when God taketh away his soul? alas! he hath no comfortable hope of hereafter.* 9 Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? *he cannot expect it.* 10 Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God? *can he have comfort from religion, and will he persevere in it, even when afflictions come?* 11 I will teach you by the hand of God: [that] which [is] with the Almighty will I not conceal; *by the assistance of God, I will instruct you in some of the dispensations of his providence.* 12 Behold, all ye yourselves have seen [it;] why then are ye thus altogether vain? *I appeal to your own experience, which makes it strange you should persist in your opinion.* 13 This [is] the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, [which] they shall receive

* A parable here means a weighty and instructive discourse. He spoke as one having authority, as the word signifies.

of the Almighty; *this is often their portion, but not universally so.*
 14 If his children be multiplied, [it is] for the sword, *either of justice, or popular tumult*: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread; *others of them shall be reduced to poverty.* 15 Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep; *others shall be destroyed by pestilential diseases, so that none shall bury them; even their nearest relations shall not lament for them, their character is so detestable.* 16 Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; 17 He may prepare [it,] but the just shall put [it] on, and the innocent shall divide the silver; *God shall transfer it to another and better family.* 18 He buildeth his house as a moth, *which is most easily destroyed*, and as a booth [that] the keeper maketh, *a little hut, run up in the corner of the garden or vineyard, for the keeper to watch the fruit there.* 19 The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered, *shall not have the honour of burial*: he openeth his eyes, and he [is] not, *he is gone at once.* 20 Terrors take hold on him as waters, *in great numbers and violence*, a tempest stealeth him away in the night, *silently hurries him away*; or 21 The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth: and as a storm hurleth him out of his place, *in a public, violent manner.* 22 For [God] shall cast upon him, and not spare; *send one plague after another, so that he shall not escape, though he would fain flee out of his hand, though he often and vigorously attempts it.* 23 [Men] shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place; *men shall rejoice when he is dead, and hiss him out of the place where he has been so much magnified.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE infer, that serious, solemn engagements to be just and honest, are proper and useful. Job here binds himself, as it were by a solemn oath, not to lie or deceive, even where his own character and credit were concerned. In doubtful and indifferent matters it is good and safe not to be peremptory; but when sin and duty are concerned, it is necessary to lay ourselves under the strictest engagements. In this view, solemn professions in prayer, written engagements to be the Lord's, and partaking of the Lord's supper, which is a sacred oath of fidelity to God, are very useful, and ought frequently to be recollected.

2. The condition of the hypocrite is most dreadful; we could

wish even our greatest enemy no worse. They have no comfort in religion or devotion; they cannot look up to God with peace in time of distress. Religion is a task and drudgery to them, and will soon be cast off. They may gain much, may *heap up silver as dust*, but what profit is this, *when God taketh away their soul?* Let us dread this detestable character, and diligently *search and try our ways*, that we may not deceive and ruin ourselves.

3. We may reflect on the contrary character, that of a good man; and a truly honourable and comfortable one it is. *He delights himself in the Almighty; he always calls upon God*, and can approach his throne with humble confidence in the day of evil. Though he gains little of the world, has little or no silver, yet he has an infinitely better portion; he lives honoured, and dies lamented. When God takes away his soul, he takes it to himself, to be perfectly and eternally happy. And therefore,

4. Let us *never remove our integrity from us*, but continue upright, *hold fast our righteousness*, and *never let it go*, upon any temptation whatsoever; and be careful so to behave, that *our heart may never reproach us as long as we live*.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The purport of this whole chapter is, that there are depths in the divine councils unknown to us; particularly why God does not inflict those punishments on all wicked men in this life that he does upon some; and that the chief wisdom of man is to be religious.

1 **SURELY**, there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold [where] they fine [it;] *men find out precious metals and refine them.* 2 Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass [is] molten [out of] the stone; *they discover and prepare iron and brass.* 3 He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death; *he diggeth down into dark places, even into the most hidden and obscure parts of the earth, and searches them out in the most perfect manner.* 4 The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; [even the waters] forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men; *they find great waters in the bowels of the earth, which those who walk on it know not of, and by the art and labour of miners they are turned*

into a different channel, or drained off. 5 [As for] the earth, out of, or from, it cometh bread : and under it is turned up as it were fire ; sulphur, coals, and other fuel. The stones of it [are] the place of sapphires : and it hath dust of gold ; among the stones they find gems and gold. 7 [There is] a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen ; a place so deep, that no sharp-sighted bird ever discovered it. 8 The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it ; lions that rove about and seek solitary places never find it. 9 He putteth forth his hand upon the rock ; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. 10 He cutteth out rivers among the rocks ; and his eye seeth every precious thing ; the miners cut their way through rocks, or blow them up, and discover precious minerals or metals. 11 He bindeth the floods from overflowing ; and [the thing that is] hid bringeth he forth to light ; they dam up waters, or turn the course of rivers to find out the treasures contained in the earth. 12 But though he be so indefatigable and successful in these searches, yet where shall wisdom be found ? and where [is] the place of understanding ? he can never penetrate the depths of the divine counsel : 13 Man knoweth not the price thereof : neither is it found in the land of the living ; it cannot be possessed or found in this world. 14 The depth saith to the miners that dig in it, It [is] not in me : and the sea saith to the mariners and merchants that sail over it, [It] is not with me. 15 It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed [for] the price thereof. 16 It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. 17 The gold and the crystal cannot equal it : and the exchange of it [shall not be for] jewels of fine gold. 18 No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls : for the price of wisdom [is] above rubies. 19 The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold ; no gold, gems, or precious stones, can purchase this knowledge. 20 Whence then cometh wisdom ? and where [is] the place of understanding ? where shall it be found ? who shall show it us ? 21 Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air ; seeing the most soaring geniuses are quite ignorant of it. 22 Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears ; there are discoveries of the divine wisdom in the invisible state, which cannot be known in this ; yet they are as far short of the whole of the divine counsel, as an imperfect rumour is from certain knowledge. 23 God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof ; God's counsels are only known to himself : 24 For

he looketh to the ends of the earth, [and] seeth under the whole heaven; *his understanding is infinite, he sees all creatures*; 25 To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure; *he directs where, and how strong the winds shall blow, and determines how much water shall fall, and lie upon the earth.* 26 When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder; *when he appointed the course of the rain and lightning, and established the several laws of the air and other elements*; 27 Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out; *these were first established, and their regular course settled by his unerring wisdom; God knew them perfectly, and communicates to us what he thinks fit.* 28 And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that [is] wisdom; and to depart from evil [is] understanding; *this is the great discovery he hath made to men, that practical religion is the true wisdom, and that in which we are most concerned. Man was made, not to censure, but to adore that divine wisdom he cannot comprehend, and to pursue that which he can attain; and this God said to man, or, as in the original, to Adam: it is a law as old as the creation, and of universal importance.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE wisdom and goodness of God, in furnishing the bowels of the earth with such treasures, and in giving men wisdom and industry to get them out, claim our veneration and thankfulness. The metals and minerals, the coals and the clay, are all useful and serviceable to human life. God has lodged them in their different recesses, and different kinds in different parts of the earth, to quicken men's industry, and promote a circulation of money and exchange of valuable commodities. He has ordained so many difficulties in procuring them, that multitudes may be employed about them. All this cometh from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

2. Let us remember that the secrets of God's providence are not discoverable by us. The secret reasons of his conduct are hidden from us, and all future events; all the skill, sagacity, and application of men, cannot discover them. But there is a world beyond the grave where they are better known, though even there not perfectly. Let us not tire ourselves in the search of what we cannot understand, and what God never intended we should understand; but content ourselves with firmly believing (as we have

the greatest reason to do) that all things are well and wisely ordered; and that *all things shall work together for good to them that love God.*

3. Let us attend with the greatest care to what is plain, obvious and important. The distinction of good and evil, the immutable and indispensable obligations we are under *to fear the Lord, and depart from evil*: these are very evident, and most momentous. This is spoken of by Moses, David, Solomon, Job, and Christ himself, as *the one thing needful*. To man God hath said this in all ages. It is better to get this wisdom than gold; it is more easily obtained; the possession is more secure; the consequence more happy. This is the wisdom which God requires of man; and by this alone he can attain to eternal happiness. It lies open to the poor as well as the rich, to him that digs for jewels, as well as to him that wears them. Let this be our concern, for unto us God says, *Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

Job here reminds his friends of his former prosperity and honour; tacitly reproving them for attending no more to what he said, which was so different from the respect with which he was formerly treated; and he interweaves solemn protestations of his innocence.

1 **MOREOVER** Job continued his parable, and said, 2 Oh that I were as [in] months past, as [in] the days [when] God preserved me *with peculiar tenderness and care*; 3 When his candle shined upon my head, [and when] by his light I walked [through] darkness; *when I had continued tokens of his favour, which spread a glory around me*; 4 As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God [was] upon my tabernacle; *when I had pleasing communion with God, and he seemed to dwell in my house, as his tabernacle*; 5 When the Almighty [was] yet with me, *showed himself gracious, and [when] my children [were] about me, offering me their assistance and services*; 6 When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil; *when he blessed me with such prosperity that I had butter and oil as plentiful as water*; 7 When I went out to the gate through the city, [when] I prepared my seat in the street! *when I went out to the place of*

judicature. 8 The young men saw me and hid themselves, *ashamed to be surprised in any irregular behaviour*: and the aged arose, [and] stood up, *to show me reverence.* 9 The princes refrained talking, and laid [their] hand on their mouth; *there was a general silence, waiting for what I had to say.* 10 The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth; *there was profound attention of princes and nobles to my words.* When the ear heard [me,] then it blessed me; and when the eye saw [me,] it gave witness to me; *I was so far from being a tyrant, as you suggest, that I was a public darling; when my name was mentioned every body was ready to give me a good word, and their very looks discovered their esteem:* 12 Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and [him that had] none to help him, *from their enemies.* 13 The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy; *I had the prayers and blessings of those whose lives and estates I had preserved.* 14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment [was] as a robe and a diadem; *my wisdom and equity in administering justice, were more conspicuous and ornamental than my robes and ensigns of honour.* 15 I was eyes to the blind, and feet [was] I to the lame; *I directed the ignorant and perplexed, and helped the weak and the feeble.* 16 I [was] a father to the poor: and the cause [which] I knew not I searched out; *I was not only a patron, but a father to the poor, providing for him, as well as protecting him; and was unwearied in searching out the merits of his cause to do him justice.* 17 And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth; *I punished the wicked, and made them restore what they had unjustly gotten.* 18 Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply [my] days as the sand: *I thought I should continue prosperous and die honourably in my house, and not be driven like a bird from his nest.* 19 My root [was] spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch; *like a tree by the rivers, I thought I should never wither.* 20 My glory [was] fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand; *my esteem and reputation were growing, and my power to defend my fortune and dignity continued and increased.* 21 Unto me [men] gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. 22 After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them; *all were attention; my words were a law; I was the oracle of the country; my speech distilled and insinuated into their hearts, like showers of snow.* 23 And they waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their

mouth wide, [as] for the latter rain ; *they waited impatiently for my opinion, and received it with eagerness.* 24 [If] I laughed on them, they believed [it] not ; and the light of my countenance they cast not down ; *if I laid aside my gravity, and condescended to be cheerful and familiar among them, they could scarce believe themselves ; yet this did not breed contempt, they still kept up their reverence for me.* 25 I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army ; *I could do as much by my influence as if I had been a monarch, or a general of an army ; yet I did not abuse my authority, but was as one [that] comforteth the mourners ; I treated all about me with as much humanity and tenderness, as a person does a dear friend who is in distress.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. How little do young people know what is before them in life ! After a comfortable and prosperous youth, they may be in such circumstances, as to wish for the days and months past. Let them set out with moderate desires, and not expect too much from this world ; but cultivate an humble and contented spirit. The less we expect, the less grievous will be our disappointments.

2. Those who have wealth, power, wisdom, or any influence, should use it for valuable purposes. Job is an excellent pattern for all, especially for magistrates ; let them in imitation of him, do justice, love mercy, be friends of the poor, and patrons of the oppressed ; otherwise their robes, and swords, and other ensigns of honour, will be only a reproach. Let all, according to their various spheres and abilities, endeavour to do good ; to be public blessings, and the darlings of the place where they live ; (a most noble, honourable, and God-like character !) and they will be esteemed and revered ; and it will be a pleasure to them, (as it was to Job,) to recollect their generous and charitable actions ; even when the power of repeating them is lost. It is in the power of all to pity and comfort the afflicted ; and a noble act of charity it is. *Let us learn to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

3. Worthy, useful, and generous men, ought to be highly esteemed and revered. It is a just debt to them, and will be an encouragement to the like conduct in others. Let us give every man's character its just encomium ; *pay honour to whom honour is*

due. Where men appear to lay themselves out for the public good, they deserve public applause; every one should attest their character, and show them all that respect, which their virtue and usefulness claim.

4. When amidst the greatest prosperity and honour, let us expect changes, and especially think of death. Men are ready to be confident of the continuance of their wealth and enjoyments; perhaps Job was so. Let us learn from the sad change in his circumstances, and many such changes within our own knowledge, *not to be high-minded, but fear*. He thought of death; his prosperity did not make him forget that. Let us daily think of it, and prepare for it; and then, whether we have praise of men or no, we shall certainly have praise of God, and be applauded before the assembled world at the last-day.

CHAPTER XXX.

Job proceeds to describe the vileness and misery of his present condition, to move the compassion of his friends, especially as they thought him so near his end.

1 **BUT** now [they that are] younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock; *persons who durst not before look me in the face, and whose fathers I would not have set with the meanest shepherd or servant in my family.* 2 Yea, whereto [might] the strength of their hands [profit] me, in whom old age was perished? *in their best state they were good for nothing, but now they are wholly useless.* 3 For want and famine [they were] solitary; fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and waste; *beggary fellows who were glad to hide themselves in the wilderness.* 4 Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper roots [for] their meat; *fed on any coarse herbs or roots they found there.* 5 They were driven forth from among [meu,] (they cried after them as [after] a thief;) *they were driven, as unworthy of human society, and they fled as if an hue and cry was after them;* 6 To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys [in] caves of the earth, and [in] the rocks; *they sought shelter in rocks.* 7 Among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together, *and lived like wild asses.* 8 [They

were] children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth; *they were descended from a scandalous crew, and were as infamous as their parents.* 9 And now am I their song, yea, I am their by-word, *their pastime.* 10 They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face, *they treat me insolently.* 11 Because he hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me; *because God hath taken away my power and authority, with which I held them as with a bridle, so they now abuse me.* 12 Upon [my] right [hand] rise the youth: they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction; *a parcel of despicable villains, whose fathers or themselves I had punished as a magistrate, come and insult me, and charge me with tyranny and injustice in my office.* 13 They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they have no helper; *they are fruitful in inventing calumnies against me, and need no person's help.* 14 They came [upon me] as a wide breaking in [of waters :] in the desolation they rolled themselves [upon me,] *like soldiers entering into a besieged city, through a wide breach.* 15 Terrors are turned upon me: they pursue my soul as the wind: and my welfare passeth away as a cloud *that is dispersed by it.* 16 And now my soul is poured out upon me; the days of affliction have taken hold upon me; *I pour out many tears, and my soul is faint through grief.* 17 My bones are pierced in me in the night season; and my sinews take no rest, *by reason of the violent pain I have in the night.* 18 By the great force [of my disease] is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat; *I have such a discharge from my sores that it quite stiffens my garment and makes it painful.* 19 He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes; *he, or rather it, that is, my distemper, has brought me low, and trampled upon me like mire; which aggravates all the rest.* 20 I cry unto thee *for deliverance and the judgment of my cause,* and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me [not.] 21 Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me; *thou actest towards me like an implacable enemy.* 22 Thou liftest me up to the wind; thou causest me to ride [upon it,] and dissolvest my substance; *my health, my comforts, all are carried away as with a whirlwind.* 23 For I know [that] thou wilt bring me [to] death, and [to] the house appointed for all living, *I think of this, and it is my only comfort.* 24 Howbeit he will not stretch out [his] hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction; *but yet God does not let out his hand so fur*

as to bring me there, though there would be some alleviation or comfort in that destruction, as the word signifies. 25 Did I not weep for him that was in trouble? was [not] my soul grieved for the poor? *I do not therefore suffer for my hard-heartedness.* 26 When I looked for good, then evil came [unto me :] and when I waited for light, there came darkness; *my trouble was aggravated, because unexpected.* 27 My bowels boiled, and rested not: the days of my affliction prevented me; *I had violent inward commotions, which came suddenly and unexpectedly upon me.* 28 I went mourning without the sun; *like a mourner, I covered my face:* I stood up, [and] I cried in the congregation; *I cried for pity to all around me, and could not help it, even in large assemblies.* 29 I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls; *I am so melancholy, that I could dwell even in a desert.* 30 My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat; *my skin is parched, and my marrow quite exhausted.* 31 My harp also is [turned] to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep; *all musical instruments are laid aside, and nothing but mourning and weeping come in their room.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET not wise and good men wonder if they should be abused and vilified. It is the lot of many such; it was of Job, and a greater than Job, even Christ; *who was despised and rejected of men, spit upon, insulted and treated as the greatest criminal. The servant is not above his master. Let us learn of him, when reviled, not to revile again.*

2. See how vain a thing popular applause is, and how little to be depended upon. Men may soon fall from the greatest height of dignity, to the lowest depth of disgrace. This should engage us to seek the honour which cometh from God; that is noble, substantial, and will be everlasting.

3. See how little reason we have to be fond of the body, and over anxious about it. How soon may it be reduced to the pitiful condition of Job's, be a heavy burden itself, and make every other burden almost insupportable. Let us look upon it as a vile body, and not pamper it; which will only make it more liable to diseases, and less able to bear up under them.

4. Let us bless God that we are not exposed to such contempt and afflictions as those, which are here so movingly described. Job's case, and the cases of others in like circumstances,

are very pitiable. We should thank God for the health, ease, and reputation we have, and consider them as talents to be improved for him.

5. It will be a great satisfaction to us, when affliction comes, to think that we have pitied and *helped others under their affliction*: ver. 25. Job comforts himself with this thought. Unmerciful and hard-hearted people will hear of their temper and conduct again from their own consciences, when they come to need pity and comfort from God at last; for *he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy*.

6. We should think of the grave as *the house appointed for all living*. It is a cold, disagreeable dwelling; but thither we must remove. *It is appointed for all*, the rich and poor, small and great. Let us consider that it is God who brings us thither: a comfortable thought to good men, in the prospect of their awful change. And it should engage us all to prepare for our removal; that when the body is lodged in that house, our separate spirit may be removed to the paradise above, the world of everlasting serenity, honour, and joy.

CHAP. XXXI. 1—23.

Lest the misery Job had mentioned in the former chapter should be considered as a proof of guilt, he here dwells on his behaviour in his private capacity; makes his last solemn appeal to God, and offers himself as it were to all the power of his thunder and vengeance, if it were not so.

1 **I** MADE a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? *I watched against all occasions of uncleanness.* 2 For what portion of God [is there] from above? and [what] inheritance of the Almighty from on high, *for those that allow themselves in that sin? they forfeit his blessing.* 3 [Is] not destruction to the wicked? and a strange [punishment] to the workers of iniquity? *he exposes himself to God's curse, and to dreadful destruction.* 4 Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? *he reads even my secret thoughts.* 5 If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hastened to deceit; *if I have been familiar with it, or accustomed to it; if I have hastened to defraud, to break my promise, or to cheat*

my neighbour ; 6 Let me be weighed in an even balance, *let me be impartially tried*, that God may know mine integrity. 7 If my step hath turned out of the way *of justice, through fear or favour*, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands ; *if I have been covetous or taken a bribe* ; 8 [Then] let me sow, and let another eat, *the corn I have sown* ; yea, let my offspring be rooted out ; *all the trees I have planted with so much pains*. 9 If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or [if] I have laid wait at my neighbour's door ; *if I have been allured by a woman, or attempted privately to seduce my neighbour's wife* ; 10 [Then] let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her ; *let my wife be made a slave of, and let me be wronged as much as I have wronged others*. 11 For this [is] an heinous crime ; yea, it [is] an iniquity [to be punished by] the judges ; *it is a capital crime, and should be punished by the magistrates*. 12 For it [is] a fire [that] consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase ; *it would consume my estate, my reputation, my body, and soul too*. 13 If I did despise the cause of my man servant or of my maid servant, when they contended with me ; *though I had the power of life and death over them, yet I treated them kindly, gave them leave to vindicate themselves, and plead their own cause before me*. 14 What then shall I do when God riseth up ? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him ? *when God, our common master, comes to call us to account, what can I say ?* 15 Did not he that made me in the womb, make him ? and did not one fashion us in the womb ? *are they not as nearly related to God, and as equally accountable to him, as I am ? and will he not do them justice as well as me ?* 16 If I have withheld the poor from [their] desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail ; *if I have been cruel to them, or failed in giving them that relief they desired, as Eliphaz has charged me with* ; 17 Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof ; *if I have denied them food convenient* ; 18 (For from my youth he was brought up with me, as [with] a father, *sentiments of compassion early worked upon me* ; and I have guided her, *that is, the widow from my mother's womb ; from my youngest days* ;) 19 If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering ; *if I have not supplied the poor with clothing as well as food* ; 20 If his loins have not blessed me, and [if] he were [not] warmed with the fleece of my sheep ; *a beautiful phrase, intimating that every time he put on his garments he would applaud me and pray for me* ; 21 If I have lifted up my hand

against the fatherless, *to oppress, or even threaten them*, when I saw my help in the gate; *my brother magistrates sitting in the courts of justice, ready to defend me in so doing*: 22 [Then] let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone; *let that guilty arm drop off*. 23 For destruction [from] God [was] a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure; *though no man could punish me, yet the majesty of God awed me, and the fear of him made me afraid to do wrong*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE general reflection from this chapter is, that it gives us an amiable idea of Job's character, and renders him a noble pattern for our imitation, particularly in the following instances:

1. We learn from Job's example, to avoid all the lusts of the flesh, especially uncleanness. That we may abstain from this detestable evil, let us abstain from the appearance and occasions of it; let us make a covenant with the eyes, and not fasten them on any object that may occasion impure imaginations; let us not indulge unchaste fancies or desires. Those who would keep from sin, must keep from the first step to it. Remember that *God sees our ways, and counts our steps*. If men do not punish us for uncleanness and adultery, God will. *It is a fire that consumeth to destruction*, and will burn to the lowest hell. Abstain therefore from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

2. Let us guard against dishonest gain; never *walk with vanity, or haste to deceit*. Let us not lie, or prevaricate, for the sake of a good bargain, or suffer any blot to cleave to our hands. We should remember, that however we may weigh our commodities to others, *God will weigh us in an even balance*; and that if we have dealt honestly and fairly, our money will be used or even lost with comfort; and we shall have true pleasure in the reflection upon our upright conduct.

3. It is a good lesson to masters and mistresses to treat their servants with humanity and kindness; *not to despise their cause*, but be willing to hear reason, if they differ from us in judgment; and willing to hear their excuse, if they are chargeable with any fault. If they have any complaint to make, instead of bidding them hold their tongues, we should give them a patient hearing, and in every respect do what is just and equal. How forcible are the arguments to this: they are made of the same clay; have the

same relation to God, and therefore are not to be trampled upon and insulted. *What shall we do when God riseth up? If he should always chide, and be angry for ever; if he should despise our cause, what will become of us? Let us remember, that there is a Master in heaven, and that he is no respecter of persons.*

4. Let us learn to guard against an uncharitable and unmerciful disposition; be careful never to wrong the poor, the widow, and fatherless, but do them all the good we can, and furnish them with food and raiment, if it is in our power. Let us early teach our children lessons of compassion and mercy, and recommend the practice of this duty by our example. To excite us to this, let us consider the majesty of God; his wrath against the unmerciful; and also the promises he has made to the bountiful and the charitable. *To do good and to communicate let us not forget, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

CHAP. XXXI. 24, to the end.

24 **I**F I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, [Thou art] my confidence; *if I ever made an idol of my wealth, or thought it would entitle me to good, or secure me from evil;*
 25 If I rejoiced because my wealth [was] great, and because mine hand had gotten much; *if I immoderately rejoiced in the wealth left me by my ancestors, or in what I had gotten;* 26 If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking [in] brightness; *a beautiful description of the moon passing through the clouds;* 27 And my heart hath been secretly enticed to consider them as gods, or my mouth hath kissed my hand, *which was the ancient way of worshipping them; whence comes the word adoration;*
 28 'This also [were] an iniquity [to be punished by] the judge: for I should have denied the God [that is] above; *it was so in Job's time.* 29 If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him; *if I ever wished evil to my enemy, or insulted him when it came upon him;* 30 Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul; *I never uttered any imprecation or curse against him;* 31 If the men of my tabernacle said not, Oh that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied; *my servants and attendants would have stirred me up to revenge, or would themselves have avenged their master,*

with so much rage as almost to eat up his enemies, but I would not permit it. 32 The stranger did not lodge in the street: [but] I opened my doors to the traveller; *my house was always open for their reception.* 33 If I covered my transgressions, as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom; *if I concealed or excused my faults, and threw the blame upon others, like Adam:* 34 Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me, that I kept silence, [and] went not out of the door? *I never made it an excuse for iniquity and dissimulation, that I was afraid of the clamour of the mob, or of disobliging great families; I always went out to do good, and would not keep silence when I had an opportunity of redressing grievances and doing justice.* 35 Oh that one would hear me! behold, my desire [is, that] the Almighty would answer me, and [that] mine adversary had written a book; *solemnly appealing to the judgment of God, wishing his enemies would draw up an indictment, and give him a copy of it.* 36 Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, [and] bind it [as] a crown to me; *I would prize it, as containing matter of honour to me; because all the accusations therein would be found upon trial to be false.* 37 I would declare unto him the number of my steps; as a prince would I go near unto him; *instead of coming as a prisoner to the bar, I would advance as a prince to a court or bench of justice, binding the accusation on my shoulder; alluding to the custom of princes appearing in public with their ensigns of rank and honour borne on some conspicuous part of their garment, that every one might see them.* 38 If my land cry against me, as unjustly gotten, or violently taken from the owners, or that the furrows likewise thereof complain; *if my ploughmen or reapers were defrauded;* 39 If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money, *without a valuable consideration to the owners or doing justice to my tenants,* or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life; *if I have destroyed the owner for the sake of the estate, or broken the heart of my tenant or servant, by unkind usage;* 40 Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley; *may my corn be changed into weeds.* The words of Job are ended; *that is, he says no more to his friends in his own defence.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are taught from this example of Job, to guard against the love of the world; never to rejoice, merely because our wealth

increases, and we have gotten much. Much less should we make gold our hope and confidence; for this is no sign of the divine favour. We shall bear the loss of it with less grief and concern, when we have been moderate in the pursuit and enjoyment of it. To prevent our inordinate love of the world, let us learn to say to God, Thou art my hope, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art my confidence.

2. We learn to guard against a spirit of malice and revenge; never wish evil to any, nor rejoice in their misfortunes. Persons of an angry disposition will meet with others to instigate them to revenge; but let us not hearken to such counsellors to do wickedly. He that is glad at calamity shall not be unpunished. Our rule is, *not to avenge ourselves; to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them who despitefully use and persecute us.*

3. Let us learn to *stand in awe of sin*: not to palliate and excuse it, and lay the blame on others. This we are too apt to do; and thus Adam did. We should not be led by the clamour of the populace, the fashion of the age, or fear of disobliging the families of the great, to do an ill thing, or to be silent when we have an opportunity to plead the cause of God, or to do justice to the characters of others. Finally, let us,

4. Guard against injustice and oppression. Let not masters oppress their servants, husbandmen their labourers, landlords their tenants, or men in trade their workmen; but deal by them justly and honourably; never be guilty of hard usage, or give any of them just reason to complain. God has declared that *he heareth the cry of the oppressed*, and will execute vengeance on their oppressors. Upon the whole, as this is one of the most useful chapters in this whole book, let us all seriously review it, and compare our temper and conduct with it; and if our consciences can bear witness to us, as Job's did to him, that our behaviour has been in these instances agreeable to the will and law of God, we may lift up our faces with honour, and we shall have comfortable reflections in the day of evil: for *with the upright God will show himself upright, and with the merciful he will show himself merciful.*

CHAPTER XXXII.

Elihu here engages in the dispute, but rather as a moderator than as a party. He is represented by the poet as a wise man, who was standing by, but at length interposed, and gave his judgment in the case. He does not charge Job with any crime but what the heat of the debate occasioned; and spends his time rather in justifying God, than condemning Job. This chapter is an apology for undertaking the debate, and the manner in which he would conduct it.

1 **SO** these three men ceased to answer Job, because he [was] righteous in his own eyes; *they found he was resolutely bent to justify himself, say what they could.* 2 Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram, or Aram, from whom the Syrians were descended: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. 3 Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, *were not able to defend their charge,* and [yet] had condemned Job. 4 Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they [were] elder than he, *therefore he thought it most decent to let them speak first, and finish what they had to say.* 5 When Elihu saw that [there was] no answer in the mouth of [these] three men, then his wrath was kindled, *he was not able to keep silence any longer.* 6 And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I [am] young, and ye [are] very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion; *he pleads his youth as an apology for his silence; he was afraid of discovering his weakness, and appearing rash and conceited.* 7 I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom; *he expected a wise and full determination of the point from persons of their age and experience.* 8 But [there is] a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding; *reason sometimes opens early, and he hopes they will consider him at least as a rational creature.* 9 Great men are not [always] wise: neither do the aged understand judgment; *on the contrary, men of great authority, reputation, and advanced age, are not always the most wise and sagacious.* 10 Therefore I said, Harken to me; I also will show mine opinion. 11 Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to

your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say; *I heard you with patience, and waited till you had done.* 12 Yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, [there was] none of you that convinced Job, [or] that answered his words; *no one who said any thing to the purpose in answer to him:* 13 Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom: God thrusteth him down, not man; *therefore I take up the argument lest you should say, your arguments are unanswerable, and that his affliction was a punishment from God for his wickedness, as you have attempted to prove.* 14 Now he hath not directed [his] words against me: neither will I answer him with your speeches; *I shall answer him mildly, and suffer nothing personal to enter into the dispute, nor take up any of your reasonings.* 15 They were amazed, they answered no more: they left off speaking. 16 When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, [and] answered no more*;) *he makes this address to the auditory, and appeals to them whether there was not a clear stage, and a fair opportunity for him to speak;* 17 [I said,] I will answer also my part, I also will show mine opinion. 18 For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. 19 Behold, my belly [is] as wine [which] hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles, *therefore he was determined to speak, for he had heard so much of the dispute, and thought so much about it, that he was in pain till he had uttered his thoughts, like fermenting wine, ready to burst the bottles.* 20 I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips and answer. 21 Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man; *he protests against all flattery and compliments, regarding only the cause itself.* 22 For I know not to give flattering titles; [in so doing] my Maker would soon take me away; *I do not understand the art of soothing men, because they are old and have the reputation of wisdom; or of sparing to deal plainly even with the afflicted, lest I should provoke God, and expose myself to some awful punishment.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here taught, that modesty and humility are great ornaments to young people. It is their duty to be learners, to hear patiently, and attend to the sentiments of the old and wise; to be

* Some think this is an argument that Elihu was the author of the book, which appears to me not unlikely, and that he is put here for Ezekiel, who is called the son of Buzi, Ezek. i. 3.

diffident of themselves, and shun every thing which has the appearance of vanity and conceit. Especially, when it appears proper that they should deliver their opinion, let them do it with all deference to the aged, and all the marks of a modest spirit.

2. Age gives men great advantage for improvement in knowledge, and being useful by their advice and instructions. It is naturally expected that their faculties should be strengthened, their stock of ideas enlarged, by reading, reflection, and experience. Therefore *the aged should be teachers of good things*, and endeavour to instruct the rising generation, in what may be useful to them and conducive to their true happiness.

3. Let us consider that our fellow-creatures are rational beings, as well as ourselves. *There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.* All the ordinary exercises of reason are here ascribed to the *inspiration of the Almighty*. Let us be thankful for this gift of God; and pray to him to strengthen our rational faculties, and enable us to judge and speak aright. This consideration should preserve the aged from a supercilious treatment of the young, that they have reason, as well as their fathers; and some are wiser at twenty, than others at sixty. Every man has a right to judge for himself, and ought to be allowed a liberty of speech. Those who pretend to dictate to the world, and would have every one be as they are, and believe just as they believe, should consider that others are rational creatures as well as themselves, and have equal access to the oracles of divine wisdom. Let us therefore learn to hear with candour, and judge with temper, and never deny to others those rights and privileges which we claim to ourselves. Once more,

4. The fear of God should engage us to deal plainly with men, in all matters of importance, particularly in those where religion and happiness are concerned. Excess of compliments is an utter enemy to truth and wisdom. It is especially a lesson to ministers, not to *prophecy smooth things* for fear of giving offence, but to address to men's consciences, with all plainness and affection united; remembering their Maker, who has declared that *he will take away all flattering lips and every deceitful tongue*; and in the mean time it will be found, as Solomon observes, that *he that reproveth a man, afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.*

CHAPTER XXXIII.

In the last chapter we had Elihu's preface, here we have his address to Job.

1 **WHEREFORE**, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words. Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth; *I have thought much of what I am about to say, and spoken it over to myself.* 3 My words [shall be of] the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly; *I will speak both uprightly and plainly.* 4 The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life; *I am a man, like thyself, and therefore fit and ready to discourse with thee upon equal terms, according to thy desire.* 5 If thou canst answer me, set [thy words] in order before me, stand up, *I am ready to hear any thing you have to say in your own defence.* 6 Behold, I [am] according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay; *I am such a one as you wished, an impartial judge.* 7 Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee; *my majesty shall not terrify thee, nor my power oppress thee.* 8 Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of [thy] words; *I am master of the argument, I do not speak by hearsay, but have attended to the whole of the debate; thou hast been [saying,]* 9 I am clean without transgression, I [am] innocent; neither [is there] iniquity in me. 10 Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy. 11 He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths. *Job never said this; but he had spoken in a passionate manner, and said what nearly amounted to it.* 12 Behold, [in] this thou art not just; *though I do not join with thy friends in condemning thee in general, yet in this thou art wrong:* I will answer thee, that God is greater than man, *both in wisdom and power.* 13 Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters; *he is not obliged to give us an account of his ways; there is often a mystery in them which we cannot understand.* 14 For God speaketh once, yea, twice, [yet man] perceiveth it not. 15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; 16 Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, *whispers*

instruction to them by their conscience or his Spirit; yea, he sealeth instruction, makes the soul receive the deep impression, as the wax receives the seal. 17 That he may withdraw man [from his] purpose, and hide pride from man; *withdraw him from evil purposes, mortify his pride, and make him humble.* 18 He keepeth back his soul from the pit, *that is, saves him from destruction,* and his life from perishing by the sword of justice, or divine wrath; *intimating that Job had not sufficiently improved these methods of instruction.* 19 He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong [pain;] *he is not only instructed by revelation, ver. 15., but by correction, Psalm xciv. 12.* 20 So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat; *he loseth his appetite.* 21 His flesh is consumed away that it cannot be seen; and his bones [that] were not seen, stick out; *he is emaciated, and becomes a mere skeleton.* 22 Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers, *to the pangs of death.* 23 If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness; *God contrives it so that he should be visited by some pious friend, a messenger, as it were, from God, to interpret and explain the method and design of providence, and the afflicted person's duty; one of a thousand, peculiarly qualified with uncommon abilities to answer that great end, to show him the uprightness of God's dealings, and teach him to look upon them as a punishment for his sin.* 24 Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom; *then God spares him, finds him a ransom, a faithful friend, who should be the means of bringing him to repentance, which God graciously accepts as a ransom for his life.* 25 His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth; *he then recovers his health:* 26 He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy, *have a sense of the divine favour and love:* for he will render unto man his righteousness, *restore him to his friendship; or it may refer to the penitent's making restitution to others.* 27 He looketh upon men, and [if any] say, or, He shall look upon men, and say, I have sinned, and perverted [that which was] right, and it profited me not; *the penitent shall confess his fault, own the shame and unprofitableness of sin, and warn others against it.* 28 He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light; *he shall own the goodness of God in sparing his life and restoring his health.* 29 Lo, all these [things] worketh God oftentimes with man, *he often takes such methods as these*

to reform men, to prolong their lives, and restore their comforts ;
 30 To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. 31 Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me : hold thy peace, and I will speak ; *consider this.* 32 If thou hast any thing to say, answer me : speak, for I desire to justify thee ; *propose any objection, for I shall rejoice to answer and vindicate thee, that thou mayest appear as a righteous person.* 33 If not, hearken unto me : hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom ; *that is, how to judge better of God's dealings with thee, and the way to find mercy.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. It may be inferred from hence, that discourses intended for instruction and consolation ought to be plain and gentle. Elihu's was well weighed and was delivered in plain terms, without perplexity or obscurity ; so as not to terrify or confound. This is a caution proper for ministers and parents to attend to ; and particularly for them or others to observe, when they would instruct or comfort the afflicted. Let them pray for *the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season.*

2. Due consideration of the greatness and unsearchableness of God, would silence our murmurings and promote our submission. It is sufficient to silence our complaining words, and suppress our repining thoughts, to consider that God is greater than man ; greater in goodness as well as wisdom and power. We are not to expect an account of his matters. The general reasons of his conduct to his creatures are evident ; and it becomes us to acquiesce ; *to be still, and know that he is God.*

3. We are here taught what the great end or design of divine admonitions and instructions is, to divert men from their evil purposes, subdue their pride, and teach them *not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think.* This is a lesson all need to learn ; which ordinances and providences are adapted to teach ; and it is our duty to pray that we may learn it more perfectly ; that God would seal this important instruction on our souls.

4. Sickness and pain are in their consequences very salutary and beneficial. It is grievous indeed, to have all the bones full of pain, to lose the appetite, to have no relish for common bread, or the nicest dainties. But still *it is good to be afflicted ;* desirable to have the help of good books, tender friends, faithful ministers, to be interpreters of Providence. It is proper to consider *wherein*

we have done iniquity, and perverted that which is right; that we may have the peaceable fruits of righteousness produced thereby.

5. Recovery from sickness ought thankfully to be acknowledged and faithfully improved. And it should engage us to continue in prayer, to make restitution, to warn others, by what we have felt and experienced, of the vanity of the world and the advantages of affliction, the supports of religion and the hopes of immortality. Thus shall we be improving ourselves, while we are comforting others with those consolations with which we have been comforted of God.

6. All the methods of instruction, reformation, and improvement, are God's work. He speaks by conscience, providence, scripture, ministers, and friends. He works by sickness, recovery, mercies, and deliverances; and all are designed to save us from the pit of destruction, to make us comfortable here, and happy for ever. Let us give him the glory of his kind designs; observe the methods of his operations, and comply with his purposes. Remembering how inexcusable we shall be, if all these means of discipline and instruction are lost upon us. If we carefully improve them, he will be favourable to us, and *we shall see his face with joy.*

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Elihu finding Job not disposed to reply, goes on to reprove some hasty speeches of his; vindicates the providence of God; and directs him to more proper language.

1 **F**URTHERMORE Elihu answered and said, 2 Hear my words, O ye wise [men;] and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge; *he appeals to the auditory, not being desirous to be judge in the controversy himself.* 3 For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat. 4 Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what [is] good; *let us lay aside prejudice, and examine the matter in debate.* 5 For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment. 6 Should I lie against my right? my wound [is] incurable without transgression; *I am not guilty of such miscarriages as to deserve such severe punishment.* 7 What man [is] like Job, [who] drinketh up scorning like water? *who so arrogantly charges God, and so contemptuously scorns his friends?* 8 Which goeth in company with

the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men; *talks too much like them.* 9 For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God; *he seems to be of their opinion, that religion is unprofitable.* 10 Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, [that he should do] wickedness; and [from] the Almighty, [that he should commit] iniquity; *speaking with abhorrence of imputing any iniquity to God.* 11 For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to [his] ways; *he will do justice to every man.* 12 Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment; *it is self-evident that the Supreme Judge of all beings cannot do that which implies weakness.* 13 Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world? *his power is of himself, there is no superior being that he is afraid of.* 14 If he set his heart upon man, [if] he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; 15 All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust; *he made and sustains all creatures, and can destroy them at once; therefore he is under no temptation to do injustice.* 16 If now [thou hast] understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words, *weigh well these considerations.* 17 Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just? *would any wise prince make a wicked man a ruler, or punish a good man?* 18 [Is it fit] to say to a king, [Thou art] wicked? [and] to princes, [Ye are] ungodly? *is it not reckoned indecent and affronting to charge earthly princes and judges with tyranny and injustice?* 19 [How much less to him] that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all [are] the work of his hands; *how much less fit to God, who made both, who is no respecter of persons, who will do nothing unjust to gain their favour, or to avoid their anger?* 20 In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand; *how should he stand in awe of those, whom he can strike dead in a moment, or take away suddenly by his immediate hand?* 21 For his eyes [are] upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings; *he can easily do this, for he knows them perfectly, and sees sin enough in them to deserve punishment.* 22 [There is] no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves; *though they endeavour by every means to conceal themselves, it is all in vain;* 23 For, in consequence of this perfect knowledge, he will not lay upon man

more [than right;] that he should enter into judgment with God; *he will not punish them more than their iniquities deserve, so that they should be unable to tax him with injustice.* 24 He shall, or can, break in pieces, *easily destroy,* mighty men without number, and set others in their stead. 25 Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth [them] in the night, so that they are destroyed; *from his perfect knowledge of their conduct, he always acts justly when he punishes them.* 26 He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others; *often brings remarkable vengeance on them, to be a warning to others;* 27 Because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways, *that is, because they did wickedly:* 28 So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted; *they were particularly oppressive to the poor, whose complaints he hears and will redress.* 29 When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? *when he gives quietness to the oppressed, the attempts of the oppressor are vain;* and when he hideth [his] face, who then can behold him? whether [it be done] against a nation, or against a man only; *when he is angry at the wicked, there is no peace or relief; and it is the same with regard to nations as single persons:* 30 That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be insnared; *he often brings down wicked governors, especially such as pretend to piety, that others may not be insnared by their artifices and example: drawing this conclusion from these remarks; since God is so great, so just, so compassionate to the afflicted,* 31 Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born [chastisement,] 32 I will not offend [any more: That which] I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more; *it is proper to be humble, penitent, and devout, and to form resolutions of amendment.* 33 [Should it be] according to thy mind? *shouldst thou have every thing thy own way?* he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I; *he will punish thine iniquity, whether thou wilt or no, and not I; it is not owing to me that thou art thus dealt with, and I would not despise this advice myself, though thou mayest: therefore speak what thou knowest; if thou hast any objection against this advice, speak freely.* 34 Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me; *if any of the company have any objection, let them speak.* 35 Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words [were] without wisdom; *he hath spoken foolishly and inconsiderately.* 36 My desire [is that] Job may be tried unto the end because of [his] answers for wicked men; *out of love to Job, I cannot but wish the*

affliction may be continued, till he is brought to a better temper, because of his censures of Providence, and vindication of the wicked.

37 For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth [his hands] among us, and multiplieth his words against God; *he intimates that otherwise he would go on to censure God, to insult his friends, and increase his own guilt.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE infer, that in matters of importance it is good to consult with our friends, and take their judgment. The proposal of Elihu, to lay aside differences and prejudices, and examine the matter together, was a good one. In difficult and perplexed cases, it is seldom that one man's thoughts are sufficiently clear, unbiassed, and comprehensive, to judge; and *in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*

2. Let us firmly believe and reverently acknowledge the righteousness and equity of God. *Far be it from him that he should do iniquity, or pervert judgment;* and far be it from us to say or think so. He cannot do an ill thing, or deal unjustly with any man. He never respects persons, nor suffers any service to him to go on the whole unrewarded, nor any wicked action unpunished: sooner or later *he will render to every man according to his work.* If it is not fit to say to earthly princes, *Ye are wicked;* if decency and decorum are necessary in speaking of them, much more of the great God, *the blessed and only potentate.*

3. Let a sense of the perfect knowledge of God continually impress our minds. *v. 21.* He accurately observes us wherever we go, and whatever we do; *his eyes are ever upon us; there is no darkness nor shadow of death where the wicked can hide themselves.* This intimates that they would be glad to hide themselves, but it is in vain. He sees all their wickedness; no concealment can hide from his view, no confederacy can secure from his hand. Let us then always act *and endure, as seeing Him who is invisible.*

4. Let us remember how constantly we depend upon God for personal and national peace. *When God speaks peace to a man, earth and hell cannot break it. If he hideth his face, who can have any comfort till they behold it again?* Every creature is insufficient to restore peace. The same Providence extends to nations as to particular persons; which is the strongest reason why we should endeavour to *be at peace with him,* and secure his favourable regards to us.

5. We are taught our duty in seasons of affliction. *Then it is fit and meet to be said unto God, as v. 31, 32, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* It is our duty to humble ourselves before him, to examine what has been amiss, and pray *that he would show it unto us*, that we may repent and correct it. It is our duty to form resolutions that *we will offend no more*, and to put them into practice immediately. A sense of the almighty power, impartial justice, and tender compassion of God, and the recollection that our comfort and peace, our times and our lives, are in his hand, should engage us to *do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.*

CHAPTER XXXV.

Job continues silent; sensible, that though Elihu put a harsh construction on some of his words, he was right in general, in allowing Job's integrity, and giving him good advice. Elihu goes on to represent the limits of God's moral administration, and maintains that he is ready to deliver his creatures out of trouble, if they humbly address him, and do not merely cry because of their pain.

1 **E**LIHU spake moreover, and said, 2 *Thinkest thou this to be right, [that] thou saidst, My righteousness [is] more than God's? appealing to Job's conscience, reproving him for reflecting on God's righteousness, which he did in effect by talking so much of his own integrity, and of God's severity.* 3 *For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? [and,] What profit shall I have [if I be cleansed] from my sin? thus representing religion as unprofitable.* 4 *I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee; all who talk or think in the same manner.* 5 *Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds [which] are higher than thou; God is as much above the clouds, as they are above thee.* 6 *If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or [if] thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? he is none the worse for thy sins.* 7 *If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? he is not any the better for thy righteousness. In strictness of speech, God is not obliged to reward his creatures any farther than he has promised.* 8 *Thy wickedness [may hurt] a man as thou*

[art;] and thy righteousness [may profit] the son of man; *but notwithstanding this, it is not all one whether thou art good or bad, for thyself and others will be better or worse according as thy temper and character are. Job had reflected on God's goodness, to which Elihu answers, 9* By reason of the multitude of oppressions, they make [the oppressed] to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty, *yet God does not appear to vindicate them; 10* But the reason of this is, none saith, Where [is] God my maker, who giveth songs in the night? *they do not humbly and sincerely pray to him, nor acknowledge his goodness in tempering their afflictions with so much mercy, that he gives them ground of rejoicing in the darkest seasons. It is a cry of nature, not of devotion, which they utter; 11* Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven? *God has given us rational faculties to pray to him, and will not neglect us if we use those faculties aright. 12* There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men; *they cry because of evil men and oppressors, but none answereth, because they do not devoutly pray, their cry does not proceed from a regard to God, but from sensations of pain and trouble. 13* Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it; *therefore they cannot expect an answer, God will not hear their prayer, nor regard their oppression, so as to deliver them. 14* Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, [yet] judgment [is] before him; therefore trust thou in him; *though thou sayest thou shalt never enjoy prosperity, or a sense of his love again; yet he is perfectly just and righteous, therefore trust him, and wait patiently for him. 15* But now, because [it is] not [so,] *because thou dost not pray thus, art not thus humble and penitent, he hath visited in his anger, and thine afflictions still continue; yet he knoweth [it] not in great extremity; thy great extremity hath not brought thee to a sense of this, and to a knowledge of God and thyself. 16* Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain; he multiplieth words without knowledge; *therefore thou chargest God with great severity in his conduct, which it is easy to justify on the clearest principles of reason.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE learn from hence to reflect seriously on the greatness of God, and how unable we are to hurt him by our sins, or profit him by our righteousness. Sin cannot hurt his nature and happiness;

but, as the moral governor of the world, he must hate and punish it for the sake of his creatures. Our righteousness cannot profit him; therefore when he commands, encourages, and rewards it, it is all of his grace and for our good. We must take in the whole of a creature's duration, in order to judge of its happiness and misery. The prospect of a future state seems the only sufficient answer to Job's objections; especially as we can but very imperfectly judge of what our fellow-creatures suffer or enjoy here below.

2. It is the duty of those who are afflicted to be thankful for the mercies which are continued to them; particularly for our reason; that *we are made wiser than the brutes*; can observe whence afflictions come, and what ends they are designed to answer. That *we have songs in the night*, many alleviating comfortable circumstances in the deepest distress; so that we have reason to rejoice in the darkest seasons: but these comforts we too often ungratefully overlook. If God continues to us the exercise of reason and peace of conscience under our afflictions, we have abundantly more cause for thankfulness than complaint.

3. Let us attend to the important distinction here made between crying and praying. It is natural in affliction to groan, cry, and complain; but there is no religion in this; the brutes do so. The cry of too many to God under their afflictions, rather arises from a sense of pain, than any devout regards to him. They cry for health, or for a physician; but how few say, *Where is God my maker?* Every one complains of pain and trouble, but few lift up their hearts to God with penitential, humble, and devout addresses; and it is no wonder if they are not regarded. God hears the cry of brutes extorted by pain, because they have no rational souls; but as men have them, he expects they should pray as well as cry, and consider and improve their afflictions, as well as feel them.

4. When we are under the deepest distress, let us remember that *our judgment is before God, and therefore trust in him*. We are often ready to despair, and think we shall never see him; never enjoy prosperity, or be restored to his favour. But he is perfectly righteous and wise, and knows the best time and way to deliver us; therefore we should continue to trust him. *The Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.* Isa. xxx. 18.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Elihu here comes close to the point; arguing that if Job had submitted to God's correction, he would have been delivered; that his not being able to comprehend the designs of Providence ought not to be an hindrance to this, seeing the daily works of God are incomprehensible.

¹ **ELIHU** also proceeded, and said, ² Suffer me a little, and I will show thee that [I have] yet to speak on God's behalf; *entreating their patience while he goes on to vindicate God's proceedings.* ³ I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker; *I will urge some uncommon and sublime considerations to support the justice of God.* ⁴ For truly my words [shall] not [be] false: he that is perfect in knowledge [is] with thee; *I will not use sophistical arguments, but offer solid reasons.* ⁵ Behold, God [is] mighty, and despiseth not [any: he is] mighty in strength [and] wisdom; *therefore he will wrong no man, nor despise even the meanest.* ⁶ He preserveth not the life of the wicked: but giveth right to the poor; *he preserveth not the wicked though very rich, but rights the poor, by delivering them from oppressors.* ⁷ He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous; *he regards them with an eye of favour;* but with kings [are they] on the throne; yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted; *he often exalts them to the highest honours which kings can confer.* ⁸ And if [they be] bound in fetters, [and] be holden in cords of affliction; *if at any time he afflicts them, yet* ⁹ Then he showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded; *he leads them to reflect on their sins, and* ¹⁰ He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity, *to receive instruction, and return to their duty; and if they do so,* ¹¹ If they obey and serve [him,] they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures; *they shall be restored to prosperity and established in comfort*.* ¹² But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge; *if they persist in obstinacy and impenitency they shall die in their folly.* ¹³ But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath *by their counterfeit piety, and they cry not when*

* Some think, with great probability, that here is a reference to the case of Manasseh, and would render it, *he will release kings upon the throne, if, after having been bound in fetters, as he was, they repent and reform, as he did.*

he bindeth them; *do not pray sincerely to God.* 14 They die in youth, and their life [is] among the unclean; *they die unexpectedly, in the prime of their days, and are suddenly cut off, like the sodomites; whereas* 15 He delivereth the poor in his affliction and openeth their ears in oppression; *he delivers the humble, and teaches them instruction by their oppression.* 16 Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait [into] a broad place, where [there is] no straitness; and that which should be set on thy table [should be] full of fatness; *so upon thy humble submission he would have restored thee to thy former prosperity and plenty.* 17 But *instead of delivering the poor, thou hast maintained the cause of the wicked, thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked: therefore judgment and justice take hold [on thee,] and thou sufferest like them.* 18 Because [there is] wrath, [beware] lest he take thee away with [his] stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee; *cautioning him therefore not to persist in such sentiments lest he should be suddenly cut off.* 19 Will he esteem thy riches? [no,] not gold, nor all the forces of strength; *no ransom will signify any thing to him, neither riches, nor all the forces thou canst muster up.* 20 Desire not the night, when people are cut off in their place; *do not rashly desire death, for God sometimes cuts off multitudes at once in the night.* 21 Take heed, regard not iniquity; *do not give way to such rash speeches: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction; accusing God rather than submitting to him.* 22 Behold, God exalteth by his power, and casteth down: who teacheth like him? *therefore be willing to learn, and do not pretend to teach him.* 23 Who hath enjoined him in his way? or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity? *who hath directed his way, or can charge him with injustice?* 24 Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold; *instead of finding fault with his work, speak honourably of it.* 25 Every man may see it; man may behold [it] afar off; *the most ignorant and stupid must see the greatness and excellency of it.* 26 Behold, God [is] great, and we know [him] not, neither can the number of his years be searched out; *he is infinite and eternal, therefore just in all his ways.* 27 For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof; *instancing in the wisdom and power of God in the rain; and the clouds gently distil the rain which is exhaled from the earth:* 28 Which the clouds do drop [and] distil upon man abundantly; *so as plentifully to supply the necessities of man and beast.* 29 Also can [any] understand the spreadings of the clouds, [or] the noise of his tabernacle? *we*

cannot understand how the clouds hang and float in the air, nor the thunder we hear from his dwelling-place: 30 Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it, and covereth the bottom of the sea; the sun spreads its light over the whole heavens, and penetrates the surface of the sea, to exhale and draw up the vapours from thence. 31 For by them judgeth he the people; he giveth meat in abundance; he sometimes judgeth or punisheth by storms or tempests; at other times he makes plentiful provision by seasonable showers. 32 With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it [not to shine] by [the cloud] that cometh betwixt; sometimes he obscures the face of heaven, so as to withhold the kindly influences of the sun; and sometimes there are only thin clouds that temper its excessive heat. 33 The noise thereof showeth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour; thunder and wind foretell and introduce a storm; and cattle by a strong instinct foresee it, and by various actions give notice of it.

REFLECTIONS.

1. GREAT caution becomes us when we speak of God. Let us be careful that what we say be true, and pertinent; that we always entertain the highest idea of God, and neither speak wickedly, rashly, nor uncharitably in his behalf. Let us especially be careful to *ascribe righteousness to our Maker*; and lay it down as a first principle, that he will, that he can, do nothing wrong. Let us remember that he is our maker; and always speak of him with seriousness.

2. It is a comfortable thought to the righteous, that *God withdraweth not his eyes from them*. Though they may seem to be forgotten, and think God hides his face from them, yet he never looks off them. Though he afflicts them, yet he graciously regards them; directs when, in what manner, and how long, they shall be afflicted: and assists them in improving their afflictions. *Let our eyes be ever towards the Lord, and then his eyes will be ever upon us for good.*

3. See the misery of hypocrites in heart; of men who counterfeit religion and goodness, but *whose hearts are not right with God*. They think they are heaping up wealth, reputation, and merit; but they are indeed only heaping up wrath. Their hearts are hard, unhumiliated, and stubborn under affliction. Every sin, every counterfeit act of religion, every proud, repining thought, further

provokes God, and *they are only treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*

4. It is a very foolish thing indeed to prefer iniquity to affliction; to pursue wealth by sinful methods in order to avoid poverty, to indulge sinful pleasures, to ease the cares of the mind, to allow ourselves in sinful compliances, to avoid trouble, reproach, or persecution. Such persons may think themselves wise and cunning; but they will appear at last to be very great fools. Sin is the greatest and most dreadful evil, and therefore ought to be avoided, whatever we may endure or suffer.

5. High and honourable thoughts of God, tend to promote submission to his will. Let us consider him as a Being of infinite perfections, of boundless power and knowledge, supreme authority, unrivalled and everlasting dominion. We see his works of nature, and they are all without fault and defect; especially his agency in the blessings of sunshine and rain; they are plain to our eyes, though the method of the operation of natural causes is mysterious and incomprehensible. Let us not dare to teach him or prescribe to him. The more careful we are to contemplate his nature, and to magnify his works which we behold, the more shall we be afraid and ashamed of censuring his providence.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Elihu pursues his former subject concerning the incomprehensible greatness and glory of God's works, as displayed in the formation of the sky, and the direction of the meteors and clouds*.

1 **AT** this also my heart trembleth, *at the consideration of the thunder, which perhaps he then heard*, and is moved out of his place, *beats and leaps up and down, as if it would leap out of my body.* Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound

* This chapter will have a peculiar beauty if this thought be attended to, that the poet introduces God himself in the next chapter, as speaking out of a whirlwind; and in this represents Elihu as hearing the thunder at a distance, and seeing the whirlwind coming forward with slow pomp, and pointing towards the place from whence it came. This made his heart tremble; but at its nearer approach, towards the close of the chapter, he speaks short, and with broken sentences, like one in a hurry and confusion, who was afraid to open his mouth, and lost in amazement.

[that] goeth out of his mouth ; *he calls upon Job to hearken attentively to it while it rumbled at a distance.* 3 He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth? *sound and light spread wide.* 4 After it a voice roareth ; *after the lightning the thunder is heard:* he thundereth with the voice of his excellency ; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard : *it should be rendered, "and it cannot be searched out when it is heard."* 5 God thundereth marvellously with his voice ; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend ; *we cannot give a clear account of these nor many other marvellous effects of his power.* 6 For he saith to the snow, Be thou [on] the earth ; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength ; *the snow, the small gentle rain, and the violent tempestuous rain, all come at his command, and go when he directs.* He sealeth up the hand of every man ; that all men may know his work ; *by frost he seals up men's hands, and the earth and many materials, that men, by diversity of seasons, may have their thoughts led to God, and have leisure to consider them.* 8 Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places ; *the cold is so intense, that the wild beasts cannot stand before it.* 9 Out of the south cometh the whirlwind : and cold out of the north ; *different winds bring different weather, hot and cold.* 10 By the breath of God frost is given : and the breadth of the waters is straitened ; *water is congealed by the sharp frost.* 11 Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud : he scattereth his bright cloud ; *a beautiful figure, intimating the excessive quantities of rain with which the clouds are loaded, and the continued violence with which they are discharged till they are quite exhausted: then the brighter and lighter clouds are scattered by the wind and sun.* 12 And it is turned round about by his counsels : that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth ; *the clouds are turned by him where he pleaseth.* 13 He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy ; *either to correct a sinful country, by the excess or want of it, to make the land fruitful, or to occasion extraordinary and uncommon plenty.* 14 Harken unto this, O Job : stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God ; *he demands Job's attention, that he might learn from these mysteries of nature, how unfit it is to censure the providence of God.* 15 Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of his cloud to shine ? *when he formed these meteors, and how he directs them?* 16 Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is per-

fect in knowledge? how the clouds, so full of water, are suspended in the empty air? and others of his wondrous works, who is perfect in knowledge? 17 How thy garments [are] warm, or, warm thee when he quieteth the earth by the south [wind?] when he takes away the storms and sends heat? 18 Hast thou with him spread out the sky; [which is] strong, [and] as a molten looking glass, firm, clear, and bright? 19 Teach us what we shall say unto him; [for] we cannot order [our speech] by reason of darkness; teach us to celebrate his excellencies in a worthy manner, for we are greatly ignorant; the clouds and darkness that surround him, throw me into speechless confusion. 20 Shall it be told him that I speak? is what I have said worthy his hearing? is it a meritorious service thus to plead for him? if a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up: he who attempts to describe his glory, is quite dazzled and confounded. 21 And now [men] see not the bright light which [is] in the clouds; but the wind passeth and cleanseth them; even now the clouds hide the sun, but the wind shall drive them away. 22 Fair weather cometh out of the north; the north wind, which clears the face of the heavens: with God [is] terrible majesty; all these effects and revolutions are proofs of his terrible majesty. 23 [Touching] the Almighty, we cannot find him out: [he is] excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict; after all, we must acknowledge that God is unsearchable, almighty, righteous in his judgments, rigorous in justice, but will not afflict willingly, nor without just cause. 24 Men do therefore fear him, as they certainly ought to do: for he respecteth not any [that are] wise of heart; who are proud and conceited of their own wisdom, which he knows to be trifling and inconsiderable.

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE changes of weather and the revolution of seasons display the majesty and power of God. Thunder is his voice, and ought to be heard with seriousness and awe. The weather and seasons, wet and dry, hot and cold, are the subject of every day's discourse; and should be thought and spoken of as the wonderful works of God. Let us remember our necessary dependance upon him; and own his hand in seasonable and unseasonable, in comfortable and uncomfortable, weather. To fret against the weather, is to fret against God.

2. It is our duty to consider the wonderful works of God, as

they display his almighty power and perfect knowledge. They deserve to be considered; and they are so interesting, that they need to be considered. It is an agreeable and useful employment to study them, and search them out. But we cannot comprehend them, philosophy is soon puzzled. This should reconcile us to the darkest dispensations of providence, and teach us, instead of censuring, to adore the conduct of God, and to *humble ourselves under his mighty hand*.

3. Since God is so great, *he is greatly to be feared*. But he is not only awful and powerful, but gracious; he does not afflict in rigorous justice, but with a tender hand and with kind designs. Let us therefore stand in awe, and not offend so great, so gracious and good a Being; but *sanctify him in our hearts, and honour him with our lips, and in our lives*.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN the former chapter the poet represented thunder, storms, and whirlwinds, as ushering in the appearance of Jehovah; here he is described as making his appearance, and addressing Job out of the whirlwind, with a voice loud as thunder, and challenging him to explain the most common and obvious works of nature*.

1 **T**HEN the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 2 Who [is] this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? *who dishonours my counsels by his ignorant discourses about them?* 3 Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me; *if thou thinkest thyself equal to the debate, answer these questions; alluding to Job's so often desiring that he might argue the matter with God.* 4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding; *were you present when the foundations of the earth were laid? how was it done?* 5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched

* The poet having worked up his drama with the most admirable skill, in this chapter represents the Deity as interrogating Job, in the loftiest style, and the boldest images. A celebrated ancient writer, in a Treatise on the Sublime, shows how much interrogations contribute to it: this speech of the Almighty is made up of them; and indeed it seems to be the proper style of incensed majesty. He who asks the guilty a proper question, makes him in effect pass sentence upon himself.

the line upon it? *who formed it with so much exactness?* 6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened; or who laid the corner stone thereof? *on what centre doth it rest? and how are its parts united?* 7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? *where wast thou when the angels expressed their joy at the new-made creation, and celebrated the praises of their Creator?* 8 Or [who] shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, [as if] it had issued out of the womb? *when it came from chaos or the abyss, like an infant from the womb?* 9 When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it, *confined it as easily as a nurse swathes a new-born child?* 10 And brake up for it my decreed [place,] *fixed it in its proper place, and set bars and doors, so that if it is ever so much tossed, it still keeps within its channel,* 11 And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed? 12 Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days? [and] caused the day spring to know his place? *hast thou appointed where the sun shall rise and set?* 13 That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it; *that it may shine to the ends of the earth, and that the wicked, who love darkness, may be detected.* 14 It is turned as clay [to] the seal; and they stand as a garment; *the earth is transformed by light, receives the impression of it, as clay or wax does that of the seal; it spreads over all its face, and covers it as a lucid garment.* 15 And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken; *the security they promised themselves shall be lost, and their insolent power destroyed.* 16 Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? *hast thou been at the bottom of the sea, to know what it contains, and searched out the springs that rise there?* 17 Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? *have its dark caverns been opened to thee? hast thou gone down to its centre?* 18 Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all, *the number of acres it contains.* 19 Where [is] the way [where] light dwelleth? and [as for] darkness, where [is] the place thereof; *what becomes of light when the sun goeth down, and of darkness when it ariseth?* 20 That thou shouldst take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldst know the paths [to] the house thereof? *canst thou direct either as thou pleasest, and fix it where thou wilt?* 21 Knowest thou [it,] because thou wast then born? or [because] the number of thy days [is] great? *wast*

thou born when the light was made? or hast thou gained this knowledge and power by long life? 22 Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail? *when wast thou in the clouds, to see how snow and hail were formed there?* 23 Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war? *for I need no other weapons to destroy my enemies.* 24 By what way is the light parted, [which] scattereth the east wind upon the earth? *the light of the sun is diffused through all the earth, which causeth the east wind; a reference to the periodical winds which are common in southern climates, and precede or follow the seeming motion of the sun.* 25 Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder? *who hath appointed a channel for the rain, and where the thunder shall be heard, and the lightning break out?* 26 To cause it to rain on the earth [where] no man [is; on] the wilderness, wherein [there is] no man; *to supply the creatures, who have no skill to dig for well water, or preserve rain water, who yet want it for their support, and to produce their food.* 27 To satisfy the desolate and waste [ground,] and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? 28 Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew? *canst thou produce one drop of rain or dew?* 29 Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven who hath gendered it? *canst thou scatter the hoar frost, or bind rivers and oceans with ice?* 30 The waters are hid as [with] a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen. 31 Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion*? 32 Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? *canst thou direct the southern and northern constellations?* 33 Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? *dost thou know, or canst thou alter their laws?* 34 Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? 35 Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we [are?] *canst thou command rain, or commission the lightnings? and will they obey thee?* 36 Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? *dost thou understand the nature of thy own soul? or canst thou tell how a single thought is formed?* 37 Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven, 38 When the dust groweth into hard-

* The learned differ in opinion what these stars are; the meaning is, Canst thou make it freeze in summer, or thaw in winter?

ness, and the clods cleave fast together? *canst thou number all the flying clouds, and restrain the showers when the earth is moist enough, or fit to receive the seed?* 39 Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions? *wilt thou find out his rest, and bring him food? or dost thou do it,* 40 When they couch in [their] dens, [and] abide in the covert to lie in wait? 41 Who provideth for the raven his food? *wilt thou do it?* when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat; *when the young ones, which are driven out of their nests by the old ones, cry to God, the universal Parent.*

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us these two important lessons :

1. *That the works of the Lord are great and wonderful.* Many surprising instances are here set before us, which are too plain to need a large commentary. *His works are all honourable and glorious, sought out of all those who take pleasure therein.* Angels at the first formation adored the Creator, and it is our duty to observe those wonderful works of God ; to give him the glory displayed in them ; and sing *his praise, who made the heavens and earth, and sea, and all that therein is.*

2. Since we are so soon puzzled with the works of God, how unfit are we to dive into his counsels, and how unbecoming is it in such short-sighted creatures to censure his providence! Go, proud man, whoever thou art that sayest God does not do right to thee, or any of his creatures ; go, ask thyself some of these questions, and thou wilt quickly see reason to be humble. Here are questions enough to puzzle all the philosophers on earth ; who often only *darken counsel by words without knowledge.* Humble faith and sincere obedience are our duty. Let not our weakness tempt his anger. ‘ Man was not made to censure but adore.’

CHAPTER XXXIX.

God is here represented as putting some further puzzling questions to Job, to convince him of his ignorance and weakness, and show him the absurdity of censuring his providence.

1 **KNOWEST** thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? [or] canst thou mark when the hinds do calve? 2 Canst thou number the months [that] they fulfil? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth? 3 They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows. *Canst thou tell the time and circumstances of their bringing forth? which intimates that some remarkable providence attended them*.* And though 4 Their young ones are brought forth with pain, yet they are in good liking, they grow up with corn; they go forth, and return not unto them; they are provided for, they thrive, they leave their dams, and return not to them. 5 Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? *who hath sent forth the wild ass free from servitude?* 6 Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. 7 He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver; *he is not subject to be driven, as the tame asses are.* 8 The range of the mountains [is] his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing. 9 Will the unicorn, or rather, the buffalo, or wild ox, be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? 10 Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? 11 Wilt thou trust him, because his strength [is] great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? 12 Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather [it into] thy barn? *Now thy oxen and asses are gone, canst thou bring him to plough and harrow for thee, and bring home thy corn from the field?* 13 [Gavest thou] the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? 14 Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust †, 15 And for-

* Pliny tells us, that the hinds find out a certain herb which facilitates their labour. Thunder has the same effect, *Psalm xxix.*

† The ostrich does not secure her eggs as other birds do, but leaves them on the sand, to be hatched by the sun.

getteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. 16 She is hardened against her young ones, as though [they were] not hers; *she does not defend them as some birds do, even with great violence*: her labour is in vain without fear, *because she has no fear of their being destroyed. The reason is* 17 Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding; *she has less instinctive sagacity than other animals**. 18 What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider †. 19 Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? 20 Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils [is] terrible. 21 He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in [his] strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. 22 He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. 23 The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. 24 He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that [it is] the sound of the trumpet. 25 He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting ‡. 26 Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom §, [and] stretch her wings toward the south? 27 Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? 28 She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. 29 From thence she seeketh the prey, [and] her eyes behold afar off ||. 30 Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain [are,] there [is] she. *Is she beholden to thee for her strength and wisdom, the sagacity to find her food, and furnish her young ones*

• Naturalists relate many instances of the stupidity of these creatures; of their covering their heads among the reeds, and supposing themselves for that reason safe; of their being allured with the skin of an ostrich's neck on a man's hand; swallowing iron, stones, and even a firebrand.

† Ostriches neither fly nor run distinctly, but their motion is composed of both; their wings are as sails to assist their flight. Cyrus had a horse that could overtake goats and wild asses, but not an ostrich. A horse, equalling an ostrich in speed, was reckoned worth a thousand pieces of gold, or a hundred camels.

‡ These verses contain a noble description of the horse. There is a beautiful criticism on this passage in the Guardian, Number 86, to which I refer the curious reader. Other writers only describe his outward figure and motion, while the sacred poet makes all his beauty to flow from an inward principle of courage, which is much more striking and majestic.

§ The Egyptians made the hawk a symbol of the wind, so swift is its flight. It is a bird of passage, and seeks a warmer climate in the winter.

|| Eagles are remarkable for flying high, and when quite out of the sight of men, are said to have such piercing eyes, that they can behold a small serpent on the ground, or even a fish under water.

with it? She flies with admirable speed to seize her prey, carries it away, and tears it with great strength, and supplies her young with its blood.

REFLECTIONS.

THE grand, leading instructions of this chapter are the same as the former; to show us our weakness and ignorance, and how unfit we are to censure the providence of God, which is so powerful, wise, and kind. In order therefore to diversify the scene, let us learn instruction from some of the animals here mentioned.

1. The care God takes of animals in their bringing forth and nourishing their young, should lead mankind to trust his providence. If he takes care of the brute creation in these circumstances, much more will he take care of his servants. It highly becomes them to trust him in such seasons; and to commit their children to him, who supplies the kid and the ravens and the young eagles.

2. Those who are wild and licentious, and unwilling to be under restraint, may see an emblem of themselves in the wild ass. *Man*, that is, all men, *is born*, says Job, *like a wild ass's colt*; proud and untractable, and unwilling to submit to discipline. But yet this is necessary, to keep their passions in proper bounds, and fit them for usefulness in life. God intended that men should be serviceable to one another; and those who are above restraint and choose to range at their pleasure, defeat the designs of Providence, are useless members of society, and sink into just contempt.

3. The ostrich is a lively emblem of the greatest part of the gay and polite world: their inward qualities are not equal to their outward appearances. The ostrich is a fine, noble bird, has beautiful features, and looks very gay. But if you mark the inside of the creature, she is destitute of wisdom and understanding. There is indeed this difference, God for wise ends has hid wisdom from her; the gay world hide it from themselves, will not seek it, will not use their rational faculties to any valuable purposes. Mothers who will not nurse their infant offspring when they can do it, and all parents who neglect their children's souls, are like the ostrich, *who is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers*. They never consult the true welfare of their offspring; and will have an awful account to render of that supe-

rior wisdom which God has given them above the beasts that perish. Once more,

4. The goodness of God in giving us such noble creatures as horses, ought to be thankfully acknowledged. How many important uses are they capable of! what strength and courage, do they possess! and yet generally how easily are they managed! They contribute so much to tillage and traffic, to our health and our pleasure, that we ought to give glory to God, who has herein consulted our happiness; and who, in infinite wisdom and goodness, has made them and all brute creatures for our use.

CHAPTER XL.

We have here Job's answer and God's reply; in which he renews the challenge, and farther enforces humility and submission, by a representation of the strength of behemoth.

1 **MOREOVER**, *after a short pause, to hear what Job would say*, the LORD answered Job and said, 2 Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct [him?] *teach him to govern the world better, and to do greater things than those before mentioned: he that reproveth God, let him answer it; he that censures his actions, let him answer these questions.*

3 Then Job answered the LORD, and said, 4 Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. 5 Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further. *Job acknowledges his vileness; that he had said much amiss, but neither defends it, nor adds to it.*

6 Then, *in order to humble him more thoroughly*, answered the LORD unto Job out of the whirlwind, *speaking in the same awful manner as before*, and said, 7 Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me; *thou, who so eagerly desiredst the dispute, pluck up thy spirits, and answer the further questions which I shall put to thee.* 8 Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? *wilt thou condemn my judgment, my conduct to thee, and my government of the world, in order to defend thyself?* 9 Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? *consider the infinite inferiority of thy power, and then judge whether it is fit to censure my proceedings.* 10 Deck thyself now [with]

majesty and excellency ; and array thyself with glory and beauty ; *put on all appearances of grandeur and majesty, and since thou persistest to censure me, and complain of proud oppressors, try thy strength upon one of them.* 11 Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath : and behold every one [that is] proud, and abase him. 12 Look on every one [that is] proud, [and] bring him low ; and tread down the wicked in their place ; *try to bring down insolent tyrants ;* 13 Hide them in the dust together ; [and] bind their faces in secret ; *bring them to the grave, and cover them with shame and confusion.* 14 Then will I also confess unto thee, that thine own right hand can save thee ; *I will then own that thou hast some reason to contend with me, and needest not my help.*

15 Behold now behemoth *, which I made with thee ; he eateth grass as an ox. 16 Lo, now, his strength [is] in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly. 17 He moveth his tail like a cedar : the sinews of his stones are wrapped together. 18 His bones [are as] strong pieces of brass ; his bones [are] like bars of iron. 19 He [is] the chief of the ways of God ; *one of the strongest creatures :* he that made him can make his sword to approach [unto him †.] 20 Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play ; *at night he goes to feed upon the mountains, and in the day.* 21 He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. 22 The shady trees cover him [with] their shadow ; the willows of the brook compass him about. 23 Behold, he drinketh up a river, [and] hasteth not : he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth ; *this denotes his insatiable thirst, and the great quantity he drinks.* 24 He taketh it with his eyes ; [his] nose pierceth through snares. *It is better rendered in the margin of our bibles, 'Will any take him in his sight, or bore his nose with a gin?' As if he had said, Let Job attack this creature openly, and take him in his sight ; or if he uses nets and snares, he can easily break through them all.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may infer from hence, that those who are once made truly sensible of their own vileness, dare not justify themselves or condemn God. Job, overwhelmed with these questions, and the

* The word in general signifies beast. Some suppose it refers to the elephant, but some part of the description (see ver. 21.) does not answer to that creature. It rather refers to the hippopotamus, or sea horse, which is an amphibious creature ; the strength of his bones and muscles are described, ver. 16, 17, 18.

† This would be better rendered, *it is his maker that moveth his sword,* that is, his sharp teeth, with which he cuts down grass and corn as with a scythe.

awful majesty with which they were uttered, acknowledged his guilt, and determined never more to censure or complain of God. It is pride and conceit of themselves which make men censure his providence. It is the design of afflictions to humble them; and where they work right they will produce this effect, and dispose us to say, *the Lord is righteous, and we have sinned.*

2. Here is a good idea given us of repentance. It consists in an humble sense of what we have said and done amiss; an ingenuous confession of it, with grief and shame; and a determinate resolution to proceed no further. Let us inquire whether we have been thus penitent, for this alone is repentance to salvation.

3. When the heart is truly ashamed and humbled for sin, it may be necessary and useful to dwell on those thoughts and considerations which tend to humble it still more. Job was convinced that he had been in the wrong, and had said and done much that was amiss. God nevertheless puts more questions to him, with the same awful voice, to humble him further, and make him more sensible of his sin. This shows the meaning of God's continuing to afflict those who appear to be humble and penitent; it is to increase so excellent a disposition in them, and lay a foundation for higher improvements in religion.

4. It is the prerogative and peculiar glory of God to humble proud oppressors. Job is called upon to try what he could do; which plainly implies that God can do it. Though men's hands are weak, his arm can reach and bring them down; and though the voice of men does not affect them, the thunder of God's voice will terrify and confound them. If he casts about his wrath, they cannot stand before him. One look of his eye brings them down to the dust, and overwhelms them with horror and confusion. Since this is the case, we may be sure, that while such sinners continue to prosper, God has wise and good ends to be answered by it; and it is folly and arrogance in us to complain of him, or in any instance to prescribe to him.

5. The description of behemoth suggests to us what use we are to make of the sight of large and strong animals; namely, to magnify the wisdom and power of God. When strange creatures are to be seen among us, such as lions, tigers, elephants, &c., it is proper to indulge young persons with a sight of them, and inculcate upon them the amazing skill and power of the great Creator; that they may learn to reverence him, *who made small and great beasts, who gives to them their food, and appoints to them their proper uses.* The same reflections we should make when we hear or read

of such creatures; the Lord made all the beasts of the earth, and gave all their strength, magnitude and beauty; that we may learn from them to magnify and adore the great Creator, who is the proprietor of the beasts of the forests, and the cattle on a thousand hills.

CHAPTER XLI.

In pursuance of the design of the former chapter, God is here represented as discoursing of the great strength of the leviathan; and of his wisdom and power conspicuous in the heavens.

1 **CANST** thou draw out leviathan* with an hook? or his tongue with a cord [which] thou lettest down? *to represent the difficulty of taking this creature.* 2 Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? 3 Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft [words] unto thee? 4 Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? 5 Wilt thou play with him as [with] a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? 6 Shall thy companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants? 7 Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears? 8 Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more; *he who once cometh near him will never venture a second attack.* 9 Behold, the hope of *taking* him is in vain: shall not [one] be cast down even at the sight of him? 10 None [is so] fierce that dare stir him up, *when he is asleep upon the shore*: who then is able to stand before me? 11 Who hath prevented me, *with offices or services done for me*, that I should repay [him;] *that I should be obliged in justice to requite him, or to do nothing but what he likes?* [whatsoever is] under the whole heaven is mine, *and therefore I may dispose of them as I please.* 12 I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion; *his scales, his wide mouth, his double rows of teeth.* 13 Who can discover the face of his garment? [or] who can come [to him] with his double bridle? 14 Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth

* The description of this animal does not answer to the whale, but to the crocodile; a creature well known in those parts, some of which are near one hundred feet long. When Augustus subdued Egypt, he struck a medal, which represented a crocodile chained to a tree, with this inscription, *No one ever before caught him.*

are terrible round about. 15 [His] scales [are his] pride, shut up together [as with] a close seal, *remarkably close and strong*. 16 One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. 17 They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered; *no weapon can pierce them; they are proof against a bullet; there is no way of killing him but by wounding him in his belly*. 18 By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes [are] like the eyelids of the morning*. 19 Out of his mouth go burning lamps, [and] sparks of fire leap out. 20 Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as [out] of a seething pot or caldron. 21 His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth; *after laying long under water, and being forced to hold his breath, it is so hot, and bursts out so violently, when he riseth above the water, that it resembles fire and smoke*. 22 In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him†. 23 The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved. 24 His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether [millstone.] 25 When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings, they purify themselves; *terrified at that unusual dashing of the waves which attends his coming up, they are reduced to their wits' end, and beg forgiveness of their sins, and mercy of God*. 26 The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. 27 He esteemeth iron as straw, [and] brass as rotten wood. 28 The arrow cannot make him flee: sling stones are turned with him into stubble. 29 Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear; *he is impenetrable by all kinds of weapons*. 30 Sharp stones [are] under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire; *he lies upon sharp stones and rocks, without being hurt*. 31 He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. 32 He maketh a path to shine after him; [one] would think the deep [to be] hoary. 33 Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear, *so that he is to be found on the earth as well as in the waters*. 34 He beholdeth all high [things:] he [is] a king over all the children of pride; *he looks with contempt on the tallest and proudest creatures, and sets them all at defiance*.

* The Egyptian hieroglyphic for the morning light was the crocodile's eye, it is so bright and piercing.

† This would be better rendered, *sorrow rejoices before him*, that is, marcheth before him, and seizes on all that meet him.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are taught that God is not indebted to any of his creatures. Who hath prevented him with offices or services done for him, that he should be obliged in justice to requite him, or do nothing but what he likes? St. Paul quotes these words, in *Rom. xi. 35.*, to show that all the favours we receive from God are the result of his free goodness and mercy. All the benefits we receive are mercies from God; he may dispose of his favours as he pleaseth; and it is our duty to be thankful for whatever share of them he grants to us.

2. The great use to be made of all is, to reverence the wisdom and power of God as displayed in his works, especially in those terrible creatures here described. Those who have seen a crocodile, observed his wide mouth, his double rows of teeth, his large, close, impenetrable scales, &c., will best enter into the beauty of this chapter. To others, the description will be sufficient to show them how much the power of God must be displayed in so formidable an animal; how little power and strength man has to boast of, when these creatures keep him in awe; and how great a Being he must be who formed them. The psalmist takes notice of these as some of the extraordinary productions of divine wisdom, *Psal. civ. 26.*, *There (in the sea) is that leviathan whom thou hast made to play therein.* Let us reverence this glorious God; give him the honour of his stupendous works, and never dare to repine at any of his proceedings, or rebel against any of his laws.

 CHAPTER XLII.

In which Job repeats his submission, entreats divine mercy, and resigns himself to divine instruction. God accepts his repentance, and for his sake pardons his friends, and amply rewards him with greater prosperity than he had before.

1 **T**HEN Job, *struck with these awful descriptions, submissively answered the LORD, and said,* 2 I know that thou canst do every [thing,] *thou hast authority and power to do what thou pleasest,*

and [that] no thought can be withholden from thee; *or, no thought of thine can be hindered, no purpose of thine can be prevented by any of thy creatures.* 3 Who [is] he that hideth counsel without knowledge? *thou askest who doth so? I answer with shame and sorrow, I have done it:* therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not; *I have talked rashly and foolishly of things above my capacity.* 4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me; *begging of God to accept his humble submission, and to instruct him better.* 5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee; *I knew something of thy greatness, power, and wisdom before; but now more clearly see it, by these awful appearances, and these majestic descriptions.* 6 Wherefore I abhor [myself,] and repent in dust and ashes; *I therefore repent in the deepest humiliation; I abhor myself for my indecent complaint, and expostulations, and my eager desire of death*.*

7 And it was [so,] that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me, [the thing that is] right, as my servant Job [hath.] *Eliphaz is here addressed by the Almighty, because he had been the chief accuser. God was displeased with him and his two friends because they had put a perverse construction on Job's afflictions, and treated him roughly and uncharitably, whom God still owns as his servant.* 8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you [after your] folly, in that ye have not spoken of me [the thing which is] right, like my servant Job; *they were to offer a costly sacrifice, Job was to intercede for them, and then God would pardon them; otherwise they must expect some heavy judgment.*

9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite [and] Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job; *he heard their prayer, and was reconciled to them; probably he gave a visible token of his accepting the sacrifice, by sending fire to consume it.* 10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed

* Thus far the poetic part of the book goes; the rest, like the epilogues of the dramatic pieces of the ancients, is historical, designed to inform the reader how the whole scene concluded.

for his friends : also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before; *he restored the cattle of which he had been before plundered, healed his bodily disorders and restored the peace of his mind.*

11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house : and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him : every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold ; *his acquaintance and relations, seeing his innocence cleared, came and made him presents by way of atonement for their past neglect.* 12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning : for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses ; *the Lord doubled his former substance.*

13 He had also seven sons and three daughters ; *God gave him as many children as he had before.* 14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima ; and the name of the second, Kezia ; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch *. 15 And in all the land were no women found [so] fair as the daughters of Job : and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren ; *made them coheirs with them.*

16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, (*the Seventy say, two hundred and ten years in all*), and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, [even] four generations. 17 So Job died, [being] old and full of days † ; *in a good old age.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. It may be inferred from hence, that even the faithful servants of God have great reason to be humbled for the irregularities of their temper. Though they may not be chargeable with gross enormities, yet passion, peevishness, and discontent, are sins displeasing to God, and what good men ought to be humbled for and to guard against, especially in seasons of affliction.

* Many commentators suppose that he gave his daughters significant names to preserve the remembrance of God's kindness to him. Jemima signifies the day of comfort, after the night of affliction ; Kezia signifies spices of a fragrant smell, to intimate that his sores were healed, and his health restored ; Keren-happuch signifies the horn of plenty, because his prosperity was increased.

† The Seventy add to this verse, *And he shall rise again with those whom the Lord raiseth up.* His name is still celebrated in Arabia ; and the greatest families glory in being descended from him ; the famous Saladin in particular, whose name was also Job.

2. The better acquainted we are with God, the more reason we shall see to be lowly in our own eyes. Our notions of God are too general, or else we should not be in so much danger of pride. If we knew more of him, and felt more of the power of those truths we admit concerning him, we should abhor ourselves for any proud, haughty carriage, and especially for any censures of his government and providence.

3. Those who plead the cause of God in an angry, passionate manner, will find that he will give them no thanks for it. Though Job's friends had pleaded the cause of God, yet because they bore hard upon Job, and were uncharitable in their censures of him, he expresseth his displeasure against them. Elihu was not censured, because he discoursed calmly, and acted as moderator. Let us always remember *that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*; that moderation is a virtue pleasing in his sight; and that it is a dangerous thing to judge uncharitably of the spiritual state of our brethren. If we censure and condemn those whom God will own and approve as his servants, he may deal with us after our folly, and measure to us that severe judgment we have measured to others.

4. Job's successful intercession for his friends, naturally directs our thoughts to the intercession of Christ. He is God's servant, and appointed to pray for us; *him he will accept*. To him let us go with our prayers, that he may present them to God; rejoicing that *we have an advocate with the Father, whom God heareth always*. Through him let us offer up the sacrifices of prayer and praise, even through him *who ever liveth to make intercession for us*.

5. Here is a beautiful view of the uncertainty of human friendship, and what little dependance is to be placed upon it. Job's friends forsook him, his relations disowned him, when he was poor and sick; but came to condole with him and bring him presents, when his prosperity returned. Instances of such a conduct are very common; and they teach us not to raise our expectations from men, to look to a higher hand, and secure a better Friend; who, if we are faithful to him, *will never leave us nor forsake us*.

6. To conclude, in the words of St. James, *ch. v. 11., Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy*. The great lesson which we are to learn from the whole book is, to be patient under the troubles of life, to *judge nothing before the time*: whatever we suffer, or how-

ever we may be censured, to *wait on the Lord*, and *hold fast our righteousness*: then *God will bring forth our judgment as the light*. Though men may censure us, yet he will acknowledge and approve us as his faithful servants. And though he should never appear for us in any extraordinary manner in this world, yet *in the day of the revelation of his righteous judgment, our works of faith and labours of love and patience shall be abundantly rewarded*. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for after he hath been tried, and found faithful, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to all them that love him. Amen.*

THE BOOK OF
P S A L M S.

INTRODUCTION.

WE are now entering on the Book of Psalms ; it is not my intention to spend much time in conjectures about the authors, or the design of particular Psalms ; but shall content myself with endeavouring to clear up obscure passages, to point out those which are peculiarly beautiful and emphatical, and direct to the practical improvement which may be made of them. This Book has always been reckoned the most useful and important part of the Old Testament ; and perhaps it may be accounted the most useful in the whole Bible, especially in an age in which there is so little true and lively devotion.

PSALM I.

This Psalm is a general discourse on the happiness of good, and the misery of bad, men. It is a glorious subject ; which has employed the thoughts of the wisest men in all ages, to inquire wherein true happiness consists ; here the Psalmist plainly points it out, and it is a very proper introduction to the whole Book.

1 **BLESSED** [is] the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful ; *who avoids the acquaintance and society of all sorts of wicked men**. 2 But his delight [is] in the law of the LORD, *in studying and practising it* ; and in his law doth he

* There is a very remarkable gradation in this passage ; each thought rising upon the former ; *ungodly, sinners, and scorners*. To walk in the counsel of the ungodly, intimates a general acquaintance with men who fear not God. To stand in the way of sinners intimates a coming nearer to them, and holding familiar converse with men of wicked lives. Sitting in the seat of scorners, intimates friendship and confidence with men who deride religion. The scorners were the free-thinkers of those days, who looked upon the whole Jewish religion as an imposture, and could not forbear insulting those who were serious in the profession of it. This is a negative description of the good man's character, the positive follows in *ver. 2.*

meditate day and night; *he continually meditates upon it, and makes it the rule of his actions.* 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; *his soul shall be plentifully fed from heaven with the never-failing influences of grace and consolation, whereby he shall be made fruitful in every good word and work; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper; he shall persevere in holiness, and his happiness shall be fixed and durable, even everlasting.* 4 The ungodly [are] not so: but [are] like the chaff which the wind driveth away; *they are not so prosperous and happy, though they think to thrive by their impiety; but are useless and despicable, like the chaff, which is beautifully contrasted with a firm-rooted and fruitful tree; every wind of temptation affects them, and their designs are often blasted.* 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment*, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; *they shall not share in the happiness of the righteous, though with regard to outward enjoyments they may have been far better.* 6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous; *this is the sum of the whole, the Lord observes and approves the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish; all their wicked designs and courses shall come to nothing, and for ever perish with them.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. How cautious should all, especially young people, be of keeping bad company; for it leads them to sin; leads them on in it by quick steps; first to forget God, then openly to violate his law, and then to make a jest of religion, which is the last stage of wickedness, the seat of the scorner being on the very brink of hell. Have no acquaintance or correspondence, therefore, with wicked men. Hear the tender advice of the wise man, *My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Enter not into the path of the wicked; come not near it, turn from it and flee away.*

2. We should labour to secure this blessedness for ourselves. Let us love the Scriptures, study them carefully, and form our lives according to them; for this is the surest way to prosperity in both worlds.

* This cannot refer to human courts of judgment, because there are many crimes that may denominate a man ungodly, which yet do not come within their cognizance; so that it must refer to a future judgment, the day when the righteous shall all be gathered together to be applauded and rewarded.

3. Let us all consider the judgment-day, as an engagement to *avoid that which is evil, and pursue that which is good.* Remember *there is a judgment to come; a day when every man's character and conduct will be examined, and their eternal state determined.* Of this we have the clearest account and the strongest assurance in the New Testament. God grant that we may so improve this discovery, as that we may stand with honour and comfort in the judgment, and find the mercy of the Lord Jesus to eternal life on that awful day.

PSALM II.

That this Psalm is a prophecy of Christ, is the opinion of both Jewish and Christian interpreters; and the Apostles, under the inspiration of the Spirit, declare (Acts iv. 25.) that 'God, by the mouth of his servant David' uttered these things concerning Christ.

1 **W**HY do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? *Here David describes the rage of the Gentiles and Jewish people against Christ; and asks, why they contrive a thing which will prove vain?* 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed; *Pilate, Herod, and other kings of the heathen, and the Jewish rulers, conspired against the Messiah, [saying,]* 3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us; *they were determined to break through all opposition, and the strongest obligations with which it was attempted to bind them: but shame and vexation shall be the consequence; for* 4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. 5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure; *he will contemn them himself, and expose them to public scorn: then, when in their own opinion they are secure of success, and full of rage, he shall confound and punish them by his judgments. This the Psalmist further confirms by introducing God, as declaring his full determination to establish the Messiah's throne, to make many obedient, and to destroy the obstinate.* 6 Yet have I set, anointed, or inaugurated, my king upon my holy hill of Zion, *from which the Gospel is to proceed. The Messiah is then introduced as saying,* 7 I will declare the

decree: the LORD hath said unto me, 'Thou [art] my Son; this day have I begotten thee. *This he said when rising from the dead, for to that event the words are applied by two of the inspired apostles, ' he was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead; that was his birth-day to his kingdom.*

8 Ask of me, and I shall give [thee] the heathen [for] thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth [for] thy possession; *many nations shall become thy willing people.* But 9 Thou shalt break them *who continue obstinate* with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel; *they shall be as easily and irreparably destroyed.*

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth; *submit and make your peace with Christ, while you have time and space for repentance and submission.*

11 Serve the LORD with fear, *with an awful sense of his greatness and majesty, that you may be careful to please him, and fearful to offend him,* and rejoice *in the sense of God's grace and goodness to you,* with trembling, *lest you walk unworthy of it.*

12 Kiss the Son, *that is, pay allegiance to him, (which among the easterns was done by a kiss),* lest he be angry, and ye perish [from] the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little; *lest if you continue your rebellion he march against you, meet you by the way, and you be immediately cut off; for his wrath will soon be kindled, and the least blaze of it will be your destruction:* blessed [are] all they that put their trust in him; *that submit, and fly to him as their mighty deliverer and protector.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us rejoice in the exaltation, authority, and glory of Christ. God raised him from the dead; gave him universal dominion; confirmed it to him by an irrevocable decree; and vain have been the rage and tumults of the people hitherto, vain the counsels and arms of the rulers and princes of the earth; and this faithful word assures us, that all future counsels and attempts against his throne, shall also be in vain. In this, as his disciples, we have great reason to rejoice.

2. Let us see to it that we ourselves submit to him. It is not sufficient to pay him the homage of the lip and the knee, for he expects that of the heart; that we reverence his authority, love him for his goodness, trust in his almighty protection, and serve him with all our powers. Else, though we wear his name, and

profess his religion, we shall perish; and his anger will not only be kindled, but burn more furiously against us than against the heathens and Jews who opposed him. Let us reflect also on the blessedness of those who submit to him. They are secure from every enemy, and shall reign with him in eternal glory.

3. This should promote our zeal for the interest of Christ in the world, and make it our own. It is the cause of truth and righteousness in which Christ is engaged; and this cause shall succeed in his hand. Let us appear strenuously on the Lord's side; plead the cause of his gospel; and endeavour to lead our fellow-creatures to submit to him and obey him. Earnestly praying that this glorious prophecy may be accomplished in its full extent, and that *God would give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.*

PSALM III.

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

2 Sam. xv. 14—18.

This was a very afflicting providence; but it was a means of doing him good, by awakening a more lively sense of devotion in his own mind.

1 **L**ORD, how are they increased that trouble me? many [are] they that rise up against me. *He found a melancholy change in his condition, and was surprised to see to what a number his enemies were increased, and in how short a time.* 2 Many [there be] which say of my soul, [There is] no help for him in God. *They did not say, God was not able to help him, but that he was a person of so abandoned a character that God would not do it; this was the language of Absalom and his confederates.* Selah*. 3 But thou, O LORD, [art] a shield for me; *thou wilt defend me with thy almighty protection; thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head; thou wilt restore me to my former dignity, and in the mean time keep up my courage and my spirits.* 4 I cried unto the LORD with my voice, *in an earnest and affectionate manner,* and he heard me out of his holy hill; *out of Zion, where the ark was fixed, and which was typical of heaven; where he resides, and to which our prayers*

* Selah is probably only a musical note: the meaning of which is not now understood.

are to be directed. Selah. *This has so comfortably secured me in my own mind, that* 5 *I have laid me down and slept; I awaked cheerfully, for the LORD sustained me. Encouraged by this composure, and by faith in God's care,* 6 *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set [themselves] against me round about, so that humanly speaking I have no way to escape; but still I will hope in God.* 7 *Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies [upon] the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly; let it appear that I speak the truth, by thy saving me, as thou hast formerly done, when my enemies were as much confounded and disabled, as a man would be if his teeth were dashed out, and his jawbone broken to pieces.* 8 *Salvation belongeth unto the LORD; let the honour of my salvation be ascribed to him: thy blessing [is] upon thy people; or, let it be so; though I pray for the defeat of my personal enemies, I wish and pray for the prosperity of the people, how ungrateful soever they be to me.* Selah.

REFLECTIONS.

1. IN every time of danger let us apply to the divine protection. Though we may have no personal enemy, of whom we are in danger, yet we are liable to many troubles and afflictions from spiritual enemies, by whose attacks we may be in danger of losing our piety and comfort. Let us look up to God as an almighty helper, and seek our refuge in him.

2. Let us thankfully own the past experience we have had of his goodness as David does. We are too ready to forget the former appearances of Providence for us because we are afflicted, and to overlook a thousand past benefits, because we want this or the other, that would be convenient or desirable. This is ungrateful to God, who intends our good by our affliction, and has hitherto *daily loaded us with his benefits.*

3. Grateful reflections and serious prayer, will tend to animate and compose our spirits under trouble. A recollection of the divine goodness communicated to us hitherto, will lead us to encourage ourselves in the Lord our God; will prevent despair, and support our hope. Prayer will take much of the burden off our minds; prevent the anxieties of the day, and the tossings of the night. By this means God will appear for our salvation; *his blessing will be upon us;* and there is nothing we can want or wish for more.

PSALM IV.

To the chief musician on Neginoth, to the master of the band of music in the tabernacle; Neginoth signifies stringed instruments. A Psalm of David; probably composed by him during his persecution by Saul.

1 **H**EAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me [when I was] in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer; *he appeals to God as a righteous judge, and pleads former instances of his delivering goodness. Then addressing his enemies, he says,* 2 O ye sons of men, how long [will ye turn] my glory into shame? [how long] will ye love vanity, [and] seek after leasing? *How long will ye revile my destination to the kingdom, object to my claim as a fraud and imposture, and spread false reports that have no foundation?* Selah. 3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him; *God hath made a remarkable and wonderful choice of the godly in all ages; his divine authority hath set me apart to the throne, and therefore he will hear and support me.* 4 Stand in awe, and sin not; *dread the divine displeasure: commune with your own heart upon your bed, hear what conscience will say in your retired and silent hours, and it will convince you of my innocence, and of your own guilt; and be still; cease to persecute and revile me.* Selah. *They boasted of their sacrifices, but he exhorts them,* 5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD; *offer your sacrifices with an upright and charitable heart, or they will not be acceptable. He then addresses himself to God.* 6 [There be] many that say, Who will show us [any] good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us; *the generality are chiefly anxious about worldly good, and seek it by indirect methods, but I esteem thy favour, the smiles of thy approving mercy, as the best good; and the possession of it has given me greater joy than the joy of harvest and vintage, or any prosperity which my enemies possess.* 7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time [that] their corn and their wine increased. 8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety; *I am so satisfied with thy favour, and so secure under thy protection, that I will lie down and sleep at once*

not terrified by my enemies, since thou makest me to dwell in safety; thou alone, and I need no other defence.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us rejoice in God's peculiar favour to his people. *He hath set apart him that is godly for himself*, wonderfully selected them to be the objects of his special care and love. He knows and approves them, when their enemies are persecuting and reproaching them. Who would not rejoice and be glad, to enjoy the protection and favour of the Most High!

2. Let us attend to these precepts, which are of universal obligation and importance. Let us stand in awe of God's authority and power, and not dare to sin against him. We should *commune with our own hearts*; in secret silence of the mind, examine our state and temper towards God, that we may not be deceived. And if we desire that our spiritual sacrifices, our prayers and praises should be accepted of God, let them proceed from pure hearts, and be offered *without wrath and doubting*. Then may we confidently put our trust in the Lord; and he will accept our sacrifice, and be our refuge.

3. We are taught to prefer the favour of God before all the enjoyments of earth. *Many say, who will show us good?* It is temporal, earthly good which they seek and pursue; though this cannot satisfy the soul at present, nor make it happy hereafter. But the favour of God, a sense of his approbation and love, should be the objects of our warmest pursuit. This will abundantly make up the want of earthly blessings, and make us happy without them; it will add a peculiar relish to the comforts of life; tend to the happiness of our days, and the repose of our nights; and be an earnest and foretaste of everlasting joy.

PSALM V.

To the chief musician upon Nehiloth, which signifies a wind instrument,
A Psalm of David, during Saul's persecution.

1 **G**IVE ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.
2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. 3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morn-

ing, O LORD; in the morning will I direct [my prayer] unto thee, and will look up; *he would direct his prayer in a proper manner, and with suitable affections; he would look up with humble hope and patient expectation of a gracious answer; and this he could do because his heart was sincere.* 4 For thou [art] not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee; *not meet with the least acceptance from thee.* 5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity; *they shall not have any countenance from thee.* 6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing; *those who accused him to Saul: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man; a just character of Saul himself.* 7 But as for me, I will come [into] thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; *though I am at present banished from it, yet I hope to be soon restored to it; [and] till then in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple; in all my prayers I will look that way*.* 8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; *lead me in thy commands, which are the rule of righteousness; make thy way straight before my face, that I may not take any rash, sinful, or imprudent steps. He entreats this because his enemies were very crafty and malicious;* 9 For [there is] no faithfulness in their mouth; *their speech is offensive and destructive; and whatever pretences of piety and friendship they may make, their inward part [is] very wickedness; their throat [is] an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.* 10 Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee; *defeat their counsels, and cast them out of thy protection; for by their opposition to me they have opposed thy appointment.* 11 But let all those that put their trust in thee, *all righteous and honest men, be protected and favoured, and on that account rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.* 12 For thou, O LORD, wilt bless the righteous; *it is suitable to thy nature and promise to do so; with favour wilt thou compass or crown him as [with] a shield; thou wilt surround him with it on every side, and add a dignity to him.*

* The Israelites were required to do this when they were absent from the temple.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE here see in what manner we should pray. That is a very instructive phrase, in ver. 3. Prayer should be directed or set in order before God, with great thought and seriousness. We should look with great intenseness, with earnest desires, and cheerful hope. This is necessary to the end of prayer, as means to promote our piety, strengthen our faith, and encourage our dependance on God.

2. We are here shown what is necessary to the acceptance of prayer; that our hearts be sincere, and that we obey the law of God. He does and must hate the wicked; all bloody, deceitful, and lying men; and their sacrifices must be an abomination to him. Let us therefore cleanse our hands from wickedness, and so encompass his altar.

3. We learn to wait on God for direction, that our ways may be upright and prudent; ver. 8. It is desirable that God's way, that is, the way of duty, should be made straight before us, that we may easily find it out, and walk uprightly in it; that prudence and caution should attend all our steps; for there are scarce any who have not some unfriendly observers, who would reproach them, and religion too, if they should take any false step. *In all thy ways acknowledge God, and he shall direct thy paths.*

4. We should rejoice in God's favourable regard to the righteous. Let their enemies speak lies of them, hate and persecute them, yet, delightful thought, *God will bless them.* Though their enemies should compass them about on every side, he will spread around them his almighty shield, which will be at once *their defence and their glory.* While we join prudent caution to sincere prayer, God will guide and protect us. *For the Lord God is a sun and shield, a light and a defence; he will give grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

PSALM VI.

To the chief musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith ; Neginoth Sheminith signifies an instrument of eight strings. A Psalm of David, composed on occasion of some sickness.

1 **O** LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure ; *as if he had said, When thou seest it necessary to afflict me, do it out of love, and according to fatherly compassion.* 2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD ; for I [am] weak : O LORD, heal me ; for my bones are vexed ; *pity me, for I am full of grievous pains.* 3 My soul is also sore vexed ; *an apprehension of God's displeasure, and a fear of his further wrath, had distressed his mind, and beclouded his sense of the divine favour :* but thou, O LORD, how long ? *how long wilt thou suffer me to lie languishing in this condition ?* 4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul : Oh save me for thy mercies' sake ; *deliver me from this sickness, and restore me to health and inward peace.* 5 For in death [there is] no remembrance of thee : in the grave who shall give thee thanks ? *he pleads for this, lest he should soon die, and all opportunities of service should be over ; whereas if he recovered, he would celebrate God's praises, and instruct his people.* 6 I am weary with my groaning ; all the night, *or, every night,* make I my bed to swim ; I water my couch with my tears ; *my pain and distress is so great that I groan and weep incessantly.* 7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief ; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies ; *he had an unpleasant and deadly aspect, and, to add to this affliction, his enemies insulted over him, and rejoiced in the prospect of his death. He then turns as it were to them, and says,* 8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity ; *insult me no more ; stay no longer expecting my death, as if my disorder was sent as a punishment for my sins, and a token of divine displeasure ;* for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. 9 The LORD hath heard my supplication ; the LORD will receive my prayer ; *he will restore my health and comfort, according to my prayer ; therefore I am fully assured that I shall live to be victorious over my enemies, and see them disappointed in all their cruel schemes against me.* 10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed : let them return [and] be ashamed suddenly.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE have great reason for thankfulness that the case of David is not ours. It was indeed a melancholy one. It is bad to have *the bones vexed*, and tears and groans extorted by violent pain; but worse to have *the soul sore vexed*, the peace of the mind lost; and especially to have all this aggravated by insults, reproaches and unkindness. Let us bless God if, when we are sick, we have no additional sorrows; if we have kind friends, suitable accommodations, and above all, peace of conscience, and a comfortable sense of the divine favour. It may be inferred from hence,

2. That we may justly and reasonably pray for the removal of any affliction which we labour under. One end for which afflictions are sent, is to quicken our prayers, to convince us of our dependance on God, and show us the vanity and insufficiency of all earthly things. *Is any man afflicted? let him pray*; let him pray for deliverance out of his afflictions; but especially that they may not be imbittered by a sense of the divine displeasure; that they may see his hand and read his love in every afflictive stroke. Let us pray that he would appear our friend; then it matters little what we suffer, or who are our enemies.

3. In the most afflictive circumstances of life we should labour to have faith in God; and commit our cause to him by humble, earnest prayer. Then, like David, we may rest in cheerful hope that he will interpose in our favour, extricate us out of our difficulties, or *cause them to work together for our good*. Our faith will be peculiarly bright and honourable, when thus exercised, in the darkest seasons of life; and *the trial of it will be found to our comfort in this world, and to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ*.

PSALM VII.

Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

Shiggaion is the name of some unknown song or instrument. Cush was probably one of Saul's courtiers who had slandered David.

1 **O LORD** my God, in thee do I put my trust : save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me ; *I entreat thy favourable appearance for me.* 2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending [it] in pieces, *destroying me with a great deal of rage and cruelty,* while [there is] none to deliver ; *none that will or dare stand my friend.* 3 **O LORD** my God, if I have done this *which is laid to my charge ;* if there be iniquity in my hands, *particularly in conspiring against Saul's life ;* 4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me ; *if I have had any treacherous designs against him, or broken my covenant ;* (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy ; *I have let him escape, when I had him in my power, which was the case twice ; once when I took away his spear, and again when I cut off the skirt of his garment ;*) then 5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take [it ;] yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust ; *let him succeed in his designs against me, let me lose my life and reputation too.* Selah. *But as thou knowest it is otherwise,* 6 Arise, **O LORD,** in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies, and awake for me [to] the judgment [that] thou hast commanded ; *set me in the kingdom which thou hast promised me, and the office thou hast commanded me to undertake, which I do not seek from a principle of covetousness or ambition.* 7 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about ; *my deliverance will be the ground of public rejoicing, especially among the pious Israelites ;* for their sakes therefore return thou on high ; *ascend thy judgment-seat, and determine this depending cause ; I am confident thou wilt at length do it.* 8 The **LORD** shall judge the people : judge me, **O LORD,** according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity [that is] in me ; *according to my loyalty and upright intentions toward Saul.* 9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end ; *let it be disappointed and corrected ;* but establish the just :

for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins; *he perfectly knows every man's true character.* 10 My defence [is] of God, *none but he can absolve or condemn me,* which saveth the upright in heart, *therefore he will appear for me.* 11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry [with the wicked*] every day; *though he does not immediately appear, yet he sees uprightness, and will in time show that he is the righteous judge.* 12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. 13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors; *when their punishment comes, it shall be deadly, for he hath prepared various instruments of destruction, a terrible execution for them. In the mean time they hasten it upon themselves by their own iniquity;* 14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood; *he takes a great deal of pains to contrive and work it.* 15 He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch [which] he made. 16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate, *like a man throwing a stone in the air, which falls on his own head, and dashes out his brains.* 17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high; *he was so fully persuaded that he should live to see the display of God's faithfulness and justice against his persecutors, that he determines in the most joyful manner to praise the Lord most high, whose power and justice are infinite.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE here the great happiness of having a good conscience, especially under censures or slanders. It is pleasant to reflect that we are not guilty of what we are charged with; yea, that we have practised the contrary virtues, that we have *rendered good for evil,* and denied the gratification of our passions when it was in our power. Let us earnestly labour to secure this happiness; and *herein exercise ourselves, to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.*

2. Let us think of God as the supreme and righteous judge, to keep us from doing wrong, and comfort us when we suffer wrong. This thought, so frequently suggested in this psalm, contains an awful caution to us, to avoid injuring, persecuting, slandering, or

* The words *with the wicked* are not in the original. *The Lord is the righteous judge, and the Lord is angry every day.*

insulting, others. It is a great satisfaction to us when so treated, that, *God searches the heart*, and will in his own good time *awake to judgment*, and *render to every man according to his works*. We may therefore safely and comfortably lodge our appeal with him, *who will bring forth our righteousness as the noon-day*.

3. We may reflect how miserable they are who are the objects of God's anger. *He is angry with the wicked every day*; amidst all their prosperity, mirth, and gaiety. Though he seems not to regard them, he continually observes and records their faults; and is preparing a variety of instruments for their punishment. Their schemes and contrivances to gratify their lusts, and to corrupt and injure others, will all come with dreadful vengeance on their own heads, *at the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*. Let us therefore earnestly pray, *Lord, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; and establish the just*, that they may neither be destroyed nor insnared by them, but may have reason to *sing praise to the name of the Lord most high*.

PSALM VIII.

To the chief musician upon Gittith, A Psalm of David.

Gittith is the name of some instrument used at Gath. This psalm is a pious meditation by moonlight, upon the goodness of God to mankind in general, and begins with a devout admiration of it.

1 **O** LORD our Lord, how excellent, *or magnificent*, [is] thy name in all the earth! *the earth is full of thy praise*, who hast set thy glory above the heavens; *it reacheth above the visible heavens, and fills the upper world with rapture and praise*. 2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings * hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. 3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, *so curiously and beautifully wrought*, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, *which thou hast disposed, ordered, and established*; 4 What is man, *weak mortal man*, that thou art *so graciously* mindful of him? and the son of man, *the greatest of the chil-*

* Some understand this of real infants, who draw their nourishment from the breasts by instinct, and are an evidence of the being and providence of God. But, rather, the psalmist having mentioned the glory of God, falls into a reflection upon the displays of it in the dispensations of providence; by weak instruments overcoming the mighty, and confounding those who study revenge, and take every occasion to blaspheme God's name.

dren of men, that thou visitest him with thy daily care and providence? that thou, who hast so many worlds under thy care, filled with so many inhabitants, how wonderful that man should so constantly and largely partake of thy goodness! 5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, *perhaps next below them in the order of beings,* and hast crowned him with glory and honour; *put upon him the honour of rational faculties, made him in thine own image; and* 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all [things] under his feet; *brought all things into subjection to him:* 7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; 8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, [and whatsoever] *passeth through the paths of the seas; not only creatures upon the earth, but the fowls of the air, and the fish in the sea; the one does not soar so high, nor the other dive so deep, but man can find ways to take them; and God hath given to some of them a remarkable instinct, by which they come to the shore in great shoals, and offer themselves as it were to be taken. He concludes with the same humble devout admiration, with which he began. O LORD our Lord, how excellent [is] thy name in all the earth!*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us acknowledge the goodness of God to the children of men. In the dignity of their nature *he hath made them but a little lower than the angels,* and given them dominion over the creatures. Abundant provision is made for the support, convenience, and delight of mankind. In how many instances does his goodness and bounty to man appear! in furnishing every part of the globe with good things for his use. He not only feeds, clothes, and protects him, but visits and converses with him as a friend. Let us think of this every day, especially at our meals; and look upon every dish of flesh, fish, and fowl that comes to our table, as a witness that God is good, and as an incentive to gratitude, love, and obedience.

2. Let us admire the condescension of God, that he will thus display and communicate his goodness to us. Think what a glorious Being he is in himself. When we view the moon and stars, we may think of them as so many worlds, or parts of systems of worlds, inhabited by various ranks of beings, many of them equal, yea, perhaps superior to man. Then we should reflect, what a great stoop of condescension it is in God, to take such favourable

notice of the children of men. Let his name be ever glorious and magnificent in our esteem.

3. Let us carefully observe the methods of divine Providence; particularly in making use of weak and contemptible instruments to bring about great and astonishing events. He can make infants the preachers of his glory, and the publishers of his praise; can confound the mightiest enemies, and destroy the most malicious avengers, by persons and means which they despise. Such instances often appear in the course of providence; it becomes us seriously to observe them; and to acknowledge, that *verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

4. We should adore the riches of divine grace in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is to be remembered, that our Lord quotes the second verse of this psalm to silence the cavils of the scribes and pharisees, who were displeased at the Jewish children saying, *Hosannah to the Son of David*; and St. Paul applies what is here said of God's regards to man, and putting the creatures into subjection to him, to Jesus Christ, *Heb. ii. 6.*, to his character and circumstances, both in his humbled and exalted state; as *made for a while lower than the angels, and having all things subjected to him.* When therefore we survey the bounty and goodness of God to man, let us think of this most illustrious display of his goodness, in giving his Son to humiliation and suffering for our sake; and now exalting him above the highest angels, and making every creature, every being but himself, subject to him. When we contemplate this scene of wonders, surely we have peculiar reason to say, *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

PSALM IX.

To the chief musician upon Muthlabben*, A Psalm of David.

1 **I** WILL praise [thee,] O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works; *I will praise thee with hearty devotion and ardent affection.* 2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High. 3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence, *and not by my power.* 4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause, *which I solemnly committed to thee;*

* The learned are not agreed about the meaning of this title.

thou satest in the throne judging right. 5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. *This probably refers to the Philistines; there is a beautiful gradation in it; first he rebuked them, then destroyed them, and lastly put out their name for ever.* 6 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them. *The marginal reading in the bibles is best; the destructions of the enemy are come to a perpetual end; and their cities hast thou destroyed, &c.* 7 But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment; *he still lives to avenge my cause.* 8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness; *his jurisdiction is not limited, nor can his justice be corrupted.* On the contrary, 9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed; a refuge in times of trouble. 10 And they that know thy name, *who are acquainted with thy justice, and the merciful dispensations of thy providence,* will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. 11 Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion, *in the sanctuary where his special presence is manifested:* declare among the people, *among the heathen nations that are brought to know and worship God,* his doings. 12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, *which he will quickly and certainly do,* then he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble, *though he may not presently answer it.* 13 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble [which I suffer] of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death, *that is, the grave:* 14 That I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion, *which is beautifully opposed to the gates of death; and in the assurance of this I will rejoice in thy salvation.* 15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit [that] they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. 16 The LORD is known [by] the judgment [which] he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands; *the Lord will bring upon them the mischiefs they intended for others; though men should doubt the being and providence of God, he will prove it by his judgments.* Higgaion. Selah*. 17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, [and] all the nations that forget God, *even the most numerous and powerful.* 18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten;

* These extraordinary notes are put here to engage attention: as if he had said, Let this be thought upon again and again; it is a point that deserves the most serious meditation.

though God may long defer to judge the wicked and to deliver the righteous, yet the expectation of the poor shall [not] perish for ever. 19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen *who oppose me*, be judged in thy sight. 20 Put them in fear, O LORD, *strike terror into them*: [that] the nations may know themselves [to be but] men; *that how haughtily soever they may think of themselves, they may know by experience that they are but men; or, as it is in the original, one man, that is, a poor, weak, miserable man.* Selah.

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM hence we learn to ascribe all our victories and successes to God. In whatever we prosper, it doth not become us to boast of ourselves, or ascribe our prosperity to any means or instruments; we ought to give God the glory, and *praise him with our whole hearts.*

2. We should think of God as the universal ruler and judge, who *sitteth on his throne*, to decide all controversies, to determine all appeals, to defend the injured, and to punish the injurious. Though there may seem some irregularity in his providential dispensations, yet we may be sure that *the Judge of all the earth doeth right; he prepareth his throne for judgment.* A most delightful thought, in the midst of our troubles, alarms, and fears.

3. Let us study the nature and perfections of the blessed God; and labour to know his name, as a powerful motive to trust in him, and in perilous times to fly to him. For our encouragement, let us remember that *he never forsakes them who seek him*; never disowns or deserts them.

4. We should observe the wisdom and equity of divine Providence in sinking ambitious, tyrannical and persecuting powers *into their own pit*, and *snares them in the works of their own hands*, turning their wicked designs upon themselves. Our own country hath had frequent experience of this; God hath brought upon wicked men the ruin they were contriving against his church and people. *When God makes inquisition for the blood of his persecuted saints, he will punish their persecutors.* Let this be the subject of our frequent and most serious meditation.

5. We should consider seriously what will be the lot of the wicked at last. However they may escape punishment now, *he will cast them into hell*; even though nations, powerful and nume-

rous; and not only blasphemers and persecutors, but even *all those that forget God*. The cause of wickedness is forgetfulness of God; and the end of it is hell. It is an easy thing to slight the judgments of God now, but not so easy to bear them. *Who can stand in his sight when once he is angry?*

6. It is much to be wished that all mankind may consider that they are men, and but men. This is true of the greatest princes, and of those who think themselves as gods, above the common rank of mortals. The thought of this would abate their pride and ambition. It is good for us to consider that *we are but men*; weak, frail, dying, accountable men. It would tend to lessen our conceit of ourselves, and our dependance upon, and boasting of, our own wisdom and strength; and it would teach us to *cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of.*

PSALM X.

This Psalm was probably composed by David during Saul's administration; the oppression and insolence of whose ministers are here described in a very lively and pathetic manner.

1 **WHY** standest thou afar off, O LORD? [why] hidest thou [thyself] in times of trouble *and danger?* 2 The wicked in [his] pride, *on account of his authority and power*, doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined, *or artfully framed.* 3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, *that he can do what he pleaseth*; and blesseth the covetous, [whom] the LORD abhorreth; *praiseth the unjust extortions of other violent men, whom God abhors.* *The source of all this is a neglect of God.* 4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek [after God:] God [is] not in all his thoughts; *he thinks himself above the need of God and of prayer; he never thinks of the supreme Ruler; all his thoughts are otherwise engaged.* 5 His ways are always grievous, *troublesome and injurious to those about him*; thy judgments [are] far above out of his sight; *he thinks divine threatenings are but trifles, and that he is in no danger of God's judgments*: [as for] all his enemies, he puffeth at them; *he despises them to the last degree, and thinks he can easily blow them away.* 6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not

be moved: for [I shall] never [be] in adversity, *my prosperity shall always continue.* 7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue [is] mischief and vanity; *sometimes he utters his malignity of heart, and sometimes speaks fair in order to hide it.* 8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor; *like a highway robber, and murderer, who lurks about for the defenceless.* 9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net; *he is like a lion ready to catch his prey; that waits with cool, deliberate, unwearied patience, till he gets his prey into his den, and then draws out his vitals without remorse.* 10 He croucheth, [and] humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones, *that is, by his claws and teeth: still carrying on the same metaphor.* Now all this wickedness is owing to secret atheism; 11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see [it.] 12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble; *lift up thine hand to confound those who blaspheme thee, and to deliver and relieve the poor.* 13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? *what is it that encourages them in these wicked practices? it is because he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not requite [it;] he thinks God, by his forbearance, does not seem to regard them; nevertheless,* 14 Thou hast seen [it;] for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite [it] with thy hand; *surely thou dost not see it as an idle, unconcerned spectator; therefore the poor committeth himself unto thee, firmly expecting that thou wilt appear, for thou art the helper of the fatherless.* 15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil [man;] *spoil them of their power to injure others: seek out his wickedness [till] thou find none; let there be no wickedness unreckoned for, no mischievous designs undefeated.* 16 The LORD [is] King for ever and ever: the heathen, *the wicked Israelites, who deserve no better name than heathen, are perished out of his land; the land to which he has a peculiar claim.* 17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; *thou hast often done it; and therefore I believe thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear; thou wilt fit them to pray acceptably, and to receive the mercies they pray for:* 18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress; *that mere dust and ashes may not insolently tyrannize.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us reflect upon the detestable characters here described; and how solicitous we should be to abhor and avoid them. It is too just a description of many princes, nobles, landlords, and masters. What pride do they show, in their rank, wealth, and authority! What oppression do they practise upon their subjects, tenants, dependants, servants, and all that come within their reach? *Because they have no changes* they grow more proud, confident, and oppressive. The source of all this is, irreligion; they forget the supreme Ruler, and *have no fear of God before their eyes*. Let us then, as men and christians, shun all degrees of oppression, and all the arts of mischief, which are so common in the world around us. Let us *be clothed with humility*, and cherish it by prayer and setting God before our eyes. He abhors all the wicked; and will at length appear to humble their pride, to confound their devices, and bring everlasting mischief and ruin upon them.

2. We are taught to keep the judgments of God always in our sight. Though sentence be not speedily executed against the wicked, it will certainly come. Though God's judgments against sinners are out of our bodily sight, we should keep them before the eyes of our mind, that we may *stand in awe and not sin*.

3. Setting the Lord always before us, and making a serious business of prayer, are the best preservatives against evil. *A wicked man will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts*. If we desire to be kept from sin, let us remember that the eye of God is always upon us; we should take pains to make the thoughts of him familiar to our minds, and *have our eyes ever towards him*. Let us, as in v. 17., entreat that he would *prepare our hearts* to pray. Prayers are represented by Homer as the daughters of Jupiter; probably to intimate that he considered it as the work of God, to excite men to a proper disposition for prayer. Let us seek of God a fixed attention, devout affections, and earnest desires; then *he will cause his ear to hear; for the preparation of the heart of man, and the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord*.

4. Let us remember that we are *men of the earth*; that we may neither forget God nor injure man. *We are of the dust*; sup-

ported by it, and tending to it. In the best state we are but dust and ashes; consequently, we have a continual dependance on God, and need daily support and sustenance from him, which should be sought by prayer. We are weak, frail, dying creatures; therefore it becomes us to avoid all oppression, insolence, and mischief. Let us remember also, that the greatest princes, and proudest oppressors, are but *men of the earth*; and attend to the force of the prophet's expostulation, *Why art thou afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man who is but dust?*

PSALM XI.

To the chief musician, [A Psalm] of David.

It was probably composed by him while at Saul's court; some of his friends observed the danger he was in before he himself did, being a young man and unpractised in the arts of courts. The Psalmist begins with declaring his firm confidence in God's fidelity and goodness.

1 **I**N the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee [as] a bird to your mountain? *The second and third verses seem to be the arguments his friends urged upon him to fly to the mountains, as a bird, to get away from Saul's malice as soon as he could;*
 2 For, lo, say they, the wicked bend [their] bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart; *like an artful fowler taking aim at an helpless bird.*
 3 If, or, seeing then that, the foundations be destroyed, that there is no law nor justice, nothing but artifice and perfidy, what can the righteous do? *innocence and righteousness will be no security. The rest of the Psalm is David's answer to this suggestion.*
 4 The LORD [is] in his holy temple, or palace above; the LORD's throne [is] in heaven, *infinitely exalted above the highest earthly monarch: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men; he looks attentively, observes their conduct with the minutest care, as men do when they look intently upon an object.*
 5 The LORD trieth the righteous; *exerciseth him with affliction, to call forth and improve his graces: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth, however prosperous and successful he may be.*
 6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire

and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; *their destruction shall be like that of Sodom, surprising and inevitable*: [this shall be] the portion of their cup; *the rectitude of God will engage him to do this.* 7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness, *and all who practise it; therefore he will thus severely punish those who persecute his servants; and his countenance doth behold the upright with approbation and delight, notwithstanding all the injurious treatment they meet with.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are taught from hence, to reverence the omniscience of God: *his eyes behold, and his eyelids try the children of men.* He knows every man's true character, and what schemes and desires are in his heart. He knows it, not by report or representation from others, as earthly princes do; but by immediate and thorough inspection. Let us therefore reverence this infinite mind, which is capable of perfect and universal knowledge; and endeavour to approve all our actions and thoughts to his all-seeing eye.

2. How desirable is it that God should be our friend, and not our enemy. We here see what is necessary to this. Upright and righteous men are the objects of his love; he beholds them with an approving and gracious eye, however men may treat them, and whatever they may say or think of them. He hates the wicked, with all their pomp and power; and will bring upon them speedy, irresistible, and everlasting destruction. Let us dread and abhor their character, and *let integrity and uprightness always preserve us.*

3. We learn from the whole, not to be deterred from our duty by the terror of our enemies, or the unreasonable caution and tenderness of our friends. When David's enemies persecuted him, his friends were much concerned about him, and advised him to fly; he argues against this strongly, not because it would appear cowardly, but it would manifest unbelief, a distrust of the power, care, and faithfulness of God; and he would sooner have his valour suspected than his piety. Let us, like him, act steadily in our duty; keep the post which Providence assigns us, and never be discouraged by what men can do against us. He here suggests to us many weighty motives to continue firm to our duty; particularly, the over-ruling providence of God, his perfect

knowledge of what we are doing, the principles on which we act, and the designs of others against us. Let us remember that he will approve us, if we are faithful to him. If he tries us by affliction *he will not forsake us*; and when he rains destruction upon the wicked, we shall appear to be the objects of his protection and love. *In him therefore let us put our trust; and boldly say with the psalmist, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what men can do unto me.*

PSALM XII.

To the chief musician upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.

Probably penned by him on his accession to the throne; as there is reference to the persecutions he endured from Saul and his courtiers, and the great degeneracy of the people during his administration.

1 **H**ELP, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men; *the faithful or the honest fail, they are reduced or diminished to a handful.* 2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: [with] flattering lips [and] with a double heart do they speak; *one neighbour will not believe another; they pretend kindness, while they mean nothing, or only cruelty and deceit.* 3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, [and] the tongue that speaketh proud things; *he shall execute severe vengeance among them**. 4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail *against David, and the cause of truth and virtue; we shall set Saul and the people against him by our slanders; our lips [are] our own, to speak what we please: who [is] lord over us, to call us to account for what we say?* 5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set [him] in safety [from him that] puffeth at him; *that speaks of him as scornfully as if he could blow him away with his breath* †. 6 The words of the

* Perhaps there is an allusion here to a custom in the eastern nations of cutting off the tongue or lip of those who had spoken treasonable or seditious words.

† God is here introduced as speaking when David was writing these words. He looked upon it as a revelation which God then made to him, and not merely as the suggestion of his own mind, and what he by a figure put into the mouth of the Lord, as he immediately declares his faith in it; This God hath said, and I will triumph in it.

LORD [are] pure words, *not false and treacherous, like theirs: [as] silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times; which is purified from earth and dross many times over, till it is quite pure and unmixed.* 7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them, *that is, the pious poor and oppressed, from this generation for ever; from this wicked generation, as long as they are assaulted by malice and cunning. With this hope he encourages himself, though things were bad at present; and he urges it as a plea why God should arise and help speedily; for* 8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted; *the wicked walk proudly and without fear, you may meet them wherever you go, while base and wicked men are exalted to be governors and magistrates.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE have great reason to lament that the character, which is here described, suits our own days and circumstances so much: a general decay of piety and honesty, which naturally stand or fall together. It is to be feared that many of our courtiers are too much like Saul's; *they speak with flattering lips, and a double heart, make no conscience of lying; and often promise when they never intend to perform.* It were well if such infamous practices were confined to the court; but a general licentiousness of the tongue, is too much the character of our country. With confidence and insolence men say what they please; profane the name of God, the most high; and deceive, reproach, and slander their neighbours. This ought to be lamented; and we have great reason to fear the continuance of divine judgments, because our tongues and our doings cannot please the Lord.

2. Let us guard against this iniquity in ourselves. In speculation we think it wrong to speak falsely and to deceive; and should perhaps resent it if it were practised on ourselves. Let us then resolutely *keep our own tongues from speaking evil, and our lips from guile.* Let us abhor to speak proud and insolent things, even to the meanest; and especially guard against *speaking with a double heart, against flattery, and excessive compliments; which lead men to make light of truth and integrity.* We ought to remember that *our tongues are not our own; nor are we at liberty to speak what we please.* There is a Lord over us, who hears and remembers our words, and will call us to account for them: *by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be*

judged. If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridled his tongue, that man's religion is vain.

3. Let us remember the purity and certainty of God's words. *He is not a man, that he should lie or be deceived*; his declarations are true, and his promises are faithful; he neither imposes upon us, nor jests with us. The words of men are not always to be relied upon, but God's words are. All his promises shall be fulfilled; and we should particularly encourage ourselves, with those which relate to the happiness of his faithful servants, for *not one word shall fail.*

4. We are here taught our duty in degenerate times; that is, deeply to lament the want of honesty and piety, and earnestly to seek God's help, when honest and pious men are scarce; when they die, or abate in their zeal. When godly and faithful men, who should and would lend an hand to support the cause of God and religion, die, it is time to cry, *Help, Lord.* Let good men rejoice in his protection; he will keep them from being destroyed and corrupted; *keep them from this crooked and perverse generation: yea, keep them for ever. The Lord will deliver them from every evil work, and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom.*

PSALM XIII.

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David.

It was probably penned during his persecution by Saul, as that continued the longest; and the Psalm intimates that he had been a considerable time in circumstances of distress.

1 **H**OW long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? *He complains that his deliverance was so long delayed, that God seemed to have forgotten him and hid his face from him, as men turn away their face from those whose petitions they will not grant.* 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, change my purposes, and perplex myself with one contrivance after another, and all in vain, [having] sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? *so exalted that I continually fear destruction, and know not where to turn myself for help.* 3 Consider [and] hear me, O LORD my

God: lighten mine eyes; *endue me with wisdom and circumspection to avoid the dangers that beset me, and give me refreshment in my spirits by delivering me; lest I sleep [the sleep] of death;* 4 *Lest mine enemy should say, I have prevailed against him: [and] those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved; their boasts will dishonour thy name, and grieve thy people. Then, by a surprising turn of language, he expresses a cheerful confidence in God.* 5 *But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation, that is, in the assurance I have that thou wilt appear for me, and in due time deliver me.* 6 *I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me; he hath done so in former instances, and especially because he hath given me such promises and assurances of deliverance and salvation, as I know will at length be accomplished.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may here reflect on the melancholy condition of a person under dejection of spirit. This is a mournful circumstance, especially when it arises from any apprehension of the displeasure of God, and being rejected of him. This was David's case, and has been the case of many good men. When this affliction is long continued, it is a very dreadful one; anxiety and impatience are apt to arise, and despair of relief to fill the soul with exquisite distress. If a good man may be thus afflicted, what have not the wicked to fear! How sad must their case be, whom *God has utterly forgotten, and from whom he will hide his face for ever!*

2. Let the afflicted servants of God continue in prayer. This is the best relief under trouble, and the sure way of obtaining support and deliverance. It is some ease to a burdened and dejected spirit to communicate its grief to a faithful and tender friend; but a much greater ease to pour out its complaints before the Lord; who knows the depth of its distress; who tenderly pities, and is able to help. We should never allow ourselves in any complaints, but such as are fit to be presented to the Lord; nor ever despair, while there is a way open to the throne of grace.

3. We here see what should be our plea in prayer when we are afflicted; namely, *the mercy of God*, as displayed in his works, and especially in the scheme of redemption by Christ Jesus. He is a merciful Being, he has therefore wise and kind designs in afflicting us; and will continue our troubles no longer than they

are needful. Let us also, with David, plead former experiences of his power and goodness; recollect the instances in which *he hath dealt bountifully with us*; and endeavour to maintain a lively faith in his righteousness and fidelity; *for the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy.*

PSALM XIV.

To the chief musician, [A Psalm] of David.

Probably composed during Absalom's rebellion; which was a time of great and general degeneracy. He calls the Israelites his people; and represents them as comparatively in a captive state; and speaks of Zion as the residence of God, which it was not till after David was king.

1 **T**HE fool hath said in his heart, [There is] no God; *he does not believe there is a God, or that he is governor of the world. When this principle prevails, no wonder it follows that they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, [there is] none that doeth good; the greater part of the nation were degenerate, corrupt in their principles, and licentious in their morals.* 2 **T**HE LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, [and] seek God; *to see how they behaved themselves upon this occasion, and whether they would, by showing fidelity to me, prove their religious regard to him; but to their shame I must add,* 3 They are all gone aside, they are [all] together become filthy: [there is] none that doeth good, no, not one; *the greater part of the nation are become abominable in his sight, there is scarce one that doeth good.* 4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people [as] they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD; *have the principal managers of this revolt no knowledge? The meaning is, Do not these traitors know that to gratify their ambition they are preying upon my people, taking measures that will end in weakening and ruining them, and yet act without remorse? care not what becomes of the deluded people? Irreligion is the source of all this, the cause of all their treachery and inhumanity: yet* 5 There were they in great fear; *I question not their hearts misgave them; methinks I see them defeated and full of the horrors of conscience:*

for God [is] in the generation of the righteous, *to assist, comfort, and deliver them. I am confident of this, though they would conceal it, and put on insolent airs.* 6 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, *because he had nothing but his piety to trust to; mocking him for his confidence in God; because the LORD [is] his refuge; or rather, although the Lord is his helper. He then expresses a strong degree of faith, and expects deliverance from Zion, though that at present was the chief seat of the rebels, but he knew the ark was there.* 7 O that the salvation of Israel [were come] out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, [and] Israel shall be glad: *he compares their present deluded state to a captivity with great propriety and beauty; when they are delivered from it, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel be glad; though now they oppose me with so much heat, they will be glad at my restoration. Probably many joined with Absalom through artifice or fear, who were in their hearts with David; and they and others would rejoice to have these disturbances cease, and their lawful monarch on the throne.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE should labour to be confirmed in the belief of the being, perfections, and providence of God. This is the great foundation of religion. Some fools in David's time said, *there is no God:* and none but fools would say so. Even they could scarce believe this, but *said it in their hearts;* and rather wished it was so, than believed it. May we guard against every thought which would lead us to disown God, or forget him? Let us study his works and his word; then we shall have the clearest proof of his being and over-ruling providence. And as we cannot but believe the being of a God, let us be careful we are not like those, *who though they profess to know God, yet, in works deny him.*

2. Let us lament the depravity and corruption of human nature, in that any should deny the most evident principles, and practise the most wicked and mischievous deeds. The apostle quotes part of this psalm in *Rom. iii. 10.*, to prove the degeneracy of the Jews, and to show that on many accounts they were no better than the Gentiles, *being alike under sin*, and incapable of being justified before God by their own righteousness. It is a lamentable case, but deserves seriously to be considered, and considered with self-application, that we none of us perfectly do good, no

not one ; and therefore must seek pardon, and be justified in the gospel way, or be without it for ever. And till our hearts are deeply impressed with this thought, the gospel will never be welcome to our souls.

3. Let us rejoice in God, as the refuge of his people, however their counsels may be shamed. The licentious and free-thinkers in these days may say like those in David's time, *there is no God*, and ridicule those who reverence him and trust in him ; and a more vile, wretched character there cannot be, than he who laughs at religion, weakens the regards of others to it, and endeavours to put to shame their counsel, dependance, and hope. But *let none of these things move us ; God is in the generation of the righteous*, however men may treat them ; and he will appear to be their refuge, and at last *their exceeding great reward*. *It is a righteous thing with God to render tribulation to them that trouble and ridicule his people, and to them who are troubled, he will render everlasting rest.*

4. How melancholy is it to reflect, that this whole description so naturally suits the present state of our country. Corrupt principles and morals prevail among us ; christianity is despised, and religion neglected by many, and abominable works are done in the midst of us. I fear we may justly say of many of those that are, or have been, or would be, ministers of state, *Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* Do they never consider that the nation is suffering, and the people are devoured, while they are indulging their own spleen, or pursuing their ambitious schemes? Do they not consider, *that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand?* Let this engage us to pray *that the salvation of our Israel may come out of Zion*, that God may interpose for our help, bring back our captivity, and deliver us from our distress, that we may rejoice and be glad in him.

PSALM XV.

A Psalm of David.

It was probably composed by him when he brought up the ark to mount Zion; and is an inquiry who should appear there as acceptable worshippers. It seems intended particularly for the use of the priests. He fixes on moral virtues, as what God peculiarly delights in; and especially on those which were most opposite to the reigning vices of the times.

1 **L**ORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? *who shall be an acceptable guest and worshipper in thy tabernacle?* 2 He that walketh uprightly, *or sincerely,* and worketh righteousness, *doeth justly,* and speaketh the truth in his heart, *is careful of all his words; and he does this in his heart; there is an exact agreement or conformity between his words and sentiments.* 3 [He that] backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour; *he that neither defames nor speaks evil of any man, nor doeth any kind of mischief to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour, that never says any thing to his prejudice; who neither raiseth nor receiveth any ill report of him; neither invents nor supports a slander.* 4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned, *be he ever so great, rich, or eminent: but he honoureth them that fear the LORD, be they ever so poor and mean; judging of men's excellencies by their goodness, and not by their greatness.* [He that] sweareth to [his own] hurt, and changeth not; *he that will make good his engagements, though it be to his own prejudice.* 5 [He that] putteth not out his money to usury*, *who never violates the law of justice or charity, but freely lends or gives to the necessitous; nor taketh reward against the innocent; who never takes a bribe to pervert judgment, and hurt the innocent.* He that not only heareth, but doeth these [things,] shall never be moved; *he shall enjoy the favour and help of God now, and be happy with him for ever.*

* Usury, for political reasons, was forbidden to the Jews among themselves, as they were not designed to be a trading nation. But it was not sinful in itself, because they were allowed to lend upon usury to strangers.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE hence learn that it is of great importance to inquire into our real characters. This question may be applied to the heavenly Zion, and we may ask who shall be welcome there? It is a great privilege to dwell in God's tabernacle now; much more in his heavenly hill. To be deprived of this honour and felicity, will be inconceivably dreadful. Therefore it becomes us to examine ourselves narrowly, that we may not be deceived, and that we do not deceive ourselves.

2. Let us therefore bring ourselves to the test of this psalm; and to judge of our own state, let us observe how far it answers to this description. Are we sincere in every thing we do in religion, just and honest in all our dealings, careful never to injure the property, person, or reputation of others, and solicitous never to raise or spread any reproach against them? Do we judge of men by their piety alone? or by their family, fortune, and rank in life? Who are our friends and favourites? vile persons, or those that fear God? Do we prefer a good conscience to secular gain? and never violate the law of God for the sake of advancing our fortune? If our conscience can answer these questions in the affirmative, as in the sight of God, our state is comfortable, secure, and happy; we shall always be acceptable worshippers in his house below, and at length *have an abundant entrance into his heavenly kingdom.*

 PSALM XVI.

Michtam of David, or, the golden Psalm.

It is so entitled, either to express the excellency of it, or rather, the name of some tune to which it was sung.

1 **P**RESERVE me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.
 2 [O my soul,] thou hast said unto the LORD, *or, as some of the ancient versions read it, I have said unto the Lord, thou [art] my LORD: my goodness [extendeth] not to thee; cannot benefit thee or lay thee under any obligation;* 3 [But] *I desire preservation*

that I may be useful to others, to the saints that [are] in the earth, and [to] the excellent, in whom [is] all my delight, especially to thy servants whom I love. And since 4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied, [that] hasten after another [god,] I resolve not to be like them: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, I will not taste the blood of their victims, nor the wine which is mixed with it in token of their communion with idols; nor take up their names into my lips; I will not swear by their names, nor mention them with reverence. 5 The LORD [is] the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup*; the only object of my worship, and the source of my happiness; 6 Thou maintainest my lot: this happiness thou wilt secure to me, whatever violence or calamity may surround me. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant [places;] yea, I have a goodly heritage; an allusion to the dividing of the land of Canaan by a line or lot; as if he had said, I am highly pleased with my interest in thy favour, and I look upon it as my best heritage. 7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel, directed me in all my difficulties: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons; my inward thoughts are under the guidance of his Spirit, which directs and comforts me in the night. St. Paul quotes the following verses in Acts ii. 25., and applies them to Christ, of whom, he says, David as a prophet spake; one of the discoveries God made to him in the night was of the Messiah. 8 I have set the LORD always before me, to observe the intimations of his will, and do the things that please him: because [he is] at my right hand I shall not be moved; he will support my faith and courage under all my sufferings. 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my tongue, which is the glory of my frame rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope of a glorious resurrection. 10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, among the abodes of departed spirits, as the word hell sometimes signifies; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption†; wilt not suffer my body to putrefy in the grave. 11 Thou wilt show me the path of life, wilt raise my body from death to life: in thy presence [is] fullness of joy; at thy right hand [there are] pleasures for evermore; thou wilt admit me to thy presence above, to the full enjoyment of thyself, to a place and state of everlasting happiness.

* This is an allusion to the custom of a master of a feast, who used to distribute to his guests their several portions.

† The apostle Paul argues, in Acts xiii. 35, 36, 37, that this passage belongs to Christ, because David did see corruption; and surely St. Paul is the best interpreter we can follow.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE should often be recollecting the solemn engagements we are under to serve the Lord; be often with David, reminding ourselves, *O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord.* He often said it, and said it with seriousness and sincerity. Let us recollect this, that we may abide by it, and take the comfort of it in every time of difficulty and affliction; and it should be an encouragement to trust in God.

2. Let us learn to maintain the highest esteem for the saints, and show the greatest kindness to them. They are the most excellent, yea, *they only are the excellent of the earth*, however they may be overlooked or despised. They are excellent in God's esteem; he prefers them before wicked princes, the richest sinners, or the haughtiest beauties. May we reverence their character, delight in their acquaintance, company, and converse, and do them all the good we can, especially when they are in want; rejoice with them in all their joys, sympathize with them in all their sorrows, and abound in labours of love towards them.

3. Those who have entered into covenant with God, should guard against the sins which prevail among those they converse with. It was a good resolution of David not to join with others in their idolatry and vice. If we have devoted ourselves to God, we must *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor be unequally yoked with unbelievers.* Their vices must not be imitated by us, nor named among us, as becometh saints. To excite us to this, we should consider that their sorrows shall be multiplied; however gay and merry they may be now, sorrow will overtake them, and it will be multiplied in proportion to their offences. *Partake not of their sins, therefore, lest ye partake of their plagues.*

4. If we deliberately choose God for our portion, he will be our guide and defence, our instructor and our hope; *v. 4.* Let us not make the world our portion, nor make its gains and pleasures our heritage; but seek our happiness in God, live upon it, and rejoice in it. Then we may leave it to him *to maintain our lot*, to determine our abode, and all the events of our lives. He will give us counsel, when we want it, always good counsel; and that when other counsellors deceive or disappoint us. He will give us advice by day, and gentle hints by night, give unexpected

and pleasing turns to our thoughts. If we set him before us, and approve all our actions and thoughts to his all-seeing eye, he will be at our right hand to support and animate us, and we shall never be moved or come into trouble, or be shaken from our obedience.

5. Let us rejoice in the resurrection of Christ, both with respect to him and ourselves; and adore the spirit of prophecy that directed the thoughts of the Psalmist to Christ Jesus. *He being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, spake, in the words before us, of the resurrection of Christ.* Let us bless God that this prophecy is accomplished; that *God hath raised up his Son Jesus, and set him at his own right hand.* By virtue of this, his people shall rise too; their souls shall not be left in a separate state, nor the body dwell for ever in the grave; they shall be advanced to that place where Christ is, and partake of his honour and joy. May we therefore *set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.*

PSALM XVII.

A Prayer of David.

Probably composed upon occasion of his cruel persecution by Saul.

1 **H**EAR the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, *consider the justice of my cause; give ear unto my prayer, [that goeth] not out of feigned, or deceitful lips, for mine have not dissembled with God or with Saul.* 2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence, *then I am sure judgment will be in my favour,* let thine eyes behold the things that are equal; *I know I appeal to an heart-searching God, for* 3 Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited [me] in the night, *in times of the greatest retirement;* thou hast tried me, [and] shalt find nothing of *which they accuse me;* I am purposed [that] my mouth shall not transgress; *so far from having attempted Saul's life, I have not spoken a disloyal word.* 4 Concerning the works of men, *the evil works of men which are commonly practised in my circumstances,* by the word of thy lips, *the consideration and observation of thy holy word, and of the rules laid down therein,* I have kept [me from] the paths of the

destroyer; *those injurious courses which will prove destructive in the end to those who use them.* 5 Hold up my goings in thy paths, [that] my footsteps slip not; *enable me to persevere in those ways of holiness in which I have hitherto walked.* 6 I have called upon thee *formerly, and will still do it,* for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, [and hear] my speech. 7 Show thy marvellous loving kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust [in thee] from those that rise up [against them;] *or, O thou that savest them which trust in thee from those that rise up against thy right hand, against thy power, authority, and destination.* 8 Keep me as the apple of the eye, *as carefully as a man guards his eye;* hide me under the shadow of thy wings, *as tenderly as a hen gathers and watches over her brood,* 9 From the wicked that oppress me, [from] my deadly enemies, [who] compass me about, *whom nothing will satisfy but my destruction.* 10 They are enclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly; *they live in splendour and prosperity, and boast as if they already had me in their power.* 11 They have now compassed us in our steps, *hunted me and my small company from place to place:* they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; *looking narrowly into every place to find us out;* 12 Like as a lion [that] is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. 13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, *that is, Saul,* cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, [which is] thy sword: 14 From men [which are] thy hand, O LORD; *thy instruments to correct me, and who can do nothing without thy permission;* from men of the world, *who mind only earthly things,* [which have] their portion in [this] life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid [treasure,] *with great substance:* they are full of children, and leave the rest of their [substance] to their babes; *or, their children are full of it, and they leave great inheritances to their grand-children; but all is in this life, they have no prospect or hope beyond it. Then, opposing himself to them, and his hopes to theirs, he says,* 15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; *I have hope in thy favour beyond the grave, when I shall behold thee and be like thee: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, either from this dream of life, or rather, at the resurrection, with thy likeness.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are taught from hence, to labour after sincerity of heart, that we may neither dissemble with men nor God. Especially when we address his majesty, let there be *no feigned lips*; but let the impressions of the heart correspond to the expression of the lips; otherwise *our prayers will be an abomination. God is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and truth.*

2. A sense of the divine omniscience should regulate our words and thoughts. *His eyes behold the things that are equal*; he tries and proves us, and is intimately acquainted with our true characters; therefore we should steadily *purpose* and resolve *that our mouth shall not transgress*, and that our words and thoughts shall be such as he approves.

3. In times of temptation and distress we should seek our security in the word of God and prayer. To arm us against temptation, let us consider, that the path of sin is *the path of the destroyer*. It is the way of Satan, *who was a destroyer from the beginning*, and who still leads to destruction. Let us attend to the words of God's lips, that we may learn our danger and duty, and pray that he would hold us up and preserve us; even when we have formed the best resolutions; then we may hope that he will guard us with the greatest care and tenderness.

4. It is comfortable to think, that the bitterest and most powerful enemies are only a sword in God's hand, his instruments in chastising his children and people. He manages them as he pleaseth; they can do nothing without his leave; they cannot exceed his commission. *The wrath of man therefore shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain.*

5. We may observe, what little reason there is to envy the prosperity of sinners; of men who have large possessions, and whose families prosper from one generation to another. It is God who fills them, though they are so wicked; therefore it is no mark of his approbation, nor is the want of abundance a mark of his dislike. But all their portion is confined to the present life; they have no hope beyond it. May the Lord deliver us from such a portion, and teach us to seek better things; and to welcome afflictions, yea, even poverty itself, as the means of preparing us for them.

6. Let us often meditate on this sublime and delightful view of heaven, this bright abridgment of future blessedness. It consists in seeing and knowing God; in being like him, and transformed into his spotless image. This will yield us entire satisfaction, when nothing else can; and the hope of it should reconcile us to the prosperity of the wicked, and to our own troubles; and engage us to *purify ourselves even as he is pure; since none but the pure in heart shall see God.*

PSALM XVIII.

This Psalm is the same as the twenty-second chapter of the second book of Samuel, where it is explained and improved, to which the reader is therefore referred.

To the chief musician, [A Psalm] of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day [that] the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,

1 **I** WILL love thee, O LORD, my strength. 2 The LORD [is] my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, [and] my high tower. 3 I will call upon the LORD, [who is worthy] to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. 4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. 5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. 6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, [even] into his ears. 7 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. 8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. 9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness [was] under his feet. 10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. 11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him [were] dark waters [and] thick clouds of the skies. 12 At the brightness [that was] before him his thick clouds passed, hail [stones] and coals of fire.

13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail [stones] and coals of fire. 14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. 15 Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. 16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. 17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. 18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. 19 He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me. 20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. 21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 22 For all his judgments [were] before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. 23 I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. 24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eye sight. 25 With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright; 26 With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward. 27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks. 28 For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness. 29 For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall. 30 [As for] God, his way [is] perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he [is] a buckler to all those that trust in him. 31 For who [is] God save the LORD? or who [is] a rock save our God? 32 [It is] God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. 33 He maketh my feet like hinds' [feet,] and setteth me upon my high places. 34 He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. 35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. 36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip. 37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. 38 I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. 39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. 40 Thou hast also

given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me. 41 They cried, but [there was] none to save [them: even] unto the LORD, but he answered them not. 42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. 43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; [and] thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people [whom] I have not known shall serve me. 44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me. 45 The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places. 46 The LORD liveth; and blessed [be] my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. 47 [It is] God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people unto me. 48 He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. 49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name. 50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and showeth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

PSALM XIX.

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David.

A most noble and delightful composition; containing a devout meditation on the glory of God, as displayed in the works of nature and providence, but especially in the holy scriptures.

1 **T**HE heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy work; *the visible heavens show they are his work, and display the glory of his power, wisdom, and goodness.* 2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge; *every successive day and night, produced by the motion of the heavens, proclaim constantly the glory of the almighty Creator.* 3 [There is] no speech nor language, [where] their voice is not heard; *their notice of the divine existence and perfections is so plain, that all nations, how different soever their languages are, may understand it; or, as it may be rendered, They have no speech nor language; but their voice is heard; there is much silent eloquence in their motions and influences.* 4 Their line is gone out through

all the earth, and their words to the end of the world; *they are a sacred book, in which all men may read a GOD, and they powerfully speak his name to all nations.* In them hath he set a tabernacle, a glorious, but moveable habitation, for the sun, 5 Which [is] as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, [and] rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race; *no bridegroom hath so pleasant a look, or is arrayed in such gay apparel as the sun when it ushers in the morning.* 6 His going forth [is] from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof; *he travels (according to common appearance) with unwearied, unabating strength, from one end of the heavens to the other; his heat extends over the whole earth, and reacheth even to the bowels of it.* The next verses show the superior excellency of the law of God. 7 The law* of the LORD [is] perfect, converting the soul from ignorance and error: the testimony of the LORD [is] sure and certain, fully to be depended upon, making wise the simple; *it is plain and intelligible, so as to enlighten the ignorant.* 8 The statutes of the LORD [are] right, rejoicing the heart; *they are free from error and deceit, and afford the noblest pleasure: the commandment of the LORD [is] pure, free from corrupt mixture, enlightening the eyes; removing prejudices and vice, by which the mind is darkened and misguided.* 9 The fear of the LORD [is] clean, enduring for ever; *free from all dregs of uncleanness and superstition, and not subject to change, like human laws, it is the same for substance in all ages: the judgments of the LORD [are] true [and] righteous altogether; they are entirely righteous, and shall be faithfully executed.* 10 More to be desired [are they] than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb; *the richest treasures of other countries, or the sweetest productions of our own, are not so desirable and valuable.* 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned of his danger and duty: [and] in keeping of them [there is] great reward; *the exercise of piety is delightful and profitable at present, as well as infinitely advantageous hereafter.* He then adds some practical uses which may be made of the whole. 12 Who can understand [his] errors; *his transgressions, against this pure and perfect law?* cleanse thou me from secret [faults;] *pardon my unknown sins.* 13 Keep

* David here uses many words to describe God's law, as in the hundred and nineteenth psalm, all centring in the same thing. He calls it the law, statutes, and commands, as it shows God's authority and our duty; his testimony, as it testifies his will; his fear, because it teaches us to fear, worship, and serve him aright; and his judgments, because it is attended with awful sanctions, and is the rule of final judgment.

back thy servant also from presumptuous, *that is, wilful, deliberate* [sins;] let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression; *from much transgression, from a great deal of guilt, which I should contract by violating or neglecting this rule.* 14 Let the words of my mouth, *or rather, Then the words of my mouth,* and the meditation of my heart *shall be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer; when I am sincere in my obedience to thy law, my services will be acceptable to thee, who wilt defend me from sin, and enable me to observe thy testimonies.*

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections arising from this delightful composition are very natural and easy to be learned, and at the same time most important and useful.

1. We should acknowledge God in the works of his hands, and give him the glory of them. Notwithstanding these plain intimations, the heathen, even their philosophers, knew not God; *professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.* But let us, who enjoy the peculiar advantages of revelation, observe the power, wisdom, and goodness which appear in the works of creation, in the sun, moon, and stars, the revolution of times and seasons, of day and night; and let this raise our thoughts to him who formed all things out of nothing. How wonderful his power! Let us meditate on his works, and muse on the operations of his hands. But,

2. Let us be deeply sensible of and thankful for the superior excellency of his word. This is a noble description of the law of Moses, but it still better suits the gospel of Christ. *That enlightens the eyes, turns men from darkness to light, converts the soul, and is the source of the noblest pleasures, and the most solid edification; yea, it makes men wise to salvation.* Let us fervently bless God for the book of nature, in which we read so much of his name, but especially for the fairer, plainer, nobler book of grace. Let us bless him for the spread of the glorious gospel. The apostle, in Rom. x. 18., applies the fourth verse of this psalm to this glorious event, and the successful labours of the apostles. Let us highly prize it, esteem it *sweeter than honey, and better than thousands of gold and silver.*

3. Let us carefully improve our knowledge of God's will to

practical purposes. It shows us our errors and sins, and our danger by them; and should lead us to *seek mercy to pardon* our numberless offences, *and grace to help us in every time of need*. We should especially pray against *presumptuous sins*; lest we sin wilfully against the law of God; in which case we are more inexcusable than even Jews or Heathens. Our great desire should be, that our hearts may be humbled, and our lives directed and guided by the law of God. And unless we pay such a practical regard to it, our most serious words and meditations upon it will neither be acceptable to God nor profitable to our own souls; for those who turn away their ear from hearing, that is, obeying God's words, will find that he will turn away his ear from hearing their prayer.

PSALM XX.

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David.

This psalm is a prayer for the king, composed by David, to be used in the temple service before he went out on a military expedition, probably against the Syrians and Ammonites, who had a multitude of chariots and horsemen, to which there is a reference in the seventh verse. See 2 Sam. x. 18.—The people say.

1 **THE LORD** hear thee in the day of trouble; *they knew he would pray, and therefore desire God to hear: the name of the God of Jacob, the grace and providence of that God who is in covenant with his people, defend thee.* 2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, *from the holy place where he dwelleth, and strengthen thee out of Zion.* 3 Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; *show that he accepts thy sacrifices, by giving thee success.* Selah. 4 Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel; *fulfil thy heart's desire, which they knew was no other than reasonable, just, and pious.* 5 We will rejoice in thy salvation, *in humble confidence that God will hear us, and in the name of our God we will set up [our] banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions; we will go forth with thee in humble dependance upon him, and may he give us success. Thus far was the prayer of the people. Then the king, who was present at this solemnity, and joined in the service, adds,* 6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving

strength of his right hand; *I am assured that God will give me success, as he inclines the hearts of my people to pray for it; he will hear me and defend me by his almighty power.* 7 Some [trust] in chariots, and some in horses, *our enemies boast of these, and despise us for the want of them:* but we will remember the name of the LORD our God; *we will make mention of the Lord our God, and trust in him; and can even triumph beforehand, saying,* 8 They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen and stand upright; *we have gained the victory over them. Then the chorus of the Israelites concludes;* 9 Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call; *or, as the words are better rendered in the English liturgy, 'O Lord, save the king, and hear us when we call upon thee.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE learn hence the duty of praying for our king, and for victory and success in time of war. It was an universal custom among the heathens, it was required among the Jews, and is enjoined by the rules of the gospel. We should commend our king, his counsellors, and forces, to the guidance, care, and blessing of the Almighty. These are important petitions, since *the heart of the king is in God's hand*, and victory and success depend entirely upon him. Let us pray, that God would incline the hearts of our rulers to pray for themselves, and the nation, as David did; and as the apostle exhorts, 1 Tim. ii. 2., we should continue to make *supplication, prayers, and intercession, for our king and all that are in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.*

2. We are here taught not to trust in our military preparations in times of danger and war, but in the Lord. Pride and confidence in our military strength has been too much the character of our country. We have often talked arrogantly of our soldiers and navies; and God has often, *by terrible things in righteousness*, shown us the vanity of that confidence. Let us learn this wisdom by all our former disappointments, *to make mention of the name of the Lord, and go forth in his strength.* O that such may always be the disposition and conduct of our country, and especially of our commanders; then we may hope that *God will appear for us; that he will hear us from his holy habitation, and deliver us by the saving strength of his right hand.* Finally, let us often pray for one another, especially for those in danger or distress, in spiritual

troubles, or spiritual desertions, in the suitable language of this psalm; *The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee. Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion. May he grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy petitions.*

PSALM XXI.

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David.

The former psalm was a prayer for the king, this is a thanksgiving for mercies received.

1 **T**HE king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! *his joy in thy delivering goodness is beyond expression.* 2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah. 3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness, *thou hast not only granted his request, but hast given him more than he asked:* thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. 4 He asked life of thee, *that is, present deliverance,* [and] thou gavest [it] him, [even] length of days for ever and ever; *thou gavest him the promise of long life, and thou wilt continue the crown to his posterity.* 5 His glory [is] great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him; *his renown is greatly spread abroad by reason of those wonderful deliverances and favours granted to him.* 6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever, *or rather, hast set him for a blessing, hast made him such an example of happiness, that it shall become a proverb, Let him be as successful as David:* thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance, *by the discoveries of thy love and favour to him. He then expresses his humble confidence in what God would further do for him.* 7 For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved. 8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies; *his enemies, who are also thine:* thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. 9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them; *they shall perish as unavoidably as if they were thrown into a fiery oven.* 10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the

children of men. 11 For they intended evil against thee : they imagined a mischievous device, [which] they are not able [to perform.] 12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, [when] thou shalt make ready [thine arrows] upon thy strings against the face of them ; *they will be thrown into utter confusion when thou appearest against them.* 13 Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength : [so] will we sing and praise thy power : *for this manifestation of thy power thou shalt be applauded ; and the glory of all the deliverances vouchsafed to our king and people be given to thee.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. ANSWERS to prayer demand a return of praise. When God hears the petition of his servants for public or private blessings, it becometh them to render thanks to him ; to acknowledge the suitableness, seasonableness, and greatness of the mercy granted ; and especially to take notice how graciously God has exceeded their prayers and their hopes.

2. This psalm naturally leads our thoughts to the Lord Jesus Christ. If the author of it had not a direct reference to him, as many suppose, yet David's victories over his enemies were emblems of the nobler victories of the Redeemer. Let us rejoice in his exaltation and triumph, *because God hath given him his heart's desire ; conferred all authority upon him, and vanquished all his foes : he is set for a blessing for ever, and his seed, his faithful servants, shall enjoy everlasting happiness.* Let us then submit to this King, and behave as his loyal subjects ; for dreadful is that condemnation and ruin which shall be the final portion of his enemies. Let us heartily pray for the further spread and establishment of his kingdom ; and do all we can for his service : and wherein the strength of the Lord appears to be exalted, and exalted too in spreading the gospel, and making any the willing subjects of the Lord Jesus Christ, let us sing and praise his power, and long for the happy day, *when all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his anointed.*

PSALM XXII.

To the chief musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, or, the hind of the morning*; A Psalm of David.

This whole psalm is a prophecy of Christ, of his sufferings, and the glory that should follow.

1 **MY** God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? [why art thou so] far from helping me, [and from] the words of my roaring? *why dost thou withdraw the sensible tokens of thy presence and love?* 2 O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent; *to an eye of sense thou seemest to have entirely deserted me.* 3 But thou [art] holy, [O thou] that inhabitest the praises of Israel; *thou art still good and gracious, and art always surrounded with the praises of Israel, as we are with the houses in which we dwell.* 4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded; *pleading God's former goodness to his people and praying servants.* 6 But I [am] a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people; *though they were delivered, I am treated as the meanest creature, and dealt with in the most contemptible manner.* 7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *they show all the marks of reproach, and scorn,* [saying,] 8 He trusted on the LORD [that] he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him; *the very words used by the priests when Christ hung upon the cross, which was most astonishing, considering how often they must have read them.* 9 But thou [art] he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope [when I was] upon my mother's breasts †, *and therefore I hope thou wilt not now forsake me.* 10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou [art] my God from my mother's belly; *my mother and supposed father, being unable of themselves to protect and provide for me, without thy special providence.* 11 Be not far from me; for trouble [is] near;

* The Jewish paraphrase interprets it, of the daily morning sacrifice; and hence some learned men suppose that it was sung every morning in the temple service, to accustom them to the expectation of Christ's sufferings and kingdom.

† This refers to the helpless circumstances in which Christ was born; his mother might have no help in bringing him forth, or dressing and swaddling him.

for [there is] none to help; *my circumstances are still helpless.*
 12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong [bulls] of Bashan, *powerful and furious enemies*, have beset me round. 13 They gaped upon me [with] their mouths, [as] a ravening and a roaring lion; *wicked men and evil spirits are joined together against me.* 14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels; *my spirits are spent, and I am left as weak as water; probably referring to Christ's sufferings in the garden and on the cross, to the depression of his spirits, and his bloody sweat.* 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; *my sufferings have wasted my strength and brought on great thirst;* and thou hast brought me into the dust of death; *it is thine appointment, my enemies are only the instruments.* 16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; *my persecutors are like so many hounds hunting a weak and trembling animal:* they pierced my hands and my feet; *words which plainly refer to Christ's crucifixion, and cannot be applied to David.* 17 I may tell all my bones, *through leanness and distortion upon the cross:* they look [and] stare upon me; *my enemies gaze upon me and take pleasure in my misery.* 18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture; *a circumstance which the evangelists directly apply to Christ.* 19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD; O my strength, haste thee to help me; *again I seek thy help in these distressing circumstances.* 20 Deliver my soul from the sword; *from the rage and violence of my enemies;* my darling from the power of the dog; *my spirit from the assaults and suggestions of Satan.* 21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns; *thou hast granted me former deliverances, especially from the temptations in the wilderness.—The rest of the psalm refers to the glory that should follow Christ's sufferings.* 22 I will declare thy name, *thy attributes and grace,* unto my brethren, *to my true disciples, in my person and by my ministers:* in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee; *make known thy praise in large and public assemblies. This is applied by Saint Paul to Christ, Heb. ii. 12.* 23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him, *for the benefits received by the Messiah;* all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. 24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted: neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard, *and supported him.* 25 My praise [shall be] of thee in the great

congregation, *in the temple*: I will pay my vows before them that fear him, *and thus devote my recovered life to his honour.* 26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied; *humble souls shall partake of spiritual provisions with joy*: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever; *be supported and comforted with everlasting consolations.* 27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee; *the gospel shall have a wide spread, and become an universal blessing.* 28 For the kingdom [is] the LORD'S: and he [is] the governor among the nations, *Gentiles as well as Jews, and therefore he shall set up his spiritual kingdom among them also.* 29 All [they that be] fat upon earth, shall eat and worship; *many rich and great men shall embrace the gospel and partake of spiritual blessings*: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul; *the poor also, who are in great distress, and can scarcely support life, shall submit to Christ: and this shall not be the happiness of one age only,* 30 A seed shall serve him; *there shall be a succession of christians in every age*; it shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation; *shall be enrolled and reckoned as a chosen generation, and be esteemed his people.* 31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, *shall propagate the remembrance of this great mercy to them who come after them, that, or, because, he hath done [this,] and shall give God the glory of this wonderful salvation.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. OUR faith in Christ should be strengthened by this remarkable prophecy of him. Scarce any thing could be more plain, particular, and full. Several passages are quoted from it in the New Testament; many of them are by no means applicable to David, but all suit the circumstances of our blessed Lord. Let us then reverence that divine inspiration which guided the mind of David to foretell the sufferings and glory of Christ, in language so remarkably fulfilled, and which leaves the Jews inexcusable; *who by wicked hands crucified and slew the Lord of life.*

2. We are instructed from this psalm how to behave under the afflictions and distresses of life. Good men should not think it strange, if they suspect themselves to be *forsaken of God*; if he hides his face from them, and seems to shut out their prayer, and

suffers Satan or wicked men to distress or tempt them. *The servant is not above his master.* Let them therefore learn to make prayer their refuge, as Christ did; to plead their past experience of the divine goodness, and to hope in God amidst the darkest scenes of life.

3. Our love to Christ should be increased by this account of his sufferings, which were so exactly fulfilled. He knew beforehand what he should suffer, what assaults he should meet with from men and devils, what reproaches, insults, and torments; yet he cheerfully came down from heaven to endure them all, and endure them for our sakes too. Surely *such love* should constrain us to love him, and make us willing to suffer any thing for his sake.

4. Let us rejoice in the glory which followed Christ's sufferings, and the extensive kingdom which he hath established; that the ends of the world are turned to the Lord, and that God is now become the God and King of the Gentiles. Christ has still a seed to serve him, and will have through all generations; and at length *all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him*, and rich and poor shall alike partake of the blessings of his grace. In this we should rejoice, and long for the more full accomplishment of each delightful prediction. In the mean time,

5. Let us all be solicitous that we and ours may be *a seed to serve Christ*; and so answer to this prediction, that we and our children may be reckoned among *the generation of his people*. Let us therefore dedicate ourselves to Him as his loyal subjects and obedient servants, declaring his righteousness and grace to our children, and frequently celebrating what his power and love have done. Then shall we and they partake of the benefits of his kingdom of grace here, and be abundantly refreshed by them; yea, and *our hearts shall live for ever*.

PSALM XXIII.

A Psalm of David.

This is a short but beautiful composition; and has often afforded great support and encouragement to pious minds. It was probably written by David after the peaceable settlement of the ark in its place, when he began to enjoy tranquillity, and had frequent opportunities of waiting upon God in his tabernacle. David having been a shepherd himself, these thoughts were familiar to his mind, and he would enter with peculiar relish into these descriptions.

1 **THE** LORD [is] my shepherd; *not only the shepherd of Israel, but mine; therefore I shall not want any thing that is truly good for me.* 2 He maketh me to lie down to repose at noon in green pastures, *not in parched ground: he leadeth me beside the still waters, pure and quiet; these are opposed to great rivers, which by their noise might terrify the sheep, or by the rapidity of their current, endanger their being carried away. The meaning is, he hath brought me into a safe and happy condition, made plentiful provision both for my body and soul, for the supports and pleasures of the natural and spiritual life.* 3 He restoreth my soul; *revives me when dejected, and recovers me when I go astray: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake, to manifest his power, love, and mercy.* 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; *this may refer to any gloomy or distressing scene through which he might be called to pass, and more especially to death itself; but even then he would fear no evil: for thou [art] with me, to support and animate me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*.* 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; *intimating the plenty and elegance of his provisions, notwithstanding the envy and rage of his enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; alluding to an eastern custom of anointing the head of their guests with fragrant ointment, to cheer and refresh their spirits, Psalm xcii. 10., my cup runneth*

* This is an allusion to a custom among the eastern shepherds, who had two staves, one which they used in counting the sheep, called *the rod*, Lev. xxvii. 32.; the other a *staff*, like our shepherd's crook, with which they drew them back when going astray, or caught them when in danger of falling down a precipice. Thus the psalmist was comforted under a sense of God's care and the instruments he made use of for his deliverance.

over; *I have a superfluity of all good things, and am distinguished by thy providential blessings. He then draws a comfortable conclusion from the divine bounty; 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; the favour of God, and the effects of it, shall attend me wherever I am: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever; I shall always have access to his tabernacle and pay my homage there; and after the days of my life are ended, I shall be brought to God's house and presence above, and have an everlasting happy abode there.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE learn hence, to adore the condescension of God, in sustaining this endearing relation. How kind and gracious is he to represent himself under this amiable image, as taking all good men under his pastoral care; the weakest and meanest of them are not below his notice. He extends this favour to us, who might have seen him armed with the sword of an offended sovereign, instead of the rod of a tender shepherd. Let us acknowledge and adore this condescension; for thus he himself expresseth it, *Ezek. xxxiv. 31., Ye, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.*

2. Let us be solicitous that we may be of the number of his sheep; solemnly commit ourselves to his care, as he invites us to do; particularly by yielding ourselves to the management of Christ, whom God hath constituted the shepherd of the sheep. Let us *hear his voice, and follow him*; and be like sheep, innocent, gentle, and useful. Let us remember, that no wolf in sheep's clothing can deceive his eye, and that there is a day coming when there will be an awful distinction, and an everlasting separation made between the sheep and the goats.

3. We are here taught, thankfully to own the pastoral care of God in all our mercies. Let us think, when we see our table spread with what is necessary for our sustenance and conducive to our pleasure, it is God who spreads it; if our cup runneth over, it is God who fills it. Our lot is of God's choosing; therefore, if we are denied some of the comforts of life, it is because he sees that they are not good for us. He knows that a rich, luxuriant pasture, would often hurt his sheep, and therefore he sometimes keeps them from it. Let us especially thank him for spiritual blessings, for his word and ordinances, those green pastures and still waters, by which he nourishes and refreshes our souls.

4. Under his guidance and care, let us rejoice in the views of life, and death, and the eternal state; confident that he will fulfil all his gracious engagements. The experience we have had of his care, should teach us to draw David's comfortable conclusion, *surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.* Let us hope that he will protect us from *our adversary the devil, who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.* These delightful views of God should reconcile good men to the thoughts of *passing through the valley of death.* God will be with them, and comfort them, so that all its terrors shall vanish; they need *fear no evil.* The dark valley leads us to God's house above, where his servants shall dwell for ever; for thus saith the good Shepherd, *I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.*

 PSALM XXIV.

A Psalm of David.

This psalm was composed when the ark was brought up to mount Zion; being conducted in solemn procession from the house of Obed-edom, David, and all Israel with him, playing upon all manner of instruments, as the historian tells us. We cannot enter into the beauty and spirit of this psalm, without considering it as set to music, and sung in different parts by different persons, according to the manner of the Jews. The two first verses were probably sung by the whole company during the procession.

1 **T**HE earth [is] the LORD's, and the fullness thereof, *every thing it contains; the world, and they that dwell therein; all are his creatures and property; he is not a local deity, confined to one spot, nor the tutelar deity of Israel only; but the God of all the earth. This is designed to illustrate his condescension in taking up his peculiar residence among the Israelites, as their God and king.*
 2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods; *the waters in the caverns and bowels of the earth are like a foundation for it, and all the beating of the seas cannot overthrow it.—When this solemn procession reached the foot of mount Zion, David himself perhaps put this important question to the attending Levites,* 3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? and who shall stand in his holy place? *who shall be an acceptable*

worshipper at his tabernacle, and be honoured as his faithful servant? To which the Levites in chorus answer, 4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully; not he who offers the most costly sacrifice, or addresses the most harmonious songs, but he who has clean hands, free from blood, unrighteous gains, and all other works of iniquity; who hath an heart free from hypocrisy and inward pollution; whose soul hath not been lifted up to idols, or been inordinately fond of the vanities and pleasures of the world, and who is faithful to all his engagements both to God and man. 5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, not only from the priests, but from Jehovah; he shall have temporal and spiritual prosperity; and righteousness from the God of his salvation, he shall be accepted of God as righteous, shall receive the fruits and rewards of righteousness now, and salvation from him who is the God of salvation. 6 This [is] the generation of them that seek him, these he will reckon acceptable worshippers, that seek thy face, O God of Jacob. Selah. 7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. When this grand cavalcade came to the gates of the city of David, those who carried the ark address this beautiful apostrophe. It is not said, Open the doors, or open yourselves, O ye doors; but, Lift up your heads; as if they had said, Let inanimate nature be struck at the appearance of this glorious Being; let the entrance grow wider and higher to receive this sacred guest. They are called everlasting doors, on account of their strength, and their cheerful hopes that God would defend them.—Then the porters or Levites, who attended the gate, ask, 8 Who [is] this King of glory? The answer is made by those who bore and accompanied the ark; The LORD strong and mighty, able to destroy his enemies and defend his subjects, the LORD mighty in battle. The procession going on to the gate of the court of the tabernacle, the king and his attendants again cry out, 9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift [them] up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. The priests and Levites that attend there, ask, 10 Who is this King of glory? And then the king and all the people in the procession, as a chorus, cry out with the loudest acclamation, in which they are joined by the priests and Levites about the tabernacle, The LORD of hosts, he [is] the King of glory*. Selah.

* If each of these portions of the psalm are considered as set to music, and repeated thus alternately by a vast multitude, accompanied with instruments of music, I believe it will be allowed to be as grand, as solemn, and as celestial a scene, as can possibly be conceived.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us acknowledge and adore God, as the supreme and universal sovereign. *The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens*, and this earth, though at such a distance, and so small a part of his dominion, is not overlooked by him ; all that it contains is his property, and all its inhabitants are his creatures, his subjects, and dependants, with whom he has a right to do whatsoever he pleaseth. The apostle quotes the first verse of this psalm, *1 Cor. x. 26.*, to prove that we may freely use the gifts of his bounty ; and that if partaking of any of them would be injurious to our health or conscience, he can provide for us some other way. Let the bounties and comforts we enjoy, lead our grateful hearts to the Author of them. Let us trust in him to supply our wants, and leave it to him to govern his own world, without any complaints or suspicions on our part.

2. We should seriously make the inquiry, *v. 3.*, and attend carefully to the answer. It is an important question, who shall be an acceptable worshipper, and a favourite of this glorious King? A soul that understands its own nature, will soon be sensible that there is nothing on this earth which can satisfy its desires ; and therefore will look to God, and desire acceptance of him. Let us remember what is necessary to this, that our conversation be unblameable ; and not only so, but that our hearts be pure, purified by divine faith, and sanctified by divine grace ; that we love not this world, but renounce its deceitful vanities, and have no guile found in our mouth. Thus alone can we be welcome guests at the house of prayer.

3. It is well if we can rejoice in hope of the blessing connected with this character. Such persons *receive the blessing from the Lord* ; as much worldly prosperity as is good for them ; they shall be justified before God through the righteousness of their Redeemer ; a principle of righteousness shall be cherished in their souls ; and at length, *they shall obtain salvation with eternal glory*. These are blessings inestimably precious ; and they are promised to all pious worshippers, who come in the name of Christ, and *worship in spirit and in truth*. May we earnestly desire them, and labour after that character to which they are promised.

4. Let us solemnly admit this glorious Sovereign *into our hearts*. He stands as it were at the door of our hearts; he knocks for admittance, and is ready to enter with the choicest tokens of his presence and love. Let us most cheerfully admit him, and let all the faculties of our souls be bowed to his sway. He comes to us by his word and ordinances, as he did to the Jewish tabernacle by his ark, the emblem of his special presence. Let us receive this sacred guest with all reverence and all readiness. If we keep God's word, he will love us, and come unto us, and make his abode with us; and at length command the everlasting doors of heaven to be opened for us, and grant us *an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom and joy of the Lord*.

PSALM XXV.

[A Psalm] of David.

It was composed during some of his troubles, either by Saul's persecutions or Absalom's rebellion. There is little in it that needs a particular illustration; it abounds with petitions for favour and mercy, mingled with many comfortable and edifying reflections upon God and his providence.

1 **U**NTO thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul; *direct and make known my desires with sincerity and fervour*. 2 O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, *that is, disappointed of my hope from thee*; let not mine enemies triumph over me. 3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed; let them be ashamed which transgress without cause, *that is, oppose me without any provocation, yea, against all law and obligations*. 4 Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. 5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou [art] the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day; *begging divine guidance, which he stood in need of, and constantly sought*. 6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses; for they [have been] ever of old; *remember the goodness which I have formerly experienced, and which thy people have experienced in all ages*. But 7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD. 8 Good and upright [is] the LORD; *gracious and faithful to his*

promises: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. 9 The meek will he guide in judgment, *wisely and judiciously*: and the meek will he teach his way; *the way which God requires and approves*. 10 All the paths of the LORD [are] mercy and truth, *all his providential dealings are the effects of his mercy and faithfulness*, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies; *who perform the conditions of his gracious covenant*. 11 For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it [is] great, *or, although it is great; probably referring to the matter of Uriah*. 12 What man [is] he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way [that] he shall choose, *which is most agreeable to the divine will*. 13 His soul shall dwell at ease; *or, shall lodge and rest in goodness, in full satisfaction and comfort*; and his seed shall inherit the earth, *that is, the land of Canaan, and shall be blessed after him*. 14 The secret of the LORD [is] with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant; *they shall have secret direction in difficulties, some extraordinary discoveries of the divine will and designs; more particularly of the nature and typical design of the law, and of the future covenant of grace*. In consequence of this, he adds, 15 Mine eyes [are] ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net; *out of the troubles with which I am almost surrounded*. 16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I [am] desolate and afflicted. 17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged: [O] bring thou me out of my distresses. 18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins. 19 Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred. 20 O keep my soul, and deliver me; *preserve my life from falling a prey to their wicked designs*: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee. 21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee; *let me never take any steps out of the way of duty, for I wait on thee for my security*. He concludes with praying for the kingdom in its present distressed state; 22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles*.

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM the example of David we are taught to seek divine guidance and direction. David, though a wise and good man,

* The whole Psalm is a collection of his devout reflections and breathings, so that a close connexion cannot be expected; and those interpreters who have sought for it, have only obscured the whole.

was sensible he had need of it, and there are a variety of circumstances relating to our temporal and spiritual interests in which we need it. *The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.* Some doubtful cases will often arise, and on a wise determination of them, our own comfort, and the credit of religion, may very much depend. We should therefore seek daily guidance from the Father of lights; and in order to attain it, it is necessary that we *lift up our souls to God*, pray sincerely and fervently; and that we be meek, have humble thoughts of ourselves, be diffident of our own wisdom, and ready to follow the divine leadings. Thus we should *acknowledge God in all our ways, and he will direct our steps.*

2. Let us encourage ourselves in the promises made to God's people, especially to the meek and humble. God will *teach them his way*, and there is nothing so well worth our learning. We should attend particularly to that comfortable declaration in v. 10., *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies*; all his providential dispensations, how dark and severe soever, all come from love, are sent in mercy, are the result of his faithfulness to his covenant; he is only fulfilling his word when he corrects and afflicts us. Let it then be our care to be faithful to our covenant engagements, and to keep God's testimonies; then *all will work together for our good.*

3. We may here learn the way to be easy, comfortable, and happy; and that is, *to fear the Lord.* The souls of such *shall dwell at ease*, enjoy sweet inward content by day and night; they shall not be ruffled and discomposed by the accidents of life, but enjoy rest in the favour of God, have his safe conduct and protection, and all desirable prosperity. That is most delightful encouragement in v. 14., which shows the great honour which God will put upon good men; *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.* The word signifies a council, or a meeting of persons to consult together. 'Good men shall be, (as Mr. Howe expresseth it,) of God's cabinet council; shall know his communicable secrets, the meaning of his word, and the design of his dispensations; and shall enjoy such a state of friendship and comfort with him as shall be most delightful and edifying.' *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.*

4. Amidst all our personal troubles, let us never forget the distresses of our fellow-creatures. We should think of God's Israel;

the troubles which others endure; and especially those circumstances which appear to be threatening and distressing to the church; and spread them before God in prayer, saying, *Redeem, Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.*

 PSALM XXVI.

[A Psalm] of David.

It was probably composed when he was accused by Saul and others of ill designs, particularly of seeking Saul's hurt, and endeavouring to embroil the government.

1 **JUDGE** me, O LORD, *give sentence for me and plead my cause; for I have walked in mine integrity; have behaved uprightly to all men: I have trusted also in the LORD to avenge my cause, and have not done it myself when it was in my power; [therefore] I shall not slide.* 2 **EXAMINE** me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. 3 For thy loving kindness, *that is, a grateful sense of thy loving kindness, [is] before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth, by the rules of thy word; or, in imitation of thy fidelity and truth, I have fulfilled all my engagements to others.* 4 *I have been so far from falsehood and treachery, that I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers; I will take no counsel with those who are caballing against the government.* 5 I have hated the congregation of evil doers, *all their meetings and confederacies, and will not sit with the wicked.* 6 I will wash mine hands in innocency; *I will not be content with washing my hands before I go to the tabernacle, (as the priests were required to do, and as the pious Israelites did), but I will keep myself free from all moral impurity: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD.* 7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, *or rather, hear the voice of thanksgiving, that is, the praises which are sung by the priests and Levites, and tell of all thy wondrous works; may join in them, and celebrate the favours I myself have received; and I shall appear there with pleasure, for,* 8 **LORD**, I have loved the habitation of thy house, *not for low and mean ends, but that I might glorify thee; and the place where thine honour dwelleth; the tabernacle where thy glory is disco-*

vered by the Shekinah. 9 Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men; *I have such a dread of their future portion, that I earnestly pray I may not be numbered with them, nor have such punishments as thou art preparing for bloody men:* 10 In whose hands [is] mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes; *who destroy and do mischief abroad, and pervert judgment by taking bribes, at home.* 11 But as for me, I will continue to walk in my integrity: *redeem me from mine enemies, and be merciful unto me: deliver me from every thing that would injure or corrupt me.* 12 My foot standeth in an even place; *hitherto I have been preserved, therefore in the congregations will I bless the LORD; I will praise thee in the public assemblies of thy people.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. It is a happy thing amidst censures and accusations to be able to appeal to God for our integrity. This is a great satisfaction when men censure us; when they will not hear what we have to say for ourselves, or will not credit our assertions. It is the wickedness of men's own hearts which teaches them uncharitable censures and suspicions; but God will sooner or later vindicate the character of his faithful servants; *and this in the mean time is their rejoicing, even the testimony of their consciences.*

2. We should be solicitous to secure such evidence of our integrity, as David had. Let us maintain a constant sense of God's goodness; observe, reflect upon, and be grateful for, his loving-kindness; and endeavour to keep his laws, which are founded on eternal truth. Like him, let us avoid bad company; not only the society of profligate and abandoned sinners, but of vain persons, those who have no relish for any thing but gaming, mirth, and gaiety. The company of such is more dangerous to a christian than that of profligate sinners; because he may apprehend less danger, and therefore not be so much on his guard. Let us be solicitous, like David, to love God's house. This will be a good sign that we love God, and have a relish for spiritual pleasures. If this be our character, we may comfortably hope that God will support and defend us, and that we shall escape that dreadful punishment which he will inflict on impenitent sinners and bloody men. Again,

3. We learn the necessity of purity, in order to our being acceptable worshippers. It is in vain to compass God's altar,

and expect him to be favourable to our services, unless we wash our hands in innocence; that is, not only be free from gross sins, but from irregular passions and impure desires. This is the best preparation for holy duties, and what is absolutely necessary to their acceptance. *If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us.* But as we are not and cannot be perfectly innocent, and therefore, considered in ourselves, cannot be acceptable worshippers, we must fix our dependance on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, apply to the blood of sprinkling, and seek acceptance through the Beloved.

4. The satisfaction arising from a consciousness of our integrity, should engage us to retain it, and never give it up; *v. 11.*, Let us be careful not to lose what is so noble a source of consolation, but *till we die hold fast our integrity, and never let it go* on any consideration. In order to this, let us with David continue in prayer, that *God would redeem us*; redeem us from the power of sin, and the temptations of Satan; and that wherein we come short of our duty he would be merciful unto us. Then will *our feet stand in an even place*; we shall not fall, but shall have reason in the congregation to bless the name of the Lord.

 PSALM XXVII.

[A Psalm] of David.

It was probably composed during his persecutions by Saul, as he complains so feelingly of false accusers, speaks with such earnest desires of the house of God, and mentions his father and mother forsaking him.

1 **THE LORD** [is] my light and my salvation; *my guide and my protector*; whom shall I fear? the **LORD** [is] the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? *he keeps me alive, notwithstanding all my dangers*; *I can look round, and find nothing to terrify me, while I have confidence in the divine support.* 2 When the wicked, [even] mine enemies and my foes, came upon me, *like a savage beast, to eat up my flesh, as Goliath did, they stumbled and fell; were disappointed in their designs.* 3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this [will] I [be] confident, *that is, in the divine assistance and blessing.* 4 One [thing] have I desired of the **LORD**,

that will I seek after; *this is the great object of my desire and ambition, what I will continue to pray for with the utmost importunity, and use all proper methods to obtain, that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, have constant access there at the seasons of religious worship, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple; to contemplate his perfections and glory, and inquire his will.* 5 For in the time of trouble, or rather, nevertheless, while deliverance is delayed, he shall hide me, in his pavilion; he shall secure me from danger: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock; the most secret retirement, or the most impregnable rock, would not render me more secure. 6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me; *I am confident, not only that they shall be disappointed, but that I shall be victorious; therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD, in the most exalted strains.* 7 Hear, O LORD, [when] I cry with my voice, *in a most affectionate and fervent manner: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.* 8 [When thou saidst,] Seek ye my face, *that is, my favour and protection; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.* 9 Hide not thy face [far] from me; put not thy servant away in anger, *as an angry master may do to a servant; thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.* 10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up; *he will then be my guide and guardian, and will not suffer me to perish*.* 11 Teach me, thy way, O LORD, *the way of duty and prudence, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies; that I may not stumble, and they take occasion to lay hold on me, or to insult me.* 12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty; *who discover bloody intentions in their discourses and threatenings.* 13 [I had fainted,] unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living; *I should have been quite undone, had I not firmly believed that I should enjoy the good things God has promised me before I die.* 14 Wait on the LORD, therefore: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; *give not way to despondency and fear, but stir up holy courage, and God will add fresh supplies of it: and though he should not immediately appear for thy deliverance, wait, I say, on the LORD.*

* See 1 Sam. xvii. 5., where it is said, he left his father and mother, for security, with the king of Moab.

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM this psalm we learn cheerfully to trust in God, amidst the many dangers and difficulties of life. As christians, we have many enemies, though, through the divine goodness, none that can be called oppressors and persecutors. We wrestle not only with flesh and blood, with inward corruptions and ill examples, but *with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places*. Let us then commit ourselves to the divine protection; if omnipotence be our guard, we have nothing to fear; *if God be for us, who can be against us?*

2. Let us delight in public worship, from the same principle that David did; and make it our earnest desire that we may not be deprived of the privileges and comforts of God's house. We live under a more excellent dispensation; have a brighter display of the beauty of the Lord, see it reflected from the face of Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God, and in the scheme of our redemption by him. In gospel ordinances we enjoy his presence, and are instructed in his will. This is a great satisfaction to a pious mind, and the want of it is the chief lamentation of a good man. May we value and improve this privilege while we enjoy it; and cheerfully and steadily obey the will of God, as well as diligently inquire after it.

3. We should labour to secure an interest in the divine friendship, and live on the comforts of that, when earthly friends forsake us. God invites us to this; he says, by his providence and his word, *Seek ye my face*; may our hearts reply, *Thy face, Lord, will we seek*. Father and mother may forsake us; our dearest friends and relations may die; or Providence may remove us to a distance from them, and we may lose the benefit of their conversation, counsel, and examples; but God is every where present, and always ready to hear and help us. *In him the fatherless find mercy*. Let us therefore *wait on the Lord*; and endeavour to keep up our courage. He hath said to every believer, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*; therefore we may boldly say, *The Lord is my helper, I will not fear. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount as on eagles' wings; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.*

PSALM XXVIII.

[A Psalm] of David.

This psalm was probably composed after his accession to the throne (as he calls himself the Lord's anointed) when a party was raised against him by Ishbosheth, Saul's son, conducted by Abner.

1 **UNTO** thee will I cry, O LORD, my rock, *my shelter and security*; be not silent to me: lest, [if] thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit, *quite helpless and undone.* 2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle; *the mercy-seat in the most holy place, from whence the oracles were delivered.* 3 Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity; *let me not be drawn into their practices, nor involved in the same punishment, for they are treacherous men,* which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief [is] in their hearts. 4 Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert; *this expresses his confidence in the goodness of his cause; as if he had said, I desire I may have but justice; and his assurance that God would thus punish them, rather than his desire that it might be so.* 5 Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, *the works he hath wrought for me and by me, in slaying Goliath, and saving me from Saul, choosing me king, and fixing me upon the throne,* he shall destroy them, and not build them up; *they shall never recover. And he had such confidence that the Lord would appear for him, that he breaks out into the language of praise;* 6 Blessed [be] the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. 7 The LORD [is] my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; *he is still my strength, he hath helped, and will help me:* therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him. 8 The LORD [is] their strength, *that is, the strength of his people,* and he [is] the saving strength of his anointed, *by whose strength alone he has been delivered.* 9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever; *take care of them as a shepherd does of his flock, and advance them to a state of security and honour, in which they shall continue through succeeding generations.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. IN imitation of David, let us earnestly pray that we may not be *drawn away with the wicked*; that no temptation may lead us to follow their example, to enter into their confederacies, or to join our interests with theirs. We should especially dread the ways of the worst sort of wicked men, that is, deceitful men, who *speaking peace, while mischief is in their hearts*; imposing on those for whom they profess friendship and affection. Let us be cautious, that we never turn aside into these crooked ways. God will *give wicked men according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours*. A very remarkable, and indeed a very awful, phrase; he will punish them for the wickedness they intended, though they had not an opportunity of doing it. May we therefore never *learn their ways, nor enter into their counsels*; for it is said, *Partake not of their sins, lest ye partake of their plagues*.

2. Let us carefully observe the schemes and designs of Providence, that we may reverence and follow them, and not attempt to oppose them. Many live in a constant forgetfulness of God, because *they regard not his works*. This is the cause why so many that know God, in works deny him; affront him, and rebel against him; they overlook the evidences of his authority and power, and the displays of his wrath against sinners. This was the case with Pharaoh of old; and whether this disposition be found in the rich or the poor, in princes or common people, it is the sure way to destruction. Let it therefore be our resolution, that *we will meditate on God's works; we will consider the operations of his hands*.

3. We learn from hence, to cultivate a deep concern for the good of the public, and to offer fervent prayers for its prosperity. That is, a short, excellent, and comprehensive prayer in the conclusion of the psalm, which we should often adopt, viz., that *God would save his people, and bless his inheritance*; those who profess his pure religion, and are devoted to his service; that he would save them from their enemies, and bless them with victory and prosperity; feed them with plenty of earthly and spiritual blessings; lift them out of their troubles into a state of security, honour, and triumph; and do it *for ever*, for the race of his people through all succeeding generations. This is a very proper prayer for our country at all times, and should be offered up with great ear-

ness; then may we hope that *God will be the strength of his people, and the saving strength of his anointed.*

PSALM XXIX.

A Psalm of David.

Apparently composed in a violent storm of thunder; and some have supposed that it was used in the temple during thunder storms.

1 **GIVE** unto the LORD, O ye mighty, *ye princes and potentates of the earth*, give unto the LORD glory and strength; *acknowledge the strength and glory of God, and ascribe to him the perfections of his majesty.* 2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name, *the honour which he deserves*; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; *in his tabernacle, which was beautiful and holy.* 3 The voice of the LORD [is] upon the waters; *among the thick clouds, which then usually pour down abundance of rain*: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD [is] upon many waters; *upon the great ocean itself, which trembles at his voice.* 4 The voice of the LORD [is] powerful in its operations; the voice of the LORD [is] full of majesty; *his thunder produces great and wonderful effects. For instance,* 5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars: *when he speaks in thunder, and sends forth his lightnings, he shivers to pieces the cedars, which are so tall, thick, and durable*; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon, *which for stateliness, strength, and bulk, surpass all others.* Yea, 6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf: Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn; *the mountains on which the cedars grow, tremble before their God; are thrown into strange commotion, and, with all their load of woods and rocks, appear like some affrighted animal.* 7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire; *thunder and the forked lightnings break out of the clouds.* 8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh; *its force is felt in the most desert places, and affrights the beasts of the wilderness.* 9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve; *though at other times they bring forth with difficulty, the thunder terrifies them so as to hasten their delivery.* Some ancient versions better render it, *'The Lord shaketh the oaks,'* and discovereth the forests; *penetrates into the most secret places, breaks down the trees, and lays the ground bare*; and in his

temple doth every one speak of [his] glory; *his temple remains unmoved, and there it is that he receiveth public honour for all these wonderful appearances.* 10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; *he rules all the elements; or, rather as the word is used concerning Noah's flood, 'the Lord did sit king upon the flood;'* *presided over the universal deluge, and therefore particular storms are undoubtedly under his command; yea, the LORD sitteth king for ever; he always possesses the same power which he then manifested: here is our comfort, that storms can never shake his throne.* Yea, 11 The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace; *this mighty God will strengthen his people amidst all their dangers and enemies; and this glorious Being will bless them with peace, and make them secure and happy.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are taught, from the solemn and sublime description of him in this psalm, to reverence and adore the Lord Jehovah, in all the awful appearances of nature, especially in thunder and lightning. With what beauty and propriety is the grand name of JEHOVAH repeated in almost every verse, and in some several times! Every clap of thunder and flash of lightning, call upon us *to give glory to the Lord: call upon the greatest and mightiest to reverence him; for none hath an arm like God, none can thunder with a voice like him.* When we hear the rolling thunder, and see the forked lightning, it should fill us with great, high, and honourable thoughts of God; our souls should be impressed with reverence for his tremendous majesty. How stupid is it not to be affected with that voice that *shakes the wilderness, the forests, and the mountains, and strikes an awe over all nature!*

2. The people of God may be composed and serene, amidst all the rage of the elements, and the terrors of nature. How sweetly does this noble composition conclude! The same God that thunders marvellously with his voice, and speaks terror through all nature, *gives strength to his people; strengthens them against all their temptations and anxious fears, and will bless them with peace.* This consideration should lead us to adore him for the gentle voice of his gospel, the terrors of which do not make us afraid, and the grace of which should excite our love, our trust, and our obedience. His people should remember that thunder, be it ever so loud and dreadful, is the voice of their Father; that it speaks nothing but mercy to them: and at that day, when the earth shall

be destroyed by fire, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, he will be their confidence; so that they may *lift up their heads with joy, and shout, because their redemption draweth nigh.*

PSALM XXX.

A Psalm [and] Song, [at] the dedication of the house of David.

This was either when it was first built, or upon his return to it after it had been defiled by Absalom's wickedness with his father's wives there. It seems probable from other psalms, that David had a long and sore fit of sickness after the matter of Uriah, of which Absalom took the advantage, and raised a rebellion against him. David was restored to his health and kingdom much about the same time; and on this occasion the psalm was most probably composed.

1 **I** WILL extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me; *thou hast graciously delivered me from my own sickness, and from Absalom's rebellion.*
2 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me *both in mind and body.* **3** O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. **4** Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, *that is, his power, wisdom, and truth in my deliverance and restoration.*
5 For his anger [endureth but] a moment; *the violent storm will be but short, there is but a moment in his anger; in his favour [is] life, or, his favour runs through life, in beautiful contrast to momentary anger:* weeping may endure for a night, but joy [cometh] in the morning, *will succeed it in due season, as the day does the night.*
6 And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved; *I thought my constitution was strong, and that when delivered from Saul I had nothing to fear as to the kingdom.* **7** LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; *hast settled me in the kingdom, notwithstanding all Saul's designs;* thou didst hide thy face, *thou didst withdraw thy protection,* [and] I was troubled, *I was speedily brought into great distress. Then, in my affliction,* **8** I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication. *I pleaded,* **9** What profit [is there] in my blood, when I go down

to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? *thy faithfulness in performing thy promises? Therefore I repeated my supplication;* 10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper. *And the happy consequence was,* 11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing, *into great joy:* thou hast put off my sackcloth, *which I bore in the time of my humiliation,* and girded me with gladness; *and all this* 12 To the end that [my] glory, *that is my tongue, or my soul,* (Psalm lvii.8.), may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever; *I will praise thee now and for ever, and will live to thy glory.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM the title of the psalm, we are taught to dedicate our houses to God. It was customary among the pious Jews to do so; and there is some reference to it in the law. It is proper, when first entering on an habitation, or when restored to it after long absence, to make a serious, solemn acknowledgment of God, to commit our dwelling to the care of his watchful providence, and all our affairs to his guidance and conduct: entreating his presence and blessing; and resolving that it shall be a house of prayer, of piety, of justice, and charity; and that *we and our household shall serve the Lord.*

2. We are taught what general sentiments we should form of God; to think of him as the preserver of our lives and comforts; who maketh our mountain stand strong, and continues our prosperity; to reverence him as a good and gracious Being, who *does not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities;* and whose anger bears no proportion to his kindness. We should also learn to think of him as a holy and faithful God, and should *give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*

3. We here see what particular sentiments to entertain of God after he hath delivered us from affliction. After the example of David, we should recollect the difficulties and distresses in which we were involved, and the workings of our mind under them; the prayers we offered, and the vows we made. Then own the hand of God in our deliverances; look beyond means and instruments to Jehovah, *who healeth us.* We should recollect how short our afflictions have been, compared with the months and years of health and peace we have enjoyed. He hath delivered us, that

we may praise and serve him. Let us not frustrate his purpose, but call on the saints to join with us in our praises, and to be witnesses to our gratitude and our vows.

4. Observe how apt the wisest and best of men are to forget the uncertainty of human affairs, and to expect continued prosperity. David did not think of a distempered body, or a disturbed government; he trusted to the strength of his constitution, and thought he had no other enemy when Saul was dead. Thus do most men reason, and especially young men; they set out in life with high expectations of prosperity, health, and success; that *to-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant*. But all that can be enjoyed here, is uncertain; the strongest mountains may be removed. How soon can God produce the most melancholy changes! he has but to *hide his face, and we are troubled*. May we therefore not set our hearts on the continuance of any earthly good; but expect changes, and prepare for them. Then will they appear less grievous when they come, and will produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness; and *those light afflictions which are but for a moment, shall work out for us an eternal weight of glory*.

PSALM XXXI.

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David.

This psalm was composed upon David's escape from Keilah, when Saul came to besiege him there; see 1 Sam. xxiii.

1 **I**N thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness, *according to thy promise*. 2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. 3 For thou [art] my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me; *direct me in my difficulties, that I may do nothing unlawful or imprudent*. 4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou [art] my strength. 5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit; *I commit my life to thy guardian care, and my soul to thy grace to be preserved from sin*: thou hast often redeemed, or delivered me, O LORD God of truth; *thou art still a God of truth, and therefore I may well trust thee*

for the future. 6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities; *that have worshipped idols, and sought to diviners and wizards:* but I trust in the LORD alone. 7 I will be glad, and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities; *hast taken notice of me, and supported me hitherto;* 8 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room; *hast given me freedom and comfort.* Yet 9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, [yea,] my soul and my belly; *my sight is impaired with weeping, and my body grown lean with fatigue and anxiety.* 10 For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, *or calamity, as the word might be rendered,* and my bones are consumed; *therefore I shall be quite lost, if thou dost not help me.* 11 I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, *as an object of Saul's displeasure,* and a fear to mine acquaintance; *as I was an outlaw, it was dangerous for any to take notice of me; all my friends avoided me, and they that did see me without fled from me.* 12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel, *not worthy of regard.* 13 For I have heard the slander of many; *their false and scandalous reports, as if I were a factious person, an enemy to the king, &c.,* fear [was] on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. 14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou [art] my God. 15 My times, *all the events of my life,* [are] in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. 16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake. 17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee, *and trusted in thee:* let the wicked be ashamed, [and] let them be silent in the grave. 18 Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. 19 [Oh] how great [is] thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; [which] thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! *Thou hast given them much in this world, notwithstanding their enemies, but infinitely more is laid up for them, of which they shall never be deprived.* 20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; *thou wilt keep them always before thy face, where no enemies shall dare to touch them:* thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues; *preserve them from public odium and slanderous*

tongues. 21 Blessed [be] the LORD: for he hath showed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city; *in Keilah, when Saul came to besiege me, and the inhabitants intended to give me up.* 22 For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; *I recollect and acknowledge with shame my hasty and despairing expressions: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee; thou hast been better to me than my fears; therefore would I encourage others to love and trust in thee.* 23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints: [for] the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer; *or, as it might be rendered, 'He rewardeth the proud doers upon the strings,' rewards them with his arrows made ready on the strings of his bow, which he will shoot into their very souls.* 24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD; *let this encourage you to adhere to God, and never sink amidst the greatest difficulties and the heaviest afflictions.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us from hence be encouraged to commit our spirits to God our Redeemer; not merely for the preservation of our lives, but for the safety of our souls and their eternal interests, that they may be taught, sanctified, and saved by him. It is necessary to do this in time of health and prosperity, that our spirits be not entangled and corrupted by the world, and in time of affliction, that we be not overwhelmed by it; and it is peculiarly proper at death, according to the example of Christ. Let us thank God that he allows us to commit our spirits to him, and do it with faith, cheerfulness, and submission. Then shall we *know in whom we have believed*, even him, who is our Redeemer, and will *keep what we have committed unto him until that great day.*

2. Let us learn to be thankful that we are not in such afflictive circumstances as David was when he wrote this psalm. His case was most melancholy; his eyes were spent with weeping, his flesh consumed with grief, his neighbours, his acquaintance, and friends, all forsook him and fled. See to what straits a temper naturally stout and cheerful, may be reduced. Let the airy and the gay observe it, and guard against levity and confidence; for God can soon make them melancholy and solitary, if they will not otherwise learn to be serious.

3. It is matter for rejoicing that *our times are in God's hands*; our lives and all the events of them are at his disposal. They are

not in an enemy's hand, to put an end to our lives; not in the hands of our friends, to keep us too long from our home; not in our own hands, lest we should judge and choose ill for ourselves; but in the Lord's hand; and in better hands they cannot be. May we therefore be easy, and resigned to his will.

4. We are hence taught to be thankful for that goodness which God now bestows upon his people, and for that greater goodness which he hath laid up for them hereafter. O how great is it! David, with all his rich invention and lively imagination, is quite at a loss for words to express it. They have much in hand, and more in hope. God doeth great things for them at present; and hereafter will do infinitely *above all they can ask or think*.

5. We learn to guard against all rash and hasty conclusions, and especially such as may impeach the faithfulness of God. Good men are ready to fall into this temptation; to say things, even of God himself, in their haste, which afterwards they deeply repent of, and which gives them much concern and grief. Let us keep the passions of fear, sorrow, and anger, in due bounds; trust a faithful, unchanging God, and persevere in serving him and hoping in him, however heavy our afflictions, or gloomy our apprehensions may be. *Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.*

PSALM XXXII.

[A Psalm] of David, Maschil, which signifies, giving instruction, by showing how to be happy.

This psalm was probably composed after his sin in the matter of Uriah.

1 **BLESSED** [is he whose] transgression [is] forgiven, [whose] sin [is] covered, *so as not to rise up to condemn him.* 2 Blessed [is] the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, *that is, chargeth it not to his account, so as to punish him for it,* and in whose spirit [there is] no guile; *whose repentance is sincere, and whose conduct is suitable.* He then adds from his own experience, 3 When I kept silence, *when I concealed my sins, and did not confess them and repent of them,* my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long; *I was filled with inward agony, which weakened my strength, and brought on me the decays of age.* 4 For

day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; *it was thy hand that impressed those terrors upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer; my body was parched and consumed like grass in the height of summer.* Selah. 5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid; *therefore I fully resolved, though guilt and shame had long kept me at a distance, to pour out my complaint to God; I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin; I had no sooner formed the resolution, than thou wast graciously pleased to accept of it, and gave me the tokens of returning mercy.* Selah. 6 For this, *because thou hast pardoned my sin,* shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters, *in time of the greatest troubles and dangers,* they shall not come nigh unto him, *to hurt him; since under such guilt as mine the encouragement is so great, much more shall it be so under other troubles.* 7 Thou [art] my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; *thou art so entirely reconciled to me, that I can now triumph in thy protection; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance; I shall have reason for many songs of praise, and my brethren shall join with me in them.* Selah. 8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye; *I will give thee counsel from my own experience, and have an eye upon thee that thou dost not go astray, only be willing to be instructed.* 9 Be ye not as the horse, [or] as the mule, [which] have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee; *do not follow your appetites, and be untractable when God would by afflictions bring you to your duty.* 10 Many sorrows [shall be] to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about; *he shall not only be secured by providence, but be enriched with abundance of blessings. Therefore* 11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous, *though ye may be in affliction; and shout for joy, all [ye that are] upright in heart, because you have the blessedness of being pardoned, and shall finally be victorious over every enemy and every tribulation.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM hence we learn the folly of sin; what a burden it brings upon the mind, and into what distress and perplexity it is thrown by it. What a gloomy state must David's mind have been

in! full of agony, yet silent in that agony. This is often the case with sinners; they are conscious of guilt, yet keep silence; they stifle convictions, and endeavour to divert their minds by company and amusements, seeking rest, and finding none. Into such circumstances may a good man be brought, if he falls into sin. *Wherefore let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall.*

2. We are taught, the wisdom of repentance. It is the only way to obtain pardon, and the surest way to comfort. David in the expression of *not imputing iniquity*, seems to intimate, that all mankind are in a guilty state, and that no man is blessed but *he to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity*. Oh that this might be a motive to all sinners to repent, to confess their iniquity with deep humility, shame, and sorrow, and earnestly to entreat divine forgiveness. They have great encouragement to do this, because God is ready to pardon, to take off the load of guilt and grief. But then let them see to it that their repentance be sincere, that they do not trifle and prevaricate with God; confessing and lamenting those sins which they do not design to part with. If there be guile in the spirit, there can be no forgiveness; but *if we confess and forsake our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

3. Those who have received signal mercies from God, should do what they can to instruct, comfort, and edify others. David tells us his experience of the smart of sin, and the pleasures of forgiveness and obedience. Let pardoned souls exhort sinners to repent, and animate them to it by a consideration of the grace of God manifested to them; and let christians *excite one another to love and to good works*; to prayer, and faith in God, by mutual information of the dealings of God with their souls. Thus they will *strengthen each other's hands in God.*

4. See the wide difference there is between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous may be perplexed and troubled; but they have *a hiding place in God, and mercy shall compass them about*. But let the wicked be at present ever so prosperous and merry, *many sorrows shall be to them; they are like the horse and the mule*, hurried by appetite and passion, untaught and unhumiliated. They may at length have their spirits broken by affliction; or, if they pass through life without it, their end is sorrow and destruction. *Let the wicked then forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him. But let the righteous hold on his way, and the floods of deep waters shall not come nigh him.*

PSALM XXXIII.

Some suppose this psalm was composed by David in his advanced age, when his neighbouring enemies were subdued, as he calls upon his people to join with him in praising God.

1 REJOICE in the LORD, O ye righteous, *you are under peculiar obligations to it*; [for] praise is comely for the upright; *there is a beautiful agreement between the language of praise and your general conduct.* 2 Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery [and] an instrument of ten strings; *make use of those instruments to express and excite religious joy.* 3 Sing unto him a new song *for his new mercies, and with new and lively affections*; play skilfully with a loud noise. 4 For the word of the LORD [is] right; *his revealed word is true and righteous*; and all his works [are done] in truth; *are correspondent to his nature and will.* 5 He loveth righteousness and judgment, *and always practises them*: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD; *his mercy abounds in every part of it, else strict justice would turn it into a heap of confusion.* 6 By the word of the LORD, *his single almighty word*, were the heavens made; and all the host of them, *all the heavenly bodies, were formed by the breath of his mouth.* 7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap; *he shows how powerful he is, by separating the sea from the dry land, and cutting a channel for the waters*: he layeth up the depth in storehouses; *though they stand on an heap as high as the land, yet they are kept, as in a storehouse, from overflowing it; they cannot pass beyond their bounds. Therefore* 8 Let all the earth, *which is encompassed with these wonderful displays of his power*, fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. 9 For he spake, and it was [done;] he commanded, and it stood fast; *an allusion to God's saying, 'Let there be light, and there was light; all was done at a word's speaking, and continues firm and unmoveable. He then proceeds to the moral world, and there also he needs but speak the word, and the event shall answer his pleasure.* 10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect; *he either gives them up to a series of wrong thoughts and schemes, or, when the wisest plans are laid, he disconcerts them,*

by bringing about such events as their greatest wisdom could not foresee. 11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations; *nothing can frustrate his counsels, or break his schemes.* 12 Blessed [is] the nation whose God [is] the LORD; [and] the people [whom] he hath chosen for his own inheritance; *Israel, his peculiar people and inheritance, are happy under his care.* 13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. 14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon, *discerns the actions and thoughts of* all the inhabitants of the earth. 15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; *he has made human nature in the same manner; or, God presides over the thoughts of men, and influences them as he pleases;* he considereth all their works; *he knows and can defeat their deepest plots.* 16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength *when God determines otherwise; David, though a great warrior, depended only upon God.* 17 An horse [is] a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver [any] by his great strength*. 18 Behold, the eye of the LORD, *his watchful providence and favour, which is better than all military preparations,* [is] upon them that fear him, *not with a servile, slavish fear; therefore he adds,* upon them that hope in his mercy; 19 To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine; *to do that for them which all human skill and strength cannot do.* 20 Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he [is] our help and our shield. 21 For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. 22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee. *In this comprehensive prayer he appeals to an omniscient God for the sincerity of their faith in him, and declares, they could desire no greater mercy than what they firmly hoped for.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us learn from hence to abound in praise; and observe what tends to excite it, namely, the perfections of God as displayed in the works of nature, the conduct of providence, and his dispensations to his people; the ease with which universal nature was formed, the firmness of his ordinances, and especially that the earth is so full of his goodness. It is a pity it should be so

* The Israelites were forbidden to use horses in war, to keep them dependant on God only. David inculcates this; he had no dependance upon them without God, much less when he had forbidden the use of them.

empty of his praise. Let us praise him in the best manner we are able; do it skilfully, with our voice and our heart; with a loud voice, like those who have their hearts in the work: an admonition that many need in our public assemblies. Let us reflect upon this psalm often in this view, that we may know what to do it for, and how to do it acceptably.

2. We may rejoice in the immutability of the divine counsels, and the certain success of all his schemes. He baffles the devices of men when they are most wisely formed; but his own can never be frustrated, nor the execution of them be obstructed. A pleasing thought this, when we consider that all his schemes are for the benefit of his church and people. Let us stand in awe of this glorious Being, who hath such amazing power, and against whom there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor device that shall prosper.

3. Let us reflect on the universal influence of God on the hearts of men; that he can turn and fashion them as he pleases. He knows all their schemes, and can divert their thoughts so as shall be most contrary to their own former views, and to the expectations of all about them. The hearts of princes and kings are as much under his influence as those of the meanest subjects: this is a great satisfaction amidst national confusion, or fearful apprehensions. It is a great comfort to ministers in their work, that God knows how to reach and turn those hearts, which seem proof against all their admonitions, entreaties, and motives. This also shows the reasonableness and expediency of prayer for any blessing or comfort we want, and which may depend on the hearts and inclinations of men, that God can overrule all for our good.

4. We are taught to seek his protection and assistance in all our private and public concerns. *No king is saved by the multitude of an host*; horses, soldiers, ships, are all vain things without God. Let us then *wait for the Lord*; observe his providence, accommodate ourselves to it, and endeavour to cherish a lively faith in him. Then, however he may deal with nations, here is our comfort, that *the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.*

PSALM XXXIV.

[A Psalm] of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech*, 1 Sam. ii. 13., who drove him away, and he departed.

David fled to Achish for security from Saul's attempts; the courtiers of Achish representing him as a dangerous man, he feigned himself mad, and so escaped the snare. This psalm is addressed to the soldiers who shared his fortune. It is an alphabetical psalm, each verse beginning with the several letters of the Hebrew alphabet in order.

I WILL bless the LORD at all times, *for this miraculous deliverance among others; his praise [shall] continually [be] in my mouth, as long as I live.* 2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD, *as my guide and defence: the humble shall hear [thereof,] and be glad; shall be encouraged by it.* 3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together; *because* 4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears of Saul and Achish. 5 They, *his companions, or others who were interested in his deliverance,* looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed; *they were comforted and revived.* 6 This poor man, *I myself, despised and persecuted as I was,* cried, and the LORD heard [him,] and saved him out of all his troubles. *Nor was this my privilege alone,* for 7 The angel of the LORD, *with other spirits under his command,* encampeth round about all them that fear him, and delivereth them, *keeps them secure.* 8 O taste and see that the LORD [is] good; *make trial of his goodness by a steady, faithful adherence to him:* blessed [is] the man [that] trusteth in him. 9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints, *and make use of no irregular methods for your supply; for [there is] no want to them that fear him.* 10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good [thing;] *nothing that is truly good for them. He then addresses those about him, particularly his men, and exhorts them with tenderness and respect, as if they were his children, saying,* 11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 12 What man [is he that] desireth life,

* This king's name was Achish, but his title was Abimelech, which was a common name for the kings of the Philistines, as Pharaoh was for the kings of Egypt.

[and] loveth [many] days, that he may see good? *If you would desire many years, and would have them prosperous,* 13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile; *avoid all injurious and deceitful speeches.* 14 Depart from evil, and do good; *do not seek to keep yourself from trouble by unlawful or dishonourable means: seek peace, and pursue it; use all possible endeavours to procure it. He enforces this by weighty reasons:* 15 The eyes of the LORD [are] upon the righteous, *to guide and protect them,* and his ears [are open] unto their cry. 16 The face of the LORD, *his open anger, his righteous indignation,* [is] against them that do evil; *he looks upon them with awful sternness and severity; to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth; both them and their descendants. But* [17 The righteous] cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. 18 The LORD [is] nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, *to assist them;* and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. 19 Many [are] the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all, *when they have answered the end he designed.* 20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. 21 Evil shall slay the wicked; *those who have forced me to fly the country;* and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate; *shall be forsaken of God, and in miserable circumstances.* 22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us, from David's example, learn to declare our own experience of the divine goodness with modesty: this is an important part of christian friendship and communion. We should, with David acknowledge the interpositions of divine providence and grace in our favour, and call on our fellow christians to join with us in magnifying them. *The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad;* and it will be a great encouragement to the young and weak.

2. We should be desirous *to taste and see that the Lord is good:* to have an appropriating sense of it, founded on our own experience. A man can have no just ideas of fruits or liquors without tasting them. Let us pray for an experimental relish of the divine goodness arising from a serious contemplation of it; gratefully acknowledging, and faithfully improving it. Then may

we with a good grace, and a probability of success, encourage others to make the experiment, and so *taste that the Lord is gracious.*

3. Let us cheerfully repose ourselves on the divine protection, and never use any unlawful or doubtful means to defend ourselves. God will employ his angels to defend his servants; they *encamp about them that fear him*; and they are too brave to be terrified, and too strong to be routed, by any human host. We receive many kind offices from these holy and benevolent spirits; they will always protect the righteous, when God sees it best they should be protected; and he will never leave the souls of his people desolate. Amidst all the desolations that his judgments make on the earth, the immortal interests of the righteous shall be secure.

4. We are here shown the way to a happy and comfortable life. And what man is he who does not desire this? If we would attain it, let us attend to the psalmist's exhortation to *fear God, to do good, to depart from evil, and keep our hearts and tongues from guile.* The fear of God will lead us to practise the other duties recommended in this passage, which is quoted by St. Peter, *1 Peter* iii. 10—12., where these duties are all enjoined upon us as christians; and indeed they are of perpetual and universal obligation. Upon the whole, this psalm furnishes us with great and noble encouragements to fear, love, and serve God; as the only way to be happy in this life, and to be *saved from the wrath to come.*

PSALM XXXV.

[A Psalm] of David.

Composed during his persecutions by Saul and his courtiers. As he could have no justice on earth, he appeals to heaven.

1 **P**LEAD [my cause] O LORD, with them that strive with me: *because I am not able to defend myself*, fight against them that fight against me. 2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. 3 Draw out also the spear, and stop [the way] against them that persecute me; *that, if they still persist, they may run upon it*: say unto my soul, I [am] thy salvation. 4 Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that

devise my hurt. *There is a beautiful gradation in the original, Let them be ashamed, yea, confounded, yea, turned back, yea, pierced quite through.* 5 Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase [them.] 6 Let their way be dark and slippery; *let them go on with as much difficulty and distress, as a person does in slippery ways in a dark night*; and let the angel of the LORD persecute them; *let those angels, who are the ministers of thy power and justice, chase and persecute them that they may not rest nor escape.* 7 For without cause or provocation have they hid for me their net [in] a pit, [which] without cause they have digged for my soul; *therefore* 8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall. 9 And *then* my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation. 10 All my bones, *which thou hast preserved*, shall extol thee, and say, LORD, who [is] like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him? *He then proceeds to observe how unkindly and treacherously they had behaved to him.* 11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge [things] that I knew not. 12 They rewarded me evil for good [to] the spoiling of my soul; *they drove me from my country and my father's house, and so made me an orphan, as the word signifies.* 13 But my conduct towards them was quite different; as for me, when they were sick, my clothing [was] sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom; *though it did not prevail for them, yet it brought inward satisfaction to my own soul that I had done my duty.* 14 I behaved myself as though [he had been] my friend [or] brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth [for his] mother; *I was as constant in my inquiries, visits, and good wishes, as if he had been my nearest relation.* 15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: [yea,] the abjects, *poor and mean persons*, gathered themselves together against me, and I knew [it] not; they did tear [me,] and ceased not, *with their scoffs, slanders, reproaches and curses.* 16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, *contemptible buffoons, who will say or do any thing to please those who entertain them*, they gnashed upon me with their teeth; *their scorn was carried to such a height that they could even have eaten me up.* 17 LORD, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling, *my precious life*, from the lions. 18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people;

I will give thanks before the whole nation at their solemn feasts
 19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me : [neither] let them wink with the eye, *mock and insult*, that hate me without a cause. 20 For they speak not peace ; *they use nothing but threatening language* ; they devise deceitful matters against [them that are] quiet in the land ; *they lay plots against me, who desire to be a peaceable subject*. 21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, [and] said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen [it ;] *they tax me openly with being a traitor, and pretend that they were eye-witnesses of it*. 22 [This] thou hast seen, O LORD : keep not silence : O LORD, be not far from me. 23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, [even] unto my cause, my God and my Lord. 24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness, *then I am sure to escape* ; and let them not rejoice over me. 25 Let them not *have reason to say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it ; he is in the fair way to ruin* : let them not say, We have swallowed him up : *he is at length actually destroyed*. 26 Let them *who have conspired together* be ashamed and brought to confusion together, that rejoice at mine hurt : let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify [themselves] against me. 27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause : yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. 28 And my tongue *above all others, as I am under particular obligations*, shall speak of thy righteousness [and] of thy praise all the day long.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may observe, that it is no new thing for the best of men to be persecuted, and the most peaceable subjects to be falsely accused. David the servant of the Lord, was most shamefully and injuriously treated ; and though one of Saul's best subjects, he was most insolently abused, and virulently persecuted. Good men, generally speaking, are *the quiet in the land* ; they pay their dues, and live in all dutiful subjection. Yet deceitful matters are often devised against them, and they are represented as enemies to Cæsar, as troublers of Israel, and injurious to kings and provinces. Therefore laws are made to insnare and ruin them ; and men of bad characters are often employed to hunt them down.

2. How desirable is it to have the supreme Lord and Judge fo

our friend, and to be able to appeal to him for the righteousness of our cause, and the integrity of our conduct. It is a mercy that we live under a government to which we can appeal when injured and deprived of our rights, and can meet with redress. But many cases occur in which the laws afford no relief: in which the most wise and honest kings can do nothing. Let us therefore rejoice in God's universal government, and be solicitous to secure his guardianship. We should especially make it our prayer that he would *say unto our souls, I am your salvation*, and give us a comfortable assurance of our interest in his favour. This will afford abundant support under every difficulty and trouble. Let men curse, if the Lord will but bless.

3. Let us abhor the odious ingratitude and baseness of David's enemies, and imitate the gentleness and benevolence of his temper. We can scarcely conceive any thing more base, treacherous, and ungrateful, than their conduct; or more humane, friendly, and affectionate, than his. Who would not rather have been the aspersed, persecuted David, than the most powerful and successful of his enemies? May we be upright, friendly, and compassionate; and endeavour to secure the character of faithful, tender friends, however ill we may have been treated. It will be a great satisfaction when we are under injuries and neglects, that we never gave cause for them; yea, that we might have expected returns of kindness, sympathy, and respect. To the affection of the man, let us add the piety of the saint. Then *our prayers will return into our own bosoms*: they will at least afford us satisfaction; and God will remember them *for our good*.

4. Let us reflect on the amiable idea here given of the blessed God, that *he taketh pleasure in the prosperity of his servants*, ver. 27. Not of his church and people in general only, but of every particular servant, however mean and despised. He consults and is pleased with their happiness. If he afflicts, it is not willingly, but to promote their best and highest prosperity; and he rejoices to see the end answered. He makes the souls of his servants prosperous; takes pleasure in their improving graces and comforts, and will at last rejoice in their final salvation. In the recollection of this we should say, *Let the Lord be magnified, and speak of his righteousness and his praise all the day long*.

PSALM XXXVI.

To the chief musician, [A Psalm] of David, the servant of the
LORD.

It is most likely that this psalm was composed after David had discovered Saul's malicious designs against him.

1 **T**HE transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, [that there is] no fear of God before his eyes; *the wickedness of mine enemies appear so plain, that it proves to me that they have no sense of God's omniscience, no regard to his authority, nor fear of his displeasure.* 2 For, or nevertheless, he flattereth himself in his own eyes, *that he shall not be discovered, until his iniquity be found to be hateful; till it becomes apparent, and renders him odious in the sight of men.* 3 The words of his mouth [are] iniquity and deceit*: he hath left off to be wise, [and] to do good; *he becomes an open apostate from what he once professed; and whatever public declarations he makes,* 4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed: he setteth himself in a way [that is] not good; *fixes his resolution to go on: he abhorreth not evil; refuses nothing that is likely to answer his purpose, though it be ever so evil. David knew that God's perfections were his best support, and therefore he sets himself to take a view of them.* 5 Thy mercy, O LORD, [is] in the heavens; [and] thy faithfulness [reacheth] unto the clouds. 6 Thy righteousness [is] like the great mountains, *firm and stable, and can never be undetermined or thrown down; thy judgments [are] a great deep, which cannot be fathomed: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast; thou protectest and suppliest them, and much more those who love thee.* 7 How excellent [is] thy loving kindness, O God; *the thoughts of it are precious to me, the effects of it are great and wonderful: therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings; they trust to thy powerful protection, as chickens run for shelter under the wings of their parent.* 8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; *they shall find such pleasure there as to make it an inexhaustible store of good; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures; the*

* Saul pretended friendship, and therefore gave him his daughter, but hoped by the terms he imposed upon him that he would die in battle, or be destroyed by private assassination.

comfort they shall receive from thee, shall no more exhaust thy fullness and bounty, than a few drops of water could exhaust a river. 9 For with thee [is] the fountain of *natural and spiritual* life; thou art the origin and support of all happiness: in thy light shall we see light; with thy favour the darkest condition will become comfortable. 10 O continue thy loving kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart. *The original is more emphatical; Draw out thy loving kindness. God had been represented as a fountain of happiness, therefore David prays, Draw out this living water for our refreshment and comfort, and let upright souls drink and be satisfied.* 11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, to trample me in the dust, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me from my confidence in thee, or subdue and destroy me. 12 There, where they thought to have vanquished me, are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise; as if he had said, I can by faith look forward, to the time when it shall be so; while I am praying I foresee their ruin coming upon them; and this was abundantly fulfilled in the death of Saul and the rout of his army.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us learn from hence, to abhor and avoid that detestable character which is represented in the beginning of this psalm. To deceive others with fair pretences, to seek their ruin, while we speak friendly, and deliberately to contrive mischief, is a most odious character. Flattering others is bad; but it is worst of all to flatter ourselves, to think our state right, and our practice lawful, and to varnish over our wicked actions with plausible pretences. To cheat will sooner or later be discovered, to our shame in this world, or our everlasting confusion in the other. May we therefore guard against *leaving off to be wise and to do good*. Leaving off to do good, is leaving off to be wise. The source of all these evils is forgetting God, and not keeping his fear before our eyes. Let us therefore be solicitous to set him always before us; then we shall *abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good*.

2. We are taught to entertain venerable ideas of the blessed God, as a Being of perfect righteousness and invariable fidelity, of diffusive and boundless goodness. Though his judgments are unfathomable, yet mercy presides over all his dispensations towards all his creatures. Such views of the divine perfections are very

comfortable amidst the abounding wickedness of the world about us, and the mischievous designs of proud and deceitful men; and should be encouragements to us, to *trust under the shadow of his wings*; that we may enjoy a sure protection and a most delightful repose.

3. As the favour of God is the greatest blessing both in time and eternity, let us seek it, by endeavouring to know him, and to serve him with an upright heart. There is fatness in his house; comfort and joy which will abundantly satisfy us; he is the inexhaustible fountain of life and happiness. Amidst all the darkness through which we pass, and all our disappointments in creature comforts, the Lord will be a light about us: he will communicate from this fountain to the everlasting refreshment of our souls; and will advance us to his heavenly presence, where *he will be our everlasting light, and the days of darkness and mourning shall be ended.*

PSALM XXXVII.

[A Psalm] of David.

Composed in his old age; full of excellent instructions, which were the fruit of long observation and experience.

1 **FRET** not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. *But* 3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; [so] shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed; *thou shalt enjoy security and competency.* 4 Delight thyself also in the LORD, *in his perfections, promises, and benefits*; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart; *that is, all the reasonable and proper desires of thy heart.* 5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring [it] to pass; *shall grant such an issue as is most for thy good.* 6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon day; *if thy character is aspersed it shall be cleared up; and shall at length shine forth like the noon day. He then renews the caution against fretfulness at the wicked.* 7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who

bringeth wicked devices to pass. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. 9 For evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. 10 For yet a little while, and the wicked [shall] not [be:] yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it [shall] not [be.] 11 But the meek, *those who silently wait on God according to these directions,* shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace; *they shall be settled in their possessions, and lead a pleasant life in them.* 12 The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth; *their rage against the righteous is very great; but* 13 The LORD shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming; *God will disappoint him, for his day to fall shall come before he can execute his designs.* 14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, [and] to slay such as be of upright conversation. 15 Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken; *their mischief shall return upon themselves; they shall hurt themselves most by their wicked designs against others.* 16 A little that a righteous man hath [is] better than the riches of many wicked; *for it is generally more honestly gained, and always better improved.* 17 For the arms, *that is, the power,* of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous; *the wicked have none but their own arms to support them, and a poor support they are; but the Lord upholdeth the righteous.* 18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright; *he observes them every day, and knows how long their afflicted state shall continue:* and their inheritance shall be for ever; *they shall at length be removed to an everlasting inheritance.* 19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied; *they shall be preserved and supported.* 20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD [shall be] as the fat of lambs *burnt on the altar, and which all vanishes:* they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. 21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again; *wicked men are often reduced to a necessity of borrowing, and are so poor that they cannot, or so unjust that they will not, repay it:* but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth; *they have enough, and a generous heart to assist others.* 22 For [such as be] blessed of him, *that is, of God,* shall inherit the earth, *the land of Canaan;* and [they that be] cursed of him shall be cut off. 23 The steps of a [good] man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way; *or, as it would be better rendered, The steps of a man are*

ordered by the Lord when he delighteth in his way. 24 Though he fall into great dangers, or even into sin, he shall not be utterly cast down; he shall not be destroyed, shall not be utterly overcome: for here lies his security, the LORD upholdeth [him with] his hand. 25 I have been young, and [now] am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. *This is generally true, but not always; David once begged his bread: but in general the blessing of God attends the children of good men, and he raises them up friends**. 26 [He is] ever merciful, and lendeth; God sendeth him new supplies to do good with; and his seed [is] blessed. *He then enlargeth upon the security of the righteous.* 27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. 28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. 29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. 30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment; *he does good, not only to the bodies, but to the souls of men, and breathes forth wisdom continually.* 31 The law of his God [is] in his heart; *he knows it, meditates upon it, and delights in it*; none of his steps shall slide; *he shall not fall into that mischief to which the wicked are exposed.* 32 The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. *But* 33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged; *he will find out a way to vindicate his servants, when they are falsely accused.* 34 Wait on the LORD *by faith and prayer*, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see [it;] *thou shalt see his providence appearing for their destruction. This, says David, I have often observed,* 35 I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. 36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he [was] not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found; *I have seen families which flourished by iniquity gone at once, one scarce knows how, as Saul, Ahithophel, Doeg, and others. But* 37 Mark the perfect [man,] and behold the upright; *fix your eyes on the honest, upright man: though he be oppressed and persecuted, yet it will be well with him either in this world or another, for the end of [that] man [is] peace.* 38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off; *though they escape the*

* If the sentence is stopped after *seed*, it will run thus, *I have not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed, though begging bread, though reduced to this necessity.*
—ED.

judgments of God in this world, they shall be condemned and suffer together in another. 39 But the salvation of the righteous [is] of the LORD: [he is] their strength, *security, and happiness*, in the time of trouble. 40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him, *and use no irregular methods for their redress.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM the exhortations so earnestly and frequently given in this psalm, we should be concerned to guard against envy and fretfulness at the prosperity of the wicked. This is too common even with good men, and therefore David repeats the caution, and gives a substantial reason for it, namely, that all their glory will be quickly gone, and end in sorrow, shame, and torment.

2. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come.* The way of religion is the true way to thrive, to be secure, easy, and happy. To trust in God, commit our way to him, and take no sinful, dishonourable, or doubtful methods to mend our circumstances, is the way to have enough, and the favour of God with it; and to entail a blessing upon our families, which is the best portion we can leave them.

3. Let us often reflect on the difference between the righteous and the wicked. What a strong and lively contrast is drawn between their character and condition through the whole psalm! Under the christian dispensation it is not so visible as it was under the Jewish; but it is sufficient to show us which is to be preferred, if we confine our views only to the present life; *a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.* Though he has not abundance of riches, he has abundance of peace, and he is blessed of the Lord.

4. We should carefully observe the providence of God, as illustrating his word; and communicate to others what observations we have made upon it. David here informs us what remarks he had made on the care God takes of the righteous, and their children, and of the speedy, sudden destruction of wicked families. If we have used ourselves to reflect on what passes about us, we have seen much of this. God's aged servants should recollect such observations; and, like David, cheerfully relate them to others, especially to their descendants. *Their mouths should speak of this wisdom, and their tongues talk of these judgments. Whoso is*

wise, and will observe these things, shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.

5. Let us endeavour to treasure up these words in our hearts. It is the character of a good man, that *the law of the Lord is in his heart*; and it is in vain to read and hear these lively descriptions and admonitions, and in vain is the labour of ministers to illustrate or improve them, if we do not take pains to lay them up in our hearts; that they may be always ready for use, and have a commanding influence on all our conduct. Thus shall we enjoy the blessing of heaven; and whatever we suffer here, *our end will be peace.*

PSALM XXXVIII.

A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance, that is, to put himself in mind of, the sore affliction he had been in for his sins, and of God's mercy in his deliverance; and to put others in mind how to behave themselves upon a like occasion.

It was probably composed after his guilt in the matter of Uriah. God visited him with sickness, and Absalom took advantage of his confinement and danger to raise a rebellion against him.

1 **O** LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. 2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; *he owns the hand of God in this affliction, however heavy.* 3 [There is] no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither [is there any] rest in my bones because of my sin; *his whole body was full of sores, and his bones full of pain.* 4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. 5 My wounds stink [and] are corrupt because of my foolishness; *they were offensive to himself and all around him.* 6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. 7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome [disease:] and [there is] no soundness in my flesh. 8 I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. 9 LORD, all my desire [is] before thee: and my groaning is not hid from thee; *he still comforts himself that God heard his groans, and knew every desire of his heart.* 10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me; *he was full of*

inward agitation and uneasiness, which weakened his strength and his sight. 11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off; *to add to his distress, his friends would not come near him, because his sores were offensive.* 12 They also that seek after my life lay snares [for me:] and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long; *his enemies were busy sowing sedition, and improving the time of his confinement in prejudicing the people against him; this he heard of, and it aggravated his distress.* 13 But I, as a deaf [man,] heard not*; and [I was] as a dumb man [that] openeth not his mouth. 14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth [are] no reproofs; *he thought it best at present to take no notice of their designs.* *Amidst all the distress those complicated afflictions gave him, he turns to God, and entreats his help.* 15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O LORD my God. 16 For I said, [Hear me,] lest [otherwise] they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify [themselves] against me; *they were glad at his affliction, hoping it would prove his death, or at least give them an opportunity of compassing their designs.* 17 For I [am] ready to halt, and my sorrow [is] continually before me. 18 For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin; *still he dwells on the most grievous circumstance, that his afflictions were sent on account of his sin; this therefore he again laments, as what gave him reason to expect the worst treatment.* 19 But mine enemies [are] lively, [and] they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. 20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; *like a man in great distress, without much regularity, he complains of the virulence of his enemies; he might suspect or know that Ahithophel, his minister of state, and Joab, his general, were confederate with Absalom, and therefore say, they render me evil for good; because I follow [the thing that] good [is;] his impartial administration of justice might be improved by the conspirators to set the people against him as cruel and tyrannical.* 21 Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me. 22 Make haste to help me, O LORD my salvation.

* The words may denote, that when they came to see him out of pretended friendship, they hinted something to one another even in his presence, relating to their designs, and their expectation of his death, imagining that he was too weak to understand or hear them.

REFLECTIONS.

1. SUCH distempers as are here described, show what vile bodies ours are, which contain the seeds of such diseases, and are capable of being overspread, weakened, and pained by them in every part. If we, or any who are dear to us, have been carried safely through loathsome and dangerous distempers, especially if friends have been kind and tender, ready to pity and assist us under the burden of them, we should bless God, and devote our lives to his service, *who healeth all our diseases.*

2. The sting of affliction is sin; it is that which makes the burden heavy, and almost insupportable, which otherwise the spirit would bear. How often does David repeat the thought in this psalm, that it was *because of his foolishness and sin* that he was afflicted. Besides the disorder in his body, his spirit was wounded, and his heart dejected under God's displeasure. Had he enjoyed a sense of divine love, he could easily have borne the unkindness of his friends and the treachery of his enemies. See how dear sin may cost a child of God, even after it is forgiven; how bitter the remembrance of it may be, even when God is pacified towards us for what we have done. Let us therefore *stand in awe and not sin.*

3. It is a very desirable thing under ill treatment from men, especially from those who profess themselves to be friends, to keep our temper. Whether David was capable of speaking or not, the language here used suggests a useful lesson to us, to govern our spirits and bridle our tongues. It is in general the best way to be deaf and dumb when we are ill used; it is dangerous to say much, lest it should inflame our passion and beget more strife. Silence, or at least calmness, is the best way to preserve our inward peace, to answer the reproaches of our enemies, and mortify their ill nature. Let us then learn of David, and of a greater than David, even Christ, *not to render railing for railing, and when reviled, not to revile again.*

4. We should hope in God, and commit our way to him; this will compose our spirits under every afflictive dispensation. When God visits us or our families with loathsome or threatening sicknesses, we are taught in this psalm, what our prayer may be, and whence our expectations should come. God is a friend to the afflicted, and never stands aloof from those who seek and

serve him. He hears our groans, and knows our desires; and he will at length appear as the God of our salvation. Let us therefore *hope and quietly wait for his salvation.*

PSALM XXXIX.

To the chief musician, [even] to Jeduthun, one of the masters of music, see 1 Chron. xxv. 1. A Psalm of David.

On what occasion this psalm was written is uncertain; but no doubt it was some afflictive providence, under which he describes the workings of his mind. He found it difficult to see the prosperity, and hear the rage, of his enemies, and not break out into violent expostulations.

1 **I SAID**, I will take heed to my ways, *to my whole conduct, but particularly* that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me; *while I am considering the flourishing state of wicked men.* 2 I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, [even] from good; *lest, by vindicating myself, I should be hurried into any indecent expressions; and my sorrow was stirred; it rather increased by my silence.* 3 My heart was hot within me, *it was agitated and disturbed, and while I was musing in a silent manner, the fire burned; a fire burst forth, and I could hold no longer; [then] spake I with my tongue. What he said showed great piety and moderation; he spake not to the wicked, nor to his friends concerning them, but to God.* 4 **LORD**, make me to know, *that is, consider and reflect upon* mine end, and the measure of my days, what it [is; that] I may know how frail I [am.] *and so be less concerned at the misery I have to endure, or the prosperity of the wicked that I see.* 5 Behold, thou hast made my days [as] an hand breadth, *that is, the shortest measure, and mine age [is] as nothing before thee, in thy sight, or compared with thine eternal duration: verily every man, whatever his rank in life is, and when he is seemingly in the greatest security, at his best state [is] altogether vanity; is vain, yea, vanity, yea, altogether vanity; as if all kinds of vanities met in him, and he were an abstract of them.* Selah. 6 Surely every man walketh in a vain show, *all his pomp is a shadow; surely they are disquieted in vain; the things he hurries himself about are empty and vain; he heapeth up [riches,] and knoweth not who shall gather them.*

The inference from hence is just and devout: 7 And now, LORD, what wait I for? my hope [is] in thee; since life is so short, and worldly enjoyments are so vain, I will not disquiet myself about them, no not even for the glory of a kingdom, but seek my happiness in thee. 8 Deliver me from all my transgressions, which have deserved the calamities I complain of; make me not the reproach of the foolish, by suffering me to be quite overwhelmed with my troubles. 9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, and they imputed my silence to a sense of my guilt; yet it was because thou didst [it.] 10 Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand; I can support it but a little longer. 11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth; it is as easily consumed, as a moth is crushed: surely every man [is] vanity; especially does he appear to be so when under thy rebukes. Selah. 12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears; regard my tears, when my heart is so oppressed with grief that I cannot give vent to my thoughts any other way: for I [am] a stranger with thee, [and] a sojourner, as all my fathers [were;] therefore I am exposed to injury, and need divine guidance and protection. 13 O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more, that is, before all my schemes and designs in this life perish.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us learn from David's example, to govern our tongue and our passions under every provocation. When we meet with insults and abuse, or see the wicked prospering, let us take heed to our tongue, and bridle that unruly member. If any evil thought arises, let it be immediately checked; for thoughts are words before God. It may be sometimes prudent and necessary to hold our peace from good; but this precaution should not be carried so far as to neglect the duty of brotherly reproof and admonition. Wisdom is profitable to direct; but it is certainly better to say nothing, than to say that which would irritate the passions, and injure the cause we profess to serve. It is necessary to lay a strong restraint upon our tongues, for St. James says, *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain.*

2. It will be profitable often to meditate on the vanity and mortality of man. The schemes and pursuits of wicked men are

vanity; and too many of the schemes of wise and good men are so; and both are mortal. How vain is strength and beauty! what poor things to be proud of! which God can, by a few days' or hours' sickness, entirely destroy. All the glory of man is short-lived, and it is sufficient, one would think, to abate the ardour with which men pursue riches, to observe how short their lives are, and that they are toiling for they know not who. Let us remember that *our days are but as an hand's breadth*; we carry the measure of our days always about with us; and it is a pity we should ever forget it. But as we are prone to do so, we should pray that God would enable us to consider it and lay it to heart, that we may act accordingly.

3. Let the vanity of all earthly things lead us to God, and engage us to seek our happiness in him. We shall never find happiness in earthly things, though we seek it ever so eagerly. Let us therefore, with David, disclaim all expectations of this kind, and seek an interest in God as our portion. This is the way to true satisfaction; it will remove some of the vanities of human life, and reconcile us to others, and it will fix us in a state of security and peace.

4. Let us consider ourselves as *strangers and sojourners here*. All our fathers were so, and we inherit their imperfections, their labours, and sorrows. This is not our home and rest; we are travelling through this world to another. May we then be content with our lot, and daily think of a removal. This is a proper plea to use with God for pity, direction, and support, a powerful motive to excite us to *consider our latter end*; and as *pilgrims and strangers, to seek a better country, even an heavenly one*.

PSALM XL.

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David.

That some part of this Psalm is a prophecy of Christ, is very evident from what the apostle quotes in Hebrews x. 5. But it has been much debated whether the whole Psalm is prophetic, and the language of the Messiah, or whether it describes David's case, and in the description introduces a prophecy of Christ. I incline to the latter interpretation, because there are some passages in the Psalm which seem to me not to suit the temper of our blessed Lord. The Psalmist here celebrates God's goodness in delivering him from his enemies, or recovering him from sickness, or both.

I WAITED patiently for the LORD, *for an answer to my petition*; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. **2** He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, *he delivered me from great and desperate dangers*, and set my feet upon a rock, *brought me into a safe condition*, [and] established my goings. **3** And he hath put a new song in my mouth, *hath given me great cause for praise*, [even] praise unto our God; *and my deliverance is so remarkable, and its happy consequences so extensive, that many shall see [it,] and fear, and shall trust in the LORD; shall join with me in worshipping and serving God.* **4** Blessed [is] that man, *notwithstanding his afflictions*, that maketh the LORD his trust; and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies; *who neither envies nor imitates the proud, nor those who are deceitful, or worship idols.* **5** Many, O LORD my God, [are] thy wonderful works [which] thou hast done, and thy thoughts [which are] to us ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: [if] I would declare and speak [of them,] they are more than can be numbered. *From hence to the eleventh verse he prophesies of that mercy with which the world was to be favoured by the coming of the Messiah, and introduces him as saying,* **6** Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; *thou intendedst to put an end to them*; mine ears hast thou opened, *or bored*; *in allusion to the Jewish servants when they chose not to be made free**, Exodus xxi. 5, 6., burnt offering and sin offering

* The apostle, quoting this passage from the Greek, renders it thus, *A body hast thou prepared for me*, that is, fitted for thy service; a phrase in sense much the same as the other, but which those to whom he wrote would better understand.

hast thou not required. 7 Then said I, Lo, I come; *I am ready to execute thy will*: in the volume of the book* [it is] written of me, 8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law [is] within my heart; *I obey thee with pleasure, and am ready to fulfil whatever thou requirest*. 9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. 10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving kindness and thy truth from the great congregation; *I have proclaimed thy righteousness and goodness to numerous assemblies with the greatest freedom, though doing so hath exposed me to sufferings and death. After this the Psalmist goes on to entreat God's mercy for himself and his friends*. 11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy loving kindness and thy truth continually preserve me *in all future dangers*. 12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities † have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me. 13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me; *I have no other helper but thee*. 14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. 15 Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame, *who make a mock of my affliction, and my trust in thee ‡, and that say unto me, Aha, aha*. 16 Let all those that seek thee, *that observe thy providence and depend on thee alone*, rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation, *who take pleasure in seeing thee appear for the deliverance of thy people*, say continually, 'The LORD be magnified; *let them have continual occasion to bless thee on that account*. 17 But I [am] poor and needy, *destitute of human help*; [yet] *this is my comfort*, the LORD thinketh upon me: thou [art] my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God; *as I depend on thee alone for deliverance, be pleased to send it speedily*.

* It is called *the volume of the book*, because the ancient books were written on long pieces of parchment, which were rolled up to keep them clean. See a curious criticism of Mr. Harmer's on this text, *Observations*,² Vol. III. *in loc.*—ED.

† If the whole psalm is applied to Christ, then *iniquities* here must signify *calamities*, as the word often does.

‡ If these verses are applied to the Messiah, they must be considered as a prediction, and not as an imprecation.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE hence learn, under all our afflictions to *trust in God, and wait patiently for him*; this will be our wisdom and duty under the greatest distresses. Let us then not trust to ourselves, as proud men do, nor to others, who may imagine themselves able to help us; but *have our eyes ever toward the Lord*, and wait his time for deliverance. This will tend to compose the mind while deliverance is delayed; and at length he will bring us out of the horrible pit and the miry clay.

2. We ought to admire the love of Christ, displayed in his submitting to labours and sufferings for our sakes. He came cheerfully to accomplish the ancient prophecies, and to do God's will, though he knew that while he was on earth he should endure many afflictions, and at length die in a painful and ignominious manner. Let us show our gratitude, by learning and practising that righteousness, which he so plainly and faithfully preached.

3. Let us imitate his example, by cheerfully performing any services and submitting to any sufferings which God may call us to, and with equal pleasure concur in every intimation of the divine will. In order to that, let us lay up his law in our hearts. Cheerful obedience to the divine will is the most acceptable sacrifice, and *will please the Lord better than an ox or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs*.

PSALM XLI.

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David.

Composed upon occasion of some sore disease or other affliction, in which he had met with very inhuman treatment from some person who pretended great affection. It was probably written on the same occasion as the thirty-eighth Psalm, when Absalom took advantage of his sickness. To set off the contrast more forcibly, he begins the Psalm with a reflection on the beauty of a compassionate spirit, and the happiness to which the possessors of it are entitled.

BLESSED [is] he that considereth the poor, *the weak, or sick, and takes every wise and proper method to afford them relief*: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. 2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; [and] he shall be blessed, *be prosperous, upon the earth*: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. 3 The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; *when afflictions come upon him through natural infirmities, God will strengthen him; or, as the word signifies, support and hold him up*: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness; *like a tender parent, or an affectionate friend, God will as it were assist in adjusting his bed, and making it easy to him. In this confidence, when I was sick,* 4 I said, LORD, be merciful unto me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee; *pardon my sins, and deliver me out of this distress.* 5 Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish? *they think the distemper does its work too slowly, and would be glad, if they durst, to aid its victory with murder.* 6 And as for him who is my chief enemy, *that is, Absalom, if he come to see [me,] under pretence of duty or affection, he speaketh vanity, that is, falsehood and lies*: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; [when] he goeth abroad, he telleth [it;] *he makes malignant remarks on my temper and conduct.* 7 All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. 8 An evil disease, [say they,] cleaveth fast unto him, *as a peculiar judgment from heaven*: and [now] that he lieth disabled in bed, he shall rise up no more. 9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, *Ahithophel, in whom I trusted, whom I depended upon for assistance in my affairs, which did eat of my bread, had a place at my own table, hath lifted up [his] heel against me;*

like an ungrateful brute which strikes at his feeder, he hath endeavoured to do me all the mischief in his power. 10 But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them, *punish them according to their deserts.* 11 By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not yet triumph over me, *hath not gotten me into his power.* 12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever; *as thou knowest my integrity, thou upholdest me in the midst of those dangers, and wilt restore and establish me; therefore I will say,* 13 Blessed [be] the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen; *let all the people concur with me in ascribing glory and praise to thee.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how amiable and happy a compassionate and charitable temper is. *Blessed is he, or, O the blessedness of him, who considereth the poor.* If we wish this to be our case, we must not turn away our eyes from the sick or the poor, but take notice of their cases; inquire into their circumstances; tenderly pity them, and do our utmost to relieve them. We may soon be in their situation, sick, if not poor. This psalm shows us, that even royal dignity cannot secure the continuance of health, nor the fidelity of friends. If we consider the poor, God will consider us, and comfort us under our afflictions; but we cannot expect his help if we are uncharitable; for his word declares, *Prov. xxi. 13., Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.*

2. It is cause of thankfulness if we have never experienced the infidelity of our friends; the most grievous circumstance in David's affliction. Had they quite deserted him, it would have been much better than to have visited him with the appearance of condolence and pity, but with words of falsehood, and designs of cruelty. If we have kind or faithful friends who visit us in our affliction, we should give God the glory of it, from whom all our blessings are derived, and all our support and counsels flow.

3. See the odious nature of ingratitude; the sting of it wounds deep. David felt it, when his intimate friend, yea, his own son, treacherously conspired against him. How base a disposition! let us abhor it; be always careful to show gratitude and respect to whom they are due; and be sincere in all our expressions of

good will. Our Lord applies these words of David to the treachery of Judas, *John* xiii. 18., and it is applicable to all who profess his gospel (and more especially those who partake of his supper) and yet are disobedient to his laws ; they eat of Christ's bread, and yet ungratefully and cruelly *lift up the heel against him*.

4. We should be careful under every affliction and ill usage to maintain our integrity, to do our duty, and keep a good conscience : this will be our rejoicing in the day of evil. When men reproach us and God afflicts us, we ought to depend upon him to *uphold us in our integrity* ; else we shall fall from it ; and often pray that *integrity and uprightness may preserve us* ; for it is better to suffer any thing, and lose every thing, than give up that. If we retain it, God will *set us before his face for ever ; we shall behold his face in righteousness, and be satisfied with his likeness*.

PSALM XLII.

To the chief musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

Probably composed by David during Absalom's rebellion, when he was forced to fly beyond Jordan. He expresses earnest desire, deep sorrow, and cheerful hope, in mingled strains, without much method ; for sorrow is not methodical.

1 **AS** the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 2 My soul thirsteth for God, *earnestly desires his favour* ; for the living God, *the God of life and comfort* : when shall I come and appear before God ? *I long for that happy time*. 3 My tears have been my meat day and night, *I have no inclination to any thing but weeping*, while they continually say unto me, Where [is] thy God ? *why doth he not appear for thee ?* 4 When I remember these [things,] I pour out my soul in me, *in sad complaints, and fervent prayers* : for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day ; *the recollection of this pleasure increases my distress, yet will I not despair* ; 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and [why] art thou disquieted in me ? hope thou in God : for I shall yet praise him [for] the help of his countenance ; *he will again look favourably upon me, and with that look will send deliverance*. 6 O my God,

notwithstanding the pains I take to keep up my spirits, my soul is cast down within me : therefore, or, as it may be better rendered, nevertheless, will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar ; I will think of thy power, goodness, and faithfulness in those countries beyond Jordan, whither I am forced to fly ; though cut off from public ordinances, and wandering about, still I will remember thee. He then adds a most beautiful but melancholy account of his distress. 7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water spouts : all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me ; one distress after another almost overwhelms me. 8 [Yet] the LORD will command his loving kindness in the day time, he will restore me to a day of light and comfort, and in the night, this night of affliction, his song [shall be] with me, [and] my prayer unto the God of my life ; I will sing of former mercies, and pray for those I want. 9 I will say unto God my rock, my refuge and security, Why hast thou forgotten me ? why dost thou appear as if thou hadst deserted me ? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy ? 10 [As] with a sword in my bones, in the most cutting, distressing manner, mine enemies reproach me ; while they say daily unto me, Where [is] thy God ? But it is fit to turn the expostulation to myself, and chide away my anxious fears. 11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? hope thou in God ; for I shall yet praise him, [who is] the health of my countenance, and my God ; from whom, therefore, I have every thing to expect.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here taught to cherish ardent desires after God ; after a further knowledge of him, clearer manifestations of his favour, and uninterrupted communion with him ; nothing is so delightful ; nothing will make us so happy. We should long to appear before him, to pay our homage to him, to receive his orders ; and join with the devout multitude in this blessed work. We should cultivate and cherish that love to ordinances, which David so pathetically expresses ; and blush that we have so little of his devout spirit, notwithstanding our superior privileges.

2. We have great reason to bless God that we are not driven from his house and our own. To be driven from our habitation, and forced to wander about, is afflictive ; but to be driven from the house of God, and deprived of opportunities of attending

there, is, to a pious soul, more afflictive. The remembrance of former enjoyments would in that case be painful, and add to the distress. May we therefore learn to value and improve our privileges, lest God should teach us their worth by the want of them.

3. When in the greatest difficulties, we should maintain our faith and continue instant in prayer. When waves and billows roll over us, and threaten to overwhelm us, let us have faith in God, and let our prayer be to him as *the God of our life*; maintaining a believing confidence in his power, goodness, and faithfulness, and *casting all our care upon him*.

4. Let us endeavour to reason ourselves out of those desponding thoughts which may sometimes rise in our bosoms, and chide our hearts when they are ready to sink. We should inquire what cause there is for despair or even dejection, and say, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?* Despondency dishonours God, discourages others, and hurts ourselves. Let us therefore with David continue these reasonings, repeat our good thoughts, prayers, and resolutions, and God will at length appear as *the health of our countenance, and our God*.

PSALM XLIII.

Perhaps this psalm is an appendix to the former; it was composed on the same occasion; his doubts and disorder returning, he had recourse to the same remedy; conscious of his integrity in his government, he appeals to God as his judge.

1 **JUDGE** me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; *against this seditious people, who, not having thy fear before their eyes, have risen up against me*: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man; *particularly Absalom, who is seeking my life under the pretence of justice*. 2 For thou [art] the God of my strength, *who hast hitherto strengthened me*: why dost thou seem to cast me off, and delay to help me? why go I mourning so long because of the oppression of the enemy? 3 O send out thy light, *let me be guided by thy wise and good providence*; and thy truth; *let thy faithful engagements to me be manifested in my deliverance*; let them lead me, and conduct me through all my

difficulties: let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles; *restore me to my capital, and especially to thy tabernacle, where thou hast fixed thine abode.* 4 Then will I go unto the altar of God; *the first thing I do shall be to approach thine altar with sacrifices of thanksgiving, unto God my exceeding joy, the principal author and matter of all my joy and comfort*: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God; *in secret as well as in public assemblies.* I am confident *this will be the case, and therefore* 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul, *under thy present troubles?* and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him *in his tabernacle, though I am now driven away, and seem to be overlooked by him, [who is] the health of my countenance, and my God; he has been and will be the health of my countenance; will give me support, and brighten my looks, which are now dejected.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE learn from hence, to take pleasure in the worship of God, and to go to his house with joy. David's heart was much set upon God's tabernacle, and was more desirous to be restored to that, than to his family comforts, or royal dignity; nothing was so amiable in his eyes, or so delightful to his soul. God was the supreme object of his joy; and his joy in God was not common, but *an exceeding joy*, something more sublime and elevated than any earthly joy. Let us aspire after this temper, and cherish this ardent love to the house of God. He should be the chief object of our delight and joy, and all our inferior joys should terminate in him.

2. We should pray that God's light and truth may lead us; that he, who is the Father of lights, would guide us by his providence in the way of wisdom and safety; that he, who is perfect truth and unchangeably faithful, would assist and strengthen us. His word is *light and truth*. Let us therefore lay it up in our hearts, and it will direct our steps. His Spirit is the spirit of light and truth; and if we seek his influences, they will guide us into all important and needful truth; and being led by this spirit, we shall be *the children of God, and heirs of an eternal inheritance*.

3. Let us not be discouraged in our endeavours to get rid of unbelieving suspicions and melancholy thoughts. David reasons with his soul in the same language twice in the former psalm, and

once in this. Good men under affliction are apt to fall into his disorder, which is not easily removed, and very apt to return. It will be necessary to reason the case with our souls, to urge the same arguments again and again, to present the same prayer, and make use of the same plea; we should not be discouraged, and think the malady incurable, because in the first or second time of trial those means have not had the desired effect. We have an instance of the like kind in the New Testament, viz., in St. Paul: he sought the Lord that an infirmity of this kind might depart from him, yea, he sought the Lord thrice; at length the Lord said to him, (as he will say to us if we pursue this method), *My grace is sufficient for thee.*

PSALM XLIV.

To the chief musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil.

It is uncertain when this psalm was composed, but most likely in Hezekiah's time; when the Israelites were reduced to great extremities, when several towns of Judah fell into the hands of the king of Assyria; and when, among other sufferings, they might probably have idolatry imposed upon them by their conquerors.

1 **WE** have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, [what] work thou didst in their days, *and* in the times of old, *the times before them.* 2 [How] thou didst drive out the heathen, *the seven nations of Canaan*, with thy hand, and plantedst them, *the Israelites, in their room*; [how] thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. *But this should not be ascribed to their valour, but to thy power*; 3 For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them. 4 Thou art my *almighty King, O God*: command deliverances for Jacob; *thou hast commanded deliverances for him, we therefore hope thou wilt command them for his posterity.* 5 Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us; *through thee we hope for success, and therefore we, like our fathers, will trust in thee, and not in military preparations.* 6 For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. 7 But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to

shame that hated us. 8 In God we boast all the day long, *of his goodness, and praise thy name for ever, for the manifestation of it.* Selah. 9 But *for the present* thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies, *as in times past.* 10 Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy, *we have lost our former courage;* and they which hate us spoil for themselves, *take away our estates for their own use.* 11 Thou hast given us like sheep [appointed] for meat; *they make no more scruple of killing us than they would sheep;* and hast scattered us among the heathen; *we are sold for captives among heathen nations.* 12 Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase [thy wealth] by their price. *The original is, 'Thou hast not raised our price; we are sold at the cheapest rate, as things of no value.'* 13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. 14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people; *when they would express wretchedness and misery, they say, as wretched and miserable as a Jew, and shake the head at us, and banter us.* 15 My confusion [is] continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me, *I am ashamed to show my face,* 16 For the voice of him, *the Assyrian,* that reproacheth and blasphemeth thee; by reason of the enemy and avenger, *who exercise cruelty towards us.* 17 All this is come upon us; *but it is our comfort, that yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant; have not turned apostates.* 18 Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; *from thy service to idols, but have complied with the reformation of Hezekiah our prince;* 19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, *among fierce and cruel enemies,* and covered us with the shadow of death. 20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; 21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart; *and we dare appeal to him for the truth of this. But this has not been the case;* 22 Yea, for thy sake, *for our steady adherence to thee,* are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter*. 23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O LORD? *why seemest thou to sleep?* arise, cast [us] not off for ever, *as unworthy thy regard.* 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, [and] forgettest our affliction and our oppression? *givest us*

* It is probable that the Assyrians had killed many because they would not renounce their religion. In Rom. viii. 36., the apostle applies this to the bitter and cruel persecutions which the christians in his day endured.

no countenance, and seemest to forget our afflictions? 25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth; *we are in the greatest distress. Yet we can do nothing for ourselves; and deserve nothing from thee; therefore we depend on thy known and experienced mercy; Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE hence learn to commemorate the appearances of God for former generations; no present distresses should make us forget them, for they will be an encouragement to our prayer and hope. Parents should take pains to impress on the minds of their children the wonderful interpositions of God for his church and for our country; and children should take pains to learn and remember them. Thus should one generation praise his mighty works to another.

2. Let us not ascribe the success of our undertakings to our own wisdom and strength, but to the power and goodness of God. The psalmist teaches us not to trust to our military preparations, or our own skill and diligence in private concerns, but to God. And when the nation, or our private affairs prosper, let us humbly acknowledge that it is through God's name, and the manifestation of his glorious perfections to us and for us.

3. Let us pity and pray for those that suffer persecution for conscience' sake, and be thankful, if we do not experience such treatment. It was the case of the pious Israelites, and of the primitive christians, and of many of our protestant brethren in later days. *We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us, what they suffered in this country for conscience' sake. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, in some way or other.* If they are not led as sheep to the slaughter, they must expect to be a reproach to their neighbours, a scorn and derision to those who are about them. It is grievous to be reproached and derided for that which we know to be right and good; especially when God's name is also dishonoured; and his holy ways blasphemed. Let us think of our persecuted brethren with tender compassion; and by bearing one another's burdens fulfil the law of Christ.

4. Whatever our country, or we ourselves suffer, we should keep up high thoughts of God, seek to him for mercy, and continue faithful to our religious engagements. We must still acknow-

ledge him as our King; remembering his perfect knowledge and intimate acquaintance with all the secrets of our hearts. Our pleas for prosperity should be grounded on his favour and mercy; and whatever comes upon us let us never *decline from his ways*. This is a duty peculiarly needful in times of persecution, and under the strong temptations, arising from that, to turn aside from God. Let us be careful that nothing may drive us from our duty, and then nothing can deprive us of our comfort.

PSALM XLV.

To the chief musician upon Shoshannim, the name of a musical instrument, for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of loves, or, of the Beloved.

Some have thought this psalm was composed on occasion of Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter; but there are several passages in the psalm by no means agreeing to Solomon. Jewish interpreters acknowledge it refers to the Messiah; and it seems to have been originally intended to describe the excellency and glory of Christ's kingdom, and his marriage with the church. Perhaps some of the ideas were borrowed from Solomon's marriage, which the psalmist might have seen a little before.

1 MY heart is inditing a good matter; *it is affectionately engaged in it: I will speak out of the abundance of my heart of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue [is] the pen of a ready writer. Struck with the majesty of the king's appearance he addresses to him,* **2** Thou art fairer than the children of men; *more beautiful and glorious than the greatest princes: grace is poured into thy lips; thy words are peaceful and acceptable; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever; exalted thee to the highest honour, and made thee an everlasting blessing to the world.* **3** Gird thy sword upon [thy] thigh, O [most] mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; *gird on thy sword, which is thy glory and majesty, thy royal ornament, and the ensign of that power by which thou wilt obtain the most celebrated victories.* **4** And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of, or, *in honour of the cause of, truth and meekness, [and] righteousness; and thy right hand, thy own power, shall teach thee terrible things; to do great and glorious*

exploits, which shall be terrible to thy enemies. 5 Thyne arrows [are] sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; [whereby] the people fall under thee; *the instruments of thine holy war against ignorance, idolatry, and wickedness, shall either convert or conquer thine enemies.* 6 Thy throne, O God, [is,] for ever and ever, *it is firmly established: the sceptre of thy kingdom [is] a right sceptre; the administration of thy kingdom is most just.* 7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; *in the government of the Jewish church thou hast made it appear that thou lovest righteousness; and much more in thine holy life, and by giving thyself a ransom for sinners: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows; he hath made thee a royal priest, a priest upon a throne, above all the kings and high priests that ever were anointed, yea, above the angels* who presided over the other provinces of the world, and whose administration was not so wise and righteous as thine.* 8 All thy garments [smell] of myrrh, and aloes, [and] cassia; *perfumes commonly used in the east; out of the ivory palaces, or wardrobes, whereby they have made thee glad; which they have prepared for thy entertainment on this grand occasion.* 9 Kings' daughters [were] among thy honourable women; *are thy maids of honour: upon thy right hand did stand the queen, that is, thy bride, in gold of Ophir; referring to the church, which he has united to himself.* 10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; *which may refer to the Gentiles, who were required to forsake their idolatry, in order to become members of the christian church.* 11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; *thou shalt become very amiable and acceptable to him: for he [is] thy Lord; and worship thou him; he is now become thy Lord, and thou must pay homage to him, and do thy utmost to render thyself agreeable to him.* 12 And the daughter of Tyre [shall be there] with a gift; [even] the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour; *the inhabitants of Tyre, the most wealthy of the Gentiles, and the rich among many other nations, shall be united to the church.* 13 The king's daughter [is] all glorious within: her clothing [is] of wrought gold; *she is glorious in the endowments of her mind, as well as in the charms of her person and dress.* 14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle work; the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee; *she shall have a train of glorious attendants;*

* That this refers to the angels, is plain from the apostle's quoting it in Heb. i. 8, where he brings this passage to prove Christ's superiority to them.

referring to the number of believers who shall be joined to the church, and are represented as virgins, to denote their purity. 15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace; *this expresses the joy with which they should receive the gospel, and be united to the society of christians.* 16 Instead of *the Jews*, thy fathers, shall be thy children, *the Gentiles*; *the whole christian church shall be thy children*, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth; *who shall be endowed with spiritual power and dignity, being kings and priests unto God.* 17 I will make thy name to be remembered, *or celebrated*, in all generations, *by this song which I have composed*; therefore shall the people praise thee *as a most excellent prince* for ever and ever.

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE grace and glory of Christ is a most excellent subject; it is good matter, it is a most noble, copious, and profitable theme. Our thoughts should dwell upon it with all possible fixedness and seriousness; and we should *count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2. We may reflect with pleasure on the glorious cause in which Christ is engaged, and the holy war which he carries on, and in which he shall prosper. It is the cause of truth, of meekness, and righteousness. His gospel, his sword, which is the word of God, tends to rectify our errors by truth; to control our passions, by that meekness which it promotes; and to regulate our lives, by the laws of righteousness which it inculcates. Let us rejoice that this sacred cause has hitherto prospered, and shall prosper.

3. We should be thankful if we have the honour of belonging to the church of Christ, and learn our duty as members of it. Glorious things are here spoken of the church; its dignity and purity are here celebrated. Blessed be God who takes Gentiles for his people; and that we, who were once afar off, are espoused and united to Christ. May we learn to forsake our sins, that we may become entirely his; to seek the adorning of the mind, that we may be glorious within, which is the brightest glory; and that the lustre of holiness may shine in our conversation. So shall the King delight in us, and we shall be happy in the most endearing, yea, in an everlasting, union with him.

4. Let us earnestly pray for the further spread and establishment of his kingdom; that it may prosper still more; that truth,

meeekness, and righteousness may spread over the earth; to root out ignorance and idolatry, subdue all the savage passions of men, and promote universal peace, justice, and charity. Let us do our part, by our prayers and labours, to spread this gospel, on which the happiness of men so much depends. And with a cheerful expectation that it shall spread over all the earth, let us praise the name of our King and of our Saviour for ever and ever.

PSALM XLVI.

To the chief musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth, a musical instrument for the treble part.

It is supposed this Psalm was written on occasion of David's signal victory over the Syrians, 2 Sam. viii., when he took a prodigious number of chariots and soldiers from them, and they became tributary to him.

1 **GOD** [is] our refuge and strength, a very present, *a ready and sufficient*, help in trouble. 2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, *though the world should be in the greatest confusion, and all its kingdoms and states in a tumult*, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3 [Though] the waters thereof roar [and] be troubled, [though] the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. 4 [There is] a river, *a quiet stream, in opposition to the roaring of the sea*, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, *that is, Jerusalem*, the holy [place] of the tabernacles of the most High; *especially mount Zion, where God's tabernacle is fixed**. 5 God [is] in the midst of her; she shall not be moved, *like other mountains*: God shall help her, [and that] right early, *speedily and in a most seasonable manner*. 6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he, *God*, no sooner uttered his voice, *manifested his pleasure*, but the earth melted; *their enemies grew heartless and were struck into consternation*. 7 The LORD of hosts, *a God of almighty power*, [is] with us *Israelites*; the God of Jacob [is] our refuge. Selah. *If any doubt of this, let them* 8 Come, and behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth, *among the*

* The image here is a pure stream, that shall not be troubled; making glad a mountain, that shall not be shaken; referring to the presence of God with his people, and the benefits of the word and ordinances that flowed from Zion.

enemies of his church and people. 9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth, *or, all around us*; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. *God himself is then introduced as speaking with awful majesty.* 10 Be still, *all ye nations*, and know that I [am] God, *the supreme governor of the world*: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth, *as well as in your particular nation.* *We have reason to rejoice therefore, for* 11 The LORD of hosts [is] with us; the God of Jacob [is] *still* our refuge. *Selah; let it be remembered and repeated.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM hence we are taught to reverence and adore God, as *the Lord of hosts and the God of Jacob.* He is a Being of almighty power; all the hosts of angels are at his command; *he does what he pleaseth in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of this lower world.* The desolations of war are by his appointment to punish guilty nations; when he pleaseth, *he maketh them to cease*, breaketh the weapons of war, and turneth them upon those that wield them. How awful is he in his doings! He fought of old for Jacob, and for Israel his people, and he is still the refuge of his servants. Therefore,

2. Let us learn to trust in God amidst the greatest public alarms and commotions. When the earth is full of confusion, when nation is rising up against nation, and war is making its desolations, we should guard against anxious fear, and repose our confidence on the Lord of hosts; *be still*, calm and sedate, *and know that he is God.* This thought should compose and animate our spirits. When Luther, the great champion of the reformation, was told of fresh disturbances and confusions breaking out, he used to say, 'Come, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm;' and nothing could be more suitable in such circumstances. Let us trust and hope in God; for if the Lord of hosts be for us, none can effectually be against us.

3. If we desire to have this cheerful confidence in God, let us cherish a love to his house and ordinances. When the sea roars, and mountains tremble, let us drink of that quiet, pleasant, and salutary stream which flows from mount Zion, even God's holy word; the precious promises and noble encouragements of which

will support our faith and our courage. O let it dwell richly in us, to regulate our passions and our conduct ; then we shall have every thing to hope for, and nothing to fear.

PSALM XLVII.

To the chief musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

Composed on occasion of removing the ark to mount Zion, which was attended with a grand procession : this Psalm might then be used ; in which David celebrates the victories he had gained, his being now established on the throne, and the union of the Israelites under him. He calls upon the people, and they upon one another, to express their joy.

1 **O** CLAP your hands, all ye people ; shout unto God, with the voice of triumph. 2 For the LORD most high [is] terrible ; [he is] a great King over all the earth, *to be revered by his people, and dreaded by his foes.* 3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. *The original is, ' He shall speak the people under us ;' one word of his can do it, and awe them into silence and obedience.* 4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved ; *he hath chosen a good inheritance for us, and continued it to us ; such an excellent inheritance as he chose for Jacob his beloved, and which we his descendants possess.* Selah. 5 God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet ; *the ark is brought up to the tabernacle with a shout, and the sound of instruments used on this grand occasion ; therefore* 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises to our God, *who hath provided for us, and blessed us :* sing praises unto our King, *who hath defended us and conquered our enemies,* sing praises. 7 For God is not our King only, he [is] the King of all the earth : sing ye praises with understanding, *as to a Being of infinite perfections, and the sovereign Ruler of the whole universe.* 8 God reigneth over the heathen, *though he dwells in Sion as his habitation :* God sitteth upon the ark *as the throne of his holiness.* 9 The princes of the people of Israel are gathered together *on this solemn occasion,* [even] the people of the God of Abraham : for the shields of the earth, *its princes and mighty men,* [belong.]

unto God; or, as it might be better translated, 'O ye princes of the nations, join yourselves to the people of the God of Abraham, for the territories of the earth are the Lord's: he is greatly exalted, and able to protect his people.'

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM hence we learn to reverence and adore the awful Majesty of heaven and earth. It is a noble and sublime idea of God, that he reigns over the whole world, all the kings of the earth are his subjects. Let us think of him in this view, and express our reverence and homage with the warmest affection.

2. Let us refer to God the disposal of all our personal concerns. He chooses our present inheritance, therefore it is best for us; and it becomes us contentedly and cheerfully to acquiesce in his choice. The places of our abode, our settlements, and stations in life, are of God's appointing; and he has chosen a future inheritance for all his children, even *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*.

3. When we are engaged in praising God, we should do it with understanding, in an intelligent manner; sing praises unto him, as *the King of all the earth*, as our God and our King. Our praises to God should be a rational service; the heart, as well as the voice should be employed in it. Our praise will then be acceptable, when we *make melody in our hearts unto the Lord*.

4. Let us refer the protection of our land through so many ages to God, and cast our future cares on him. That unanimity and loyalty prevail among us, is owing to his influence upon men's minds; it is he who makes our princes shields; they derive their power and ability to protect us from the great King. May a proper sense of God prevail among our princes and great men; and may it prevail in our hearts, that we may thank God and take courage.

5. This psalm naturally leads our thoughts to the Lord Jesus Christ, and his glorious ascension to heaven, of which the ascension of the ark to Zion was a type. He ascended to heaven with great triumph, amidst a full assembly of the angels; his kingdom is established and supported, and spread among many nations that were once heathens, especially over Britain. Here Jesus reigns; we are gathered to the people of the God of Abraham; and, with regard to temporal and spiritual things, he hath chosen

a good inheritance for us. Let us therefore sing praises with understanding; and rejoice in the thought that *the Messiah shall reign till all his enemies are made his footstool.*

PSALM XLVIII.

A Song, [and] Psalm for the sons of Korah.

This composition is styled a Song or Psalm, which indicates a joyful, devotional composition, of which the chief part is employed in thanksgiving. Whether it was penned on occasion of the destruction of Sennacherib's army in Hezekiah's time, or of the enemies of Israel in Jehoshaphat's, is uncertain; it undoubtedly refers to some extraordinary success God had given his people.

1 **G**REAT [is] the LORD, and greatly to be praised *every where, especially in Zion, in the city of our God, [in] the mountain of his holiness, which is set apart for his holy worship, and now wonderfully preserved.* 2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, *or land, [is] mount Zion, [on] the sides of the north, that is, on the north side of the city, the city of the great King.* 3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge; *his presence gave the Israelites all their dignity and stability, and by his providence he secured them from the attempts of their enemies.* 4 For, lo, the kings, *neighbouring nations, were assembled, and confederated together; they passed by together.* 5 They saw *the beauty and strength of [it, and] so they marvelled; they were troubled [and] hasted away.* 6 Fear took hold upon them there, [and] pain, *or consternation, as of a woman in travail. They were confounded, as sailors are when* 7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. 8 As we have heard *from our fathers what thou hast done, and what thou hast promised to do, so have we seen it verified in the defence of our capital, in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: we therefore hope God will establish it for ever, against all future attacks.* Selah. 9 We have thought of thy loving kindness, O God; *the circumstances of our deliverance, and all the goodness manifested in it, when we have been paying our thankful acknowledgments for it in the midst of thy temple.* 10 According to thy name, O God, *thy perfections displayed in our deliverance, so [is] thy praise unto the ends of the earth; thy*

name shall become known and formidable in the remotest nations: thy right hand is full of righteousness; which is manifested in thy justice and goodness in confounding our enemies and preserving thy people. 11 Let mount Zion especially, which is the capital, rejoice, let the daughters of Judah, the lesser towns and villages, be glad, because of thy judgments on our enemies. 12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof, see if any are wanting. 13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, if any of them are damaged; consider her palaces, how they are preserved from every injury; that ye may tell [it] to the generation following, to excite their thankfulness and trust in God. 14 For this God [is] our God, our protector and governor, not only in this particular instance, but for ever and ever: he will be our guide and protector [even] unto death.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE hence learn, that God should be praised for all the deliverances wrought out for his church and people. When the kings of the earth have confederated against his people, he has often taken away their strength and their heart, and brought consternation and ruin upon them. For such interpositions *he is greatly to be praised*; and the clearer discoveries that any persons have of his nature and perfections, the more should they abound in his praise.

2. Let us with deep attention reflect upon his goodness, especially in his house. It should often dwell upon our thoughts; more especially when we assemble in his courts. Let us think of and acknowledge his appearances for mount Zion of old, particularly for our own country; and as we have heard what he did in former ages, so in some instances we have seen the like. When we meet in his house undisturbed by our enemies, and enjoy so many advantages for knowing God, and doing his will, it becomes us to adore his loving kindness. The recollection of it will be of the greatest use to excite our devout supplications, and encourage our hope that they will not be presented in vain.

3. In a reliance on his protection, let us humbly commit the guardianship of our land to God. He can easily put our enemies in fear, and dash their ships to pieces. Oh may he be known in our palaces for a refuge! may he secure our towns, and our bulwarks! that we and the generation following may glorify and serve

him in holiness and cheerfulness. But as our sins may provoke him to deny his assistance, and give our enemies cause to triumph over us, let us commit our souls to him and live near to him; then, whatever troubles and alarms we meet with, *he will be our guide to death, and our God for ever and ever.*

PSALM XLIX.

To the chief musician, A Psalm for the sons of Koran.

Both the author and the occasion of this Psalm are unknown; but it contains some excellent instructions.

1 **H**EAR this, all [ye] people; give ear, all [ye] inhabitants of the world; *what I have to say is matter of universal concern:* 2 Both low and high, rich and poor, together; *you are all equally concerned in what I am going to say.* 3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart [shall be] of understanding; *I will instruct you in a variety of useful knowledge.* 4 I will incline mine ear to a parable; *I will take the greatest care in what I am going to compose, and listen to the impulse of the Spirit of God:* I will open my dark saying upon the harp; *I will set the instructive discourse to music, to make it more engaging.* 5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, or affliction, [when] the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about? *Why should good men be dejected in times of trouble, or when wicked men prosper?* 6 They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; *let them consider, that* 7 None [of them] can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; *they cannot save the dearest friend from the grave, or purchase a reprieve:* 8 (For the redemption of their soul, or life, [is] precious, and it ceaseth for ever; *it cannot be procured:*) 9 That he should still live for ever, [and] not see corruption. 10 For he seeth [that] wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others; *these subtle rich men cannot but see that death makes a universal conquest, and that neither riches nor wisdom can preserve them.* 11 Their inward thought [is, that] *though they know they must die, it is some comfort that their houses, their inheritance, [shall continue] for ever in their family, [and] their dwelling-places to*

all generacions; *and to make themselves in some measure immortal, they call [their] lands after their own names.* 12 Nevertheless man [being] in honour, *in his highest exaltation, abideth not; he is like the beasts [that] perish; at death he becomes as incapable of doing or enjoying any thing as the brutes.* 13 This their way [is] their folly; yet their posterity, *those who succeed them, approve their sayings, imitate their conduct, and act over the same folly.* Selah. 14 Like sheep, *which are taken one by one out of a field for slaughter, they are laid in the grave, so little do worldly people improve the deaths of their predecessors; but at length death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; at the resurrection the upright shall be rescued from the grave, and advanced above those who oppressed them; in the mean time the wicked shall be taken from their pompous habitations, and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.* 15 But God will redeem my soul, *or life, from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me into his favour in heaven.* Selah. 16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; 17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him; *he must leave his riches and dignity.* 18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul; *gave a loose to his appetites, rioted in pleasure, and thought himself very happy: and [men] will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself; if thou followest his steps.* Nevertheless 19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers, *to the grave; they shall never see light; never enjoy any of the comforts of this life, and have no title to those of the next.* 20 Man [that is] in honour, *that has the greatest portion and dignity, and understandeth not his true interest in this life, and the uncertainty of its continuance, is like the beasts [that] perish; behaves like a brute while he lives, and dies without being regarded.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM the death of rich and honourable men, we are here taught the vanity of all worldly enjoyments. In their highest exaltations they are frail, mortal creatures; when they die their wealth is transferred to others; their estates have new lords or owners; and their names are often remembered with infamy. They could not save themselves, nor the dearest friend they had

in the world, from death. How little then is there in riches and grandeur to be fond of. If any of our fathers acted so foolishly, as to be fond of the world, let us not imitate their conduct nor approve their sayings, nor sell our souls for that which cannot purchase the continuance of our lives for one day. May all attend to the vanity of earthly things; the rich and great, that they may *not be high-minded*, nor *trust in uncertain riches*; and the poor and low, that they may be humble and content, and not envy their wealthy neighbours, but endeavour to be *rich in faith, and heirs of the heavenly kingdom*.

2. When we are in danger of dreading the power or envying the prosperity of wicked men, let us *consider their end*; how foolish they are at present, and how miserable they will be hereafter, notwithstanding they bless themselves, and others may flatter and commend them. He that knoweth and understandeth himself and his duty, and doeth it, is truly rich and honourable; is indeed like an angel: while ignorant and vicious lords and gentlemen live and die like brutes; with this difference only, that the immortal part survives, and sinks into destruction.

3. Let it be our great desire and care to be numbered among the upright, rather than among the rich and great. Various and strong are the temptations with which men of dignity and wealth are surrounded, and *it is hard for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven*. But those who are upright shall have the dominion, when all that sleep in the dust shall awake in the morning of the resurrection. God will redeem his servants from the power of the grave, and adorn them with a splendour and glory, superior to what the wicked ever knew. *Mortality shall be swallowed up of life*; and God will receive them to everlasting habitations. They shall have dominion over all their persecutors and oppressors, and reign with Christ in everlasting honour and glory. May we therefore judge of earthly things in the light of another world, that we may use them as not abusing them; and *seek a better and more enduring substance; even an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us*.

PSALM L.

A Psalm of Asaph, see 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

When this psalm was written is uncertain; but it might have been written in almost any age of the Jewish church; for there is no period in which the Jews were not ready to place too much dependance on ceremonial observations, while the great duties of piety and morality were neglected. It was designed to instruct them in the nature of acceptable worship, and to prepare the way for the change which the gospel was to make. God is represented as coming with the ensigns of majesty and terror to judge an hypocritical people.

1 **T**HE mighty God, [even] the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth, *the inhabitants of the land*, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof, *to hear the charge he hath against them.* 2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, *the most beautiful and lovely place*, God hath shined; *marching forth to judgment with the greatest pomp and solemnity.* 3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him; *though he be our covenant God, he will not connive at our formality and hypocrisy, but will come to judge us for our breaches of his law, with such terror as was displayed at the first giving of it.* 4 He shall call to the heavens from above, *to the angels*, and to the *inhabitants of the earth*, that he may judge his people; *to be witnesses of his righteousness, and to testify against his dissembling people.* 5 Gather my saints together unto me, *my people, who by profession are saints, and ought to be holy*; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice; *by which they acknowledged their covenant relation to me, though they have not performed the conditions of it.* 6 And the heavens, *that is, the angelic host*, shall declare his righteousness; for God [is] judge himself, *in his own person*; *therefore his sentence will be perfectly agreeable to the rules of equity and goodness.* Selah. 7 Hear, O my people, *hear the charge I have against thee*, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I [am] God, [even] thy God. 8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, [to have been] continually before me; *you have not in general neglected those things, but have taken pride in them, and thought they would expiate or*

excuse your breaches of the moral law. 9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, [nor] he-goats out of thy folds; *though you lay so much stress on those things, yet I value them not considered in themselves, or as if they were the whole of what I require.* 10 For every beast of the forest [is] mine, [and] the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field [are] mine, *to be disposed of as I will.* 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world [is] mine, and the fullness thereof. 13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? *an allusion to the notion the heathens had that their deities were nourished and entertained by the steams of their sacrifices, Deut. xxxii. 38.* 14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; *bring to him a truly thankful heart, which is the most acceptable sacrifice;* and pay thy vows, *thy promises of obedience and duty,* unto the most High; *do not think to put off so glorious a Being with a poor composition of sin offerings for wilful neglects:* 15 And call upon me in the day of trouble; *acknowledge thy subjection and dependance by constant, fervent prayer, especially in time of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me by thy praises, and by a holy life.* 16 But unto the wicked, *to hypocrites,* God saith, *What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or [that] thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? why dost thou talk of my statutes, and pretend respect for them,* 17 Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee; *treating them with the greatest contempt.* 18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers; *thou favourest them, and art guilty of their crimes.* 19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. 20 Thou sittest in judgment [and] speakest, *givest false witness or unjust sentence,* against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son, *thy neurest relations.* 21 These [things] hast thou done, and I kept silence; *but instead of being amended by this goodness, thou thoughtest that I was altogether [such an one] as thyself; that I had forgotten thy crimes, or had not that rectitude and abhorrence of them which I have often declared I had: [but] I will reprove thee openly, and set [them] in order before thine eyes; set them in battle array against thee, and so make it appear that I both know them and hate them.* 22 Now, *as an inference from the whole,* consider this, ye that forget God, *lest my patience be exhausted, and, like a roaring lion, I tear [you] in pieces, and [there be] none to deliver. Know that this is the maxim by which I will administer the rewards and punishments of my empire,* 23 Whoso offereth

praise from a devout, humble heart, glorifieth me; promotes my honour and interest in the world: and to him that ordereth [his] conversation [aright,] who is concerned to dispose his actions in a proper manner, will I show the salvation of God, that is, a complete salvation; a salvation worthy of God, by way of eminence mine, and infinitely superior to all others.

REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how odious formality and hypocrisy are in the sight of God. How strange is it that the Israelites should substitute sacrifices instead of holy obedience, when there were so many cautions in the law against it! We are in no danger of this; but christians are in danger of laying too much stress on rites and ceremonies of men's devising, or even of substituting the means of religion instead of the end; praying, hearing, and receiving sacraments, instead of justice, mercy, and self-government. How abominable is it to talk of religion, to be zealous for its articles and doctrines, while we are enemies to its morals! to love to give instruction, but hate to receive it! Such are an abomination in the sight of God; and we should dread every degree of the hypocrisy here condemned.

2. Let us guard against the source of such a temper, and particularly against imagining that *God is such an one as ourselves*. The best men have but imperfect notions of God, and too many have mean, false, and dishonourable notions of him. May we never think that he is weak and fickle, like ourselves; that he forgets what is past; is unconcerned about truth and righteousness; and that because he does not immediately punish transgressors, he never will; but be false to his word. Let us remember that he is a God of perfect knowledge, and forgets nothing; that he is the just, the holy, the terrible, the unchangeable God; that he has declared the highest abhorrence of hypocrisy and wickedness, and will not fail in his own good time to reprove and punish it.

3. Let us devoutly present to God the acceptable sacrifices and services here required. Though he does not now command sacrifices and burnt offerings, he still demands the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and the regular exercise of serious, fervent prayer. He requires us to vow to forsake sin, and do our duty; and to perform those vows; to glorify him, when we are delivered from trouble, by offering praise, and by holy lives; especially that we

order our conversation aright, agreeably to the reason of things, the rules of his word, and our true interest; as we desire to escape the doom of hypocrites, and to see and enjoy *the salvation of God*.

4. Let us keep in remembrance the final awful judgment, in order to preserve the integrity of our hearts before God. This poetical description of God's coming to judge his people Israel, will be verified at the great day, when *Christ shall appear in his own and his Father's glory, attended with all his angels, to judge the world*. Then the whole earth shall be summoned before him to receive their sentence; then will he *gather his saints together*, who have been sincere in their worship, holy in their conversation, and faithful to their covenant. He will set the sins of the wicked in order before them; the sins of childhood, youth, and riper years; the sins of heart, hand, and tongue; and they that have forgotten God, will with inexorable severity be torn in pieces, and *there shall be none to deliver*. May we all seriously consider this; and so remember that future solemn account, that *our work may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ*.

PSALM LI.

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

The title of this psalm tells us on what a melancholy occasion it was composed, namely, upon David's great and heinous sin in committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering her husband. It is a remarkable instance of his humility, and a proof of his repentance, that it should be delivered to the master of music in the tabernacle service, and publicly performed there, the king himself probably attending in sackcloth. He repeats the same petitions again and again, his heart being too full to attend to any order.

1 **H**AVE mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out* my transgressions; *his pleas are all taken from God's*

* The term *blotting out* alludes to the notion of God's keeping a book of remembrance of the good and evil actions of his creatures; and is a metaphor which occurs in many parts of the scriptures.

goodness and mercy. *I am fully sensible of my defilement by my sin, and pray thee to* 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin [is] ever before me; *I keep it ever in view, to increase my humility and make me more watchful for the future.* 4 Against thee, thee only, or chiefly, have I sinned, and done [this] evil in thy sight; *I have done evil to myself, to Bathshebā, to Uriah, and to those brave men who were slain with him; but my sin chiefly grieves me as committed against thee, against thine authority, omniscience, justice and goodness: this I acknowledge, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, [and] be clear when thou judgest; or, as it should be rendered, 'so that thou art justified in pronouncing sentence against me, and wouldst be clear from the imputation of injustice, wert thou to execute it.'* 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me*. 6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; *I know that thou requirest of men to suppress the first motion to that which is evil, to stifle every sinful inclination: and in the hidden [part] thou shalt make me to know wisdom, or, hast made me to know it; given me a principle of reason and conscience, to correct and restrain the workings of corrupt nature.* 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow; *an allusion to the waters of purification which were to be sprinkled over those who were ceremonially unclean; as if he had said, Till I am purified in a spiritual sense, I am not fit to appear in thy sanctuary, or have a place among thy people.* 8 Make me to hear joy and gladness, *by affording me thy pardoning mercy; [that] the bones [which] thou hast broken, my wounded spirit, may rejoice.* 9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities; *let my guilt be entirely forgiven.* 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me; *thy almighty power only can renew thine image in me, and make me a new and holy creature; a very humbling expression, as if his wickedness had not only polluted all that was good in him, but entirely destroyed all rectitude and integrity.* 11 Cast me not away from thy presence, *from communion with thee;* and take not *the influences and assistance of thy holy spirit from me.* 12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, *a comfortable sense of thy favour;* and uphold me [with thy] free

* These are undoubtedly figurative expressions; probably a strong declaration of the greatness of his guilt, just as the Israelites are called *transgressors from the womb*: or if it refer, as is generally supposed, to his bringing corrupt and evil inclinations into the world with him, it cannot be mentioned as an excuse, but as an aggravation of his sin; that knowing this, he ought to have been more watchful.

spirit, *from falling into sin, and give me courage and resolution in thy service.* 13 [Then] will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee; *I will admonish others against sin, and encourage those who have fallen to repent.* 14 Deliver me from blood guiltiness, *the murders I have been accessory to, O God, thou God of my salvation: [and] my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness, or goodness.* 15 O LORD, open thou my lips, *which have been sealed with shame, confusion, and fear,* and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. 16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give [it;] *hast not appointed any sacrifice for such sins as I am guilty of: thou delightest not in burnt offering; thou dost not value them in comparison of sincere and universal obedience.* 17 The sacrifices of God, *his beloved and most acceptable sacrifices, [are] a broken spirit; an heart which is humble, penitent, tender, and patient: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise, but graciously accept, and therefore I will offer it.* 18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; *favour the public interests of Israel: build thou the walls of Jerusalem; complete the work, and protect and defend the city.* 19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar; *though I am unworthy to do it, thy faithful servants shall bring those sacrifices, thou mayest accept; and when I am reconciled to thee, I will join with them in such devout services and offerings.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. OBSERVE how David describes the great evil of sin, from his own painful feelings. All his petitions for washing, cleansing, and purifying, intimate how sadly defiling it is; that it destroys the beauty and purity of the soul, renders it offensive and odious to God, makes the sinner a burden to himself, and gives him a pain, which the language of broken bones does but imperfectly represent. His guilt and remorse *are recorded for our admonition, that when we think we stand, we may take heed lest we fall.* They that make light of sin, forget its malignity and its horrors, and will be of another mind when God and conscience set their sins in order before them.

2. We are here taught the nature of genuine repentance. It consists in a due sense of the evil of sin; more particularly as committed against God; as it manifests a disbelief of his

omniscience, a contempt of his authority and justice, and an abuse of his goodness. It consists in having the heart broken and contrite for sin, deeply humbled, ashamed, and grieved for it, and produces a serious, humble confession of its particular circumstances and aggravations. A true penitent will, like David, give glory to God by a public acknowledgment of his guilt and repentance, where his sin has been public, and take shame to himself in the presence of God's people.

3. Under a sense of guilt, let us adopt these suitable and excellent petitions and pleas. God may have preserved us from such heinous and aggravated offences as David was guilty of; but *in many things we offend all*; our souls have been polluted and defiled, and we need pardoning mercy and purifying grace. Let us then offer up these petitions with the same temper as David did, remembering that the gospel directs us to seek mercy through the atonement and intercession of Christ, and represents his blood as the great instrument of our purification. Let us have recourse to the blood of sprinkling, and the sacrifices of a broken and contrite heart will then be acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

4. When God has extended his pardoning goodness to us, let us teach, admonish, and encourage others; warn them from our own experience of the evil and mischief of sin, and caution them to abstain from that bitter and abominable thing. We should encourage them to hope in God's mercy, and to seek it in the gospel way. David is in this psalm teaching us, and all other transgressors to the end of the world. Let us join in his good resolutions; and make it our great aim in teaching and admonishing others, that they may turn to God, do works meet for repentance, and sin no more.

5. Amidst our greatest private cares and sorrows, we should not forget the interests of God's Zion. It is a most lovely and amiable part of David's character, and should be imitated by us, that oppressed and almost distracted as he was, under a sense of guilt, still Jerusalem came into his mind, and that he offered up a prayer for its welfare. As we have all more or less done injury to the public by our sins, we should do it what service we can, by our prayers: for *with such sacrifices God is well pleased*.

PSALM LII.

To the chief musician, Maschil, [A Psalm] of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

This Doeg made a false representation to Saul of David's being supplied with food and weapons by Ahimelech; upon which Saul sent Doeg, who slew a great number of the priests, 1 Sam. xxii. 10—18., and it seems from the first verse of this psalm, that he boasted of it, as a noble exploit. David may probably refer to some other enemies of a like character.

1 **WHY** boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man, *and promisest thyself that thou shalt prevail over me?* the goodness of God, which has hitherto appeared for me, [endureth] continually, and shall still protect me; his goodness makes thy mischief appear more base and abominable. *The finest and most just censure on tyranny that ever was penned.* 2 Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully; *it is a keen instrument of mischief; thou hidest perfidy and falsehood under the name of loyalty and friendship.* 3 Thou lovest evil more than good; [and] lying against me, Ahimelech, and the priests, rather than to speak righteousness, *the whole truth, which would have cleared our character.* Selah. *Yea,* 4 Thou lovest all devouring words, *which were the ruin and destruction of a family of priests, and the whole city;* (see 1 Sam. xxii. 18. 19.) O [thou] deceitful tongue. 5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away *suddenly,* and pluck thee out of [thy] dwelling place, *where thou thinkest thyself secure,* and root thee *and thy posterity* out of the land of the living. Selah. 6 The righteous also shall see *this,* and fear *the righteous judgment of God,* and shall laugh at him; *shall turn from thee with contempt and derision, saying,* 7 Lo, [this is] the great man [that] made not *the favour of God* his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, [and] strengthened himself, *went on confidently,* in his wickedness, *and now see what is become of him*!* 8 But I [am] like a green olive tree, *fresh, fruitful, and useful,* in

* Probably he fell with Saul in the battle; or else we should have heard of David's judging and punishing him for his cruelty.

the house of God, *under his immediate eye and care*: I trust in the mercy of God, *that he will show favour to me and my posterity for ever and ever.* 9 I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done [it;] *thou hast defended me hitherto from this mischievous man, and wilt settle me on the throne*: and I will wait on thy name, *for the accomplishment of all thy promises*; for [it is] good before thy saints; *this thy saints have always done, and have found the comfort and benefit of it.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us abhor the detestable character here described, who devised mischief, worked deceitfully, uttering devouring words, and then boasting of the success of them. It is to be feared there is a great deal of this wicked work among courtiers, to support their several parties; and too much of it in lower life. It is a conduct which does incredible mischief in churches and families, and makes men appear like devils. Those who are mighty on account of their rank, wealth, weight, or influence, should guard against the licentiousness of the tongue, by which they are capable of doing mischief, in proportion to the height of their circumstances. May we all guard against lying misrepresentations; telling half the truth, or putting an ill construction on good, well-intended, or doubtful actions; and be tender of the reputation as well as of the persons and property of our fellow-creatures; remembering, that God is a witness to all falsehood, slander, and misrepresentation. He abhorreth a lying tongue, and assures us, that *all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.* An awful threatening, at which every liar should tremble.

2. We have great reason to be thankful, if we have not been ruined or injured *by such mischievous men.* If these vices should generally prevail, society would be dissolved, and no man's life, property, or comforts, would be secure. Let us bless God if he hath preserved us from the scourge of a malignant tongue, given us wisdom and grace to behave in an honourable and unblameable manner, and secured us from those slanders and misrepresentations, which even such a behaviour will not of itself be a security from.

3. Let us observe the vanity of earthly confidence, and fix our trust in God. *He that maketh not God his strength,* has no strength to trust in; he that is high-minded, and trusts in uncertain riches, acts wickedly, and takes the way to strengthen himself in

wickedness ; to become quite impudent in it, and abandoned to it. *May we trust in the mercy of God, and wait on his name ; all the saints have found it good to do so ; and nothing else will guard us against the deceitfulness of riches, the malice of wicked men, and the devices of wicked spirits. Therefore, turn thou to thy God, keep mercy and judgment, and wait on him continually.*

PSALM LIII.

To the chief musician upon Mahalath, the name of some musical instrument, Maschil, [A Psalm] of David.

This is almost the same in every particular as the fourteenth psalm. That was probably composed on occasion of Absalom's rebellion, and this when Sheba attempted to revive it after his death. He complains of the prevailing degeneracy of the Israelites, which was all owing to the want of the fear of God, and a denial or forgetfulness of his providence.

1 **THE** fool hath said in his heart, [There is] no God. Corrupt are they and have done abominable iniquity : [there is] none that doeth good. 2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were [any] that did understand, that did seek God. 3 Every one of them is gone back : they are altogether become filthy ; [there is] none that doeth good, no, not one. 4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge ? who eat up my people, [as] they eat bread ; *by pursuing their own ambitious schemes, they bring distress and calamities upon the nation ; and contending parties devour one another : they have not called upon God.* 5 There were they in great fear, [where] no fear was ; *conscious that they had a bad cause, they were terrified before David's forces came near them :* for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth [against] thee ; *destroyed their power, reduced their bodies to dry bones, that is, utterly consumed them :* thou hast put [them] to shame, because God hath despised them ; *O my soul, thou hast had success because God despised them, and dealt with them as contemptible persons.* 6 O that the salvation of Israel [were come] out of Zion ! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, *and delivers them from their present deluded state, in which they are enslaved by their own ambition and obstinacy,* Jacob shall rejoice, [and] Israel shall be glad.

PSALM LIV.

To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil, [A Psalm] of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us? They discovered to Saul where David had concealed himself, 1 Sam. xxiii. 19.

1 **SAVE** me, O God, by thy name, *thy own immediate power*, and judge me by thy strength; *vindicate my cause by my strength, which alone can easily free me from the assaults of my enemies.* 2 Hear my prayer, O God, *which is all that I have to oppose to them*; give ear to the words of my mouth. 3 For strangers, the Ziphims, who indeed are Israelites by name, but have behaved like heathens, are risen up against me, and oppressors, Saul and his courtiers, seek after my soul: they have not set God before them, and only study to gratify their ambition or revenge. Selah. 4 Behold, God [is] mine helper, *my principal helper*: the LORD [is] with them that uphold my soul; *without him all my friends and helpers are nothing, and would not be able to defend me.* 5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies; *inflict deserved punishment upon them*: cut them off in thy truth; *according to the declaration of thy law against persons of such a character, and thy faithful promises of my preservation,* 6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee; *liberally offer large sacrifices, with a cheerful mind*: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for [it is] good; *pleasing to thee, and delightful to me.* 7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble*: and mine eye hath seen [his desire] upon mine enemies; or, 'mine eye hath looked upon mine enemy,' *seen them just laying hold upon me, and then unexpectedly departing*; so that I have had a most critical and extraordinary deliverance.

REFLECTIONS ON PSALMS LIII, LIV.

1. FROM the fifty-third psalm we are taught seriously to lay to heart, and deeply to lament, the degeneracy of mankind in general,

* When Saul was just seizing David, and there was no opportunity of his escaping, word was brought him that the Philistines had invaded Israel, so that Saul was obliged to go immediately against them, and David escaped, 1 Sam. xxiii. 27. 28.

and especially of our countrymen and neighbours. The apostle Paul, in the third chapter of Romans, showing that all flesh had corrupted their way, quotes some passages of this psalm, to prove that this was the state of the Jews, God's own people. It is to be feared, that this is the character of the generality of men in every age; and it becomes us to lament it, out of regard to the honour of God, and a concern for the happiness of our fellow-creatures; and earnestly to pray that the captivity of wicked men, their captivity to Satan and their own lusts, may be brought back, and they restored to wisdom and liberty, to virtue and happiness.

2. We learn from both these psalms, the necessity of maintaining a deep sense of God upon our minds. This is a lesson which the scripture often inculcates; and it is the most useful lesson in the world. The degeneracy of Israel, and of mankind in general, is owing to this, *They seek not God, they call not upon his name.* The Ziphites, (Saul and his party,) rose up against David, because they did not set God before them. May we be careful to set him before us; this will keep us from injuring men, and from every other iniquity. No good can be expected from those that set not God before their eyes.

3. When God has delivered us from enemies and dangers, or distress of any kind, we should be free in our thanksgivings and praises. When God had turned back Saul, David declares he would praise God, and freely sacrifice to him. In order to this we should cultivate a grateful spirit, and abound in the good work of praising his name. Our sacrifices are those of praise; these we should freely offer, with the greatest pleasure, and all the life and ardour we are capable of; *for God loveth a cheerful giver, and with such sacrifices he is well pleased.*

PSALM LV.

To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil, [A Psalm] of David.

Written on occasion of Absalom's rebellion, and Ahithophel's going over to him.

1 **G**IVE ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication. 2 Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; 3 Because of the voice of the

enemy, *my own son, who hath rebelled against me*, because of the oppression of the wicked : for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me ; *they charge me with tyranny and bad administration, and rage against me in the most violent manner.*

4 My heart is sore pained within me : and the terrors of death are fallen upon me, *a dread of falling into their hands, and being put to death by them.*

5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me, *because the conspiracy is so sudden, and so universal.*

6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove ! [for then] would I fly away, and be at rest.

7 Lo, [then] would I wander far off, [and] remain in the wilderness. Selah.

8 I would hasten my escape from the windy storm [and] tempest ; *from their noise and fury, which threatens like a storm to bear down all before it.*

9 Destroy, O LORD, [and] divide their tongues, *their counsels, and so they will perplex one another, (which was remarkably the case, see 2 Sam. xvi. 7.),* for I have seen violence and strife in the city.

10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof : mischief also and sorrow [are] in the midst of it ; *those whose business it is to watch the walls, are continually picking quarrels with their fellow-subjects, and introduce violence and strife.*

11 Wickedness [is] practised in the midst thereof : deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

12 For [it was] not an enemy [that] reproached me ; *if it had been a known enemy that had aspersed my administration and disturbed my peace,* then I could have borne [it] more contentedly, as expecting nothing else from such a one ; neither [was it] he that openly hated me [that] did magnify [himself] against me, *and built his fortune on my ruin ;* then I would have hid myself from him, *and secured myself against him.*

13 But [it was] thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance ; *my intimate friend, whom I trusted, and to whom I freely communicated my secrets.*

14 We took sweet counsel together, *his company sweetened retirement ; when I had that, I wanted none else ;* and we walked unto the house of God in company ; *I took him to be a good man, and thought we were bound in the bond of religion as well as friendship.*

15 Let death seize upon them, [and] let them go down quick into hell, *that is, into the grave, like Korah, (Numb. xvi. 30.),* for wickedness [is] in their dwellings, [and] among them ; *they pretend a public spirit, friendship, and religion, to compass their wicked designs.*

16 As for me, *I will not injure others, even for self-preservation, but* I will call upon God ; and the LORD shall save me.

17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray,

and cry aloud : and he shall hear my voice. 18 He hath *often* delivered my soul in peace from the battle [that was] against me, *and he will deliver me from this present rebellion* : for there were many with me, *though many are against me*. 19 God shall hear *their reproaches, and my prayers, and will afflict them, even he that abideth of old ; that sitteth King for ever, and is always ready to hear and help his people*. Selah. Because they have no changes, *no crosses, nor disappointments*, therefore they fear not God, *and persist in rebellion against his anointed*. 20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him ; *alluding to the treachery of Ahithophel ; as if he had said, I have done him no injury, but was at peace with him* : he hath broken his covenant, *all those obligations by which he was engaged to me both as his king and friend*. 21 [The words] of his mouth were smoother than butter, *soft and insinuating* ; but war [was] in his heart : his words were softer than oil, yet [were] they *like drawn swords, designed to inflict a mortal wound*. Yet, O my soul, think no more of this ; but 22 Cast thy burden, *all thy cares and fears*, upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee : he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved, *that is, to be overthrown ; labour to secure that character, and thou art safe*. 23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction ; *into the grave, where their bodies shall be consumed and destroyed* : bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days, *half the time they might have expected in the course of nature, but they shall perish in the flower of their age ; as Absalom, Ahithophel, and many others did* : but I will trust in thee, *that I shall finish my days in prosperity and peace*.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us not wonder if we, like David when in this distress, should find that the world is troublesome, and our friends unfaithful. The rebellion raised against him, and the misery of his kingdom, afflicted him ; but nothing touched him so nearly as the infidelity and unkindness of his intimate friend. See in this, another instance of the vanity of the world, of grandeur, and of friendship ! How soon we may be driven from our habitations by violence or fraud, have iniquity cast upon us that we did not deserve, and be deceived in the characters of those who profess religion, and boast of their friendship ! Let us not be *high-minded, but fear*. We likewise may have occasion to wish for the wings of a

dove, *that we may fly away and be at rest* ; to get out of the noise and hurry of the world, the alarms of war, the voice of strife, and the slanders of enemies. Such scenes as these should wean our hearts from present things, and engage us to secure a portion in that rest which remains for the people of God.

2. We should be jealous over ourselves, lest prosperity lead us to forgetfulness of God. A sad but a common character is that in *v. 19.*, *because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God* ; because their schemes prosper, they think they are in the right ; and because the means answer, imagine they are justifiable. Prosperity and success are dangerous temptations ; and it will be our wisdom to guard our hearts against the snare. Let us then *not trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God*, and in every circumstance of life fear him.

3. Whatever are our circumstances, we should be constant and serious in our devotions. It was an excellent resolution of David, *as for me, whatever they attempt or hope for, in all my distresses and fears, I will call upon God*. Let us keep near to God, pray to him evening, morning, and at noon. Whatever burdens our minds, let us *cast it upon the Lord*, by faith and prayer, trusting his providence and his promise. This will support the mind. When enemies attack, God will save us ; when friends desert us, he will prove faithful. Whatever troubles may surround us, we shall find peace and joy in secret retirement and converse with God ; a peace which nothing can interrupt, and a joy that will last and be increasing for ever.

PSALM LVI.

To the chief musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, (which was probably the beginning of some ode, to the tune of which this was set,) Michtam, or, a golden psalm, of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath ; when they had a mind to seize upon him, after he put himself into their hands, as a dangerous person, 1 Sam. xxi. 11.

1 **B**E merciful unto me, O God : for man, *Saul and his courtiers*, would swallow me up, *devour me like a lion* ; he fighting daily oppresseth me ; *I am no sooner fled from one cruel enemy, than I*

am fallen into the hands of another. 2 Mine enemies would daily swallow [me] up : for [they be] many that fight against me, O thou most High ; *thy almighty power is alone able to deliver me from the malice and the multitude of my foes.* 3 What time I am afraid, or have most cause to be afraid, I will trust in thee for help. 4 In God, *by his assistance,* I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust ; *I doubt not but I shall soon have reason to adore thy faithfulness to thy promise ; in that promise I trust ; and I will not fear what flesh, what weak, mortal man, can do unto me to hinder the fulfilling of it.* 5 Every day they wrest my words ; *make them speak a language I never intended :* all their thoughts [are] against me for evil ; *they are constantly employed in contriving some mischief against me.* 6 They gather themselves together, *to hold frequent consultations,* they hide themselves, *to watch me narrowly, and discern me off my guard,* they mark my steps, *like thieves or assassins,* when they wait for my soul, *to take away my life.* 7 Shall they escape by iniquity ? *by such subtle, mischievous practices ?* in [thine] anger cast down the people, O God ; *this insolent, barbarous people, who seek my destruction.* 8 Thou tellest and rememberest my wanderings, *my motions from place to place ;* put thou my tears into thy bottle ; *suffer them not to fall to the ground unnoticed and forgotten* :* [are they] not in thy book ? *dost thou not keep an exact register of all the tears I shed in these circumstances, or, on this occasion ?* 9 When I cry [unto thee,] then shall mine enemies turn back ; *I need no other weapon but prayer, and on that I place my dependance ;* this I know ; for God [is] for me, or, with me, *to plead my cause and deliver me.* 10 In God, *that is, by his assistance,* will I praise [his] word : in the LORD, *the unchangeable, faithful Jehovah,* will I praise [his] word ; *he supporting my faith, and enlarging my heart.* 11 In God have I put my trust : I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. 12 Thy vows [are] upon me, O God ; *my vows to thee, of which thou art a party and a witness :* I will render praises unto thee, *by a faithful performance of them.* 13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death ; *from the great danger I was in at Gath ;* [wilt] not [thou deliver] my feet from falling ? *may I not hope that thou wilt keep me from falling into sin, or by the snares my enemies lay for me, and that I may walk before God in the light of the living ? walk before thee, live in thy fear, and spend the residue of my days in thy service ?*

* The Romans had little urns or vessels, into which they let those tears run which they shed for their friends, and buried them with their ashes.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE learn from the example of the psalmist, whatever fears may oppress us, to trust in God. Though we may not be in his deplorable circumstances, hunted by enemies from place to place, yet we are liable to many evils and dangers that may occasion distressing fears. Let us therefore *make the Lord our refuge*, as the most high and faithful God; then we need not fear *what flesh can do unto us*; for God has all the power of man under his control. This trust in God will be an anchor to the soul, firm and steadfast; and enable it to ride out a thousand storms. The apostle Paul, in Heb. xiii. 6., puts this resolution of David into the mouth of every christian, and teaches us to argue from the promise of God, and to say boldly, *The Lord is my helper, I will not fear.*

2. We need God's assistance to enable us to trust in him, and to praise him. Do we resolve to perform these duties? let us remember that it is in God alone, that is, by his assistance, that they can be performed. We know not how to govern our affections and order our speech without him; his Spirit helps our infirmities; assists us to depend on his promise, and to believe his faithfulness; and keeps us from despairing and fainting in the day of adversity. Let this engage us daily to pray for his Spirit to help us in every time of need.

3. It is a comfortable thought, that all our distresses and sorrows are known to God. He observes what difficulties we have to struggle with, and where we are forced to wander; our tears are put into his bottle, and registered in his book; he observes them with compassion and tender concern; he remembers and reviews them. They will have a sad reckoning who persecute and injure God's people; who cause them to wander, and make them weep. *When he makes inquisition for the blood of his saints*, and reckons up the number of their tears, he will dreadfully punish their oppressors.

4. Let us charge our souls with a sense of our deliverances and our vows. Has God delivered our souls from eternal death, and our lives from the grave? and have not such deliverances excited engagements and vows to be his? Let us gratefully remember his delivering goodness, and give glory to him, who keepeth the feet of his saints. Let us remember our resolutions and vows under

afflictions, and after deliverances. And let us praise him and walk before him : live near to him, and faithfully discharge our duty. The remembrance of his past goodness should encourage our hope, that he will yet deliver our feet from falling, amidst the dangerous ways in which we are walking ; the many stumbling-blocks and snares that lie in them, and all our own ignorance and weakness. In him let us trust that he will still deliver ; yea, trust, with the apostle, that he will *deliver us from every evil work, and preserve us to his heavenly kingdom.*

PSALM LVII.

To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

Saul and his soldiers pursuing David, he and his attendants hid themselves in a cave ; Saul coming in there to sleep, and not seeing David, he had an opportunity to destroy him, as his servants advised him to do ; but he bravely and piously declined it. To this some suppose that Al-taschith, destroy not, refers. See 1 Sam. xxii. 1., and ch. xxiv.

1 **BE** merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me : for my soul trusteth in thee : yea, in the shadow of thy wings, *thy protecting care*, will I make my refuge until [these] calamities, *by which I am in danger of being destroyed*, be overpast. 2 I will cry unto God most high ; unto God that performeth [all things] for me ; *I will commit myself by prayer to God, whose providence I will own in all events, who will fulfil what he has promised, and, perfect what he has begun. Sooner than I shall be destroyed* 3 He shall send from heaven, and save me *from Saul and his hosts*, [from] the reproach of him that would swallow me up ; or, *he will put him to shame that would swallow me up.* Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth ; *manifest his goodness, by preserving me according to his promise.* 4 My soul [is] among lions, *fierce and bloody men* : [and] I lie [even among] them that are set on fire, *who are full of rage and revenge*, [even] the sons of men, whose teeth [are] spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword ; *who utter every false and spiteful speech, to sink my credit, and expose me to ruin.* 5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, *in my vindication, and in their confusion* ; [let] thy glory, *in my deliverance*, [be] above all the earth ; *be spread through*

the whole world. 6 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down, *almost overwhelmed*: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen [themselves;] *they are fallen into the same danger they designed for me; referring to the power David had over Saul when he found him sleeping in the cave.* Selah. 7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; *firmly resolved and in a proper frame for the work*: I will sing and give praise. 8 Awake up *my tongue, which is my glory*: awake, psaltery and harp: I [myself] will awake early to *this delightful work; I will not be content with private acknowledgments, but* 9 I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people; *among the greatest assemblies in this nation, yea, I will sing unto thee among the nations; when I come among the heathen I will not be ashamed of my religion, but, on all proper occasions, utter thy praises, and confess that the God of Israel is my only confidence.* 10 For thy mercy [is] great unto the heavens, *beyond all expression or conception, and thy truth unto the clouds, greatly beyond our full discovery.* 11 Be thou exalted, O God, *in this mercy and truth, above the heavens: [let] thy glory [be] above, or spread over, all the earth.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us keep in mind that important truth, that *God performeth all things for us.* The various events of our lives are under his direction, whether they are prosperous or afflictive: whatever is the immediate cause or instrument of these things, it is good to look higher and acknowledge God's hand in all; particularly let us remember, that he will perform his promises, and secure his servants until every calamity be overpast.

2. With fixed hearts and a holy courage, let us acknowledge his mercy and goodness. It is fit we should do it with fixed hearts, with serious attention, with close application of mind and suitable affections. This is necessary to render it pleasing to God. It is fit we should do it with courage, because it is unfashionable to speak of the goodness and truth of God; and we may find some ready to reproach us for so worthy and commendable a practice. But we should stir up ourselves, and strengthen our resolutions to praise God; and speak of his glory, his goodness and faithfulness to us. Whatever reproach may fall upon us for this, it should still be our prayer that *God may be exalted*, and though we suffer contempt, that his glory may be spread, known, and adored through the whole earth.

PSALM LVIII.

To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David.

This Psalm was composed when David was declared at Saul's council-board to be a traitor, and was outlawed. He prophesies of the sudden punishment which should overtake those wicked counsellors, and begins with expostulating with them.

1 **DO** ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation of counsellors and judges, in the sentence you have pronounced against me? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men? *I appeal to your own consciences whether you can believe the reports which have been raised of me, and can imagine that your late conduct has been according to the rules of justice. No, the contrary is most apparent.*
 2 *Yea, in heart you work wickedness, or mischief against me; you weigh the violence of your hands in the earth; you use caution and craft, and under the appearance of justice and holding a fair balance, you pronounced an unrighteous sentence: your complaisance to the king, and malignity against me, have influenced you to act thus.*
 3 *The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies; surely these wretches must have been born with malignity in their hearts, and have been bred up in falsehood and cruelty, or they never could have arrived to such a shameful degree of them.*
 4 *Their poison [is] like the poison of a serpent; their lies are of a venomous and fatal nature; [they are] like the deaf adder [that] stoppeth her ear;*
 5 *Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely*;* *the meaning is, they will not believe the remonstrances I make in my own vindication, though there is such evident truth and reason in them.*
 6 *Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD; or rather, God will destroy the power of these enemies, who in their fierce and cruel temper resemble lions.*
 7 *Let them melt away as waters [which] run continually; some of them shall be*

* Here is an allusion to a custom among the easterns of charming serpents. There are persons who have the art of making certain noises, and playing certain tunes, which will bring serpents out of their holes, make them discharge their poison, and become tame and gentle. Such accounts have been given by very credible witnesses; but there are some serpents that will not be thus wrought upon, and may figuratively be said to stop their ears.

destroyed gradually and insensibly, like water that evaporates by the heat of the sun: [when] he bendeth [his bow to shoot] his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces; let their attempts do no more mischief than an arrow which is broken in discharging it. 8 As a snail [which] melteth, *which consumes itself by its own motion, let [every one of them] pass away: [like] the untimely birth of a woman, [that] they may not see the sun; let their projects against me be like an untimely birth that never comes to perfection.* 9 Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in [his] wrath; *some shall be destroyed suddenly, be carried away as with a whirlwind, violently and irresistibly, and while in the greatest prosperity.* 10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, *shall be victorious, and trample upon them* *. 11 So that a man shall say, *even the meanest of the people shall be compelled to acknowledge, that Verily [there is] a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth. There is a beautiful contrast between the first verse and this: they were unjust judges, but God is a righteous judge, who will reward or punish according to men's deserts.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. How lamentable is the case of those who will not hearken to kind and friendly admonitions. In all ages there have been some of these *deaf adders*, of those who have *stopped their ears*; that could not be charmed with the incomparable wisdom of the prophets and apostles, yea, of Christ himself, though *never man spake like him*. Let not ministers and parents wonder if they meet with such instances; if they have under their care some minds that no reason will work upon, no kindness mollify, no friendship bring to a better temper; for what are we better than our fathers? While we lament this as the case of others, we should be careful that it is not our own; and thankfully receive reproof and instruction, and show ourselves wise by attending to and improving them.

2. Let the wicked, especially unjust, slanderous, and mischievous men, be warned by the judgments of God. He sometimes surprises such men with unexpected and terrible judg-

* Here is an allusion to a person returning triumphant after a battle, and wetting his feet in the blood of his enemies as he walks over the field of battle.

ments; hurries them away with his whirlwind when they are green, and in the greatest prosperity; and there is no resisting his power. Sometimes he destroys them gradually, and all their glory departs; at least their peace is gone, and they become a prey to those very turbulent passions, which led them to treat others unjustly and cruelly. Indeed such persons need no worse torment than their own bitter, ill-natured disposition, without any extraordinary punishment from God.

3. Let no present disorders in the world about us shake our faith in a universal providence and a universal judgment. We may see as it were David outlawed, and Saul and his counsellors triumphant; the righteous oppressed, and the wicked prospering. We may see the seat of judgment, that iniquity is there, and hear the cries of the oppressed, without seeing that they have any helper. But the judgments of God against cruel oppressors, and his interpositions for the righteous, are sometimes so plain and evident, that those who before denied or doubted a providence, cannot but own it; and when this is not the case, we may rest assured upon the highest authority, that *there is a God that judgeth in the earth*; that there is a day coming, when all causes shall be re-judged, and when there shall be *a reward for the righteous*, an ample, everlasting reward, whatever they may lose or suffer here. To the supreme Judge let us refer all those events which seem mysterious to us, and be solicitous to secure his favour, from whom our own judgment, and the judgment of every man, is finally to proceed.

PSALM LIX.

To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him, 1 Sam. xix. 11.

David might compose this Psalm while he knew his house was beset, and was waiting for intelligence when it was proper to retire. In this view it shews the admirable composure of his temper, and is a fine example of faith and devotion.

1 **DELIVER** me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. 2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men; *from those*

whom nothing but my blood will satisfy. 3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; *men of great power and interest at court have formed a confederacy against me; but I can appeal to thee that it is not [for] my transgression, nor [for] my sin, O LORD.* 4 They run and prepare themselves without [my] fault; *they take a great deal of pains to execute their designs: awake to help me, and behold.* 5 Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: *a people who are as bad as heathens in their conduct: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors; obstinate, malicious persecutors and sinners.* Selah. 6 They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city; *after I have escaped Saul's fury in the day, they return at evening, like a dog snarling and threatening, and watching every where that I may not escape.* 7 Behold they belch out with their mouth: swords [are] in their lips; *they utter slanders and threats: for who, [say they,] doth hear? or, if any do hear, who shall call us to account, as we have Saul's warrant.* 8 But thou, O LORD, *who seest and hearest, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision; shall disappoint them, and make them ridiculous.* 9 [Because of] his strength, *the strength of Saul and my other enemies, will I wait upon thee: for God [is] my defence.* 10 The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see [my desire] upon mine enemies; *he who hath already shown himself the God of my mercies, shall surround me, and let me see their designs defeated.* 11 Slay them not, *let their punishment be gradual, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O LORD, our shield; let them first be exposed, then scattered and reduced to distress, that being by thy repeated judgments made spectacles of thy displeasure, others may learn useful instruction from it.* 12 [For] the sin of their mouth [and] the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride; *let them be punished for their insolent and injurious speeches: and for cursing and lying [which] they speak; especially for their perjury and falsehood.* 13 Consume [them] in wrath, consume [them] gradually, that they [may] not [be] found: and let them know by experience that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth; *that thou art the righteous governor of the world.* Selah. 14 And at evening let them return; [and] let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city; *what they did voluntarily to compass my ruin, ver. 6., let them now be constrained to do for their own subsistence.* 15 Let them wander up and down for meat,

and grudge if they be not satisfied; *or, as the margin reads it, Let them stay all night and not be satisfied; let them find it as difficult to get a lodging as food**. 16 But, though they would take me and put me to death, I will sing of thy protecting power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast hitherto been, and wilt still be, my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. 17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God [is] my defence, [and] the God of my mercy.

REFLECTIONS.

1. How happy will innocence and devotion make a good man in the greatest extremity! What composure of spirit does David here show, when in the greatest distress! His house was beset with formidable enemies, and none durst take his part; yet with how much satisfaction does he appeal to God, that it was not for his transgression, nor for his sin; that he was without fault as to the things laid to his charge. Innocence will not secure a man from slander and mischievous attempts; but it will support him under them, and give him confidence in his appeals and prayers to God. Let us learn from David to cast our heaviest burdens upon God, and be watchful that our intercourse with him be not interrupted, nor our hope in him shaken, by any distresses, enemies or fears.

2. We are taught the wise design of God's awful judgments upon sinners: to convince them, and all who see or hear of their calamities, that *God reigneth to the ends of the earth*; gives laws to his creatures, knows their thoughts, observes their conduct, and can control them be they ever so mighty. It is in wisdom and goodness that his judgments upon them are slow, and that they consume and destroy gradually. Hasty executions would soon be forgotten; but when they carry the marks of divine displeasure upon them a long time, it tends to awaken others, and preserve them from those sins, which are the cause of those awful judgments. *The Lord is known by the judgments that he executeth.*

3. We should present our morning praises to God for the repose and security of the night. When we think of the distress-

* I rather think these two verses are a further description of their rage against David. Let them go on in their wicked designs against me, and wander up and down, not for meat, but to devour me; let them stay all night; neither cold nor darkness will hinder them from pursuing their designs against me.

ing circumstances which David was in; his house beset with enemies, who were employed and encouraged by the king; who thirsted for his blood, and did not scruple to commit acts of injustice or perfidy to destroy him; it should make us thankful that God preserves us by night and by day; that he delivers us from wicked and unreasonable men; and that we lie down, and none make us afraid. His mercies are new every morning; every morning therefore let us *sing aloud of his mercy.*

4. Let us habitually regard the blessed God as *our shield, and defence, and the God of our mercies.* He has been our refuge in trouble; delivered us in many dangers which we perceived, and many which we were not aware of. He is *the God of our mercies,* the author of all the good we possess; and is disposed and able to make us easy and happy. To him therefore let our eyes be directed; and because of his strength let us wait continually upon him; for *the Lord God is a sun and shield; a light and a defence; he will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them who walk uprightly.*

 PSALM LX.

To the chief musician upon Shushan-eduth*, Michtam of David, to teach some remarkable matter to the church and people of God; when he strove with Aram-naharaim, the Syrians of Mesopotamia, and with Aram-zobah, the Syrians of Zobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of Salt twelve thousand. See 2 Sam. viii. 3. 1 Chron. xviii. 3, 12.

1 **O** GOD, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeas'd; *especially when the army of Israel was defeated by the Philistines, at the time of Saul's death;* O turn thyself to us again. 2 Thou hast made the earth, or land, to tremble; thou hast broken it; *thrown it into great confusion, by foreign invasions and civil dissensions:* heal the breaches thereof; *the divisions in the kingdom;* for it shaketh, *some being attached to the house of Saul, and others to David.* 3 Thou hast showed thy people hard things; *caused them to undergo grievous and painful trials:* thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment;

* Whether this was a instrument or a tune the learned are not agreed.

filled us with horror, so that we have madly destroyed one another : but now, 4 Thou hast given a banner to them that feared thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth; *thou hast united the kingdom under my administration, and they are animated as one man to come to my standard.* Selah. 5 That thy beloved people may be delivered *from the oppression of their neighbours; save [with] thy right hand, and hear me; make me an instrument in their salvation.* 6 God hath spoken in, *promised and sworn by, his holiness to settle the kingdom upon me and my seed; and thereupon I will rejoice, in assurance of the accomplishment of his promises; I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth; that part of the land which belonged to those who adhered first to the house of Saul, and set proper officers and governors over it.* 7 Gilead [is] mine, and Manasseh [is] mine, *though for some time they were under Ishbosheth; Ephraim also [is] the strength of mine head, will supply me with brave troops; Judah [is] my lawgiver, will furnish me with able counsellors and judges.* 8 Moab [is] my wash pot; *I shall completely conquer the Moabites, and use them in the meanest offices; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; I will walk over the Edomites and tread them down: Philistia, triumph thou because of me; or rather, triumph over me if thou canst, as thou didst over Saul and his army: see what thy triumphs are come to now.* 9 Who will bring me [into] the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? *When I consider the power of my enemies, I may well say, though I have already vanquished them in the field, how shall I take their strong cities?* 10 Wilt not thou, O God, [which] hadst cast us off? and [thou] O God, [which] didst not go out with our armies, *but now hast graciously begun to return to us and show us mercy again?* 11 Give us help from trouble, *especially that which the Syrians occasion: for vain [is] the help of man, without thine assistance.* 12 Through God we shall do valiantly; *or, considered as an exhortation to his soldiers, Through God let us do valiantly: for he [it is that] shall tread down our enemies, and give us a complete victory.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us learn from David to make serious and careful observations on the providence of God. He recollected what they and their fathers had suffered, and the present happy alteration in their circumstances. It is good to reflect upon the dealings of God with us and our fathers; the sufferings and disappointments

of the nation; that we may be humbled at the remembrance of them, and rejoice with trembling in the greatest prosperity. Let us acknowledge every kind appearance of Providence for us, that, by comparing it with former discouragements, we may be cheerful and thankful. If God has made a favourable change in any of our private affairs, we should remember our crosses; that our gratitude may be more lively, and that we may not presume.

2. Let our faith humbly plead the promises of God. Hath he *spoken* to his people and servants *in his holiness*? Let them rejoice, in the assurance that he will be faithful to his engagements. Are we become the children of God, and have we an interest in Christ? we may then assuredly say, Pardon is mine, and peace is mine; over this and the other spiritual enemy will I triumph; and shall soon possess the good land which he hath promised. But,

3. We should nevertheless, *go forth in the strength of the Lord*, and guard against pride and vain confidence. Let us wait upon him by faith and prayer, to give us strength and courage for our christian work and warfare; remembering our own weakness, and the insufficiency of every creature; therefore pray, that God would *give us help from trouble*. Whatever be our strength, courage, and resolution, it is he that must *tread down our enemies*; and if we *take to ourselves the whole armour of God*, and maintain an humble, believing dependance upon him, *he will bruise Satan under our feet shortly*, and *we shall be more than conquerors through Him who hath loved us*.

PSALM LXI.

To the chief musician upon Neginah, [A Psalm] of David.

Probably composed when he fled from Absalom's rebellion.

1 **H**EAR my cry, O God, *in my great extremity*; attend unto my prayer. 2 From the end of the earth, *or land, that is, the country beyond Jordan*, will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed *with grief and fears*: lead me to the rock [that is] higher than I; *a place of defence which I am not able to obtain without thee, and where my enemy will not be able to reach me*. 3 For thou hast, *in several former instances*, been a shelter for me, [and] a strong tower from the enemy, *especially from Saul*. In

full confidence that I shall be restored, and have liberty to attend there, I resolve that 4 *I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever, that I may serve and enjoy God all my days: I will trust in the covert of thy wings**; *in thy almighty and comfortable protection. Selah.* 5 *For thou, O God, hast heard my vows; my prayers, mingled with promises: thou hast given [me] the heritage of those that fear thy name; when I consider what a train of wonderful deliverances and mercies have brought me to the throne, I am encouraged to hope I shall be continued there;* 7 *Thou wilt prolong the king's life: [and] his years as many generations; as if his life was but just beginning.* 7 *He, that is, his posterity, shall abide before God for ever; or it may refer to a future state; after a long, prosperous life on earth, he shall dwell for ever in thine heavenly presence: O prepare, or send forth, thy mercy and truth, [which] may preserve him; let thy goodness and faithfulness appear in my preservation, which will be a firmer security than all my guards and armies.* 8 *So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows, which I promised in my trouble.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. **WHAT** a great comfort is it to a good man, that wherever he is driven, or however he is afflicted, he can cry unto God. Though he is banished to a wilderness, to the ends of the earth, still a way is open to the throne of grace; and when troubles surround him, and his heart is overwhelmed, God is near to hear his prayer, and will afford him help. Let this teach us to make prayer our refuge in times of affliction; and as afflictions increase, our prayers should be more frequent and earnest; and let this thought animate and encourage us, that *God has been a shelter to us hitherto.*

2. Let a serious remembrance that God hears our vows, engage us to perform them. We are all under vows to God; every prayer in which we join, is in effect a solemn promise and vow. Many of us are under engagements peculiarly strong to be his servants; may we remember, as the psalmist expresses it, *daily to perform them.* Religion is to be the business of every day; and as God delivers us from our enemies and afflictions, and daily loads us with his benefits, we ought to be faithful to those engage-

* These were the workings of his soul during his wanderings; but, as this psalm was to be used in the tabernacle service, he goes on to celebrate God's goodness in his deliverance.

ments, of which God is a witness and a party; and *serve him in righteousness and holiness all the days of our life.*

3. Let it be our great ambition to partake of the heritage of those who fear God. David, amidst all his distresses, triumphs in this, that *God hath given him the heritage of those who fear his name.* Pious men have a heritage peculiar to themselves, in which the ungodly have no share; they have present comforts and hopes, and a sure title to *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them.* Their inheritance is more noble, honourable, satisfying, and enduring than the greatest inheritance on earth; we need nothing else to make us happy. Let this be our language, whatever I want, let me be ever so poor and mean, Lord, *give me the heritage of those who fear thy name,* and let me have my lot and portion among them. The clearer promises of the gospel encourage our hope of this blessedness; and may the Lord enlighten the eyes of our understandings, *that we may know what is the hope of our calling, and what the inheritance of the saints in light.*

PSALM LXII.

To the chief musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

This psalm contains neither prayers nor thanksgivings, but only professions of faith and confidence in God, and encouragements to others to trust in him. It was probably composed after the rebellion of Absalom was quashed.

1 **TRULY** my soul waiteth upon God; *looketh up to him for help, because from [him] cometh my salvation.* 2 He only [is] my rock and my salvation; he [is] my defence; *though I have powerful enemies, yet he is my rock; though I have many forces, yet my chief dependance is on him: therefore I shall not be greatly moved; I may be threatened, disturbed, and terrified for a while, but I shall not be dethroned or confounded.* 3 How long will ye imagine mischief against a man, *a single man, the Lord's anointed?* ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall [shall ye be,] *whose height hastens its ruin,* [and as] a tottering fence, *whose own weight overthrowes it.* 4 They only consult to cast [him] down from his excellency; *to deprive me of the dignity which God hath promised*

me: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, *fawn, flatter, and profess loyalty*, but they curse inwardly, *their hearts contrive mischief*. Selah. 5 My soul, wait thou only upon God, *trust to nothing else*; for my expectation [is] from him, *and from him alone*. 6 He only [is] my rock and my salvation: [he is] my defence; I shall not be moved; *they shall not prevail so far as even to disturb and perplex me*. 7 In God [is] my salvation and my glory; *he will support my dignity, and defend me from all their designs*: the rock of my strength, [and] my refuge, [is] in God. 8 Trust in him at all times, *especially in the most perilous seasons*; ye people, pour out your heart before him, *with sincere, fervent devotion*: God [is] a refuge for us. Selah. 9 Surely men of low degree [are] vanity, *inconstant and weak*, [and] men of high degree [are] a lie, *false, deceitful, and treacherous*; to be laid in the balance of *impartial reason, and tried by experience*, they [are] altogether [lighter] than vanity, *than the lightest trifle*. 10 Trust not in *wealth procured by oppression*, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase *by honest methods*, set not your heart [upon them,] *as if they could be fully satisfying*. *And a good reason follows*, 11 God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; *he hath spoken by his word and providence, and I have observed many instances of it*, that power [belongeth] unto God, *therefore he only is to be trusted in*. 12 Also unto thee, O LORD, [belongeth] mercy; *thou wilt therefore preserve and provide for them who trust in thee*: for thou renderest to every man *rewards or punishments* according to his work, *which is a great encouragement to commit my affairs to thee, and leave my cause with thee*.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET our souls learn to *wait only upon God*; that is, in the way of our duty, cheerfully refer ourselves and all our concerns to him, accommodate ourselves to his providence, and humbly and patiently wait his determinations, sensible that his time and way are best. This confidence in God should be habitual: in lesser as well as greater difficulties, we shall find it *good to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God*.

2. If we would have a well-grounded trust in God, we should *pour out our hearts before him*. This is an instructive description of prayer; it includes confessing our sins before him, offering up our desires to him, and making known every care and sorrow, every fear and every desire. No praying can be acceptable to God

which does not proceed from the heart; it will be in vain to pour forth many words unless the heart be also poured forth.

3. We are here taught the vanity of depending on the things or the men of the world. David's experience and advice reads us an excellent lesson of prudence; which if it is attended to, will save us from many disappointments and much sorrow. The world is the same now as it was in his day; the lower ranks of men are unstable and weak; the higher ranks are deceitful. Great men's promises are no more to be depended on than in former times. Let us learn to look unto God: with him is no vanity, variable-ness, or deceit. The things of the world are equally unsatisfying, and unable to make us happy. If riches are gained by fraud and oppression, they will end in the anguish and misery of the possessors; if they are ever so honestly gotten, and men *set their hearts upon them*, take complacency, and place confidence, in them as their portion and happiness, they will be deceived and ruined by them. May we therefore *not trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.*

4. We should often think of the natural and moral perfections of God, that our minds may be guarded against temptations, and comforted under sorrows. We have often heard this, and seen it verified, *that power belongeth to God*; that he is almighty; that all the power of creatures is his power; that he is able to prevent every evil we fear, and bestow every thing we want. *To him also belongeth mercy*; which is a further encouragement to trust in him; for he will reward our poor imperfect services, and be our glory and defence. When we are in danger of trusting in man or riches, and forgetting God, let us remember, that *he renders to every man according to his works*; and that in the day of final retribution, rich and prosperous sinners will be punished, and humble, patient, waiting saints, be abundantly rewarded. Therefore *turn thou to thy God, keep mercy and judgment; and wait on the Lord continually.*

PSALM LXIII.

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah ; perhaps driven thither by Absalom's rebellion.

This is a most noble and delightful psalm, full of lively and warm devotion. There is little in it that needs explanation ; would to God it were as easy to keep up David's affections in our hearts, as to understand his words.

1 **O** GOD, thou [art] my God ; early will I seek thee, *with great diligence and earnestness* : my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ; *my desire after thee is more urgent than my bodily appetite* ; 2 To see thy power and thy glory, so [as] I have seen thee in the sanctuary ; *my prevailing desire is to see the powerful and glorious evidence of thy presence and love, as I have enjoyed them in the sanctuary.* 3 Because thy loving kindness [is] better than life, *than all prosperity, or even the splendours of a court*, my lips shall praise thee, *for past favours, and that restoration which I hope thou wilt soon grant me.* 4 Thus will I bless thee while I live : I will lift up my hands in thy name ; *with such sentiments and affections, I will abound in prayer and praise while I live.* 5 My soul shall be satisfied as [with] marrow and fatness* ; and my mouth shall praise [thee] with joyful lips : 6 When I remember thee upon my bed, [and] meditate on thee in the [night] watches ; *I shall have greater satisfaction than any worldly delights can afford, while I meditate on thy perfections, especially thy goodness, in the watches of the night ; which will in some measure supply the want of ordinances.* 7 Because thou hast been my help *in former exigencies*, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice, *in thy powerful and kind protection, for the future.* *Though thou seemest to cast me off, yet* 8 My soul followeth hard after thee ; *is greatly desirous of thy presence, and of communion with thee, and my thoughts are still running after thee* : thy right hand upholdeth me *in these desires and resolutions, and it will still defend me.* 9 But those [that] seek my soul to destroy [it,] shall go into the lower parts of the earth ; *to the*

* This is used in scripture and ancient writings to express the greatest dainties ; so in Homer, a person says of her son, ' He had been fed with marrow, and the fat of sheep.'

state of the dead. 10 They shall fall by the sword, *that is, in battle; their dead carcasses shall lie unburied, and they shall be a portion for foxes and other wild beasts.* 11 But the king shall rejoice in God *for my deliverance; every one that sweareth by him all my loyal subjects, who swear allegiance to me, and keep their oath, shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies, that reproach my government and slander my character, shall be stopped.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE should learn to cultivate that love to public ordinances, which David so affectionately expresses. How strongly does he point it out, even by the most eager and urgent natural appetites. He desired to be restored, not to enjoy the honours and pleasures of his court, but to frequent the house of God. And why did he desire that? not for what was to be seen, or the music to be heard there, or to have his curiosity gratified, but to enjoy the presence of God and know more of his perfections; to engage in his worship and taste his love. Let us bless God that we are not driven from his house; that ours is not a thirsty land, where there is no water for the body, nor any refreshment for the soul. We should value ordinances, because they bring us near to God; and it should be our desire and ambition in attending upon them, *to see God's power and glory in his sanctuary.* If his loving-kindness is better than life, then worshipping and serving him must be a nobler employment and entertainment than the business and pleasures of the world, or any of the delights of sense.

2. When we are detained from the house of God, and in the intervals of our solemn assemblies, we see what our thoughts and tempers should be. If providence confines us from God's house, let us be desirous of having the same communion with him in our dwellings as in the congregation; to have our hearts fixed upon him, and to enjoy his love. In the night season, our meditation should be of him; this will add refreshment to our beds, when we are weary, pained, or perplexed. Let us praise him while we live, in every circumstance and condition; and we shall find the pleasure of it to be infinitely superior to what affects the body, or what this world can possibly afford. Again,

3. It should be ascribed to divine assistance and support, if we find ourselves thus disposed. Amidst our afflictions and cares, let *our souls follow hard after God;* and let nothing divert us from the pursuit. If we experience any degree of these devout regards to

God, we should remember, that it is to him we are indebted for them. His right hand upholds us, and strengthens us for this delightful employment; he strengthens us for the pursuit, and keeps alive and warm our good affections and desires; otherwise, we should forget God, become weary in well-doing, and lose our happiness. May we all imbibe more of David's temper! then shall we find heaven begun on earth, and some foretaste of that pleasure with which we shall join in the services of God's temple above.

PSALM LXIV.

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David.

Occasioned by his persecution from the slander of Saul's courtiers.

1 **H**EAR my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy; *that is, from the enemy I fear, and all the uneasiness which fear occasions.* 2 Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity; *from all their secret plots and open attempts:* 3 Who whet their tongue like a sword, *are ready upon all occasions to wound my reputation,* [and] bend [their bows to shoot] their arrows, [even] bitter words: 4 That they may shoot in secret at the perfect; *at me, who am perfectly clear of all they charge me with:* suddenly, *at the very first opportunity,* do they shoot at him, and fear not; *they vent their slanders, and spread them abroad without fear either of God or man:* 5 They encourage themselves [in] an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them? *they contrive together how to lay their snares, and imagine I shall never be able to discover them:* 6 They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search; *take a great deal of pains to discover iniquity in me;* both the inward [thought] of every one [of them,] and the heart, [is] deep; *that is, they endeavour to find out, or pretend to discover, a man's secret thoughts, and to penetrate into the very heart which lies out of their reach.* 7 But, *while they are shooting their arrows,* God shall shoot at them [with] an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded; *he shall give them a sudden, deep, and mortal wound.* 8 So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves; *God shall so*

confound them, that their plots shall be their own ruin : all that see them shall take notice of God's hand, and shall flee away, lest they share in their ruin. 9 And all men shall fear such a conduct, and shall declare the work of God ; that it was by him they were destroyed, and not by chance ; for they shall wisely consider of his doing ; how his word was fulfilled, and the cause of the upright pleaded. 10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, for his goodness manifested to me, and shall trust in him, and not be afraid in the way of duty ; and all the upright in heart shall glory, or boast of this, as an appearance of God for them as well as for me.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us abhor and avoid that malignant, slanderous, suspicious temper, which was found in David's enemies. A great deal of this hellish disposition, is still in the world ; there are men, who *whet their tongues and shoot out bitter words*, to wound the reputation of others, either by raising, or adding to, ill reports ; and if they can find nothing in a person's conduct that is exceptionable, they will *search out iniquity*, arraign even his very thoughts. This detestable conduct is highly provoking to God ; who can make the tongue of slanderers, revilers, and evil-speakers, *fall upon themselves* ; or shoot his arrows at those who destroy the credit of others ; and his arrows always hit the mark, pierce deep, and fill the soul with exquisite anguish ; for *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

2. We should habituate ourselves to search out and consider the works of God with diligence. *His works are honourable and glorious, sought out of all those that take pleasure therein* ; and none are more remarkable than his vindicating the innocent, supporting and comforting the injured, and bringing distress, infamy, and ruin on malignant spirits. If we seriously consider such things, it will preserve us from speaking evil of others ; it will make us calm and easy under censures and slanders, and engage us boldly to proceed in the way of duty, in full dependance on divine protection and care. Those who will wisely consider God's doings, will profit by them ; and it is their duty to declare God's works, for his glory and the edification and warning of others. We shall thus anticipate the pleasures of the heavenly world, where the equity, wisdom, and goodness of God will be more apparent, and the joy of his servants will be complete and everlasting.

PSALM LXV.

To the chief musician, A Psalm [and] Song of David.

In order to enter into the beauty of this fine composition, it is necessary to observe, that it was penned towards the close of David's reign, on occasion of a drought for three years, which caused a famine. When inquiry was made of the Lord, he answered, 'It is for Saul, and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites,' contrary to the faith of a solemn treaty, and gave their portion to his own family. Directions were then given to hang up seven of Saul's sons; and upon the execution of this order, we are told, 2 Sam. xxi. 14., 'God was entreated for the land,' and sent them a plentiful rain. Some passages of the psalm are extremely beautiful when considered in this light.

1 PRAISE waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; *thy people have been patiently waiting for an occasion of praise; or, as in the margin of the bible, praise is silent, my mind is quite overawed, and I am brought to a respectful silence before thee: and unto thee shall the vow be performed that was made in the time of our trouble.* **2** O thou that hearest prayer, *and hast now heard our cry,* unto thee shall all flesh come; *not one of the sons of men should omit this duty.* **3** Iniquities prevail against me: [as for] our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away; *as if he had said, Lord, I might find a reason for any of the calamities of my reign in my own iniquities, and each of us may make the same acknowledgment; but as thou hast appointed an atonement for the wickedness that was committed with the concurrence and approbation, at least with the connivance, of the people, and so it became a national act, we may hope thou hast graciously pardoned our iniquities.* **4** Blessed [is the man, that is, the priests and the Levites, whom] thou choosest and causest to approach [unto thee, that] he may dwell in thy courts; *be a constant attendant upon thy ordinances: we, who attend but sometimes, shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, [even] of thy holy temple.* **5** [By] terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; *it is a terrible answer which thou hast given, and an awful command, to hang up Saul's descendants; nevertheless thou art a righteous God, and we believe the equity of this dispensation; [who art] the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar*

off [upon] the sea; *thou art the support and guardian of all mankind, and wilt not suffer the Gibeonites to be destroyed, without punishing their persecutors*: 6 Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; [being] girded with power; *thou art the proper object of our trust; thy power is the band of union by which the several parts of nature are bound together*: 7 Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people, *of which they are an emblem**. 8 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts, *the most barbarous nations*, are afraid at thy tokens; *at some awful appearances, as thunder and lightning, storms, earthquakes, and comets*; yet he generally appears to his creatures in milder glories; thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice; *every morning and evening is generally calm; and so many blessings attend us, that they may be said to make their revolutions with pleasure, and we have occasion to rejoice in both*. After so long a drought as we have experienced, 9 Thou again visitest the earth in mercy, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, [which] is full of water; *a beautiful and sublime idea of rain, the river of God, always full, and always at his command*: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it, *or, prepared it, that is, the earth*. Thou waterest the new ploughed ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. 11 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; *every part has its proper fruits and products, all which are the effects of thy goodness*; and thy paths drop fatness; *wherever thou art pleased to go forth, thy steps are attended with fruitfulness and plenty*. 12 They drop [upon] the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side; *the wilderness and uncultivated hills, which, though before burnt up, when supplied with rain, put on a green and flowery dress*. 13 The pastures are clothed with flocks; *or, as it may be rendered, The rams of the flock are clothed with fine and heavy fleeces*; the valleys also are covered with corn, so that the face of the ground cannot be seen; they shout for joy, they also sing; *they are all animated with joy, keep a kind of festival, and burst out into songs of praise*.

* It is probable there was some tumult on account of the execution of Saul's sons, which God remarkably restrained.

REFLECTIONS.

1. IN this psalm we see with what temper we ought to address ourselves to God; with a serious, awful recollection of his majesty and glory, in high admiration of his infinite excellencies, deep humility, as unworthy to come into his presence from a consciousness of iniquities prevailing upon us, and yet with cheerful hope, as to a *God hearing prayer*.

2. We hence learn the happiness of those who love God's house and draw near to him there: they are *blessed*; they approach him as a father, and as a friend whom they esteem and love. They are *satisfied with his goodness*; the comforts they there enjoy, and the privileges and blessings communicated to them, fill their hearts with sacred delight. Let us then *love the habitation of God's house*, and seek this blessedness for ourselves.

3. The awful, especially the pleasant, scenes of nature, should lead our thoughts to God. When storms and tempests, thunder and lightning, terrify us, let us remember, that they are God's tokens; tokens of his awful majesty, his irresistible power, and dreadful wrath; and we should be thankful that they are displayed so seldom. Let us own the hand of God in refreshing flowers; to which it is owing that the heavens are not as iron, and the clods as brass; that the grass and corn spring up, and that there is plenty for man and beast. When all nature appears gay and fruitful, as it does in the spring of the year, and the birds and beasts in their language express their joy, let *our* praise be daily rising to our bountiful Benefactor. Thus we may hope for the dews of his grace and Spirit to make our souls like a watered garden, grateful to the cultivation of God, as the earth is to ours; and let our years that are crowned with goodness, be crowned with cheerful praises and faithful services. *Amen.*

PSALM LXVI.

To the chief musician, A Song [or] Psalm.

Probably composed soon after David's accession to the throne, when the Philistines were vanquished, and the peace of Israel restored.

1 **MAKE** a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands; *all nations that have heard of God's great goodness to his people*: 2 Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious; *do it in the most spirited and honourable manner, so as to engage others to join in it.* 3 Say unto God, How terrible, or how awful, [art thou in] thy works; *we are not able to express the greatness of them*: through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee; *they shall become subjects and tributaries to me thy king.* 4 All the earth, or land, shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing [to] thy name; *celebrate thy glorious power which is exemplified in our deliverance.* Selah. 5 Come and see the works of God: [he is] terrible [in his] doing toward the children of men. 6 He turned the sea into dry [land,] or divided it, so that they went through the flood, over Jordan, on foot: there did we *Israelites* rejoice in him. 7 He ruleth by his power for ever; *his power is still the same*; his eyes behold the nations, or the heathen: let not the rebellious exalt themselves, *as the Egyptians and Canaanites did, lest they be destroyed like them.* Selah. 8 O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: 9 Which holdeth our soul in life, *supports us under all our afflictions*, and suffereth not our feet to be moved; *will not suffer our enemies to triumph in our destruction.* 10 For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried by the refiner. 11 Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidest affliction upon our loins; *our enemies have taken us in their snares, and treated us like beasts of burden.* 12 Thou hast caused men of the vilest sort to ride over our heads; *a proverbial expression for the lowest abasement*; we went through fire and through water; *through the greatest difficulties*: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy [place;] *into a state of liberty and plenty.* 13 I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows, 14 Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. 15 I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of

fatlings, with the incense of rams; *or, the incense that burned while rams were sacrificed*; I will offer bullocks with goats; *the best and choicest sacrifices*. Selah. 16 Come [and] hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul; *how wonderfully he hath delivered me*. 17 I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue; *I prayed earnestly in my affliction, and would now with equal fervour offer my praises*. 18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear [me;] *had I been that wicked man, which my enemies have suggested, God had never brought me to the throne*. 19 [But] verily God hath heard [me;] he hath attended to the voice of my prayer; *a glorious proof of my integrity, as well as of his goodness*. 20 Blessed [be] God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me; *it was not for my own righteousness, but from thy divine mercy, that I have had deliverance and success*.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET the majesty of God, as described in this psalm, bow our souls into humble subjection. We should think of the wonders he wrought for Israel, and reflect that his power cannot be obstructed, nor weakened; that with one comprehensive view he beholds all the nations, and all their affairs. It is *in vain* therefore that *the rebellious exalt themselves*, as if they were secure, for he can easily confound them. Instead of rebelling against this omniscient, almighty Sovereign, let us humble ourselves before him, and *sanctify the Lord of hosts in our hearts, and make him our fear and our dread*.

2. Let his mercies to us awaken our love and praise. When we are engaged in praising him, we should not sing as if we were afraid or ashamed; but be hearty and zealous in the work; lifting up our hearts and voices to God who gave us our being, restored our lives when sinking; who preserves us safe amidst diseases and dangers, often carries us through fire and water, through the greatest extremities; to him then let us offer our thankful homage, and pay our grateful vows.

3. Let the people of God be ready to declare *what he has done for their souls*; for their lives, in preserving them in threatening dangers; in restoring their comforts, and making them sweeter after a short interruption; but especially what he has done for their souls, in recovering them from ignorance, guilt, and misery,

and bringing them into a state of rest and joy; in trying their graces, and improving their virtues, by the corrections of his word or his rod. They should be ready to declare this experience, for the honour of God and the good of others; and be often thinking with what superior transports the saints shall celebrate and declare to one another *what God hath done for their souls*, when they come to heaven, and anticipate its pleasures, by speaking often one to another on these important topics.

4. We must guard against every iniquity, if we desire God's favourable acceptance of our prayers, *v. 18.* It is one of the most weighty and important maxims in the whole scripture, that *if we regard iniquity in our hearts*; if we love it, indulge it secretly, are loth to part with it, palliate and excuse it, God will reject our services, we shall have no part in his promises of hearing prayer, nor any interest in the Mediator. It is not the external behaviour, but the heart that God chiefly regards. May we see to it that *our hearts are right with God*, that we abhor and avoid every sin; then *God will hear our prayers, and not turn away his mercy from us.*

PSALM LXVII.

To the chief musician on Neginoth, A Psalm [or] Song.

It was probably composed by David, and used when he brought the ark to its place. It is said, 2 Sam. vi. 18., that 'he blessed the people in the name of the Lord:' and this psalm seems a kind of paraphrase on the blessing which the priests were to pronounce upon solemn occasions.

1 **G**OD be merciful unto us, and bless us; [and] cause his face to shine upon us; *may he manifest the tokens of his favour and good pleasure towards us.* Selah. 2 That thy way, thy nature, providence, and religion, may be known upon earth; thy saving health, or salvation, among all nations; *that thy mercies to us may draw the eyes of others upon us, that they may know the power of our God, and the truth of his religion, and be led to own, worship, and serve him.* 3 Let the people of every nation praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee; *every individual, heathens as well as Jews.* 4 O let the nations, sensible of the happiness of being under thy righteous government and care, be glad

and sing for joy; for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth *with equity*. Selah. 5 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 6 [Then] shall the earth yield her increase; [and] God, [even] our own God, shall bless us*. 7 God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him; *as the sum of our wishes for ourselves, may God bless us; and as the greatest favour we can ask for others, let them fear him; let the remotest nations join with us in our acts of praise, being convinced by our prosperity, that it is the most happy thing to have him for their God.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here shown what blessings are most proper to ask for our country. If we have really a public spirit, and a true concern for the happiness of our land, the subject of our requests unto God should be, that he would *be merciful unto us*, in pardoning our sins; bless us with all prosperity, and especially with a revival of religion, which will be the best token of his favour; that *our land may yield its increase*, that we may serve God with cheerfulness and gladness of heart, and that all its inhabitants may join to celebrate his praises in our solemn assemblies.

2. We learn hence, to extend our good wishes and prayers for all men. The pious psalmist, though a Jew, had just notions of charity, and was not desirous to monopolize or confine the favour of God to his own nation. The reverse of this was the temper of the Jews in Christ's time, they rejected the gospel because it was preached to and embraced by the Gentiles. How much more does it become us christians, whose religion was intended to be universal, to pray earnestly for the heathen, that they may know God, that they may all know him, fear, and praise him. Our blessed Lord teaches us to offer these petitions, in his own prayer, *thy kingdom come*; and if we have known the pleasure of God's ways, and tasted the comforts of his salvation, we shall earnestly desire that others may share the same blessing with us.

3. Let us entertain an holy joy in God, and in his universal government. There is not a more just foundation of joy than this, that *God judgeth the people righteously*. Though many of the nations *know him not*, yet he presideth over their affairs, and will

* I would rather render this verse and the next as a prayer; as if he had said, May the earth, their lands as well as ours, be fruitful. May that God, who is our God by a peculiar covenant, multiply his blessing upon us.

upon the whole *execute righteous judgment*, though for a while he may suffer iniquity to prevail, and tyrants and oppressors to prosper. *The Lord reigneth; let the earth therefore rejoice, and the multitude of the isles thereof be glad.*

PSALM LXVIII.

To the chief musician, A Psalm [or] Song of David.

This is a most noble and elegant composition; but the expressions are so concise, that they are sometimes difficult to be understood. It was probably composed when the ark was brought up by David to the tabernacle pitched for it on mount Zion; God had given him rest from many enemies, but some adjacent lands were not conquered; and some parts of the Psalm are designed to animate his people to the intended attack. He begins with the prayer that was used at the removal of the ark, Numb. x. 35.

1 **LET** God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him: *he encourages their hope that God would be with them as he was with their fathers when the ark went with them.* 2 As smoke is driven away, [so] drive [them] away: as wax melteth before the fire, [so] let the wicked perish at the presence of God; *they shall no more be able to stand before God, than smoke before the wind, or wax before the fire.* 3 But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice, *in his presence and protection.* 4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him; *adore his glorious perfections, his almighty power, his eternity and immortality.* 5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, [is] God in his holy habitation; *his grandeur is tempered with goodness; he supplies the wants of the fatherless, and redresses the wrongs of the widows, who apply to him in his sanctuary upon earth, or his throne in heaven.* 6 God setteth the solitary in families: *fixes men in comfortable habitations, and gives them agreeable relatives:* he bringeth out those which are bound with chains, *releases captives:* but the rebellious dwell in a dry [land;] *wicked oppressors shall be reduced to want.* 7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people,

when thou didst march through the wilderness. Selah. 8 The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: [even] Sinai itself [was moved] at the presence of God, the God of Israel. 9 Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary, *by cooling the air and laying the dust; or, God showered down manna, and refreshed his people.* 10 Thy congregation hath dwelt comfortably therein, *in the wilderness, being thus refreshed; and thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor; givest tokens of thy goodness to thy poor people, who are just rescued from Egyptian slavery.* 11 The LORD gave the word; *afforded matter of joy and thanksgiving in those victories he gave us:* great [was] the company of those that published [it;] *many led the song of triumph.* 12 Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home, *the wives and the children,* divided the spoil. 13 Though ye have lien among the pots, *though oppressed, filthy, or dirty, like the meanest slave,* [yet shall ye be as] the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold; *like the beautiful variety of colours upon a dove's neck.* 14 When the Almighty scattered kings in it, *in Canaan, at the coming of the Israelites thither,* it was [white] as snow in Salmon; *the land and people of Israel were in a flourishing and joyful condition; this is opposed to the uncomfortable condition they had been in. He then proceeds to celebrate the glory of mount Zion, where the ark was pitched.* 15 The hill of God [is as] the hill of Bashan; an high hill [as] the hill of Bashan. 16 Why leap ye, ye high hills? *wherefore do ye contend or exalt yourselves, Salmon and Bashan?* [this is] the hill [which] God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell [in it] for ever; *Zion being honoured by the presence and the ark of God, lifts up its head with dignity, and looks down upon them all.* 17 The chariots of God [are] twenty thousand, [even] thousands of angels: the LORD [is] among them, [as] in Sinai, in the holy [place;] *though we have no war-horses to defend this sacred place, yet God defends it by his angels, who attend and encamp upon mount Zion, as they did upon Sinai when the law was given; and this is a surer defence than all the warlike preparations of our enemies.* 18 Thou, the ark, *which is the emblem of thy presence,* hast ascended on high, *hast taken possession of this hill,* thou hast led captivity captive; *subdued those who once subdued us, that is, the Philistines, some of whom might perhaps be led captive in this procession:* thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell [among them;] *or,*

thou hast taken gifts for men, taken them from our enemies, yea, and given them to us who have been a rebellious people; or, as some understand it, The nations we have conquered may receive considerable benefit by the establishment of thy ark and worship, if they learn from what they have seen of thy power to acknowledge the God of Israel. 19 Blessed [be] the LORD, [who] daily loadeth us [with benefits, even] the God of our salvation. Selah. 20 [He that is] our God [is] the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord [belong] the issues from death, *the deliverances we have had in battle, and the preservation of our lives to the present day.* 21 But God shall wound the head of his enemies, [and] the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses; *he will oppose the enemies of Israel, and destroy them.* 22 The LORD said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring [my people] again from the depths of the sea; *he will renew the wonders of his power and goodness for Israel, as when he destroyed Og the king of Bashan, and led his people through the sea, Numb. xxi. 33., Exod. xiv. 16.* 23 That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, *that thou mayst gain a complete victory over them,* [and] the tongue of thy dogs in the same. 24 They have seen thy goings, O God; [even] the goings of my God, my king, in the sanctuary; *thou hast led us up to thy sanctuary, and we have followed thy sacred footsteps.* 25 The singers went before, the players on instruments [followed] after; among [them were] the damsels playing with timbrels; *the Levites and singers went first with vocal and instrumental music, and the women also joined the procession, singing as they went along.* 26 Bless ye God in the congregations, [even] the LORD, from the fountain of Israel; *who has been our friend ever since we sprung from Israel our fountain. He then observes how heartily the people joined in this great solemnity.* 27 There [is] little Benjamin [with] their ruler, the princes of Judah [and] their council, *the two tribes that had been long at variance, between David being of Judah, and Saul of Benjamin,* the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali; *the tribes that lay most remote from Zion came readily on this grand occasion.* 28 Thy God, O Israel, hath commanded thy strength, *and brought about this happy union and zeal: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us; increase our strength, and finish this good work thou hast begun among us.* 29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee; *yea, we hope that heathen nations shall praise thee, and their kings bring presents in token of their subjec-*

tion to thee. *But we are at present in danger of a formidable enemy, (probably referring to the king of Syria.)* 30 Rebuke the company of spearmen, or, as in the margin, the beasts of the reeds, those who come against us like lions out of the reeds, rebuke the multitude of the bulls, our enemies, that are strong and insolent as bulls, with the calves of the people, the meaner sort, [till every one] submit himself with pieces of silver : scatter thou the people [that] delight in war ; who make war upon us merely for the sake of extending their conquests. 31 Princes shall come out of Egypt ; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God ; by giving us such a victory, other nations will be wrought upon to send ambassadors and presents, and to offer prayers and praises to Jehovah. 32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth ; O sing praises unto the LORD ; Selah. 33 To him that rideth upon the heaven of heavens, [which were] of old, whose empire is most ancient, powerful, and extensive : lo, he doth send out his voice, [and that] a mighty voice ; sufficient to make the proudest sinner tremble, and which could immediately hurl him to the ground. 34 Ascribe ye strength unto God ; acknowledge his divine power : his excellency [is] over Israel, and his strength [is] in the clouds ; submit to him whose goodness is as visible to his people, as his strength is in thunder and the effects of it. 35 O God, [thou art] terrible out of thy holy places, in thy sanctuary, and from thence shall thy power be issued to destroy our enemies : the God of Israel [is] he that giveth strength and power unto [his] people. Blessed [be] God for what he hath done, and what we hope and believe he will further do.

REFLECTIONS.

1. THESE noble descriptions of the greatness and power of God should lead us to reverence and adore him. Considering him as dwelling in the heavens, as possessed of almighty power and universal dominion ; having thousands of thousands of angels always at his command ; and all nature in subjection under him ! Who would not fear so glorious and awful a Being ? If he but rises up, all his enemies are scattered. Let us ascribe strength and glory to God, and with all humble submission bow before him.

2. Let us view him in his milder characters and attributes ; as a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widow ; as taking notice of the solitary, and breaking the chains of the captives. Amidst all his awful splendour he does not overlook individuals ;

he despiseth not the meanest, but confers his bounty upon them, and exerts his power for them. Let the solitary, the widow, and the fatherless, fly to him and trust in him; and may we all rejoice, yea, exceedingly rejoice, in so glorious and compassionate a God!

3. When the interest of the church is at the lowest ebb we should not despair. We may encourage ourselves, as the psalmist does, in what God did for Israel of old: when his cause seems to be losing ground, and one potent enemy after another oppresses and prevails over it, he can restore its strength, credit, and beauty, and scatter the kings that war against it and waste it. Let the thought encourage particular believers, in their darkest and most disconsolate state, to hope in him, who can make a sudden and happy change in their state, *cause them to hear joy and gladness*, and shine in the ornaments of hope and praise.

4. Let us be thankful for the share we have in God's providential bounty. Observe how emphatically the psalmist expresses his gratitude; and let us adopt his language. God bestows benefits upon us, unworthy as we are; loads us with them; gives us a variety and abundance of them; and this every day; there is no one day in which he is not doing us good. How many escapes from death have we all experienced! and some when we were in imminent danger! *To God the Lord belong all our escapes*; let him have the praise; and let us rejoice in the prospect of complete salvation, and that final issue from death, which he shall grant to his servants, when his almighty power shall raise them up at the last day.

5. We are taught from the whole psalm, to reflect how much better and milder the glories of God shine under the gospel than under the law. We have now nothing of all that solemn pomp which attended the bringing up of the ark, and the giving of the law, which are here so nobly described. But there was a superior pomp when our Lord ascended on high, led sin, and satan, and death captive, received gifts for rebellious men, sent down the Spirit, and appointed pastors and teachers, to which the apostle applies the eighteenth verse of this psalm, in *Ephes. iv. 8*. He then ascended with a train of thousands of angels to adorn and celebrate his triumph. God is still present in his churches; there the goings of our God and King are seen; his milder glories are displayed; and every pious soul is a richer and nobler temple to his praise, than David's tabernacle, or Solomon's temple in all its glory. This gospel shall at length spread over all the earth;

princes shall come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia; *all the kingdoms of the earth shall praise him, for they shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his anointed.* From what God hath already done, and his many promises, and in the assurance that they shall all be fulfilled in their season, let us say with the psalmist, *Blessed be God.*

PSALM LXIX.

To the chief musician upon Shoshannim, an instrument of six strings, [A Psalm] of David.

Several passages in this psalm are quoted in the New Testament, and expressly applied to Christ. I imagine, with the best commentators, that David has no reference in it to his own case, but that it is throughout a prophecy of Christ. The only objection that can be made to this is the fifth verse, which will be obviated by rendering it, 'Thou wouldst have known my foolishness,' &c. There is but little in this psalm that requires explanation. The Messiah begins with representing his afflicted case.

1 **SAVE** me, O God; for the waters are come in unto [my] soul. 2 I sink in deep mire, where [there is] no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. 3 I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God; *I am in such deep distress as to be almost overwhelmed; I can scarcely see or speak.* 4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, [being] mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored [that] which I took not away; *I have made satisfaction for offences that I never committed.* 5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee; *I could never have concealed my sins, had I been guilty of the wickedness they charge me with.* 6 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. *As Christ was not finally forsaken or deserted of God, those who trust in him shall not be ashamed or confounded.* 7 Because for thy sake I have born reproach; shame hath covered my face; *I have suffered all for the cause of God.* 8 I am become a stranger unto my

brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children; *they behave to me as if I were a stranger.* 9 For the zeal of thine house, *zeal for thy honour and worship*, hath eaten me up, *have consumed my vitals*; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me; *every impious word cuts me to the heart, as much as if it had been levelled directly against me.* 10 When I wept, [and chastened] my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach; *when I grieved and humbled myself for their impiety, I was upbraided for it, as if it were weakness or hypocrisy.* 11 I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them. 12 They that sit in the gate, *the rulers and great men*, speak against me, and I [was] the song of the drunkards, *of the vilest of the rabble.* 13 But as for me, my prayer [is] unto thee, O LORD, [in] an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. 14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. 15 Let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me; *let me not be like a man crossing a rapid stream, who is at first borne down, then overwhelmed, and at last quite sinks, so as to rise no more.* 16 Hear me, O LORD; for thy loving kindness [is] good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. 17 And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily; *however despised, I am thy servant, and therefore I hope for help.* 18 Draw nigh unto my soul, [and] redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies. 19 Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries [are] all before thee. 20 Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked [for some] to take pity, but [there was] none; and for comforters, but I found none; *thou knowest all my reproach, how deeply my heart is wounded, and how my friends and disciples all forsake me.* 21 They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. *This was literally fulfilled when he hung upon the cross, Matt. xxvii. 34, 48, &c. What follows is a prediction of their punishment, not a wish.* 22 Let their table become a snare before them: and [that which should have been] for [their] welfare, [let it become] a trap; *their prosperity shall become the instrument of their ruin.* 23 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake; *they shall be filled with the utmost terror and confusion. This is applied by St. Paul to the unbelieving Jews, Rom. xi. 10.* 24 Pour

out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. 25 Let their habitation be desolate; [and] let none dwell in their tents; *their whole families shall be destroyed; those who dwell in palaces, and the meanest people who dwell in tents or cottages.* 26 For they persecute [him] whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded; *scoff at them, reproach them with, and triumph in, their calamities.* 27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity; *one punishment shall be added to another, for so the word may be rendered:* and let them not come into thy righteousness; *they shall never partake of thy saving mercy.* 28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; *they shall be put to death;* and not be written with the righteous; *have none of the blessings reserved for the righteous.* 29 But I [am] poor and sorrowful, *and consequently despised;* but let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high; *above their insults and contempt.* *In the sure prospect of this, the psalm concludes with joy and praise.* I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. [This] also shall please the LORD better than an ox [or] bullock that hath horns and hoofs; *whose horns and hoofs begin to spread, which was reckoned the most acceptable sacrifice.* 32 The humble shall see [this, and] be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God; *pious, humble souls shall be encouraged by my deliverance to pray and hope.* 33 For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners. 34 Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein; *let all nature join with me in his praise.* 35 For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession; *God will establish and build up his church, and it shall continue through all generations.* 36 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: and they that love his name shall dwell therein, *and offer continual sacrifices of praise and thankfulness.* *This may perhaps refer to the final conversion of the Jews.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE sorrows of our blessed Lord, as here in prophecy described, should be seriously reviewed and lamented. He probably met with many indignities and sufferings that are not any where recorded, and which if we knew them, would throw a light on many passages in this psalm. How melancholy the thought, that the Son of God, when he came to save sinners,

should have met with no better a reception! He suffered wrongfully and without cause; but let us remember, *he suffered for our sakes, to magnify the law*, which we had broken, and atone for our offences.

2. Let us endeavour to imitate our blessed Lord in his devotion and zeal. He kept up continual intercourse with heaven, had a flaming zeal for the honour of God, his house, and worship, and tenderly laid to heart all the reproaches cast on the divine Majesty. Let us cherish the same spirit, though it should turn to our reproach; though the great and the mean should join to persecute and insult us. *He hath left us an example*, and we should *follow his steps*.

3. Let us dread the doom of Christ's enemies. The 22d and following verses are an awful prediction of the judgments that shall come upon them: they have already been fulfilled in a terrible manner on the unbelieving Jews, and will fall heavily on unholy christians, on all who are enemies to the cross of Christ. Those who reject God's salvation shall have his indignation poured out upon them, and be given up, like the Jews, to judicial blindness and terror. Yet this is but *the beginning of sorrow*; for at the great day they shall not be written with the righteous, but *punished with everlasting destruction*.

4. We should rejoice in the promises here made of the security and continuance of the church, in consequence of Christ's death. God will save and build it up, and have a succession of faithful christians in every age. Let us cast in our lot among them, if we desire to enjoy present comfort and to be honoured of Christ at the last day. Though Christ, and his cause and people, should be ever so much reproached and insulted, his church shall not fall. Let us rejoice in this assurance, and call on our neighbours to join with us in our songs of praise.

PSALM LXX.

This is the same as the fortieth psalm, 13, to the end.

To the chief musician [A Psalm] of David, to bring to remembrance.

1 [MAKE haste,] O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD. 2 Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. 3 Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, Aha. 4 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. 5 But I [am] poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou [art] my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.

PSALM LXXI.

It was probably composed on account of Absalom's rebellion, or some time after, when his fears began to return on account of its revival in Sheba, 2 Sam. xx. 1. It is also of great suitableness and use to Christ's old disciples.

1 **I**N thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion. 2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, *according to the justice of my cause*, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me, *though I have no place of safety to fly to*. 3 Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment, *hast promised*, to save me; for thou [art] my rock and my fortress, *therefore in thee I place my confidence*. 4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man, *of Absalom and his accomplices*. 5 For thou [art] my hope, O LORD GOD: [thou art] my trust from my youth. 6 By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise [shall be] continually of thee.

7 I am as a wonder unto many; *a monster that every one shuns; or, they wonder at my sudden fall; but thou [art] my strong refuge.* 8 Let my mouth be filled [with] thy praise, [and with] thy honour all the day; *let me have fresh reason to praise thee for my deliverance.* 9 Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth, *when I have most need of divine help.* 10 For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, *conspire to take away my reputation and my life,* 11 Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for [there is] none to deliver him; *they think thou hast forsaken me, and that none of my subjects will take my part.* 12 O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. 13 Let them be confounded [and] consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered [with] reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt. 14 But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. 15 My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness [and] thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers [thereof;] *I will attempt God's praises daily, though the subject is so great that I never can fully celebrate it.* 16 I will go in the strength of the Lord God, *and not in my own; I will make mention of thy righteousness, [even] of thine only; sensible that by my sins I have deserved these calamities, I will ascribe all my deliverances to the riches of divine mercy, and thy faithfulness to thy promises.* 17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, *how good and powerful thou art: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works; I have spent my life in declaring that goodness and power to others: therefore* 18 Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto [this] generation [and] thy power to every one [that] is to come; *let me survive these calamities, that I may proclaim thy power in my deliverance to the rising generation. I do not despair of this, for* 19 Thy righteousness also, O God, [is] very high, who hast done great things for me already: O God, who [is] like unto thee in power and goodness! 20 [Thou,] which hast showed me great and sore troubles, *and hitherto preserved me,* shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth; *shalt save me even now I am given up for dead, and seem quite lost and abandoned.* 21 Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side; *not only restore, but increase my greatness. And in return,* 22 I will also praise thee with the psaltery, [even] thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou

Holy One of Israel. 23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee and my soul which thou hast redeemed; *I will praise thee with my instruments and my voice, and my heart shall accompany them in this work: yea,* 24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long; *I will make it the subject of my familiar discourse:* for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt; *I look upon them as already defeated, and am assured that they quickly shall be so.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM hence we are taught, gratefully to reflect on God's goodness to us, and to go back in our thoughts to our formation and birth. It was God that took us out of the womb, and hath supported us ever since. Let us review the mercies and deliverances of our childhood and youth; especially the blessings of a good education, our having been taught of God from our youth. Let us *remember all the way that the Lord hath led us,* and observe how *goodness and mercy have followed us all our days;* that *our praise may continually be of him,* and that we may devote our lives to his honour and service.

2. From an experience of God's goodness and care, we should be engaged to trust him in every future scene of life. This is the use which David makes of his experience, even to *repose his confidence in God.* We know not what is before us; and may as little expect great and sore troubles as David did. It is good to think what may possibly happen, and habituate ourselves to recollect the goodness and faithfulness of God. Aged saints, in particular, should learn from this holy man, *to trust in the Lord;* to assure themselves, that *when they are old and grey-headed, God will not forsake them;* that though their troubles and sorrows are many, *he will quicken them;* and though they die, *he will bring them up again.* Let this be a motive for them to *hope in God continually, and praise him yet more and more.*

3. We should accustom ourselves to talk of God's righteousness and goodness; be often speaking one to another on topics so important and delightful; talk of the righteousness of his nature, the equity of his providence, the holiness of his laws, and especially of that everlasting righteousness which his dear Son hath brought in, and by which we hope to be justified and saved. These should be the frequent subjects of our discourse, and they

will be useful to ourselves and others. Let aged christians, in particular, abound in such discourses; they can do little else for God, and should therefore *talk of his righteousness all the day long*; tell the rising generation their own experience; and leave a solemn testimony to the reasonableness, the importance, the pleasures, and advantages of religion, for the admonition and encouragement of those who shall come after them. Thus will *their hoary heads be crowns of glory, being found in the way of righteousness.*

PSALM LXXII.

[A Psalm] for Solomon.

This psalm was composed by David just before he died, when Solomon was appointed king, and the grandees of the kingdom swore allegiance to him. But while he was praying for Solomon, the prophetic Spirit of God bore him on to predict the glory of the Messiah's kingdom; for many particulars of the psalm cannot belong to Solomon, especially to the latter part of his reign. The Jewish doctors in general apply it to the Messiah.

1 **G**IVE the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son; *give him a sound understanding and an upright heart: then* 2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness, *according to thy law*, and thy poor with judgment; *he shall do justice to all, but take particular care to preserve the rights of the poor.* 3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness; *all parts of the land shall abound with plenty and prosperity* *. 4 He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor; *he shall vindicate the oppressed and punish the proud and the injurious.* 5 They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations; *veneration shall be paid to his memory through all ages.* 6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers [that] water the earth; *the influence of his government shall be refreshing, comfortable, and delightful to all who are under it.* 7 In his days shall the righteous

* Some commentators by mountains and hills understand magistrates of different ranks and degrees, who, under Solomon's wise government, should dispense justice to the people.

flourish, *be countenanced and preferred*; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. 8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea; *his kingdom shall be much extended*; and from the river *Euphrates or Nile*, unto the ends of the earth. 9 They that dwell in the wilderness, *the most barbarous people*, shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust; *be reduced to the most abject submission*. 10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. 11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him*. 12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and [him] that hath no *other* helper; *he shall be thus honoured, not because of his riches, wisdom, and magnificence, but for the justice and mercy of his government*. 13 He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy; *be as tender of their lives and comforts, as of those of the rich and great*. 14 He shall redeem their soul from *secret* deceit and *open* violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight; *he shall never employ them in war to satisfy his own covetousness, ambition, and revenge*. 15 And he shall live, *have a long and prosperous reign*, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; [and] daily shall he be praised; *he shall reign in the hearts of his subjects, who shall applaud his government, and pray for the increase, prosperity, and support of his kingdom. God shall bless the earth with extraordinary fruitfulness*; 16 There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; *which shall produce such a crop that the fruit thereof shall be tall and large, and shake like the cedars on Lebanon*: and [they] of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth; *the cities also shall become populous and wealthy; an emblem of the success of the gospel, and the flourishing state of Christ's kingdom*. 17 His name and honour shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: *he shall be the promised seed*, and [men,] *all nations*, shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed; *shall acknowledge him as a most excellent, glorious prince, and praise God for him*. 18 Blessed [be] the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. 19 And blessed [be] his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled [with] his glory; *be possessed with a sense of his wisdom, power, and love, and join with us in his praise*; Amen, and Amen. 20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended. *This was the last psalm*

* This was true of Solomon, when all the kings of the earth came to hear his wisdom; but was, or will be, more exactly true of Christ.

that David composed, and in some instances resembles his last words, 2 Sam. xxiii.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WHAT an amiable idea does this psalm give us of a good government! How honourable is it to the prince, and how happy to the subjects, when this is its character! Let us daily pray that it may be more and more the character of our sovereign, and of all that are in authority under him; and as far as it is so, we should accept and own it with all thankfulness.

2. Let us rejoice in the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom. *David, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, uttered this prophecy.* Blessed be God, that it is so far accomplished, that so many nations have been brought to know Christ; that so many kings have become subjects to him; that the handful of seed sown in Judea, has produced such a plentiful harvest; that his religion shall continue as long as the sun, and that no power of men or devils can subvert it: it shall spread till all the kingdoms of the earth are become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his anointed.

3. We should be earnestly solicitous to secure the blessings of his administration; to partake of his care and protection, and enjoy the happiness of his subjects. To this end let us *fall down before him*, yield ourselves to him, applaud his government, and bring our presents, that is, our sacrifices of prayer and praise, and cheerful obedience to him; that we may enjoy that peace now which no other prince can give, and that happiness which will last for ever.

4. Let us join with the psalmist in earnest prayer that his kingdom may be further advanced; that it may come, that is, spread further, appear with greater lustre and power, and make all the nations obedient to the faith; that *the whole earth may be filled with the glory of God*. Dying saints cannot conclude their lives better than in the language of prayer and praise; blessing God for all the wondrous things he has done for the church and for them; and committing all its interests to him, who has been hitherto its guardian, and in whom all the nations of the earth shall finally be blessed. *O may his kingdom come; and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven! Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his glo-*

rious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.

PSALM LXXIII.

A Psalm of Asaph.

This Asaph is probably the same person mentioned 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

This psalm is an admirable composition, it describes his struggle with a strong temptation, and his victory over it; after revolving things in his mind, this was the result of his thoughts.

1 **T**RULY God [is] good to Israel, [even] to such as are of a clean heart: *this I now firmly believe, and am determined not to doubt the truth of it any more.* **2** But as for me, my feet were almost gone, *I was once ready to think otherwise, my steps had well nigh slipped; my faith in God was almost overthrown, and I was ready to repent of my piety.* **3** For I was envious at the foolish, [when] I saw the prosperity of the wicked. **4** For [there are] no bands in their death; *they are not put to a violent death by the hand of the magistrate, nor suffer any grievous torments of mind or body: but their strength [is] firm; they continue strong and healthful all their days.* **5** They [are] not in trouble [as other] men, *as many pious, honest men are; neither are they plagued like [other] men.* **6** Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them [as] a garment; *they think providence favours them, or that there is no providence at all, and therefore are haughty and tyrannical. They live in great plenty and prosperity, so that* **7** Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish; *better success than they themselves could have expected.* **8** They are corrupt, and speak wickedly [concerning] oppression: they speak loftily; *they think themselves not bound by the laws of justice, and vindicate their oppressions, and boast of their power.* **9** They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth; *they blaspheme God and slander men.* **10** Therefore his people, *who have the same difficulties as I have,* return hither, *revolve these scenes in their mind: and waters of a full [cup] are wrung out to them; the cup of affliction is put into their hands.* **11** And they, *that is, God's people are sometimes ready to adopt the language of the wicked, and to say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? surely he*

takes no notice of affairs here below. 12 Behold, [these] are the ungodly, who, *instead of receiving the punishment they deserve,* prosper in the world; they increase [in] riches. *Therefore I am ready to say,* 13 Verily, I have cleaved my heart [in] vain, and washed my hands in innocency; *I have taken pains to live honestly and keep my heart pure, but it has been in vain.* 14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning; *my afflictions have been very great, and renewed every day. But I will check myself; for* 15 If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend [against] the generation of thy children; *it would be contrary to the sense of good men in all ages; I should set them a bad example, and grieve the men and injure the cause that God approves.* 16 When I thought to know this, it [was] too painful for me; *before I determined the point, I was willing to study it more closely, and I found difficulties in it that I could not surmount:* 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; [then] understood I their end; *while consulting the scriptures, worshipping God, and seeking direction from him, he was pleased by his Spirit to give me such a view of things as to take off the burden.* 18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction; *now I see that their standing was slippery, and their fall unspeakably dreadful.* 19 How are they [brought] into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors; *sure, swift, and terrible destruction comes upon them.* 20 As a dream when [one] awaketh; [so,] O LORD, when thou awakest, *to execute judgment upon them,* thou shalt despise their image; *dissipate those dreams of happiness they have been amusing themselves with; and then all their glory shall vanish as a dream.* 21 Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins; *I was distressed that I should ever entertain such doubts.* 22 So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was [as] a beast before thee, *because I did not use the reason thou hast given me. And this folly has been aggravated, for* 23 Nevertheless, notwithstanding these failings and miscarriages of mine, I [am] continually with thee; *I have enjoyed thy gracious as well as providential presence, and thou hast holden [me] by my right hand; supported me amidst all my afflictions and temptations.* 24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel through every future difficulty, and preserve me from such snares; and afterward receive me [to] glory, *everlasting glory in heaven.* 25 Whom have I in heaven [but thee?] and [there is] none upon earth [that] I desire besides thee; *my hope is in thy favour alone; there is no Being but thyself that can be my portion; no creatures, possessions, or delights*

on earth are equally desirable. 26 My flesh and my heart faileth; my bodily strength fails, and the courage of my mind is broken; [but] this is my comfort, that God [is] the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. 27 For, lo, they that are far from thee, those who oppose and forsake thee, shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee; whose hearts are alienated from their rightful Lord and only happiness. 28 But [it is] good for me to draw near to God; to adhere to thee and thy service, and to live near to thee: I have put my trust for comfort and happiness in the LORD God; that I may declare all thy works; the justice and goodness of thy providence in the final salvation of the good, and the destruction of the wicked; and lead others to understand the meaning and design of thy providence.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are cautioned from hence to guard against the temptation which the psalmist describes, and by which he suffered so much. It is too common an error; the best of men are ready to slip, and fall, by it. But we should remember how foolish it is, and what ignorance it shows, to doubt the providence and goodness of God. It is especially inexcusable in christians, who have life and immortality brought to light by the gospel. *Therefore fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious at their prosperity.*

2. When we are pressed with such difficulties, let us have recourse to *the sanctuary of God*; consult his word, seek assistance from him by prayer, and use the appointed public means for our comfort. Let us learn to judge of every appearance in the moral world, by the light of revelation; this will correct our mistakes, and silence our doubts.

3. We should make it our business to secure an interest in the favour of God; then we may joyfully *rest in him as our portion and happiness*, however we may be afflicted. Nothing in earth or in heaven, but God, can be a suitable portion to our souls, and satisfy their boundless desires. We shall find the need of his favour in afflictions, especially in dying moments, *when flesh and heart fail*; if God does not at that time strengthen us, nothing can: and at death, if he be not our portion, we have no other, but are undone for ever.

4. Let the people of God cheerfully commit themselves to his guidance in life and death; to the direction of his providence, his

word, and his Spirit. *It is good for us*, our duty and interest, the best thing in the world, *to draw near to God*, by meditation and prayer, and live near to him by the exercise of faith, love, and hope. This we shall find to be the most comfortable life, and the firmest security against temptation. *He will be our guide to death*, and will receive us to that world, where every temptation and painful doubt will be vanquished, and he himself shall be our everlasting felicity.

PSALM LXXIV.

Maschil of Asaph; or, a Psalm for Asaph to give instruction.

Composed during the captivity by some pious Israelite who continued in the land.

1 **O** GOD, why hast thou cast [us] off for ever? *so long, that we seem to be forgotten?* [why] doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? *thy peculiar people, once so dear to thee?* 2 Remember thy congregation, [which] thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, [which] thou hast redeemed out of *Egypt, and settled in Canaan*; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt *as thy palace*. 3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; [even] all [that] the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary; *make haste to visit and repair this desolation, which otherwise is likely to be perpetual*. 4 Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; *there is the voice of rage and triumph, where thy people used to pray and praise*; they set up their ensigns [for] signs of their conquest and victories, and boast as if their gods were superior to thee. 5 [A man] was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees, *that is, contributed his help towards the building of the temple*. 6 But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers; *they make no more scruple of breaking this curious work, than a man would in cutting down a tree*; they destroy the work for the sake of the gold that is upon it. 7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled [by casting down] the dwelling place of thy name to the ground; *they have destroyed what the fire had not consumed*. 8 They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together, *the people and the place*: they have burned up all the synagogues of God, or houses of prayer, in the land, *as if they*

would utterly destroy our religion. 9 We see not our signs; such miracles or appearances of providence for us as we had in times past: [there is] no more any prophet*: neither [is there] among us any that knoweth how long; we shall be thus reproached, (ver. 10.), and continue in this calamitous condition, being uncertain about reckoning the time when the captivity shall be restored. 10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever, as if thou wast not able to deliver us? 11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck [it] out of thy bosom; exert that hand which hath formerly done such wonders. 12 For God [is] my king of old, the king of Israel many generations ago, working salvation in the midst of the earth, that is, of this land, though it is now desolate, and therefore I do not despair. 13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons, destroyedst the Egyptians in the waters. 14 Thou brakest the heads of the leviathan in pieces, Pharaoh and his princes, [and] gavest him [to be] meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness; the sea threw up their dead bodies, which were devoured by the beasts of the desert. 15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood; cleave the rock, and madest a spring there: thou driedst up mighty rivers, both Jordan and the Red sea. 16 The day [is] thine, the night also [is] thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun; instances of thy power are continual in the revolutions of day and night, the sun and moon. 17 Thou hast set all the borders of the different climates of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter, the change of seasons. 18 Remember this, [that] the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and [that] the foolish people have blasphemed thy name. 19 O deliver not the soul, the life, of thy turtledove, who trusteth in thee, unto the multitude [of the wicked:] forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever; a poor helpless company, who depend only upon thee. 20 Have respect unto the covenant with our fathers: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty; this land, once fruitful, full of the knowledge of God, and under good government, is now full of darkness, rapine, and cruelty. 21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed of our prayers and hopes: let the poor and needy praise thy name in their ancient possessions, from which they have been long banished. 22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause, the cause of thine honour and worship: remember how the foolish man

* Ezekiel and Daniel were now in Babylon, and Jeremiah was gone into Egypt.

reproacheth thee, *useth reproachful expressions*, daily. 23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually, *therefore it is time for thee to chastise and silence them.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may reflect, how melancholy and pitiable their case is, who thus suffer insults and persecution. How tenderly does this good man lay to heart the desolation of the sanctuary! He makes no complaint of the burning of cities, and laying waste the country, but the temple and the synagogues. He laments the want of prophets and ministers, more than of armies. This is the case of many of our protestant brethren in the world; and we should think of them with tender pity, and earnestly pray that *God would remember them; lift up his feet* for their deliverance, and *plead his own cause.*

2. We have great reason to be thankful that the case is not our own. Blessed be God, that our eyes do not see that worst of sights, *an enemy in the sanctuary of the Lord*; that our Jerusalem is a quiet habitation; that violence is not heard in our land; that our eyes see our teachers; and that if we now and then are reproached by our neighbours, that is the utmost to which their malice can extend. God grant that we may be sensible of the value of our peace and liberty; and so improve them, that his salvation may be still near to us, and that *glory may dwell in our land.*

3. In every time of public or private distress, let us contemplate the works of God, and think of him as the ruler of the day and night; who opens the eyelids of the morning, and draws the curtains of the night; who has appointed the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and continues the regular succession of seasons: whose power therefore is not weakened. As summer comes after winter, and day after night, so we may hope for a happy change in the most distressing circumstances. He is faithful to his covenant of the day and of the night, and *will have respect to his covenant* with his people. Let us recollect what he did for Israel; what we have heard with our ears, and what our fathers have told us. The cause of religion is God's cause, and he will plead it. Whatever his people suffer, and though *many are the afflictions of the righteous, the Lord will deliver them out of them all.*

PSALM LXXV.

To the chief musician, Al-taschith, A Psalm [or] Song of Asaph.

This is called a song of Asaph ; but as it seems to have been composed by a prince or magistrate, and Asaph was only the leader of the singers in the temple, it is more probable that it was written by David, upon his accession to the crown, and was directed to Asaph, as the chief musician. He begins with declaring his thankfulness to God for the establishment of his government.

1 **U**NTO thee, O God, do we give thanks, [unto thee] do we give thanks : for [that] thy name is near thy wondrous works declare ; *thy wondrous works displayed in our behalf show that thou art near to us. Nor will I content myself with praising thee, but* 2 When I shall receive the congregation, *when all the people shall submit themselves to me, I will judge the people uprightly.* 3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved : I bear up the pillars of it. *In Saul's time justice had been perverted, which occasioned such confusion, as if the foundations of civil government had been destroyed ; but I will do all I can to support its sinking interest, by promoting religion and justice.* Selah. 4 I said unto the fools, *impious and profane persons,* Deal not foolishly ; and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn ; *I will put a stop to their immoralities, and will not suffer them to exert their oppressive power :* 5 Lift not up your horn on high ; *behave not insolently : speak [not with] a stiff neck against my government.* 6 For my promotion [cometh] neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. 7 But *from God, who [is] the judge, and will support me : it is he putteth down one, and setteth up another.* 8 For in the hand of the LORD [there is] a cup, and the wine is red ; it is full of mixture ; and he poureth out of the same : but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring [them] out, [and] drink [them ;] *an allusion to a custom in the east of destroying criminals with poisoned wine. Good men may taste the cup of affliction, but the very dregs belong to the wicked, the most dreadful judgments shall be their portion : a weighty reason why they should not be proud and presumptuous.* 9 But I will declare for ever ; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. 10 All the

horns of the wicked also will I cut off; *I will deprive them of their power; [but] the horns* of the righteous shall be exalted; they shall be raised to posts of dignity and authority.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are taught from hence, to maintain a constant sense of the presence of God; that his name, that is, he himself, is near. All his works declare this; the course of nature, the daily operations of providence; and especially his wondrous works for his church and people. Let us be careful to observe his works, to give him the glory of his omnipresence, and praise him as the author of all our deliverances and comforts.

2. Whatever we find to be advantageous in our circumstances, it is derived from God, and ought to be improved for him. *Promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west, neither from one quarter nor another; but God is the judge.* If our rank in life be distinguished, if our circumstances be plentiful and easy; if we have any authority or influence over others, or respect from them, we should thankfully ascribe it to God, and employ all for him; to discountenance evil-doers, and weaken their power; to encourage, support, and keep in countenance those that are good.

3. Let us dread having our portion with the wicked, and think of the cup of trembling and indignation which shall be put into their hands. Good men have sometimes a taste of this cup, even Christ himself had; and the cup which our Father hath given us, shall we not drink it? But the wicked drink the dregs of it, in the terrors of conscience now, and a fearful looking-for of his vengeance; and they shall drink of it for ever; *for on the wicked the Lord shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this is the portion of their cup.*

4. Let us be thankful to God for the good government we live under; remembering that *promotion cometh from God.* It does not depend on the people's choice who shall be king, nor on the king's choice who shall be ministers and rulers under him. *God putteth down one and setteth up another.* In this view we should recollect with pleasure and gratitude the wonderful revolution which he brought about in our country, in favour of our religion and liberties, when both were in imminent danger; and also the

* Among the ancients horns were made use of as an emblem of power and authority. On many ancient coins their princes are represented with horns, to denote that they were powerful princes.

succession of the present royal family ; when, in both cases, there seemed to be so many difficulties in the way, and so many of our leading men *spake with a stiff neck*. But God hath favoured us with a righteous and mild government, and continued it to this day, notwithstanding several attempts have been made to subvert it. May he long continue it, give us grace to own his interposition with all thankfulness, and to *lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all goodness and honesty*.

PSALM LXXVI.

To the chief musician on Neginoth, a Psalm [or] Song of Asaph.

Probably composed in Hezekiah's time on occasion of the destruction of the Assyrians, 2 Kings xix., to which it is extremely suitable. The Seventy call it, A Song upon the Assyrians.

1 **I**N Judah [is] God known, *more evidently and undeniably than he formerly was, both by his gracious word, and miraculous works* : his name [is] great, *his divine perfections are magnified* in Israel. 2 In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion ; *it is clearly known that his abode is there, by the destruction of those enemies who attacked and insulted it*. 3 There brake he the arrows of the bow, or coals of the bow, *that is, arrows which inflicted a burning wound*, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah. 4 Thou, *mount Zion*, [art] more glorious [and] excellent than the mountains of prey ; or rather, *from the mountains of prey* : thou appearest more glorious after so signal a victory, and so sudden and terrible a slaughter of thine enemies. 5 The stout hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep : and none of the men of might have found their hands ; *the Assyrian host are destroyed, they were not able to strike a stroke, or defend themselves against the angel who attacked them*. 6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, whom they reproached, both the chariot and horse, *the charioteers and horsemen*, are cast into a dead sleep, *the plague destroyed them both*. 7 Thou, [even] thou *only* [art] to be feared : and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry. *We made our solemn appeal to thee*, and 8 Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven ; *hast pronounced a sentence of condemnation upon our enemies* ; the earth feared, and was still, *they were quite*

silent and confounded. 9 When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth; *his helpless people, who had patiently borne the insolence of the Assyrians.* Selah. 10 Surely the wrath of man, *in other instances,* shall praise thee; *shall make thy praise more conspicuous, so that others shall learn to fear thy name:* the remainder of wrath, *what will not be for thy glory and the good of thy people,* shalt thou restrain. 11 Vow that you will bring new sacrifices and honours to God, and pay unto the LORD your God *what you have already vowed:* let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared; *let all who shall hear of this mighty work, bring their tribute and homage to this awful Being.* 12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes; *shall mow them down like grass; which intimates how easily he can bring down the pride and haughtiness of their spirits, and destroy their lives:* [he is] terrible to the kings of the earth; *to the greatest kings who dare to blaspheme, insult, and oppose him or his people.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may with great pleasure apply these declarations to God's care of his church in general. Among them he is known. His perfections are known in some measure among the heathen; but most clearly among those who are favoured with the scriptures. He hath often appeared to *weaken the strength of the mighty;* to destroy the weapons of his insolent enemies, and sink them into a deep, irrecoverable sleep. And this is applicable to spiritual deliverances, to the triumphs of Christ over the enemies of his people, *when he spoiled principalities and powers, ascended on high, and led captivity captive.*

2. Let us reverence this great and glorious God, who has such amazing power. *He, even he only, is to be feared: who can stand in his sight when once he is angry.* What a vast power and stretch of thought must he have, *who can make the wrath of man to praise him,* and subserve his own purpose? Let us tremble before him, *who cutteth off the spirit of princes,* and, on that account, *is terrible to the kings of the earth.* He hath verified these words in his conduct to this nation. This great Being, whose are all hands and all souls, *is greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all that draw nigh unto him.*

3. We should be very solicitous to pay our vows unto God. It is our duty to bind ourselves by solemn vows to be his, for his

we are, and are under innumerable obligations to serve him. But we must also remember our vows; *it is better not to vow, than to vow and not perform.* Let us bring our presents to him, though he needs them not; it is the way to show our gratitude, and our sense of the obligations we are under to him, and that we have received our all from him. The most acceptable present is our whole selves; let us therefore *yield ourselves to God, and glorify him in our bodies and spirits which are his.*

PSALM LXXVII.

To the chief musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of Asaph.

The author of this psalm seems to have been a good man, but of a melancholy disposition. It contains reflections on the afflictive scenes through which he had passed. The first verse expresseth the issue of his whole experience. God at length heard him, and removed his grief; though (as he shows more largely) it was a long time before he obtained that favour.

I CRIED unto God with my voice, [even] unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me. 2 In the day of my trouble I sought the LORD: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not; *or, my head was watered in the night with tears that flowed plentifully: my soul refused to be comforted.* 3 I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed; *I then thought on God, which used to be the noblest relief, yet I found my soul incapable of relishing this divine consolation.* Selah. 4 Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak; *I have restless nights and uncomfortable days, and my trouble is so great that I cannot express it.* 5 I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times; *what God has done for me in the former part of life.* 6 I call to remembrance my song in the night; *my former songs:* I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search *into the reason why God has sent this affliction.* 7 Will the LORD cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? 8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth [his] promise fail for evermore? 9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? *have I so highly provoked him, that he will show me no*

mercy? Selah. *But I checked these gloomy thoughts,* 10 And I said, This [is] my infirmity, *that is, my distemper, these doubts and suspicions are dishonourable to God, and injurious to myself; [but I will remember] the years of the right hand of the most High; the years in which his power was exerted for his people.* 11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders *done* of old. 12 I will meditate also of all thy *later* work, and *to impress them upon my mind, I will talk with others* of thy doings. 13 Thy way, O God, [is] in the sanctuary; *I know it is perfectly holy, but above our comprehension: who [is so] great a God as [our] God? None is equal to thee in power and in wisdom.* 14 Thou [art] the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people, *and showed that it exceeds both their strength and opinion, particularly in the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt:* 15 Thou hast with [thine] arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. 16 The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; *felt the effects of thy divine presence and power: they were afraid; the depths also were troubled; the deep sea was divided to the very bottom.* 17 The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. 18 The voice of thy thunder [was] in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook; *referring to the rain, thunder and lightning, which fell upon the Egyptians, when they were pursuing Israel, when God looked through the cloud and troubled their hosts.* 19 Thy way [is] in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. 20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron, *with all possible care and tenderness, till thou broughtest them to the promised land: so thou ledest thy people now through many strange providences, and wilt conduct them safe to their everlasting rest.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. GOOD men should not think their case singular when they are oppressed with trouble and melancholy. Asaph's was indeed a mournful case; he had wearisome days, restless nights, weeping eyes, a comfortless soul; and was tempted to make a desperate conclusion about his own state, and the mercy and faithfulness of God. Those who are in such afflicted circumstances, should recollect what others have endured, and draw no rash conclusions

about their real characters. Let them remember, that despondency of spirit, or distrust of God, is an infirmity, and therefore endeavour to suppress it.

2. Such afflicted persons should give themselves to prayer. *In the day of my trouble*, says the psalmist, *I sought the Lord*; and the gospel rule is, *Are any afflicted? let them pray*; not seek for business and recreations to divert their minds, though they are useful in their places, but *continue in prayer*. 'Let them not think, (as Mr. Henry expresses it,) to drink away or laugh away their melancholy apprehensions, but pray them away;' let them not cease their petitions, though they may for a long time be discouraged, and have very little hope of success; at length God will incline his ear, and their souls shall be comforted.

3. Those who are afflicted should think of God's works; his works of wonder for his people, and his works of kindness for themselves. Let them recollect what God has done both for their bodies and souls in time past, as an encouragement to trust in him, and to hope that he will not forsake them. It seems that Asaph did not find relief in this thought; therefore he set himself to consider what God had done for his people of old, and then he found relief. This shows the usefulness of scripture history; and of how much importance it is that we make it familiar to our minds and meditate upon it. It shows also, that we should apply those histories to our own case. What God hath wrought for the church, may and ought to be improved for the comfort of particular believers. Though God's way be in the sea, and his path in the deep waters, let us trust him when we cannot trace him, and follow him, though we know not where he leads us; and we shall find that *all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as fear him and keep his covenant and his statutes*.

PSALM LXXVIII.

Maschil of Asaph.

The greatest part of this psalm needs no illustration. It was composed for the instruction of the Israelites, especially their children, according to the command of God that they should teach them these things. It is an abstract of their history from their coming out of Egypt to David's time.

1 **G**IVE ear, O my people, [to] my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old*: 3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. 4 We will not hide [them] from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the **LORD**, and his strength and his wonderful works that he hath done. 5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: 6 That the generation to come might know [them, even] the children [which] should be born; [who] should arise and declare [them] to their children: 7 That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: 8 And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation [that] set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God. 9 The children of Ephraim, [being] armed, [and] carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle; *referring to the defeat of Israel by the Philistines, when the ark was taken. The Ephraimites, in whose tribe Shiloh was, proved cowardly, and fled on that occasion.* 10 They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law: 11 And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had showed them. 12 Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, [in] the field of Zoan. 13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap. 14 In the day-time also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. 15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave [them] drink as [out

* As the first poetry consisted of parables or riddles, they came to be used for all kinds of poetry; and here may signify any discourse that is sublime and poetical.

of] the great depths. 16 He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. 17 And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness. 18 And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. 19 Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? 20 Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people. 21 Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; 22 Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: 23 Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, 24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. 25 Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full. 26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind. 27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: 28 And he let [it] fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. 29 So they did eat and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; *they had as much as they wished for, yet* 30 They were not estranged from their lust; *they still greedily desired more, to gratify their sensual appetite:* but while their meat [was] yet in their mouths, 31 The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen [men] of Israel. 32 For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works. 33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. 34 When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. 35 And they remembered that God [was] their rock, and the high God their redeemer. 36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. 37 For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant. 38 But he, [being] full of compassion, forgave [their] iniquity, and destroyed [them] not; ye, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. 39 For he remembered that they [were but] flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. 40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, [and] grieve him in the desert! 41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel; *they questioned his power, and prescribed to him what proof he should give of it.* 42 They remembered not his hand, [nor] the

day when he delivered them from the enemy. 43 How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan : 44 And had turned their rivers into blood ; and their floods, that they could not drink. 45 He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them ; and frogs which destroyed them ; 46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar and their labour unto the locust. 47 He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. 48 He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. 49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels [among them,] *who were employed in plaguing the Egyptians.* 50 He made a way to his anger *with the exactest care, that it might strike the Egyptians and pass by the Israelites ;* he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence ; 51 And smote all the first-born in Egypt ; the chief of [their] strength in the tabernacles of Ham : 52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. 53 And he led them on safely, so that they feared not : but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. 54 And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, [even to] this mountain, [which] his right hand had purchased. 55 He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. 56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies : 57 But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers : they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. 58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. 59 When God heard [this,] he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel : 60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent [which] he placed among men ; 61 And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory, *that is, the ark,* into the enemy's hand. 62 He gave his people over also unto the sword ; and was wroth with his inheritance. 63 The fire consumed their young men ; and their maidens were not given to marriage. 64 Their priests fell by the sword ; and their widows made no lamentation ; *they were so oppressed with grief that they had no heart to use the common ways of mourning.* 65 Then the LORD awaked as one out of sleep, [and] like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. 66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder part : he put them to a perpetual reproach : *referring to the diseases brought upon the Philistines.* 67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of

Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; *that is, would not permit the ark to return to Shiloh again*: 68 But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. 69 And he built his sanctuary like high [palaces,] like the earth which he hath established for ever. 70 He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: 71 From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. 72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may hence learn an important part of education; namely, to inform children of God's wonderful works. In this view, we see the usefulness of scripture history, and how important it is that children should be acquainted with it. This will be very entertaining to them, and be remembered better than precepts. They should be taught what ideas of God, and what useful instructions are to be learned from it. This is what God requires; and it is a proper honour paid to his works and word. By this means *one generation will declare his praises, and his strength, and his wonderful works to future generations; that they may set their hope in God, and keep his commandments.*

2. See the cause of national calamities; what brought all their miseries upon the Israelites; forgetfulness of the works and word of God. A remarkable passage occurs, *v. 9, 10, 11.* Sin makes men cowards; guilt makes them fear death, and so disposes them to fly: true courage has its foundation in religion. These things happened to Israel for examples; and we shall have little ground to hope for great success in our national contentions, or of a lasting peace till we *keep God's covenant and walk in his laws.*

3. We are taught to guard against all those iniquities which brought the wrath of God upon Israel; unbelief, distrust of his power and care, dealing treacherously with him, or the indulgence of appetite. And what is the source of all this? forgetfulness of God. May we therefore believe his word, trust his promises, and be particularly careful after our solemn professions and engagements, that we do not *turn aside like a deceitful bow*, *ver. 57.* This is the greatest affront we can put upon God, and will expose us to his hottest anger. He desireth truth; and nothing but truth can stand before him with honour or acceptance.

4. See the compassion and tender mercy of God; all the deliverances of Israel are traced up to these; and this is recorded for

our encouragement; that we may *turn unto the Lord and hope in his mercy*. But if we continue in sin because grace abounds, *our sin will be exceeding sinful*. *With God there is forgiveness, that he may be feared*. His goodness is designed to lead us to repentance, and keep us from sinning against him; and if it answers this end, *we through patience and comfort of the scripture shall have hope*.

PSALM LXXIX.

A Psalm of, or for, Asaph.

Whether it was composed on occasion of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, or on the sufferings which the Jews endured under Antiochus king of Syria, after they returned from captivity, is uncertain. I imagine the former; as I much question whether any of the psalms were composed so late as the latter event. There might be several successive musicians of the name of Asaph, descended from the first of that name, who was so eminent in David's time.

1 **O** GOD, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled, *by setting up idols there*; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps, *made it a charnel house*. 2 The dead bodies of thy servants, *that is, priests*, have they given [to be] meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints, *the Israelites as a holy nation were saints*, unto the beasts of the earth. 3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and [there was] none to bury [them;] *that is, they would not suffer them to be buried*. 4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. 5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire? 6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen, *that is, our enemies*, that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name, *but blasphemed it*. 7 For they have *not only cursed, but devoured Jacob, thy people Israel, Jacob's posterity*, and laid waste his dwelling place. 8 O remember not against us former iniquities, *or, the iniquities of them that were before us*: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low; *are greatly reduced, weakened, and impoverished*. 9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy

name's sake, *which they have blasphemed.* 10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where [is] their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight, [by] the revenging of the blood of thy servants [which is] shed. 11 Let the sighing of the prisoner, *that is, the captive,* come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power, preserve thou those that are appointed to die; *that we fear will be cruelly put to death:* 12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O LORD, *for not delivering us from the Chaldeans.* 13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE learn from hence to be thankful for the restraints of enemies and persecutors. Blessed be God, that this melancholy description does not suit our country; but alas! it too well suits many of our protestant brethren, whose country is the seat of war, or who live under tyrannical governments; *their blood is shed like water; they are a scorn and derision to their neighbours;* many are sighing in loathsome dungeons, or groaning under their slavery in the galleys; or appointed to die by the merciless courts of the inquisition. Blessed be God, who restrains their power; or else such horrid scenes of cruelty, would be seen among us, for the temper of many of our popish enemies is still the same. While we have no occasion to offer up these petitions for ourselves, let us be frequently offering them up for our suffering brethren. Let us *his people, the sheep of his pasture, give him thanks* for his distinguishing goodness to us, and perpetuate the remembrance of his mercies and his praise through succeeding generations.

2. We are here taught to argue in prayer from the name of God, and especially in our prayers for the public. *The glory of his name, and his name's sake, v. 9.,* are phrases that very frequently occur in the devotional parts of scripture. His name denotes his perfections and glory, by which he is distinguished from all other beings, as a man is from all other men by his own name; and more particularly refers to the honour and dignity of his government, and his faithfulness to his promises. When the heathen overcame the Jews, they insulted them and their God, as if he was not so great, so powerful, and so faithful a being, nor standing in such a relation to them, as they boasted; therefore they prayed

that God would deliver them for *his name's sake*; that the heathen might be convinced he was the supreme governor, an almighty and ever faithful God. Thus should we pray that for his name's sake he would help us; that his glory may shine brighter, and that he may be properly thought of, and spoken of, in the world. This plea we are to use with sincerity; with hearts deeply impressed with the glorious excellency of God's name, and an earnest desire that it may be every where magnified: and it should teach us to pray with humble submission to his will; that, if it be for the glory of his name, such and such favours may be granted us. Let us carry these thoughts with us, and endeavour to feel these dispositions every time we use this plea, and particularly when we say, *Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.*

 PSALM LXXX.

To the chief musician upon Shoshannim Eduth, A Psalm of, or for, Asaph.

It was probably composed by some pious Jew who belonged to one of the ten tribes, and joined with Judah after their return from Babylon, expressing his concern at the desolate state of the other tribes, and wishing their restoration.

1 **G**IVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock*: thou that dwellest [between] the cherubims, *on the throne of thy glory, surrounded by the angelic hosts, shine forth, manifest thy favour to us, in our deliverance.* 2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come [and] save us; *referring to Numbers ii. 28., where, in the account of the march of Israel, the ark was in the centre, and these three tribes encamped behind it: as if he had said, Though the ark be no longer among us, to precede these tribes, yet let that almighty assistance, of which the ark was an emblem, be engaged in our defence.* 3 Turn us again, O God, *reform us from our corruptions,* and cause thy face to shine, *look favourably upon us,* and we shall be saved. 4 O **L**ORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people, *or, angry with us, notwithstanding our*

* Joseph is here put for all Israel, or rather, for the ten tribes; as in the prophets they are often called Ephraim, one of Joseph's descendants.

prayers. 5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; *instead of bread and wine, they have terror and sorrows;* and givest them tears to drink in great measure, *by gallons, a very emphatical expression.* 6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours; *they are continually contradicting and opposing us:* and our enemies laugh among themselves, *at the confidence we place in thee.* 7 Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. 8 Thou hast brought a choice vine out of Egypt, *thy church and people Israel;* thou hast cast out the heathen inhabitants, and planted it *in the land of Canaan.* 9 Thou preparedst [room] before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land; *they multiplied till they filled the country.* 10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof [were like] the goodly cedars. *It should be rendered, Its shadow covered the hills, and its boughs the goodly cedars; as if he had said, We obscured the glory of the greatest nations, and made the neighbouring kings tributary to us.* 11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river; *to the Mediterranean sea, and to the river Euphrates.* 12 Why hast thou [then] broken down her hedges, *withdrawn thy protection,* so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? *we are become a prey to all our neighbours.* 13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field, *fierce and furious enemies,* doth devour it. 14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; *be reconciled to us, repair our breaches, and renew thy protection;* 15 And we beseech thee to remember, *it is the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch [that] thou madest strong for thyself; for thy own special delight, service and honour,* Isa. xlix. 3. 16 [It is] burned with fire, [it is] cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance; *thy people are destroyed, like the numerous branches of a vine when cut off from the tree.* 17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man [whom] thou madest strong for thyself; *raise up some deliverer for us, worthy of being called the man of thy right hand, that is, one whom thou wilt strengthen and animate for the restoration of Israel.* 18 So will not we go back from thee; *we will not practise idolatry again:* quicken us, and we will call upon thy name; *will worship and obey thee continually.* 19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may hence learn some proper titles by which to address the blessed God, *v. 1.*, as *the shepherd of Israel*, who still guides and feeds the church; as enthroned in glory on the mercy-seat, with thousands of angels and cherubim surrounding him. Our hearts will by this means be impressed, at once with his greatness and goodness, and our addresses be both reverent and cheerful.

2. We may plead the arguments which are here used for the jewish church, in favour of the christian. God planted the gospel as *a choice vine*, made room for its wonderful increase, and a wider spread than ever the jewish religion had; and he hath preserved this vine to the present day. It was early planted by him in this land; and his goodness hath secured it; while so many other churches have been ravaged and destroyed; while, in many parts, the vineyard of God is only a nursery of poisonous weeds, or *the degenerate plants of a strange vine*. Let us pray that God would heal the disorders of his church, repair its breaches, and root out every plant that is not of his own right-hand planting.

3. We should be thankful for the deliverers which God hath raised up, especially for Christ. Kings have been raised up in many nations, especially in this, who have been nursing fathers to his vine; *he has made them strong for himself*, and honoured them, as instruments of supporting his church and securing its praises. But we should be especially thankful for Christ, who is, by way of eminence, *the man of God's right hand*; whom he hath raised up to accomplish a great and everlasting salvation; who guards the church with watchful eyes, and will never suffer the gates of hell to prevail against it.

4. We are here taught the importance of the divine favour at all times, but more especially in times of extremity. The burden of this song is a suitable prayer for our nation, that God would turn us to himself by repentance and reformation, and then *cause his face to shine upon us*. There is no hope of his favour but by reformation; nor is this to be expected but by converting grace. Let it then be the subject of our daily prayer, both for our nation and our churches.

5. When God has wrought out deliverances for us, let us be careful not to revolt from him any more. When he hath rescued us from death and danger, from slavery, or from sin, let it be our

resolution never *to go back from him*, never to desert the cause he hath espoused, or the good ways he hath marked out for us to walk in; but we should remember, that we need the quickening influences of his Spirit, to preserve us from apostacy. If he puts life into our souls, it will put fervour and liveliness into our prayers; and this will be the means of strengthening our graces and comforting our hearts.

PSALM LXXXI.

To the chief musician upon Gittith, [A Psalm] of Asaph.

This psalm was composed to be used at the feast of trumpets, which was instituted in remembrance of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, and the giving of the law at mount Sinai.

1 **SING** aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. 2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. 3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. 4 For this [was] a statute for Israel, [and] a law of the God of Jacob. 5 This he ordained in Joseph [for] a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt *to destroy their first-born, and to deliver his people*: [where] I heard a language [that] I understood not. *The people of Israel are frequently represented as one person, and so is the christian church. Israel did not understand the language of Egypt, which made their oppression more grievous; and probably the pious among them might be desirous that their children should not learn the language of Egypt, lest they should be corrupted by their idolatry. God is then introduced as declaring his kindness to them, and regard for them.* 6 I removed his shoulder from the burden; *delivered them from slavery*: his hands were delivered from the pots, *their dirty employments*; and so I acquired a right to their obedience. 7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder; *probably referring to God's answering them out of the cloud, from which the thunder came which vexed the Egyptians in the Red sea, and put them into confusion*: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah, or strife, Numb. xx. 13. Selah. *And this was the language of all,* 8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me, *and learn the way to be happy*;

9 There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god *of thy own, or of any other nation.* This is the principal thing, the first and fundamental article of the covenant between me and thee; for 10 I [am] the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it; *enlarge thy desires, and I will satisfy them, if thou art faithful and obedient.* 11 But notwithstanding this encouragement, my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me; *they would not be content with me alone as their God, nor submit to my government.* 12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: [and] they walked in their own counsels; *I left them to the sad consequences of their own inventions and iniquities, though with reluctance.* 13 Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, [and] Israel had walked in my ways! 14 I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries; *I would have led them directly into Canaan if they had been obedient, and would not have suffered any of their enemies to rule over them or oppress them.* 15 The haters of the LORD, *that is, the Canaanites,* should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever; *I would have made them submit however unwillingly, and have given Israel a lasting settlement.* 16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat, *that is, the inner part of it;* and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee; *they should have been blessed with the greatest prosperity.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may hence infer, that it is reasonable we should remember, and praise, God for his wonderful appearances in our favour; and celebrate his goodness to our ancestors and to us in them, in removing the burdens of popery and arbitrary power from their shoulders, and in restoring and preserving their civil and religious liberties. Though we have no divine statute for observing annual days in commemoration of such appearances, it may be proper and useful at certain times, to call them to mind, and renew our thankfulness for them: and we have a divine statute for praising him every day, especially every Lord's day, for our deliverance by Christ. This we should do with the warmest affection; *making a joyful noise to our God.*

2. We, as God's preserved and favoured people, should dili-

gently hearken to his voice. He testifies to us his will, and requires that we attend to him; he says nothing but what is weighty and interesting; he requires that we devote ourselves to him; that we serve no other god, neither any idol, nor money, nor our belly, each of which by the apostle is termed idolatry; and upon these conditions he will own us as his people.

3. We are here encouraged to enlarge our desires after spiritual and eternal blessings. God's language to us is, *Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.* *We are not straitened in God,* let us therefore keep up our faith and raise our expectations, since there is enough in him to satisfy all our desires; he is *able* and willing to *do for us exceeding abundantly, above all we can ask or think.* As he does not think any thing too good to give his obedient people, they should seek his favour with faith and hope, nothing doubting.

4. We are led to adore the divine goodness for speaking in so condescending a manner, even as wishing the happiness of his people. *O that my people had hearkened unto me!* It would have pleased him to have seen them obedient, and to have poured out his blessings upon them. He is still unwilling that any should perish, still taketh pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. Let us therefore not reject the counsel of God against ourselves, but walk diligently in his ways.

5. Let us dread the misery of being given up to our heart's lusts. This is the sorest judgment on this side hell. Those who go on in the indulgence of their lusts, who disobey the commands and resist the Spirit of God, may be so given up, suffered to walk in the way they choose, till it ends in perdition. Christianity is a warfare; it requires mortification and self-denial. Let us earnestly beg the continued abode of the Spirit of God with us, in order that we may be resolute and unwearied in crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts.

6. Let us make it the governing maxim of our lives, that to obey and please God, is the only way to present and everlasting happiness. He tells Israel what he would have done for them, if they had been obedient; if we are so, God will bless us with all that plenty and prosperity which he knows to be good for us; he will, besides this, feed us with the bread of life, and make us victorious over every enemy: and thus shall we be prepared for his everlasting favour

PSALM LXXXII.

A Psalm of Asaph.

Many commentators apply this Psalm to the days of Hezekiah, when, notwithstanding the reformation he made in the worship of Judah, and in other instances, yet there were great corruptions among the magistrates, as is evident from the beginning of Isaiah's prophecy. But it is to be feared that these abominations prevailed in other kings' reigns; so that it is difficult to ascertain the particular time when this, and many other, Psalms were composed.

1 **G**OD standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods; *he observes all that is said and determined upon in the courts of justice and councils of state, and will call the greatest of men to a strict account.* 2 How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? *screen them from justice, or give causes in their favour, because they are rich and give bribes, or powerful, and their resentment is feared?* Selah. 3 Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. 4 Deliver the poor and needy: rid [them] out of the hand of the wicked; *do justice to all, and take especial care of the poor, and those who have no friends or helpers. But, alas!* 5 They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness; *they are wilfully ignorant, inconsiderate, and obstinate; they take no care how they determine, provided it serves their own interest: all the foundations of the earth, the land, are out of course, truth and justice, which are the great supports of civil society, are disregarded; there is nothing but confusion and disorder, and no man's property is secure. Hear then the sentence of God himself, the supreme Judge;* 6 I have said, Ye [are] gods; and all of you [are] children of the most High; *I have invested you with power and dignity, and given you commission to rule others. See John x. 34.* 7 But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes; *like other unjust judges and oppressive tyrants, who have come to an untimely and miserable end.* 8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; *take the work into thine own hand, and see justice done to thy people: for thou shalt inherit all nations, or, do thou inherit them; thou art Lord of all the world, and canst easily restore justice, order, and security to us.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is of great importance to preserve upon our minds a sense of the universal presence and providence of God ; that he is every where present, supreme president of every prince's council, and of every court of justice ; he observes their debates and determinations, and remembers all they say and do. It is of great moment that the mighty, the earthly gods, should consider this, that they may act as *the ministers of God for good, and be terrors to evil-doers*. It is of consequence that we all consider it, to quicken and encourage our prayers for our rulers, and to comfort us when we see the throne of judgment, and that iniquity is there. There are higher powers than they ; and there is a day coming, when all causes shall be re-heard, all human judgments reversed or confirmed ; and the Judge of the whole earth shall do right.

2. We may learn the vanity of all mortal dignity and glory. Nobles, princes, emperors, though styled gods, and children of the most High, die like common men, and lie down alike in the dust. It would be well if they would consider their frailty and mortality, as it would preserve them from exercising tyranny and oppression, and excite them to be public blessings. And this should teach us to cease from man, and not to put our trust in princes ; and to pray for them, that they may consider their latter end, and the solemn account to which they are hastening ; that they may *do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God*.

3. We are here taught to pray for the wider spread of the gospel, and the universal government of God by Jesus Christ : that God would judge the earth and rule the nations, agreeably to that plan of government he has established by his dear Son ; that the maxims of his gospel may prevail, to banish tyranny, injustice, violence, and persecution out of the world ; and that all the kingdoms *of the earth may become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his anointed*.

PSALM LXXXIII.

A Song [or] Psalm of, or for, Asaph.

This Psalm is generally thought to have been composed on occasion of the attack made upon Israel by the Moabites and Ammonites in the time of Jehoshaphat.

1 **K**EEP not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God; *silence their tumults, and confound their attempts.* 2 For lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head, *as if they were already successful.* 3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones, *thy favourite people, whom thou hast hitherto protected.* 4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from [being] a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance; *hoping utterly to extirpate them.* 5 For they have consulted together with one consent; *and with all their different interests, they are confederate against thee, thy people, religion, and government:* 6 The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; 7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; 8 Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot; *that is, the Moabites, and Ammonites, who were the principals in this war.* Selah. 9 Do unto them as [unto] the Midianites; as [to] Sisera, as [to] Jabin, *the Midianites and Canaanites, who were destroyed by Gideon and Baruch, at the brook of Kison:* 10 [Which] perished at En-dor: they became [as] dung for the earth. 11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb, *whom the Edomites slew:* yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna, *whom Gideon slew;* 12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession; *let us destroy the pleasant parts of the land, and especially the house of God.* 13 O my God, make them like a wheel, *a rolling thing, as the same word is rendered in Isaiah xvii.* 13., as the stubble* before the wind; *uncertain in their counsels, unsettled in their possession of this land, and unstable in all their ways.* 14 As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth

* The word properly signifies *the down of the thistle*, which is wafted about with every breath of air.

the mountains on fire, *that is, the trees and woods on the mountains**; 15 So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm; *pursue them with irresistible vengeance, and scatter them as the whirlwind does the chaff and the stubble.* 16 Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD; *confess thy superior power, and entreat thy favour: as for those who will not do it,* 17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever: yea, let them be put to shame, and perish, *that is, so confounded and weakened, that they may give us no further trouble.* 18 That [men,] *they, yea, and all around,* may know that thou, whose name alone [is] JEHOVAH, [art] the most high over all the earth; *not only the tutelary deity of Israel, but the supreme God, the Lord and governor of all the earth.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE here see what is the refuge of good men under the greatest troubles and alarms, namely, the power and goodness of God, to which they apply by prayer; this is their hope amidst formidable conspiracies and imminent dangers. God sometimes seems to retire, and keep silence, in order to quicken their prayers, and convince them that their only hope is in him. Let this excite us to pray; since *God hath never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain.*

2. See what use we are to make of the histories contained in scripture. When we are reading the bible, and observe God's interpositions for his church and people, we should draw encouragement from thence, to pray and hope; when we think how many mighty princes he has confounded and destroyed, how many formidable confederacies he has disunited, and by their strong alliances made their defeat and shame the more remarkable. Let us learn to cast our care upon him; to banish despair and anxious fears; for *he is still the same.*

3. We here see what we should chiefly have in view in our prayers against our enemies; not their destruction, but their reformation; not so much that they may be filled with shame, as that they may *seek God's name.* That their disappointments may bring them to consideration and repentance. It should likewise

* Here is a reference to what often happens in hot countries, where the lightning sets the trees and woods on fire. It is an emblem frequently made use of by Homer and other poets, to express the conquest of a powerful army.

be our desire that others may learn these useful lessons from thence, that **JEHOVAH**, the supreme, self-existent, eternal God, is above all kings and gods; that they may *serve the Lord with fear, and give him the glory due to his name.*

PSALM LXXXIV.

To the chief musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

This is one of the most excellent psalms in this whole collection, and perhaps has done more than any other to excite devout affections in the hearts of God's worshippers, and to assist them in their religious exercises. It is a psalm that is proper to be read or sung and meditated upon every Lord's day morning. It was composed by David when he was driven from Jerusalem by Absalom's rebellion.

1 **H**OW amiable [are] thy tabernacles, *thy house, and the several courts of it! I cannot express my affection for them, O LORD of hosts! of the hosts of angels who attend thy divine presence.*
2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the **LORD**: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God; *I am ready to faint and sink, because my hope is so long deferred.*
3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, [even] thine altars, **O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God; that is the place of my chief delight, from which I am still kept at a distance. **4** Blessed [are] they that dwell in thy house, *the priests and Levites who stately attend there: they will be still praising thee; are continually engaged in the delightful work of praise.* Selah. **5** Blessed [is] the man whose strength [is] in thee; *who relies so entirely on thy protection, as to leave his habitation to go three times a year to thy tabernacle: in whose heart [are] the ways [of them,] or, whose heart is in the way thither.* **6** [Who] passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools; *who, though they pass through the sandy, uncomfortable valley of Baca, (the worst road to Jerusalem) make it a well; their heart being so set on the journey, that they easily dispense with the inconveniences of the way, and are content with any standing water left in the pits dug for the purpose of receiving it.* **7** They go from**

strength to strength, *from company to company; they overtake several companies, and get before them through their eager zeal to be at thine house.* Or, *if we take it according to our translation, it intimates, that notwithstanding the length and fatigue of the journey, they go on resolutely; the body borrows vigour from the mind, and the fervency of their love to thy house keeps up their spirits, and preserves them from being tired; [every one of them] in Zion appeareth before God. These are happy persons, with all their difficulties; but, alas! I am kept at a distance; therefore,* 8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer *to be restored to thy house; give ear, O God of Jacob.* Selah. 9 Behold, O God our shield, *the defence of thy people, and look upon the face of thine anointed; look favourably on me, thine anointed servant; behold which way my face is turned, even to thy tabernacle, where I long to be.* 10 For a day in thy courts [is] better than a thousand *any where else; pursuing the most profitable business, or in scenes of pleasure: I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, have the meanest office, and do the most servile work there, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness, inhabit the most magnificent edifice of the wicked.* 11 For the LORD God [is] a sun *to enlighten our darkness, and shield, to protect us from every evil: the LORD will give grace, by the strengthening and comforting influences of his Spirit, and glory; future, everlasting glory: no good [thing] will he withhold from them that walk uprightly, or sincerely.* 12 O LORD of hosts, blessed [is] the man that trusteth in thee; *who maintains an humble confidence in thy goodness, though he may for a while be deprived of those comfortable enjoyments in thy house.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us learn from this psalm, highly to value the ordinances of religion; to cultivate that fervent affection to them, which David here expresses; and to esteem religious exercises, our most delightful employment. God's house is the most pleasant place, and the Lord's day, religiously spent, is better than a thousand days employed in sin or even in lawful business or pleasure. Let us learn to try ourselves by this mark whether we are godly, or not, by the love we have to God's ordinances, and the delight we take in them. It is to be feared, that when weighed in this balance, many *will be found wanting, whom bad*

roads or weather often keep from the public assembly; who are discouraged by every little difficulty or disorder, and who instead of pressing on (like the pious Israelites) to be the first there, appear every sabbath as if they studied to be among the last; as if they came with reluctance, and had no hearty inclination to the work before them. Blessed be God, all are not of this mind; the ministerial work would then be more difficult and discouraging than it is.

2. Let us be thankful for the opportunities we have of going so frequently to the house of God. Very few among us have far to go; the word is nigh to us; and God's sanctuary is near at hand. Blessed be God, that we are not like the Psalmist, driven by our enemies to a distance from our own houses and from God's temple. Let us be thankful for the superior advantages we have for knowing God and our duty, and of enjoying communion with him; and for the fuller communication of the Spirit, which we have reason to expect. This should make us value our privileges, and glorify God in the improvement of them; else we may provoke him in righteous judgment to lay us under the restraints of providence, and by pain and weakness confine us from his house.

3. We should labour to secure the favour of God, as the consequence of all our approaches to him. We should often think of the blessed God in this amiable view, as our *sun and shield, our light, and our defence*. If we walk uprightly, are sincere and spiritual in our worship, and have our conversation in simplicity and godly sincerity, he will enlighten and protect us, give us grace here and glory hereafter; every good thing in this world, and heaven at last. In the use of these means, let it be our prayer and endeavour that we may *go from strength to strength*, till we join with our fellow-christians in the work and service of heaven.

PSALM LXXXV.

To the chief musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

This psalm seems evidently to have been written after the return of the Jews from Babylon, probably while the building of the temple was interrupted in Ezra's time by the evil suggestions of their adversaries.

1 **L**ORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob, *and thereby showed that*
 2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin; *their idolatry and other sins for which they had been sent into captivity.* Selah. 3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned [thyself] from the fierceness of thine anger, *which otherwise would like fire have consumed us; but still our enemies oppose our comfortable settlement, therefore* 4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease; *complete the deliverance, and remove those new vexations and all the evils we groan under.* 5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? *it is enough that former generations have felt it so heavily, and we hoped that this would have a respite.* 6 Wilt thou not revive us again; *not only establish our liberty and prosperity, but revive thy worship and the interests of religion; that thy people may rejoice in thee, without any thing to damp their pleasure?* 7 Show us thy mercy, O **L**ORD, and grant us thy salvation. 8 I will hear, *diligently attend to,* what God the **L**ORD will speak *in answer to these prayers; I will attend to the operations of his providence, and the secret intimations of his Spirit to me;* for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. 9 Surely his salvation [is] nigh them that fear him; *I have a cheerful persuasion that it is so; that glory may dwell in our land, by the restoration of his worship among us, and making it effectual to the purposes of practical religion.* 10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed [each other,] *like friends that had been long absent; sobriety, justice, peace, and good order prevail among us.* 11 Truth shall spring out of the earth, *like plants after a long winter;* and righteousness shall look down from heaven; *a righteous God shall*

look down with pleasure and approbation upon us. 12 Yea, as a proof of it, the LORD shall give [that which is] good; and our land shall yield her increase; he shall grant us abundance of plenty. 13 Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set [us] in the way of his steps; our reformation shall bring us into the way of his blessing; and as he passes by, he will open his hand and shower down blessings upon us.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET the psalmist's prayer, resolution, and hope, be ours. We here see what this pious man was chiefly concerned about, namely, the presence and blessing of God, and the revival of religion. Let us be frequently offering up these petitions for our land, that God would *turn us from our iniquity*, and cause all the tokens of his anger to cease; that he would revive his own work, the work of religion, and show mercy to a guilty people, who deserve his fierce anger. Let us, with the psalmist, call to remembrance our past experience of his goodness and mercy, as an encouragement to our prayers.

2. Let us resolve, with the psalmist, *to hear what God the Lord will speak*. If we expect that he should hear our prayers, we must hear what he commands; what he speaks by his providence and by his word. Whatever public alarms and calamities affect us, *he will speak peace to his people*; and as far as we enjoy that peace, we should be thankful, and be very careful that we *never return to folly*. This would show the highest ingratitude, and provoke him to turn upon us, and do us hurt, after he hath done us good.

3. Let us encourage ourselves with the hope, that if we continue in prayer and are obedient to God's voice, justice, truth, mercy, and peace will abound in our land; and the happy consequence of that will be all national prosperity. Let us observe and remember how justly this noble description is applicable to the blessings of the gospel. *God's salvation is nigh to us*; the glory of christianity dwells in our land. In the scheme of redemption by Christ, God's mercy and truth, his righteousness and reconcileableness, appear in perfect harmony; through this scheme, all spiritual blessings abound to us; God hath *set us in the way of his steps*; in the way that he approves; in the way which leads to everlasting happiness: Oh that we may be careful *never to depart from it!*

PSALM LXXXVI.

A Prayer of David.

Written in a time of great distress. It is remarkably plain and intelligible, without any poetical flights, as all our prayers should be; and will therefore need very little illustration.

1 **BOW** down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I [am] poor and needy. 2 Preserve my soul; for I [am] holy, *that is, devoted to thy service, and innocent of what my enemies lay to my charge:* O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. 3 Be merciful unto me, O LORD: for I cry unto thee daily. 4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. 5 For thou, LORD, [art] good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. 6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. 7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me. 8 Among the gods [there is] none like unto thee, O LORD; neither [are there any works] like unto thy works. 9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O LORD, and shall glorify thy name; *referring to the many proselytes made to the Jewish religion in David's and Solomon's time, and it may extend to the spread of the gospel.* 10 For thou [art] great, and doest wondrous things: thou [art] God alone. 11 Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name; *let it be entirely free from distracting cares and fears, constantly employed in thy service, and may all my affections centre in thee.* 12 I will praise thee, O LORD my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore. 13 For great [is] thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell, *from the grave.* 14 O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent [men] have sought after my soul, *or life;* and have not set thee before them. 15 But thou, O LORD, [art] a God full of compassion, and gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. 16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid; *have respect to the prayers, the tears, and the piety of an aged*

mother. 17 Show me a token for good; that they which hate me may see [it,] and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me; *not only preserved me, but made me comfortable, by the tokens of thy favour and friendship.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here taught how to conceive of the blessed God, especially in our addresses to him; as *very great*; as a Being whose nature and works are unparalleled; as the former and ruler of all nations: and likewise consider him as *very good*; *ready to forgive*; *merciful*, and plenteous in mercy. We should particularly observe and acknowledge that mercy in our eminent deliverances from death; and especially in the deliverance of our souls from hell, by his pardoning and renewing grace. This goodness of God is a great encouragement in all our addresses to him. It is a great comfort, when we meet with cruelty, unfaithfulness, or unkindness from men. Let us therefore entertain great and honourable thoughts of God, and *give him the glory of his goodness and mercy.*

2. We learn from the example of David, to be constant and fervent in our applications to the throne of grace; to *cry unto God daily*; *make supplication*, and *lift up our souls to him.* The lifting up of the eyes and hands, and bending the knees, will avail nothing, except the soul be lifted up and our hearts sincerely and devoutly accompany the words we utter, or those we hear from the person who leads the devotion. If we hope for help in answer to our prayers in times of adversity, we must make a daily serious business of prayer in times of prosperity. The neglect of this duty is the source of great wickedness, *v. 14.* Setting God before us, and daily conversing with him, will keep us from offending him and injuring our fellow-creatures; and then *he will rejoice our souls.*

3. We should especially pray that our souls may be engaged in the fear and service of God. A most excellent, important, and comprehensive petition this is, that he would *unite our hearts* in his worship; that our hearts may be sincere, our thoughts fixed, and that we may serve him without distraction: that in our christian work we may not be double-minded, and have our hearts divided between God and the world; that we may be fixed for him, notwithstanding every temptation; and that all our aims, views and intentions may be to please and glorify him. The influence

of his Spirit is necessary to produce this effect; and that he would bestow it, should be the subject of our fervent prayer; and with these we must also join a care *to keep our hearts with all diligence.*

4. The children of religious parents should plead their relation to God and to them. Thus David pleads for mercy because he was *God's servant, and the son of his handmaid.* He had a pious mother, from whom he received excellent instructions, and a good example. Let children who have been solemnly devoted to God by their pious parents, and entered into his church and family, remember that they are his servants by an indisputable claim; and if they observe the rules, and submit to the discipline, of his family, they are entitled to the privileges of it. Let them never forsake their fathers' God; remembering, *that if they seek him, he will be found of them; but that if they forsake him, he will cast them off for ever.*

PSALM LXXXVII.

A Psalm [or] Song for the sons of Korah.

The learned are not agreed when this short typical psalm was composed, nor about the meaning of it. It is generally thought that it was composed after the captivity, when the foundation of the temple was laid; and that it is a prophecy of the prevalence of religion in the rising church, and of the honour which God would confer on that place, by making it subservient to the support of piety: but some understand it as a prophecy of the christian church. The psalmist had been contemplating the kind appearances of God for the Jews, in restoring them to their country and to their temple worship, and begins abruptly.

1 **HIS** foundation, *that is, the foundation of God's temple, [is] in the holy mountains*.* 2 The LORD loveth the gates of Zion, *the place of resort, Jerusalem and Zion, where the temple and ark were, more than all the dwellings of Jacob, more than any other cities in the land of Canaan, though he takes delight in them.* 3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God, *by David and other*

* Moriah was the hill on which the temple was built, but as the tabernacle in David's time had stood upon mount Zion, which was near the other, and some of the appendages to the temple might extend to Zion, the psalmist takes in both; they are called holy, because God was worshipped there.

holy men, who loved thy gates; and they have foretold still more glorious things of thee, as typical of the christian church. Selah.

4 I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this [man] was born there. 5 And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the Highest himself shall establish her*. 6 The LORD shall count when he writeth up the people, [that] this [man] was born there; *when he comes to look over the catalogue of his people, the number of those who were born in Zion, that is, who were truly religious, shall be many more than those to be found in much larger and more populous countries. Selah.* 7 As well the singers as the players on instruments [shall be there:] all my springs [are] in thee †.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here taught to adore God for the glorious things he hath spoken of his church, especially the christian church. The scripture abounds with declarations of its beauty and glory, and with prophecies of its increase and establishment; and they are spoken by him whose *judgment is according to truth*. When God hath said such glorious things of it, it matters very little what ill things men may say. *He loves the dwellings of Jacob*, takes delight

* Some understand these two verses as the words of the psalmist, and translate them thus; 'In mentioning among my acquaintance Rahab, that is, Egypt, and Babylon, and some adjoining countries, the common phrase is, *This man was born there*; as if he had said, 'I do not deny other countries their due praise; they have produced now and then a famous man, renowned for wisdom or bravery; but of Zion it shall be said, *This and That man was born in her*; it has produced many eminent persons.' Others understand them as the words of God; as if he had said, 'There shall be found in Egypt and Babylon some that know me, some few persons of real piety; but of Zion, *one and another*, that is, many persons eminent for wisdom and piety; and no wonder, for the Highest shall establish her, that is, settle her peace and worship again, protect her from enemies, and form her inhabitants to the most excellent qualities.'

† There are many different translations of this verse; the most probable sense is this; 'When God comes to recount the number of pious worshippers, I hope there will be many Levites among them, who were singers and players on instruments, (perhaps the author of this psalm was one), persons who attended the temple service only to exercise their skill in delighting the ear, or to procure the salary allotted, but who shall be found in the list of the truly devout.' Some translate the verse thus; 'The singers and players on instruments shall say, *All my springs are in thee*;' and make the last clause an independent sentence; as if he had said, *Here is the source of all my pleasures; the springs of my best delights are in Zion, in the worship and service of God. Or it may intimate that there shall be a constant succession of such pious persons, following one another like water from a spring; and it may refer to the hope the psalmist had with regard to the rising age, and particularly to his own children, all my springs are in thee*; as if he had said, *May those who descend from me, be among those whom the Lord shall reckon up, and whom he shall delight to bless and honour.*

in religious families, and in the worship paid to him by them; but he has peculiar pleasure in social worship. Let this be a motive to us to join ourselves to his church; never to be ashamed of our relation to it; and to behave so, that we may be an honour, and not a reproach, to it.

2. Let us dwell on the delightful thought, that there are some out of the pale of the visible church, who are truly pious, and whom God will own as his children. The psalm intimates, that among the heathen there may be here and there one, who is eminent for knowledge and virtue, who worships and fears the true God, and works righteousness, and consequently shall be accepted of him. This thought should preserve us from rash censures of the heathen world; and as there is but here and there one, it should excite our fervent prayers that the boundaries of the christian church may be enlarged, and that the children of God may be more numerous.

3. It should be our serious concern that we may be among the number of those who are born in Zion. There is a sense in which we are all born in Zion, as we are born to the external privileges of God's church and people: but unless we are born again, of the word and the Spirit, the greater will be our condemnation. It is a great privilege to be born of religious parents; but those who enjoy it should remember, that *some shall come from Babylon and Egypt, from Tyre and Ethiopia, and sit down in the kingdom of God; while the disobedient children of the kingdom shall be cast out.* Let us remember that *God writes up the people*; keeps an exact register of those who belong to him, and that if our names are not found written in that book of life, whatever be our privileges and hopes, *it had been better for us that we had never been born.*

4. We should endeavour to increase the triumph of the church, by promoting serious religion in all about us, particularly in the rising generation. Parents especially should be very solicitous that their children may be *a seed to serve the Lord.* In order to that, let them be brought early to the gates of Zion, and put in the way of God's blessing: let them be taught the nature of religious worship, and how to improve it, and may God prosper all our pious endeavours; that *they may be his in that day when he maketh up his jewels.*

PSALM LXXXVIII.

A Song [or] Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the chief musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, some instrument or poetical measure, unknown to us, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite, or, a Psalm of Heman the Ezrahite, giving instruction.

1 **O** LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day [and] night before thee: 2 Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; 3 For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. 4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man [that hath] no strength: 5 Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, *like one of their society, free of that large body*, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand, *from the care and conduct of thy providence*. 6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps; *I am given up by my friends, and look upon myself as past hope*. 7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted [me] with all thy waves; *with a great variety of troubles, which crowd upon me and press me down*. Selah. 8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: [I am] shut up, and I cannot come forth; *my friends have deserted me, and I am confined by long sickness and distress*. 9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee. 10 Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise [and] praise thee? *I shall soon be among the dead, and have no hope of praising and serving thee there*. Selah. 11 Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave? [or] thy faithfulness in destruction? 12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? *that is, in the grave*. 13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee; *I will offer up my prayer before the usual hour in which I was wont to perform my devotion*. 14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul? [why] hidest thou thy face from me; 15 I [am] afflicted and ready to die from [my] youth up: [while] I suffer thy terrors I am distracted; *hurried and confused by a variety of fears and anxieties*. 16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off.

17 They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. 18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, [and] mine acquaintance into darkness; *some of them are dead, others through my own sin and folly have forsaken me; but in all this I would see and acknowledge thy hand.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE here see into what distress a good man may be brought. The psalm is a lively description of a person under long and tedious sickness, and prevailing melancholy, who is full of dismal apprehensions of his own case, and dark conclusions about the state of his soul; and this prevailing to such a degree as to make him almost distracted, and put him out of the possession of his own mind. Let not wise and good men, when they fall into such afflictions, think their case singular, but remember what this holy man went through. This, and some other of the psalms in which a like case is described, have been encouraging to melancholy christians, and the means of preserving them from despair; and in this view are a very valuable part of the sacred writings.

2. We see what is to be the refuge of a good man when in deep distress. Faith in God, expressed and cherished by prayer; acknowledging him as *the God of salvation*; who hath often appeared for the support of his servants, and perhaps for the afflicted person himself in the former seasons of distress. *Is any man thus afflicted? let him pray*: pray earnestly and daily; this will support the soul, while the burden continues; till at length God will hear, and set it entirely free.

3. We see with what thankfulness we ought to survey our own case. There are but few to whom any part of this mournful description is applicable; and it may be hoped none of us, to whom it is altogether so. This should excite us gratefully to acknowledge the goodness of God in the health of our bodies and the peace of our minds; in the support we have under our affliction; and for the presence and kindness of our relations and friends; which doubles all the joys of health and prosperity, and helps to lighten the burdens of sickness and sorrow. Let us often think what calamities and distresses others endure; and especially the anguish which wounds their spirits; that we may thankfully acknowledge and carefully improve the distinguishing goodness of God to us, though we have deserved worse than all this from him, to whose mercy it is owing that we are not consumed.

4. Let this psalm engage our pity and prayers for those who are oppressed with sickness and melancholy. Their real afflictions are bad, and their imaginary ones much worse. Let us be very careful that we never, by any unkind word, add affliction to the afflicted, and aggravate their sorrows. *To him that is any way afflicted*, especially to him who is troubled in spirit, *pity should be shown by his friends*; and a man had better have all his friends put far from him, and his acquaintance into darkness, than to have those who remain, slighting, vexing, or neglecting him. Let us bear the cases of the afflicted upon our hearts before God, and entreat his pity and help for them; as we know not how soon their case may be ours, and we may want the pity and prayers of others. Thus let us *bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*.

 PSALM LXXXIX.

Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

This psalm was composed at the time of the captivity, when the two last kings were carried captive, and the poor remains of David's family were insulted by their enemies.

1 **I** WILL sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. 2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up, *or established*, for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. 3 I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, 4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah. 5 And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. 6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? [who] among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? 7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all [them that are] about him. 8 O LORD God of hosts, who [is] a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? 9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. 10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy

strong arm. 11 The heavens [are] thine, the earth also [is] thine : [as for] the world and the fullness thereof, thou hast founded them. 12 The north and the south, thou hast created them : Tabor *on the west*, and Hermon *on the east*, shall rejoice in thy name. 13 Thou hast a mighty arm : strong is thy hand, [and] high is thy right hand. 14 Justice and judgment [are] the habitation of thy throne : mercy and truth shall go before thy face, *prepare the way for, and conduct all, thy dispensations. All these considerations are encouragements to hope in God's mercy and faithfulness, though Israel was now in circumstances of distress. In the same view their former happiness is described.* 15 Blessed [is] the people that know the joyful sound of the trumpet, which *blowed over the sacrifices in the day of the solemn assembly ; or rather, the trumpet which proclaimed the jubile : they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance ; live comfortably all their days.* 16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day : and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. 17 For thou [art] the glory of their strength : and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. 18 For the LORD [is] our defence ; and the Holy One of Israel [is] our king ; *or, our shield is of the Lord, and our king is of the holy one of Israel.* 19 Then thou spakest in vision, *or by revelation*, to thy holy one, *to Samuel, or Nathan*, and saidst, I have laid help upon [one that is] mighty ; I have exalted [one] chosen out of the people. 20 I have found David my servant ; with my holy oil have I anointed him : 21 With whom my hand shall be established : mine arm also shall strengthen him. 22 The enemy shall not exact upon him ; nor the son of wickedness afflict him, *so as to overpower him.* 23 And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. 24 But my faithfulness and my mercy [shall be] with him : and in my name shall his horn be exalted. 25 I will set his hand also in the sea, *on the Philistines*, and his right hand in the rivers, *on the Syrians.* 26 He shall cry unto me, Thou [art] my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. 27 Also I will make him [my] first born, higher than the kings of the earth ; *chief among those who are called children of the most High.* 28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. 29 His seed also will I make [to endure] for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. 30 If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments ; 31 If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments ; 32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. 33 Never-

theless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. 35 Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. 36 His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. 37 It shall be established for ever as the moon, and [as] a faithful witness in heaven; *like the moon, which faithfully and regularly measures out our time.* All these declarations intimate, that no other family but that of David should rule while Judah was a kingdom; that that tribe should still subsist, and have power in it, and the family of David be honourable among them till Christ should come. Selah. 38 But thou hast cast off, and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. 39 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant, *thou seemest not to regard it:* thou hast profaned his crown [by casting it] to the ground. 40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. 41 All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours. 42 Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. 43 Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle. 44 Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. 45 The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame; *the royal family is weakened, and the two last kings carried captive in their youth.* Selah. *The psalmist then pleads for this family, that it might be restored, and not put to death, nor spend those lives in misery which could be but short at the best.* 46 How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire? 47 Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? 48 What man [is he that] liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah. 49 LORD, where [are] thy former loving kindnesses, [which] thou swarest unto David in thy truth; 50 Remember, LORD, the reproach of thy servants; [how] I do bear in my bosom, *or lay to heart,* [the reproach of] all the mighty people; 51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed, *who are insulted, as if there was an end of David's family, and Israel's dominion and prosperity.* Nevertheless, *with a cheerful hope that the case will be otherwise, I will say,* 52 Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us learn in times of the greatest trouble and affliction to abound in praise. The psalmist is in deep distress, and utters many mournful complaints of the low state to which the house and kingdom of David were reduced, yet he begins and ends with praise: he largely celebrates God's power, faithfulness, and mercy, though he found it hard to reconcile their present distresses with them. This is a good example to us, to give God the glory of his excellency and his ancient wonders, in our most afflicted state: this will be honourable to God, and a great relief to our own mind. The brighter discoveries we have of his mercy, faithfulness, and wonderful works under the gospel, call upon us *in every thing to give thanks.*

2. Let all our religious services be performed with the highest reverence of God. The inhabitants of heaven adore his wonders; and it becomes his saints when they draw near to him, especially in their public assemblies, to think of his unparalleled glory and perfections; to have their minds abound with the profoundest veneration, and to maintain all the external marks of it. If we would serve God acceptably, it must be done *with reverence and godly fear.*

3. Let us be thankful for the joyful sound of the gospel, and careful to attend to it. If the jewish people were blessed, who had a jubile proclaimed among them once in fifty years, when their debts were cancelled, their inheritances restored, and slaves set at liberty, how happy are we, who so often hear the gospel! and what a joyful sound is that, which proclaims liberty to the captives of satan, cancels our debt to divine justice, and proclaims admission to the heavenly inheritance, which by sin we had forfeited. Let us attend to this sound, and comply with the terms on which these privileges are granted; then shall we walk in the light of God's countenance, possess his favour and love, under a comfortable sense of being accepted of him; and shall have reason to rejoice, notwithstanding all our sufferings and all our fears.

4. We should often contemplate with pleasure the covenant which God hath made with his Son, and with us through him. What is here said of the covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, is very applicable to the covenant of grace made

with believers, who are the spiritual seed of Christ. He is therefore called the son of David, and the mercies of the gospel are styled, *the sure mercies of David*. *God hath laid help on one who is mighty*, and promised him a glorious and everlasting throne. This affords us great encouragement; *thanks be to God, who causeth us always to triumph in Christ! His covenant will he not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips.*

5. Let us remember the frailty and mortality of human nature; this will moderate our joys, lighten our sorrows, and quicken us in our preparations for eternity. Death is the end of all men; of kings, as well as others; yet God hath not made man in vain. There is time enough here, if we improve it well; and especially as there is another world beyond this. In the hope and prospect of this we should rejoice, and say, *Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen.*

PSALM XC.

A Prayer of Moses the man of God.

Occasioned by the sentence which was pronounced upon Israel for their murmuring and other provocations, that all who were above twenty years old when they came out of Egypt should die in the wilderness, and never enter Canaan, except Caleb and Joshua; see Num. xiv. 29, 30.

1 **L**ORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations; *thou hast been a refuge and protection to our fathers in Canaan, and to us in Egypt and in the wilderness, and this is an encouragement to hope that thou wilt not quite forsake us.* 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou [art] God. 3 Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men; *referring to the sentence of death passed on all the human race, 'dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.'* 4 For a thousand years in thy sight [are but] as yesterday when it is past, *and its shortness is more sensible, and [as] a watch in the night, about three hours, the night being divided into four watches.* 5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; *hastily and irresistibly; they are [as] a sleep; they vanish like a*

dream when a man awakes: in the morning [they are] like grass [which] groweth up. 6 In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. 7 For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled; *the source of this destruction is the anger of God against us for our sins*. 8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret [sins] in the light of thy countenance; *by the sentence which is passed upon us, it appears that thou hast brought into the account not only our open, but our secret, sins; those which we have forgotten*. 9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; *under the tokens of thy displeasure*: we spend our years as a tale [that is told*.] 10 The days of our years [are] threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength [they be] fourscore years, yet [is] their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. *Some understand this of those Israelites, who came out of Egypt and died about this age in the wilderness; but it rather refers to the period of human life in general; as if he had said, We do not arrive to the age of our forefathers; and therefore, being doomed to spend our lives in this wilderness, is peculiarly grievous*. 11 Who knoweth, or seriously considers, the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, [so is] thy wrath; *that is, as some understand it, It is greater or less to particular persons, in proportion as they fear thee. But it rather intimates, that God's wrath is equal to a man's fear; the busy imagination of man cannot produce an idea more terrible†.* 12 So teach [us] to number our days, that we may apply [our] hearts unto wisdom; *that we may not repeat the provocations of our fathers, but, seriously considering the vanity of life, may become truly religious*. 13 Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants ‡. 14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy; *give us some token of thy favour, which may be as acceptable and pleasant as the light of the morning after a dark night*; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days, though we spend them in the wilderness. 15 Make us glad accord-

* The word *tale* sometimes signifies a *groan*, a *breath*, or a *thought*; and it intimates the brevity, vanity, and misery of human life; but may here particularly refer to the uncomfortable and seemingly unprofitable manner in which the Israelites lived for so many years in the wilderness.

† Herein Moses seems to lament the little impression this sentence had made upon the people, notwithstanding they saw their brethren dying, and knew they must soon die, therefore he prays as in v. 12.

‡ The sentence was pronounced so solemnly, and confirmed by an oath, that Moses could not entreat that God would revoke that; he must therefore refer to some particular chastisement they were then under; that God would mitigate the severity of it; or at least turn it into kindness, by making it promote their seriousness and repentance.

ing to the days [wherein] thou hast afflicted us, [and] the years [wherein] we have seen evil ; *let our joy in a sense of thy favour, overbalance all the sufferings we endured in Egypt, and what we now endure in the wilderness.* 16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants ; *work for us still in a favourable manner ; do for us the great things thou hast promised, and let us have eyes to see and hearts to own thy goodness ;* and thy glory unto their children, *in bringing them into the land which thou hast promised ; and so make it appear that thou hast not entirely forsaken us.* 17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us ; *shine forth favourably upon us, and let us see as much prosperity as may be a token for good :* and establish thou the work of our hands upon us ; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it ; *prosper our labour, make our arms victorious, and especially let our minds be softened and improved by this awful dispensation of thy providence.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM hence we are taught to reverence and adore the eternal God, as *the dwelling-place of his people in all generations.* It is a most sublime idea which Moses here gives us of God, and a delightful idea of the happiness of his people. He is without beginning of days and end of life ; a thousand years, yea, a thousand ages, bear no proportion to his eternal duration. The human mind is lost in the thought of God's eternity ; but it is a noble support under the loss of our friends, and the changes and alterations of the world, that he will be our dwelling-place amidst all our toils and sufferings, and we shall find in him a sure and a delightful abode.

2. Let us seriously lay to heart the shortness and vanity of human life. Upon this subject we need line upon line, and precept upon precept ; which providence and scripture both afford, in order that we may not forget it amidst the cares and amusements of life. Let us remember, that *all flesh is grass ;* that time, like an irresistible flood, is carrying us all away into the ocean of eternity ; that the period of human life is short, and much of it labour and sorrow. The young, as well as the old, the strong and gay, as well as the sickly and sorrowful, should consider this ; that they may not spend their years in vanity, and hurry them on by excesses, as if they did not move fast enough ; and murder them in sin, as if there was no future account to be given of them.

3. We should endeavour to improve this view of life to the purposes of practical religion. It is a most important prayer which Moses offers in the twelfth verse, *so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*: so to number them, that we may consider our frailty; consider what our work is, and what our duty; and apply our hearts to wisdom, to good ends and proper means, or, to true religion. This lesson requires close application of mind; and though it is so plain and important, we shall not learn it without divine teaching. Let us therefore pray for it; remembering that there is a day coming, when God will judge us for all our sins, open and secret; then careless, trifling sinners shall fall under his wrath: and we may be assured, that his word does not represent that wrath, nor can the human imagination paint it more dreadful than it will prove.

4. We should commit ourselves to the divine protection and favour for the residue of our days, be they more or less. Nothing can satisfy a pious soul but the mercy and favour of God; that is the only source of solid joy. It is our duty *to work with our hands the thing that is good, and to be diligent in business*; but, without his blessing, we shall labour in vain; and, without his favour, the greatest success will afford us no real satisfaction. Let us then offer up this important prayer, that he would *establish the work of our hands*, and that his favour may be upon us and our enjoyments, and *his glory appear to our children*. Then will our minds be easily reconciled to the vanity and shortness of life, and we shall be conducted to that world, which is not subject to these changes; to that world, where he will *make his servants glad according to the days in which he has afflicted them, and the years wherein they have seen evil*.

PSALM XCI.

Neither the author nor the occasion of this psalm are known. It is a noble piece of poetry, describing the safety and happiness of all good men. The psalmist begins with laying down his design, which is, to celebrate the excellency of the divine protection.

1 **H**E that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, *who makes God his refuge*, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty; *shall be as safe, as if he dwelt in the most holy place*

under the cloud of glory. The pious soul is then introduced as answering; 2 I will say of the LORD, [He is] my refuge, and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. And he hath great reason for such a triumph, for it follows; 3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler; from satan, or wicked men who lay a snare for thy life or thy substance; [and] from the noisome, hurtful pestilence. 4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings† shalt thou trust: his truth [shall be thy] shield and buckler‡. 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; [nor] for the arrow [that] flieth by day; 6 [Nor] for the pestilence [that] walketh in darkness; [nor] for the destruction [that] wasteth at noon day; thou shalt be safe from wicked men, from storms and tempests, and the diseases which are occasioned by the coldness of the night or the heat of the day. 7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, in battle or by pestilence; [but] it shall not come nigh thee. 8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked, the divine vengeance overtaking them. 9 Because thou hast made the LORD [which is] my refuge, [even] the most High, thy habitation; 10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling; thou and thy house shall be in security. 11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12 They shall bear thee up in [their] hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone; in both their hands, as the word means, like a nurse carrying her child. 13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet; the meaning is, Thou shalt be as remarkably preserved, as if a man who was walking through a desert should tread on these destructive animals, and yet should not be hurt. In the three last verses God himself is introduced as speaking to confirm all this; 14 Because he hath set his love upon me, that is, delights in me above every thing else, therefore will I deliver him from present enemies; I will set him on high from future dangers, like a man on the top of a strong tower, because he hath known my name, so as to trust in me. 15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him, grant his petition: I [will be] with him to support him in trouble; I will deliver him out of it; and, which*

* The original word signifies, a strong wing, like that of an eagle, which not only reaches a considerable way, but will give a terrible blow.

† This word signifies, the down, or soft part, of the wing or plumage, carrying with it the idea of a pleasant retreat and repose.

‡ This word signifies, a suit of complete armour, which defends on every side.

is more, I will honour him, make him more great and illustrious afterwards. 16 With long life will I satisfy him; he shall live till he is satisfied with life, as long as is good for him, and his relish for life continues; and show him my salvation; he had said before he would save and deliver him, this therefore seems plainly to refer to a future state; when his life ends, I will show him my salvation, the salvation which is by way of eminence mine, as it is great, complete, and eternal.

REFLECTIONS.

1. THESE gracious declarations, and especially if we have had any experience answerable to them, should excite our gratitude and praise. There are none of us but have experienced the divine protection, in innumerable and daily instances; and some of us have been preserved in imminent danger. Let us recollect the care of providence over us and our families, as illustrating the promises of his word. Let us be thankful for the guardianship of good angels, and the many friendly services, which we have reason to believe we receive from them. We should each say of the Lord, *He is my refuge*; and make no scruple to own, on all proper occasions, our dependance on his good providence, and our obligations to it.

2. We should trust in God for deliverance in all future dangers; make him *our habitation*, seek to him, depend upon him, and converse with him; and let the remembrance of his promises preserve us from anxious fear, and that dejection of spirit, which is tormenting to ourselves, uncomfortable to our friends, and dishonourable to religion: a cowardly temper, ill becomes a christian. Let us suppose the worst that can come, and consider what he has said, that we may in patience and calmness possess our souls. Though danger and calamity may be before us, if God does not see good to secure us from them, let us take encouragement that he will be with us in them; give us strength equal to the affliction, and make it productive of righteousness and happiness.

3. Let it be our care and ambition to set our love upon God. It is great condescension in him to permit and invite us to do so. Let us consider him as the best and most excellent of all beings, the most worthy of our highest love; and if we set our love upon him, we should keep it fixed there; and determine to admit no rival

in our hearts. We shall find a return of love, abundantly above what we deserve or could expect. And God's love to us will be manifested by the visits of his grace, and the light of his countenance; yea, by every thing which can promote our peace and happiness.

4. Let us keep up our hearts under the troubles of life by expecting the *salvation of God*. We should not be intent on having many days on earth, but endeavour to be satisfied with so long a life as God sees best; filling it up with active services, and performing the work he gives us to do. If we have good hope of seeing his salvation, we may be well satisfied with life, though we die in the middle or morning of our days. Let us bless God for the hope of this salvation; let it be *our song in the house of our pilgrimage*; and may we be able to say with dying Jacob, *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord*.

PSALM XCII.

A Psalm [or] Song, probably David's, for the sabbath day, praise being proper work on the sabbath.

1 [IT is a] good [thing,] *reasonable, pleasant, and useful*, to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: 2 To show forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, 3 Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound; *to join instruments and voices in this work. I testify this from my own experience*; 4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands, *thy works of creation and providence*. 5 O LORD, how great are thy works! [and] thy thoughts, *thy counsels and designs*, are very deep, *and though we cannot fully comprehend them, we see enough to admire and adore*. 6 A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this. 7 When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; [it is] that they shall be destroyed for ever: 8 But thou, LORD, [are most] high for evermore, *which is a reason why the wicked should be alarmed; God can cut them down hereafter, as well as now; therefore it is no good argument that*

there is no providence, because they prosper at present. 9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered, *how many soever are combined together.* 10 But my horn shalt thou exalt like [the horn of] an unicorn; *thou shalt make me prosperous, exalt and preserve my power**. I shall be anointed with fresh oil; *I shall have a fresh confirmation in my royal dignity.* 11 Mine eye also shall see [my desire] on mine enemies, [and] mine ears shall hear [my desire] of the wicked that rise up against me; *I shall see my enemies brought down and deprived of their power.* 12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, *beautiful and green*: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon †. 13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD, *who have opportunities of attending there at stated seasons of worship*, shall flourish in the courts of our God, *in wisdom and goodness.* 14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; *shall not decay, like trees which have lost their nourishment*; 15 To show that the LORD [is] upright, *kind to his people, and faithful to his promises; and my own experience confirms this, for [he is] my rock, and [there is] no unrighteousness in him.*

 PSALM XCIII.

This psalm is a noble description of the power and majesty of God.

1 **THE** LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, [wherewith] he hath girded himself; *princes have their robes, but he is girded with majesty and strength*: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved. 2 Thy throne [is] established of old: thou [art] from everlasting. 3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; *the multitude of enemies are like a flood*; the floods lift up their waves; *are noisy and tumultuous, and threaten to bear down all before them.* 4 The LORD on high [is] mightier than the

* There is no such creature as a unicorn in the shape it is commonly drawn; but it probably means a rhinoceros.

† Several travellers mention cedars which they saw in Lebanon twelve yards round, with a circumference of branches forty yards in spread. And the cedar is very durable; whereas the wicked are like the grass, which grows speedily, but is soon cut down or withered.

noise of many waters, [yea, than] the mighty waves of the sea; *God can easily silence and restrain them; from whence I infer that his word is faithful, and will be accomplished, all the worshippers of this great Being ought to be eminently holy.* 5 Thy testimonies are very sure : holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

REFLECTIONS ON PSALMS XCII, XCIII.

1. WE learn hence, that praise should be our daily employment, especially our sabbath work. Innumerable favours are daily conferred upon us, which we should be thankful for. We should bless him every morning, for the security and repose of the night; and every night, for the mercies and comforts of the day. It is good and fitting to praise him in our closets and families; but more especially in his house on his own day; when we come to commemorate the wonders of creation, providence, and grace. By these God makes us glad; and it becomes us to *triumph in the work of his hand*; to cherish a grateful impression of his goodness, and *in every thing to give thanks.*

2. Let us carefully observe the conduct of providence, and reverence the depth of its counsels. *Fools and brutish persons regard not the work of the Lord, neither do they consider the operations of his hands.* Those who neglect this, deprive themselves of the highest pleasure and the greatest advantage. But we should all remember, that *his thoughts are very deep*; that there are many mysteries which we cannot fathom. Let us not stumble at them; but rejoice that *God is most high for evermore,* and will at last reveal his righteous judgments to the satisfaction and applause of the whole world.

3. Let us learn to govern our lives by this maxim, that *the triumphing of the wicked is short*, and the honour and joy of the saints eternal. *The wicked spring as the grass*; and like that, *they perish.* Divine vengeance will soon overtake them; and though all the workers of iniquity should join themselves together, they shall be scattered and destroyed. But the righteous shall be exalted and dignified; shall enjoy that holy anointing of the Spirit, which will afford them the highest pleasure, and be the earnest of the heavenly inheritance.

4. We should value and esteem those ordinances which are so useful to christians, and so subservient to their growth in grace; remembering that ordinances are adapted to promote christian

fruitfulness. God has promised to bless them for this purpose ; and the experience of good men confirms this truth. Let us therefore *love the habitation of God's house*, and never forsake it ; *a day in his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.*

5. Let us seriously attend to the instructive inferences which the psalmist draws in the ninety-third psalm ; that since God is so great and powerful a Being, his word may be depended upon, and all his people ought to be holy. Nothing can tempt so great a Being to impose upon his creatures ; and as the highest moral perfections are joined with his natural ones, he expects us to be holy ; that we worship him with great seriousness and solemnity ; and cheerfully trust in him amidst all the storms and tempests, the hurries and confusions of this world. His friendship must be infinitely desirable, and his wrath infinitely dreadful. As holiness becomes his house for ever, may all who worship there be holy, and *serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.*

PSALM XCIV.

This Psalm was probably composed by David during his persecution from Saul. It is an exact description of him and his court.

1 **O** LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth ; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself. 2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth : render a reward to the proud. 3 LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph ? 4 [How long] shall they utter and speak [hard] things ? [and] all the workers of iniquity boast themselves ? 5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage. 6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless ; *probably referring to the slaughter of the priests and their families, and of the Gibeonites, by Saul and his bloody house.* 7 Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard [it ;] *practical atheism is at the bottom ; they laugh at religion and the God of Jacob, however they boast of their knowledge and justice.* 8 Understand, ye brutish among the people ; and [ye] fools, *though you think yourselves the wits and bold spirits of the age,* when will ye be wise ? 9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear ? he that formed the eye, shall he not see ? 10 He that chastiseth the

heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, [shall he not know?] 11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they [are] vanity, *and will make them see it to their confusion.* 12 Blessed [is] the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; 13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, *repose of soul under his afflictions, and deliverance out of them, until the pit be digged for the wicked, for prosperous sinners, into which they shall fall and perish.* 14 For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. 15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it; *however thy judgments may seem at present to depart from righteousness, at last they shall return and be perfectly conformable to it; and all the upright shall attend the triumphs of thy justice in a solemn cavalcade; a strong and beautiful image.* 16 Who will rise up for me against the evil doers? [or] who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity, *whose power is so great?* 17 Unless the LORD [had been] my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. 18 When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up. 19 In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul, *which otherwise would be overwhelmed with sorrow.* 20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? *wilt thou be an assistant to them, confirm their administration, and bear them out in their oppressions, especially those which they do under colour of law and justice?* 21 They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. 22 But the LORD is my defence; and my God [is] the rock of my refuge. 23 And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, *that is, the mischief they contrive for me,* and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; [yea,] the LORD our God shall cut them off.

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM this psalm we are taught that *vengeance belongeth to the Lord.* He alone has a right to avenge, because he is perfectly wise, just, and impartial, and to him belongeth power so to do; and he certainly will call tyrants and oppressors to account. Let us not dare then to usurp his prerogative, but *commit ourselves to him that judgeth righteously.* This is the use which the apostle makes of this thought, *Rom. xii. 19., Dearly beloved, avenge not*

yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

2. Let us adore God as the author of all the senses of the body and the faculties of the mind. He made the eye and the ear, with all their curious and exquisite workmanship. We should praise him that he has given us these organs, and continues the use of them. *He also teaches man knowledge; gives him his capacities and powers of mind; and we should adore him for their continuance, and employ them in his service.* We may also infer from hence, that he must be infinitely wise; he could not give that which he has not: all the capacities and perfections of his creatures he must himself have in the highest degree. It is folly to deny this, and brutishness to forget it and *live without God in the world.*

3. The providence of God, which is exercised towards the heathens, should teach us christians to dread offending him. He hath not left himself without witness among them; he has written his laws in their hearts, and given them notices of his being and attributes; their guilt therefore is inexcusable, and he often chastiseth them for it by some judgment or other; and shall he not much more severely correct wicked christians, who have so many peculiar advantages for knowing God and their duty, and whose guilt therefore must be greater? so that indignation and wrath shall be to the christian first, and also to the heathen.

4. It should be our desire that God would *teach us out of his law.* When we are under the discipline of affliction, he chasteneth us as a father does a child; and it becometh us to know the rod, and him who hath appointed it. But it is desirable that by the help of his word, we may understand the design of his chastisements, and to what purposes they are to be improved. We have need to pray that God would teach us this; and if we learn it, he will give us rest from the days of adversity, which will be peculiarly comfortable; while those who go on in sin, though they may prosper here, shall fall into the pit of destruction. *It is a righteous thing with God to render tribulation to those that trouble his people; and to them that are troubled, rest.*

5. The interest which good men have in the favour of God, affords them satisfaction and relief in the worst of times. How joyfully does the psalmist speak of God, as *his defence, and the rock of his refuge, and the Lord his God.* Though they cannot call their properties or lives their own, it is their comfort that they can call God their own. He will hold them up; amidst their timorous

suspicious and tumultuous thoughts, *his comforts will delight them*; those comforts which come from him and lead to him. Though his judgments are mysterious, though they take a great compass, they will at last come round in such a manner as to appear all to centre in righteousness; and when they do so, good men shall follow them in triumph, and adore the wisdom, the justice, and goodness of the Lord.

PSALM XCV.

We have the authority of Paul to say this Psalm was written by David; and it is applied by him as a warning to christians not to reject or disobey the gospel.

1 **O** COME, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. 3 For the LORD [is] a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4 In his hand [are] the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills, *that is, the high and strong hills*, [is] his also. 5 The sea [is] his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry [land.] 6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. 7 For he [is] *peculiarly* our God, *as Israelites*, and we [are] the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand, *as we are conducted and guided by him*. To-day if ye will hear his voice, 8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, [and] as [in] the day of temptation in the wilderness; *at Massah and Meribah, Exodus xvii. 7., so called from their tempting and provoking God*: 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, *that is, questioned whether they might take my word, unreasonably demanded new proofs of my power, and further security for the performance of my promises to them*, and saw my work. 10 Forty years long was I grieved with [this] generation, and said, It [is] a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways; *they have not attended to and considered what I have done for them, and commanded them to do*: 11 Unto whom I swear in my wrath, *declared solemnly by my own great and holy name*, that they should not enter into my rest.

PSALM XCVI.

We find this Psalm in 1 Chron. xvi., composed on occasion of bringing the ark to mount Zion. The latter part refers to the kingdom of Christ being established in the world, and the happiness it should produce.

1 **O** SING unto the LORD a new song : sing unto the LORD, all the earth. 2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name ; show forth his salvation from day to day. 3 Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. 4 For the LORD [is] great, and greatly to be praised : he [is] to be feared above all gods. 5 For all the gods of the nations [are] idols, *and can do neither good nor harm : but the LORD made the heavens.* 6 Honour and majesty [are] before him : strength and beauty [are] in his sanctuary ; *his presence gives a pomp and splendour, superior to any thing that art can possibly produce.* 7 Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 8 Give unto the LORD the glory [due unto] his name : bring an offering, and come into his courts. 9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness : fear before him, all the earth. 10 Say among the heathen [that] the LORD reigneth, *God hath set up his kingdom among them :* the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved : he shall judge the people righteously ; *he hath established his church, and thereby promoted the peace and happiness of the world.* 11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad ; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. 12 Let the field be joyful, and all that [is] therein : then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice, *the whole creation shall appear beautiful and joyful,* 13 Before the LORD : for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth : he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth ; *he shall govern the world by wise and righteous laws, and promote the felicity of mankind.*

REFLECTIONS on PSALMS XCV, XCVI.

1. WE learn from both these psalms the profound reverence with which God ought to be worshipped. Not only as great above all gods, possessed of honour and majesty, strength and

beauty, above princes and angels, and possessor of heaven and earth; but as our maker, preserver and benefactor. We should therefore approach him with our songs of praise, and draw nigh to him with the greatest reverence; and though bodily exercise profiteth little, yet as it is expressive of the veneration of the mind, and tends to promote it, it appears to be an evident duty, that we should bow down and kneel before the Lord; that is, assume the posture of reverence, usual in our situation; and none can be excused from this, except their infirmities necessarily hinder them, in which case God will have mercy and not sacrifice.

2. The great practical inference from the ninety-fifth psalm we find in *Heb.* iii. 11., viz., That we christians are under peculiar obligations to hear Christ's voice to-day, and not harden our hearts; that we are to consider the judgments of God, upon the unbelieving Jews, as a warning to us; that we attend diligently to God's voice, speaking by Christ, and be cautious, lest we miss of the rest that he has promised. Let us therefore remember that a glorious rest is set before us; infinitely better than Canaan. Let us fear lest a promise being left us, of entering into this rest, any should seem to come short of it. To prevent that, let us not harden our hearts; but be willing to receive divine discoveries, believe divine promises, and comply with all the intimations of God's will. *Take heed, therefore, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief; but exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

3. We learn from the ninety-sixth psalm, how we should be affected towards that kingdom which God has established in the world by Christ. Let us remember that it is founded in righteousness and equity, and administered in wisdom, truth, and goodness; and give God the glory due to his name for this display of his grace; and speak of the excellencies of this kingdom; that we may affect our own hearts, and those of others, therewith. Let us look forward to the final distribution of righteousness and truth to all his creatures, in the latter day. We should rejoice in those delightful scenes which the gospel opens upon us; not cut off ourselves from the universal joy, and appear as it were in mourning, when all nature puts on its most cheerful array. Let us testify our joy by our most ardent praise, our cheerful tempers, and holy lives; and thus *show forth his salvation from day to day.*

PSALM XCVII.

This and the next psalm, like the former, were composed by David. He might intend them as a description of the general joy and happiness of the Messiah's kingdom. He wished to have the Jews encouraged with the expectation of that; and so contrived it, that there should be a variety of sacred poems, all referring to this great event, that they might not be obliged to repeat the same psalm, as often as they had occasion to celebrate this happy state of the church. It need only be observed, that the prophet speaks of future events as if they were passed, to testify his firm belief of them, and the better to describe what should be the workings of our hearts upon the accomplishment of such predictions.

1 **THE LORD** reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad [thereof.] 2 Clouds and darkness [are] round about him: righteousness and judgment [are] the habitation, *or foundation*, of his throne. 3 A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about; *referring to the punishment of the unbelieving Jews.* 4 His lightnings enlightened the world; the earth saw, and trembled. 5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the **LORD**, at the presence of the **LORD** of the whole earth. 6 The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory. 7 Confounded be all they, *that is, they shall be confounded*, that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all [ye] gods; *which the apostle applies to the resurrection of Christ, 'let all the angels of God worship him,'* Heb. i. 6. 8 Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O **LORD**. 9 For thou, **LORD**, [art] high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods. 10 Ye that love the **LORD**, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. 11 Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart; *holiness and joy shall as surely be their portion, as the harvest succeeds the seed-time.* 12 Rejoice in the **LORD**, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness *and faithfulness.*

PSALM XCVIII.

A Psalm.

1 **O** SING unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. 2 The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen, *not in types and figures, as before.* 3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. *And since this blessing extends so far,* 4 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. 5 Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. 6 With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King. 7 Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 8 Let the floods clap [their] hands: let the hills, *let all nature,* be joyful together 9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge, *that is, to rule,* the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity, *and thus diffuse universal happiness.*

REFLECTIONS ON PSALMS XCVII, XCVIII.

1. LET us be thankful that the kingdom of Christ is so far established, and earnestly pray for its complete establishment. God hath manifested himself in the mildest glories by Jesus Christ, and hath remembered the mercy promised to the fathers, and his holy covenant. Christ is come as the messenger of good tidings, and a source of blessings to the world. By his resurrection from the dead, *he is declared to be the Son of God with power,* and the angels of God are commanded to worship him. He is gone into heaven, angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject to him. And, blessed be God, his salvation is published among the heathens, and that openly. *Let the multitudes of isles,* especially this our isle, *rejoice.* Let us pray for the universal spread of this salvation; that *all the ends of the earth may see the*

salvation of God. He hath promised they shall see it, and it becomes us to give thanks at the remembrance of his faithfulness.

2. Let us see to it that our behaviour be worthy of our relation to this great King. Let us love the Lord our God with all our heart, and love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; showing the sincerity and strength of our love, by hating evil. If we love him who is pure and holy, to whom sin is the abominable thing that he hates, let us hate it likewise, and keep at a distance from it. Then shall we be the objects of his protection and care; he will preserve our souls from being ruined and overwhelmed, and deliver us out of the hand of the wicked, who may persecute and oppress us. We should be excited to *abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good*, by a view to the recompense of reward. *Light and gladness are sown for the righteous*; and at length they shall spring up, and produce a plentiful and glorious harvest. Though the world may frown upon them, and darkness may surround their steps, they should comfort themselves with the expectation of unchanging and everlasting light and joy. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for the early and latter rain; *Be ye also patient, brethren, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*

PSALM XCIX.

Proper for a fast day in time of war.

1 **T**HE LORD reigneth; let the people tremble; *let his people be humble and reverent, and his enemies tremble: he sitteth in the cloud of glory, [between] the cherubims; let the earth be moved; let it be in ever so much uproar and confusion, he can control it.*
 2 The LORD [is] great in Zion; and he [is] high above all people; *his greatness appears particularly in Zion, in his care of his church and people; therefore they should exalt him.*
 3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name; [for] it [is] holy.
 4 The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity; *he does not abuse his almighty power to purposes of tyranny and injustice; he who is a powerful king himself, and the strength of our king, establisheth equity by the righteous laws he hath given us; thou executest judgment and righteousness in*

Jacob; *he doth this in the course of his providence, and by the governors he hath set over us.* 5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; [for] he [is] holy. 6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, *when Israel was in trouble, and he heard and answered them.* 7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance [that] he gave them; *he spake to them in a familiar manner, and they obeyed the divine directions; this rendered their prayers so acceptable.* 8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions; *thou didst not destroy them, though thou didst see fit to chastise them for their idolatry and other crimes.* 9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill, *pay your public homage to him; for the LORD our God [is] holy, perfectly righteous and good.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. THIS psalm teaches us that the government of God is a subject of delightful reflection, especially amidst the commotions of the world. The Lord reigneth; he loveth judgment, doth not employ his strength to crush mankind, but rules them with justice, wisdom, and moderation. When the earth is moved, when the kings of the earth are contending, and new wars are likely to break out, we should remember, that *the Lord is high above all the people*; if the whole earth be confederate together, they cannot break his purposes, nor, without him, establish their own. Sensible of the public blessings we enjoy under his government, let us cheerfully bear a part in that public homage which is due to him.

2. Let us observe the instances in which God has put an honour upon the prayers of his people. Moses, Aaron, and Samuel prayed; and God gave them remarkable answers; and by his almighty power produced wonderful events in favour of that people for whom they sought him. It is one excellency of the Old Testament, that it records such histories as these; *they are written for our admonition*; that we may call upon God in the day of our trouble, and make intercession for our country: and also for our encouragement, that we may cheerfully hope for success.

3. If we desire that God may hear our prayers, it should be our concern to keep his testimonies and ordinances. It was this that put such a value upon the prayers of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, and gained them a favourable audience. God has given us his statutes and ordinances, which are all excellent; and it becomes us to study and keep them; otherwise our prayers for ourselves, our churches, and our country, will be in vain. *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, God will turn away his prayer from him.*

4. God may see it proper to animadvert upon the sins of a people though he does not destroy them, nor suffer their enemies to triumph over them. Thus he brought judgments upon Israel for their idolatry, though he did not cast them off; and punished them in Samuel's time by giving them up to a tyrannical king, though he did not give them up to the Philistines. Let us carefully consider this, that we may not be elated with our national prosperity and success. Though these should be renewed and increased, God may by other methods take vengeance on our inventions; or he may and certainly will, punish particular persons for their sins, though the nation should be saved. This shows the wisdom and necessity of prayer and repentance, and should promote our humility, caution, and watchfulness.

5. So great, so just, and holy a Being, should always be approached with the greatest reverence. This is several times inculcated in this short psalm. Whenever we draw near to him, it should be with high and honourable thoughts of him, and profound veneration for him. If we desire to serve God acceptably, it must be done with reverence and godly fear; more especially when we come to confess our sins, to humble ourselves before him, to deprecate his wrath, and entreat mercy for our land; then *let us exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool, for he is holy.*

PSALM C.

A Psalm of praise, or thanksgiving.

This psalm has a title peculiar to itself; it was to be sung when they offered up any sacrifice of thanksgiving; and it is with very good reason that it is so often sung in many christian churches, as none of these sacred compositions are better adapted to excite devout affections and holy joy.

1 **MAKE** a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. 2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. 3 Know ye that the LORD he [is] God: [it is] he [that] hath made us, and not we ourselves; [we are] his people, and the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, [and] into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, [and] bless his name. 5 For the LORD [is] good; his mercy [is] everlasting; and his truth [endureth] to all generations.

PSALM CI.

A Psalm of David.

Composed probably on occasion of his advancement to the throne of Israel. By it he intended not only to manifest the piety of his own resolutions in a public capacity, but as an instruction to those who were about him, that they might see on what terms they stood with him. The character of some of those who attended him in his exile might not be good, and yet they would expect to be favourites, and to be promoted on his advancement. What he had seen in Saul's court might likewise concur to make him judge it necessary to compose and publish this psalm on his accession to the throne; and by putting his resolution into this form, and having it sung in the public service, it would more deeply impress the minds of the people.

1 **I WILL** sing of mercy and judgment*: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing. *Nor will I content myself with songs of praise, but*

* Some understand this as if he had said, I will sing of thy mercy to me, and thy judgments upon my opposers; but rather, 'I will sing of such a conduct, as shall be both just and kind; my punishing the wicked will be a mercy to the public; and I will express my resolutions in thy presence.'

2 I will likewise behave myself wisely in a perfect way, *with thought and prudence.* O when wilt thou come unto me? *I desire thy presence with me; and that I cannot hope to obtain without integrity; therefore I will walk within my house, or court, with a perfect heart; in my personal conduct giving a good example to my family and those about me; and that not from prudential or political views, but from a serious sense of the presence of God, and a concern for his honour and glory.* 3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes; *I will not aim at wrong ends in my actions; no reasons of state shall make me swerve from my integrity:* I hate the work of them that turn aside; [it] shall not cleave to me; *I consider myself, though king of Israel, as a subject of God, and sin as treason against him: therefore it shall not cleave to me, but I will as carefully guard my own conduct, as watch over those about me.* 4 A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked [person,] *that is, I will not favour him, though it is my duty to discover and punish him, Matt. vii. 23.* 5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, *him that would supplant his fellow-servant, and speak against his services to bring his own into reputation, and make court to his prince, him will I cut off, severely punish, and banish from my court:* him that hath an high look and a proud heart, *who treats others contemptuously, and studies his own honour and profit more than the public good,* will not I suffer to be near me. 6 Mine eyes [shall be] upon the faithful of the land, *I will endeavour to find out those who appear faithful to God and man, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me; no man shall bear office in my family or court, but who is upright; as I shall have no need of any deceitful persons about me to support me in my designs,* 7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight; *no false informer, or flatterer, shall abide in my service.* 8 I will early, *immediately and diligently,* destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD; *make them an example of public justice, that others may be terrified; and so will purge my family, and the place of my residence, which ought to be an example to the whole kingdom. Thus David recorded his vows before God, and gave his domestics and servants fair warning by this public declaration.*

REFLECTIONS ON PSALMS C, CI.

1. WE learn from the hundredth psalm, with what joy we are at all times to approach God in his ordinances. We should not esteem them a burden, or weariness; but come to them with all possible cheerfulness. As it will be an honour done to God, to rejoice in him and his services, so it is a high favour to us to be admitted to serve him. He is our creator, preserver, and benefactor; good to all his creatures, and gives us all things richly to enjoy; mercy everlasting, truth and faithfulness unchangeable. Whenever we approach him, we should endeavour to banish anxiety and sorrow from our breasts, and come to him as *unto God our exceeding joy*.

2. It should be our prayer, that our king and governors may conduct themselves by the maxims of the hundred and first psalm. It deserves to be written in golden letters, in the council-chamber, in the court, and all public offices. We should pray that the leading men among us may be upright themselves, faithful to God and man; that they may employ none but such as are so, and never be influenced by rank, fortune, or family connexions, to exalt vile, dishonest, or deceitful men. It should be our prayer that our magistrates may punish all wicked doers, and be a protection to them that do well.

3. Heads of families may derive much useful instruction from this psalm. It is the householder's psalm, as well as the magistrate's. Let us endeavour in the first place to be upright and unblameable ourselves, that our families may not learn vice from us, or be countenanced in any evil way by our example. It teaches us to choose such servants as are humble, diligent, and faithful to God, as well as to us, and to put up with the want of some other qualifications, if they have this most important one. We are likewise to banish those who are of a contrary character; not only the grossly vicious, but the proud, the haughty, the quarrelsome, and the deceitful. Whatever excellent qualities of other kinds they may have, they can never be trusted; they will corrupt our children, and their fellow-servants, and may bring a curse on our family. Let us pray that God would come to us, and make us wise and faithful; teach us to rule our own houses well, that he may dwell with us, and *delight over us to do us good*.

PSALM CII.

A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed*, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD.

This psalm was perhaps written towards the end of the captivity by some pious Jew who was returned to Jerusalem; and it seems to breathe very much of the spirit of good Nehemiah. It grieved him to find the temple and city still in ruins, and the rebuilding of them hindered by their enemies; at the same time he encourages the hope of God's favourable appearances for them.

1 **H**EAR my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. 2 Hide not thy face from me in the day [when] I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me; in the day [when] I call answer me speedily. 3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. 4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. 5 By reason of the voice of my groaning *I am so reduced that my bones cleave to my skin.* 6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl, or bittern, of the desert; *I shun all company, and mourn in secret.* 7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. 8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day; [and] they that are mad against me are sworn against me. 9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, *I lie down in ashes, which mingle with my bread,* and mingled my drink with weeping, 10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down; *referring to the hopes they entertained when Cyrus gave them leave to return and build the temple; but being slandered and misrepresented by their enemies, they were obliged to desist, which depressed his spirits.* 11 My days [are] like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass. 12 But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations; *this thought gives him comfort, that God can remedy these evils, and transmit the memorial of his faithfulness to succeeding generations.* 13 Thou shalt arise, [and] have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come; *the period marked out in the prophecies of Jeremiah, Jer. xxix. 10, 11. Dan. ix. 2.; though there may be some*

* The word signifies *wrapt about*, or covered with a garment that surrounds the whole body.

difficulty in computing the exact time, yet the affection shown to the place, now in ruins, is an intimation that it is at hand. 14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. 15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. 16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory; *his appearance for Zion will promote his glory in the neighbouring nations.* 17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. 18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD; *if I do not live to see this, those who come after me shall find it true.* 19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; *though the sanctuary of God at Jerusalem be in ruins, and its enemies triumph over it, yet there is a sanctuary above from which God looks down,* 20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; 21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; 22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD. *I hoped to have lived to see this blessed time, but I am apprehensive I shall not; for* 23 He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days. 24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; *let me live to see thy promises fulfilled: but however that may be, this is my comfort, that thy years [are] throughout all generations.* Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens [are] the work of thy hands. 26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; *thou canst change the visible form of this world, as easily as a man puts off one garment and puts on another.* 27 But thou [art] the same, and thy years shall have no end. 28 The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee; *whatever becomes of us, thou canst establish thy church, if not for us, yet for our children, and wilt preserve thy cause to the end of time.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. OBSERVE how low the people of God may be brought by sorrow and distress. This good man gives a melancholy description of his own case, in words which other good men have seen great reason to adopt. He was visited with sickness, that had

destroyed his comfort, weakened his frame, and reduced him almost to a skeleton. His trouble and concern for the church of God had exhausted his strength; his enemies had scorned and grieved him; and he was in a solitary state, far from his friends; so that, as the title intimates, he was just overwhelmed. Let not good men think their cases singular, or that God does not deal with them as his children, when they are thus heavily afflicted.

2. Observe the comfort this good man found when addressing himself to God. He poured out his complaint to the Lord; and so should we. He allows us to be free, large, and particular in laying our complaints before him. However destitute of health and friends, and oppressed by enemies, his people may be, they can still pray, and God will not despise their prayer: yea, more than this is implied, he values it, and takes pleasure in it. Others may despise it, and praying souls themselves may sometimes fear that God will despise it; but he graciously regards it. This, as the psalmist tells us, is written for our sakes, that we may praise the Lord for his ancient goodness, and cast our cares upon him.

3. When a public spirit prevails among a people, it is a token for good that God is about to appear for them. *Thy servants take pleasure in her stones*; even her ruins are precious; and they long to do something to raise them again. When men enter tenderly into the concerns of the churches, pity and bewail the declining state of religion, and lift up praying hands for its revival, it is a great encouragement to hope that God will appear; for this is his own work, he puts this concern into their hearts; their piety and zeal will do something, and their examples may stir up others. Let us cultivate a public spirit ourselves, endeavour to promote it in others, and pray that it may prevail in all.

4. We should rejoice in the eternity of God, and the immutability of Christ, amidst all the distressing scenes relating to ourselves, our families, or the church. This was the psalmist's grand cordial, and this he repeats. The apostle applies the words to the kingdom of Christ, and brings them as a proof that it shall be established. And this thought will afford us comfort when sick and dying, or when our strength is weakened by the way, that the eternal and unchangeable God will take care of our families and children, that we may leave behind. It is a comfort to think of this when useful instruments are removed; when the friends of Zion lessen, and its enemies increase. Christ ever lives; and therefore his people shall live: the church shall continue through all ages, and *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.

PSALM CIII.

[A Psalm] of David.

Probably written when the plague, which was brought upon Israel after they were numbered, ceased. Considering it in this light, many passages in it have a peculiar beauty, especially what is said of the angels at the latter end. If it be proper to make a comparison between one sacred composition and another, this psalm shines with distinguishing lustre. There is little in it needs to be explained; it calls for devotion more than exposition.

1 **BLESS** the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, [bless] his holy name. 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies, *or encompasses thee with it on every side, as a crown does the head;* 5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good [things; so that] thy youth is renewed like the eagle's; *who, after they have cast their feathers, are more beautiful and vigorous.* 6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. 7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. 8 The LORD [is] merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plentiful in mercy. 9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep [his anger] for ever. 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins: nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, [so] great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, [so] far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13 Like as a father pitieth [his] children, [so] the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we [are] dust. 15 [As for] man, his days [are] as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. 16 For the wind passeth over it and it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more, 17 But the mercy of the LORD [is] from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children. 18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. 19 The LORD hath

prepared his throne in the heavens ; and his kingdom ruleth over all. 20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength ; *of which we have had a specimen, and a very awful one, in one of their host destroying seventy thousand Israelites in a few hours ;* that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. 21 Bless ye the LORD, all [ye] his hosts ; [ye] ministers of his, that do his pleasure. 22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion : bless the LORD, O my soul.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us charge upon our souls a serious recollection and grateful acknowledgment of the divine favours to us. Nothing can be more reasonable than that we should bless him for his innumerable benefits ; for our health and reason, for our various supplies, and for his patience, tenderness, and grace. Let our souls and all that is within us do it ; for unless the heart be engaged, the language or the music of the tongue will be vain. Let us chide our souls out of their forgetfulness of God's mercies, and acknowledge them before him with devotion and cheerfulness. They are, as David intimates, so many that we cannot remember them all ; but let some of them at least be remembered and recounted before him ; and let us retain a general and grateful sense of the rest.

2. Let us esteem the revelation of God's will among his choicest favours. This David mentions, *v. 7.* And he has made known to us his ways and acts, his precepts, purposes, and promises, by a greater than Moses, even his own dear Son. This is the greatest blessing, as it relates to our souls and eternity. It is a distinguishing blessing : many have it not ; and among those who have it, few sufficiently value it. This is what makes the enjoyments of life more agreeable, and its sufferings more tolerable ; for this, then, let us with peculiar ardour praise the Lord.

3. The compassion of God should be our comfort under all our afflictions and uncertainty about future events. He pities us with the tenderness of a father ; considers our frame, and makes gracious allowances for our infirmities. He knows what dangers, temptations, and infirmities we are exposed to ; and proportions our strength accordingly. He knows the weakness and imperfection of our souls, and makes his grace sufficient for us. Whatever we feel, God knows it, and pities us ; whatever we fear, his compassion fails not.

4. Let us seriously contemplate the frailty of our nature, as an engagement to enter into God's covenant, and to be faithful to it. Man's days are as grass; fading as the flower; and liable, like that, to be destroyed by various accidents. We should consider this, that we may be dead to this world and its vanities, and more careful to secure a better. While every thing about us is fading, his mercy is everlasting to his people, and to their children's children. Let this engage us to a life of faith and obedience; to devote ourselves to God in his covenant, and do his commandments: then all will be well at last, whatever may befall us here.

5. We should rejoice that angels are continually praising and serving God, and long to do it like them. The psalmist makes this beautifully poetical address to angels to bless the Lord, to show what high and honourable thoughts he had of those great and good beings; that he esteemed God worthy of the highest praise; to quicken his own soul to perform this work better, and to encourage himself amidst the imperfections of his praises and services, by recollecting those of angels. It is their highest honour that they hearken to the voice of God, and do his pleasure. It will be our highest honour to resemble them; and our happiness to join their society, and share in their work and blessedness. In the mean time let it be our fervent prayer, that God's will may *be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.*

 PSALM CIV.

This psalm was probably composed by David. It contains a description of the majesty of God in his works and in his providence, with a noble mixture, of sublimity, elegance, and devotion.

1 **BLESS** the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. 2 Who coverest [thyself] with light as [with] a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain, *or canopy*: 3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; *the clouds in the firmament are the floor of his stately palace*: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: 4 Who maketh his angels spirits, *or winds*: *his angels and his ministers a flaming fire, or, flaming fire his ministers; which may refer*

either to the quick motion of angels from place to place to execute his orders, or to their being instruments in raising storms and tempests, or darting lightnings to the earth: 5 [Who] laid the foundations of the earth, [that] it should not be removed for ever. 6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as [with] a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. 7 At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away; *probably referring to what was done at the creation, when the waters stood above the earth, but retired at the divine command to their appointed beds.* 8 They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys, *or, the mountains ascend, the valleys descend,* unto the place which thou hast founded for them; *that is, the mountains were raised, the valleys were sunk, and the waters were gathered into their proper places.* 9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth. 10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys, [which] run among the hills; *nevertheless by thy providence they are raised up to the highest hills and break out in springs.* 11 They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. 12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, [which] sing among the branches. 13 He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. 14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth, *by means of the rain;* 15 And wine [that] maketh glad the heart of man, [and] oil to make [his] face to shine, and bread [which] strengtheneth man's heart. 16 The trees of the LORD are full [of sap;] the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted, *though it be not cultivated by man.* 17 Where the birds make their nests: [as for] the stork, the fir trees [are] her house, 18 The high hills [are] a refuge for the wild goats; [and] the rocks for the conies, *or mountain mice, which are there secure from their enemies.* 19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. 20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep [forth.] 21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. 22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. 23 Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening; *savage beasts are led by instinct to seek their prey by night, so that men generally work and travel securely in the day-time. This is an instance of the wisdom and goodness of God.* 24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou

made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. 25 [So is] this great and wide sea, wherein [are] things creeping, or swimming, innumerable, both small and great beasts, *that is, animals or living things.* 26 There go the ships: [there is] that leviathan, *the whale, or, as the word rather signifies, all large fishes,* [whom] thou hast made to play therein, *which sport there without fear.* 27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give [them] their meat in due season. 28 [That] thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good; *an allusion to our manner of feeding the creatures which are dependant upon us.* 29 Thou hidest thy face, *withdrawest those influences, which, though they know it not, are the support of their life, and they are troubled;* thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. 30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and though renewest the face of the earth; *though so many creatures die, yet every species continues; and though propagated by the common laws of nature, it is here expressly referred to a divine agency, so that every birth is a new creation.* 31 The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works. 32 He *but* looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke, *like Sinai, or in volcanos.* 33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live; *all my life shall be employed in his praise; yea, I will sing praise unto my God, while I have my being; when I go to the other world, and as long as I have any existence, it shall be my delightful work.* 34 My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. 35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth; and let the wicked be no more; *he shall destroy impenitent sinners, and bring awful judgments upon them, how prosperous soever they now are.* Bless thou the LORD, O my soul; *my soul, shall ever praise him; therefore let me now begin my hallelujahs.* Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTION.

THIS psalm scarcely admits of any particular reflections. All centres in one grand design, to fill our souls with great and exalted thoughts of God; his wisdom and majesty, his power and goodness: and if the very reading and hearing this psalm does not excite them, our hearts must be cold and stupid indeed. Let us commit these noble descriptions to memory, and apply them to any of the works of nature and providence which may offer

themselves to our view. We should accustom ourselves to such meditations as these; look about us, and see how wonderfully God provides for his great family, and how kind and bountiful he is to us. Let the adoration and praise of God be the business of our whole lives, then it will be the delightful business of eternity. Nobler scenes will open upon us in the future world, and we shall have more enlarged faculties wherewith to contemplate and adore. In the mean time, let us do our best, and may God give us eyes to see and hearts to feel that wisdom and goodness, which he is daily causing to pass before us.

PSALM CV.

It appears, from 1 Chron. xvi. 7., that this psalm was composed by David, and part of it at least used on occasion of his bringing up the ark to the tabernacle he had pitched for it. Some additions might be made to it afterwards. It was probably intended to be learned by children, as a short summary of their history, and would be of great use to them in that view, as they had few opportunities of attending religious worship, and might have but few copies of the law. It might likewise be of great service to their proselytes and heathen neighbours.

1 **O** GIVE thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. 2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. 3 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. 4 Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore. 5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; 6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen. 7 He [is] the LORD our God; his judgments [are] in all the earth. 8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word [which] he commanded to a thousand generations. 9 Which [covenant] he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; 10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, [and] to Israel [for] an everlasting covenant: 11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: 12 When there were [but] a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. 13 When they went from one nation to another, from [one] kingdom to

another people ; 14 He suffered no man to do them wrong : yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes ; *as in the case of Abraham and Isaac, when Abimelech and Pharaoh were reprov'd for their sakes ;* 15 [Saying,] Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm ; *the prophets were said to be anointed, because an extraordinary measure of the Spirit was communicated to them.* 16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land : he brake the whole staff of bread. 17 He sent a man before them, [even] Joseph, [who] was sold for a servant : 18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters : he was laid in iron : 19 Until the time that his word came : the word of the LORD tried him. 20 The king sent and loosed him ; [even] the ruler of the people, and let him go free. 21 He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance : 22 To bind his princes at his pleasure ; and teach his senators wisdom. *It may be rendered, 'To instruct his princes like himself, and teach his senators wisdom ;' referring to the pains Joseph took to teach them the knowledge of the true God, his works, and worship ; and many learned men suppose that this rendered Egypt so famous for literature.* 23 Israel also came into Egypt ; and Jacob sojourn'd in the land of Ham. 24 And he increased his people greatly ; and made them stronger than their enemies. 25 He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants. 26 He sent Moses his servant ; [and] Aaron whom he had chosen. 27 They showed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. 28 He sent darkness, and made it dark ; and they rebelled not against his word. *Some understand this of Moses and Aaron denouncing those judgments by the command of God : it rather refers to the elements themselves ; God gave forth his word, and it took effect as regularly as darkness and light succeed one another every day.* 29 He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. 30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings. 31 He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, [and] lice in all their coasts. 32 He gave them hail for rain, [and] flaming fire in their land. 33 He smote their vines also and their fig trees ; and brake the trees of their coasts. 34 He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number, 35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. 36 He smote also all the first born in their land, the chief of all their strength. 37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold : and [there was] not one feeble [person] among their tribes ; *a most remarkable providence, that among so many thousands there was not one*

so sick and weak as to be unable to travel. 38 Egypt was glad when they departed : for the fear of them fell upon them. 39 He spread a cloud for a covering ; and fire to give light in the night. 40 [The people] asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. 41 He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out ; they ran in the dry places [like] a river. 42 For he remembered his holy promise, [and,] *or to Abraham* his servant. 43 And he brought forth his people with joy, [and] his chosen with gladness : 44 And gave them the lands of the heathen : and they inherited the labour of the people : 45 That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are taught from hence to commemorate with pleasure and thankfulness the marvellous works of the Lord, and talk of them to others. The psalmist recommends this to the Israelites by various exhortations, in the beginning of the psalm. Pains should be taken by us to make God's wondrous works familiar to our minds ; and they should be the subject of our discourse, as well as study, especially to our children. To talk of the history of our own or other nations, or the character and faults of our neighbours, while we forget God's dealings with his church and people, shows great weakness and folly. These things are written for our instruction ; and to remember and talk of them is a duty we owe to God, and will afford us great pleasure and improvement. And besides these things we have nobler wonders to think and talk of, even the grand facts, duties, and privileges of christianity, and all the great things of our redemption. Let the words of Christ dwell richly in us ; and let us from thence teach and admonish one another.

2. The great end of scripture histories and discoveries is, that we may learn obedience to God's will. Why did God perform all these things for Israel ? not that they might live in ease and plenty, and make a figure in the world ; but, as the psalmist observes, *that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws.* In this view we are to consider all the discoveries of the New Testament, and every thing that God has done for us by his Son and his apostles ; and unless we make this use of them, we might as well read a common history as the Bible. Let us learn then from all, *what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us ; namely, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.*

PSALM CVI.

This is a proper appendix to the former psalm, and was probably added at the captivity. It is a short history of Israel's rebellion, to point out to the captives the cause of their calamity, and lead them to repentance, from a consideration of the patience and goodness of God, which was exercised to their fathers.

1 **PRAISE** ye the **LORD**. O give thanks unto the **LORD**; for [he is] good: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the **LORD**? [who] can show forth all his praise? 3 Blessed [are] they that keep judgment, [and] he that doeth righteousness at all times. 4 Remember me, O **LORD**, with the favour [that thou bearest unto] thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; 5 That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance. 6 We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. 7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked [him] at the sea, [even] at the Red sea. 8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known. 9 He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. 10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated [them,] and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. 11 And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. 12 Then believed they his words: they sang his praise, *in the song of Moses at the Red sea*. 13 They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsels: 14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. 15 And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul. 16 They envied Moses also in the camp, [and] Aaron the saint of the **LORD**. 17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. 18 And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked, *Korah and his company*. 19 They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. 20 Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. 21 They forgot God their saviour, which had done great

things in Egypt; 22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham, [and] terrible things by the Red sea. 23 Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy [them.] 24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: 25 But murmured in their tents, [and] hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. 26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness, *solemnly swearing they should die there*: 27 To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. 28 They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, *in many impure and filthy rites*, and ate the sacrifices of the dead; *offered sacrifices to dead men and deified heroes*. 29 Thus they provoked [him] to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. 30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and [so] the plague was stayed. 31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore; *it was considered as an eminent act of piety, zeal, and justice, for which God entailed the priesthood on his posterity*. 32 They angered [him] also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: 33 Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips. 34 They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: 35 But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. 36 And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. 37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, *to demons, or deified men*, 38 And shed innocent blood, [even] the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. 39 Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. 40 Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. 41 And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. 42 Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. 43 Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked [him] with their counsel; and were brought low for their iniquity. 44 Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: 45 And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies. 46 He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. 47 Save us, O LORD our God, and

gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, [and] to triumph in thy praise. 48 Blessed [be] the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WHEN we are addressing ourselves to praise God, we should remember how unequal we are to the work; *v.* 2. Neither we, nor angels, are equal to his praise; his mighty acts are so many that they cannot be numbered, and so great and glorious that we cannot fully celebrate their excellency. Let this thought engage us to be serious and lively in our praises, and to do the best we can; while we acknowledge that *his glorious name is exalted above all blessing and praise.*

2. We may here see the advantage of steady, consistent piety; *v.* 3. It is not forming good resolutions, and doing righteousness now and then, that will be acceptable; but being steady, at all times adhering to the rules of religion; and being just to God and man, in every condition and circumstance of life, and persevering therein to the end. *Then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect unto all his commandments.*

3. Let us learn to retain a lasting sense of divine favours, and carefully improve them. Notice is often taken of the stupidity and ingratitude of Israel in this respect. Though they were at times much impressed by them, and sang God's praise, yet they *soon forgot his works*, and their promises and vows to be his. Let us charge them on our memory, and keep a sense of them alive on our hearts; and while we are grateful for past mercies, let us wait for his counsel, humbly receive and faithfully obey every intimation of his will.

4. Here is great encouragement to pray and labour for the salvation of a sinful nation; *v.* 23. Moses interposed as an advocate, and God was gracious. Phinehas was zealous for the honour of God, and in promoting reformation in an evil time, and God stayed the plague and rewarded his piety. This shows what prayer and zeal will do; let us unite them together, then we may hope, as in *v.* 5., *to see the good of his chosen, to rejoice in the gladness of his nation; to glory with his inheritance.*

5. Those who stir up the passions of others, and so provoke them to bad language, are accessory to their guilt. *Moses spake*

unadvisedly with his lips. This is written for our caution, that we may rule our spirits, and bridle our tongues. But the guilt is charged upon the people; they made God angry because they provoked Moses' spirit. It is hard even for those who are eminent for meekness, not to speak amiss when provoked. If we provoke others, by profane or indecent language, to say or do that which is wrong, both we and they are guilty. Let this thought make men cautious how they talk to any who are drunk with strong liquors, or with passion. As we would keep clear of this guilt, let us study to be quiet, rule our own passions, and endeavour, by silence or soft words, to allay the passions of others.

6. We are also taught the danger of being corrupted by bad examples, or company, and are reminded how the Israelites were corrupted by their heathen neighbours. They were first led to their entertainments and assemblies, then into their most wicked, cruel, and detestable idolatries. *These things*, St. Paul tells us, *were written for our admonition*; and it is an admonition we peculiarly need in this untoward generation. Let us then *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them; lest we learn their ways, and be like them, and so get a snare to our souls.*

PSALM CVII.

This psalm was probably written after the captivity, as seems to be intimated in the third verse; and I think the several parts of it may be applied to the case of the Israelites about that time. It is an anthem, to be sung in several parts, and the call to praise God is the chorus. The first part, to the eighth verse, seems to refer to the deliverance of Ezra and his company in their march from Babylon to Jerusalem. We find, Ezra viii. 21., that they had set apart a day of fasting and prayer at the river Abava, because they were passing through great dangers, and had much treasure about them: at last they arrived safe at Jerusalem, when, it is probable, this psalm was composed; though Dr. Watts applies it to the Israelites' journey through the wilderness.

1 **O** GIVE thanks unto the LORD, for [he is] good: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say [so,] whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;

3 And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. 4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. 5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. 6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, [and] he delivered them out of their distresses. 7 And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. 8 Oh that [men] would praise the LORD [for] his goodness, and [for] his wonderful works to the children of men! 9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. 10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, [being] bound in affliction and iron; 11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: 12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and [there was] none to help. 13 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, [and] he saved them out of their distresses. 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. *This part of the psalm may refer to their state while captives: though some of them were comparatively in comfortable circumstances; yet others were imprisoned, as their princes, and those that were for keeping up the war against the Chaldeans; some might be sold for slaves, and so beaten, abused and put in irons: but God had now delivered them, and broken their bands in sunder. Therefore the chorus proceeds,* 15 Oh that [men] would praise the LORD [for] his goodness, and [for] his wonderful works to the children of men! 16 For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. *From hence to the twenty-first verse may refer to any affliction or sorrow which God sends, and especially what the captives endured through hardships, want, or confinement.* 17 Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. 18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat: and they draw near unto the gates of death. 19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, [and] he saveth them out of their distresses. 20 He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered [them] from] their destructions. 21 Oh that [men] would praise the LORD [for] his goodness, and [for] his wonderful works to the children of men! 22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing. *From hence to the thirtieth verse refers to the appearance of Providence in favour of sailors. Many of the Jews during the devastation of their country by the Chaldeans, fled to other nations, and some of them*

might return by sea when their captivity was restored. 23 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; 24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. 25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. 26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. 28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. 30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. 31 Oh that [men] would praise the LORD [for] his goodness, and [for] his wonderful works to the children of men! 32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders; *when they give an account of their voyage and preservation, let them do it in a serious manner, acknowledging the hand of God therein.* *The remainder of the psalm may refer to the state of their country while it lay uncultivated during the captivity, and the different aspect it began to wear now they were returned.* 33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water springs into dry ground; 34 A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. 35 He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water springs. 36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation; 37 And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. 38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. 39 Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow; *probably referring to the disturbance they had from their enemies in the time of Nehemiah, and the opposition that was made to their settlement.* 40 He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, [where there is] no way. 41 Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh [him] families like a flock. 42 The righteous shall see [it,] and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. 43 Whoso [is] wise, and will observe these [things,] even they shall understand the loving kindness of the LORD.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us diligently attend to these repeated calls to praise God, for his goodness to us and our brethren of mankind ; for all his wonderful works to us and to them ; for protection in our journeys, and the care he takes of us in going out and coming in ; for his goodness in raising us up, when we have been brought low ; and sending his word and healing us. If we have reason to hope that we are the redeemed of the Lord, rescued from the slavery of sin and satan, it is our incumbent duty to give thanks to the Lord, and cheerfully commit ourselves to him, in all the remainder of our journey through life.

2. We learn hence, to avoid those sins which bring down the judgments of God on mankind ; namely, rebelling against the words of God, and contemning the counsel of the most High. *Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.* The natural consequences of disobedience and transgression are sorrow and shame ; and the design of afflictive providences is to bring down the heart, to humble its pride, and promote its caution and watchfulness for the future.

3. Let us remember how much our nation depends upon the divine blessing, and earnestly pray for it. Ours is a fruitful land, but may soon by our iniquities be turned into barrenness. It is God's blessing that multiplies the people greatly, and suffers not their cattle to decrease. We should particularly remember the case of our seafaring men, who are the strength and bulwarks of our land, and the great means of our security and wealth ; and pray that *they who behold the wonders of God in the deep*, may fear and glorify him, and celebrate his praise.

4. We here see how good it is to be careful observers of God's providence ; of his dispensations to us, to our country, to other nations, and to all mankind. We should observe and own his hand even where the train of events is most natural. Thus shall we see how God governs the world, and have full conviction of the folly and impiety of those who deny his providence. By observing these things, treasuring them up in our minds, and seriously reflecting upon them, *we shall see the loving kindness of the Lord* ; how good he is to all his creatures, especially to those who

serve and honour him: and how that saying is fulfilled, *Those that honour me, I will honour; but those that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.*

PSALM CVIII.

A Song [or] Psalm of David.

This psalm is a repetition of part of the fifty-seventh and sixtieth psalms.

1 **O** GOD, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. 2 Awake, psaltery and harp: I [myself] will awake early. 3 I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. 4 For thy mercy [is] great above the heavens: and thy truth [reacheth] unto the clouds. 5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth: 6 That thy beloved may be delivered: save [with] thy right hand and answer me. 7 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 8 Gilead [is] mine; Manasseh [is] mine; Ephraim also [is] the strength of mine head; Judah [is] my law-giver; 9 Moab [is] my wash pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph. 10 Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? [Wilt] not [thou,] O God, [who] hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? 12 Give us help from trouble: for vain [is] the help of man. 13 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he [it is that] shall tread down our enemies.

PSALM CIX.

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David.

The eighth verse of this psalm is by the apostle Peter, Acts i. 20., applied to Judas, and he says, ‘the Holy Ghost spoke it of him by the mouth of David.’ He is here foretelling the destruction of his enemies, and having it revealed to him that the Messiah should be injuriously and cruelly treated, he had his eye to the enemies of the Messiah, who should fall under those calamities which he here predicts. That the psalm is to be considered, not as containing curses but predictions, is plain from the manner in which St. Peter quotes the eighth verse.

1 **H**OLD not thy peace, O God of my praise; 2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. 3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. 4 For my love they are my adversaries: but I [give myself unto] prayer. 5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. 6 Set thou a wicked man over him, *some cruel, oppressing tyrant*; and let Satan, *or, an adversary*, stand at his right hand, *to accuse him and plead against him*. 7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, *that is, lose his cause*; and let his prayer become sin; *if he petition for pardon, let it be counted a crime*. 8 Let his days be few; [and] let another take his office, *in which he behaved himself with such insufferable insolence*. 9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow, *a desolate widow, without any thing to maintain her*. 10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek [their bread] also out of their desolate places; *seek where to lodge, because their own houses and land are desolate*. Let the extortioner, *or creditor*, catch all that he hath; and let the stranger spoil *all that he hath gotten by his labour*. 12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. 13 Let his posterity be cut off; [and] in the generation following let their name be blotted out. 14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the **LORD**; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out; *let his punishment be so great and dreadful, that it may appear as if the sins of all former generations were punished in and upon him*. 15 Let them

be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth; *that the last remains of so wicked a family may perish.* 16 Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart, *that is, myself who am extremely dejected and afflicted in spirit, by reason of my great pressures.* 17 As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. 18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones, *that no part may escape free.* 19 Let it be unto him as the garment [which] covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually. 20 [Let] this [be] the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul. 21 But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy [is] good, deliver thou me. 22 For I [am] poor and needy, and my heart [is] wounded within me; *I am ready to faint away with sorrow.* 23 I am gone like the shadow of the evening, when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust. 24 My knees are weak through fasting, *for want of food in the desert places where I am forced to fly;* and my flesh faileth of fatness. 25 I became also a reproach unto them: [when] they looked upon me they shook their heads. 26 Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy: 27 That they may know that this [is] thy hand; [that] thou, LORD, hast done it. 28 Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise *to put their malicious designs into execution,* let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice. 29 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle, *entirely, on all sides.* And in confidence of this, 30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude. 31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, *as an advocate or patron; in opposition to verse the sixth, where Satan, or an adversary, is represented as standing at the right hand of a wicked man;* to save [him] from those that condemn his soul; *that would pass an unjust sentence upon him, and would take away his life.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are taught hence, that how unkind and severe soever may be the treatment we meet with, we should make prayer our

refuge. *I give myself unto prayer, v. 4.*; in the original it is only, *I pray*; an elliptical but very emphatical form of speaking. Prayer is my business, my refuge, my hope, and joy. I love it, and practise it, and make a serious business of it. When men surround us with falsehoods and violence, we should continue in prayer; when they laugh at us for our devotion and religion, as *v. 25.*, we should not be discouraged, but go on in prayer; waiting God's time to interpose for us; and *he will save us according to his mercy.*

2. Let us be taught from hence, to dread the terrible curses which will sooner or later fall upon all the enemies of Christ. Even the enemies of David were brought to shame and destruction; much more will those who slight and despise Christ. The dreadful end to which Judas's guilty conscience hurried him, is an awful lesson to us not to betray the Son of God. The destruction of the Jews warns us not to crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame; and as for all his enemies, who will not that he should reign over them, he shall command them to be brought forth and slain at his feet. *Kiss the Son, therefore, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.*

3. It may not be unnecessary here to add a caution, that we govern our passions so as not even to wish ill to our enemies. Some persons, finding these prophetic denunciations in the bible, and not understanding the genius of the Hebrew language, have considered them as curses; and from thence have concluded, that it was lawful thus to imprecate vengeance on their enemies. Calvin, in his commentaries on this psalm, says that it was common in his day for persons to hire the monks to curse their enemies in these words; and he particularly mentions a lady of quality, who had hired them thus to curse her only son who had wronged her. But our duty is very plain; not to indulge bitterness and wrath, *not to render railing for railing*, or secretly to wish our enemies ill; but to love them, and bless them, and pray for them, after the example of our benevolent Master. If they will curse, let us pray and hope that God will bless them, then their curses will do us no harm. *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator.*

PSALM CX.

A Psalm of David.

The general drift of this psalm, and the many quotations out of it in the New Testament, plainly prove that the whole of it refers to Christ; and he himself tells us that David in spirit spoke of him in it.

1 **THE LORD** said unto my **LORD**, *God said to his son Jesus, who, though my descendant according to the flesh, is my Lord, having existed before me, being the object of my trust, and having an eternal kingdom, Sit thou at my right hand, the post of dignity and authority, until I make thine enemies thy footstool; an allusion to the custom of setting their feet on the necks of the princes or generals conquered in war, as Joshua commanded the Israelites to treat the vanquished kings of Canaan.* 2 **THE LORD** shall send the rod of thy strength, *thy strong rod, or sceptre, out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies; referring to the gospel, which began to be preached at Jerusalem, and from thence went forth through all the earth. It is a promise that God would support and assist his heralds in preaching the gospel; so that Christ should rule in the midst of his enemies, that is, overcome Jews and heathens, the enemies of his church; it may likewise refer to victory over spiritual enemies.* 3 *Thy people [shall be] willing in the day of thy power; Christ shall rule over a willing people, in the day when all power in heaven and earth shall be given to him; in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning* : thou hast the dew of thy youth; there shall be a large accession of young converts, as numerous as the drops of dew, who shall present themselves to Christ, and list under his banner. The priestly office of Christ is then celebrated.* 4 **THE LORD** hath sworn, and will not repent, *Thou [art] a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek †.* 5 **THE LORD** standing at thy right hand

* *The beauties of holiness, signifies the temple, and may refer to the armies of Israel going up to present themselves there early in the morning before they went forth to action.*

† This passage the apostle Paul largely explains and illustrates in his epistle to the Hebrews, chap. v. Christ was made a priest to offer up a sacrifice for sin, to intercede for and bless his people. He was after the order of Melchizedek, with some respect to his name, as it signifies a king of righteousness, and the place over which he reigned, which was Salem, that is, peace, he was king of peace. Like him he had no priestly ancestors, nor any successor in his office; which is the meaning of Melchizedek's having neither father nor mother, nor descent, that is, they are not recorded in the history of him. Thus Christ is a royal priest, a priest on a

to strengthen thee, shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath, and bear down all thy enemies, even kings and princes that rise up against thee *. 6 He shall judge among the heathen; *execute vengeance on all opposers of his gospel: he shall fill [the places] with the dead bodies; so many shall be slain, that the valleys shall be filled with their dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries; the great rulers and emperors, or Satan, who is the god of this world* †. 7 He shall drink of the brook ‡ in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head; *he shall not appear in pomp and state, as a king upon earth, but shall take the same course with his soldiers, go before them, meet with the same difficulties, and be glad, like them, to find a little brook in the way, where he may refresh himself; then he shall lift up his head, pursue and conquer his enemies, and be advanced to the highest dignity.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us adore that spirit of prophecy which appears in this psalm. It is a plain and noble prediction of Christ. David in spirit, or under the influence of the Spirit, spoke these things of Christ. Some of the ancients properly enough called this David's creed; as there is scarce any doctrine of the gospel but what is hinted at in it. He describes Christ's several offices, of prophet, priest, and king; and his state of humiliation and exaltation. The ancient Jews could not but refer it to the Messiah, though the modern Jews strangely torture it, to make it speak another language. Let us bless God for this prophecy, as a confirmation of our faith in the gospel.

2. Let us reverence the Lord Jesus Christ, as the son and the Lord of David; who was before David, and with the Father before the world was. He received of the Father honour and glory; is seated at his right hand, and his almighty power is engaged to make his cause prosperous. May our souls bow in humble

throne; he has neither predecessor nor successor in his office, but it is an unchangeable priesthood; and this is confirmed by an oath, which proves his pre-eminence, his superiority to Aaron, and that his appointment to the priesthood shall never be revoked.

* Accordingly, many kings and emperors, who set themselves to oppose christianity, have been destroyed in a dreadful manner.

† This was fulfilled in the destruction of the unbelieving Jews; and shall be more so in the latter day, when all the enemies of the christian cause shall be destroyed; as we learn from many passages in the prophets and Revelations.

‡ Many understand this as spoken of Christ's death, and his drinking of the brook Kidron, in his way to crucifixion. Others understand it of his being largely supplied with the Holy Spirit, whose influences are often compared to water. I rather think the meaning is as in the paraphrase.

reverence before this glorious Being, and rejoice that he is constituted both Lord and Christ.

3. We ought to be thankful for the triumph of Christ, and pray and hope for his future triumph. He has overcome the impenitent Jews, and the opposing heathens; been terrible to the kings of the earth, though their policy and power have been very great. He has conquered the spiritual enemies of his people, and death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed by him. We do not as yet see all things put under him; but they shall be so. Let us pray that his mighty power may be shown in making multitudes his willing and obedient subjects; especially that there may be a numerous accession of young converts to his church, who shall be the seed and support of religion in the world; and that all our children and young friends may be of this happy number.

4. Let us be desirous to behave with all duty and affection to this glorious Prince; be his willing people, voluntarily and cheerfully enter ourselves among his soldiers and subjects, and under his banner wage a good warfare. As far as we have done this, we should acknowledge his power, which hath made us willing; and at the same time remember that he is the King of righteousness, and that his people must be a holy people. May it be our care, that we may be righteous before God, and holy in all manner of conversation and godliness. And while we are conscious of great imperfections, we should remember that he is the Prince of peace; humbly rely on his atonement and intercession; and rejoice that our affairs, our souls, and spiritual interests, are in his hands. As he stooped to such humiliation and abasement for us, it should induce us to be content with a low estate, and cheerfully take our part of the sufferings of Christ; following our leader through the most thorny paths, though poverty, reproach, and sufferings be in the way; remembering that he has lifted up his head above them all, and has declared, *Where I am, there shall my servants be*; and that *if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together*.

PSALM CXI.

This and the following psalm have what might be then thought a peculiar poetical beauty in them; the several clauses of them beginning with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in succession; and were probably composed to be used at their great feasts.

1 **PRAISE** ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with [my] whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and [in] the congregation. 2 The works of the LORD [are] great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. 3 His work [is] honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD [is] gracious and full of compassion. 5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant. 6 He hath showed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. 7 The works of his hands [are] verity and judgment; all his commandments [are] sure. 8 They stand fast for ever and ever, [and are] done in truth and uprightness. 9 He sent redemption unto his people, he hath commanded his covenant for ever; holy and reverend [is] his name. 10 The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do [his commandments:] his praise endureth for ever.

PSALM CXII.

This is a large illustration of the last verse of the foregoing psalm, containing a description of the character and happiness of a good man.

1 **PRAISE** ye the LORD. Blessed [is] the man [that] feareth the LORD, [that] delighteth greatly in his commandments. 2 His seed shall be mighty, *that is, numerous and honourable*, upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. 3 Wealth and riches [shall be] in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: *his*

sufferings shall make his virtue more conspicuous, and spread a light and glory around him: or it may refer to his speedy deliverance; as great deliverance, joy, and prosperity are often described by light shining out of darkness: [he is] gracious and full of compassion and righteous; he is just to all, while he takes pity on the poor; yet, he does not err in the exercise of his generosity, but manages his affairs with frugality, that he may have the more to give. 5 A good man showeth favour, and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion. 6 Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. 7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed trusting in the LORD. 8 His heart [is] established, he shall not be afraid, until he see [his desire] upon his enemies. 9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour. 10 The wicked shall see [it,] and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

PSALM CXIII.

This psalm was called by the Jews, 'the great hymn of praise,' and used to be sung at the feast of the passover.

1 **PRAISE** ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. 2 Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. 3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name [is] to be praised. 4 The LORD [is] high above all nations, [and] his glory above the heavens. 5 Who [is] like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high. 6 Who humbleth [himself] to behold [the things that are] in heaven, and in the earth. 7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, [and] lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; 8 That he may set [him] with princes, [even] with the princes of his people. 9 He maketh the barren woman to keep house, [and to be] a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTIONS ON PSALMS CXI, CXII, CXIII.

1. FROM the hundredth and eleventh psalm we learn, 1. That we should be engaged, both from the works and the goodness of God, to praise him with our whole hearts. It is the character of good men that they take pleasure in God's works, and seek them out diligently. They are all great, striking, and awful, honourable and glorious; displaying the greatest wisdom and power; and his goodness to his creatures is conspicuous in all; *he giveth them meat in due season*; he is full of bounty, tenderness, and compassion. Especially is he good to his people, in giving them his law, in establishing his covenant with them, and in sending them redemption by his Son. All these things are inducements and motives to praise God; and he is so great and bountiful a Being, that we must praise him with our whole hearts. He claims and deserves such praise; and no other will be acceptable to him. Let us then awaken our spirits to this work, and call upon *all that is within us to bless his holy name*.

2. We are here shown wherein true wisdom and learning consist; namely, in *the fear of the Lord*, and *in doing his commandments*. This is a truth which is often inculcated, and is a very important one. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*; the foundation, and the chief part of it; the end of all true wisdom, and the grand point in which it centres. All other kinds of knowledge, without this, will be of little avail. An understanding which leads men to keep God's commandments, shows that they are sensible and judicious. May we be ambitious of this wisdom.

From the 112th psalm we learn,

1. That if we desire the happiness of the good man, we must unite piety, charity, and justice together; must endeavour to *fear the Lord, and delight ourselves greatly in his commandments*; make it as it were our meat and drink, our chief business and pleasure, to do them. We must *abound in every good work*; not heaping up riches for ourselves and our families, but dispersing them to the needy; and at the same time, by diligence, discretion, and frugality, doing justice to our families, our neighbours, and the public. Thus shall we enjoy the favour of God and man; entail a blessing upon our offspring, and be had in honourable remembrance among survivors.

2. We learn to maintain a steadfastness of mind in times of danger and affliction. This must be founded on a confidence in the power and protection of God, and a care to serve and please him. Let us manifest this, by being not afraid of evil tidings, to hear bad news ; or be put into terror and confusion by it. Let us labour to keep masters of ourselves, and to preserve the calm of our own minds, under a persuasion of God's universal government, and that he will order all our affairs, and all events relating to the public, for his glory and the general good.

From the 113th psalm we learn,

To adore the greatness, and to admire the condescension, of God, as illustrated by that. We should reverence him as *high above all nations*, above the greatest kings and potentates ; yea, *his glory is above the heavens*, above the brightest, wisest, mightiest angels there. None can equal him, none compare with him. It is condescension in him to behold the things in heaven, to regard the noblest and most exalted services of saints and angels there. But it is a greater stoop of condescension to regard the things on earth ; to take notice of men, and take pleasure in their mean and worthless services. Nor does he only regard the great persons of the earth, but the mean ones, raising the poor to affluence and honour, and building up the families of the desolate. For these his amazing favours let us *bleſs the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore* ; and earnestly pray, that *from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, the Lord's name may be praised*.

PSALM CXIV.

This psalm is a contemplation of the majesty of God in bringing Israel out of the land of Egypt into the land of Canaan. Dr. Watts calls it an admirable ode, and with great judgment observes, the poet does not introduce the presence of God till the close of the psalm; had God appeared at first, there could have been no wonder why the mountains should leap, and the seas retire; therefore, that this convulsion of nature may be brought in with due surprise, the sacred poet conceals God's name till afterwards; and then, with a very agreeable turn of thought, he is introduced in all his majesty, to account for this wonderful commotion of nature.

1 **WHEN** Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; 2 Judah was his sanctuary, [and] Israel his dominion; *he dwelt in Judah the leading tribe, and where his temple was afterwards fixed, and he ruled over Israel as their king.* 3 The sea saw [it,] and fled: Jordan was driven back. 4 The mountains, *Sinai and the hills about it, skipped like rams, [and] the little hills like lambs, at the giving of the law.* 5 What [ailed] thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, [that] thou wast driven back? 6 Ye mountains, [that] ye skipped like rams; [and] ye little hills, like lambs? 7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the God of Jacob; 8 Which turned the rock [into] a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters; *alluding to the fiery form in which God appeared, and as it were melted the rocks into waters.*

REFLECTION.

FROM hence we learn to rejoice with trembling, in the conduct of divine Providence. Observe here, how great and glorious JEHOVAH is! what is too hard for him, who can remove mountains, divide rivers, and melt down rocks? How desirable is his guidance and protection! and how cheerfully should we follow him, though he may bring us into straits and difficulties, since we see he can never be at a loss to make a way for our escape. But let us follow him with all humility; remembering, that *his presence maketh the earth tremble, and the mountains melt; and serve him with all reverence and godly fear.*

PSALM CXV.

This psalm was composed on occasion of some victory over idolaters ; probably when David overcame the Jebusites, and took Jerusalem, after they had set up their idols, called by the Israelites, ‘ the lame and the blind,’ to defend it.

1 **NOT** unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, [and] for thy truth’s sake ; *for thy mercy in delivering us when we could not help ourselves, and for thy truth in making good thy promises.* 2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where [is] now their God ? 3 But our God [is] in the heavens : he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased ; *making them know his power, which they before denied.* 4 Their idols [are] silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. 5 They have mouths, but they speak not, *to give advice or comfort* : eyes have they, but they see not *the prostration of their worshippers* : 6 They have ears, but they hear not *the petitions that are offered to them* : noses have they, but they smell not *their sacrifices and incense* : 7 They have hands, but they handle not, *cannot wield the weapons they have in their hands to help their supplicants* ; feet have they, but they walk not : neither speak they through their throat ; *though by the contrivances of their priests, their worshippers may think they do.* 8 They that make them are like unto them ; [so is] every one that trusteth in them. 9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD : he [is] their help and their shield. 10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD : he [is] their help and their shield. 11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD : he [is] their help and their shield. 12 The LORD hath been mindful of us : he will bless [us ;] he will bless the house of Israel ; he will bless the house of Aaron. 13 He will bless them that fear the LORD, [both] small and great. 14 The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. 15 Ye [are] blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth. 16 The heaven, [even] the heavens, [are] the LORD’s : but the earth hath he given to the children of men, *to live upon and cultivate it, and he expects a return of praise and obedience.* 17 The dead, *as we should have been, had not God interposed for us,* praise not the LORD, neither they that go down into silence. 18 But we *and our posterity, who*

are so graciously preserved and protected, will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM this psalm we are taught to remember with thankfulness that we are serving the Lord, the living God, and not idols. The greatest part of the earth is still over-run with idolatry. Such was the worship of the inhabitants of this land, before the gospel was published among us; and such it yet remains in those countries which are under the directions of the Romish church. Let us bless God for the free use of the scriptures, and that we are engaged in spiritual and rational worship. All our capacities and advantages, our victories over temporal and spiritual enemies, and every deliverance which contributes to our happiness, are owing to God. *Let boasting then be for ever excluded; and let the subject of every song be, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory.*

2. Observe the happiness of those who fear the Lord; *he is their help and their shield; but idols cannot save them. He will bless them, whether small or great, young or old, rich or poor; and if he that made heaven and earth blesseth them, they are blessed indeed. This should likewise be an encouragement to trust in him, that he hath been mindful of us; has given us his gospel, heard our prayer, and granted us a variety of other favours. May his ministers be examples to others of a cheerful hope and trust in God. As the dead cannot praise God, let us praise him while we live, and do it with that seriousness and fervour which his greatness and goodness deserve.*

PSALM CXVI.

This psalm was probably composed by David. It is an acknowledgment of God's mercy in delivering him, when he was reduced to very great extremities, and doubted of God's promises; and when his enemies also insulted him on account of his sickness.

1 I LOVE the LORD, because he hath heard my voice [and] my supplications. 2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon [him] as long as I live. 3 The

sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow; *such pains and horrors as dying persons use to feel.* 4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. 5 Gracious [is] the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God [is] merciful. 6 The LORD preserveth the simple; *sincere and plain-hearted persons, who dare not use those crafty contrivances to save themselves, which some do:* I was brought low, and he helped me. 7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul, to God, as thy rest, trust and rejoice in him; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. 8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, [and] my feet from falling. 9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living; *I will employ my strength and cheerfulness in thy service.* 10 I believed, therefore have I spoken; *I firmly believe the divine promises, and therefore express my confidence in them**: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, 11 All men, *that is, Samuel who promised me the kingdom, and my friends who encouraged me,* [are] liars. 12 What shall I render unto the LORD, [for] all his benefits toward me? 13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD†. 14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD, now in the presence of all his people. 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD [is] the death of his saints; *he will guard their lives, and make inquisition for their blood, when he permits them to be slain.* 16 O LORD, truly I [am] thy servant; I [am] thy servant, [and] the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. 17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. 18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. 19 In the courts of the LORD's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

* The apostle, in 2 Cor. iv. 13., applies this to himself and his fellow-labourers in the christian ministry, declaring that their faith in the promises of Christ carried them through their work with comfort.

† Wine was presented to God with their meat offerings; the person presenting it first drank, and poured the rest on the altar. So we read in some heathen writers of a cup of salvation being offered for their deliverance from captivity.

PSALM CXVII.

This psalm is quoted by the apostle, Rom. xv. 11., as a prophecy that the Gentiles should be brought into the church of God, and praise him with the Jews.

1 **O** PRAISE the LORD, all ye nations : praise him, all ye people. 2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us : and the truth of the LORD [endureth] for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTIONS ON PSALMS CXVI, CXVII.

1. LET us labour to increase in love to God, as his favours are multiplied upon us : his daily mercies demand our praise and love. But we should particularly recollect the instances in which he has granted us *near escapes from death* ; and love God and prayer the better for all his kind appearances for us, in answer to our applications to him.

2. God's mercies to us should engage us to devote ourselves to his service, and walk before him continually. His bounty should lead us to seek our rest and happiness in him, to fly to him in every time of danger and difficulty, and seriously to inquire, *what we shall render to him for all his benefits*. And let us *walk before him*, live sensible of his presence, act as under his eye continually, and employ all our strength and ability in his service, with all fidelity and cheerfulness.

3. Let us particularly recollect the solemn engagements we are under to be the Lord's. We are his by our birth, being his creatures. Many of us are descended from his servants, who seriously devoted us to God, and trained us up for him. As this is a great blessing, so it lays us under great obligations. We have many of us in a public manner taken the vows of God upon us ; and it is our duty to remember them, to renew them, and to pay them in that method, and by the discharge of those duties, which God has enjoined ; and while we offer *the sacrifice of thanksgiving*, let us *call upon his name* for grace and strength, that we may be faithful even to the end.

4. We learn, from the hundred and seventeenth psalm, earnestly

to pray, that this call may be sent to all the nations, and that God may be universally known and adored. Let us bless him that this word of salvation has been sent to us Gentiles; that the wall of partition is taken down; and fervently wish and pray, that every nation may enjoy this privilege, and be led, by the inestimable blessings of the gospel, to adore and praise its divine Author.

PSALM CXVIII.

This Psalm is a noble and sacred ode, which was composed to be used in a solemn procession when David went up to the tabernacle after God had given him victory over his enemies, especially the Philistines and the neighbouring nations that were confederated with them. It seems to have been sung in several parts; and we cannot enter into the beauty and spirit of it, without supposing ourselves to make a part of the procession; seeing the courts of the tabernacle crowded with innumerable spectators; a great number of sacrifices ready to be offered; the priests and Levites in their several habits, some playing on instruments, and others singing, and the king, his officers, and soldiers, with their arms and ensigns of victory, marching up to the tabernacle. The whole assembly breaks out into this divine rapture, ver. 1.:

1 **O** GIVE thanks unto the LORD; for [he is] good: because his mercy [endureth] for ever. *The priests then address the people,*
 2 Let Israel now say, that his mercy [endureth] for ever. *The people reply to the priests,*
 3 Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy [endureth] for ever; *for God hath set over us a prince that will not treat you like Saul, but secure your maintenance, and attend and direct your services. The priests then say,*
 4 Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy [endureth] for ever. *Then the king begins an account of God's wonderful dealings with him.*
 5 I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, [and set me] in a large place.
 6 The LORD [is] on my side; I will not fear what man can do unto me.
 7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see [my desire] upon them that hate me.
 8 [It is] better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.
 9 [It is] better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

10 All nations compassed me about, *that is, all the neighbouring nations, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Amorites, and others:* but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them. 11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 12 They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns, *which blazes, and dies away quickly:* for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 13 Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall; *thou, my most distinguished enemy, (perhaps referring to Saul,)* but the LORD helped me. 14 The LORD [is] my strength and song, and is become my salvation. 15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation [is] in the tabernacles of the righteous; *of the pious Israelites, who always favoured my cause, and have now great reason to rejoice:* the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly. 16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted; *has appeared eminently, and wrought gloriously and powerfully on my behalf:* the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly, *and appears to be far superior to all his enemies.* 17 I shall not die, *not fall in battle,* but live, and declare the works of the LORD. 18 The LORD hath chastened me sore, *by a variety of enemies and afflictions:* but he hath not given me over unto death; *he hath not suffered me to be destroyed. He then addresses himself to the porters at the gates of the tabernacle,* 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness; *the gates into which the righteous enter to worship God:* I will go into them, [and] I will praise the LORD: *the porters then reply,* 20 This is the gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter; *they and no other shall be welcome here. David adds,* 21 I will praise thee for the liberty I have to come to thy house, from which I have been so long banished: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. 22 The stone [which] the builders refused is become the head [stone] of the corner; *though the politicians of the age looked upon me with contempt and scorn, as builders do upon a stone which is unfit to set in the building, yet God hath made me the foundation and support of the state. The people then reply,* 23 This is the LORD's doing; it [is] marvellous in our eyes. 24 This [is] the day, *the famous, illustrious day,* [which] the LORD hath made remarkable by this marvellous work; and we will rejoice and be glad in it. *Then David offers up his petitions for continued mercy.* 25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. *Then the priests, addressing David and his warriors, say,* 26 Blessed [be] he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed

you out of the house of the LORD; *we welcome you here, and as the ministers of God, pray that your reign may be long, prosperous, and happy.* David then gives orders for offering up the sacrifices, and repeats his thankfulness. 27 God [is] the LORD, which hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, [even] unto the horns of the altar. 28 Thou [art] my God, and I will praise thee: [thou art] my God, I will exalt thee. *Then the king and his army, the priests and the people, all join in the grand chorus;* 29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for [he is] good: for his mercy [endureth] for ever.

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM the example of David we should learn to cherish and express a fervent gratitude for the past mercies of God to us. Behold this illustrious warrior marching up in solemn procession to the house of the Lord, laying as it were his sword and his crown at God's feet; and appearing infinitely greater and more majestic in this attitude, than when engaging or pursuing his enemies. Thus let us give God the glory of all his favours to us; especially those which have been extraordinary and remarkable; such as near escapes from death, and from overwhelming enemies or calamities. Let us stir up ourselves to pray to him, and call upon our friends to join with us; and *while we live* let us *declare the works of the Lord*, for his glory, and the encouragement of others.

2. Let us learn from David, to maintain a humble, cheerful confidence in God in all future dangers. When they compass us about like bees, are many and troublesome, then let us *trust in the name of the Lord*; which is better than to trust in man, though ever so wise and good; yea, better than to trust in princes, be they ever so mighty: for their minds may change, their strength fail, or their lives end. Let us endeavour by faith and prayer, to engage him on our side, then we need not fear. What can man do? nothing but what God permits; nothing but what he will overrule for good. The apostle applies this to all christians, Heb. xiii. 6., *We may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

3. Let us rejoice in the marvellous conduct of Providence, in the foundation he has laid for the hopes of his people in a Saviour so much despised. What David says of himself, v. 22., is

expressly applied to Christ both by himself and his apostles, Matt. xxi. 42., 1 Pet. ii. 7. As David was despised, though chosen and anointed of God to be king, yet he was afterwards raised to royal dignity, and so was Christ. The Jewish builders, the scribes and priests, who should have edified the church, rejected him, would not build upon him, or seek any union with him. But he was chosen of God; was a foundation laid by him: *he is become the head-stone of the corner*, which supports and cements the whole building, the church of believing Jews and Gentiles; and he, as a living stone, gives spiritual life to all who are united to him; *This is marvellous in our eyes*. Let us celebrate this constitution on every Lord's day; a day which he hath made and set apart for himself; and *let us rejoice and be glad in it*.

4. Let us cordially welcome Jesus Christ, who cometh as the King of Zion. What was said of David, *v. 26., Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord*, is in Matt. xxi. 9., used by the multitude that followed Christ, when he entered in triumph into Jerusalem. If the priests thus welcomed David, how should we welcome his son and Lord! *He cometh in the name of the Lord*; with authority and commission from him; and to promote his glory in the salvation of perishing souls. May we not only submit to him as our prince, but welcome him with the utmost joy; welcome him into our hearts, and yield every power of our souls to his sovereign and delightful sway: for his laws are reasonable, his protection sure, and his rewards great and everlasting.

PSALM CXIX.

This Psalm is a miscellaneous collection of what arose in David's mind concerning the excellency of the law of God, his desire to understand it, and his resolution to practise it. Afterwards it was put into poetical order, and divided into twenty-two parts, agreeably to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet; each verse in the first part beginning with Aleph, all in the second book with Beth, and so on, as marked in our English bibles. This is particularly suited to the composition, as consisting of independent sentences, which by this method might more easily be remembered. There is so much resemblance in the sentiments, reflections, and petitions in this Psalm, that there is room to draw but few practical reflections from the several parts; it will be sufficient to illustrate its sense and beauty where it may be needful.

ALEPH.

1 **BLESSED** [are] the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD; *who endeavour to keep themselves from the defilement of sin through the whole course of their lives.* 2 Blessed [are] they that keep his testimonies, [and that] seek him with the whole heart; *who are devoted entirely to his service, and are solicitous above all things to secure his favour.* 3 They also do no iniquity; *they do not work iniquity, it is not their prevailing custom:* they walk in his ways. 4 Thou hast commanded [us] to keep thy precepts diligently, *and we ought to acknowledge the command as a favour.* 5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! *O that my knowledge of thy precepts may influence my conduct, and my heart be disposed to observe thy law.* 6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments; *I shall have confidence in thee, and not be disappointed of my hope.* 7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments, *that is, shall have been thoroughly instructed in the nature of thy worship.* 8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly; *stand by me and strengthen me, that I may keep my good resolutions.*

BETH.

9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed [thereto] according to thy word; *young men are apt to corrupt their ways, through want of experience and thought, through*

bad examples, and depravity of heart; but if they study thy law, and compare their lives with that, it will tend to preserve, or reform, them. 10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. 11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee; *I have laid it up in my memory, impressed my heart with it, and often call it to mind, to be my security against sin.* 12 Blessed [art] thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes, *that so I may resemble thee in purity and blessedness.* 13 With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth; *I have openly professed my affectionate regard for them.* 14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as [much as] in all riches; *I have found more pleasure in contemplating and obeying thy law, than in all the vast substance of which I am master.* 15 I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways; *I will take notice of thy word and providence, and observe the harmony between them, how the scriptures illustrate thy providence, and providence the scriptures. Delightful and profitable work!* 16 I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

GIMEL.

17 Deal bountifully with thy servant, [that] I may live, and keep thy word; *it is for this end I desire life; to this purpose I will employ it; and to better purpose I cannot live.* 18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law; *that I may discern the admirable wisdom discovered there. I know there are greater things in the law of God, than appear upon a transient survey; and I desire to see and feel them; which I cannot do without divine illumination*.* 19 I [am] a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me, *but let them guide me through this dangerous state.* 20 My soul breaketh for the longing [that it hath] unto thy judgments at all times; *I approve thy commandments so heartily, and love them so well, that it is the greatest grief of my soul, that I am not more entirely conformed to them.* 21 Thou hast rebuked the proud [that are] cursed, which do err from thy commandments; *my proud enemies, who have persecuted me, without any regard to equity and humanity, and are therefore in thy book branded with a curse.* 22 Remove from me reproach and contempt, *which they have endeavoured to cast upon me, for I have kept thy testimonies.* 23 Princes also,

* This was especially true in what related to Christ and his church.

Saul and his courtiers, did sit [and] speak against me: [but] thy servant did meditate in thy statutes, and that made me easy, notwithstanding all their combinations against me. 24 Thy testimonies also [are] my delight, [and] my counsellors; *though I have often had no friend to consult, yet I have found guidance there in my perplexities and dangers.*

DALETH.

25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust; *my affections are sometimes irregular, and my heart languid: quicken thou me according to thy word, according to thy promise, or by attending to thy word.* 26 I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me; *I have laid open the state of my soul before thee, all my fears and dangers: teach me thy statutes, as the surest way to safety and happiness.* 27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts *more fully*; so shall I talk of thy wondrous works; *shall be likely to do more good, and be more importunate in prayer.* 28 My soul melteth for heaviness, *under a sense of my many sins: strengthen thou me according unto thy word, which promises mercy to the penitent.* 29 Remove from me the way of lying; *all the falsehood and deceit which my enemies practise against me: and grant me to observe thy law graciously, that is, through thy good pleasure. And though in some instances I may have deviated from it, yet* 30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid [before me.] 31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame; *let me not fall into any sinful course, by which I may expose myself or religion to reproach.* 32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart; *I shall go on with vigour and cheerfulness when thou shalt remove my burden and restraint, and communicate more of thy Spirit to me.*

HE.

33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it [unto] the end. 34 Give me understanding *to see its beauty and excellency*, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with [my] whole heart, *with sincerity and abiding resolution.* 35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. 36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness*. 37 Turn away mine eyes from

* This is an elliptical expression, *let it not be inclined to covetousness.* David found human weakness working in him, and therefore begs to be preserved from the snare.

beholding vanity, *from admiring and coveting worldly things*; [and] quicken thou me in thy way. 38 Stablish thy word, *thy gracious promises, especially those of the everlasting covenant*, unto thy servant, who [is devoted] to thy fear. 39 Turn away my reproach which I fear; *preserve me from bringing a reproach upon religion*: for thy judgments [are] good; *by regarding thy word, my reputation and that of religion may be secured*. 40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts, *to hear, read, and obey them*: quicken me in thy righteousness, *according to thy faithful promises*.

VAU.

41 Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, [even] thy salvation, according to thy word. 42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word; *probably referring to the promise of the kingdom, his expectation of which had been derided*. 43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; *let me have liberty and resolution still to profess my faith in thy promise*; for I have hoped in thy judgments. 44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever; *I shall not grow more negligent in thy service, but be animated to persevere to the end*. 45 And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts; *I shall not be entangled, or put to any mean shifts, since I inquire after thy will, and not the maxims of human policy*. 46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed; *the kings of the Philistines and Moab may endeavour to persuade me to worship idols, but I will plead the cause of the God of Israel before them, though I depend ever so much upon them*. 47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved; *as I have loved them, I will love them better, and seek my pleasure in them (as the word signifies) more than in any sensual gratifications*. 48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes; *I will not only commend them, and meditate upon them, but act agreeably to them*.

REFLECTION.

WE see from hence what is the temper of good men, and what should be ours; we should form a steady resolution to study and practise the divine laws; this should be accompanied with earnest prayer, that God would teach us to know them, and incline us to

practise them; that neither ignorance, unsteadiness, nor cowardice, may make us neglect them. This is the way to true blessedness; and may God incline us to walk in this way, even to the end.

ZAIN.

49 Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. 50 This [is] my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me; *brought comfort to me when I was ready to despair.* 51 The proud have had me greatly in derision: [yet] have I not declined from thy law, *even for my own preservation from their designs.* 52 I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; *thine appearances for good men in former ages;* and have comforted myself *with the expectation of the like appearances in my favour.* 53 Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law. 54 Thy statutes have been my songs, *matter of joy to me,* in the house of my pilgrimage, *in the places of my wandering.* 55 I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law. 56 This *composure and cheerfulness of spirits under the most pressing afflictions, this communion with thee,* I had, because I kept thy precepts.

REFLECTION.

THESE verses suggest these two important and excellent thoughts; that a devotional spirit is to be acknowledged as an invaluable favour, and that the way to attain it is to exercise a good conscience at all times. A sense of guilt will distress and perplex the mind, unfit us for converse with God, and receiving the tokens of his favour.

CHETH.

57 [Thou art] my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words. 58 I entreated thy favour with [my] whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word. 59 I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. 60 I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments. 61 The bands of the wicked, *the Amalekites at Ziklag,* have robbed me: [but] I have not forgotten thy law; *I have not gone out of the way of duty to seek revenge.* 62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments. 63 I [am]

a companion of all [them] that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts; *though I am a king, yet these are my companions and chosen friends; though I am sometimes obliged to converse with others.* 64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes, *this I desire above all other blessings.*

TETH.

65 Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word, *though I have been so much afflicted. An acknowledgment that every good man will sooner or later make.* 66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge; *give me (as the word signifies) a good taste, a right relish for things, that I may discern between what is amiable and odious; for I have believed thy commandments, and my final happiness depends on forming my relish and my conduct agreeably to them.* 67 Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. 68 Thou [art] good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes. 69 The proud have forged a lie against me: [but] I will keep thy precepts with [my] whole heart. 70 Their heart is as fat as grease; *their minds are stupified with sensual pleasures; [but] I delight in thy law; enjoy nobler pleasure in the study of thy law. They think that their prosperity is true happiness; but I can say,* 71 [It is] good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes; *learn them better, and observe them more diligently.* 72 The law of thy mouth [is] better, *that is, more precious,* unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

JOD.

73 Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments; *Oh do not leave the better part, the soul, without knowledge, cultivation, and improvement, else I shall be a contemptible creature, how exact and beautiful soever the animal frame may be.* 74 They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word; *when they see such a monument of mercy as I am, who have been supported under so many afflictions and trials.* 75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments [are] right; *I approve the justice, wisdom, and goodness of them; and acknowledge [that] thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me; that they are no way inconsistent with thy promises, but will make thy faithfulness more illustrious in delivering me.* 76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant. 77 Let

thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law [is] my delight. 78 Let the proud, *Saul and his adherents*, be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: [but] I will meditate in thy precepts. 79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me; and those that have known thy testimonies*. 80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes: that I be not ashamed; *nothing but thorough integrity will keep me from secret shame.*

CAPH.

81 My soul fainteth for thy salvation: [but] I hope in thy word. 82 Mine eyes fail for thy word, *for the accomplishment of thy promise*, saying, When wilt thou comfort me? 83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; *like a leathern bottle, wrinkled and shrivelled by being long hung up in the smoke*; [yet] I do not forget thy statutes. 84 How many [are] the days of thy servant? *his afflicted days?* when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me? 85 The proud have digged pits for me, which [are] not after thy law; *they have endeavoured to ruin me in a most treacherous manner.* 86 All thy commandments [are] faithful, *and teach us to behave ourselves with fidelity*: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me. 87 They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts. 88 Quicken me after thy loving kindness; *enliven my graces, and bring me out of this forlorn condition*; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

LAMED.

89 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. 90 Thy faithfulness [is] unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. 91 They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all [are] thy servants; *the steadfastness of the earth, the regular motions of the heavenly bodies, all illustrate and confirm thy faithfulness to thy promises.* 92 Unless thy law [had been] my delights, I should then *instantly* have perished in mine affliction. 93 I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me. 94 I [am] thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts. 95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: [but] I will consider thy testimonies. 96 I have seen an end of all perfection: [but] thy commandment [is] exceeding broad.

* Probably most of those who were gathered to him were good men, at least this sentence intimates his desire that they might be so; and it appears from some of the psalms, that he endeavoured to make them so; as if he had said, Lord, I would not have any good man, whether by constraint or mistake, found among my enemies.

REFLECTION.

THE history of David is an admirable paraphrase on the former part of these verses; and the whole scriptures on the latter part of them. He went through as many various scenes in life as any man ever did; he knew what solitude and company, friendship, health, beauty, strength, honour, power, and great riches could do to make him happy: but all proved empty, uncertain, and unsatisfactory; and he had often come to the end of them. But the large, extensive discoveries, rules, and precepts of God's law, afforded him a noble, solid, and lasting delight. Let this recommend it to our study, restrain our fondness for other things, and save us the trouble, vexation, and disappointment of seeking happiness in them.

MEM.

97 O how love I thy law! it [is] my meditation all the day.
 98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies, *though they are very crafty*: for they [are] ever with me; *continually in my eye, thoughts, and heart to guide me in all my ways; I find piety to be the best policy for this world.*
 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies [are] my meditation. 100 I understand more than the ancients, *the aged, wise and grave counsellors*, because I keep thy precepts. 101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. 102 I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me *that my happiness consists in observing them.* 103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! [yea, sweeter] than honey to my mouth! *than any entertainment of the senses.* 104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way, *and have no need to betake myself to any of them.*

NUN.

105 Thy word [is] a lamp unto my feet; and a light unto my path; *it does not only serve to amuse me with its splendour, but guides and conducts me in the way of duty and happiness.* 106 I have sworn, and I will perform [it,] that I will keep thy righteous judgments. 107 I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word. 108 Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy

judgments; *while I am driven by my enemies to a distance, so that I cannot attend thy sanctuary, accept the sacrifice of prayer and praise, the only one I can offer, and which I present with all sincerity and cheerfulness.* 109 My soul, or life, [is] continually in my hand, *in continual danger*: yet do I not forget thy law; *I have not acted contrary to thy commandments, nor taken irregular methods for my redress and deliverance.* 110 The wicked have laid a snare for me, *a subtle plot to ruin me*: yet I erred not from thy precepts. 111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they [are] the rejoicing of my heart, *my chief portion*; and I had rather continue poor as to all other possessions than want this, *which I know none can take from me.* 112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, [even unto] the end; *though I found some struggle and disinclination, yet, through grace, I have conquered it; and it is worth every man's while to maintain such a noble combat.*

SAMECH.

113 I hate [vain] thoughts; *all double dealing and crafty purposes, as the word signifies, every thought unbecoming a man and a sercant of God: but thy law do I love.* 114 Thou [art] my hiding place and my shield; *in thee I enjoy security and peace*: I hope in thy word. 115 Depart from me, ye evil doers; *no longer endeavour to persuade me to concur in your measures, for I am fully resolved that I will keep the commandments of my God. A proper answer to all that would corrupt us; and especially proper for young persons when sinners entice them.* 116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope, *that is, my hope of defence and deliverance, which I have often professed.* 117 Hold thou me up, *direct and support my steps*, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually. 118 Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes; *reduced them to a weak and contemptible condition*: for their deceit [is] falsehood; *while they endeavour to deceive others, they deceive themselves, and bring upon themselves the ruin which they intended for others.* 119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth [like] dross; *disownest them, and meltest them down, as good for nothing*: therefore I love thy testimonies. 120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments, *lest I should disobey thee, and incur thy displeasure.*

AIN.

121 I have done judgment and justice : leave me not to mine oppressors ; *those wicked, outrageous men, who treat me in the most unjust manner.* 122 Be surety for thy servant for good : let not the proud oppress me, *though they rage and boast, as though they had me in their power**. 123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness, *for the accomplishment of it, and sometimes I am almost ready to despair.* 124 Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes, *that I may improve my deliverance well when it comes.* 125 I [am] thy servant ; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies. 126 [It is] time for [thee,] LORD, to work, *to punish thine enemies : [for] they have made void thy law ; they have not answered the end and design of it.* 127 Therefore I love thy commandments above gold ; yea, above fine gold ; *their contempt of thy law raises my value for it.* 128 Therefore I esteem all [thy] precepts [concerning] all [things to be] right ; *I approve all thou requirest, and will cheerfully do whatsoever thou shalt command ; [and] I hate every false way ; every thing that is false in itself, or that will deceive me.—Thus should our zeal fetch arguments from the coldness, our fidelity from the falsehood, and our piety from the wickedness, of others, to be so much the more active.*

P E.

129 Thy testimonies [are] wonderful : therefore doth my soul keep them ; *the more they are known, the more they will be admired ; though in some respects they are very sublime, yet in others they are so plain, that,* 130 The entrance of thy words giveth light, *on the first observation, on a transient survey ; it giveth understanding unto the simple ; the understanding is enlightened by it, so that the young and ignorant easily gain instruction.* 131 I opened my mouth, and panted, *as one who is thirsty doth for water : for I longed for thy commandments, I so earnestly desired to be better acquainted with them.* 132 Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name. 133 Order my steps in thy word ; *direct and govern the whole course of my actions by it :* and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. 134 Deliver me from the oppression of man : so will I keep thy precepts ; *this will be a fresh engagement*

* This is the only verse in the whole psalm in which there is not some mention of the law of God ; but it may be hinted at when he calls himself God's servant.

upon me to keep them. 135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes. 136 Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law; *I lament the dishonour that is done to thee by the wickedness of my enemies, more than my own sufferings.—This tender regard to the honour of God, and concern for the contempt thrown upon his law, should be carefully preserved by us; as it will be a security against sin, have a happy influence on the usefulness of our lives, and lead us to ‘exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.’*

TSADDI.

137 Righteous [art] thou, O LORD, and upright [are] thy judgments. 138 Thy testimonies [that] thou hast commanded [are] righteous and very faithful; *therefore their sin is greatly aggravated who break them.* 139 My zeal hath consumed me; because mine enemies have forgotten thy words. 140 Thy word [is] very pure, *pure in itself, and requires entire purity; and this is the true reason why men do not love it, but make so many objections against it: therefore thy servant loveth it: this is a good test to try ourselves by.* 141 I [am] small and despised; *in low circumstances, and a helpless condition: [yet] do not I forget thy precepts.* 142 Thy righteousness [is] an everlasting righteousness, and thy law [is] the truth; *we may certainly depend upon it, without danger of being deceived.* 143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: [yet] thy commandments [are] my delights. 144 The righteousness of thy testimonies [is] everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live; *shall be kept from those things which deserve and bring death.*

KOPH.

145 I cried with [my] whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes. 146 I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies. 147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word; *I have been as careful in the study of thy word, as in seeking thine assistance.* 148 Mine eyes prevent the [night] watches, that I might meditate in thy word; *it is my meditation in the night, and the first thing I think of in the morning.* 149 Hear my voice according unto thy loving kindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment, *that is, thy word, or the means thou judgest best.* 150 They draw nigh to seize me that follow after mischief: they are far from

thy law: *but this is my comfort, that* 151 Thou [art] near, O LORD; and all thy commandments [are] truth. 152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever; *they shall never fail those who depend upon them.*

RESH.

153 Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law. 154 Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word. 155 Salvation [is] far from the wicked; *though they may triumph for a while, yet, what alone is worthy of being called salvation, is far from them; it is indeed offered to them, but they refuse it, for they seek not thy statutes.* 156 Great [are] thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments. 157 Many [are] my persecutors and mine enemies; [yet] do I not decline from thy testimonies. 158 I beheld the transgressors, *I fixed mine eyes upon them, took a deliberate view of their various crimes, and the several circumstances and aggravations of them, and was grieved, (the original signifies a mixture of grief, indignation, and pity,) because they kept not thy word, on account of the indignity they offered to thee, and the mischief they brought upon themselves; on this account I grieved myself, and laboured to affect my own heart with the sadness of the case. A temper which all christians, and especially ministers, should cultivate.* 159 Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy loving kindness. 160 Thy word [is] true [from] the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments [endureth] for ever, *and have been performed in the most punctual manner.*

SCHIN.

161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word, *therefore I dare not avenge myself.* 162 I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil, *and I know what this is, and the joy it occasions.* 163 I hate and abhor lying: [but] thy law do I love. 164 Seven times a day do I praise thee, *that is, many times in a day**, because of thy righteous judgments; *because thou hast given such laws, and I have the happiness to be acquainted with them.* 165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them; *they have great satisfaction of mind, and shall not be easily*

* Good men may say this of themselves in reference to secret and family worship, prayer at meals, and ejaculatory addresses.

drawn into sin, as the word 'offend' signifies. 166 LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments. *An important remark; there is no hope of salvation, without doing God's commandments: what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.* 167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. 168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways [are] before thee; *a firm persuasion of thy omniscience is my great engagement to keep thy commandments.*

TAU.

169 Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word. 170 Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word. 171 My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes. 172 My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments [are] righteousness: 173 Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts *as my treasure and guide; that is, I will keep them and be guided by them.* 174 I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law [is] my delight, *while that salvation is delayed.* 175 Let my soul live, *prolong this temporal life, and give me greater affection in the spiritual life,* and it shall praise thee, *yea, my eternal life shall be employed in thy praise:* and let thy judgments help me. 176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; *amidst all these declarations of my piety, I humbly acknowledge my errors, and the imperfections which attend my best services: my plea is, for I do not forget thy commandments, that is, I love thy law, and long to serve thee better.—When we can make this appeal to God, it will be a token for good; and we may comfortably hope that he will recover us.*

REFLECTION.

THE great use we are to make of this psalm, is, to have our veneration and love for the law of God increased, as that which will afford us the noblest delight and the best instruction; and considering what a small part of the scriptures David had, in comparison of what we are favoured with, and how much more excellent that part is which he had not, we shall be inexcusable if we are strangers to the word of God, and do not make it our study and delight. *The servant who knoweth his lord's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.*

PSALM CXX.

A Song of degrees.

This and the fourteen following psalms are called Songs of degrees. It is not material to know what this means, since the learned are not agreed, nor can the Jewish writers give us any light in the matter: whether they were to be sung on the stairs of the temple, Neh. ix. 4., as is generally supposed, or only with a loud voice. They are all short, but the hundred and thirty-second, which might be used as a token of gratitude to David and his memory, who had made such preparations for building the temple. This hundred and twentieth psalm was written by David in the wilderness of Paran, and when sojourning among or near the Arabians.

1 **I**N my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.
 2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, [and] from a deceitful tongue. 3 What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? *what treasure dost thou hope to heap up by it?* 4 Sharp arrows of the mighty, *the dreadful punishment of almighty God*, with coals of juniper, *a wood that burns fiercely, and keeps fire a long time.* 5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, [that] I dwell in the tents of Kedar! *that I am forced to continue a long time among this inhospitable and barbarous people; or it may refer to wicked men in Israel, who were as bad as any that dwelt in this country.* 6 My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. 7 I [am for] peace: but when I speak, they [are] for war; *when I make proposals of peace, or take any pains to bring them to a better temper, they are for carrying on the war with so much the more eagerness.*

REFLECTION.

FROM hence we are taught, that a peaceable, quiet situation, among good neighbours, is a great mercy. It is dreadful to be obliged to sojourn among those who fear not God, nor love truth; but who tell lies, devise mischief, and sow discord by slandering and evil-speaking; who love litigation and contention, and are all for war. If we have not the vexation and perplexity

of such neighbours, we should bless God for it. If we have, let us consider it as an affliction; patiently bear it, and endeavour, by being peaceable ourselves, by rendering good for evil, and abounding in friendly offices, to disarm their rage, and promote their moderation. *Let us not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* It is no uncommon thing for men to complain of a bad neighbourhood, when they are themselves the worst neighbours in it.

PSALM CXXI.

A Song of degrees.

Composed by David during some great affliction, probably Absalom's rebellion, as he refers to mount Zion, which was not in the hands of the Israelites, nor the seat of the ark, till a little before that event.

1 **I** WILL lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help; *though I am driven from my palace, and thy tabernacle, yet I lift up mine eyes toward mount Zion and Moriah, where God dwells.* 2 My help [cometh] from the LORD, which made heaven and earth, *and has all things at his command.* 3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. 4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep; *the protector of Israel and all good men will not neglect thee a moment, much less entirely abandon thee.* 5 The LORD [is] thy keeper: the LORD [is] thy shade upon thy right hand *to refresh and protect thee.* 6 The sun shall not smite thee by day *with his excessive heat*, nor the moon by night, *though thou shouldst be forced to lodge in the open air.* 7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul, *that is, thy life, and not suffer thee to fall into the hands of Ahithophel and Absalom, who would take it away.* 8 The LORD shall preserve thee in thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore, *even to the end of thy days.*

REFLECTION.

FROM this psalm we may learn, thankfully to acknowledge and cheerfully depend upon divine guardianship. This has been

universally called the *traveller's psalm*; and it is indeed an excellent companion upon our journeys. Let us adore the goodness of God that he will be the guardian of his people, and the keeper of Israel; and when we are leaving our habitations and going abroad, we should take encouragement from hence to trust in God to take care of us and them. In dependance upon this encouragement, let us cheerfully prosecute the proper business of life; and not be slavishly afraid of enemies and danger by day or by night. God's eye is every where; we and our friends may sleep, but God never slumbers nor sleeps. Let this then engage us to be cheerful; he has hitherto preserved and kept us, and we may comfortably conclude that, *He will preserve us safe to his heavenly kingdom.*

 PSALM CXXII.

A Song of degrees of David.

1 **I** WAS glad when they said unto me, *at the approach of the sabbath, or solemn feasts,* Let us go into the house of the LORD, 2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. 3 Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together, *not scattered and divided**; 4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, *to worship before the ark, in which the table of testimony was kept, and by which God testified his dwelling in Israel and his relation to them; thither they repair for the administration of justice, as well as to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.* 5 For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David; *the courts of judicature are there, where David and his sons administer justice* †. *Whenever you come up there,* 6 Pray for the peace and happiness of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. 7 Peace be within thy walls, [and] prosperity within thy palaces; *may plenty of all good things be found within thee.* 8 For my brethren and companions' sakes,

* David had filled the valley between the upper and lower city with buildings, so that the city was now regular.

† We are told, 2 Sam. viii. 18., that David made his sons chief rulers. The temple might be made the place of judgment, to lead the people to thankfulness that God had given them a prince, by whom and by his family justice was distributed; and to engage those young princes to do it with diligence and integrity.

I will now say, Peace [be] within thee. 9 Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good; *not only pray for it, but do what I can to promote it.*

REFLECTION.

WE are taught from this psalm to love God's house, and seek its prosperity. No particular place is now the centre of worship and unity, as Jerusalem then was, but wherever christians meet, there is a church, a house of God, a holy place. Let us quicken and stir up one another to go there, for we all need to be quickened. Let us earnestly embrace the call, *love the habitation of God's house, esteem a day in his courts better than a thousand other days; pray for its peace and prosperity; that God would be the guardian of our churches; and continue their liberty and tranquillity.* This should be done from a principle of love to God, a concern for the edification and happiness of our brethren; and a regard to all the pleasure which results from social devotion. Let a spirit of piety and religious fellowship animate us to offer up our prayers and perform every good deed for the house of God; for in the peace thereof we shall have peace; and *God is not unrighteous to forget our works of faith and labours of love, or blot out our good deeds for the house of our God.*

PSALM CXXIII.

A Song of degrees.

If this psalm was composed by David, it was probably one of the first that he penned. Israel was then under great oppression by the Philistines; there was no spear nor sword among them; and they were obliged to go down to the forges of the Philistines to sharpen their instruments of husbandry: at those times they would banter the Israelites for their dependance upon a God, who, they thought, could not save them. David might go on these occasions, and this psalm be some of the first breathings of his pious and generous soul, on seeing his country thus oppressed.

1 **U**NTO thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. 2 Behold, as the eyes of servants [look] unto the hand of their masters, [and] as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her

mistress, *either for help and defence against those who wrong them, or to receive the signals of their will; or rather, as expressing their resolution to submit to their correction; so our eyes [wait] upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us, and remove the affliction.* 3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, *we earnestly entreat thee, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt, and are hardly able to bear up under it, as in 2 Kings xviii. 23, 24.* 4 Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, [and] with the contempt of the proud, *who are in peace and prosperity, and enjoy not only the good of their own land but of ours also.*

REFLECTION.

WE should be led by reading this psalm, to adore the divine goodness, that our enemies are not oppressing us, lording it over us, insulting us with cutting reproaches and cruel mockings. Yet many who are serious and good, will meet with the scorn and contempt of the wicked and the freethinkers of the age. Let them, when in such a case, keep their eyes fixed upon God; and derive support and encouragement from his mercy, and that assurance of his favour which he has given to all who hold fast their integrity.

PSALM CXXIV.

A Song of degrees of David.

Composed perhaps on occasion of the victory David gained over the Philistines in the beginning of his reign, see 2 Sam. v. 19. It is probable that they were overcome by thunder, or some other remarkable interposition of Providence.

1 **I**F [it had not been] the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; 2 If [it had not been] the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: 3 Then they had swallowed us up quick, *that is, alive,* when their wrath was kindled against us: 4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: 5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. 6 Blessed [be] the LORD, who hath not given us [as] a prey to

their teeth. 7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. 8 Our help [is] in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth; *in whose power and goodness, illustrated by this deliverance, we will for ever trust.*

REFLECTION.

WE are taught from this psalm, that national deliverances demand our fervent gratitude. Many circumstances have occurred in this nation, especially that we commemorate on the fifth of November, and some which have happened within our own memory, when our danger has been extreme, and God's interposition remarkable, that may properly be celebrated in the language of this psalm. These considerations should keep us from unreasonable fear, when our enemies are again rising up against us; and encourage us to fix our dependance upon him, *who hath delivered, and doth deliver*; who, as he made heaven and earth, can defend us from the greatest dangers, and deliver us out of the greatest distresses. The French protestants always begin their public worship with the last verse of this psalm; and there is no thought more encouraging and comfortable. *Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

PSALM CXXV.

A Song of degrees.

This psalm was probably composed when the king of Assyria invaded Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time; and might be some of the good and comfortable words which we are told Hezekiah spoke to the people.

1 **THEY** that trust in the LORD [shall be] as mount Zion, [which] cannot be removed, [but] abideth for ever. 2 [As] the mountains [are] round about Jerusalem, *the mount of Olives, Calvary, and others, which make it difficult of access to an enemy*, so the LORD [is] round about his people, *and is a much surer defence than they*, from henceforth even for ever. 3 For the rod, *that is, the sceptre or dominion*, of the wicked, shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; *many of the estates that in the division of the*

land had fallen to them by lot, may now be overrun by invading enemies; but they shall not keep possession of them, lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity, seek relief by unlawful means. 4 Do good, O LORD, unto [those that be] good; and to [them that are] upright in their hearts. 5 As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, *apostates, who choose sinful courses, for fear of persecution and reproach,* the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity, *to destruction, as malefactors are led to execution; they shall have their portion with those who never professed religion; [but] peace [shall be] upon Israel.*

REFLECTION.

IF we desire stability and peace, let us sincerely *trust in the name of the Lord.* The wicked may attack our lot, our persons, properties, or reputations: but God knows what we can bear, how to proportion our trials to our strength, or our strength to our trials. In him therefore let us hope, and dread those crooked ways which lead to destruction. If we choose sin before affliction, and forsake our duty to escape reproach and sufferings, we shall inevitably fall into greater mischiefs than those we seek to avoid. But if we continue good and upright in heart, whatever we suffer, we shall have satisfaction within; and *our end will be peace.*

PSALM CXXVI.

A Song of degrees.

This psalm was composed either by Ezra, Zerubbabel, or some other pious person after the captivity, and before their deliverance was quite complete; acknowledging the goodness of God in what was past, and encouraging the hope that the great work would be perfected.

1 **WHEN** the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion we were like them that dream; *we could hardly believe that so surprising and unexpected a change in our affairs was real; that when Cyrus came to Babylon as a conqueror he should give the Jews their liberty, (a nation so hated by kings and princes), and also give them supplies out of his royal treasury to build the temple.* 2 Then was our

mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. 3 The LORD hath done great things for us; [whereof] we are glad; *we resounded the declaration with pleasure and thankfulness.* 4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south; *as Jordan, and many other rivers which flow towards the south, grow wider and deeper in their progress, and run with a stronger current; so let our restoration be gradually growing more complete, till we are all returned and comfortably settled.* To encourage their hope of this, he adds, 5 They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy; *an allusion to the circumstances in which the foundations of the temple were laid; though we now weep, yet a glorious harvest is before us.* 6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, *that weeps when he sows it, lest it should be lost, and be quite impoverished, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves [with him;] the joy of the harvest, if successful, will be proportionable to the apprehension with which he committed the seed to the ground.* So God will ensure a plentiful crop; *though you give out of your poverty towards building the temple, an honourable, glorious harvest shall arise.*

REFLECTION.

LET us animate our hearts with a cheerful hope of the divine favour, when circumstances seem most discouraging; considering how often God has turned again our captivity, our frequent deliverances from popery and slavery, and the surprising and sudden appearances of Providence for us. Let us reflect on these, and acknowledge that, *the Lord doeth great things for us*, and rejoice in him. This may encourage our hope, that God will yet defend his own cause; and our prayers, that he would remember his persecuted servants, and turn again their captivity. In many circumstances *we sow in tears*; when bewailing our sins, mourning for public abominations, and suffering for well-doing. But there is a rich harvest before us, *when all tears shall be wiped away*, and exchanged for settled peace and universal joy.

PSALM CXXVII.

A Song of degrees for Solomon.

This psalm was probably written by Solomon when he was about to build the temple, and at the time when Rehoboam was born. It is designed to illustrate this very important maxim, that the success of all our affairs depends upon God.

1 **EXCEPT** the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh [but] in vain. 2 [It is] vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, *to fare hard and live sparingly*: [for] so he giveth his beloved sleep, *sound and quiet sleep*; while the children of the world deny themselves necessary comforts, God gives his servants composed rest under a sense of his protection. 3 Lo, children [are] an heritage of the LORD: [and] the fruit of the womb [is his] reward; *the hand of God in producing human creatures in the ordinary course of nature, is as visible to a thoughtful eye, as if he raised them out of the dust of the ground.* 4 As arrows [are] in the hand of the mighty man; so [are] children of the youth; *children born to a man in his youth, and grown up to years of maturity, when he is old are capable of defending him, like arrows in the hand of a mighty man.* 5 Happy [is] the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate; *an allusion to an old man sallying out to war, guarding and guarded by his sons; these would inspire him with vigour and courage, that he would not perhaps have felt if single.*

REFLECTION.

WE are here taught our constant dependance upon God for all public, domestic, and personal comforts. This is a truth of great importance, and ought to be made familiar to us. Let us depend upon him for every kind of security and peace; the safety and quiet of the places of our residence; the building up of our families; our success in business; and our comfort in every relation. On this we depend for safe and quiet repose, undisturbed with care or fear. No skill, sagacity, application, friends, or cordials

will do without his blessing. May we *trust in him therefore at all times, pour out our hearts before him, and beware that we forget not the Lord our God.*

PSALM CXXVIII.

A Song of degrees.

This psalm may be considered as an appendix to the former and is a further encouragement to be good.

1 **BLESSED** [is] every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. 2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy [shalt] thou [be,] and [it shall be] well with thee; *thou shalt have good success in thy labours, and a comfortable enjoyment of them.* 3 Thy wife [shall be] as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table, *the ornament, delight, and entertainment of it.* 4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. 5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion, *with such choice blessings as he bestows on his covenant people:* and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. 6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, [and] peace upon Israel, *which, if thou art a true Israelite, thou wilt be much concerned about.*

REFLECTION.

WE learn from this psalm, that the way to secure God's blessing is to be holy; to fear him, and walk in his ways. Devotion, faith, sobriety, justice, and charity, are the best friends to temporal prosperity; to the support, increase, and comfort of our families, and the peace of our own minds. It will also have an happy influence on the public welfare; as every good man is a common good. But whether we prosper in this world or not, whether we see the good or evil of our country, *it shall be well with them that fear God;* happy shall they be in the divine favour now, and in the enjoyment of everlasting felicity hereafter. Let us then *follow after godliness, for it hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

PSALM CXXIX.

A Song of degrees.

Composed during the captivity.

1 **M**ANY a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say; *ever since we have been a people, both in Egypt and at our first settlement in Canaan:* 2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me, *to our utter extirpation.* 3 The ploughers ploughed upon my back: they made long their furrows; *we have been cruelly oppressed, and our vexation long continued, like a person who has been frequently and severely scourged.* 4 The LORD [is] righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked; *disarmed their power, as Cyrus did that of the Chaldeans when he conquered Babylon.* 5 Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion. 6 Let them be as the grass, *or green corn,* [upon] the house tops, which withereth afore it groweth up *to maturity;* 7 Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom, *but it continues unregarded, none caring to gather it.* 8 Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD [be] upon you; we bless you in the name of the LORD; *so let the designs of our enemies never come to perfection, and let none wish them well.*

REFLECTION.

WE may comfort ourselves from hence that the enemies of the church shall not prevail against it. The christian church, like Israel, was afflicted from its youth, met with great opposition and persecution; but it still continues, and always will. God has cut the cords or scourges of the wicked, and healed the furrows they have made. This gives us encouragement to pray, that God would confound all the devices of its enemies, and that he would bless and prosper all those who are labouring for its good.

PSALM CXXX.

A Song of degrees.

This psalm was composed by David, probably after his sin in the matter of Uriah.

1 **OUT** of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD; *from the lowest misery and distress, when sinking into despair.* 2 LORD, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. 3 If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand? *If thou shouldst set it down in the book of thy remembrance, and in the strictest manner bring thy creatures to account for all their offences, none could stand in judgment; if thou didst not mingle mercy with thy justice, we must despair.* 4 But [there is] forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared, *that is, worshipped and sought unto, to which we should have no encouragement if on every offence our case was desperate.* 5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. 6 My soul [waiteth] for the LORD, more than they that watch for the morning: [I say, more than] they that watch for the morning; *I wait for the displays of thy mercy, as travellers that are benighted, or sentinels on duty, or persons in pain and sickness look and long for the approach of day.* 7 Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD [there is] mercy, and with him [is] plenteous redemption. 8 And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities; *they shall obtain pardon for all their sins, and deliverance out of all their troubles.*

REFLECTION.

FROM this psalm we are taught what should be our disposition as sinful creatures; namely, to be deeply humbled before God, under a sense of our own demerit. If he should deal with us in strict justice, and set our sins in order before us, the best of us would be inevitably undone. We should acknowledge his justice, and our own guilt; and consider the mercy of God as an encouragement to fear him. Let us not trifle with him, and continue in sin, presuming upon his mercy; but learn to reverence his authority, and labour to please him. Thus let us *fear the Lord and his goodness, for with him there is plenteous redemption.* We should earnestly seek,

and humbly wait for the displays of his favour. His goodness will not be delayed beyond the most reasonable time, though we may think it long. The light of the morning is pleasant after a dark night; so will be his favour and mercy, after we have patiently waited for it in the way of our duty. Let us then *hope in his word, for he is a faithful God, keeping covenant and mercy.*

 PSALM CXXXI.

A Song of degrees of David.

This psalm was composed by David when he was charged with ambitious and aspiring views, and of seeking Saul's life.

1 **LORD**, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me; *I neither seek great things for myself, nor arraign thee and judge thy providence concerning thy dispensations to me.* **2** Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul [is] even as a weaned child; *I have imitated the humble, tractable temper of the infant state; a weaned child hankers a little after the breast, but soon reconciles itself to another way of living, and forgets the former; thus am I entirely resigned to thy guidance, and trust thy care and goodness.* **3** Let Israel hope in the **LORD** from henceforth and for ever; *let every Israelite that can say this of himself, disclaiming all confidence before God, and resigning himself entirely to his disposal, be encouraged to hope for a good issue.*

REFLECTION.

LET US learn to cultivate that humble, contented temper, which is so beautifully described in this psalm; and to this end guard against an undue opinion of our own worth and abilities; not seeking great things for ourselves, and aspiring after state and grandeur; by which we see so many ruining themselves, and injuring others. Neither should we pry too curiously into the mysteries of religion, or talk dogmatically about them. Let the humility of our hearts appear in a mild, placid, and condescending countenance; endeavouring to become as little children, and behaving with a becoming indifference to the world, with all simplicity, moderation, and contentment. It is worth our while to take

the greatest pains to gain these dispositions. Let us then seek them of God, and learn them of Christ, *who was meek and lowly in heart, and we shall find rest to our souls.*

PSALM CXXXII.

A Song of degrees.

This psalm was composed at the dedication of the temple by Solomon, when the ark was brought to its place, see 2 Chron. vi. 41. Part of Solomon's prayer used at that time is the same as some verses of this psalm.

1 **L**ORD, remember David, [and] all his afflictions; *what the workings of his heart were during his afflictions and persecutions, viz., that if ever he came to the crown he would build a house for the Lord:* 2 How he swore unto the LORD, [and] vowed unto the mighty [God] of Jacob; 3 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; 4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes, [or] slumber to mine eyelids, (*proverbial expressions for pursuing a scheme with all one's might,*) 5 Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty [God] of Jacob, *that is, a temple for his ark and worship.* 6 Lo, we heard of it at Ephrath: we found it in the fields of the wood; *we have heard that the ark was once at Shiloh, in the land of Ephraim, and afterwards at Kirjath-jearim, a city in a wood: it was there till David brought it to a more worthy place.* And now it is fixed, 7 We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool. 8 Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength; *take up thy more settled abode in this magnificent temple.* 9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, *as well as outward ornaments;* and let thy saints shout for joy, *on account of thy ordinances, and all the blessings both civil and sacred which they enjoy.* 10 For thy servant David's sake, *and the solemn covenant made with him, remember me his son, and turn not away the face of thine anointed.* 11 The LORD hath sworn [in] truth unto David; he will not turn from it; 12 Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore. 13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he

hath desired it for his habitation ; *and graciously declares,* 14 This [is] my rest for ever : here will I dwell ; for I have desired it ; *I will not remove from it to any other place.* 15 I will abundantly bless her provision : I will satisfy her poor with bread ; *here is abundance of temporal and spiritual blessings for all true worshippers.* 16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation : and her saints shall shout aloud for joy ; *I will furnish them with suitable gifts and graces, and make their ministrations successful.* 17 There will I make the horn of David to bud ; *I will advance and confirm his power ;* I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed, *that is, a successor, even until the time of the Messiah, and his kingdom shall be prosperous.* 18 His enemies will I clothe with shame : but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us be encouraged from hence to emulate the piety of David, displayed in his love and zeal for the house of the Lord. How anxious was this good man, that the ark, the emblem of God's presence, should have an honourable abode ! and how uneasy till he had found out a place where the pious Israelites might assemble ! A concern this, which neither all his cares, nor all his afflictions could exclude from his mind. Such a disposition it is our duty to cultivate, as it is so reasonable in itself, and so pleasing to God. If this was the temper of our fathers, (as of many of them it remarkably was,) we may plead it with God in prayer, as Solomon did, in our own behalf, if we are careful to tread in their steps. And let us learn from David, when we are resolved upon any good deed for the house of God, to fix a time, and set about it immediately ; lest by deferring it we should neglect and forget it.

2. Let us earnestly pray that such blessings may attend the christian church, as were asked for and promised to the jewish : that God would protect and prosper it ; that all his ministers may be righteous, and their labours be effectual to promote the salvation of men ; that God would *bless the provisions of his house,* and make his ordinances useful ; that cheerfulness and joy may fill every heart ; and that Christ, who has the kingdom of David, may have a more prosperous reign, and more extensive triumphs. We have great encouragement to offer up these prayers, since they accord with God's promises ; and the accomplishment of them will be for his glory.

PSALM CXXXIII.

A Song of degrees of David.

This psalm was composed on occasion of the union of the houses of Israel and Judah under David's government.

1 **BEHOLD**, how good and how pleasant [it is] for brethren to dwell together in unity! 2 [It is] like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, [even] Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts, *or hood*, of his garments, *and diffused a grateful odour to all about him*; so *amiable and delightful is our present union*. 3 As the dew of Hermon, [and as the dew] that descended upon the mountains of Zion; *as grateful and desirable as the dew, whose nature is refreshing, the quantity abundant, and which extends far and wide, falling at the same time on Hermon and Zion*: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, [even] life for evermore; *eternal life, as well as present prosperity, shall be the blessed effect of this union*.

REFLECTION.

SINCE it is so good and pleasant for brethren to dwell thus in unity, let it be our care to cultivate a benevolent disposition in ourselves, and labour to promote it in all about us. Let us remember that we are all brethren; that it is peculiarly necessary for those of the same stock and family to live in love; and for the members of the same church to be peaceful and friendly. Let us guard against bigotry, and a narrow spirit; against every thing which looks like scorn and contempt of our brethren, though their sentiments and forms of worship may differ from ours. We should also guard against the first rising of resentment and ill-will, and a disposition to take offence; and endeavour to promote a spirit of love among others; striving to repair breaches; frowning upon those of a backbiting tongue; and be glad to restore and maintain peace. Let us delight in one another, and *by love serve one another*, since this is the way to obtain a blessing from God. *He is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*.

PSALM CXXXIV.

A Song of degrees.

This psalm is an exhortation to the Levites, to take care that while they watched all night they employed themselves in devotion, and not in any thing beneath the dignity of their character. The two first verses might be sung by the people, and the last be the Levites' answer.

1 **B**EHOLD, bless ye the LORD, all [ye] servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD. 2 Lift up your hands [in] the sanctuary, and bless the LORD. 3 The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.

REFLECTION.

LET us learn from hence to maintain a devotional temper at all times, especially in the night season, when obliged to watch, or our eyes are kept waking; let us then employ our thoughts in meditation upon God and his word; in prayer and in praise. This will make wearisome nights comfortable and edifying, and add refreshment to our bed. Thus may we hope for the blessing of God; who, as he made heaven and earth, can never be at a loss to furnish his people with suitable supports and consolations. Thus saith David, *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.*

PSALM CXXXV.

1 **P**RAISE ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise [him,] O ye servants of the LORD. 2 Ye Levites, that stand in the house of the LORD, ye people, that stand in the courts of the house of our God, 3 Praise the LORD; for the LORD [is] good: sing praises unto his name; for [it is] pleasant. 4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, [and] Israel

for his peculiar treasure; *he delights in them, and takes them under his special care and protection.* 5 For I know that the LORD [is] great, and [that] our LORD [is] above all gods. 6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, [that] did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places. 7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain, *or, with the rain sending out lightning, which is often attended with violent showers of rain;* he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries. 8 Who smote the first born of Egypt, both of man and beast. 9 [Who] sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants. 10 Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings; 11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: 12 And gave their land [for] an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people. 13 Thy name, O LORD, [endureth] for ever; [and] thy memorial, O LORD, *as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, (Exodus iii. 15.),* throughout all generations. 14 For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants; *he will be reconciled to them after he has treated them with seeming severity.* 15 The idols of the heathen [are] silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 16 They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; 17 They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there [any] breath in their mouths. 18 They that make them are like unto them: [so is] every one that trusteth in them. *The nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first verses were probably sung alternately, and the last clause was the chorus.* 19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron: 20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD. 21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTIONS.

1. PRAISE should have a large share of our public worship. It is reasonable and good to praise God at all times, but especially when admitted to the privileges of his house, and when we behold his beauty and perfection there. Let us consider the many favours we have received, and are daily receiving from him; particularly our privileges as christians, in being a peculiar treasure to the Lord; not only succeeding to the dignity of his ancient

people, but enjoying nobler blessings. It is a pleasant work; tends to raise the soul to habitual cheerfulness, and by that promoting the health of the body and serenity of the mind. Let us therefore exhort one another to, and assist one another in, this reasonable, useful, and delightful work.

2. Let us observe and adore the hand of Providence in all events. As all nature depends upon God, all its powers and elements are directed and actuated by him. The rain, the lightning, and the wind are his: when they produce any favourable or dreadful effects, his hand should be acknowledged. We should also own his providence in all the favours bestowed on his church and people; especially in delivering them from their enemies: and let the remembrance of his goodness be kept up through every generation.

3. We have great encouragement to pray for God's oppressed people, from what he has done and promised to do for them. Though he may suffer them for a while to be under the power of the oppressor, he will at length vindicate their cause. He will not proceed in his controversy with them, but set them free from their enemies. We see so many instances of this in his conduct towards Israel, as ought to give great encouragement to our prayers and hopes.

4. Let us bless God for our deliverance from that idolatry, which is so stupid in itself, and so offensive to God. The contemptuous but just manner in which idolaters and their idols are here spoken of, should lead us to reflect on our happiness in being favoured with the gospel, which has delivered us from that state of idolatry and darkness in which our ancestors were; and to give God thanks for the reformation from popery, which had brought us back to a state almost as bad as the former. Let us be thankful that we are not obliged to submit to any thing in devotion, which is displeasing to God, shocking to our consciences, or inconsistent with that spirit and truth in which God ought to be worshipped.

PSALM CXXXVI.

This psalm is called by the Jews, 'the great Hallel,' or psalm of praise; and was used in the daily service of the temple. We find a reference to it in several parts of the Old Testament history; when Solomon dedicated the temple, while singing this psalm the Lord entered into it by a cloud of glory; in Jehoshaphat's time, when God destroyed their enemies, they sung this psalm. We find it used when the foundation of the second temple was laid in Ezra's time. The composition is singular; the burden of the song is repeated in every verse. The former part of each verse was probably sung by the Levites, and the latter by all the people. There is nothing in it that needs explanation.

1 **O** GIVE thanks unto the LORD; for he [is] good: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 2 O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 3 O give thanks to the LORD of lords: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 4 To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 7 To him that made great lights: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 8 The sun to rule by day: for his mercy [endureth] for ever: 9 The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy [endureth] for ever: 10 To him that smote Egypt in their first born: for his mercy [endureth] for ever: 11 And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy [endureth] for ever: 12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy [endureth] for ever: 14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever: 15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 16 To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 17 To him which smote great kings: for his mercy [endureth] for ever: 18 And slew famous kings: for his mercy [endureth] for ever: 19 Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy [endureth] for ever: 20 And Og king of Bashan: for his mercy [endureth] for

ever: 21 And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy [endureth] for ever: 22 [Even] an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 23 Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy [endureth] for ever: 24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 25 Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy [endureth] for ever.

REFLECTION.

IT should be the ground of our daily joy and praise, that *the mercy of God endureth for ever*. There is no truth concerning God, so often repeated, and so much magnified in scripture as this. No truth more comfortable or delightful to sinful, and yet immortal, creatures. His mercy followed our fathers through all their lives; it will accompany us through our days; it will attend our children and posterity to the end of time; and will extend through a blessed eternity; it will be the everlasting song of heaven, and therefore should be *our joy and our song in this house of our pilgrimage*. Let us trace up all the favours we receive to this true source, and *offer the sacrifice of praise continually*.

PSALM CXXXVII.

This psalm was composed during the captivity, probably by some Levite who was a leading musician in the temple. Such persons were in high repute in Babylon, as great proficients in their art, having been obliged to play daily during their attendance at the tabernacle, before the Israelites assembled there; and three times a year before the whole nation.

1 **BY** the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. 2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof; *we went out to the river side to soothe our distress, hoping to divert our grief by our music; but found our hearts too full to relish it,* 3 For there they that carried us away captive [required of us] a song; and they that wasted us [required of us] mirth, [saying,] Sing us [one] of the songs of Zion; *some of our enemies came and would have us sing*

such songs as we used in the temple: to which we replied
 4 How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land? *A song appropriated to the temple service, in a strange idolatrous land, among them which know not God, and by whom we are oppressed.*

5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget [her cunning,] *its skill in music, or its use for any purpose.* 6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy; *if I do not prefer thy interest above any of my joys, and mourn for thy distresses more than for any of my personal injuries, let me not only lose the power of singing, but the faculty of speech.* 7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, *Rase [it,] rase [it, even] to the foundation thereof; remember the Edomites, to punish them; who, though allied to us, by descent from Abraham and Isaac, though we were commanded by Jehovah not to injure them, when we passed through their land, yet have ungratefully hunted us down, and stirred up the Chaldeans utterly to destroy us*.* 8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy [shall he be,] that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. 9 Happy [shall he be,] that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones, *as it is foretold in Isaiah xiii.* 16 †.

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE pitiable state of the captives in Babylon, should make us very thankful that it is not our own; that we are not groaning under the oppression of enemies, and suffering their cruel mockings; but can sing the songs of the Lord in comfort. Our fathers, in many places, were obliged to omit this part of worship, for fear of being overheard and informed against; but we can sing God's praises without the oppression or scorn of our enemies; and it is fit our hearts and voices should be fervently engaged in this work.

* There is a reference to this in the prophecy of Obadiah, chap. i. 10—14.

† This kind of cruel execution was common in the east; but no reason or custom can justify so inhuman a practice. Probably the author of this psalm might have seen or suffered something of this kind, when Jerusalem was taken; if so, one can scarce wonder at his mentioning such a circumstance as this. It is not necessary to maintain that all the sentiments in scripture were suggested by the Spirit of God; especially the poetical compositions; and this in particular, any more than Job's and Jeremiah's cursing their day. God might leave his servants to the irregular passions and workings of their own hearts, and to utter sentiments which are neither to be imitated nor vindicated; and which are peculiarly unbecoming christians, whose religion teaches them to love and pray for their enemies.

2. We are taught to retain an affection for the church of God, even when in its lowest state. Let us esteem its welfare our chief joy; and its distresses and declensions our greatest grief, and let us speak a good word for it whenever we here it aspersed. Yet we should be careful to govern our passions, and to wish the enemies of the church no further ill, than the defeating of their schemes and the changing of their hearts.

 PSALM CXXXVIII.

[A Psalm] of David.

Composed probably soon after his accession to the throne. He had many enemies, but God was pleased to prosper him wheresoever he went.

1 **I** WILL praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods, *the princes and great men*, will I sing praise unto thee; *I will not be ashamed to acknowledge thy goodness, and celebrate thy praise.* 2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name; *employed all thy other attributes in the performance of thy promise, and so made them all testify and magnify thy faithfulness.* 3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, [and] strengthenedst me [with] strength in my soul; *didst support and comfort me under my sorrows.* 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth; *referring probably to the day when heathen nations should be converted to the knowledge of the true God.* 5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD, *engage in and pursue thy service with pleasure:* for great [is,] *or shall be,* the glory of the LORD. 6 Though the LORD [be] high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; *he knows, favours, and delights in them:* but the proud he knoweth afar off; *looks upon them with abhorrence, and will not allow them to come near him.* 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me; *thou shalt lay thy right hand upon their wrath; as if he had said, When they raise their hands with the utmost rage, thou canst easily hold them down.* 8 The LORD will perfect

[that which] concerneth me : thy mercy, O LORD, [endureth] for ever ; *I doubt not but thou wilt establish my throne : but, instead of being made cool and remiss by that confidence, I will be more earnest in prayer ; therefore I beseech thee, O Lord, forsake not the works of thine own hands.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE learn from this psalm to make the service of God the cheerful business of our lives ; and to seek strength from him to discharge it. If we have entered on the ways of God, let us proceed resolutely in them ; and rejoice therein, as they are ways of pleasantness and paths of peace ; as we have a good guide, a powerful guard, and agreeable company ; and they lead to everlasting life. We see the great glory of the Lord displayed, and therefore should go on our way rejoicing. In order to this, let us pray that God would *strengthen us with strength in our souls ;* enable us to bear up under the burdens of life ; to maintain our faith and patience, and make us joyful in all our tribulation. If for this we beseech the Lord, *his grace will be sufficient for us.*

2. Let us charge it upon our souls to be humble, if we desire any fellowship with God. *He knows the proud afar off :* though men may not discern their pride, or may even think themselves humble, he will reject them, how confidently soever they pretend to his favour. Whereas *he hath respect to the humble ;* is pleased with them, and will put honour upon them. Let us therefore *not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think ; but be clothed with humility ; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.*

3. We should learn from David, to depend upon, and to improve, the promises of God ; since he hath magnified his word of promise above all the other glories of his name ; that is, displayed his faithfulness in the contrivances of his wisdom and the exertions of his power. This is an encouragement for us to trust in him, and to depend on his loving kindness and his truth. We see in the last verse how the faith of David operated ; he was assured that God would *perfect his work,* yet he was not negligent, but continued in prayer. The promises of God are designed to encourage, not to supersede, our prayers. Let us then *continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving ; since he who hath begun the good work will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

PSALM CXXXIX.

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David.

This psalm is by the Jewish writers esteemed the most excellent; and indeed it deserves our most serious attention for the grand ideas it gives us of God, and the useful instructions it contains. It was composed by David when he was reproached for having ill designs against Saul.

1 **O** LORD, thou hast searched me, and known [me,] *my actions, and the workings of my mind.* 2 Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up rising, *at home and abroad,* thou understandest my thoughts afar off, *which are the most contingent things, yea, even my future thoughts.* 3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted [with] all my ways. 4 For [there is] not a word in my tongue, [but,] lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether, *that is, before there is a word uttered by my tongue.* 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me; *I cannot outrun thee, nor retire without thy leave; thou directest and controllest my motions as thou pleasest.* 6 [Such] knowledge *as this* [is] too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot [attain] unto it; *I cannot say how thou knowest all I have mentioned, but I am well satisfied that thou dost.* 7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou [art] there: if I make my bed in hell, *in the deepest caverns of the earth* *, behold, thou [art] there. 9 If] I take the wings of the morning, *if I could fly with the swiftness of a sun-beam,* [and] dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me *in my flight.* 11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light [are] both alike [to thee.] 13 For thou hast possessed my reins; *observed the secret recesses of my body:* thou hast covered me in my mother's womb; *cherished, preserved, and taken care of me there.* 14 I will praise thee; for I am fear-

* Heaven may signify the place where God manifests his brightest glory, and hell the abode of the damned.

fully [and] wonderfully made : marvellous [are] thy works ; and [that] my soul knoweth right well ; *I have frequently considered and acknowledged thy wonderful wisdom in my formation.* 15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, [and] curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth*. 16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect ; and in thy book all [my members] were written, [which] in continuance were fashioned, when [as yet there was] none of them ; *or, and there was none of them left out, or unfinished ; but all completed according to thy perfect model.* 17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! how great is the sum of them ! *I think of thy mercies with pleasure and thankfulness.* 18 [If] I should count them, they are more in number than the sand : when I wake, I am still with thee ; *when I lie down I think of thy goodness and mercy ; and these thoughts possess me in the morning ; or, if I begin the enumeration of them in the morning, and continue it all day and all night, yet I find myself the next morning as far from the end as ever.* 19 Surely thou, *who art omniscient and seest all they do,* wilt slay the wicked, O God : depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. 20 For they speak against thee wickedly, [and] thine enemies take [thy name] in vain ; *they are thy enemies as well as mine, for they prostitute the sacred name of religion to countenance their villany, and call upon thee as a witness for what they know to be false.* 21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee ; and am I not grieved with those that rise up *and rebel* against thee ? 22 I hate them with perfect hatred† : I count them mine enemies : *yet, lest any personal malice should lurk in my breast, and I should err through self-love, do thou* 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart : try me, and know my thoughts : 24 And see if [there be any] wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting, *by unchangeable rules of sincerity and truth.*

* This some suppose, alludes to the manner in which the creatures were first produced out of the earth ; and if so, it intimates, that when he was formed in his mother's womb, it was as much a work of divine power, as if he had been created out of the earth. I think it rather signifies, he was formed in the womb ; as remote from mortal eyes, as if it had been in the deepest caverns of the earth.

† This evidently refers to their character, and not their persons ; for it appears from other psalms, and David's history, that he prayed for them, and often refused to take vengeance upon them, when it was in his power.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us charge it upon our consciences that we remember the omniscience of God at all times; that he is perfectly acquainted with every one of our actions, words, and thoughts, though we cannot comprehend it. It is impiety not to believe the omniscience of God, and folly and madness not to act accordingly. The recollection of this would be a powerful restraint from every sin, an incentive to every duty. Let us then *set the Lord always before us; act and endure as seeing him that is invisible; and never consent to sin, for God sees us.* Let us remember that his eyes are upon us, by day and by night, in darkness as well as in the light; and that he particularly observes our behaviour and our thoughts in his house, and in what manner we worship him.

2. Let us acknowledge and adore him as the former and preserver of our frame. There are innumerable beauties in it; every limb, organ and sense, every bone, vessel and nerve, displays exquisite wisdom and skill. His mercies to us are innumerable, more than the sand. Let our bodies then be devoted to his service, and all our members be employed as instruments of righteousness. We should keep alive a sense of God and his goodness upon our minds; lie down every evening with a serious, grateful impression of it, and direct our first waking thoughts to him, that we may be in his fear all the day long.

3. Let us set ourselves in his presence to search and try us. A man may mistake his own character, and have sin prevailing in him, without being sensible of it. Let us therefore be careful that we be not deceived by an external profession, transient affections, or any gifts or privileges. Though we may not be conscious to ourselves of hypocrisy, or self-deceit: yet in a matter of such moment we ought to make diligent search, and beg the guidance of God; that he would show us the worst of ourselves, and preserve us from fatal delusions. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked.*

4. If we can really approve ourselves in the sight of God, let us take comfort in his omniscience, and the thought of his being a witness of our integrity. *It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment; our judge is the Lord.* There are excellent

marks in this psalm to judge of our characters by. Do we maintain a sense of the omnipresence and omniscience of God? Do we cherish a grateful remembrance of his mercies? Do we hate wicked practices? Do we feel a just indignation against those who continue in them? Do we give no countenance to sinners? Do we oppose the progress of iniquity, and count the enemies of God our enemies, so as to have no fellowship with them, however wealthy, polite, or honourable they may be? These will be considerable proofs of our integrity; and this will be our rejoicing when men abuse and misrepresent us. But lest we should draw back, let us earnestly pray that God would strengthen these dispositions in our hearts, and *lead us in the way everlasting*; the way of eternal truth and rectitude; the way that leads to everlasting life.

PSALM CXL.

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David.

Composed on occasion of his trouble from Saul and Doeg.

1 **DELIVER** me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; 2 Which imagine mischiefs in [their] heart; continually are they gathered together [for] war, *repeating their attempts to injure and destroy me.* 3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison, *which is not only painful but deadly,* [is] under their lips. Selah. 4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings. 5 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the way side; they have set gins for me. Selah. 6 I said unto the LORD, Thou [art] my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD. 7 O God the LORD, the strength of my salvation, *that is, my strong saviour,* thou hast covered my head in the day of battle; *probably alluding to his combat with Goliath, when he went out without shield or helmet.* 8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device; [lest] they exalt themselves; *lest they consider it as an evidence that God favours them, and so be led on to wicked attempts against other innocent*

persons. 9 [As for] the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. 10 Let burning coals fall upon them; let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. 11 Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth, *though he may thrive for a while by his artifices: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow and destroy [him.]* 12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, [and] the right of the poor, *though he may seem for a while to forget it, and suffer it to be borne down.* 13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence; *in a state of security and comfort when their enemies are destroyed.*

REFLECTION.

WICKED men are miserable notwithstanding all their art or power, and good men are happy though most violently assaulted and ill used. Who would not wish rather to be David than any of his enemies? Though such wicked men sharpen their tongues, yet the mischief of their own lips shall cover their heads, and burning coals fall upon them whose mouths are set on fire of hell. Let those that delight in malice and mischief, that carry tales to sow discord among brethren, that spread ill-natured characters and stories of their neighbours, remember, that there is a day of retribution coming, when their own tongues shall fall upon them, and they will be cast into that deep and bottomless pit from whence they will never rise again. But God is the strong saviour of good men, he can preserve them from secret fraud and open violence; he will maintain their cause, and make it appear to all the world that he favours them, and they shall dwell for ever in his presence.

PSALM CXLI.

A Psalm of David.

Written on the same account as the last, when he was persecuted by Saul; probably a little after the slaughter of the priests who were his friends.

1 **L**ORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. 2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee [as] incense; [and] the lifting up of my hands [as] the evening sacrifice; *though I cannot go to thy house, as thy people do, at the times of morning and evening sacrifice, let my prayer nevertheless be as acceptable to thee as if offered in the holy place, and with incense and sacrifices.* 3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips*; *guard me by thy grace, that I do not break out into intemperate speeches.* 4 Incline not my heart to [any] evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties, *or partake of any of those feasts, at which they contrive mischief, and encourage one another to pursue it.* 5 Let the righteous smite me; [it shall be] a kindness: and let him reprove me; [it shall be] an excellent oil, [which] shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also [shall be] in their calamities; *let the righteous reprove me severely; even though so keenly as almost to wound me, I would excuse it on account of the good effects it is likely to produce, and consider their reproofs as an engagement to pray for them and do them all the service I can, when they are in trouble*†. 6 When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet‡. 7 Our bones are scattered at the grave's

* His passions might be stirred up to an high degree, and ready to break out in reviling words against Saul, on account of this tragical scene, many having been put to death for the act of one, and that an act of kindness.

† These words are capable of another translation, which some learned critics prefer. 'Let the righteous teach me kindly, and reprove me. The oil of the wicked shall not anoint my head; that is, I will not go to visit him and keep him company (it being usual to anoint the heads of their guests); yet will I pray for them when I see them in distress.'

‡ This is an obscure expression, and seems to prophesy that God would bring some signal punishment upon the leading men among his enemies. It is an allusion to a case that might often happen, viz., when men run from an enemy to rocks and mountains, they may be taken and slain there, where they thought to shelter themselves, so should the people hear his words of praise to God. Thus Saul

mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth [wood] upon the earth*. 8 But mine eyes [are] unto thee, O GOD the LORD: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute, *nor suffer them to take away my life.* 9 Keep me from the snares [which] they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity. 10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us learn from hence to be constant and serious in our devotions. The appointment of incense and sacrifice morning and evening, point out these as the proper seasons for prayer. It should be our desire that our prayers may be set forth or directed to God, that our hearts be lifted up with our hands; this will be pleasing to God, and an acceptable sacrifice, through the incense of the great High-priest.

2. We have need earnestly to pray that God would guard our lips. It is our duty *to keep our mouths as with a bridle*; for the tongue is an unruly member, and needs a strong restraint. Let us then beg of God to restrain it, and enable us to take heed that we offend not with it; especially when we meet with injuries and provocations, for that is a time when men are very apt *to speak unadvisedly with their lips.* Let us entreat him to assist us in ruling our spirits, and governing our passions, that no word may proceed from us that will be displeasing to him, dishonourable to religion, or injurious to our own credit and peace.

3. The sharpest reproofs of the righteous, are better than the company and dainties of the wicked. A love of company and luxuries often leads men into the society of the wicked, and so weakens the force of religion, and tempts them to say and do as the wicked do. Let it be our care to avoid such company, however gay and merry they may be, remembering that *their dainties are deceitful meat.* Let us esteem reproof to be an instance of friendship, and be thankful for it, though we should think it not well grounded, or too sharply administered, yet when it appears

was destroyed. Some understand it of the comfort which the pious Israelites would have in David's preservation, and the encouragement he gave them when the priests were slain.

* It is not unlikely but Saul might leave the priests whom he had slain, unburied; if so, the hand of God was remarkably upon him, in his body being hung up, and denied the honours of a burial.

to be kindly intended, it should be kindly taken; and we should show how highly we esteem their friendship who are so faithful.

4. Let us learn from the whole, to trust in God when our case is most deplorable and desperate. Let us have our eyes unto him, who has wisdom sufficient to direct us, and power to guard and secure us. *If we do so, he will not leave our souls destitute; but as our day is our strength shall be.*

PSALM CXLII.

Maschil of David; a Prayer when he was in the cave.

It is generally thought he composed it afterwards, it being an account of the workings of his mind at that time. Others think he drew it up while he was actually there, in the very article of danger; and he might do it, as it was then his strength and security to be as quiet as possible.

1 **I** CRIED unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. 2 I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble. 3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. *In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me; this attack of my enemy, and the circumstance of my being in the cave did not happen but by thy direction.* 4 I looked on [my] right hand, and beheld, but [there was] no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul*. 5 I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, 'Thou [art] my refuge [and] my portion in the land of the living; *I have in former days made prayer my business and delight; I have looked up to thee to defend me from danger, and to bestow needful good upon me.* 6 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low; deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I, *and there seems to be no way for my escape.* 7 Bring my soul out of prison, *this dark and dismal confinement,* that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me. *While he was pouring out his soul to God, he found his faith confirmed;*

* This may perhaps signify that those who were with him were in such consternation and fear for themselves, that they said little to encourage him, or took no kind notice of him; no friend would appear for him, when Saul sought his life.

and, even before the danger was over, he declares his confidence that God would appear so wonderfully for him, that the righteous should compass him about with congratulations, and songs of praise to God.

REFLECTIONS.

1. How happy is it for us that we can have access to God by prayer, in the most pressing calamities of life. From every place there is a way open to the throne of grace; no cave so dark and deep but prayer may ascend to God from it. We, like David, may be in imminent danger; without may be fightings, and within fears. We may be disappointed in human dependencies; friends may fail us, *and no man care for our souls*. Let this engage us with greater earnestness and affection to look to God as our refuge in danger, and our portion to supply our wants. Let us lay before God our troubles, which is better than poring over them ourselves, or teasing others with them. This is the way to obtain support and relief. Yea, prayer should be our daily business and delight, if we desire comfortable access to God, and his interposition for us in seasons of affliction.

2. Let us remember and consider the hand of Providence in those events which seem most afflictive; *v. 3., When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path*. God knows our path when it is most dark, perplexed, and surrounded with enemies; when our spirits are so overwhelmed that we cannot express our desires to him as we would. Let us remember that affliction comes by his appointment; that he knows every circumstance of the case, and every sensation of the mind; that he discerns the bitterness of the spirit, and can furnish out suitable strength; and that if we seek and patiently wait for him, he will deal bountifully with us.

PSALM CXLIII.

A Psalm of David.

Written in a time of great distress, when he was obliged by reason of Absalom's rebellion, to flee from Jerusalem, and pass over Jordan by night. 2 Sam. xvii. 22.

1 **H**EAR my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications : in thy faithfulness answer me, [and] in thy righteousness. 2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant; *come not forth to give judgment against me, deal not with me with inflexible justice; but rather look on me as a merciful father does on his penitent child:* for in thy sight, *at the tribunal of strict justice,* shall no man living be justified. 3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, *in a disconsolate and afflicted condition,* as those that have been long dead. 4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate; *if my enemies succeed, I am ruined; if I succeed, the leader of them is my son, and my whole family will suffer; this occasions me so much perplexity.* 5 I remember the days of old: I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands; *on my deliverance from the lion and the bear, from Goliath and Saul, when I said, I should perish by their hands.* 6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul [thirsteth] after thee, as a thirsty land *does for refreshing showers of rain.* Selah. 7 Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit, *and are lost beyond all hope of recovery.* 8 Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning*, for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I left up my soul unto thee *for direction and defence.* 9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me. 10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou [art] my God: thy Spirit [is] good; lead me into the land of uprightness; *in a*

* It seems probable, from the story of David, that on the morrow after the composition of this psalm, or else quickly after, he heard of the counsel of Ahithophel being rejected; this was a great encouragement to hope that the hand of Providence was engaged in his favour.

*plain, even way; in the way of justice and piety**. 11 Quicken me, O LORD, *direct and revive me*, for thy name's sake, for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. 12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I [am] thy servant, *chosen by thee to govern thy people; I have endeavoured to be faithful to that trust; and though I have sinned against thee, yet I do not forget thy word.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us be deeply sensible how wretched we should be, if God should enter into judgment with us. If he was to deal with us in strict justice, we cannot be justified. We know that we have sinned, and deserve punishment; we cannot plead innocence, and have no satisfaction to make to his justice. Till we are thoroughly sensible of this, the gospel will not be welcome to us. Let us then seriously weigh this thought, that we are guilty before God, and cannot be justified by our own righteousness: this will lead us to bless God for Jesus Christ, on whom our iniquities were laid, and by whose righteousness we may be justified, and to receive him as he is offered to us in the gospel.

2. Let us carefully observe what loving kindness God causeth us to hear every morning, and put up proper petitions every evening. Our preservation in the night from death, fire, thieves, and diseases; our health, raiment, friends, food, strength gained by sleep, and especially the word and prayer, all spring from his loving kindness. Let us hear the voice of God in these, and praise his name for them: avoiding an insensible, unthankful, repining spirit: and as he causeth us to hear his loving kindness every morning, let him every morning hear our devout prayers and praises.

3. We should often ask for ourselves such mercies as David here seeks for himself; and make use of his plea; that *God would cause us to know the way in which we should walk*; that we keep the way of integrity, and be guided safe from sin and danger: that he would teach us to do his will; not only teach us what it is, but how to do it in the best manner; and that he would incline our

* Some understand *the land of uprightness* to be a country where he should meet with honest men, and not be deceived and betrayed. But David confessed that he was a pilgrim and stranger upon earth: and therefore we may suppose him to look forward to a better world; the land of uprightness, where none but the upright shall dwell, and righteousness shall always prevail.

hearts to it: that he would lead us in the way of uprightness; in a steady, even course of integrity and truth. These mercies we need, considering our many dangers and enemies; and that in some cases it is difficult to know the way of duty. We have encouragement to hope that he will grant our requests, if we can plead that we trust in God; lifting up not only our eyes and hands, but our souls to him; desiring impartially to know and do our duty; that we are his servants, devoted to his honour, and willing to be employed in his work. Then may we hope his good Spirit, who is able and willing to make us good and holy, will lead us in the right way, and conduct us safe to heaven; that land of uprightness, where none but the upright dwell; and where they shall dwell for ever, beyond the reach of enemies, dangers, and temptations.

PSALM CXLIV.

[A Psalm] of David.

Composed probably soon after his accession to the throne, but before he had obtained complete rest from the people round about him. It seems particularly to refer to the Philistines; he probably made a truce with them on account of Achish, who had been his friend; but the lords of the Philistines were always his enemies; so that, upon the death of Achish, or some revolution in the state, he had reason to suppose that they would break the league, and invade his country again.

1 **BLESSED** be the **LORD** my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, [and] my fingers to fight; 2 My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and [he] in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me. 3 **LORD**, what [is] man, *in general*, that thou takest knowledge of him! [or] the son of man, *myself, once so mean and obscure a person*, that thou makest account of him! 4 Man is like to vanity: his days [are] as a shadow that passeth away; *continually moving along, and soon gone; a cloud or any intervening body destroys it.* 5 Bow thy heavens, O **LORD**, and come down, *as thou didst at mount Sinai*: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. 6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and

destroy them*. 7 Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children; 8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand, *by the lifting up of which they used to swear*, [is] a right hand of falsehood, *that is, they are guilty of falsehood and treachery in their most solemn treaties.* 9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery [and] an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. 10 [It is he] that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword. 11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand [is] a right hand of falsehood: 12 That our sons [may be] as plants grown up in their youth; *not cut down by the sword of violence, but grow up like young and flourishing plants, to their full stature and vigour;* [that] our daughters [may be] as corner stones, polished [after] the similitude of a palace; *of graceful persons, polished manners, and agreeable tempers: which are a much greater ornament to a house, than being fronted with marble, and adorned with polished pillars:* 13 [That] our garners [may be] full, affording all manner of store; [that] our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets: 14 [That] our oxen [may be] strong to labour; [that there be] no breaking in *of enemies*, nor going out *to give them battle*; that [there be] no complaining in our streets *of tyranny, oppression, or famine.* 15 Happy [is that] people, that is in such a case: [yea,] happy [is that] people, whose God [is] the LORD; *or rather, more happy the people who have Jehovah for their God; who worship him alone, and are under his special protection.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE should be led from hence to adore the condescension of God to mankind. It may well fill us with admiration, when we consider his infinite greatness and majesty, and what a weak, helpless creature man is, of what limited power, and short duration; that God should make account of him, as if he were something great and considerable. Let us join then in this thankful admiration of the divine condescension and grace; especially in Christ Jesus, that unspeakable gift of God to men.

* This was remarkably fulfilled in the defeat of the Philistines, 2 Sam. v. 24., when the sound in the mulberry trees, and probably thunder and lightning, discomfited them.

2. Let us be thankful for the temporal prosperity of our nation. God has hitherto delivered us from the hands of our enemies; of whom we may justly say, *their hands are the hands of falsehood*. He hath preserved our king from the hurtful sword; hath blessed us with plenty, so that our garnerers are full; he hath not suffered the enemy to invade us. We should be thankful to God if there are no complainings of oppression or famine; that our oxen are strong, and our sheep fruitful, which is a great blessing to a country whose prosperity depends so much on their wool. Let us see the hand of God in these mercies, and praise his name who dealeth wonderfully with us.

3. Let us learn that a covenant interest in God, is better than all temporal prosperity. Happy is the people who are in the case just described, but more *happy the people whose God is the Lord*; who know him and serve him, and enjoy his favour and love. This we should seek as the greatest of blessings for ourselves and our country; choosing the Lord for our God, devoting ourselves to his service, and living to his glory: then shall we have all good things, be hid in the day of trouble, and find deliverance and happiness where others find destruction.

PSALM CXLV.

David's [Psalm] of praise*.

This is called so perhaps to intimate, that he not only composed it, but sung it often, and took great pleasure in it.

1 **I** WILL extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. 2 Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. 3 Great [is] the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness [is] unsearchable. 4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. 5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. 6 And [men] shall

* This noble composition is written in alphabetical order, each verse beginning with the successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet: only between the thirteenth and fourteenth verses one is wanting, beginning with the letter Nun to complete the order, and is to be found in some of the ancient versions; but Bp. Patrick says, it is so much like the seventeenth verse that he can hardly think it is the true one.

speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness; *I will praise God while here, and instruct others to carry on the work to succeeding generations; and while they are doing it on earth, I shall be doing it in heaven.* 7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, *it shall flow forth freely, without constraint,* and shall sing of thy righteousness. 8 The LORD [is] gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. 9 The LORD [is] good to all: and his tender mercies [are] over all his works. 10 All thy works *shall furnish matter for men to praise thee, O LORD;* and thy saints shall bless thee *according to their capacity: some of thy creatures indeed are enemies to thee; but this little discord is not heard among the general harmony.* 11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; 12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. 13 Thy kingdom [is] an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion [endureth] throughout all generations. *Then the ancient versions add, 'faithful is the Lord in his sayings, and holy in all his works.'* 14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all [those that be] bowed down. 15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season; *a suitable supply of food for various orders of creatures, especially for man.* 16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. 17 The LORD [is] righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. 18 The LORD [is] nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth; *though he is so great a king, he does not keep out the humble petitioner, but attends to every sincere prayer.* 19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. 20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy; *though he is so good, he will destroy the wicked.* 21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us learn to form ourselves by this model of praise. It is a noble composition, sufficiently plain to the meanest capacity, and yet full of sentiments truly devout, sublime, and philosophical. Let us cultivate these sentiments, and make this language familiar. Praise should be our daily work; though we are ever so

busy, or ever so sorrowful, still let us praise God, and *abundantly utter his great goodness*, as what our hearts are full of, and greatly affected with. Let us continue it through life, and consign the work to our children; dying with praise on our lips, and with a cheerful hope, that it will be the delightful employment of eternity.

2. To stir ourselves up to praise God we should observe the conduct of providence in the natural and moral world, the marks of his providential government, care, and goodness; his provision for all his creatures, especially that which he hath made for man, which is both so agreeable and plentiful. Let us think of the glory of his kingdom; the justice, wisdom, and goodness of his government; his care of his people, and tender pity under their afflictions, as arguments to praise him; and learn the advantage of studying the works of nature and observing the conduct of providence, that we may give due honour to the preserver and governor of the universe.

3. Let us take the greatest care that we do not make this God our enemy, by such a conduct as even his goodness shall require him to punish, *v. 20., The Lord preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.* Nothing can be conceived more dreadful than destruction from so good a Being. That the hand opened daily to relieve the necessities of millions, and so often opened to supply us, should be lifted up to destroy us, is a thought which should fill us with terror. Let us therefore *fear the Lord and his goodness*, and we shall then have nothing to fear from his wrath.

PSALM CXLVI.

Both the author, and the occasion upon which this Psalm is written, are uncertain.

1 PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul.
 2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. 3 Put not your trust in princes, [nor] in the son of man, *the greatest monarch*, in whom [there is] no help. 4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. 5 Happy [is he] that [hath] the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope [is] in the LORD his God: 6 Which

made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein [is,] *and can dispose of all things in them as he pleases*; which keepeth truth for ever, *is ever faithful to his promises*: 7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners, *those who are carried captive*. 8 The LORD openeth [the eyes of] the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous: 9 The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down, *overthrows their counsels, and defeats their designs*. 10 The LORD shall reign for ever, [even] thy God, O Ziou, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM hence we are taught the vanity of creatures. We have daily instances of it, yet are ready to forget it, and so expose ourselves to many snares and sorrows. Even princes are feeble, insufficient helps, both as fickle and as mortal creatures. Our dearest relatives and friends are not too much to be depended on; their affections may alter, their circumstances change, or their lives end. Let us therefore learn to *cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?*

2. It is our wisdom to form and pursue such thoughts and schemes as will not perish. Man was made for action, and his appetites and desires were placed within him to spur him on to form schemes and purposes for futurity: but men's folly is, that their schemes are formed only or chiefly for this world; to aggrandize themselves and their families, and to enjoy earthly good. May all our schemes therefore be laid with a due sense of the uncertainty of human life, and our main purpose be, to secure a happy eternity. If so, changes will not affect them, and death, instead of defeating, will accomplish them.

3. We need not fear the greatest afflictions of life while God is our support. He knows how to deliver the oppressed, to enlighten the blind, to raise them that are bowed down; to help the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. In every affliction we may find an antidote in faith; and under every burden, support and comfort in God. Let us then *in every time of trouble rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation*.

4. Let us comfort ourselves with the thought of God's uni-

versal and everlasting dominion, amidst all the changes of life. Our friends die, princes die, and we must die; but *the Lord shall reign for ever*. He will take care of our families, govern the world, and guard the church, when we are gone; and he will make all his people completely and eternally happy. He is *the blessed and only potentate, who hath immortality*. *Happy is he who hath the God of Jacob for his help, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.*

PSALM CXLVII.

This Psalm, with the preceding and following ones, are called, in the Greek version, ‘Psalms of Haggai and Zechariah.’ They were probably composed after the captivity, to be sung at the dedication of the second temple.

1 **P**RAISE ye the LORD: for [it is] good to sing praises unto our God; [for it is] pleasant; [and] praise is comely, *decent, and reasonable*. The LORD doth build up Jerusalem, *in spite of the opposition of its enemies*: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel, *from the country where they were carried captive*. 3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. 4 He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by [their] names, *though they are so many, and seemingly disposed in such confusion; therefore he is certainly able to gather the captives wherever they are dispersed*. 5 Great [is] our LORD, and of great power: his understanding [is] infinite. 6 The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground. 7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: 8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains*. 9 He giveth to the beast his food, [and] to the young ravens which cry. 10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man; *he would not have his people discouraged though they had no horses, and but few foot soldiers in their armies; God could easily suc-*

* Showers had been withheld to punish them for their negligence in building the temple; but upon their return to their work rain was given.

our and deliver without them, if they revered and trusted in him; for 11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. 12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. 13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates, *made the despised city so strong, that no enemy dares to attempt it,* (Neh. vi. 15, 16,) he hath blessed thy children within thee, *greatly increased their number.* 14 He maketh peace [in] thy borders, [and] filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. 15 He sendeth forth his commandment [upon] earth: his word runneth very swiftly, *is immediately executed.* 16 He giveth snow like wool, *so that the vegetables are covered during the intense cold, as with a woollen garment:* he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes. 17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels, *in violent hail storms: who can stand before his cold? Neither man nor beast are able to bear the extremities of it.* 18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, [and] the waters flow; *in these things the whole world see his power and goodness; but we have peculiar reason for thankfulness, for* 19 He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. 20 He hath not dealt so with any nation: and [as for his] judgments they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us observe the instances of divine goodness here specified as a call to praise him. We should view him as the author and support of universal nature; observe his hand in rain, hail, and snow, in frost and ice, in thaws and heat. He has ordained the seasons of the year, and through his overruling providence, summer and winter do not cease. *He feeds us with the finest of the wheat, strengthens our gates,* without which their bars would be vain, *and giveth peace in our borders.* Let us own him, as the guardian of the church, who builds up Jerusalem, gathers strangers into it by converting grace, and will at length gather the Jews, the outcasts of Israel, into his church. For those favours then which we enjoy, and those we expect from his promises, let us praise him, for it is pleasant and comely, highly decent, reasonable and delightful.

2. Let us be especially thankful for the revelation he hath given us. After the psalmist had celebrated public and national bless-

ings, he concludes with this as the distinguishing glory of Israel. No nation hath in this respect been so remarkably favoured as ours. If Israel was excited to be thankful for the law given by Moses, we ought to be much more so for that grace and truth which is given us in Christ Jesus; and shall of all people be most ungrateful and inexcusable, if we do not praise him.

3. Let us labour to be such as God delights in and will favour. *His judgments are not like those of men, but according to truth.* His delight is not in the strength of a horse, or the legs of a man; not in any beauty, comeliness, or strength; not in those things which are the ornaments and defence of the land: but *his delight is in them that fear him.* Observe the connexion; holy fear prevents hope from growing presumptuous, and hope prevents fear from growing excessive and tormenting. It is a most comfortable thought, that *God delights in them that hope in his mercy;* and takes delight in what is our highest interest and greatest comfort. He beholds such with approbation, and will distinguish them by his favour and love. Another useful hint may be drawn from hence, namely, that in such persons, that is, in their friendship and converse, we should delight. We should esteem those whom God esteems, and make his favourites ours; for *they shall be his in that day when he maketh up his jewels.*

PSALM CXLVIII.

This psalm was probably composed when Israel was in great prosperity, perhaps in the time of David or Solomon. It is a general call upon all creatures to praise God.

1 PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights, *where his glory is most illustrious.* 2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. 3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. 4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that [be] above the heavens. 5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. 6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass. 7 Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, *ye whales, and other large fishes,* and all deeps: 8 Fire, and hail:

snow and vapours : stormy wind fulfilling his word : 9 Mountains, and all hills ; fruitful trees, and all cedars : 10 Beasts, and all cattle ; creeping things, and flying fowl : 11 Kings on the earth, and all people ; princes, and all judges of the earth : 12 Both young men, and maidens ; old men, and children : 13 Let them praise the name of the LORD : for his name alone is excellent ; his glory [is] above the earth and heaven. 14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, *he increaseth their power, and giveth them success in their affairs*, the praise of all his saints ; [even] of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTION.

THE manner in which the psalmist here calls upon universal nature to praise the Lord, intimates to us, that he esteemed God most worthy to be praised, that he delighted in this duty, and wished that the whole creation were vocal in his praise. The perfections of God, displayed in his works, furnish us with matter for praise, and call upon us to adore him. The capacities and instincts of the creatures, the provision he has made for them, their serviceableness to man, all should lead us to praise him. Let us look on the frame of nature with such seriousness and devotion, that we may see the hand and goodness of God in all, and be engaged to praise him. We have peculiar reason to do it, as we are a people near unto him ; once afar off, but now brought nigh. *Let us therefore show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

PSALM CXLIX.

This Psalm is a fine military ode ; it was probably composed by David, to be sung when the army was going out against the devoted nations of Cauaan, and went up first in solemn procession to the house of God, there as it were to consecrate the arms he put into their hands, and beg the divine blessing on their enterprise.

1 PRAISE ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, [and] his praise in the congregation of saints. 2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him *a people* : let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. 3 Let them praise his name in the dance :

let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp. 4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people; he will beautify the meek* with salvation. 5 Let the saints be joyful in glory; let the chosen people of God rejoice; yea, exult in a glorious manner: let them sing aloud upon their beds, or couches, (on which, according to the eastern manner, they reclined at the feasts that followed the sacrifices:) instead of singing vain songs, or joining in foolish conversation, let them employ their powers in praising God; yea, 6 [Let] the high [praises] of God [be] in their mouth; and a two-edged sword in their hand; while making the attack, let them sing praise to God, as Jehoshaphat's soldiers did, (2 Chron. xx. 21, 22.) 7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, [and] punishments upon the people; 8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; 9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints †. Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us cultivate that meekness to which such a gracious promise is annexed, v. 4. Let us govern our passions; be calm and patient under injuries and provocations; be submissive to God's will, tremble at his word, and thankfully fall in with the method of salvation by Jesus Christ. If this be our character, *God will take pleasure in us*, in our characters and services, our prosperity and comfort, and in bestowing his favours upon us. *He will save us;* and it will be such a salvation, as shall reflect honour upon us; *we shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our heavenly Father.*

2. Let us earnestly pray that God would give our soldiers that religious spirit which is here described; that he would animate them to fight boldly in the cause of their country; deliver them from a spirit of malice and revenge, and every thing that has the appearance of injustice and cruelty; that *the high praises of God may be in their mouths*, instead of oaths and curses, which are too much their common language; and that all their joy in victory may terminate in God.

* By *meek* some understand afflicted, and suppose that it refers to their being oppressed by their enemies. Perhaps it may be a fine hint, to take care to maintain a proper meekness of temper; and not to indulge a savage fierceness, but join sentiments of humanity and compassion with necessary severity.

† This refers to what is written in the Books of Moses, concerning the extirpation of the Canaanites, and was designed to animate them. They were obeying the command of God, executing a divine sentence; and it was an honour to be employed by Jehovah, even in this awful work.

PSALM CL.

1 PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise God, *ye pious ministers, who attend* in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power, *in the highest heavens.* 2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness; *if it be possible, let your songs be proportioned to it.* 3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. 4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. 5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals. 6 *Let the choir be universal, and every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Let all cry,* Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is our duty to praise God for this whole Book, and that we have such excellent helps for our devotion by it; that we have so many songs of praise on record, both as forms and models of praise; and in such sublime, devout, and pathetic strains; sufficient, one would think, to animate and warm the coldest heart; compositions, which furnish delightful entertainment in our closets and families, and in the solemn assembly. This is a part of scripture which we have peculiar reason to be thankful for; and for all those sacred hymns which are composed upon this divine model.

2. Let us be careful not to rest in the external forms of praise, but see that our hearts be engaged and affected. There is no express direction or authority for the use of instruments of music in our public worship, though it is plain that they were sometimes used in the tabernacle. Our rule is, to *sing with the spirit and the understanding also*; with our hearts and our mouths to glorify God. If we rest in the tune and the modulation of the voice, there is no more devotion in us than in a harp or an organ; the pipe of brass and the pipe of flesh are much alike. Let our hearts therefore be engaged to praise God. All the harmony of Solomon's temple would be nothing to him without grace in the heart; without a

principle of reverence, faith and love. *Let all that is within us praise God*: and while our best services are so poor and imperfect, let us rejoice to think in how much better a manner he is praised by saints and angels above; and long to join that grand chorus, and partake of their work and happiness for ever and ever. *Amen.*

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.





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