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LECTURES

ON THE

PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH,

BY

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MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT DAIRSIE.

VOL. IV.

THE LORD GOD HATH DONE THAT WHICH HE HAD DEVISED: HE HATH FULFILLED HIS WORD THAT HE HAD COMMANDED IN THE DAYS OF OLD. LAM. II. 17.

— THESE THINGS ARE FAITHFUL AND TRUE. AND THE LORD GOD OF THE HOLY PROPHETS SAITH—BEHOLD I COME QUICKLY: BLESSED IS HE THAT KEEPETH THE SAYINGS OF THE PROPHECY OF THIS BOOK. REV. XXII. 6, 7.

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LECTURES

ON THE

PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

WE now enter on the consideration of another Section of the Second Discourse, contained in the fifth part of the Prophecies of Isaiah. Its manifest design is, to administer comfort to the Church of God, destined for a long period to sustain various afflictions, intended, by infinite Wisdom, to purify them from remaining corruptions, to exercise and improve their graces. Walking in darkness, and having no light, their faith and hope required to be supported and established by renewed promises of grace and favour. In the prosecution of this valuable object, the great Messiah is introduced addressing the posterity of Abraham and Sarah, the heirs of the blessing pronounced upon the renowned father of the faithful.—He directs them to call to remembrance the small beginning from whence their nation took its rise, and gives solemn assurance of the approaching happy change in the state of the Church, in consequence whereof, through the plentiful communications of divine mercy, it was to resemble the paradise of God, ver. 1—3.—He foretels the conversion of the Gentiles, who were to be enlightened by his salutary doctrines, and to be-

come partakers of his great salvation, ver. 4—5.—He announces the total abolition of the Old Testament dispensation, to make way for the establishment of the new œconomy of grace, the perpetuity of which is described in very strong terms, ver. 6.—After which he predicts the certain destruction of his adversaries, who were to oppose the interests of his kingdom, and to act in hostility against his people, ver. 7—8.—The Church is then brought forward, encouraging themselves in the power of Jehovah, who of old had delivered their fathers from oppression in Egypt, and invested them in the possession of the land of Canaan, ver. 9—11.—This is followed with an assurance of God's merciful regard, and a prediction of the overthrow of those kingdoms who were to refuse assistance in founding the new kingdom of God, ver. 12—16.—Having mentioned the direful calamities which were to befall the people of God, they are called upon to be of good comfort in the reviving prospect of their deliverance, ver. 17—20.—The chapter concludes with an explicit declaration of their release from affliction, and the execution of righteous vengeance on their enemies, ver. 21—23.

C H A P. LI.

HEARKEN to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

To comfort his peculiar people, who feared the Lord and obeyed the voice of his servant, the Messiah demands their special attention, and exhorts them to call to mind the stock from which they were descended. The persons to whom he addressed his discourse are thus characterized, *Ye that follow after righteousness.* The Hebrew word translated righteousness, is used in
Scripture

Scripture in various senses, and is of such extensive import, that it is not easy sometimes to ascertain its precise meaning. Here it may denote truth and justice—the doctrine of the Son of God is emphatically denominated ‘the word of truth,’ inasmuch as it contains the most certain and important discoveries, ratified and confirmed by God, who cannot lie, the precious promises made unto the fathers, and fulfilled unto their children; and ‘the word of righteousness,’ because the righteousness of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, are therein celebrated, which being believed from the heart, men become righteous before the Lord. It comprehends whatsoever enlightened reason, and the holy law of God requires; things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, virtuous, and of good report. To follow after righteousness intimates, that, notwithstanding it was far from them, and apt to escape their vigilance, they prosecuted this worthy object with ardour and assiduity, convinced, that in the belief and obedience of the word of righteousness and truth consists their chief excellence, beauty, and utility; that destitute of righteousness, they should be deformed, miserable, and odious.—What an inestimable acquisition is this. ‘The way of the wicked,’ (saith the proverb), ‘is an abomination to the Lord; but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness*.’ This righteousness is the beauty and ornament of human nature, it constitutes a principal part of the divine resemblance, it is the peculiar effect of the operation of God, the richest jewel we can acquire, the precious seed that springs up into everlasting life, the amiable object which we ought to endeavour with diligence and constancy to attain.

Ye that seek the Lord, firmly convinced of your absolute need of the enjoyment of his favour, which is better than life, to your possessing true happiness, ye seek his face with your whole hearts, in the diligent use of those means he hath instituted. Deeply sensible, that his mercy, his assistance, direction, and protection, are indispensibly requisite to your
felicity

* Prov. xv. 9.

felicity and comfort, ye are earnestly desirous to obtain from God these important blessings. In obedience to his command, and encouraged by his promises, who allows none of the posterity of Jacob to seek him in vain, ye assiduously endeavour, in the ways he hath pointed out, to obtain the fruits of his loving-kindness. Ye who are the generation of them that seek the face of the God of Israel, solicitous to enjoy the light of his countenance, and the good of his chosen people.—‘It is now time to seek the Lord,’ as saith the prophet Hosea *: it is not yet too late to commence this important business, in which I would have you, brethren, immediately to engage, animated by the gracious assurances, that they who are thus employed shall not lack any good thing, and that when you search for God with all your heart he will be found of you.—Persons of this description are required,

To look unto the rock, &c. Scripture allusions to natural objects are adapted to the ordinary capacities of mankind, and therefore in some cases, as in the one before us, do not require nice disquisition to unfold their import. The figurative language used in this verse, was doubtless well understood by those to whom it was primarily directed, and for the benefit of all is explained in the following verse. The meaning of the exhortation seems to be this, Consider the ancestors from whom ye are descended, and from a careful survey of their character and circumstances, ye may learn many useful instructive lessons. Steadily contemplate the patriarch Abraham, the friend of God, the father of the faithful, your renowned progenitor, and fix your thoughts on the good conduct of his virtuous companion for life, whose children ye are as long as ye do well.

2. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

Fix

* Chap. x. 12.

Fix your attention, I say, on this highly-favoured man, and his beloved wife, from whom ye have the honour of being lineally descended. Recollect how the Lord God was graciously pleased to call him, with his spouse, from among an idolatrous people, living in Ur of the Chaldees, to enjoy the most valuable privileges, to worship the living and true God, to be the father of many nations, the heir of the world, the heir also of the righteousness that is by faith, and an eminent example of faith in God and obedience to his command. This vocation is said to have been peculiar to Abraham, because he only received command from God to leave his country and kindred, and to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance; and he went forth, not knowing whither he went *. Terah his father, Sarah his wife, and Lot his brother's son, accompanied him in his journey from Ur, to the land whither he travelled, determined to share in the fortunes of their respected relation. What an inestimable favour was conferred on the servant of the most high God, in being separated by divine authority from the society of those who were addicted to gross idolatry, that he might be wholly appropriated to the service of Jehovah! What a strong sense of duty must the patriarch have felt, what entire acquiescence in the wisdom and goodness of Providence, when, surrendering all his worldly interests, he became a stranger and sojourner on the earth! This is a subject, taken in connection with what follows, truly worthy of attentive consideration.

And blessed him, with all manner of temporal and spiritual blessings. The Lord God blessed him with great riches, and large possessions, as his principal servant reported to the family of Laban. 'The Lord,' said he, 'hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great; and he hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and men-servants and maid-servants, and camels and asses †.' He was blessed with frequent delightful converse with God,
who

* Heb. xi. 8.

† Gen. xxiv. 35.

who vouchsafed to enter into covenant with him, who granted him the forgiveness of sins, the acceptance of his person and services; hence we read, that 'Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness *.' Besides, the Almighty rendered him a public blessing, all the families of the earth being blessed in him and in his posterity, whilst in his conduct he exhibited an illustrious example of faith in the promises of God, and of resignation to his will.—*And increased him.* All circumstances considered, this was an extraordinary event. Before the increase in Abraham's family took place, which is here referred to, the patriarch was near one hundred years old, Sarah was also arrived at old age, and never had any children. In this state the promise of an increasing posterity, numerous as the stars of heaven, must have seemed chimerical and absurd. Notwithstanding the promises that God had made to him, respecting his being the father of many nations, appeared highly improbable, yet Abraham was strong in faith that he would perform what he had promised, and against hope believed in hope. And his expectation was fully gratified in due time.—These and other circumstances, relative to the father of the faithful, Jehovah requires those who follow after righteousness attentively to consider, that they may thereby be induced to imitate his good conduct. If, after the example of this great man, you are prepared, in obedience to the command of God, to leave your most valued possessions, and, reposing unsuspecting confidence in the power and faithfulness of Jehovah, to surmount every difficulty that lies in the way of duty, you shall experience in due time the truth of his promises. In this view, compliance with the direction I have been explaining appears in a strong light, as highly useful to establish faith and hope in the providence and word of God. When your condition seems most destitute, turn your thoughts to this venerable servant of God, and his partner for life,
and

* Rom. iv. 3.

and contemplate them amidst pressing difficulties, costly sacrifices, and heavy trials, trusting in him who never fails to verify his promises, and by their worthy example be animated to patient continuing in well doing.

3. For the Lord shall comfort Zion : he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord ; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

These words contain an explicit assurance of the certain accomplishment, of the glorious change which God was to make in the state of the church, by the abundant communications of his favour. Though in their primary and literal sense, they might have reference to the remarkable happy alteration which the Almighty was to effect in the land of Canaan, after it had long lain in a desolate condition, on the return of the Jews from captivity at Babylon, the figurative spiritual import of the prediction demands our chief attention. The late learned Bishop of London justly observes, in his notes on these Prophecies, that the mystical or spiritual sense is very often the most literal sense of all *. This remark is verified, I apprehend, in the verse before us, and upon this principle I proceed to consider the several parts whereof this prophecy is composed.—Glorious things are said in the Old and New Testament concerning Zion, the subject of this prediction. God is affirmed to have chosen Zion, to love the gates thereof, and to delight to dwell therein ; and Christ is said to dwell there, and from thence his law and his salvation, with all the precious blessings it contains, are said to proceed. It is therefore represented as the joy of the whole earth ; it is highly extolled on account of its beauty, stability, and felicity, and often

often celebrated as the happy place wherein many inestimable promises are fulfilled, among which is the one now to be illustrated. These great benefits are not so applicable to the literal mount Zion as to the church of God, which it prefigured, and which is frequently spoken of in scripture under that name. Indeed it is not uncommon, in the sacred writings, for the person or object typified, to bear the name of what was intended to represent or fore-signify that person or thing. Jesus Christ is called, by the apostle Paul *, our passover, because that institution was designed to exhibit him, in a very striking point of view, who was sacrificed for us; for the same reason the church is denominated Zion.—This select, highly-favoured society, our prophet declares,

The Lord will comfort. He will invigorate and fortify the minds of his peculiar people, under the doubts, and fears, and sorrows, whereby they are distressed. If, for important reasons, he does not remove those evils, he will so alleviate them, by various means, that they shall sustain them with ease and cheerfulness. Though they may continue for a season in an afflicted, destitute condition, yet in due time God will arise and have mercy on them, by relieving them from the miseries and sorrows whereby they are oppressed. He will give them substantial proofs of his loving-kindness and tender care, by saving them from their distresses, by defending them from their enemies, by seasonably fulfilling his promises, and by imparting the consolations of his Spirit. In a special manner—*He will comfort all her waste places, &c.* These, with the wilderness and the desert, mentioned in the following clauses of this verse, may denote the societies of the faithful, or those individuals whereof they are composed, from whom the influences of divine grace had been in great measure withheld, who had not enjoyed the ministrations of the servants of God, nor the ordinances whereby

* 1 Cor. viii. 7.

whereby the Church is improved and becomes fruitful in holiness and righteousness. Those who are in such forlorn circumstances God will comfort, by shewing them the necessity and utility of afflictions, by rendering their desolate condition subservient to their real benefit, by mitigating their distresses, by enabling them to bear their troubles with fortitude and patience, and by pouring refreshing consolations into their hearts. In consequence thereof, they shall adopt the grateful acknowledgment of an apostle, expressed in his own name and that of the Church of God, 'Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation*.'

He will make her wilderness like Eden, &c. Those who have been in a most desolate, hopeless condition, shall be made to assume a new, beautiful, and fruitful appearance, the very reverse of their former state. The country of Eden, situated on the banks of the Euphrates, is said to be one of the most delightful, fertile places in the world. There the Lord God planted a garden, formed a complete paradise, celebrated for its fertility, verdure, beauty, and fragrancy; for the fine shades afforded by the leaves of the trees and shrubs, the variety of rich delicious fruits, the odoriferous smell of beautiful flowers, and the pleasant rivers whereby it was watered. In this garden of delights were placed, by the great Creator, the first man with his companion. In scripture, any country that is remarkably pleasant and fruitful is compared to it, or called by its name; and, in the words before us, the Church, after having been comforted by Jehovah, is said to resemble Eden, the garden of the Lord. Though in time past like a neglected desert, having been enriched by the bounties of Providence, and the blessings of grace, their circumstances are entirely changed. Within their precincts is a beautiful variety of trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified;

* 2 Cor. i 3, 4.

rified ; defended by divine Providence, warmed by the benign influence of the Sun of righteousness, watered by the dew of God's blessing and the river that makes glad the city of our God, filled with the precious fruits of faith and holiness, and tended by men eminent for sanctity, prudence, learning, and other useful accomplishments.—Such shall be the very pleasant aspect of the Church of God, after having been solaced and revived by the interpositions of Providence, and the liberal communications of his grace.

Joy and gladness shall be found therein, &c. The participation of the benefits above mentioned, and the blessed effects wherewith they were to be attended, should give rise to exultation and joy only : they were to excite thanksgiving and the voice of melody, of which they are the genuine natural expressions. Gratitude and praise, which are the duty and delight of God's servants, were to be presented to their great Benefactor, as part of that homage he justly demanded for the blessings which in mercy he had seasonably conferred upon them. With thanksgiving was to be joined the voice of melody. Every heart and every voice was to be tuned, to celebrate the praises of Jehovah for his wonderful works, and to extol his glorious name for his mercy in promising, and his faithfulness in accomplishing, his good word unto his servants.—This prediction, which hath been fulfilled from time to time, according to the good pleasure of God and the exigencies of his people, is not to be limited to any one period. It was in some measure verified to the church founded in Zion and Jerusalem, which extended throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Those places which had been desolate like a desert, through the divine efficacy that accompanied the ministry of the gospel, were made to abound with the precious fruits of knowledge, faith, love, and other graces, in consequence whereof they resembled the fertile pleasant garden of Eden. And when the set time to favour Zion arrives, the people which

which shall be created anew in Christ Jesus shall praise the Lord with joy and triumph, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. His name shall be declared, and his praises in Jerusalem.

4 Hearken unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.

The Messiah proceeds to call the attention of his chosen people to the sources of that consolation which he was to administer to the afflicted church, derived from the vocation of the Gentiles to the knowledge and worship of the living God, by means of the gospel. He addresses especially, I suppose, the Jewish people, who in a particular manner belonged to him, being emphatically denominated his own inheritance. They were his property, not only in common with other men, but he had appropriated them to himself from among all the kingdoms of the earth, that they might be to him a peculiar people, and with them he dealt as he never did with any other nation. From them primarily he demanded the closest attention to the subject here introduced, being at once momentous and interesting. There were doubtless many among them who did not advert to the excellence of the blessings to be conferred upon the Church, to the magnitude of the judgments to be inflicted on their enemies, nor to the predictions of the prophets, wherein these things were clearly foretold, and therefore they much needed to be roused to serious consideration.—From us, brethren, who profess to be the ransomed of the Lord, the great Redeemer requires the same diligent attention, that we may understand the important truths he delivers, that we may ponder them in our hearts, and experience their sanctifying practical influence. Let us incline our ear and come unto him, hear and our soul shall live.

For a law shall proceed from me, &c. The law and the judgment may denote the doctrine and precepts of the gospel, which are made known to all men, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for the obedience of faith. The gospel is sometimes called the law by our prophet, because it contains an explicit declaration of the good pleasure of the almighty Sovereign of heaven and earth, because it was promulgated by divine authority, and urges, by the most persuasive arguments, the belief of the record it contains and subjection to all the commands of its glorious Author. With great propriety, therefore, it is denominated the law of faith, the royal law, the perfect law of liberty, and the law of truth.—With no less justice is the gospel spoken of by the name of judgment; inasmuch as it is the word of equity, truth, and righteousness; which contains the unerring rule whereby men ought to decide on whatever relates to God, to their neighbour, and themselves, and whereby they distinguish true from false religion. Besides, it exhibits a wonderful display of the wisdom and prudence, the equity and rectitude, of the divine administration in the œconomy of salvation, and in the overthrow of every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of the Son of God.—This law was foretold to proceed from the Messiah, who hath therein manifested his infinite holiness, wisdom, and grace; who hath repaired the injured honour of the divine government, and revealed a fair, beautiful creation, a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.—This judgment was to have its fixed residence in the Church, which, though transferred from one place or kingdom to another, shall continue to abide with men while sun and moon endure. The inhabitants of this earth can no more prevent its progress and continuance, by their greatest combined efforts, than they can hinder the sun from shining, the wind from blowing, and the rain from falling. Comfortable truth! The Son of God, who is faithful and true, will make his judgment

judgment to rest for a light of the people. His gospel, which is the instrument he employs to enlighten the nations, shall constantly impart to them highly-useful interesting discoveries of the most important objects. He will thereby convey to them the knowledge of the glory of God; he will shew them the malignant nature, and dreadful consequences of sin; he will exhibit himself to them as an all-sufficient Saviour; he will grant them the promise of the Holy Spirit; and make his word to be a light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their path. By these and other glorious privileges, the disciples of the Lord shall be animated to walk with cheerfulness and alacrity in the ways of God, so as to adorn the gospel, verify their profession, and demonstrate to the world the excellency of his religion.—Do you, my friends, endeavour faithfully to improve the light of the gospel with which you are favoured, and to get your hearts and lives thereby habitually influenced. Diligently study, not only the promises and privileges which it contains, but every part of the duty it inculcates, toward God, toward yourselves, and toward your families, your friends, and your enemies, with the view of getting your temper and conduct conformed to the whole will of God. Take heed that you be not partial in the law of the Lord, respecting some precepts, and rejecting others contrary to your inclination or interest, but be solicitous that the light of the gospel may irradiate your minds, and illuminate every step in your lives.

5. My righteousness is near: my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people: the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

The Messiah announces, in these words, the expected introduction of his righteousness and salvation, of which the Gentiles were to become partakers.—Righteousness may here denote the faithful accomplishment

plishment of God's promises, whereby his justice, veracity, and other attributes, were manifested in the redemption of his people.—The astonishing benignity and condescension which the Son of the Highest displayed, in his perfect obedience to the will of God, and in the sufferings he was to sustain for the deliverance of his Church, whereby he fulfilled all righteousness, and obtained salvation for those who were ready to perish; which, in the words often used on this subject, constitutes the righteousness of sinners, in virtue whereof they acquire right to eternal life and glory.—This precious benefit is affirmed, by its great Author, to be *near*; as the time fixed by infinite Wisdom for its revelation approached, and was nigh at hand in his sight with whom a thousand years are as one day, and inasmuch as it was placed fully in the view of those to whom these prophecies were delivered.—*My salvation is gone forth.* The salvation of Jesus Christ includes deliverance from sin and all its direful consequences, with an indefeasible right to the incorruptible inheritance reserved for the saints, and a progressive meetness for the enjoyment of that eternal felicity. It is a deliverance not only from presumptuous, but from secret sins, from sins of the heart as well as of the life. It is a deliverance from the destructive influence of iniquity, from its contaminating pollution, its awful punishment, and at last from its very existence. It is a deliverance from every enemy, and from all evil, accompanied with a glorious elevation to the full and everlasting enjoyment of the most exquisite happiness and dignity. In consequence of the righteousness of the Messiah being near, this salvation is said to have gone forth, diffusing its benign influence among the inhabitants of the earth. The expression seems to allude to the sun in the firmament, who, after he appears in the morning, is said to go forth in his circuit to the ends of heaven. He gradually ascends higher and higher, and shines with increasing splendor, until he arrives at the brightness of noon. In like manner, the salva-

tion

tion of Jesus Christ, which at first appeared as a lamp that burneth, the light that it emitted being confined to the land of Canaan, progressively advanced and became more luminous and brilliant, until it enlightened all the regions of the earth. This salvation, the knowledge and acquisition whereof was to extend to all nations, like the path of the just, shineth more and more unto the perfect day.—Since, then, the righteousness of the Son of God is brought near in the gospel, and openly shewed in the sight of the heathen, since the Lord hath made known his salvation, let us be convinced of the inseparable connection that subsists between these important benefits. Deeply sensible that there is no salvation but by righteousness, and that wherever there is righteousness there shall be salvation, let us diligently seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and frequently express before him our fervent desires for the salvation of Israel that goes forth from Zion, in which the upright shall rejoice, and all the sons of God shall shout aloud for joy

And mine arms shall judge the people. The omnipotence of God our Saviour, operating by the ministry of the gospel, for the conversion and salvation of sinners, and the punishment of impenitent transgressors, may be signified by the figurative expression here used. The divine power is sometimes spoken of in scripture as the finger, the hand, the arm, and the arms of Jehovah, according to the purposes for which it is exerted; and in proportion to the displays of his providence and grace, given in the protection or deliverance of his people, in vanquishing or destroying their enemies. Of the divine power manifested for these purposes, Moses the servant of the Lord thus speaks, in the beautiful eulogium he pronounced upon Israel before his death: ‘The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms*.’ Here our prophet foretels, that the Messiah was to employ his mighty power in
judging

* Deut. xxxiii. 27.

judging his people, in ruling the nations, in determining their future destiny, in supporting the interests of his Church, in defending and remunerating his faithful subjects, and in punishing those who refuse to submit to his sceptre of righteousness. The whole of his administration, in providence and grace, shall be conducted with almighty energy, as well as consummate equity. It is added,—*The isles shall wait upon me, &c.* By the isles may be meant, as in chap. xlii. 4. the Gentile nations who for ages prior to the advent of the great Redeemer, were immersed in ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, and addicted to many enormous crimes and absurd practices. Having made known to them the appearance of the Son of God, the doctrine which he published, and the salvation of which he is the author, they were to renounce their abominable customs, their expectation was to be directed towards him, their dependence was to be placed on his power, grace, and faithfulness, and all their hope of salvation was to be founded on his mediation and promises.—*And on mine arm shall they trust.* They shall rely on his almighty power for all those important benefits which are necessary to present safety and eternal happiness. Committing themselves to him who is mighty to save, they shall put their confidence in his compassion and omnipotence, for every blessing he stands engaged to bestow on those who believe and obey him.—According to this prediction, the inhabitants of many of the islands in Asia, Africa, and Europe have been favoured with the gospel of the grace of God, and been instructed in the saving ability and tender mercy of Jesus Christ, who hath become the object of their expectation and trust. Let us thereby be encouraged patiently to wait, and firmly to confide in him who is the desire of all nations, the God of salvation, who is the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea.

6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

The abolition of the Old Testament dispensation, to make way for the New œconomy of grace, with the everlasting righteousness and salvation of the Messiah, is foretold in these words—*Lift up your eyes to the heavens*; steadily contemplate the magnificent objects which they present to view. Behold, with admiration, their immensity, their beauty, splendor, permanency, and the glorious luminaries whereby they are enlightned and adorned—and see the illustrious proofs they exhibit, not only of the existence, but of the majesty and grandeur, the wisdom, power, and goodness of their almighty Creator.—*Look upon the earth beneath*, replete with the riches of divine goodness, which the Most High hath formed to be a habitation for the children of men, and established that it should not be removed, but continue throughout all generations.—*For the heavens shall vanish away like smoke*. The heavens, though pure and transparent, though highly ornamented, and finely illuminated, shall suddenly pass away, and be seen no more, at least in their present form, serving the purposes to which they are now adapted.—*And the earth shall wax old like a garment*, that, having been long worn, hath lost its beauty, firmness, and utility, being incapable of serving the purposes to which it had formerly been applied.—*And they that dwell therein shall die in like manner*. The inhabitants of this earth shall not only wax old, like a garment, and vanish away like smoke, which is soon dispersed and quickly disappears, but they shall die like other living creatures, leaving behind them their most esteemed en-

joyments ; they shall enter into a new, permanent state, wherein they shall remain forever. This subject is forcibly described by the apostle Peter, who declares, that ‘ the heavens and the earth which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men *.’ And again he says, that ‘ in the day of the Lord the heavens shall pass away, the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up †.’ Such seems to be the literal import of the words.

Let us consider them in their figurative sense, (in which the heavens and the earth are sometimes mentioned in the prophetic writings), as denoting the civil and ecclesiastical state of the inhabitants of the earth in general, and particularly of the Jewish people. In this view of the prediction, the heavens that were to vanish away, and the earth which was to wax old like a garment, may signify the dissolution of the Jewish church and state, the abolition of the whole Mosaic œconomy, consisting of the rites and worship peculiar to that dispensation. In this sense the words of the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews are to be understood, where he says, ‘ I shake not the earth only, but also heaven—that those things which cannot be shaken may remain ‡.’ There was to be, not only a dreadful concussion in the constitutions, sacred and civil, that had been formed among the nations, but there was also to be effected a great change in the Jewish dispensation.—That those things which cannot be shaken may remain ; that the kingdom of the Son of God, which cometh not with observation, that consisteth in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, with the visible administration of its ordinances, accompanied by the power of God, may abide continually, according to divine appointment. These heavens were to pass away, and this earth was to wax old ; they were to disappear, to make way for the

* 2 Pet. iii. 7.

† Ver. 10.

‡ Chap. xii. 26, 27.

the kingdom of Jesus Christ, with its doctrines, institutions, and privileges, which, like their divine Author, shall continue invariably the same throughout all ages.

But my salvation shall be for ever, &c. Amidst all the revolutions that take place in this world, the salvation and righteousness of the Messiah shall remain unimpaired, and endure forever. The salvation here spoken of may denote the everlasting gospel, which publishes the great salvation of the Son of God, which reveals the way whereby it is obtained, the various ingredients whereof it consists, and which, through the favour of God, proves the mean of conveying it to the children of men.—Or it may signify the salvation itself, as it relates to the external state of the Church, and their perpetual preservation and safety; as it respects also their internal and spiritual state, comprehending deliverance from bondage, condemnation and wrath, right to the favour of God and eternal life, the possession of the most excellent gifts and graces, with progressive improvement in conformity to the will of God.—This salvation shall be the permanent inheritance of the people of God, who shall enjoy, without end, the blessings it contains. Not like the deliverances wrought for Israel, from bondage, captivity, and other temporal calamities, wherein they were again soon involved, it shall endure throughout all generations, and terminate in the possession of an undecaying inheritance, an everlasting kingdom, and an incorruptible crown of glory.—*And my righteousness shall not be abolished.* The righteousness here intended may be the same with that which was said, in the 5th verse, to be near, namely, the perfect obedience yielded by Jesus Christ to the will of God, whereby the law was magnified, and the salvation of the Church was obtained. Or it may signify the word of righteousness, which shews in what manner sinners become righteous before God, and how they ought to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless. In either sense our prophet declares, that

it shall not be abolished, destroyed, or made of none effect, but, being firmly established, it shall continue for ever.—Both the righteousness and salvation of the Messiah are everlasting, and indispensibly requisite to your happiness. If you are not interested in these precious benefits, what will all the enjoyments of this world avail you, under a sense of divine displeasure, and in the prospect of dissolution. Give diligence, then, to be found in him, not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*.

7. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

The great Redeemer having demanded the attention of his peculiar people, excites them to fortitude and courage, by the consideration of the imbecility and certain destruction of those who act in hostility against them. In the beginning of this discourse they are described as following after righteousness, now they are addressed as having become in some measure acquainted with this valuable object. Hearken diligently and incline your ear, ye that know righteousness, who apply your minds to the study of the word of truth, and to the practice of what it requires, which of all sciences is the most excellent and the most useful. What the root is to the tree, what the sun is to the world, what the eye is to the body, that is the knowledge of righteousness to the soul; it supports, it illuminates, and proves its noblest ornament. It is the mean whereby salvation is attained, it is the distinguishing characteristic of the disciples of the Son of God.—Would to God, my brethren, that I could address you under this estimable character, but, alas! some have not this knowledge, I speak this to your shame †. A shame indeed it is, that any who enjoy the means of

* Phil. iii. 9.

† 1 Cor. xv. 34.

of improvement are not proficient in this valuable attainment. Earnestly request that God would open the eyes of your understandings; carefully study the holy scriptures, the sacred repository wherein this precious jewel is to be found; faithfully practise what you know, and you shall know more and more what to practise. 'If ye continue in my word,' saith Jesus Christ, 'then are ye my disciples indeed *.'

The people in whose heart is my law. The doctrine of the gospel, the law of righteousness, the good pleasure of God made known to men for the obedience of faith, are doubtless intended in this expression. This law is not merely in the heads, but in the hearts of the people who are addressed in the verse. This is the form of doctrine into which, as the apostle Paul speaks, they were delivered, and obeyed from the heart †. In the words now quoted, the gospel is represented as a mould, into which the metal, when melted, is conveyed, in consequence whereof it loses its former shape, and assumes a figure exactly corresponding to the model into which it was cast. In like manner the people of God, who are renewed after his image, have the law of Christ inscribed upon their hearts, whereby an intimate correspondence is established between the divine law contained in the scripture, and the impression made upon their minds. Ardent affection is experienced to God's precepts, a strong propensity is felt to obey them, and a progressive conformity to them becomes their delightful study. The knowledge of righteousness is, in this verse, connected with the law of God in the heart, forming together the peculiar character whereby the servants of the Most High are distinguished, the new nature whereof they are made partakers. Blessed is he who spake these words which I have been illustrating, and happy are they to whom they are applicable.—These few strictures ought to induce you, my brethren, to reconsider your real character and spiritual state. Are your hearts and lives unreservedly subjected to
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* John viii. 31.

† Rom. 6. 17.

the law of God? do you press after growing conformity to his will? Are you well satisfied to be disposed of by his providence, to be governed by his authority, and to live devoted to his interest and glory? Do you abandon whatever he commands you to forsake? do you resist whatever he requires you to oppose? do you part with whatever he enjoins you to relinquish? and do you suffer whatever he appoints you to endure?—To you the animating exhortation is directed,

Fear ye not the reproach of men, &c. Ye may be exposed to the malevolent reproaches, and cruel revilings, of impious malignant men, who, by false accusations, disgraceful epithets, odious aspersions, and slanderous misrepresentations, may endeavour to render you contemptible. These bitter words, these detestible calumnies, intended to divest you of your good name, which is preferable to great riches, like swords may penetrate your hearts, and be apt to crush your spirits: But remember, that all the indignities and contumelies which ye suffer from the world that lieth in wickedness, are designed, by infinite wisdom and love, to render you conformed to him that you call your Master; who, though the King of glory, adored by the celestial hosts, submitted, for your sakes, to be despised and rejected of men, to be reproached by the people, yea, to be slandered and reviled as a blasphemer, a seducer, and a wine-biber. Forget not the benediction pronounced, and the support promised, by our gracious Lord to those who on his account are maligned and injured. ‘Blessed are ye when men shall revile, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven *.’ ‘If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you †.’ In due time ye shall be rescued from every unjust calumny, ‘and he shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon-

* Mat. v. 11, 12.

† 1 Pet. iv. 14.

‘ noon-day *.’—Fear ye not, then, neither be ye afraid. Guard with the utmost caution against that fear which debilitates the mind, excites consternation, produces anxiety, and incapacitates for duty, whilst it disposes to employ improper means for obtaining relief. Be not dismayed at the prospect of reproaches and revilings, neither be terrified when ye meet with them; the dread of them might prove highly prejudicial to your best interests, it might embitter your comforts, divest you of inward tranquillity, deprive you of liberty of spirit, and greatly increase and multiply your miseries. Be not discouraged or disquieted by the malicious slanders and invectives with which ye may be loaded. Though men may endeavour to rob you of your reputation, they cannot bereave you of inward peace and serenity; though they try to misrepresent your character and conduct in the view of the world, they cannot deprive you of the favour of God; though they wrest from you earthly possessions, they cannot take from you treasures in heaven; though by falsehood and calumny they endeavour to frighten you from a steady attachment to truth and duty, they cannot hinder you from participating of those divine joys, and sublime consolations, which the saints of the Most High experience, in spite of the malice and fury of their adversaries. Yield not, then, to a base embarrassing timidity, assured that the lying lips shall be put to silence, which speak grievous things proudly against the righteous; and that God will hide you, in whose hearts is his law, in the secret of his presence, from the conspiracies of men, and will keep you secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues †.—What illustrious examples are recorded in the New Testament of undaunted fortitude, amidst a torrent of abusive language and virulent reproaches. What a noble superiority of mind did the disciples of Jesus Christ display, before the high-priest, the rulers and elders gathered together at Jerusalem, when they persecuted and threat-

ened.

* Psa. xxxvii. 6.

† Psa. xxxi. 18—20.

ened them. What heroic courage did the apostle Paul manifest, when accused by the orator Tertullus, before Felix, the Roman governor, as a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition ! And in following ages, the servants of Jesus Christ, who endured trials of cruel mockings, of scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments, have exhibited, on memorable occasions, astonishing proofs, that, far from being intimidated by reproaches and revilings, they gloried that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the sake of their Lord and Saviour.

8. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool : but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

Compliance with the preceding direction is urged, from the consideration that the sufferings of God's people shall soon be terminated by the destruction of their enemies, whilst the salvation of Messiah shall be perpetuated throughout all ages. As the moth bred in the garment, and the worm that is in the wool, silently, slowly, and effectually consumes the cloth and the materials whereof it is composed, —so the weakest and most despicable instruments, employed by divine Providence, shall certainly destroy those who calumniate and injure the servants of God, and deprive them of their power and influence. They shall perish, either by means of the corrupt passions they have cherished in their own breasts, or by some feeble, contemptible instruments raised up for this purpose.—The other argument is derived from the perpetuity of the righteousness and salvation of Jehovah, of which I treated when illustrating the 6th verse of this chapter, where the same truth was mentioned. My righteousness and faithfulness shall continue to be displayed in the fulfilment

filment of the promises I have given to my peculiar people, and the great work of salvation shall be carried forward from one generation to another, until it shall be fully consummated. And after my word is accomplished, my redemption completed, and the enemies of my Church overthrown, a new glorious scene shall be opened, wherein righteousness and salvation shall eternally triumph.

9. Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord ; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon ?

The Messiah having addressed his chosen people, in a manner suited to the afflictive circumstances wherein they were involved, the form of discourse is now changed, and the Church is introduced directing earnest supplications unto the God of salvation.—The request is addressed to the arm of Jehovah. The strength and beauty, the propriety and elegance of the expressions, with the import of the prayer, claim peculiar attention. Notwithstanding God is a spirit, that hath not flesh, and bones, and arms, like those which belong to the human body, yet, in accommodation to our weakness, and to assist our feeble apprehensions of the Supreme Being, human passions, and bodily parts, are often figuratively attributed to him. The arm of man being the instrument whereby he exerts the greatest strength, and performs the most arduous enterprizes, it affords a fit emblem of the power of Jehovah, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. This omnipotence is entreated, once, again, and a third time to awake. The repetition intimates, that this request made deep impression on the minds of the supplicants ; it expresses the fervency of desire, the feeling sense of urgent necessity that the prayer might be speedily granted, and the high importance of the be-

nefit which is asked. Though he that keepeth Ifrael neither flumbers nor fleeps, and is always attentive to their fituation and fafety, there are fome feafons wherein he feems to be unmindful of their dangerous circumftances, and is therefore earneftly entreated to interpoze in their behalf. A remarkable inftance of this occurs in the 44th pfalm, when the Church complained that they were covered with the fhadow of death, and for the fake of their Lord killed all the day long. In this deplorable ftate they turn to the Almighty, and implore his gracious aid. ‘Awake, why fleepeft thou, O Lord? caft us not off for ever.’ And at the period referred to in the prayer before us, when Providence did not appear to regard their diftrefs, they cry with importunity for fupport and deliverance. Feeling their afflictions, convinced of their infufficiency to effect the relief they wanted, they earneftly plead for help from on high, from whence alone their aid could come.—The difplay of omnipotence is requested to be like that which in ancient times was exhibited, when the mighty arm of Jehovah was employed in working ftupendous miracles, in order to accomplifh the liberation of the Ifraelites from bondage in the land of Egypt, and to put them in poffeffion of the glory of all lands. A fignal exertion of mercy and power is earneftly entreated. Manifeft, O Lord God, thy omnipotence and glory, fo as thy ftrong hand may be feen working our defence and deliverance; and let the help thou affords be attended with fuch circumftances as may excite admiration and gratitude.—*Put on ftrength.* Take to thee thy great power and reign, affift, fupport, and defend us, amid the dangers and calamities whereby we are oppreffed. Our enemies are many and powerful, we have no might to oppofe and vanquifh them, and therefore we humbly implore thy help and deliverance, begging that thou wilt feafonably interpoze in our behalf, fo fhall we triumph in thy praife.—*Awake, as in the ancient days, &c.* Let thy mighty

mighty arm remain no longer inactive, but put forth thy invincible strength, as in past ages, when thy glorious power effected the most wonderful deliverances — The recollection of former mercies is both useful and comfortable, especially in seasons of distress; for as divine dispensations are commonly uniform, whatever hath happened may again happen in similar circumstances, so that the experience of former generations, as well as of our own times, ought to be improved for our encouragement.

Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, &c. Rahab, which signifies pride, or strength, is a name given in scripture to the kingdom of Egypt, which was of old a very powerful nation. The royal Poet, contemplating the magnificence, establishment, and glory of the city of God, and predicting the numerous accessions to be made to the Church from among the Gentiles, the first which he mentions is Rahab, or Egypt *. This kingdom, once celebrated for its great power, Jehovah did cut or break in pieces, when he overthrew, in the sea, the chariots, the horsemen, and all the hosts of Pharaoh, and gave them to be meat to the inhabitants of the wilderness; their bodies being cast ashore, they became the food of the wild beasts of the deserts.—*And wounded the dragon.* The Hebrew word translated dragon signifies also a crocodile, remarkable for strength, cruelty, and cunning, an animal that frequented the river Nile, and the marshy grounds in Egypt. The mind immediately recedes from this creature, and the literal sense of the expression, and passes to the contemplation of the object it is intended to represent, the inhuman, subtle, and powerful prince who presided over that kingdom. Of this persecuting dragon Jehovah did break the head, and gave him a deadly wound, when he drowned him and his mighty hosts in the depths of the sea. The remembrance of the glorious deliverance, which was thereby effected, for the enslaved, oppressed posterity of Jacob, suggests a strong

* Psa. lxxxvii. 3.

strong argument to induce the Church of God to expect new mercies from him in the time of their distress, and for this purpose the subject is here mentioned.—Former benefits received should prove as an anchor of hope, to preserve us steadfast in the day of trouble, confident that he who hath delivered will yet deliver.

10. Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?

Another memorable instance of God's seasonable exertion of his mighty arm, in favour of his people, is mentioned in this verse.—*It dried the sea.* The immensity of the ocean, the vast multitude and strength of its waters, especially when greatly agitated by a storm, render it a most tremendous object, which nothing less than infinite power can controul. How glorious the omnipotence of Jehovah, which not only raises and calms that boisterous element at his pleasure, but can easily dry up its waters.—*That hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?* The armies of Israel having advanced to the sea-shore, in imminent danger of being again enslaved or destroyed by their enemies, who closely pursued them, the sea was instantly divided at the lifting up of the rod of Moses, and opened a new path, by which the posterity of Jacob passed in perfect safety to the opposite land. After which, the waters returning to their former state, all their adversaries who followed them were overwhelmed in the great deep. To this astonishing event, affording an illustrious proof of the mighty power of Jehovah, exerted of old in behalf of his people, to effect their redemption from the house of bondage, the Church looked back, as affording ample ground of hope and encouragement in the time of distress. Art not thou, O Lord God, the author of the wonderful

derful deliverance to which we allude, that we recollect with admiration and gratitude, as affording a noble demonstration of thine infinite ability to save, and a striking evidence of thy perfect readiness to help, in seasons of trouble and perplexity. This memorable interposition of thy mercy and power we call to remembrance, as a strong incitement to the exercise of faith and hope, of trust and dependence on thee, for relief from the evils and dangers whereby we are environed.

II. Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

These comfortable words contain the answer, which the Spirit of God dictated, to the fervent prayer recited in the two verses immediately preceding,—the reply that our prophet was directed to give to the earnest requests presented by the Church. The same almighty power which had been employed of old in vindicating the posterity of Abraham from thralldom in Egypt, was to be seasonably exerted in every age for extricating the people of God from the afflictions and oppressions whereby they were distressed. The intimate connection between the foregoing ardent prayer, and the joyful assurances here given of a favourable return, seems to be expressed by the word *Therefore* in the beginning of this verse. Prayer is an ordinance of divine appointment, and did not God honour his own institution, and verify his own solemn declarations, of hearing and answering the supplications of his servants, they would prove in some measure vain and nugatory, though not altogether useless. If the person engaged in prayer is accepted, if the homage is approved, if the sacrifice presented is an odour of a sweet smell, if it does honour

nour to God, and becomes a proper acknowledgment of his glorious perfections; if in this way he is admitted to communion with his Maker, though no other benefit resulted from this service, these advantages ought powerfully to prompt to the performance of the duty: especially when it is recollected, that he who is able to do more than we can ask or think, hath promised to grant comfortable answers to the supplications of the needy. The Lord God hath not said to the house of Jacob seek my face in vain, nor is there one instance on record, that I know, of earnest prayer which did not receive a gracious answer from him who hears the desires of the humble; nay, he hath been pleased frequently to give more than was asked. Such strong encouragement being held forth to importunate prayer, the redeemed of the Lord cannot fail, by this means, to obtain joy and gladness in their way to Zion.—The exposition given of the words before us, which occurred in chapter xxxv. 10. supercedes the necessity of explaining them at present. Nothing farther seems requisite, than to have pointed out the design of their being introduced in this passage.

12. I, even I am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?

After the above digression, if it may be so called, the consolatory discourse begun in the first part of the chapter is continued.—*I, even I am he that comforteth you.* The Lord God doth not barely say to his people that he can comfort them, if he please, or that in some instances he had administered to them this desirable blessing, but he affirms, that having abundant sacred consolations, which will not disappoint their expectations, and of which none shall be able to deprive them, he will not fail, on every pro-
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per occasion, to impart them to those who follow after righteousness, and feel themselves weak, afflicted, and destitute of human aid. I am he who alleviates your troubles, who restrains your enemies, who mitigates your sorrows, who removes the evils that you feel or fear, and who gives you reviving promises of gracious assistance and deliverance to support your dejected minds. In due season I will extricate you from all the tribulations that, for salutary purposes, you now endure, and in the meantime you shall have strength to bear them with fortitude and patience. This blessed office the Lord God is pleased to assume, this work he appropriates to himself, and in this employment he seems to glory. And after his servants have been engaged in fervent prayer for the exertion of his mighty power, he often dispenses to them divine consolations, by the saving strength of his right hand, and by sending gracious answers to their petitions.

Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man? The Almighty calls to account every individual of his people who yields to the influence of the slavish fear of man, and reprimands the indulgence of that criminal disposition.—Who art thou that art distressed with timidity and terror of a frail mortal creature like thyself, and behavest as if thou hadest not the eternal God for thy helper and refuge? This pointed enquiry carries in it the force of a sharp reproof for indulgence in this unbecoming temper, whilst it serves to shew its extreme folly and pernicious tendency. By giving way to timidity, you act inconsistently with the manly fortitude which on all occasions you ought to manifest; you act unworthy of that firm, heroic resolution, which ought always to distinguish the servants of the living God. What sufficient reason canst thou assign for allowing thyself to entertain a servile dread of a fellow-mortal? seriously expostulate with thyself on the absurdity of thy conduct, now that thou art interrogated as to this matter. The fear of man bringeth a snare, and
wherever

wherever it predominates the fear of the Lord is deficient in its operation.—Recollect the frail, uncertain, dying condition of the object that excites thy dismay and terror. The meanness, the weakness and insignificance of man, is represented in scripture by a variety of similitudes. He is compared to a shadow, that hath no real existence, and which soon vanishes away; in his best estate to vanity itself, which assumes, rather than possesses any substantial reality;—to the small dust that adheres to the balance;—to the defenceless worm, that is continually in danger of being crushed to death;—to the grass, which soon decays and is cut down; and—to the flower of the grass, which is quickly gone, shrinks into the ground, and perishes. Thus doth man fade away in his ways. Why, then, shouldest thou be afraid of such a feeble, short-lived creature? The greatest and most formidable of the human race shall soon die, and be laid low in the dust, and therefore the transitory nature of his existence, and certain approaching dissolution, ought to check anxiety and dread.—Let us remember, that those whom we most admire, love, and trust, shall die ere long, and take heed that we do not place too much affection or dependence upon them; that those whom we most fear and stand in awe of, shall soon be removed by death; and, therefore, let us beware that we do not indulge in dismay or terror.

13. And forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?

Having reproved that servile fear of man, which would disturb and distress the minds of those who are comforted of God, a farther check is given to this
sinful

sinful passion, by shewing its inconsistency with an abiding recollection of the majesty and grandeur of Jehovah.—Notwithstanding the Lord God hath employed various means to preserve continually the remembrance of him fresh in your minds, you have neglected to cherish frequent pleasing thoughts of the discoveries of his power and presence, which he hath every where exhibited. Though he hath reminded you of his existence and glory, not only by the creatures with which you are surrounded, but by the dispensations of his providence, and the impressions made on your hearts by his good Spirit, you have not realized his perfections, nor suitably regarded his operations. How criminal this neglect of thy Maker, who gave thee being, breath, and all things, and endowed thee with the power of remembrance;—who created in thee a new heart, and admitted thee into the highly-favoured society of his Church, over which he presides, and which he guards with unremitting care and affection. Justly, then, mayest thou blush, and be ashamed of thy forgetfulness of thy Creator.—*That hath stretched forth the heavens, &c.*; that by his omnipotence formed and extended the immense expanse of the heavens; that spread abroad the clouds and the firmament, wherein are placed, in admirable order, innumerable glorious luminaries; and that established the highest heavens, wherein the presence of Jehovah is especially enjoyed.—*And laid the foundations of the earth.* This expression, which refers to architecture, where the foundation is the most necessary and important part of the building, that bears the weight of the whole superstructure, and gives it strength and stability, intimates that the Lord God not only formed, but hath so established the earth, that it cannot be removed for ever.—Since, then, the Almighty hath given such illustrious displays of his goodness, wisdom, and power, in the creation and preservation of the universe, how justly reprehensible is the conduct of his people, who reside on the earth, contemplate

his glory in the heavens, and who daily receive fresh proofs of his loving kindness and tender care, to allow this gracious God, and his precious benefits, to slip out of their memories, and who do not remember him and his ways.

And hast feared continually every day, &c. By acting under the influence of the fear of man, destitute of proper respect to God, who only ought to be feared, and persisting in this absurd practice, you act inconsistently both with your character and duty. How miserable the condition of persons emphatically described by Moses, in his last solemn charge given to all Israel: ‘Thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life,—for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see *.’ In similar perplexing, distressing circumstances were the people to whom the prophet addressed his discourse.—*Because of the fury of the oppressor*, who, incensed with rage, and filled with wrathful indignation, loaded them with bitter reproaches; compelled them, by violence and cruelty, to submit to hard labour, to comply with tyrannical impositions, or to endure the most excruciating sufferings. Such seem to have been the causes of that timidity and dismay which the following words are intended to dispel. *And where is the fury of the oppressor?* The question intimates, that the object was in reality a thing of naught, and of short continuance. The oppressor and his fury were perfectly under the controul of the Almighty, and both were soon to come to an end. Though he may be great in power, and spreading like a green bay tree, yet he shall quickly pass away, and if sought for he shall not be found.—What strong encouragement do these words administer to the people of God, and what a sharp reproof do they convey to those who afflict and oppress them. The total overthrow of magnificent cities, the least vestige of which cannot

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* Deut. xxviii. 66, 67.

now be discovered; the tragical fate of powerful empires, swept with the besom of destruction; and the horrible death of the persecutors of the Church, suggest such a reply to the enquiry here made, as authorizes us to say, the oppressor and his fury shall ere long be sought for in vain.

14. The captive exile hathneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail.

Our prophet declares, that the persecutors of the people of God, being dispersed and brought to nothing, those who had been banished from their native country, and thrown into places of confinement were to be set at liberty, that they might go wherever they pleased. Being liberated from the prisons, the loathsome dungeons, and from the fetters wherewith they were bound, in which they endured hunger, thirst and nakedness, pains and sorrows, through the cruelty of their oppressors, they were happily set free from want, misery, and the dread of death, whereby they had been grievously distressed. In the words of the royal Psalmist, ‘The Lord beheld the earth from heaven, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose them that were appointed to death, to declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem *.’ No misery so complicated, no malice so inveterate, no power so great, from which God doth not extricate his faithful servants. After having suffered bondage, imprisonment, tortures, and calamities of various kinds, he sends them deliverance in his own good time and way. This prediction, on which it is unnecessary to enlarge, hath been remarkably fulfilled in different periods of the Church, when God hath commanded deliverances for the children of Jacob, and frustrated the wicked designs of their adversaries. Encouraged by this animating consideration, how fervently

* Psal. cii. 19--21.

vently ought we to pray, ‘ O let the fighting of the
 ‘ prisoner come before thee ; according to the great-
 ‘ nefs of thy power, preserve thou thofe that are ap-
 ‘ pointed to die *.’

15. But I am the Lord thy God, that divided the fea, whose waves roared : the Lord of hofts is his name.

With what a magnificent exordium is the fubject introduced contained in the following verfes. The preceding part of this difcourfe was directed to the timid afflicted difciples of the Meffiah ; here the form of expreffion is changed from the plural to the fingular number, and our prophet, in the name of Jehovah, particularly addreffes the more eminent fervants of God employed in advancing his kingdom, and the interefts of truth and righteoufnefs in the earth.—To fuch he faith, *I am the Lord thy God ;* the fovereign, omnipotent, unchangeable Jehovah, who am intimately related to thee, who have delivered thee from innumerable evils, preserved thee amid alarming dangers, provided fupply for thy manifold neceffities, fupported thee under thy great weaknefses, and in every emergency have granted thee feafonable help and relief.—*That divided the fea,* to open a fafe paffage for the Ifraelites from the oppreffion of the Egyptians ; and that keeps in continual motion the immense body of waters whereof the fea is compofed. By the fame glorious power, for which nothing is impoffible, he can preserve and work deliverance, with the utmoft eafe, for his Church, from danger and calamity, amid all the commotions that arife among the inhabitants of the earth. The Lord, who is mightier than the noife of many waters, filleth the tumults of the people, gives check to their turbulent paffions, which endanger, and might disturb the tranquillity of his chofen ; or who by various means removes them out of the way, that

* Pfa. lxxix. 11.

that no obstacle may hinder his servants from the enjoyment of promised liberty. The signal instances of divine power and providence here alluded to, furnishes complete evidence of the all-sufficiency of the Lord God to preserve his saints in perfect safety, and to extricate them from the perilous circumstances wherein they are involved. No evil, however tremendous it may appear, from which he is not able and willing to rescue them.—*The Lord of hosts is his name.* He is the Lord of all the celestial hosts, who do him homage, and execute his pleasure; yea, all the creatures, from the greatest to the least, the luminaries of heaven, every thing in the earth, the sea, and the air, is obedient to his voice, and fulfils his commands. He employs them as he sees proper to fulfil his purposes. This glorious character, claimed by Jehovah, is replete with consolation to his people, who are thereby reminded of their perfect safety under his protection who hath all power in heaven and earth, who abases the proud, and delivers the needy from deceit and violence.

16. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.

The Lord God gives solemn assurance to the Messiah, and his mystical body, the Church, acting under his authority, that he would constantly afford them his favour and protection, until the great work assigned them should be fully executed. The prediction is delivered in the manner frequently adopted by the prophets, who speak of future events as if they had actually taken place, to intimate the complete certainty of their accomplishment.—*I have put my words in thy mouth.* I have imparted to thee my truths, my commands, my promises and threatenings, that

that thou mayest openly avow and confess them before men; and I have given thee ability, liberty, and opportunity to communicate them to others, that my name may be glorified, and the knowledge of my salvation diffeminated throughout all the earth.

— *And have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand.* This expression, which I had occasion to explain when treating chapter xlix. 2. may here import, that Jesus Christ, and his Church, were to enjoy perfect security, by the power and providence of the Almighty, under whose shadow they were continually to abide, of whom they were to say, He is our refuge, our fortress, our God, in him will we trust.

That I may plant the heavens, &c. These words must undoubtedly be understood in their figurative sense. The renovation of the Church, the establishment of a new and permanent œconomy of grace, by means of the ministry of the gospel, which is here intended, is expressed by planting the heavens, and laying the foundations of the earth. Our prophet, who deduces the principal images and ornaments, which he employs to illustrate and adorn his discourse, from natural objects, in order to magnify and embellish the predicted event, refers to the planting of a garden with trees and shrubs, and to the creation of the world. By these beautiful allusions he illuminates the future by the past, he delineates the elegance and grandeur of the new world, he rescues the prediction from obscurity, and enables us, in some measure, to form distinct ideas of his meaning. — The heavens and the earth may denote the new œconomy of grace, the better dispensation established by the Son of God, which was substituted in place of the former one, that had been corrupted and vitiated, and which introduced a new form, new institutions and privileges, into the spiritual state of the world. In this new œconomy, the Lord God, according to this prophecy, placed in superior stations all those illustrious persons, whose benign influence produced the most salutary effects in the Church, and
entirely

entirely changed the very face of the world, with respect to religion. Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, arose with healing under his wings, celestial intelligences proclaimed peace on earth, apostles, pastors and teachers, who are spoken of as stars, with all those who hold eminent stations in the kingdom of God, enlightened that highly-favoured community. The earth, which may signify here the great mass of the common people, who occupy inferior stations, and derive salutary influence from those who are invested with office and authority: them Jehovah declares he will establish, and build upon the Rock of ages, against which the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail. The expressions used in relation to the heaven and the earth, intimate that the great work here foretold was to be executed by the peculiar agency of the Lord God, that it was gradually to rise to maturity, and to remain in a permanent, flourishing condition.—In consequence of this promise having been verified, the conduct of men, both Jews and Gentiles, was wholly altered towards God and one another. The Mosaic œconomy instituted at Mount Sinai was abolished, and the posterity of Israel were taught to consider the Most High, and their brethren of other nations, in a different light from that in which they had been accustomed to view them. The false deities worshipped for many ages by the Gentiles were deserted, and the homage that had been given them was withdrawn. The abettors of superstition and idolatry were deprived of the ascendancy they had acquired over the minds of men, and vast numbers of the inhabitants of the earth adored and served the living and true God, of whom they had hitherto remained ignorant. In few words, the spiritual state of the world was changed, a new heavens and a new earth appeared, and multitudes of the human race seemed to be new creatures.

This remarkable alteration was to be accomplished, that *Jehovah might say to Zion, thou art my people.*

At

At the period referred to, the Almighty was to afford convincing evidence of the intimate, endearing relation in which he stands connected with his Church, whereby the world was to be constrained to acknowledge the lustre of his glory, manifest in them, and his dispensations toward them. Though in times past the people of God had been represented as factious, seditious, and troublesome, men were to be obliged to own that their strength is in the Lord of hosts their God *, that they were his chosen inheritance, who shewed forth his praises; his peculiar treasure, wherein he will be glorified.—Improve, Brethren, this intimation as a powerful argument to excite you to live and act so that God may not be ashamed to be called your God. From this animating consideration derive comfort in all your distresses, and endeavour to shew that you are his people, by cheerful obedience to his authority, by firm trust in his wisdom, power, and goodness, and by contentment with every circumstance in your lot.

17. Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out.

Our prophet with great earnestness addresses the Church, afflicted by manifold calamities, whereby they had been reduced to a state resembling that of persons intoxicated with strong drink. He directs his discourse particularly to the Church in Judea, or Jerusalem, the mother of all the other Christian churches, the centre from whence they all diverged, which, in the prophetic Scriptures, is often spoken of by the name of Zion, or Jerusalem. He repeatedly calls upon them to arise and bestir themselves, conscious of their sloth and unconcern as to their spiritual state. The circumstances by which this select society is described require to be noticed. They were inebriated

* Zech. xii. 5.

inebriated, not with wine, but by their having drunk of the cup of the Lord's fury which contains those terrible calamities that are the effects of his dread displeasure. Of this cup they had not only tasted, but they had received a large draught, in consequence of which they were greatly distressed; they were deprived of tranquillity of mind, and reduced to a state of deplorable insensibility.—Of this cup of fury and trembling they had drunk the dregs, and wrung them out; they had shared largely of very severe afflictive evils, which had brought upon them dread and trembling. From the intoxicating quality of wine, when drunk in too great quantities, is borrowed this tremendous image of the wrath and indignation of Almighty God, which is sometimes used by the writers both of the Old and new Testament to represent the miserable condition of the objects of the divine displeasure. Remarkable instances occur, Jer. xxv. 15. and Mat. xx. 22. and in the passage under consideration. Calamity and sorrow, fear and trembling, infatuation, anguish, and despair, are the bitter ingredients that compose this cup of fury, the dregs whereof the Church had wrung out, the debilitating effects of which they had experienced. It is remarkable, and worthy of attention, that as literal Babylon was the instrument God employed to inflict his judgments on many nations, whereby he caused them to drink deep of the wine of his wrath, so mystical Babylon is the golden cup from which many nations drink of the wine of her errors, superstitions, and idolatries.—Let us give glory to the Lord our God, who hath not put into our hands the cup of his indignation, and made us drink of it with all the wicked of the earth. With gratitude let us take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord, and offer to him the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

18. There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth: neither is there any that taketh her by the hand, of all the sons that she hath brought up.

The forlorn, deserted state of the people of God, when sustaining the direful effects of the divine displeasure, is farther depicted in strong and glowing colours. They had not only drunk deep of the cup of God's wrath, but they were intirely destitute of that relief and support which they might expect from their children, not one of whom afforded them succour in the time of distress. The words seem to allude to the feeble condition of a weak female, who, having contracted great debility, and being distressed with a giddiness in the head, is incapable of moving without being in danger, and therefore requires the assistance of some kind friend to lead and support her. The Church, in a somewhat similar situation, had none, *i. e.* very few (for in this limited sense such expressions must frequently be understood in scripture), either rulers or ministers, to direct and assist them in obtaining deliverance. Of all the sons that had been cherished in their bosoms, who occupied civil or ecclesiastical stations, there were scarcely any who possessed ability and inclination to administer relief and consolation to the distressed, under the pressure of affliction. On this account the inhabitants of Jerusalem are introduced, in the book of Lamentations, bewailing their desolate condition in these mournful strains: 'For these things I weep, mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed *.'

19. These two things are come unto thee: who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?

Isaiah proceeds to recite the terrible calamities the Church had sustained, from which, through the gracious

* Chap. i. 16.

cious interposition of Jehovah, they were soon to emerge. By recollecting their former deplorable condition, and contrasting it with the comfortable state to which they were to be raised, the happy change might appear to the greater advantage—*These two things, viz. desolation occasioned by famine, and destruction, effected by the sword, have happened to thee in the righteous providence of God.* The former of these judgments was the consequence of your fields and cities having been laid waste by the ravages of enemies, of your corns having been trampled down and destroyed, of your possessions having been plundered, and of the inhabitants having been carried away into captivity and servitude, so that the whole land presented a scene of mournful desolation. The latter proceeded from the terrible destruction made by the sword, and the dreadful calamities which are the effects of war, that exhausted the strength of the state, reduced you to insignificance and contempt, and threatened your entire overthrow. In these wretched circumstances the Lord saith—*By whom shall I comfort thee?* By what instrument, and by what means, shall I impart the consolation which thy afflicted condition seems to demand, and which is indispensably requisite to thy recovery from dejection and dismay? The expression intimates the Divine solicitude for the welfare of those to whom the words were addressed; that it was difficult to extricate them from the distresses they had felt, and to bring them to the possession of freedom, order, tranquillity and comfort. This restoration must be his work who makes wars to cease to the ends of the earth, and who blesses his people with peace.

20. Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of thy God.

The

The feeble, dejected state of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in consequence of the direful calamities which they sustained, is here represented in very moving terms, similar to the description given of their lamentable condition by the prophet Jeremiah *. Through hunger, distress and fear, they were deprived of activity, vigour and courage, and fell down in the streets of the city, languishing and ready to expire. Exhausted and debilitated by various means, they resembled a wild bull entangled in a net, from which all his toilsome exertions cannot extricate him, but, on the contrary, the more he struggles the faster he is held, and the more he is weakened. In like manner, the citizens of Jerusalem, who were ferocious and untractable, and would not calmly submit to Divine judgments, but obstinately persisted in contending with them, were reduced to weakness and despondency.—*They are full of the fury of the Lord.* Fury, you know, when ascribed to Jehovah, does not signify any uneasy tumultuous passion, as it often does when attributed to man, but denotes his just detestation against sin, and the effects of his awful displeasure inflicted upon transgressors. With the dreadful displays of God's anger, the streets of Jerusalem had been filled.—*The rebuke of thy God.* The severe afflictions wherewith the Jewish people had been visited, were intended to convince them of their sins, to punish them for their perfidious rebellious conduct, to restrain them from wickedness, and to lead them to repentance. To promote these important purposes, the Lord their God reproved them sharply for their transgressions, and by various means restrained them from the practice of iniquity.

21. ¶ Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine.

The

* Lam. ii. 11, 12.

The Most High demands solemn attention from his afflicted people to the comfortable words he was about to deliver by his servant. The citizens of Jerusalem are addressed as sore afflicted by grievous calamities, the sword, famine and pestilence, accompanied with those painful circumstances which give occasion to the most complicated distresses of body and mind. They were drunken—carried away by delusions, errors and superstitions; stupified by those miseries, of which they considered not the causes; and insensible of the depravity and guilt in which they were involved. *But not with wine*, or intoxicating liquors, but with the cup of the Lord's fury, full of those dreadful ingredients which made them to tremble and be astonished. In this deplorable condition, the Lord God, who in the midst of deserved wrath remembers mercy, claims their attention.—*Therefore hear now this.* Since you are ready to sink under the pressure of divine judgments, which you suffer on account of your transgression, listen to the words of my mouth. Though I stand not in need of your services, which cannot profit me, yet, commiserating your distresses, I require you diligently to hearken to the message I send you by my servant. If you are offended at your children and dependants, that refuse to obey your orders, how criminal must be your conduct, if you regard not my kind admonitions, who am ready to relieve you from your troubles, and to impart consolation to your hearts! If you are apt to murmur when I do not grant your requests, or delay to answer your prayers, what infinitely-greater reason have I to be displeased with those who do not comply with my requisitions, and obey not my precepts.

22. Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup
of

of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury, thou shalt no more drink it again.

The comfortable assurance given to the Church, of deliverance from the calamities they had sustained, as the just punishment of their sins, is introduced with great solemnity, and expressed in the most endearing manner. It is founded on the supreme dominion of Jehovah over his peculiar people, from which arises not only a right, but an obligation to vindicate them from oppression and misery.—*Thus saith thy Lord*, who hath avouched thee to be his treasure and inheritance.—*The Lord*, who protects thee by his providence, who enriches thee from his fulness, who governs thee by his laws, whose glorious sovereignty, divine excellencies, and gracious regard, thou oughtest to acknowledge with humble gratitude.—*And thy God* who hath promised to make thee high above all nations, in praise, in name, and in honour, that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken. By thus asserting his intimate connection with them, they were reminded that he was solemnly engaged to fulfil, in due season, the promises made unto the fathers, in which he had pledged himself to be their defence and deliverer. They might therefore be confident, that he would not neglect to attend to the distressed state of the Church, and in good time to rescue them from the evils under which they had long groined. Especially when it is added, as descriptive of the character of Jehovah, *that he pleadeth the cause of his people*. He constantly protects and maintains their best interests; he supports them when opposed and oppressed, either by openly vindicating them from reproach and persecution, or by secretly overturning the mischievous plots devised against them. This kind interposition of the Almighty, in behalf of his Church, was of old gratefully acknowledged in these words, ‘O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my
‘foul

‘soul, thou hast redeemed my life *.’ You, therefore, who walk before God in truth, and hope in his mercy, ought to derive ample encouragement from this amiable character of Jehovah, to trust in him for support under all your afflictions.—*Behold I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, &c.* How reviving the intimation, of freedom from all the evils contained in the cup of astonishment, of which they had been made to drink, especially when accompanied with the assurance that they were no more to taste its bitter ingredients. To these comfortable circumstances serious attention is demanded from the desponding people of God, as opening sources of pleasing expectation and genuine consolation.

23. But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee : which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over : and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street to them that went over.

As a farther ground of comfort to the afflicted Church, Jehovah promises to convey the cup of trembling, of which they had plentifully shared, into the hand of their enemies and oppressors. God, who had been justly displeas'd with his people, had given them into the power of their foes, who had grievously distress'd them, and shew'd them no mercy ; he therefore determin'd to repay the injuries done to his Church, and with what measure their persecutors had meted, to measure to them again. Accordingly, he declares that he would put into their hands the same cup of fury of which they had caused others largely to drink. Such just retaliation, such righteous vengeance, hath been often experienced by the adversaries of God's people, as the king of Jerusalem, the Edomites, and the Babylonians, with many others, have been compelled to acknowledge.—*Whib have said to thy soul, &c.* Such was the proud insulting language

* Lam. iii. 58.

language used by those who were to have the cup of trembling put into their hands. They rigorously demanded from the servants of the Almighty that they had got into their power, the most implicit subjection to their tyrannical mandates, as a testimony of the ignominious servitude to which they were reduced. The expression plainly intimates the very humiliating abject condition in which they were detained by those who haughtily triumphed over them, and treated them with the greatest contempt. And such was their miserable state, that they were obliged to obey the insolent orders of their imperious masters. The divine mercy, justice and veracity were to be displayed in the condign punishment of these inhuman persecutors, and in the deliverance of the godly, 'so that men shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.'—Psal. lviii. 11.

PRELI-

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE introduction to the long prophetic narration which commences in the next chapter, and extends to the sixtieth chapter, inclusive, probably begins at the seventeenth verse of the fifty-first chapter, and is continued in the one now to be considered. The discourse, of which the exordium lies before us, delineates the fortunes of the Church, from the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, unto the end of the world. It may be distributed into several sections, that treat of the following subjects. The profound humiliation, and complicated sufferings of the great Messiah, with their causes and consequences, are related in chapter 53d.—The vast increase which the Church was to receive, from the accession of the Gentiles, after the glorious Redeemer's obedience, sufferings, and death, are described in chapters 54th and 55th.—The controversies that were to arise respecting some important topics, and the corruptions that were to creep into the Church, which were to be the occasion of many submitting to martyrdom, are pointed at in chapters 56th and 57th.—Depravity of manners, and the vitiated institutions observed by the Church, which were to bring upon them the awful displeasure of Almighty God, and to expose them to the fury of their adversaries, are the subjects treated in chapter 58th, and part of chapter 59th.—When in this deplorable state, Isaiah foretels that God, who is rich in mercy, was to effect their deliverance, and to take vengeance on their enemies, by illustrious displays of his power and majesty, chapter 59th, to the end.—The very happy and honourable condition to which the Church was to be advanced, through the abundant communications of divine grace, after having sustained various conflicts, is depicted in the most splendid colours, under a variety of beautiful images, by which the flourishing state of the kingdom of God, in the latter times, is

exhibited in chapter 60th.—The predictions contained in this large prophetic discourse are momentous and interesting, the consolations with which they are mixed are pure and sublime, the reproofs are necessary and pungent, and the exhortations are pathetic and seasonable.

Our prophet begins that portion of his introduction on which we now enter, by calling the servants of God to adopt such modes of worship as were suited to the more glorious dispensation wherewith they were favoured, specifying the grounds upon which his exhortation was founded, verse 1—3.—He then shews that their deliverance from servitude and captivity, both temporal and spiritual, sufficiently evinced the necessity of compliance with his requisition, verse 4—6.—The excellence and magnitude of the benefit of the gospel, to be promulgated throughout the whole world, is next celebrated with joy and triumph, verse 7—10.—The ministers of the word are then excited to engage in their arduous work, by the gracious assurance of the Divine protection and patronage, verse 11, 12.—After which the humiliation, obedience and sufferings of the Messiah are brought forward, with his subsequent exaltation, as the basis on which the grand and distinguishing glories of the kingdom of God was to be established, verse 13—15.

C H A P. LII.

A WAKE, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised, and the unclean.

These

These animating words were obviously directed to the Church, afflicted with manifold calamities, which for a long time they had sustained, and which had reduced them to a state of inactivity and indolence. They were called upon, with great earnestness, to arise and bestir themselves in faithfully improving the means God had appointed, in order to their receiving the accomplishment of the promises made unto the fathers. And, lest they might prove inattentive to this important business, the call is repeated once and again, *Awake, awake*. The Hebrew word here used denotes any kind of excitation, whether respecting the body or mind, so that the expression may signify, that the duty demanded of them required that they immediately lay aside indolence and security, and be attentive to the long-expected Messiah, and the salvation he was to effect, which were soon to be exhibited. At the 9th verse of the preceding chapter, this request was directed to the arm of Jehovah, at the 17th verse it was addressed to the Church, and to them it is here repeated under the well-known designation of—*Zion, and Jerusalem the holy city*. The literal Jerusalem at this time could not properly be called holy, on account of the sanctity of its inhabitants. But this character is bestowed upon it, because God had appropriated that city to be his peculiar residence, because he had appointed the most solemn services of his worship to be performed there, and because it afforded an eminent type of the Church of God under the New Testament, which is sanctified by the will of God, and by the blood and Spirit of his Son.

Put on thy strength, O Zion, &c. The Church having requested the arm of Jehovah to put on his strength, to exert his omnipotence, that he might accomplish their deliverance, the Lord God now invites them to put on their strength, that, in the lively exercise of unshaken dependence, they might expect the fulfilment of his promises. The Hebrew word here translated strength, signifies any peculiar excellence

cellence that constitutes the worth and value of an object, and renders it desirable and useful. When applied to the people of God, it denotes the power and vigour of the spiritual life, from whence all its exercises and habits proceed, and on which they depend. This strength of the inward man arises chiefly from faith and hope in God, which establish the heart, endow with distinguished excellence, enable to overcome spiritual enemies, to depend on Christ Jesus the Lord, and to do the will of God. To put on this strength, as here directed, is to be furnished and entirely clothed with it, as with a garment, that so they might be capable of the vigorous exercise of every grace and virtue suitable to the subjects of the kingdom of God.—*Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem.* The graces and amiable dispositions that adorn the minds of God's servants, are often mentioned in scripture under the well-known emblem of garments, that clothe and decorate the body. In this figurative sense the expression must be understood here, signifying humility and meekness, goodness, righteousness and truth, patience, resignation and joyfulness, with all those gracious tempers which they who have their hearts purified by faith, appear clothed before the world. These are the perfumed garments of the Church, which diffuse everywhere a grateful fragrance; these are the clothing and the ornament of the new man, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; these are the rich attire, the splendid and honourable robes of holiness, spoken of in the 110th sacred ode. This lovely habit they are directed to put on, that they may walk worthy of the Lord, and of the kingdom of God, to which they belong.

For henceforth there shall no more come unto thee, &c. The more excellent and comprehensive this assurance, given to the Church, the more difficult it is to demonstrate its real import. To come into the society of the faithful, must signify more than barely to enter among them; it is to become a member of their community,

community, to share in their peculiar privileges, to act suitably to their profession, engagements and prospects. The phrase, I apprehend, is of similar import with that used in the Mosaic law, of coming into the congregation of the Lord. Do you inquire, were ever the uncircumcised and the unclean admitted into the Israelitish church? If they never were received into their society, how could Isaiah with propriety foretel, that persons of this description should no more be allowed to come among them. It is probable, that in times of general corruption, when superstition and idolatry were patronized by men in high office, and possessing extensive authority, such people were admitted into the sanctuary of God, a circumstance that would doubtless greatly distress those that were Israelites indeed. Viewing this promise as chiefly respecting the Church under the New Testament, the persons mentioned are the uncircumcised in heart, who have not been divested of carnal prejudices and corrupt affections, who continue addicted to the sins that adhere to the body of sin and death, and consequently are unfit for intercourse with God, who is holy. The prediction accords with other declarations in scripture, which affirm that 'the people of God shall be all righteous, and that there shall not enter into Jerusalem any thing that defileth.' The Church, indeed, hath never been able, in any period, to exclude wholly from their communion the hypocritical and profane; and therefore, I suppose, that our prophet means only to affirm, that the state of the Church under the New Testament, being very different from what it was under the former dispensation, no person was to be estimated a real member of that sacred community, who was not cleansed from filthiness, both of the flesh and of the spirit. Though hypocrites and sinners, notwithstanding proper discipline is exercised, may associate with the saints of the Most High, they cannot be considered as genuine members of their society, or as belonging to the household of God, which is composed of those

who

who are actually holy.—What avails the shadow, without the substance; a name to live, whilst those on whom it is bestowed are really dead? What benefit to hold the character and the sign, destitute of internal holy dispositions, and the substantial blessings thereby signified. He who was dead and is alive, knows the blasphemy of them that say they are Christians, and are not. Do you, then, follow the apostle Paul's advice; 'Prove your own selves, know that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates *.'

2. Shake thyself from the dust: arise, *and* sit down, O Jerufalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

The dejected Church of God is farther directed to prepare for enjoying the accomplishment of the promises that had been given as the ground of their hope and encouragement.—Their beauty and splendour had been greatly sullied and obscured by the polluted, sorrowful state into which they had been precipitated, by those afflictions which were the signs of the Divine displeasure, by false prejudices, by corrupt doctrines and practices that abounded among them, and by their intimate intercourse with worldly, hypocritical people, who occupied the outer court of God's house. From this dust that adhered to them, they were required to shake themselves, that they might be free from those things whereby they had been encumbered and contaminated, and which had spoiled their purity and excellence. They were required to divest themselves of the grief and sorrow wherein they had indulged, and to put away whatsoever might hinder them from giving a suitable reception to the kingdom of God.—If different descriptions of persons are intended by the designations under which they are addressed, Jerufalem may denote the

* 2 Cor. 13. 5.

the citizens at large; and the daughter of Zion may signify the principal persons in the community, both civil and ecclesiastical. On them Isaiah calls to *arise*, from that state of depression in which they had long remained, that they might attain a more happy and elevated condition. To this he immediately subjoins, *sit down*, and compose yourselves, for the enjoyment of that comfortable state promised to the people of God, wherein they shall be blessed with tranquillity and safety, with every thing necessary to their felicity.—*Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck*, whereby you have been detained in captivity and servitude to those who have afflicted and oppressed you. Put off the bands of traditions, by which you have been held in bondage to the fathers, from whom they were handed down to you, and with them the yoke of the Mosaic law, which neither you nor your fathers were able to bear; that, being relieved from these incumbrances, you may enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God. This direction may remind us, that it is our indispensable duty to endeavour to disengage ourselves from whatever might injure our best interests, and to use the means prescribed, in order to obtain deliverance from the evils by which we have been embarrassed.

3. For thus saith the Lord, ye have sold yourselves for nought: and ye shall be redeemed without money.

A powerful argument is adduced in these words, to enforce compliance with the foregoing exhortation. Thus saith Jehovah, who possesses eternal unchangeable existence, and who faithfully fulfils all the promises he hath given to his people, on whose veracity ye may constantly depend.—*Ye have sold yourselves for nought*, &c. What is here asserted is equally true, in respect both of temporal and spiritual thralldom. The posterity of Israel were enslaved by the
Egyptians,

Egyptians, who grievously oppressed them, and derived great advantages from their labours and servitude, for which the children of Jacob received no adequate compensation. From this bondage they were rescued, not by their own power or prowess, or by any price they laid down to purchase their freedom, but by the sovereign mercy, and almighty power of Jehovah, who graciously interposed in their behalf, and brought them forth from the land wherein they were oppressed, with a strong hand and stretched-out arm. And afterwards, when they were led away captive by the Assyrians and Babylonians, far from receiving any equivalent for their servitude, they were treated with severity and cruelty, and for a long period unjustly detained in slavery. Again God in mercy was pleased, according to the promises made unto the fathers, to raise up the king of Persia to accomplish their deliverance, and without price to set them at liberty.—But the words before us have been more amply verified, in their figurative sense, to the Church of God at large. For that which could not profit them,—they gave themselves up to work iniquity; they became the servants of divers lusts and pleasures; they were led captive by the god of this world; they were subject to the rigid demands of the law, which, like a schoolmaster, exercised them with much severity. When in this forlorn state, sin reigned unto death, they were redeemed without money. The great Messiah appeared in the fulness of time, to put an end to sin, to destroy its empire, and to expiate its guilt, to triumph over principalities and powers, and to endure the curse of the law. By generously effecting these great purposes, he redeemed his Church out of the hands of their enemies, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but by his own precious blood: he laid down his life a ransom for our deliverance.—By the immense price paid for our redemption, and the very liberal manner in which it was given, permit me to urge you to give all diligence, that you may participate in this inestimable

estimable benefit, to avoid every thing inconsistent with the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and to endeavour to preserve a treasure so dearly purchased. Frequently review this wonderful subject, attentively think of the astonishing kindness of the compassionate Saviour, who accomplished the arduous work of setting free his Church from the law of sin and death, that they might have their fruit unto holiness, and in the end everlasting life.

4. For thus saith the Lord God, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there, and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

The circumstances mentioned in these words, the oppressed condition of God's people, serve to shew the worth and necessity of the redemption spoken of in the foregoing verse. The posterity of Israel, whom God had chosen for his peculiar people, went down into the land of Egypt at an early period, not to occupy that country, but merely as strangers to sojourn, and there they were most unjustly and cruelly afflicted; notwithstanding the preservation of the Egyptians from the terrible effects of famine, was, under God, to be attributed to Joseph, one of the sons of Israel. The Assyrians and Chaldeans afterward, though they could assign no good reason for their conduct, inflamed by the lust of conquest and domination, subdued, and then treated them with unrelenting severity. From all the hardships which they suffered, the Lord God, who delivers the needy when they call upon him, was mercifully pleased to extricate them. The miseries they endured, not only afforded occasions for the exercise of Divine compassion, but exhibited an instructive representation of the forlorn spiritual state to which the Church was reduced prior to the appearance of the loving kindness of God our Saviour, who delivered them

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from a worse than Egyptian bondage, from a worse than Assyrian captivity.

5. Now therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them, make them to howl, saith the Lord, and my name continually every day is blasphemed.

The necessity of the redemption of the Church is further urged, from the distressing circumstances in which they were involved. The subject is introduced by an enquiry, which is so stated, as plainly intimates, that the Lord God, deeply interested in the welfare of those who were sustaining accumulated distresses, was greatly displeas'd with the view of their afflictions and oppressions, their captivity and servitude, which he was determin'd no longer to tolerate. Two things relative to their state are mentioned, which evince the deplorable condition of the people of God, wherein it was inconsistent with the honour and the grace of Jehovah, that they should be permitted much longer to remain. The first is thus express'd—*They that rule over them, make them to howl.* The princes of Egypt, the kings of Assyria, the Roman emperors, with those who, in the figurative sense, had usurped dominion over them, are doubtless the rulers here intended. By their rigorous oppression, and tyrannical authority, they had reduced the servants of God to very miserable circumstances, and gave them occasion to howl and lament. Such was the grievous bondage of the posterity of Israel in Egypt, that their cry reach'd unto heaven; such was their forlorn state of captivity at Babylon, that they sat and wept, hanging their harps upon the willows; scattered abroad, in consequence of the cruel severity of the Roman emperors, they were call'd to weep and howl for the calamities that were come upon them. Especially do the spiritual oppressors

ors of the Church give them manifold occasions of grief and mourning, so that, with the royal Prophet, they exclaim, 'How are our foes increased, how long shall our enemies triumph over us? O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion.'—Besides, at the period to which our prophet especially refers, the Scribes and Pharisees, the priests and rulers among the Jews, with the public teachers, made the upright servants of God to cry with sorrow, by their futile instructions, their unprofitable disputes, their hypocritical devotions, destitute of the spirit of true religion. Whilst they inculcated strict subjection to the yoke of the law, and the rigid observances of ceremonies and traditions, they overlooked the gracious promises recorded in the Scriptures, from whence assistance and true consolation could be derived. How striking the contrast betwixt the comely appearance of those who publish salvation, and the rulers of God's people, who cause them to howl.

And my name continually every day is blasphemed. The name of God denotes the glorious attributes, the amiable characters ascribed to him in the Scriptures of truth. This name, he affirms, was blasphemed, reproached, and evil spoken of; the glory due to it was detracted from, and obscured in various ways, particularly by those who usurped authority over his people, and grievously oppressed them. The crime mentioned was greatly aggravated, by its having been constantly and daily committed, perpetrated by some profane persons, not merely on some extraordinary occasions, but the detestable practice was obstinately persisted in by those who adopted it, notwithstanding every remonstrance made to the contrary. The apostle Paul describing, in the second chapter of his epistle to the Romans, the character of the principal men and teachers among the Jews, by whose wicked lives God was dishonoured, whilst they inculcated some important duties upon the people, and made their boast of the law, has these remarkable

remarkable words ‘Through them the name of ‘God is blasphemed among the Gentiles,’ as it is written; probably referring to the words before us, or to Ezek. xxxvi 20, 23.—Such was the deplorable state of the Church, at the time whereof Isaiah speaks in this passage; a state which God in mercy declares he would not allow much longer to subsist, but that he would interpose for their deliverance. To this alarming condition were they actually reduced, before the appearance of Jesus Christ in human nature, by the Jewish doctors, who, by the heavy burdens they laid on the people, which they would not touch with one of their fingers, caused them bitterly to lament over the intolerable oppressions they sustained.

6. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day, that I *am* he that doth speak, behold, *it is I*.

One happy effect is here specified, which was to result from the redemption of God’s people.—*Therefore* (saith Jehovah) *my people shall know my name*. From the time wherein I will accomplish their deliverance, I will reveal myself more clearly to them; in consequence of which they shall become more intimately acquainted with my perfections, character, and salvation, and more firmly established in the faith and obedience of the truth, than in times past.—This prediction must be so understood, as to accord with the interpretation given of the preceding verses. If the deliverance there spoken of is considered literally, in reference to the liberation of the Israelitish church from bondage in Egypt, and captivity at Babylon, the words before us import, that from these memorable periods the glory and grace of Jehovah were to be more illustriously displayed, and better known by his servants, than hitherto they had been. If the redemption chiefly intended by our prophet be the great salvation obtained for mankind by the
Messiah,

Messiah, the expression under consideration plainly intimates, that after the fulness of time, wherein he appeared who was to manifest the name of Jehovah, his character and gracious designs were to be more clearly known than under the former dispensation. Then he revealed himself by the name of God Almighty, of Jehovah, of the Lord God merciful and gracious, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who rescued their posterity from bondage in Egypt, and from captivity in Assyria. Now he makes himself known as the God who is love, the Father of mercies, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through him the God and Father of all that believe in his name.

Therefore they shall know in that day that I am, &c. In the writings of the Old Testament, the time fixed for the redemption of the Church from the hands of their enemies, that they may serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, is sometimes specified by the words here used, *In that day*. ‘The Lord their God (said the prophet Zechariah) shall save them in that day, as the flock of his people *;’ referring, I suppose, to the same happy period which is intended in this prophecy; then the word of salvation was to be published by the Lord himself, the Angel of the covenant, and the Church were to be fully satisfied, by the most convincing evidences, that he who spake by the prophet Isaiah did in person immediately address them. Then they shall know that it is he that doth speak, of whom Moses and the prophets did write, who is the only-begotten son of God, the great Instructor, Redeemer, and Lord of the Church, that was to come into the world.—That it is he who is the light of the world, the good shepherd, the way, the truth, and the life, who preaches good tidings of great joy. Then they shall behold God himself, manifest in the flesh, present among them, conversing with them, teaching the way of salvation, and accomplishing the redemption of his people. By this prediction

* Chap. ix. 16.

prediction intimation was given, that Jehovah was certainly to appear among men, that he might become their Instructor and Saviour, and make known his righteousness and salvation to the house of Israel. —Let us diligently listen to his voice, who, according to this promise, once spake on earth, and who now speaketh to us from heaven, until we know that the Son of God is come, by his giving us an understanding to know him that is true, even his Son Jesus Christ.

7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that faith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Our prophet, having contemplated by the Spirit of revelation, the Son of God clothed with human nature, dwelling among men, transported with the delightful prospect, he exclaims, with rapture and admiration,—*How beautiful upon the mountains, &c.* The mountains may denote those places of eminence from whence the good tidings were delivered, or those kingdoms, provinces, and cities, wherein sacred truths were disseminated by the Messiah. His feet being mentioned, rather than his lips or mouth, may intimate, that in every movement he was comely and graceful; that his affections, conversation and conduct were well ordered, and perfectly corresponded to the doctrines he taught; and that his activity in preaching the gospel was uniform and unwearied, so as to attract the admiration of the beholders.—There was a wonderful propriety and beauty in all the actions he performed, when he went about doing good, and was employed in collecting, instructing, and comforting those who attended him. His presence was to them what the sun is to the natural world, what the rain is to the mown grass; it struck trans-

gressors

gressors with awe, it rejoiced the hearts of his servants, it diffused uncommon solemnity throughout large assemblies, it commanded veneration, and produced the most surprising effects. At his appearance and approach, diseases and death were removed, ignorance and perplexity were dispelled, majesty, meekness and compassion were exhibited in all their lovely forms. With what reverence, then, ought we to adore, with what willingness obey, and with what cheerfulness confide in this glorious person, whose transcendent beauty is here celebrated, and whose incomparable grace is exhibited in a most amiable point of view, in the following particulars :

That bringeth good tidings of good ; or that publisheth the gospel, which is the name given to the doctrine of Jesus Christ, by Mark and Luke, and the other inspired writers who recorded the history of our Lord's incarnation, life, sufferings and death, with his subsequent exaltation, and the sublime truths which he taught. They were therefore called Evangelists, who preached and propagated the most agreeable news that ever reached the ears of mankind, groaning under the bondage of corruption, the yoke of the ceremonial law, oppressed by a sense of sin, and liable to condemnation and wrath. What good tidings doth the gospel contain ? Life is offered to them who are worthy of death, liberty to those who are in captivity, redemption to the enslaved, pardon to the guilty, and salvation to those who are ready to perish. They who are effectually called by grace, are taught to expect the most honourable and glorious immunities, not only in this present state, but in the future world.—The tidings are *of good*, the most substantial and satisfying good ; acceptance with God, access into his presence, the care of divine Providence, the assistance, direction, and comforts of the Holy Spirit, with everlasting life and glory in the world to come. These things are indubitably excellent, and made known by Jesus Christ and his faithful servants to the children

children of men. These ineffimable benefits, exhibited in the gospel, impart to those who humbly receive them the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, a hope that maketh not ashamed, and a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

That publisheth peace, who every where publicly proclaims, with audible voice, this ineffimable benefit, even to the rebellious who are supplicating mercy, reconciliation, and friendship with God, whom they had offended,—harmony and concord with the celestial inhabitants, good will and love among brethren on earth, tranquillity and comfort to the troubled heart, and who points out the way of peace, whereby it is restored and established, by which men may arrive at the full and everlasting enjoyment of this precious blessing.—*That publisheth salvation*, glorious deliverance from sin, from the powers of darkness, from misery, death and destruction, and the attainment of liberty, sanctity and consolation here below; until it shall be consummated in the possession of all that felicity, which renovated human nature is capable of enjoying, in conformity to the image of God, in the presence of his glory. Hence the doctrine of Jesus Christ is emphatically denominated ‘the Gospel of peace and of salvation.’—*That saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth*. His power and providence extendeth over all, he governs and disposes of every creature in the universe. In a peculiar manner he rules over the subjects of his spiritual kingdom, who dwell under his shadow, and yield to him a willing cheerful obedience. He reigns over them, not with a rod of iron, whereby he breaks in pieces the power of his enemies, but with a golden sceptre of love. From his throne of grace he dispenses mercy to pardon their sins, grace to help them in all their services and conflicts, with every blessing suited to relieve their necessities. The Lord is not only their Saviour, but their king. The word of Christ is therefore denominated the Gospel of the kingdom, Mat. 4. 23.

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The words I have been considering are cited by the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, to prove the necessity of the Divine mission of those who preach the gospel. Treating of the vocation of the Gentiles, and the means employed by infinite wisdom for this purpose, he clearly evinces, that salvation is the peculiar happiness of those who call on the name of the Lord—that to attain this inestimable benefit, faith is indispensibly requisite, that hearing the gospel is necessary to faith, that preaching must precede hearing, that in order to preaching there must be a Divine mission, and that success in this work entirely depends on the power and blessing of God. This reasoning he establishes by quoting the verse before us, and by applying it to ministers of Jesus Christ, who are employed and honoured by him in publishing peace and salvation. ‘How beautiful (says he) are the feet of them,’ &c.

8. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

Our prophet proceeds still farther to express his admiration in contemplating the pleasing scene exhibited to his view.—Public teachers of the people of God, who take heed to themselves and to their flocks, who watch for the souls of men as they that must give account to God, who, in the exercise of active vigilance, warn them of approaching evils whereby they may be injured, who awake them from indolence and security, who guard them against danger, and diligently endeavour to promote their safety and happiness, are emphatically denominated Watchmen, of whom it is foretold *They shall lift up the voice*, speaking the word of God with confidence and boldness, shewing the people of God their transgressions, rousing from inactivity, inviting them to partici-

cipate of the choicest blessings, and directing them in the path of life. Deeply impressed with the importance of the trust reposed in them, they were to deliver their instructions in a clear audible manner, with much fervour and earnestness.—*With the voice together shall they sing.* All the ministers of Jesus Christ, being animated by the same spirit of love and joy, and agreeing in sentiment and doctrine, all with harmonious consent saying in effect the same things, they shall cordially unite in celebrating the praises of their common Lord, for his wonderful works to the children of men, for the good tidings they are intrusted to publish, and for the happy effects which, through his presence and blessing, are thereby produced. How pleasant, how comely for the servants of God, who dwell together in unity, to join together in expressing their love, gratitude, and joy, to the Father of Mercies and God of all comfort, for his inestimable benefits!

For they shall see eye to eye. The expression plainly intimates the clear and satisfying manifestations of the presence and glory of Jehovah to be enjoyed by his servants, at the period wherein the foundations of the Messiah's kingdom were to be laid and established. As seeing face to face, and conversing mouth to mouth, denote the closest interview and most familiar converse, so seeing eye to eye may signify the intimate, bright discoveries of the grace and glory of God, wherewith his people, and particularly the watchmen of the Church, were to be favoured at the time to which this prediction refers. With their bodily eyes they were to behold the astonishing miracles performed by the Son of God, and the precious gifts conferred on the Church by the Holy Ghost, with the awful judgments inflicted on their enemies. With the enlightned eyes of their minds, they were to contemplate, with pleasure, the spiritual benefits whereby they were adorned and felicitated. They were to see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God, which were then to be revealed, and those

those things that many prophets and kings have desired to see, and have not seen. This clear view of divine objects was especially to be enjoyed—*When the Lord shall bring again Zion* The restoration here spoken of, may comprehend the whole of that arduous work whereby the Church of God is delivered from the evils wherein they were involved, or to which they were exposed, and progressively conducted to a state of complete liberty and happiness by their Lord and Saviour. It may more especially point at the remarkable period wherein the Lord God was to accomplish the salvation of his people, to bring back their captivity, and to reinstate them in the happy condition to which he hath promised they shall be advanced.

9. ¶ Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

The discourse is now addressed to the Church, restored from their former desolate condition, who are called upon to celebrate the praises of Jehovah for the comfort and deliverance they had obtained. By the designation given them, they are reminded of the magnitude and importance of the benefits, on account of which they are invited to rejoice and sing. Those especially are directed to express gratitude and joy, who had not been favoured with the signal advantages possessed by other people in times past, and who, having been in forlorn circumstances, were become partakers of the most substantial blessings. Having formerly considered the import of similar invitations with that now before us, it is unnecessary to enlarge at present. If the reason mentioned in this and the verse immediately following, are properly attended to, the propriety of compliance with the duty here urged, cannot fail to be acknowledged.

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A thankful sense of the mercy of Jehovah, who hath comforted and redeemed his people, ought to tune our hearts and voices to praise, and to manifest itself by joy and triumph in his salvation. If the Levitical singers were employed of old in their work night and day, that in the earthly sanctuary might be exhibited some resemblance to that which is above, where the redeemed sing together, and serve God day and night in his temple, surely we, who have liberally shared in the Divine bounty, ought to magnify and bless the Lord our God, and often to make melody to him with our hearts, if not with our voices, not only in the cheerful hours of the day, but in the silent watches of the night.

For the Lord hath comforted his people, &c. He hath extricated them from the complicated distresses wherein they were involved, he hath rescued them from the hands of their powerful enemies, he hath not only dispelled their doubts and fears, and sorrows, but in the most astonishing manner he hath actually wrought deliverance for them from the calamities under which they groaned. Besides, he hath given them exceeding great and precious promises, containing the most excellent benefits, which, to their inexpressible comfort and joy, shall be conferred on them in due season.—The Lord hath redeemed Jerusalem. The spiritual redemption of the Church may be considered in two different points of view—As virtually obtained by the bitter sufferings and agonizing death of Jesus Christ, who gave his life a ransom for many, and thereby expunged the immense debt owing by transgressors to the offended majesty of God—And as actually accomplished, when, in consequence of his laying down his life for his people, and of his resurrection from the dead, they are vindicated from the power of sin and Satan, introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God, they are progressively sanctified and kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. In this verse, the redemption of the Church seems to be spoken of in the former

former sense; and in the following verse it is mentioned in reference to the latter, and in both the prophetic stile is adopted, which represents that as already done, which shall be effected in the time appointed by infinite wisdom.

10. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Another ground of joy and praise is suggested in these words to the servants of God. The holy arm of Jehovah may here denote the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, the rod of his strength, which he sends forth out of Zion, whereby his grace and power are revealed and exerted, and which proves the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. By this saving strength of his right hand, he demolishes the strong holds of Satan, he rules in the midst of his enemies, and brings the people under him. Hence the apostle of the Gentiles, who says that the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, affirms, that 'to them that are saved it is the power of God*.' With great propriety is the gospel of Jesus Christ denominated the holy arm of Jehovah, inasmuch as his holiness and righteousness are therein revealed, and because it is the mean he employs in bringing men to resemble him in perfect purity.—This holy arm is said to be made bare, in allusion to the practice of those who when they would exert their whole strength, in some arduous work, remove from it whatever might hinder its free and vigorous exertion. In reference, I suppose, to this custom, the holy arm of Jehovah, the gospel of God, is said to be unveiled and clearly manifested, when divested of those rites and ceremonies, whereby for long time it had been encumbered, that its power might be felt and its glory be seen. Both the holiness and power of God are wonderfully conspicuous in the gospel of his Son,
which

* 1 Cor. i. 18.

which contains a holy covenant, that is accompanied with Divine power—‘in the eyes of all the nations.’ All the kingdoms of the earth, according to this prediction, were to be the admiring spectators of the astonishing spread, the divine efficacy and glorious success of the gospel, made known to them in its beautiful simplicity; and to experience its blessed effects when preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Never were more illustrious displays given of omnipotence to the inhabitants of this world, than those which were exhibited by means of the gospel, accompanied with the demonstration of the Spirit. Multitudes have been thereby snatched from the power of Satan, from the delusions of error, and the tyranny of wickedness; and, brought into the obedience of faith and love, they have become fellow citizens with the saints, and members of the household of God.

And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Those who inhabited the regions of the earth situated at the greatest distance from the land of Canaan, which was considered by the posterity of Israel as the midst of the earth, are doubtless the people who are here intended. Though dwelling in countries very remote from the place where the salvation of our God was first published, and lying under many local disadvantages, that might be supposed to prevent their enjoyment of this immense benefit, they were to be admitted to contemplate this glorious object. They shall be favoured with the everlasting gospel, which in Scripture is sometimes called Salvation*, because it brings men to the knowledge of its nature and excellence, it offers the precious blessings it contains to their acceptance, and thus becomes the means, through the Divine agency, of rendering them partakers of the precious benefits which are therein comprehended. In this glass they shall behold the great Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, exhibited to view, who, by way of eminence, is denominated the Salvation of God, because

* Acts xiii. 26.

because he is the author of spiritual deliverance and restoration to happiness: by him it is bestowed, and in him it is enjoyed. With the eyes of enlightned understandings they shall survey with pleasure and admiration, the dignity of his person, the excellence of his righteousness, the perfection of his atonement, the glory of his cross, and his consummate ability to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. To this amiable transforming object they shall stedfastly look, until they are changed into his image, and prepared for the full enjoyment of his presence and glory.—Let us, with grateful hearts, celebrate the praises of the Lord our God, who hath sent his gospel, and made known his salvation to us, who would not have sought after this inestimable blessing. Let us give credit to the gracious message that is brought to our ears, and joyfully embrace the Saviour, who can relieve all our necessities, and who ought to be received with pleasure and gladness superior to that which is occasioned by dividing of spoil or finding a treasure. And let us fervently pray to the God of salvation, that this prediction may soon have a more full accomplishment than hitherto it hath received.

II. ¶ Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean *thing*, go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.

In this and the verse immediately following, our prophet directs his discourse to the ministers and disciples of Jesus Christ, who are required to desist from intercourse with those societies and objects whereby they might be contaminated, that so they might perform some important business. This separation might be enjoined for two reasons, because they were in danger of being defiled by the impurity of those among whom they lived, and of sharing in the Divine judgments, which none that were conversant with
 them

them could expect to escape. On the former account, lepers, under the Mosaic œconomy, were appointed to dwell alone, and all commerce with them was prohibited *. On the latter account, the command was given to the congregation of Israel by Moses, respecting Corah and his company, ‘ Depart from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in their sins †.’ On both considerations, the servants of God might be directed to depart, and to go out from a place which Isaiah had in his mind, that he did not judge proper to name. From the connection of the words under consideration with the preceding verses, we learn that the city Jerusalem was the place here intended, whose inhabitants at the time referred to were become remarkable for infidelity, profligacy, and wickedness, and were destined to suffer the most dreadful calamities. From this once highly favoured city, where the most atrocious crimes had been perpetrated, the ministers and disciples of Jesus Christ are ordered to depart; to separate themselves from her errors, superstitions, hypocrisies, and iniquities, to leave her assemblies for the worship of God, and to abandon intimate connection with her wicked citizens, that they might go forth every where to preach the gospel of peace. So urgent is this requisition, that it is repeated again and again, in different words, inculcating the same thing—*Depart, depart, go ye out, go ye out!*—This admonition perfectly accords with the voice which was heard from heaven respecting Babylon ‡.—‘ Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.’—It exactly agrees with the concluding exhortation delivered by the apostle Peter, in his discourse to the men of Judea: ‘ Save yourselves from this untoward generation §.’

Touch

* Lev. xiii. 46.

† Numb. xvi. 26.

‡ Rev. xviii. 4.

§ Acts ii. 40.

Touch no unclean thing, &c. In allusion to the laws which prohibited, under the former dispensation, the Israelites from meddling with any thing whereby ceremonial pollution might be contracted, the disciples of Jesus Christ are enjoined to abstain from unnecessary intercourse with unholy persons and sinful practices, whereby they might be defiled. You that God hath set apart for himself, whom he hath redeemed from iniquity by the blood of his Son, whom he hath called by his grace to be holy, as he is holy, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, avoid intimate intercourse with impudent presumptuous transgressors, who have been concerned in putting to death the Lord of Glory, and the martyrs who have died for his sake, to support his truths and ways. Cultivate no familiarity with those who are inwardly full of all uncleanness, extortion and excess, of hypocrisy and iniquity, who may be justly called a generation of vipers *, but go forth to execute the important work of disseminating the knowledge of salvation throughout all the earth.

Be ye clean that bear the vessels, (or, as the Hebrew word signifies) *the armour of the Lord.* In the former sense of the word, adopted by our translators, the direction may allude to the separation of the Levites from among the children of Israel, and their purification for the peculiar work assigned them, of bearing the ark of God and its furniture, and taking care of the vessels and utensils belonging to the tabernacle of the congregation, of which a particular account is recorded in the 8th chapter of Numbers. Its import will then be shortly this: Ye who are consecrated to the service of God, in the gospel of his Son, who are chosen vessels to bear his name before the Gentiles and the children of Israel, take heed that ye be clean from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, that your hearts be purified from the contaminating influence of corrupt passions, that ye abstain from the vanities and impurities of the world, that ye be free from

* Mat. xxiii. 27, 28.

improper attachment to the law of Moses, and keep at a distance from the odious conversation of the wicked. Remember what a treasure of wisdom and grace, of light, and life, and glory; what infinite plenitude of unsearchable riches are deposited in your hands, that ye may seasonably communicate them to the world!—According to the latter interpretation, which accords also with the connection and design of this passage, those who wear the armour of the Lord, the different parts of which are enumerated by the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians *, are called to go out as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, to follow their leader, to contend with the powers of darkness, and the world lying in wickedness, that they may enlarge the boundaries of his kingdom. That their labours be successful, they must take heed that they be cleansed from all unrighteousness, and keep themselves pure and unspotted from the world. —Fully convinced of the truth of the proverb, which saith, Evil communications corrupt good manners, permit me to address the exhortation to you, brethren, which was given by the apostle of the Gentiles to the saints at Corinth †. ‘Come out from among them who are infidels and children of Belial, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.’

12. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you: and the God of Israel *will be* your reeward.

To guard those to whom the preceding direction is given, against rashness and precipitation in going forth to the arduous enterprise to which they were called, of carrying the divine lamp of the gospel to the

* Chap. vi. 13. *et seq.* † 2 Epistle, Chap. vi. 17, 18.

the nations of the world, they are informed—Ye shall not go out with haste, in a precipitate tumultuous manner, but after mature deliberation, and being well furnished and instructed in every thing requisite to the successful execution of the important work in which you are to be employed.—*Nor shall ye go out by flight*, as the wicked, who flee and no man pursueth; or like those who, through fear and trepidation, hasten away, lest the evil that they dread should suddenly fall upon them, and prove their destruction. Nor were they to get away by stealth from the city of Jerusalem, as people who are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. Neither were they to leave that city in perturbation and confusion, as did those who escaped out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of Jehovah.—The disciples of the Lord Jesus were to go forth to their great work of preaching the gospel with undaunted intrepidity, and heroic magnanimity, unalarmed with danger, unaided by worldly power, that, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, they might proclaim liberty to the captive, the opening of the prison to them that were bound, and announce the acceptable year of the Lord.—The reason of this judicious procedure is subjoined in the following words :

For the Lord will go before you, &c. as he went before the children of Israel, after he brought them out of the land of Egypt, in their journies through the wilderness. ‘The Lord went before them, by day ‘ in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way, and by ‘ night in a pillar of fire, to give them light to go by ‘ day and night,’ as it is written *. Thus did he precede Israel in the desert; and in like manner, though not by the same means, was he to direct the apostles and first ministers of the gospel in their travels, and in the discharge of their office. By the peculiar care of his providence, God was to preserve and defend them, who having separated themselves from spiritual pollution, were employed in promulgating the truth

as

* Exod. xiii. 21.

as it is in Jesus, and who, 'with the spiritual weapons
 ' of their warfare, which, through God, are mighty to
 ' the pulling down of strong holds, were casting down
 ' imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it-
 ' self against the knowledge of God, and bringing
 ' every thought to the obedience of Christ *.'—*And
 the God of Israel shall be your reward* He will rea-
 sonably interpose between you and your unseen ene-
 mies, and afford you protection from those who pur-
 sue you with the hostile intention of harrassing you,
 and preventing your retreat from danger.—What
 striking instances of this gracious conduct, and re-
 markable preservation, are recorded in the history
 of the Acts of the Apostles, where we read that the
 servants of Jesus Christ were forbid to preach the gos-
 pel in some places that they were prevented from
 going to others they intended to visit, and that they
 were encouraged to go where they had no intention
 of bending their course. We are informed also of
 their wonderful preservation amidst the varieties of
 condition through which they passed and the immi-
 nent dangers to which they were exposed. Thus did
 the Lord God go before them to conduct and defend
 them, until his kingdom, which had a small be-
 ginning, was gradually enlarged; until, in the beau-
 tiful language of prophecy, 'the stone cut out with-
 ' out hands became a great mountain, and filled the
 ' whole earth, until the tender vine, brought out of
 ' Egypt, covered the hills with her shadow,—her
 ' boughs reached unto the sea, and her branches unto
 ' the river; until the small plant became as the cedars
 ' of God.' Mountains were made plain before them,
 valleys were filled up, until they reached the great
 object of their destination.

13. ¶ Beho'd, my servant shall deal prudent-
 ly, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be
 very high.

Having

* 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

Having foretold the redemption of the peculiar people of God, the establishment of his kingdom, with the manner of its manifestation, and the happy success which was to attend the services of its ministers, whom he had encouraged and directed,—our prophet, in the name of Jehovah, calls attention to the foundation on which these important matters depended, namely, the perfect obedience of the Messiah in his humiliation with his subsequent glorious exaltation. He first requires us diligently to contemplate this illustrious person, acting with the most consummate prudence in the great work assigned to him.—All are God's servants, angels that excel in strength, the celestial luminaries, with every creature in heaven and earth. Of the human race some sustain this character in consequence of their visible profession, and others, whose business is to wait the intimations of God's pleasure, and to execute his commands in virtue of their peculiar relation. Of this last sort were Moses, David, Paul, and many others. None of these, but some particular eminent servant of God, is here intended, to whom this designation especially belongs, namely, the great promised Messiah, who, in chap. xlix. 3. and other places of this prophecy, is mentioned under this character.—Of him it is foretold, he shall deal prudently or prosperously, as the Hebrew word is translated in the margin of some bibles, prudence in action being the way to prosperity and success in enterprize. It consists in reducing to practice the dictates of sound understanding, the principles of true wisdom, and in so skilfully managing matters to the best advantage, as to attain the ends in view. The expression imports, that God's Servant, who is elsewhere denominated the 'Wisdom of Jehovah, that dwells with prudence,' was to conduct the whole work given him to do with exquisite skill, propriety, and judgment, so as to confound his adversaries, and to advance his own glory and the interests of his kingdom. Admirable instances of the truth of this prediction are recorded by his apostles.

apostles. What consummate wisdom did he display in his instructions, in his miracles, and in every action of his life! Recollect his behaviour toward the Pharisees, who took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk* ; to the Sadducees, who tried to embarrass him respecting the state of a woman they supposed to have had seven husbands† ; and to the chief priests and scribes, relating to the payment of tribute to Cæsar‡.—In consequence whereof it is foretold,

He shall be exalted, &c. These words foretel the glorious elevation of Jesus Christ, after he had by himself purged our sins, when God exalted him as a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, and he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. In the important characters of the Prince of Life, and the Saviour of the Church, he is raised to the most distinguished honour and glory, authority and power; he is gone far above all heavens, and hath taken possession of the throne destined for him as the reward of his humiliation and obedience unto death. The well known fulfilment of this prediction, forms an important article of the gospel, which the apostles went forth preaching every where, and which we, my friends, profess to believe.—What gratitude and praise, and subjection are due to this enthroned Redeemer, who is passed into the heavens! Though he hath ascended on high, he is still accessible to his people's supplications and thanksgivings; though he is gone up out of their sight, they are constantly under his inspection; though he is entered into glory, he is touched with the feeling of their infirmities; though they may not be suitably impressed with his glory, he is deeply interested in their conditions. Sing praises to our King, sing praises! Did he sustain when on earth labours and sufferings for us, and is he gone into the presence of God to manage our concerns, and can we do too much, bear too much, or part with too much, to testify our attachment to his honour and interest!

And

* Mat. xxii. 15.

† Mat. xxii. 23.

‡ Luke xxiii. 22.

And extolled, and be very high. His praises are continually celebrated, not only on earth but in heaven. All the nations of the world shall magnify him who lives for ever, to consummate the salvation of his Church; all kindreds of the earth shall do him homage, on account of what he hath done for the redemption of transgressors. In every age, and in every kingdom, he shall be extolled for his personal excellencies, his adorable grace, and unbounded beneficence.—The celestial regions, occupied by the redeemed from among men, incessantly resound with songs of joy and praise to him who is the eternal object of their delightful admiration. Hear the angels around the throne, and every creature that is in heaven, saying, ‘Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!’ And after the final judgment, the innumerable multitude of the ransomed of the Lord, convened in one great assembly, shall for ever adore and praise their compassionate Saviour with exultation and triumph.—*Who shall be very high.* Having laid aside the veil of his humiliation, he shall eternally shine forth with unspeakable splendour and glory. Elevated to the highest pinnacle of dignity and grandeur, advanced to the possession of fulness of joy in the presence of Jehovah, and invested with universal dominion, he shall receive the homage of all the celestial hosts. Compared with the Prince of the kings of the earth in his glory, how mean doth the potentates of this world appear! Their dominions are circumscribed within narrow limits, and their reign is soon terminated, whereas his empire hath no bounds, neither shall it have any end. It extends to all places, to all creatures, and to all times, I should have said to immortal ages.—Those who treat his gospel with contempt, who look on his people as the off-scouring of all things, who consider his yoke as insupportable, attendance on his institutions as an irksome task, and who avowedly oppose his honour and interest, should

should be struck with horror at the review of their criminal conduct, and in the prospect of the direful consequences that shall result from their infatuation and daring presumption. The faithful subjects of his kingdom, for whose benefit the Lord Jesus is highly exalted, ought to rejoice and be exceeding glad in the prospect of their elevation to glory and honour with their beloved Master, who will infinitely more than compensate them for all that they ever did or suffered on his account.

14. As many were astonished at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.)

To exhibit the eminent exaltation of the great Messiah with the more advantage, Isaiah brings into view a remarkable circumstance, relative to his humiliation, which is contrasted with his elevation to the glory he now possesses.—Many who beheld him during his residence on earth were on various accounts surprised and astonished. Some were surprised at the consummate wisdom he discovered in his conduct and discourses, others were astonished at the irresistible power he exercised over all persons and elements. Some wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, others were amazed at the mighty works he performed, and the authority wherewith he delivered his instructions. Some were surprised at his pretensions to the high character of the Son of God, others were astonished at his humble appearance, the meanness of his kindred and connections, the ignominy of his death, the triumphs of his resurrection, the glory of his ascension, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the extensive success that attended the ministry of the gospel. Through the foolish prejudices they entertained, they could not reconcile things so apparently opposite to one another; hence proceeded perplexity and astonishment.

ment. Not a few people of this description seem to have been present among the men of Israel at Antioch, to whom the apostle Paul, in the conclusion of his discourse, gave this admonition: 'Beware lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish *!'

His visage was marred more than any man This circumstance, which was remarkably verified in Jesus Christ, especially toward the conclusion of his life on earth, suggests one reason why many were astonished at him. Never was a man so barbarously treated as the blessed Redeemer. Though fairer than the sons of men, and altogether lovely; though he was holy, harmless, and undefiled; though he had no sin, neither guile in his mouth; though he was full of compassion, and manifested incomparable benevolence in a thousand instances, he received the most cruel and outrageous indignities. He was exposed to the reproaches and insults of his inveterate enemies; he was beaten, he was scourged, he was crowned with thorns, he was struck on the head, he was blindfolded, he was spit upon, he was dressed as an object of derision, after being stripped of his own garments, covered with blood. Enfeebled by pain and anguish, he was harrassed by the powers of darkness, and forsaken by his God, so that his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Having been most unjustly condemned, by an iniquitous sentence, to an ignominious and painful death, he was led forth to the place of execution, where he was crucified between two malefactors. If David, the king of Israel, through his manifold troubles and sorrows, speaks of himself as a wonder to many; if Job was so disfigured by reason of grief, that he became like a shadow,—how much more must the comely countenance of David's Lord and Job's Redeemer have been hurt and marred!—Behold the man. No wonder that

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* Acts xiii. 40. 41.

his beautiful visage was more disfigured than any man's—no wonder that his form and shape were more spoiled than any of the sons of men! Behold, ye impenitent transgressors, the compassionate Saviour, tortured by the most excruciating sufferings, which he sustained with invincible patience, that he might expiate your iniquities, and see, as in a faithful mirror, with what terrible miseries your sins shall be accompanied, if you do not forsake them, and believe in the great Redeemer. Contemplate, ye believing, penitent people, the wounds, the sufferings of every kind, and the ghastly appearance of the Lord Jesus, when he bare your sins on his own body, and made atonement for your trespasses! The painful agonies to which he submitted, that so marred his visage, ought to excite not merely some transient emotions in our minds, that will vanish at the first assault of temptation, but they should make an indelible impression on our hearts, and produce permanent effects on our lives.

15. So shall he sprinkle many nations, the kings shall shut their mouths at him: *for that* which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard, shall they consider.

Some of the joyful consequences with which the exaltation of Jesus Christ was to be accompanied, are here graphically described. As many were to be astonished at the poor afflicted state of the Messiah, whilst he continued on earth, so very many were to experience the happy effects of his elevation to the right hand of God.—*So shall he sprinkle many nations.* In this expression, there seems to be an obvious allusion to the typical sprinklings appointed under the Old Testament, and particularly to those performed by the High Priest, who was commanded

to sprinkle the blood of the victim, offered in sacrifice for himself and the people, seven times before the Lord, of which we read Lev. iv. 6. *et seq.* or to the purification of a leper, mentioned chap. xvi. 7. *et seq.* In reference to these institutions, our prophet foretels that Jesus Christ, the great High Priest of our profession, was to sprinkle many nations with his Divine doctrine, which was to drop upon them as the rain, and his speech to distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and showers upon the grass.—That he shall sprinkle them with water in the sacred ordinance of baptism, administered by his servants, in obedience to his appointment, wherein they were to renounce whatever is opposite to his honour and interest, and to be solemnly admitted to the external privileges of his Church.—That he shall sprinkle many of them with his precious blood, therefore emphatically denominated the Blood of Sprinkling *, which being effectually applied by the Holy Ghost, cleanseth from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. The prediction imports, that Jesus Christ was to communicate the immense benefits resulting from his passion, to people of all nations, and that his blood was to be effectually applied to them for all the purposes for which it was shed. It was remarkably fulfilled by the commission which the Lord Jesus gave to his apostles, to disciple, to Christianize all nations, by teaching and baptizing them. Perhaps it may also refer to the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit conferred on his disciples on the day of Pentecost, when, as he had told them, they were baptized with the Holy Ghost.—Let us be solicitous to share in this promised blessing, and earnestly entreat of Jesus Christ so to sprinkle our hearts, as that all the faculties of our souls may be thoroughly sanctified, that we may not only retain, but adorn our holy profession.

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* Heb. 12. 24.

The kings shall shut their mouths at him. The edicts of princes are the mouths whereby they speak to their subjects, and make known their royal will and pleasure. The proclamations issued by the monarchs, intended in the words before us, and the laws which they had enacted hostile to the servants of Jesus Christ, were to be revoked and annulled, being determined no longer to employ their authority in opposition to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. Having been in some measure acquainted with the truths of the gospel, the happy effects produced by the enlargement of the Messiah's kingdom, and the powerful operations of his grace; and having seen awful instances of terrible judgments inflicted on those who persecuted his servants, they were to revoke the cruel statutes they had published, wherein they had blasphemed God and his tabernacle. Struck with admiration of the glory and majesty of the Saviour, they were to be constrained, with humble reverence, to yield him profound adoration and submission. The reason of this change of conduct is subjoined in the following words:—*For that which had not been told them, shall they see, &c.* The apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, writing of the success that attended the ministry of the gospel in those places where Jesus Christ had never been before preached, cites this prediction*: 'But as it is written, to whom he was not spoken of they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand.' The prophecies relative to the Messiah were delivered to the posterity of Israel, and not to the Gentiles, who were strangers to the covenants of promise. After the gospel was published to those who had been suffered to walk in their own ways, princes and great men, who hitherto had been ignorant of the person and salvation of Jesus Christ, were to behold these glorious objects with the eyes of their enlightened understandings. In the exercise of believing contemplation, they were

to

* Chap. xv. 21.

to consider the important truths respecting the Son of God, his gracious design of coming into the world, and to view him evidently set forth as crucified in the ordinances of the gospel. These interesting discoveries they were attentively to revolve in their minds, as matters of the greatest moment, wherein they were deeply concerned. Perceiving their real excellence, and the wonderful effects which, through the Divine blessing, they produce, they were to ponder with admiration and pleasure on those things, of which in times past they had not heard—Alas, brethren, some there are who see and know what they do not consider! Do you seriously meditate on the sacred truths recorded in the Scriptures, until you discover their infinite importance and suitability to your circumstances. Attend to the instructions, the warnings, and encouragements they convey, to the precepts, the threatenings and promises they contain, and especially think of the Saviour, and the salvation they reveal. Fix your minds on the great things that God hath done for you, and endeavour to have them deeply impressed on your hearts. Diligently use the means of improvement in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ, earnestly requesting that the presence, power, and blessing of God, may render them effectual for bringing you to an experimental acquaintance with the life and power of godliness. Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE Lord God having mentioned by our Prophet, in the preceding part of this discourse, the humble afflicted state of the great Redeemer of mankind, he takes occasion more fully to foretel the direful sufferings which he was to endure for the redemption of transgressors. By minutely predicting the circumstances relative to this astonishing event, contrary to human expectation, and removed at the distance of ages from the time wherein this prophecy was delivered, he hath left on record an illustrious proof of his perfect knowledge of futurity, he hath explained the reasons of this divine œconomy of Providence, and he hath laid a sure foundation whereon faith in Jesus Christ is established. By comparing the predictions now before us with the facts recorded in the gospels, the mouth of infidelity is stopt, and every pretext is taken away to which obstinate incredulity might have recourse. If various distant future events, inscrutable to human sagacity, respecting one person whom we call the Messiah have been foretold, and these events have exactly come to pass in the history of an individual, and in no other, must not these predictions have been inspired by the Holy Spirit, and he to whom they are applicable have his claim to be the Messiah confirmed by the supreme authority of Jehovah?

With this view, among others, we enter on the consideration of the second section of the third discourse contained in the fifth book of these prophecies, which exhibit a moving description of the humiliation, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ, with their causes and consequences. The subject is introduced by an inquiry concerning the small success of the gospel among the Jews and the incredulity of the Gentiles, ver. 1.—The reason of this mournful event is assigned, viz. the very humble state in which the
 Messiah,

Messiah appeared, and the most ignominious death that he sustained, in obedience to the will of God, which rendered him odious and contemptible in the view of proud, inconsiderate mortals, ver. 2. and 3.—The true cause of his profound abasement is then explained. It did not arise from any fault that he had committed, but was occasioned by the sins of those for whose redemption he submitted to the death of the cross, ver. 4—7.—The joyful consequences which were to result from his complicated sufferings are next delineated, from whence it is apparent that he is beloved and precious in the sight of God, and that in the most afflicted condition, he was the object of the peculiar care of his providence, ver. 8—10.—After which Jehovah is represented confirming the doctrine of the gospel, and instructing the Church as to the extensive glorious effects that were to proceed from the obedience performed by his righteous Servant, ver. 11. and 12.

C H A P. LIII.

WHO hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

This exclamation, or inquiry, made by Isaiah in the name of his fellow servants, and of the apostles and ministers of the word, expresses surprize and sorrow at the infidelity of those who rejected their testimony, and the little fruit that accompanied their labours!—The Hebrew word translated report, signifies a rumour that is spread abroad, a word that is heard, a doctrine that is proposed and inculcated by public teachers. Here it denotes the message that Jehovah hath sent by his servants to his people, from whom he demands

demands the obedience of faith. It contains the important truths which God hath been pleased to reveal for their instruction, the holy precepts he hath given as the rule of their conduct, the joyful tidings he hath published concerning salvation, the precious promises he hath delivered as ground of encouragement, and the awful threatenings denounced against transgression. Isaiah, speaking not in his own name only, but in that of the other servants of God, calls it their report; because they are intrusted with the business of propagating it throughout the world. Though the truth is always substantially the same, it hath been revealed with different degrees of perspicuity, as the Church was able to bear. In early ages, it appeared as a light shining in a dark place, that had burst out from obscurity, afterward it shone forth with increasing brightness unto the perfect day. There cannot remain a doubt that this report, this testimony, this record of God concerning his Son, ought to be accounted worthy of all acceptation, and should be believed with the heart unto salvation. It is attended with the most satisfying evidences, and where it is received with faith and love, it never fails to produce the most salutary effects.—Who then hath believed the words of the prophecies of this book, and who continues in the things that are written therein, knowing of whom they have learned them? They who, deeply affected with the interesting discoveries therein contained, give them undoubted credit, placing their entire dependence on the power, grace, and faithfulness of Jehovah, for the accomplishment of his good word, say, with the apostle Paul, ‘We know whom we have believed;’ and with the apostle Peter, ‘We have not followed ‘cunningly devised fables.’

To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? The arm of Jehovah, as I lately remarked, when discoursing from chap. lii. 10. may signify his mighty power exerted by the ministry of the gospel for the conversion and salvation of mankind. This power

is revealed and gloriously displayed in the blessed effects produced by his Divine agency, on the hearts of those he reconciles to himself, and brings into subjection to his government;—by removing their prejudices against the truth, and by enlightning their minds to understand it. It is manifested when they are declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, as the apostle Paul speaks, ‘Written not with pen and ink, but by the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart*.’ The expressions are beautiful and forcible. The heart is the table whereon Jesus Christ writes, by the ministry of his servants, his laws, which are the epistle he sends unto the world, intimating his royal will and pleasure. That this table may serve this good purpose, he removes its natural hardness and obduracy, renders it soft, and susceptible of Divine impressions. The characters which he there inscribes are not formed with pen and ink, which might be easily blotted out or erased, but by the power and Spirit of Almighty God, so that the impression becomes indelible, and perfectly legible to him that understands. Those to whom the arm of the Lord is thus revealed are made acquainted with the grace of God in truth; they delight in his word, and obey his will; they bring forth fruit unto God, and being doers of his work, are blessed in their deed.—What admirable, glorious effects, result from the revelation of the arm of the Lord, not only in things that are seen and temporal, but especially in the hearts and dispositions of men! What excellence, what beauty, are conspicuous in all the works of God’s hands! but all that comeliness and glory shall decay, and wax old like a garment, whereas the beauties of holiness, communicated by his renovating power, when he forms his own lovely resemblance on the human soul, shall never perish, but shall flourish through immortal ages.

Who hath believed our report, &c. This enquiry,
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* 2 Cor. iii. 3.

which is twice cited in the New Testament *, intimates, that there were comparatively few who credited the tidings published respecting the humiliation and subsequent exaltation of the great Messiah. This complaint was not peculiar to the time wherein Isaiah and his fellow-servants were employed in delivering the messages from God, wherewith they were intrusted. Whilst the Son of God, the great prophet of Jehovah, who spake as never man spake, was teaching the way of God in truth, and making known his salvation, notwithstanding the astonishing miracles he performed, there were not many who received his testimony, to whom his doctrine proved the power of God unto salvation. In reviewing the effects of his ministry among Jews and Gentiles, the apostle Paul introduces the words we have been considering as thereby verified. Indeed, in every age, and particularly in the period wherein we live, the ministers of God have had just reason to take up this mournful lamentation. Some reject the report of the gospel, on account of the sublime doctrines it contains, which transcend their comprehension. Others refuse to give it credit, because of the plainness and simplicity with which it is proposed, because it is adapted to the capacities of the meanest, and therefore they deem it unworthy of their notice. Some are offended at the strictness of its precepts, others are displeased at the freedoms used by its ministers, the information which it contains, and the plan of salvation which it exhibits, that is designed to humble the great, the learned, and the proud. From persons of these descriptions it often meets with the strongest opposition; and as few of them who have believed the report are among the rich and great of this world, many in low circumstances have been deterred, by their means, through ignorance, bigotry, and pride, from embracing the gospel, and have persisted in treating it with scorn and derision. The chief cause is mentioned in the latter

* John xii. 38. and Rom. x. 16.

latter part of this verse: *the arm of the Lord hath not been revealed*, the powerful influence of his grace hath not been experienced.—With fervour and importunity let us adopt the earnest prayer of the Church, ‘Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord, put on strength,’ &c. The longer that God defers to grant our requests, the more importunate ought to be our supplications for his gracious interposition in our favour, and in behalf of his Church; then may we hope that we shall not ask in vain.

2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see him, *there is no beauty that we should desire him.*

The humble extraction and mean appearance of the Messiah, are mentioned as principal causes of the mournful event complained of in the preceding verse. Men whose minds were warped with prejudices, and not enlightened by the spirit of wisdom to see the necessity of a suffering Redeemer, would not cordially receive him, and place their trust in him for salvation.—Some illustrious person of distinguished eminence is here characterized by several remarkable circumstances, which are attributed to him. The first question that naturally occurs on reading the words before us is, respecting the subject of this prophecy. We enquire, with the man of Ethiopia, when sitting in his chariot reading this chapter, ‘Of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man?’ It is evident that Isaiah spake not of himself, for what is here written is not applicable to him. Who then is the other person of whom he foretold—*He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, &c.* The predictions recorded in this passage of scripture accurately describe the Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who was born of
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the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, who was crucified, dead, and buried, who on the third day rose from the dead, and who in the preceding context is spoken of as the servant of Jehovah. This wonderful person is here abruptly introduced to notice as the subject of the following prophecies, which exactly delineate, in strong colours, his character, his sufferings, and their joyful consequences.

He shall grow up, &c. According to this prediction, Jesus Christ was to arise from a respectable family of the posterity of Abraham, which, at the time of his birth, was to be in a low depressed condition, conspicuous neither for rank or dignity. He was to advance from infancy and childhood to maturity and manhood, increasing in bodily stature, whilst all the faculties of his soul were to expand and improve. In this manner he was to grow up 'before Jehovah,' (who is mentioned in the preceding verse) under his immediate inspection, who always beheld him with a pleasant countenance; through the special care and protection of his providence, whose presence was to attend him in every stage of life.—His growth is compared to that of a tender plant, or young shoot, remarkable for its rapid progress, which requires to be treated with much attention, and is the object of his especial care who planted it, and who provides for its safety. The Lord Jesus Christ grew up before God, who never left him alone, but was always with him, and preserved him from being killed by the cruel design of Herod, from being hurt by the assaults of the devil, the reproaches and hostile intentions of his enemies.—*And as a root out of dry ground*, where, having little moisture, it puts forth only an inconsiderable stem, from which little expectations are entertained, either of blossoms or fruit. As by the former similitude our prophet exhibited the tender care of Jehovah toward his righteous Servant, so by the one now before us, he sets forth the mean state of the family from which the Messiah was to arise, and their incapacity to afford suitable nourishment.

nourishment and support to the root and offspring of David. Though his exterior condition was mean and unpromising, though he possessed not wealth, or riches, or grandeur, and seemed for a while not endowed with abilities superior to other men, yet, as foretold, he grew up unheeded by those around him, untutored by their care, uninstructed by their teachers, and unprovided by their bounty.

He hath no form or comeliness, &c. The figure or shape of the Messiah's person, wherein there was no blemish, does not seem, from what is here said, to have been remarkable for beauty or elegance. He is indeed justly celebrated by an inspired prophet*, for being fairer than the children of men, the most eminent of whom he far transcended in the excellence of his person, the sublimity of his doctrine, and the importance of his office. There was little however in his external appearance that commanded admiration, respect, or reverence. Those, therefore, who saw him, did not imagine that his aspect was expressive of the dignity and majesty of the high character he assumed; they did not behold that haughty countenance, that supercilious demeanor, which are often conspicuous in those who occupy high stations, nor did they discover in him any of those qualities which are visible in the assertors of public liberty, or the triumphant conquerors of mankind. In the Messiah were combined, with a graceful person, an engaging aspect and condescending behaviour, amiable meekness, humility, gentleness, and compassion; with an aversion to every species of worldly honour and vain glory. Not only was his whole temper and conduct diametrically opposite to the air and mein of those who are admired by the men of this world, but there were collateral circumstances which tended to diminish the public opinion of his character. Descended of obscure parents (his supposed father being a carpenter), born in a mean village, his kindred were among the common people, he was reputed a Galilean, and contemned

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* Plal. xlv. 2.

as a Nazarene, having often familiar intercourse with publicans and sinners, his disciples illiterate fishermen, and himself destitute of worldly splendour and wealth, he had nothing to gratify the expectation of those who looked for the Messiah to appear as a mighty conqueror. Unsupported by any testimonies from the priests and chief men among his countrymen the Jews, his doctrine and actions were condemned by the scribes and Pharisees, whilst many of his hearers complained that they did not understand his parabolical discourses. Though his wisdom holiness, eloquence, and the stupendous miracles he performed, ought to have conciliated regard and esteem, yet were they severely censured, and imputed to connection with the Prince of the devils. On these accounts, and in this manner, his form and beauty were obscured and unperceived by many.

And when we shall see him, &c. In this expression our prophet includes himself with those of whom he speaks, that he might soften the asperity of this remark, which plainly intimates that the subjects of the prediction were insensible to real worth and excellence; that, blinded by ignorance and prejudices, they did not discern any comeliness in the Saviour that excited their desires—and that, had he been like-minded with them, and had the same view of him with them, he would have manifested similar indifference toward him. The event verified this prophecy; for though, to those whose understandings were enlightened, Jesus Christ appeared altogether lovely, and possessing a glory becoming the only begotten Son of God when he dwelt upon earth, yet the bulk of the people, among whom he was conversant, would not acknowledge that he was the Messiah promised to the fathers. They saw nothing great or desirable in him, and therefore they treated him with contempt and detestation.—In what light doth the compassionate Redeemer appear to you, my hearers? Sensible of his incomparable excellence and captivating beauty, do you highly esteem him, do you cordially

dially embrace him, do you firmly trust in him, and cheerfully obey him? Or, ignorant of his transcendent worth and adorable grace, do you see nothing in him to gain your affection, and so make light of his example, his sacrifice, his word, and his ordinances? It is certainly your duty and interest seriously to consider what estimate you have formed of him, concerning whom it is said,

3. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Isaiah having ascribed the rejection of Jesus Christ to the spiritual blindness and foolish prejudices of men, he attributes the contempt with which he is treated to another cause, namely, the afflicted, sorrowful condition to which he submitted for the salvation of his people. The very circumstances which should have endeared him to mankind are converted into occasions of neglect and abhorrence. How astonishing the grace of Jesus Christ; how deplorable the perversity, the ingratitude, and wickedness of men!

He is despised and rejected of men These words describe the treatment given to the Messiah during his residence on earth. He is the stone that was refused and set at nought by the chief priests and Pharisees, the then builders of the Church. When he came unto his own, they received him not; and, as Isaiah declares again in the latter part of this verse, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Even in infancy, Herod the King, dreading the loss of his kingdom, was so inflamed with rage at the innocent child, that he issued an order requiring that all the male children under two years old should be slain. After his public ministry commenced, the learned, the

the rich, and the great, combined against him, and rejected his mission and doctrine; the scribes and the Pharisees rejected him as a deceiver and impostor; and the whole body of the people, following their example, detested and rejected him in the most contemptuous manner. Such was the abhorrence in which he was held by the people in general, that a conspiracy was formed against his life, his person was insulted, his miracles were traduced as done in confederacy with Satan, his doctrine was rejected as unintelligible, and his conduct was represented as inimical to civil government; yea, he was charged with blasphemy against God. Notwithstanding, there were many who wondered at the gracious words which proceeded from his mouth; yet such was the prevailing opinion of the multitude at Nazareth, that they thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill, that they might cast him down headlong*. At Jerusalem they took up stones to cast at him †, and the scribes and Pharisees sought to lay hands on him. A seditious man, who was a robber, was preferred before him; the popular cry was, Crucify him, crucify him; he was condemned to suffer the painful, ignominious death of the cross; and, to give the strongest proof of contempt, he was crucified between two malefactors.— In this manner was the Messiah despised and rejected of men in the days of his humiliation, to which no doubt this prediction immediately refers. Notwithstanding he is now far exalted in person above those injurious insults which he sustained while on earth, our prophet's words are still verified. Some degrade his person, others despise his ordinances, some reject his mediation, others contemn his authority. What a daring affront do such people offer to him whom all men are commanded to honour, even as they honour the Father! What vile ingratitude do they discover toward him, who is infinitely

* Luke iv. 29. † John viii. 59.

infinitely worthy of their highest esteem and thankful praises.

A man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs. Whosoever peruses with attention the life and sufferings of Jesus Christ, must be fully satisfied of the truth of this description: sorrows compassed him round about, and flowed in upon him from every quarter. How acute, how manifold, the bitter sufferings he endured, which could not fail to produce the most pungent sorrow in his exquisitely tender spirit. Destitute of a habitation in which to reside, he was exposed to the cruel persecution of his virulent enemies, to those distresses that arise from poverty and want, to the temptations of Satan, to the contradiction and reproach of sinners. Subject to infirmities, he had to encounter the most powerful opposition, to sustain the most outrageous insults, and to bear the most distressing anguish of soul, under which he exclaimed, ‘ Now is my soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death*.’—The subject is illustrated and confirmed by the following expression: *And acquainted with griefs*, that were as the intimate companions which attended him wherever he went. He was grieved with the sins and afflictions of mankind, with his own painful distresses, and the awful prospect of the approaching agonies wherewith his death was to be accompanied. To these he often looked forward, and of them he frequently took occasion to speak. When he appeared in his glory on the mount of Transfiguration, he talked with Moses and Elias of the decease he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. At his triumphant entrance into that city, when the multitude of his disciples rejoiced, and praised God for all the mighty works which they had seen, he beheld the city—he wept over it at the prospect of the favourable opportunities they had lost, and the direful calamities they were to suffer. Nor did griefs forsake him in the sacred hours of retirement; for when in solitude, in the garden of

Gethsemane, he was in an agony and exceeding sorrowful.—Let us frequently contemplate this man of sorrows, who was acquainted with griefs, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God; and consider him who endured such afflictive sorrows, lest at any time we be weary and faint in our minds. With admiring gratitude, let us celebrate his wonderful grace, who condescended to bear our griefs, and to carry our sorrows, and earnestly supplicate from him strength and support under all our troubles.

And we hid as it were our faces from him. The Hebrew words may be rendered, as on the margin of some bibles, He hid as it were his face from us. The sorrows he endured in his profound humiliation proved as a veil, which, in great measure, concealed from human view his Divine excellence and perfect beauty, and therefore he was despised by inconsiderate mortals on that very account, for which he ought to have been highly esteemed. The more common translation seems to be most agreeable to the connection of the words, and the design of our prophet, in representing the bad treatment to which the Messiah was pleased to submit.—This prediction was remarkably fulfilled after he was condemned by the Jewish sanhedrim, and delivered by Pilate, the Roman governor, to be crucified. Then especially he was considered as a guilty criminal, unworthy of the smallest favour or regard, and deserving the severest punishment. Many of his disciples had before that time been offended at him, and gone away, and walked no more with him, but now, a very few excepted, they all deserted him, as if ashamed of having any connection with him. Even those who had left all and followed him, who had heard his discourses, and seen his miracles, forsook him and fled, and hid their faces from him. This prediction looked farther than to the time of our Redeemer's residence on earth, and is verified to this day by those of his professed

fessed followers, who, baptized unto his death, and called by his name, decline publicly to avow him for their master, and to acknowledge their dependence upon him for all that they enjoy and hope to receive. Do you remember the awful declaration of Jesus Christ: ‘Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, or of my words, in this sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels*’.—The true reason of such odious conduct is assigned in the words that immediately follow. *He was despised, and we esteemed not.* Do not they despise him who continue ignorant of his character and salvation, amid the many opportunities they enjoy of becoming acquainted with his glory and grace? Do they esteem the Saviour, who refuse to believe and obey his gospel, notwithstanding the striking evidences set before them of his Divine mission and consummate abilities? Do they esteem him who make light of his amiable condescension, and prefer to him the riches, the honours, and pleasures of this world? No wonder that such people hide their faces from Jesus Christ.

4. ¶ Surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

In this and in the 5th verse, Isaiah explains the true cause of the direful afflictions, and intense sorrows sustained by the Messiah, which he sets forth in several expressions of similar import. This interesting subject is introduced by the word *Surely*, which intimates the strong persuasion and firm confidence that he felt of the momentous truth here asserted. Divested of the prejudices which he might have once entertained against this important doctrine, he proceeds, without hesitation or ambiguity, to declare explicitly the real causes of the excruciating sufferings

* Mark viii. 38.

ings and manifold griefs endured by God's righteous Servant in his humbled condition. It is evident, from the several references made to this passage in the New Testament, that it entirely relates to Jesus Christ, that it hath a direct reference to him, and that he is the person undoubtedly who is here intended: The prediction, like many others, is delivered in the prophetic stile, which describes events certainly future as already past. So accurate is the narration of facts relative to the Redeemer's sufferings, which is contained in this chapter, that it hath been justly observed this portion of Scripture resembles more a history of what is past, than a prophecy of what was to happen at the distance of ages.

He hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows, that result from the afflictions and sufferings which are the just consequences of transgression; and, being expressed in the plural number, intimate their vast variety and multiplicity, which seize upon sinners in quick succession. Sin, deviations from truth and righteousness, are by Divine constitution closely connected with painful sensations, though there may be some seeming exceptions to the general rule. 'The soul that sinneth shall die *;' 'The wages of sin is death †,' with all its distressing presages and tragical effects. This law of wisdom and equity is established by the irreversible decree of the Almighty, who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. The justice of this appointment fully appears by considering the infinite majesty of God, against whom sin is committed, the contempt thereby offered to his authority, the perfect purity of his law, and the disorder thereby introduced into the universe. Those griefs and sorrows, which are consequential on transgression, are said to be ours, inasmuch as by our criminal conduct we have acquired a certain right to them, and they have become our property and portion.—Of this illustrious person, the righteous Servant of Jehovah, it is affirmed, that he did bear and carry

* Ezek. xviii. 20.

† Rom. vi. 21.

carry them. He himself was perfectly innocent, and free from all manner of iniquity, being the Holy One of God, and so not liable to any sort of distress on his own account. Notwithstanding, in tender compassion to his people, he condescended to bear the most agonizing sufferings in his body, the bitterest anguish of soul, and the most painful, ignominious death, that they might be saved from those dreadful evils to which they were exposed. By this unparalleled display of love and grace, he effected their redemption, and obtained for them the remission of sins, sanctifying grace, and eternal life. This important doctrine, which is asserted by our prophet, and established throughout the scriptures of the New Testament, is summed up in these words by the apostle Paul: 'He who knew no sin was made sin, *i. e.* a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him *.' The apostle Matthew, having recorded some of the wonderful cures performed by Jesus Christ, introduces the words we have been considering, as being thereby verified †. Though Isaiah is here treating of the sufferings, and not of the actions of the Messiah, yet in the view of the inspired writer, this prediction received a partial accomplishment by the miraculous cures effected by Jesus Christ, which exhibited striking proofs of his ability to remove all the deplorable miseries which the sins of his people merited, and a certain prelude of what he would farther do and suffer for their relief.

Yet we did esteem him stricken, &c. Instead of admiring the wonderful condescension of Jesus Christ, in sustaining our griefs and sorrows, his enemies, deluded by ignorance and false prejudices, considered his sufferings as the just punishment of his own crimes, inflicted by the righteous God. Full of implacable enmity and rage, they supposed that the Divine displeasure had gone forth against him on account of his own personal transgressions; and therefore,

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

† Mat. viii. 17.

therefore, such was their opprobrious language : ‘ God hath forsaken him ; let us persecute and take ‘ him,’ and execute upon him what they injuriously apprehended was the just judgment of the Almighty. They looked upon him as an awful instance of the Divine vengeance, as one struck with the plague of leprosy, with whom, according to the law of Moses, they ought not to maintain any intercourse. When his adversaries saw him beaten by order of the chief men among the Jews, scourged, and condemned to death by Pilate the Roman governor, they reckoned that he was an impostor, a false prophet, a seditious person, and a blasphemer. Beholding the bitter anguish of his grieved soul, they imputed his afflictions to his own iniquities, and concluded that vengeance suffered him not to live.—With this unjust estimate of the character and sufferings of Jesus Christ, agree the unworthy sentiments whereby he hath been misrepresented and traduced by sinners in every age, who, on their own principles, ought to love him that loved them. And as our prophet includes himself with those of whom he speaks, we cannot hesitate to join ourselves to the number of those who have injured the Saviour, by wrong views of the complicated distresses which he endured for us.

5. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

The subject introduced in the preceding verse, is illustrated and confirmed in the words now read, which consist of four articles, to be separately considered in their order.—*He was wounded for our transgressions.* The Hebrew word translated wounded, signifies run through with a sword, or sharp iron weapon, and in this expression our prophet seems to refer

to those painful wounds which Jesus Christ received about the time of his crucifixion. That tormenting death being a punishment unknown among the Hebrews, there was no word in their language that could better express the agonizing death of the cross, to which our Redeemer submitted, than the one here used. He was wounded when scourged by order of the Roman governor; and, as the Psalmist speaks, ‘ the plowers plowed upon his back, and made long their furrows.’ He was wounded when his hands and feet were nailed to the accursed tree, whereon he gave up the ghost. He was wounded by a soldier, who, with a spear, pierced his side, from which there flowed blood and water. Not only his body, but his spirit was wounded, when he was loaded with unjust reproaches, assaulted with strong temptations, maliciously charged with the greatest crimes; and, above all, when, under an afflicting sense of the wrath of the Almighty, he exclaimed, ‘ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’—And why was he thus wounded? The reason was not in himself, but in us; it was for our transgressions, or, as the word denotes, for our presumptuous acts of haughty rebellion committed against the blessed God, our rightful sovereign. Notwithstanding he nourished and brought us up as children, we have rebelled against his supreme authority. ‘ My people, saith he, are risen up against me, as against an enemy*.’ These daring transgressions of ours were the cause of Jesus Christ being wounded. The preposition rendered for, in the sense wherein it is often used in scripture, plainly imports here, that on account of our sins the Messiah was pierced. He was treated as a malefactor, and suffered not for his own, but for our offences. ‘ He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures†.’

He was bruised for our iniquities.—This expression seems to have an obvious reference to the labours, afflictions, and sorrows which our Saviour sustained, especially in the last scenes of his life. The Hebrew word

* Mic. ii. 8.

† 1 Cor. xv. 3.

word rendered bruised, signifies brayed, or broken, and, in a figurative sense, wasted or consumed. It emphatically describes the humble, broken, distressed sorrowful state to which Jesus Christ was reduced before he expired on the cross, delineated in strong colours in some of the sacred odes that treat of this subject, and narrated with great simplicity by the Evangelists. He was bruised by the buffetings he received from those who struck him on the head, and fixed him to the cross. Besides, his soul was overwhelmed with inexpressible grief; whilst the terrors of the Almighty came round him as water, in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross; so that he was in an agony, and complained that he was exceeding sorrowful even unto death.—The true cause of this anguish is assigned by our prophet—*He was bruised for our iniquities*, our manifold deviations in heart and life, from the path of God's commandments, our perverse departure from him, and violations of his holy law, were the procuring causes of the grievous afflictions sustained by the Messiah. Words are deversified, various ideas are suggested, to represent in different striking lights the nature of sin in general, whereby the most egregious folly is discovered, in substituting our own inclinations and worldly enjoyments in place of the will of God as our rule, and his glory as our end—and to evince the complete efficacy of the sufferings of Jesus Christ to expiate the guilt of all kinds of transgression.

The chastisement of our peace was upon him. Had the Messiah submitted to such excruciating sufferings, and to such an agonizing death as were foretold by the prophets, not to make atonement for sin, but only that, as a martyr, he might confirm his doctrine, and leave an example of patience, resignation, and other graces, where is the propriety of multiplying terms, which must induce impartial people to think they were designed for still higher purposes? In consequence of transgression, mankind are at variance with the blessed God, being enemies to him in our minds,
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and by wicked works, we deserved to be most severely chastised before we could expect to be re-admitted into his favour, and to participate of the fruits of his loving kindness. Such is the astonishing grace of Jesus Christ, that he vouchsafed to bear the chastisement that we deserved. The word, rendered chastisement, is derived from one that signifies to learn, and, in a secondary sense, to correct, because learning is seldom acquired without correction. That chastisement, which was necessary to avert the wrath of the Most High, and to effect our reconciliation to him whom we had offended, was laid upon Jesus Christ, who became our surety. He needed no chastisement on his own account, for he was perfectly innocent, and always did the things that pleased the Father. Nor was it requisite for his instruction, for he was fully prepared to do the whole will of God, wherein he delighted; and, as his righteous Servant, he always acted prudently. Neither was he chastised merely for an example to us, for somewhat more than a pattern is necessary to the pardon of the guilty; and more is to be learned from the punishment of one who never offended, than that sinners ought to suffer correction with patience. The Messiah was afflicted, that, as our Peace, (as he is emphatically denominated *) he might reconcile us to God by his death.

And with his stripes we are healed. The misery arising from our apostacy, and the mercy of our deliverance, are so great, that a variety of expression is necessary to elucidate these interesting subjects, and to impress them deep upon the heart. Sin may be considered as an inveterate, mortal distemper, which must be cured, that we may live to God, and enjoy communion with him. It not only renders our bodies subject to dissolution and death, but hath spread its contagious influence throughout all the faculties of our souls, which have become feeble and depraved. It hath blinded our minds, hardened our

hearts, disordered our affections, and excited those corrupt passions which destroy spiritual health and vigour. We therefore greatly need to be healed.—The cure is here ascribed to the stripes endured by Jesus Christ. Prior to his crucifixion, he was scourged and beaten; he gave his back to the smiters, from whom he suffered the most ignominious, cruel treatment. From the stripes to which he submitted, issued that precious blood, which cleanseth from all sin, and proves an infallible remedy, that removes all manner of spiritual distempers. The blood which flowed from the Prince of Life, in consequence of the strokes he received from his malicious enemies, is the sovereign medicine that cures the most dangerous diseases. When properly applied, it not only cancels guilt contracted, and removes dread of the Divine displeasure, but it stops the ravages that sin hath made in the human constitution; it heals the most threatening disorders; it dispels anxious fears, and gradually restores to perfect soundness and ability for the service of God.—The believing contemplation of the wounds, the bruises, and stripes, endured for us by Jesus Christ, ought to combine, with sympathetic sorrow for the illustrious sufferer, humble gratitude and joy for his astonishing condescension, who submitted to afflictions and sorrows, that we might be pardoned and healed. Frequently fix your thoughts on this interesting subject, from which you, who are labouring under spiritual distresses, may obtain relief; and you who already are relieved, be thankful for his rich grace, and wait on him who will complete your cure, and perfect what concerns you in due time*.

6. All

* See this subject beautifully illustrated by Archbishop Leighton, in his Commentary on 1 Pet. ii. 24.

6. All we like sheep have gone astray : we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The folly and misery of transgressors, which were the impulsive causes of the Messiah's sufferings, with the wonderful expedient devised by infinite Wisdom for our deliverance, is very significantly represented in these words. Our extreme folly and danger is exhibited by an instructive similitude. *All we like sheep have gone astray.* This hath been the conduct, not of a few heedless mortals, but of all people in every nation and in every age, whether Jews or Gentiles, Greeks or barbarians, whether diseased or healed by the stripes endured by Jesus Christ. However different in other respects, however much some may flatter themselves with regard to the safety of their condition, yet all have wandered from God.—Sheep that have left good pasture, and strayed from under the shepherd's care into the barren desert, present, in the strongest and most affecting light, an emblem of disappointment, indigence, and perplexity. Being incapable of providing for their own safety, of defending themselves from those who would hurt or destroy them, destitute of that instinct by which they might find their way back to the shepherd and his flock, they convey a striking resemblance of sinners who have departed from God, of their utter inability, by their own efforts, to regain the happiness they have lost, and to return to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

We have turned every one to his own way. Every one hath a particular course of his own, wherein he goes, and though pleased that he does not tread the same path with those from whom he differs, he is forgetful that he also hath gone aside into his own way. Some have turned into the way of dishonouring
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ing the great God, by neglecting his worship, or by carelessly performing it, so that whilst they honour him with their mouths, their hearts go out after their covetousness. Others have turned into the way of profaning the name of God, and speaking irreverently of his infinite Majesty, of his perfections, word, and providence. Some have got into the way of contemning the Sabbaths of the Lord, and appropriating them to indolence, to unprofitable amusements, or worldly business. Others, disregarding the love of their neighbour, and the faithful performance of relative duties, incumbent upon them in their several capacities and stations, indulge criminal passions, and are addicted to cruelty and revenge, to lewdness and debauchery, to calumny and slander, to fraud and dishonesty, to falsehood and defamation, to discontent, and covetousness. Into all, and especially into one or other of these pernicious ways, every one hath turned and gone astray from God. In consequence whereof, all are obnoxious, to have executed upon them the awful sentence denounced against transgression in the Divine law, which hath fixed an inseparable connexion between sin and death. Justice might have seized on the sinner, and inflicted the threatened punishment. But, eternal thanks to Jehovah,

The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. These words describe the admirable expedient which the Lord God hath been pleased to adopt, that he might remove from us the guilt contracted by our wanderings, and bring us back into the path of life. The Hebrew word, translated iniquity, is used in scripture to express, not only our perverse deviations from the way of God's commandments, but also the punishment thereby incurred. 'My iniquity, (said 'Cain *,) or the punishment which I have thereby 'deerved, is greater than I can bear.' Our iniquities, with the penalties annexed to them, Jehovah, the righteous Lord and supreme Governor of the universe, hath laid upon the Messiah, or, as the word intimates,

* Gen. iv. 13.

intimates, he caused them to fall or to meet upon him. The sins of all whom he saves, in every nation and age, met on him, even as the brooks and rivers from all quarters run into the sea. For them he made his soul an offering, and bare them on his own body on the tree. In forming sentiments on this subject, assistance may be derived from attentive consideration of the rites that were observed, by Divine appointment, under the former dispensation; and particularly from the institution recorded, Lev. xvi. 21. to which possibly the words before us may refer. As the high priest of the Israelites, having offered one kid of the goats for a sin offering, was commanded to lay his hands upon the head of the other, and to confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, putting them upon the head of the goat, that was to bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited, &c.—In like manner, Jehovah laid upon the Messiah all our iniquities, and exacted of him the punishment they deserved; though not precisely in every circumstance, yet he suffered what was essentially the same we deserved, and what was sufficient to vindicate the honour of the Divine perfections and government. This immense load, which he alone was able to bear, he voluntarily and readily submitted to endure, that he might save his people from their sins. In this wonderful transaction, the unsearchable wisdom, the consummate righteousness, and infinite love of God, are illustriously displayed, whilst the admirable grace and condescension of our Saviour are exhibited in the most amiable light, and a key is given us to open the import of many things that are written concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

In consequence of Jehovah having laid all our iniquities upon the Messiah, and demanding of him the immense debt contracted by our transgressions, he was greatly depressed, and crushed to death. We learn from the history of the Acts of the Apostles*, that this was the place of Scripture which the man of Ethiopia, who had the charge of all Queen Candace's treasures, was reading in his chariot, at which Philip the Evangelist began, and preached unto him Jesus Christ. The passage before us is there cited with some small variations. It exhibits the compassionate Saviour as greatly oppressed and sore afflicted, when bearing the dreadful weight of our sins, and the awful punishment they deserved. Hear him breathing out language expressive of the heaviest distress and bitterest anguish: 'Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say—Father, save me from this hour, but for this cause came I unto this hour †' 'O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt ‡'—He was afflicted of God, who spared him not, but delivered him up to the death for us all—He was afflicted by Satan, who assaulted him with many strong temptations. He was afflicted by Jews and Gentiles, by the Jewish sanhedrim and the Roman Governor, by chief priests, elders and rulers; yea, by the rabble, who insulted and abused him—He was afflicted by his disciples, who forsook him and fled, one of them betraying him into the hands of his enemies, and another repeatedly denying connection with him—He was afflicted not only by the wounds and bruises he received on his body, but by the unjust malicious charges that were brought against him, of sedition, blasphemy, and other crimes—He was afflicted in his soul, by awful apprehensions of the miseries of mankind, the malignity of sin, and the wrath of the Almighty.

Yet he opened not his mouth, &c. Even when false accusations were laid against him, which he could easily

* Chap. viii. 32, 33.

† John xii. 27.

‡ Mat. xxvi. 39.

easily have refuted; to the astonishment of his judges, he answered never a word.—He opened not his mouth, to arraign the righteousness of God's providence in his complicated distresses, or to complain of the grievous weight of the afflictions to which he was destined.—He opened not his mouth in his own vindication, which might have been deemed inconsistent with willingness to suffer, or in complaints of the cruel treatment of his enemies, or in severe animadversions upon the conduct of those for whose sins he was afflicted.—This remark is illustrated by two similitudes, which strongly represent the perfect innocence, meekness, and patience of Jesus Christ, under the accumulated injuries he received.—*1st*, He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter. As the Lamb, which in its nature is gentle and tractable, makes no resistance, but is conducted with the utmost ease to the place where it is to be slain, so Jesus Christ was led to the place of his crucifixion, without shewing the least reluctance, or making the smallest opposition. He went forth to sufferings and death with calmness, resolution, and alacrity.—*2^{dly}*, A sheep before her shearers is dumb, and complains not while it is stript of its fleece of wool; so Jesus Christ was silent when deprived of his reputation, of his raiment, of his rest, and other blessings enjoyed by mankind. Though none of the sons of men did ever so little deserve such cruel usage, though never one could have said so much in his own defence, or could have executed such awful judgments on his enemies; yet he held his peace, and maintained profound silence under all the ill treatment to which for us he submitted.—What astonishing meekness, what invincible patience, did the compassionate Redeemer manifest under the most afflictive undeserved sufferings! Let us then endeavour, in dependence on his gracious aid, to transcribe into our conduct the amiable pattern he hath given us, by calmly and submissively bearing all the calamities that befall us, confident that if we do well and suffer, if we take it patiently, this is acceptable to God.

8. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Having foretold the complicated sufferings of the Messiah, and pointed out the true causes from whence they proceeded, Isaiah goes on to foretel the glorious effects with which they were to be accompanied. The first thing he mentions is the Redeemer's liberation from affliction, sorrow, and death.—*He was taken from prison and from judgment.* The word here used, in the original language signifies to exchange a mean, distressed state, for a glorious, happy condition, and in this sense is applied to denote the translation of Enoch and Elijah, and the resurrection of the just unto eternal life.—A word of similar import is employed by the writers of the New Testament, to express the reception of Jesus Christ into the presence of Jehovah. 'He was received up into 'heaven,' says Mark*.' 'He was received up into glory,' saith the apostle Paul †. The prison and judgment from which he was taken may denote the state of confinement and oppression wherein he had been detained, as the judicial punishment incurred by those for whom he was pleased to suffer. From this state of deep humiliation, calamity and grief, he was taken, at his resurrection from the dead, when he was freed from the judgment, the condemnation and death, to which he was consigned by the iniquitous sentence of an unrighteous tribunal. The inspired writer of the Acts of the Apostles, quoting this verse, varies the expression, saying, that his judgment was taken away ‡. The meaning of both expressions is the same. When he was taken from the prison of the grave, and delivered from the power of death, to which he yielded for a time, his judgment, the condemnatory
sentence

* Mark xvi. 19.

† 1 Tim. iii. 16.

‡ Chap. viii. 33.

sentence executed upon him was removed, and he was set at liberty.

And who shall declare his generation. Various expositions have been given of these words, the precise meaning of which it is not easy to ascertain. The Hebrew word, translated generation, signifies age, the time that one passes in this world, the course or manner of his life. Some have supposed that our prophet intimates, that there were to be none to bear witness to the character and perfect innocence of Jesus Christ, which forms a remarkable instance of hardship and injustice underwent by our Saviour. Others have been of opinion, that the enquiry imports, Who can express the atrocious wickedness of the age, or generation, of men among whom he lived, by whom he was cruelly tortured and slain. Some have imagined, that the question relates to the immense numbers of the generation of those who were to become the disciples of the Lord Jesus, in consequence of his sufferings, death, and resurrection from the dead. Others have thus interpreted the words, Who can explain the manner of the generation of the only begotten Son of God, or of the extraordinary nativity of his human nature? or who can unfold his eternal duration as Mediator? I consider the import of this challenge to be to the following effect: Isaiah having foretold, by the spirit of prophecy, some important circumstances relative to the profound humiliation and bitter sufferings of the Messiah, and specified the causes to which they are to be attributed, bids defiance to the whole human race fully to explain the sublime nature and glorious effects of that Divine life, to the possession of which he was to be exalted in consequence of his obedience unto death. Who among the sons of men can exhibit the felicity and joy of that condition to which he shall be elevated, as the reward of his voluntary abasement and manifold afflictions! From this view of the words, those who are conformed to Jesus Christ in sufferings, in meekness, patience, and other graces, are encouraged

to expect seasonable deliverance from their troubles, and to look forward with hope and joy to their entrance on immortal life and glory.

For he was cut off out of the land of the living. The reason of the Redeemer's advancement to the highest glory and dignity is here assigned. He was removed from among the living inhabitants of this earth, not by translation, as were Enoch and Elijah, nor by that kind of death which commonly puts a period to men's existence in this present state, to which all naturally tend, in consequence of transgression. Perfectly free from sin and the principles of corruption, which terminate in dissolution, death could not have put an end to his life in the same manner that he extinguishes the forfeited lives of the children of men. When, therefore, he bare the punishment of our sins, he was cut off by a violent death from among the living inhabitants of the world, as foretold by the prophet Daniel *, and in the prediction under consideration. To confirm and illustrate this interesting subject, inculcated by a great variety of expression, there is added the character of those for whom the Messiah was crucified and slain.—*For the transgression of my people was he smitten.* All the people that dwell on the face of the earth belong unto the Lord, who is their creator, preserver, and rightful proprietor. Some are in a peculiar sense called his people, his chosen, called and faithful, who in his purpose, and by his providence and grace, he hath appropriated to himself, and distinguished by the most important privileges. Them he fore knew and gave to Jesus Christ, that he might redeem them; he predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son; they are made temples for the Holy Ghost, vessels of mercy prepared afore unto glory. Though Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for all, and all receive manifold mercies from his mediation, the people God hath chosen of his good pleasure, for whom the Messiah was smitten, in a special manner participate

* Chap. ix. 26.

participate of the choicest benefits resulting from his sufferings and death. Whilst all reap present advantages from his interposition, the people of God are saved through him with an eternal salvation.— Truth hath a just claim to credit, and faith is the tribute due to truth. If you believe the witness of men, the testimony of God is greater, and ought to be received with all readiness of mind. Receive then the important truth we have been illustrating, in the faith and love of it, that it may profit your souls.

9. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

Having been cut off from the land of the living, for the purposes already specified, the crucified body of Jesus Christ would have been cast, according to custom, with the carcases of his fellow sufferers, into a pit on mount Golgotha, had not infinite Wisdom prevented. As the Messiah was entered in the register of the living under Augustus, so he was registered in the list of the dead, after particular enquiry into the certainty of his death, under the lieutenant of his successor Tiberius. Such was the astonishing grace of our Redeemer, that he went down into the lower parts of the earth, and remained for some time in the dark mansion of the grave. Notwithstanding a remarkable difference was made between him and the malefactors who suffered with him, as a seal of his innocence, and a pledge of his approaching glory, he did make his grave with the wicked, many of whose corpses were buried in the vicinity of the sepulchre wherein his body was laid. His interment affords certain evidence that he really died, and consequently that he triumphed over death in his own dominions, where he set up trophies of his victory.—*And with the rich in his death,* or in his tomb,

tomb, as the learned Dr Lowth translates the word. This improbable event was effected under the direction of Divine Providence, by means of Joseph of Arimathea, who was not only a just, good, and benevolent man, but a rich citizen, who filled an honourable station in the sanhedrim, or counsel of Jerusalem. This opulent man went in boldly to Pilate, and desired the crucified body of the Lord Jesus. Having obtained leave, he took it down from the cross, and with the assistance of Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, conducted the funeral. These two rich, respectable persons, shared the labour and expence betwixt them of the burial. Joseph brought fine linen, wherein the body of Jesus Christ, after having been washed, was wrapped, with about a hundred pound weight of myrrh, aloes, and costly spices brought by Nicodemus, after which it was laid in a new sepulchre hewn out of a rock. Thus was the scripture before us fulfilled, and our Saviour, who was born, and lived, and died in poverty, was with the rich in his tomb.

From these circumstances, relative to the interment of our Lord's body, his disciples may derive strong consolation in the prospect of death and the grave.—The reason is subjoined of this peculiar care of Divine Providence over the body of Jesus Christ,

Because he had done no violence, &c. The words forcibly express the immaculate purity of our Redeemer in heart, conversation, and conduct. No temptation ever seduced him from the paths of holiness and rectitude, to commit one violent action, or to utter one deceitful word. He never injured any one, either by what he did or said. No falsehood ever entered into his doctrine, nor did he at any time beguile or lead astray one individual. In his private conduct, and in his public capacity, he was truly upright, and perfectly free from every species of fraud and injurious conduct. The apostles unite their testimony on this subject. Peter thus paraphrases the words under consideration: 'He did no sin, neither was guile found

‘found in his mouth *’ John declares. ‘that in him is no sin †.’ And the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews affirms, that ‘he was holy, harmless, and undefiled ‡.’ In this respect, as in all others, he is infinitely superior to the whole human race, not only in their natural but in their renovated state. Did even those who have fellowship with the Father and the Son say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; whereas the Holy One of God is perfectly free from all manner of impurity. He was indeed unjustly accused, before the Roman governor, of sedition and treason, and condemned to suffer the death of the cross. To shew the iniquity of that charge and of that sentence, it is here asserted, that he did no violence, nor ever deprived any one of his just right. He was impeached and condemned by the Jewish sanhedrim, of being a false prophet, an impostor, and blasphemer. To evince the falsity of that accusation and decision, it is affirmed that there was no deceit in his mouth.—Diligently consider the complete pattern our Lord and Master hath exhibited, and employ your utmost efforts to have it transcribed into your hearts and lives.

10. ¶ Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

The sufferings of Messiah, God’s righteous Servant, are here attributed to the good pleasure of Jehovah; to his Divine agency are ascribed the triumphs of the Redeemer’s resurrection, and the prosperity of his kingdom.—*It pleased the Lord to bruise him, &c.* God, who doth not willingly afflict and grieve the children

* 1 Ep. ii. 22. † 1 Ep. iii. 5. ‡ Chap. vii. 26.

children of men, would not have consigned his beloved Son to sustain affliction and sorrow, had they not been intended to accomplish the most glorious purposes. Infinite love, mercy, grace, righteousness, and holiness, with other divine excellencies, were thereby to be illustriously displayed, and the redemption of transgressors to be obtained. When therefore, the sufferings of Jesus Christ are contemplated in the particular view wherein they are exhibited in this verse, as proceeding from the good pleasure of Jehovah, they must be considered in close connection with the grand designs which were thereby to be effected. The spiritual posterity of Israel, whom he had chosen for his peculiar treasure, were to be rescued from destruction, and restored to his enjoyment; and for attaining this end he was graciously pleased to destine his elect, in whom his soul delighteth, to endure those sufferings that were necessary to their restoration and felicity. In his decree, he adjusted all the circumstances relative to his humiliation, sufferings, and death, for all the grievous things, inflicted upon him by Jews and Gentiles, were according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*. And to his peculiar agency, who always doth according to his pleasure, who spared him not, who afflicted him, who hid his face from him, are to be attributed the severest anguish and grief that our Saviour sustained.—*When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.* The soul, which is the principal part whereof man is composed, is mentioned to denote the whole human nature of Jesus Christ. Not only the body prepared for him, but his soul, or spirit, also constituted the offering, oblation, or atonement he made for sin. The offerings presented to God under the former dispensation, could not take away sin, by any virtue or efficacy which they possessed, but served chiefly to typify, in different views, the one perfect sacrifice of the Messiah, which is ascribed to Jehovah in

* Acts ii. 23. and chap. iv. 27, 28.

in these words, *thou shalt make*. The Lord God provided this great atonement; he laid thereon the iniquity of us all, he delivered his own Son unto death, that he might expiate our guilt; ‘and bear the punishment due to our transgressions, and this offering was a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling favour*.’ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God and the merits of this offering of Jesus Christ, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service†.

He shall see his seed, &c. If you inquire what benefit, what fruit or compensation shall the illustrious, innocent, patient, benevolent sufferer, receive for the grievous afflictions he sustained in soul and body for the sins of God’s people? The joyful consequences to result from the offering of Jesus Christ, and the giving his life a ransom for many, are stated in the words now to be considered. His spiritual progeny, the children of his grace, who derive from him their spiritual life and existence, are doubtless intended by this expression. For them he obtained life by his death, to them he reveals it in the gospel, and to them he conveys it by his word and Spirit. To him they bear a striking resemblance, they participate of his Spirit, they receive grace corresponding to grace in him, they walk as he also walked, and are imitators of him as his dear children. They are the objects of his complacential love and paternal care, they are elevated to the dignity of princes, constituted heirs of his everlasting kingdom, and aim in all things to honour and obey their heavenly Father.— This numerous spiritual progeny, Jesus Christ shall behold with exquisite pleasure. Death suffered not the father of the faithful to see his posterity multiplied, whereas the Messiah, though he was cut off from the land of the living, shall contemplate his posterity perpetuated, and increased in every age of the world. He shall see them in number as the grass of the

* Eph. v. 2.

† Rom. xii. 1.

the earth, and as the drops of dew that fall upon the ground, growing up in every country, and in every age, while the sun and moon endure.

He shall prolong his days, &c. Notwithstanding his days were cut off in the midst, he shall enjoy a glorious immortal life. Having burst asunder the bands of death, and triumphed over the grave, he shall be elevated to the highest dignity, and the most consummate felicity. He shall live for evermore to make intercession for transgressors, to manage the concerns of his Church, and to confer upon them every needful blessing. He dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him, of whom it was said by the angel, 'The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; of his kingdom there shall be no end *.'—*And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.* The conversion and salvation of sinners of mankind, is represented in scripture as highly acceptable and well pleasing unto Jehovah. Had not their redemption and return to him been precious in his sight, and the object of his delight, he would not have sent his well-beloved Son into this world, and delivered him up to the death for us all—he would not have commanded and encouraged them to come to this compassionate Saviour, nor expostulated with them respecting their folly in rejecting his salvation. The restoration of transgressors to the favour, the resemblance, and enjoyment of their Maker, is the pleasure of the Lord, the blessed work wherein he takes exquisite delight and joy, whereby he accomplishes his promises, and displays the exceeding riches of his grace. He to whom belongs counsel and sound wisdom, and an arm that is full of power, hath taken this whole business into his own hand, and he will certainly manage it to the best advantage, and with the greatest success. Comfortable thought! In his gracious hand the interests of men's salvation are not only perfectly safe, but shall

* Luke i. 32.

shall assuredly thrive and prosper.—Let us frequently and earnestly pray, that Jesus Christ may behold plants of righteousness growing up in our families, that he may see a perpetual succession of his spiritual children on this earth, and that the Lord God may enjoy the benevolent pleasure that arises from the prosperity of his Church.

11. He shall see of the travel of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities.

The blessed fruits which, in consequence of his passion, were to be enjoyed by the Messiah and the Church, are graphically described in this and the following verse. With respect to the Messiah—*He shall see of the travel of his soul, &c.* He shall behold, with exquisite pleasure, the happy effects resulting to innumerable multitudes from the agonizing sufferings he sustained, not only in his body, but especially in his soul, when it was made an offering for sin. The expression may particularly refer to the bitter anguish of mind which he felt, when he was grievously oppressed with perplexity and grief, in the awful season wherein his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. He shall also contemplate, with triumph and joy, in his exaltation to the highest dignity, authority, and felicity, in the presence and at the right hand of God, the glorious fruits which were to accrue to himself from the painful distress to which he submitted.—*And shall be satisfied,* in reviewing with complacency what he hath done and suffered for the honour of Jehovah, and the redemption of his Church, in possessing an immense plenitude of blessings, and in the complete enjoyment of the most perfect happiness in God. He shall be infinitely delighted with the glory, wherewith he is invested in Heaven, the glory of his person and providence, of his righteousness and grace, of his triumphs over sin

and Satan, over death and the powers of darkness. How highly is he gratified by the success of his gospel; by the increase, extent, and perpetuity of his kingdom; by the gift of the Holy Spirit for the conversion of his spiritual children, and the preservation of their Divine life; and by the operations of his providence, whereby he provides for their defence and safety.—But this is a subject far surpassing description.

Are you, my friends, pleased to be informed of the rest, felicity, and joy, which, in consequence of his labours of love, Jesus Christ is now enjoying? know then, that you may add to his satisfaction, not by presenting to him costly oblations, but by a cordial, thankful acceptance of the fruits of his painful sufferings, and a cheerful subjection to his equitable administration. This tribute of gratitude and duty he demands as an acknowledgement for the labours and distresses he underwent for you.

By his knowledge shall my righteous servant, &c. Our prophet, having clearly pointed out the obedience, the passion and death of the Messiah, as the true cause and sole ground of justification in the sight of God, declares, in the words now read, that the right knowledge of these things is the mean whereby this precious benefit is obtained. This knowledge, of which God's righteous Servant is the author and the object, consists in a heartfelt conviction that we deserve condemnation and wrath, in a firm persuasion that the mediation of Jesus Christ is the only true cause of justification, in appropriating to ourselves the benefits resulting from his sufferings, and in humble submission to him as our Saviour and Lord, accompanied with the unreserved dedication of all our powers and talents to his service and obedience. The prediction before us is perfectly consistent with those scriptures, which explicitly assert that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ*; for genuine faith, and the knowledge here spoken of, are intimately and inseparably connected;

* Rom. iii. 26. Chap. v. 1. Gal. 2. 16.

connected; and having the same properties and effects, no material difference is made in the sense of the expression, whether the one or the other be mentioned. By this knowledge, we become acquainted with the personal excellencies of Jesus Christ, with his perfect obedience, and the offering he presented to God for us. We learn, that he is infinitely worthy to be loved and confided in, for pardon, acceptance, and eternal salvation, whilst we are under the strongest obligations to live to him who died for us.—There is a peculiar propriety in the designation given to him by whose knowledge we are justified, inasmuch as he is not only the Holy and the Just One, Jesus Christ the righteous, but because he hath righteousness to confer upon others: his name is the Lord our Righteousness, by whose obedience many shall be made righteous*. Of this illustrious person it is foretold, *He shall justify many*. Properly speaking, it is God who justifies, who absolves from guilt, admits into his favour, and bestows a right to all the blessings connected with this privilege. The foundation of this benefit, however, being laid in the everlasting righteousness, or the Righteousness of Ages, brought in by the Messiah, this prerogative is attributed to him. Of this inestimable privilege many shall participate, even as many as he gave his life a ransom for, as the Lord our God shall call, and as shall believe on him, whether Jews or Gentiles. In him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. The reason is subjoined—*For he shall bear their iniquities*, which, having been laid upon him by Jehovah, he shall endure the punishment they deserved whom he is pleased to justify. This immense load, which created strength could not have sustained, which thrust down into the lowest hell the angels that kept not their first estate, and that would have sunk the human race into perdition, this insupportable weight the Lord Jesus Christ vouchsafed to bear on his own person. In consequence of this gracious interposition, he acquits from
condemnation

* Rom. v. 19.

condemnation the many who, knowing his wonderful grace, have recourse to him for mercy and deliverance.—Would you participate of this precious benefit of justification, cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding: Endeavour to become intimately acquainted with the amiable characters of the Messiah, and the inestimable blessings he bestows, that, feeling your necessities, and seeing his all-sufficiency, you may resort to him for righteousness and strength.

12. Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong: because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbred with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

These words contain a beautiful description of the glorious reward to be conferred on the Messiah, on account of the profound abasement to which he submitted, and the perfect sacrifice he presented to God in behalf of transgressors.—*Therefore will I* (saith Jehovah) *divide him a portion, &c.* In these expressions, there seems to be an allusion to the signal advantages which result to a mighty conqueror from the victory he hath obtained over his enemies, in consequence whereof he lays hold on their spoils, as a recompence for the toils and dangers he hath experienced, and divides it with those who have shared with him in the fatigues and hardships of war. The Messiah, the captain of salvation, having completely vanquished all his and our powerful adversaries, shall enjoy many rich trophies of his glorious success—most extensive advantages shall arise to him and his followers from his illustrious triumphs. Or, as the Hebrew words intimate, The Lord God shall divide him

him many for his portion. He will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for his possession. He will set his hand in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers; his empire shall be universal over all the earth. By the rod of his strength he shall rule in the midst of his enemies; and as for his people, made willing in a day of his power, they shall exceed, in number, as well as beauty and brilliancy, the sparkles of dew which the morning discloseth to the eye of the beholder.

He shall divide the spoil with the strong. Learned men have differed widely in their sentiments respecting the strong that are here mentioned, which I shall not occupy your time in reciting. This elegant expression plainly imports, that Jesus Christ shall not appropriate to himself all the benefit flowing from his humiliation and obedience unto death, but admit his faithful servants to participate with him; so that as he overcame and is set down with the Father on his throne, so to them that overcome will he grant to sit with him on his throne*. It may also signify, that he shall distribute, with exultation and joy, among his followers, the blessed fruits accruing from his sufferings and sacrifice, and victory over their enemies. The strong may denote the peculiar people belonging to Jesus Christ, who are celebrated among the nations for strength, valour, and fortitude; those who, though weak in themselves, are strong in the Lord and the power of his might, and who, in the strength of the Lord God, vanquish all the opposition raised against them. It may farther denote, that the Lord Jesus Christ shall rescue many powerful nations from under the empire of Satan, that, by his word, accompanied with his Spirit of might, he shall cast out the strong man that occupied their hearts, destroy his strong holds, deprive him of his armour, and spoil his goods; and thus acquire new triumphs over the powers of darkness, and large accessions to the number of his subjects.—Such, my brethren,

* Rev. iii. 21.

brethren, are the happy effects of the redemption and conquest obtained by Messiah the Prince, which shall extend throughout all ages, and be for ever celebrated by all the ransomed of the Lord, in the kingdom of their Father. May I indulge the pleasing hope, that some who now hear me, shall share in the precious spoils which our gracious Lord shall distribute to his good soldiers, and that, in this prospect, they will readily endure hardness, and be faithful unto death.

Because he hath poured out his soul unto death. Four reasons are here assigned for the Messiah's triumph, the first of which I have now read. The metaphor is taken from the blood of the animals that were offered in sacrifice to God, under the Mo-
saic œconomy, which, by Divine appointment, was poured out upon the altar*. The expression applied to Jesus Christ, intimates the readiness and alacrity with which he laid down his life, and shed his blood, to be an atonement for sin, the intenseness of his sufferings, and the agonies of death to which he submitted when he gave himself for us.—
And he was numbered with the transgressors. He was apprehended as a thief, by the multitudes who went out with swords and staves to take him. He was condemned by the Jewish sanhedrim for blasphemy, and by the Roman governor for sedition, and crucified between two thieves.—
And he bare the sin of many, for whom he became a sacrifice and an offering, a propitiation and a curse, *i. e.* he was accounted and treated as one accursed, that he might take away our sins, and that we might be blessed in him.

All the sins of those who are saved in every age met together on him, and even those who had fewest, had no small burden to cast upon him.—
And made intercession for transgressors, that he might justly have consigned to everlasting destruction. He pleads successfully with his eternal Father in behalf of those who have violated his sacred authority, and
who

* Deut. xii. 27.

who are convinced of the law as transgressors. The Evangelist Luke hath transmitted to us a valuable specimen of what is here affirmed*. Whilst he was insulted and tortured on the cross by his enemies, he uttered this compassionate request: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' The efficacy of this prayer was experienced by thousands, who, on the day of Pentecost, were converted by the ministry of the apostle Peter. This intercession of Jesus Christ, exemplified at considerable length in the 17th chapter of John, is conducted by him for the most benevolent purposes, that transgressors may obtain the remission of sins, that they may be kept from evil, that their prayers may be answered, their services accepted, and that the Comforter may be sent to abide with them continually.—Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited and redeemed his people, and who hath performed the mercy promised unto the fathers. Let the praises of the Lord our God fill heaven and earth; let them occupy the hearts, the mouths, and the lives of all in the churches of Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

* Chap. xxiii. 34.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

HAVING described, in the preceding part of this discourse, the profound abasement and complicated sufferings of the Messiah, with their causes, circumstances, and consequences respecting himself, Isaiah proceeds in this chapter to delineate more particularly the fruits and effects of his obedience and passion, to his afflicted, depressed Church, that greatly needed to be comforted.—In the name of the Lord God, he exhorts them to lay aside the sadness and sorrow wherein they had indulged for long time, to be glad and rejoice, on account of the vast increase of their numbers, and the large extension of their territories, ver. 1—3.—He then points out the foundation on which depend these and the other advantages they enjoyed, namely, their intimate relation to God, the invariable constancy of his favour, and his unchangeable affection for his people, ver. 4—8.—The subject is then amplified and illustrated, by the extraordinary symbol of the covenant into which God was pleased to enter with his servant Noah, ver. 9, 10.—This is accompanied with predictions and promises, delivered in figurative language, wherein, under various images, expressive of beauty, strength, and magnificence, the Church are assured that they shall be elevated to distinguished honour and dignity; that they shall be favoured with Divine instruction, internal tranquillity, and defence against their enemies, who might endeavour to molest and distress them, ver. 11. to the end of the chapter.

CHAP. LIV.

SING, O barren, thou *that* didst not bear ; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou *that* didst not travail with child : for more *are* the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.

The Church of God are here called upon to express their joy, in the strongest manner, on account of a happy change to be made in their condition.—For a considerable time prior to the death of the Messiah, they had not brought forth spiritual children unto God, and, in respect of the small number of the faithful who believed the promises made unto the fathers, they are said to have been barren. They had not been honoured to produce a numerous spiritual posterity to the Lord Jesus Christ, nor had they experience of the pain and labours, which afterward they were acquainted with, when they travailed as in birth, until he was formed in them, until they became members of the household of God, and heirs of eternal life. In this forlorn state, they are invited to testify joy and gladness by every proper expression, such as grateful songs of praise and triumphant exclamations, celebrating the riches of that glorious grace whereby multitudes were born to God.—What pleasing emotions arise in the devout mind from contemplating the agreeable alteration, specified as the ground of their exultation and joy.

For more are the children of the desolate, &c. These words are cited by the apostle Paul *, to confirm his assertion, that the mother of all Christians, whether called from among Jews or Gentiles, is the Jerusalem which is above, being far superior to the city that bare that name in the land of Israel.—That they

all belong to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to which the believing Hebrews had actually come, and wherein they resided, together with Jesus Christ, their compassionate Saviour. The Gentile Church, which had been early espoused to the Lord God, in the days of Noah and his faithful descendants, are represented, by the designation given them, as in a very forlorn condition. They had long been forsaken and left in the state of a desolate woman, who could not be expected to have children, until she was brought unto the family and house of her husband. After that memorable period expired here alluded to, the spiritual children born to God from among the Jewish nation, which for ages had been solemnly joined in covenant to Jehovah, and whose husband he acknowledged that he was indeed, were very few in comparison of those who sprung up among the Gentiles. From them the Church received a large accession, a very numerous spiritual progeny, far exceeding what had been known under the former dispensation, as we learn from the history of the Acts of the Apostles. To the one hundred and twenty disciples that were in Jerusalem, by means of the apostle Peter's two sermons there were added at least about five, probably eight thousand souls, who were soon joined by multitudes both of men and women. A great multitude of Jews and Greeks believed, vast numbers were every where converted and added to the Church. In this manner was the prediction before us fulfilled, the consideration whereof ought to excite every Christian to gratitude, joy, and praise.

2. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.

The extraordinary increase and enlargement of the Church, which was every where to be spread abroad among the Gentiles, is exhibited under the beautiful, well-known emblem of a tent, that requires to be extended, in order to afford a cover to those who may come into it for shelter. There is a manifest allusion either to the heirs of promise, who anciently sojourned in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles, looking for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God *; or to the tents erected in eastern countries, for the accommodation of the more opulent people, which are not deficient of any convenience requisite to the comfort of those who occupy them. Those who live in tents plainly shew that they have not a settled place of residence, but expect afterward to arrive at a more permanent abode; that, notwithstanding they possess different apartments, they form but one community, which are thereby cherished and protected from the injuries that might befall them. On these, and other accounts, they afford an instructive representation of the state of the Church in this present world, who are required to enlarge the place of their habitation. Hitherto their limits had been circumscribed to the land of Canaan, but now, on account of the vast accession of converts, their boundaries were to be greatly enlarged, their curtains, the peculiar privileges they enjoyed, were to be widely extended, and the means whereby they became established on the Divine Omnipotence and faithfulness, were to be so extensively diffused, that no place or nation on the face of the earth should be exempted from sharing in the benefits belonging to the kingdom of God.—*Spare not, &c.* Withhold not faith and hope from the promises of Jehovah, which are supported by his power and veracity; but, assured of their accomplishment, be not deficient either in the vigour or continuance of your efforts, for giving full effect to this encouraging exhortation; take heed that ye be
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* Heb. xi. 9.

not moved by the temptations and oppositions whereby you may be assailed.

3. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

The high importance of complying with the preceding direction is stated, in strong terms, in the words now to be considered. The expression, which seems to refer to the bursting of waters, with force and impetuosity, from the place of their confinement, so as to spread abroad upon all hands, is intended to signify the powerful, extensive influence of the gospel of Jesus Christ, accompanied with the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, when it should be preached to all nations for the obedience of faith.—Or, as it is here expressed, *When it should break forth on the right and left hand.* The city Samaria and her daughters dwelt on the left hand of Jerusalem, from whence the gospel was promulgated; Sodom and her daughters were situated on the right hand*. In the Scripture style, people are said to be the daughters or children of those whose examples they imitate, and whose practices they adopt: they who walk in the steps of Abraham, are called the children of Abraham; they who follow the course of this world, are denominated the children of this world; and they who are addicted to the several kinds of wickedness that prevailed in Samaria and Sodom, are said to be their daughters, who, according to this prediction, were to be favoured with the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, by means of which many were to be born of God—Or the right and left hand, may signify on all hands, toward every quarter, north, south, east, and west. In this view, the prediction is of similar import with the promise that
God

* Ezek. xvi. 46.

God made to the patriarch Jacob, recorded Gen. xxviii. 14. 'And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south, and in thy seed shall the families of the earth be blessed.'—The subject is amplified in the words which immediately follow.

And thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, &c. The Lord God declares that he will grant the spiritual posterity of his Church to possess those heathen countries and cities, which had hitherto remained in a forlorn uncultivated state, and had produced no fruit acceptable unto God.—That, in consequence of this happy change, they were to be occupied by great numbers of people, and their condition in all respects to be much improved. This important event is the frequent topic of ancient prophecy, and is repeatedly foretold by Isaiah in the subsequent predictions contained in this book, and therefore I shall reserve the further illustration until the subject again occurs.

4. Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

The people of God are dissuaded, by several strong arguments, from indulging in timidity and perplexity. The fear and perturbation they are urged to avoid, is of that kind which a soldier feels on having deserted from the army, and a woman after having departed from her husband. It excites a variety of uneasy sensations, it renders averse to appear in public, and solicitous to escape observation. The meaning, then, of the exhortation given to the Church, in different forms, seems to be shortly this: Decline not, through

through timidity or terror, to come into open view, and to submit yourselves to public inspection; but come forward, with fortitude and boldness, confident of your intimate connection with the Lord God, and assured that you shall experience the fruits of his permanent affection.—*For thou shalt not be ashamed, &c* nor have cause to blush on account of disappointment, reproach, or guilt, or by reason of your hope and expectation being frustrated; for, being founded on the Rock of Ages, you shall never be exposed to merited derision and contempt.—*For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth.* The disgrace that you incurred by unbelief in the promises of God, and the few converts that were made to the faith and obedience of that gracious Lord, who had admitted you into covenant with him. The expression may refer to the time they were detained in bondage by the Egyptians, and to the period which elapsed soon after the death of Joshua, the servant of the Lord, when they apostatized into idolatry, and almost lost the appearance of the Church of God*.—*And shall not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.* The time of the Babylonish captivity, when God seemed to have withdrawn from the Church his kind affection and tender care, when they were deprived of the important blessings they had formerly enjoyed, and were exposed to scorn, insults, and injuries, is doubtless the season here referred to. Hence they are introduced, in the book of Lamentations †, presenting to God this request: ‘Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us; consider and behold our reproach. We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows.’ All this shame and reproach which they had borne, our prophet foretels, shall be forgotten, and the remembrance of them shall be so obliterated as not to give uneasiness; on the contrary, the recollection of them shall heighten their gratitude to the God of mercy and salvation.

* Jer. iii. 25.

† Chap. v. 1.

salvation. The impressions made by your former miseries shall be so completely worn out by a succession of mercies, that your reproach shall be remembered no more.

5. For thy maker *is* thine husband, (the Lord of Hosts *is* his name;) and thy redeemer the holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called.

The reason is assigned why the Church, that had remained for a time in a forlorn condition, and seemed to have been rejected of God, should not lose hope of attaining a comfortable state, and a numerous spiritual posterity.—*For thy Maker, &c.* The Lord God, who is the Creator of all things, who made the heavens and the earth, who formed and preserved the Church, with which he is intimately connected, is thy friend and husband. This expression strongly intimates the endearing relation, the tender affection, and kind attention which the Most High discovers, on all occasions, for his peculiar people. He is not only their Lord, their king, and governor, but he is joined to them in the conjugal relation, in consequence whereof there subsists between them a reciprocal interest, which is maintained and claimed with pleasure by both sides. ‘Our beloved is ours (say they), and we are his; we are called by his name, he discharges our debts, he confers on us unsearchable riches, and we yeild to him the chearful subjection he requires.’ ‘Ye are my people (saith he), and I will be your God: I will never forsake you, or cast you off.’—From this union, which commenced when he entered into covenant with them, and they became the objects of his distinguishing love and care, when he betrothed them unto himself for ever in righteousness, in judgment, in loving kindness and in mercies*, there shall

* Hosea ii. 19.

shall arise a numerous spiritual progeny, who shall call him blessed, and bless themselves in him by whom they are called. The comfortable truth which lies before us is frequently mentioned in different forms throughout the scriptures of the New Testament. 'He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom,' said John the Baptist*. Jesus Christ replied to those who asked why his disciples fasted not, 'Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them †.' The apostle Paul exhorts husbands to love their wives, as Christ loved the Church ‡. And in the Revelation, the Church is called the Bride, the Lamb's wife ||. Notwithstanding the Almighty hath had a Church on earth in every age of the world, yet, properly speaking, it was in the fulness of time that he united himself to them in the person of his Son, and conferred upon them large measures of his Spirit, the certain pledge of his love.

The Hebrew words, in the first clause of this verse, are in the plural number, and, literally translated, run thus, 'Thy Makers have thee in marriage.' Notwithstanding the perfect unity of Jehovah, he is spoken of in this and in other passages of Scripture in the plural, to intimate, that in the eternal Godhead there exist Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; in whose name we were baptized, and in whose name we are every day blessed before we depart from worship in this place. At present, I only refer you to two remarkable instances of this sort: The one in Eccl. xii. 1. where we are directed 'to remember our Creator in the days of youth.' In the Hebrew, the name Creator is in the plural; and so, literally translated, signifies remember thy Creators. The other is in Psal. cxlix. 2. where the invitation is given, 'Let Israel rejoice in him that made him, literally, in his Makers.' According to the will of the Father, by the agency of the Son, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, man was at first created in the image of God; and having
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* John iii. 29.

† Mat. ix. 15.

‡ Eph. v. 25.

|| Chap. xii. 9.

lost that resemblance, it is restored by the same Makers, in whom we ought to be glad and rejoice.—*The Lord of hosts is his name.* All the celestial hosts worship and obey him, all the goodly hosts of nations he musters and disposes of according to his sovereign pleasure. Under this magnificent title he makes himself known, as related to his people, by this designation he fortifies them against desponding fears, in which they are apt to indulge, and encourages them to expect final victory over their enemies.—*The holy one of Israel*, who is perfectly holy, and purifies his people, who, in return, sanctify him in their hearts and by their lives.—*The God of the whole earth shall be called.* He shall actually manifest himself to be the God of all the earth, and in this glorious character he shall be universally acknowledged. To this purpose the apostle Paul, when speaking of justification by faith being the common privilege of Christians, whither of the Jews or Gentiles, asserts, that God in this matter hath equal respect to each. ‘He is the God, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles *.’—These sublime descriptions are intended to convey comfort to his Church. Being their Maker, he will certainly preserve and take care of them; having admitted them into intimate relation to himself, he will never abandon nor reject them; and being the Lord of Hosts, he never wants power or instruments to accomplish their deliverance, to open the way for the sanctification of his name and of his people. Besides, being the God of the whole earth, gives agreeable assurance of their increase and felicity.

6. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

The proposition contained in the preceding verse is here illustrated and confirmed, and the Church is informed, that though in time past their state had resembled that of a woman forsaken by her husband, they were to be admitted into a happier and more prosperous condition. Having dealt treacherously with God, he had been provoked to deprive them of delightful intercourse with him, and to withhold from them the agreeable pledges of his love, which, had they been faithful in his covenant, they might have enjoyed. On these and other accounts, they were sorrowful in spirit, and bitterly complained—
‘ Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our
‘ affliction and oppression, for our soul is bowed down
‘ to the dust *.’ When in this forlorn situation, God was pleased to bring them into more comfortable circumstances, to confer upon them the blessed fruits of his loving kindness, and to impart those precious benefits whereby they were to be revived and solaced. To give stability to this gracious assurance, these emphatical words are subjoined, *Saith thy God*, thy faithful friend, who never fails, on every proper occasion, to express his tender affection for his people, and to shew them compassion when in destitute circumstances. The veracity, the immutability, and the omnipotence of Jehovah, with his other glorious attributes, contribute to give certainty and firmness to this declaration, which is therefore worthy of undoubted credit.

7. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee.

An explicit declaration is given to the Church of the constant, perpetual care of God, and his never-failing kindness for them. Notwithstanding they have been looked upon as a city not forsaken, yet in
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* Psal. xliv. 24.

the words before us, the Lord God acknowledges, that for a short time he seemed to have deserted them, by depriving them of the inestimable privileges they had formerly enjoyed. Having withdrawn the sensible testimonies of his presence, the assistance and comforts with which they had been favoured, and having permitted, for wise and gracious purposes, their enemies to harass and distress them, their troubles were greatly increased, and they were left to complain, 'How long wilt thou forget us, O Lord, for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from us *?' The Lord hath forsaken us, and our God hath forgotten us. In such desolate circumstances, (when their adversaries are ready to say, Let us persecute and take them, for there is none to deliver) God allows his people to remain only for a small moment, for a very short time compared with the long period wherein he shews them his tender mercies. After afflictions have wrought salutary effects, convinced of the malignity and danger of transgression, and brought them to repentance, so that they acknowledge, with contrition, their sins are the causes of their miseries, and earnestly implore forgiveness and deliverance, the Lord God is graciously pleased to work for them salvation. The expression we have been considering, which on many occasions hath been verified, might have a special reference to two remarkable seasons, wherein the most High left his people for a short space, in the sense here intended; namely, during the seventy years captivity at Babylon, and the twenty-six years of severe calamity which they sustained from the Syrians. In these periods, they were reduced to a forlorn state, like that of a woman deserted by her husband, and the hope of the fulfilment of the promises made to the Church, seemed to be almost cut off.

With great mercies will I gather thee, and bring you from captivity and bondage in a strange land, and restore you to a comfortable state after the distresses

* Psa. xliii. 1.

treffes you have sustained, as a happy prelude and image of a far more glorious and complete deliverance from the tyranny and oppression of sin and death, to be effected in the fulness of time. I will collect you from your dispersions into one sheep-fold, under one shepherd; and make you a happy people, by admitting you into intimate communion with your Redeemer, my righteous Servant, by granting you the enjoyment of my favour and protection, and the fruits of my loving kindness.— *This I will do with great mercies.* Every blessing that God bestows upon his Church, being unmerited, is properly denominated a mercy, and the benefits included in this promise being many and precious, they are spoken of in the plural number, to intimate their abundance, variety, and suitableness to relieve the necessities of those on whom they are conferred. They are also said to be great, to indicate their peculiar excellence, the manner of their conveyance, and the purposes for which they are intended. Well may the servants of God bear with patience and submission the trials that now befall them, remembering their short duration, and the inestimable favours with which they are succeeded. Forgetting former calamities, it becomes them to sing of the mercies of Jehovah, who rescued them from destruction, and brought them home to himself, after they had gone astray like lost sheep.

8. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.

The short continuance of the displeasure of Jehovah, is contrasted with the endless perpetuity of his loving-kindness. Human passions, and the effects with which they are accompanied, are ascribed, in a figurative sense, to the blessed God. From the expression

pression used in the first part of this verse, none may imagine that the wrath of the Almighty is a trivial matter, little to be regarded. After all the manifestations which God hath given of his displeasure against sin, we may adopt the words of Moses: 'Who knoweth the power of his anger? who layeth to heart the dreadfulnes of his wrath, and its terrible effects?' Notwithstanding his wrath is said to be little, because it was small in comparison of what his people deserved, and because it was of short continuance. 'He did not stir up against them all his wrath; he did not always chide, nor keep his anger for ever, though he was provoked'—*To hide his face from them for a moment.* He withheld from them the agreeable proofs of his favourable regard, and the light of his countenance, which they formerly enjoyed. He did not preserve them from troubles, nor afford them those reviving consolations, which in time past they had experienced. Of these benefits they were deprived only for a very short time; their calamities, sufferings, and sorrows, were soon exchanged for a happy and prosperous condition, in consequence of which they were to sing unto the Lord, 'For his anger endureth but a moment: in his favour is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*.

But with everlasting loving kindness, &c. So great and extensive is the clemency and kindness of God, that it fills the earth, and imparts the blessings of providence even to the evil and unthankful. So excellent is his loving kindness, enjoyed by his peculiar people, that it is esteemed better than life, the most precious temporal blessing. It is not variable and precarious, like the kindness of men, who are mutable and inconstant, and sometimes withdraw their favour in the season wherein it is most needed. The loving-kindness of Jehovah is permanent, immutable, the never-failing source of all those substantial benefits which felicitate and comfort his upright servants, and give them assurance of the perpetuity of his gracious

* Psa. xxx. v.

scious regard. The afflictions, whereby they are tried and purified from remaining corruptions, are no less proofs of his good will than the most prosperous events; for he who hath redeemed them, will never cease to do them good, nor permit any thing to separate them from his unchangeable love.—*He will have mercy on his Church*, rescuing them from the evils and miseries wherein they are involved, granting them protection and defence, administering seasonable support under afflictions, admitting to delightful intercourse with him, and enriching them with all the sure mercies promised to his servant David. To give certainty and stability to this comfortable declaration, these emphatical words are subjoined, *Saith the Lord thy Redeemer*, the eternal, all-sufficient Jehovah, who hath delivered you from many temporal calamities, and from those spiritual evils under which you groaned, and to which you were obnoxious.

9. For this is *as* the waters of Noah unto me: for *as* I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

The promises recorded in the preceding verses are ratified and confirmed by a beautiful similitude, taken from the deluge, that happened in the days of Noah, from which that righteous man, with his small family, were mercifully delivered by means of the ark. I suppose, the assurances given in verses 7th and 8th are compared to the waters of Noah, by which is doubtless meant the flood that overflowed the world of the ungodly, and swept them all away. When a comparison is stated in Scripture between two persons or things, the principal circumstances relative to them are to be considered as included in those

those which are mentioned. In this sense, the words of Jesus Christ, concerning John the Baptist, are to be understood. He says of that great man*, 'This is 'Elias, who was for to come,' because John appeared in the spirit and power of Elias, and resembled that eminent prophet in his manners, dress, office, and employment. Thus the waters of Noah, which are here spoken of, are intended to comprise the promises made to that Patriarch about the time of the deluge, when God gave him the assurance that the world should no more be drowned with water. The meaning therefore is, the promises I have now given, as the ground of hope and consolation to the Church, are delivered with the same solemnity, and shall be performed with the same fidelity, as those made to the second Father of the human race.—*For as I have sworn that the waters, &c.* Though, in the history of the memorable event alluded to, the oath of Jehovah is not mentioned; yet in the words under consideration, it is expressly asserted, that the Lord God actually in this manner confirmed his word on that occasion. Now, as he declared, with the utmost solemnity, that the waters which covered the earth in the days of Noah shall never again return to destroy mankind, so with equal solemnity he assures his Church, that none of the afflictions and persecutions that may arise shall ever totally overwhelm and destroy them. The same security is given by the Almighty for the preservation of the Church, as for the safety of the earth from another deluge.—The words here used are the following: *I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee*, as I have done in former times; still God is sometimes angry with his people, and as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens. The Hebrew words in this clause of the verse are very emphatical; the first denotes vehement anger, fierce wrath, and the other signifies such sharp reproof as is administered with great severity, and excites consternation and terror. The expressions

* Mat. xi. 14.

expressions must be understood in consistency with other passages of Scripture, which seem to bear a different aspect—they import that God would no longer be wroth with his people, so as to reject them in his indignation; nor so rebuke them in his hot displeasure, as to confound and overwhelm them in the deeps of distress.—When, therefore, you behold the bow that God hath set in the clouds, you may view it not only as a token that Jehovah will not again destroy mankind by a deluge of water, but as a pledge that he will not suffer his Church to be overthrown, and that their continued preservation is secured by his omnipotence and faithfulness. As certainly shall they be preserved in safety, as that the waters shall not overflow the earth; that day and night shall alternately succeed one another; that the hills and mountains shall not depart from off their basis.

10. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.

The immovable stability, and everlasting perpetuity, of the kindness and covenant of Jehovah, is illustrated by another similitude—Hills and mountains, which are considered as the most firm and permanent objects in the world, and least subject to change their places, shall depart, and be removed, at the consummation of all things. And those great empires, which have arisen to the most stupendous height of eminence and grandeur, and which are most conspicuous on account of their elevation and extensive influence, shall, one time or other, be divested of their power, and be laid low in the dust. The fashion of this world passeth away, all sublunary things are transitory and fading, the scene is continually shifting,

ing, and ere long, shall be concluded. The friends and possessions in which men most confide, shall soon be removed, or they shall be obliged to leave them.—*But my kindness shall not depart from thee, &c.* The good will and mercy, the favour and love of God, shall not be taken from those who are the objects of them. The grace of God, which flows from his sovereign good pleasure, is manifested, in conferring on his people the most signal benefits; his mercy shews compassion, and dispenses relief to the miserable; whereas his kindness embraces them with the utmost tenderness and affection, and performs all those good offices which are its genuine expressions and effects. In exercising this kindness, the Lord God takes peculiar delight, whilst his saints, with humble gratitude, acknowledge their infinite obligations for his distinguishing favour; and, like the king of Israel, ‘praise his name for his loving kindness*.’ In the holy Scriptures, this clemency and benignity of God, which is manifest in all his operations, is exhibited in the most attractive, glowing colours; precious promises are given as its choice fruits, inestimable benefits are bestowed as pleasing proofs of its efficacy, the whole scheme of redemption is represented as taking rise from this source, and consummated to display its riches and glory. ‘How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God; therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings †.’

Neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, &c. The covenant here intended, may denote the gracious constitution which Jehovah hath established betwixt him and his people, wherein he hath assured them, in the most solemn manner, that he will confer upon them all those inestimable benefits which are essential to their happiness; and clearly explained the import and duties which they ought diligently to practise, solicitous to obtain his acceptance and approbation. The sum of this covenant is recorded Hebrews chap. viii. 10, 11, and 12. verses, which you

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* Psal. cxxxviii. 2.

† Psal. xxxvi. 7.

ought frequently seriously to peruse.—In the verse under consideration, it is emphatically denominated the covenant of God's peace, because it proceeds from him as the God of Peace; who, in this way, hath formed between him and his people the most intimate, endearing connection, ratified by the Mediator, who is our Peace; and because all the blessings requisite to their peace and felicity are therein promised; such as reconciliation with God, peace of conscience, and tranquillity among themselves, with the sanctification of their persons and eternal salvation.—Of this kindness, and of this covenant, it is affirmed,

It shall not depart, nor be removed, from those who are interested in them. The kindness of Jehovah is an eternal, immutable principle, which is not subject to variation or decay, nor doth it admit of alteration from time and circumstances. His inclination and ability to impart the good things he hath promised, is perpetually the same, nor doth he ever want opportunities or means of conveying blessings to his peculiar people. His fulness cannot be diminished, his omnipotence cannot be restrained, his faithfulness cannot fail, nor the glory of his goodness be obscured, and therefore they possess the most satisfying security that, in all the circumstances wherein they may be placed, his kindness shall never forsake them. In temptations he will deliver, in afflictions he will comfort, in weakness he will strengthen, under a sense of guilt he will revive with the voice of pardon, under acknowledged depravity he will restore to lost rectitude, under spiritual darkness he will dispel the gloom, and arm with fortitude and resignation against the fears of death. No want that his goodness will not supply, no difficulty from which his wisdom will not extricate, no unworthiness over which his mercy cannot triumph, no blessing, however precious, that he will not impart to those with whom he hath entered into covenant. And though for a small moment he may hide his face, when it is necessary to effect

effect some valuable purpose, this is not a proof of the departure, but of the continuance of his kindness. — *Nor shall the covenant of his peace be removed.* This assurance is given in the most explicit terms, not only here, but in Psalm lxxxix. 33. 34. The covenant of Jehovah with his people shall never be disannulled, but shall continue throughout all generations. The Father of lights, from whom it proceeds, hath no variableness, and is always of one mind: Jesus Christ, the mediator, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; the redemption he hath obtained, and the inheritance he hath promised, are eternal; and those who lay hold of this covenant shall find, that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Having implanted in their hearts the fear of the Lord, they shall be kept from wholly deserting his service; and in the exercises of vigilance, prayer, and humble endeavours to please God, they shall be preserved by his mighty power, through faith unto salvation. — To confirm faith and hope in this comfortable truth, his name and character is subjoined who makes this declaration, *Saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.* All the blessings he bestows upon his people flow from his abundant mercy, through the channel of his covenant of peace, and are received as unmerited favours and inestimable talents, for the improvement of which they are responsible to the glorious Giver.

II. ¶ Oh thou afflicted, tossed with temp^tst, *and* not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

The Lord God having solemnly assured his Church of his constant affection, and its permanent effects, he proceeds to inform them, that he would not only defend them against their enemies, but that he would adorn them with every Divine grace and virtue. In
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the former verses, they were represented in a forlorn state, like that of a woman forsaken by her husband; now the similitude is changed, and they are described under the well-known emblem of a city decorated by the most beautiful precious stones.—The manner of address is abrupt and pathetic—*Oh thou afflicted,* &c. This was especially the condition of the Church of God about the time of the Messiah's appearance on earth. They were then doubtless greatly distressed and agitated, on account of the small number of them that feared the Lord, of the delayed accomplishment of the promises made to the fathers, and on account of the manifold reproaches, oppositions, and calamities they sustained. By these afflictions, God designed to purify them from corruption, to distinguish them from the chaff with which they were intermixed, to take away the luxuriant branches and noxious weeds that had sprung up among them, and to bring their hearts and ways into subjection to his authority and dispensations. In this state, wherein God exercised their faith, fortitude, patience, and submission, they were strongly agitated, like a ship in a storm, and exposed to imminent hazards from cross dispensations, from temptations, persecutions, and calamities, that came upon them in quick succession, in so much that they seemed in jeopardy every hour. In this mournful condition, they were *not comforted*. This circumstance greatly aggravated their affliction. 'When they looked on
' their right and on their left hand, no man would
' know them, refuge failed them, no man cared for
' their souls *,' or administered to them seasonable consolation, whilst the prospect of deliverance seemed dark and distant. In this distressing situation, how reviving the assurance,

Behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours.
Admirable images taken from the most esteemed objects in nature, are here collected to amplify and embellish the sublime subject of these predictions. Some degree

* Psa. cxlii. 4.

degree of obscurity is the necessary attendant on prophecy, not that which confuses and darkens the style, but that which results from repressing a part of the future, and the impropriety of completely revealing every thing connected with the prediction. The benefits, therefore, to be enjoyed by the people of God, though clearly indicated, the circumstances relating to them are involved in obscurity. The imagery employed in this and the verse which immediately follows, elegantly and forcibly expresses beauty, magnificence, purity, strength, and permanency, and requires to be strictly scrutinized and particularly explained, in order to discover what may be intended by each of the figures that are mentioned. —The afflicted Church is called to behold, and attentively to consider the promises which the Lord God here delivers as the ground of her consolation. I, the omnipotent Jehovah, who laid the foundations of the earth, and who built all things, will raise up the walls of Jerusalem. For this purpose, having collected proper materials, I will place them in the best and most commodious situation, and put them in the most excellent order, that they may contribute to the strength and beauty of the whole structure. The stones mentioned may signify true Christians, the precious sons of Zion, who are said to be ‘God’s building *,’ whom the apostle Peter calls ‘living stones †,’ being quickened by the Spirit of God, and built together, to be an holy temple in the Lord. I will so lay them, that they shall securely rest on the firm foundation laid in Zion, and be closely united to one another by the strongest ties. This I will do—*with fair colours*, rendering them truly beautiful and splendid, by that knowledge which is preferable to choice silver, by wisdom, which is better than rubies, by faith, which, being tried, is more precious than gold that perisheth, by peace that passeth understanding, and joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, with other graces and virtues. In consequence

* 1 Cor. iii. 9.

† 1 Epistle, Chap. ii. 5.

quence whereof, they shall shine forth, with the brightest and most amiable lustre, in the view of those who possess spiritual discernment to perceive real excellence and glory.—*And lay thy foundations with sapphires.* Jesus Christ, who died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, who is the perfect pattern to which his disciples are conformed, and to whom they are united, is the immovable foundation whereupon the Church of God is built. Those, however, who were laid nearest to this foundation, whereupon they rested all their hopes, and who shone forth with celestial splendor, corresponding to their intimate connection with him, and the Divine doctrine which they published, have this designation given them in a secondary sense. ‘Ye are built (saith the apostle to those who are of the household of God) upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone—for an habitation of God through the Spirit*.’ Those illustrious persons who first formed the noble superstructure of the Christian Church, who were illuminated by the Holy Spirit, furnished with heavenly gifts, and adorned with Divine graces and virtues, are the foundations which God promises to lay with sapphires—a sort of precious gem, of a fine blue or azure colour, resembling the firmament when clear and serene, remarkable for beauty, transparency, solidity, and other qualities. The expressiva intimates, that Jehovah was to build into his Church, under the New Testament, the excellent ones of the earth, who are distinguished for heavenly mindedness, for spiritual comeliness, solid worth, and the beauties of holiness.

12. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.

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* Eph. ii. 20, 22.

The splendor and glory of the Church is farther exhibited by the most graceful emblems.—In the figurative sense of the words, the windows of the Church of God may denote the ordinances of the gospel, which are not only ornaments to the building, but through them light is conveyed to the inhabitants, who by their means contemplate to advantage the Sun of Righteousness, and enjoy his refreshing beams. The Hebrew word signifies also a fortress, or bulwark, and may denote those zealous courageous men of God, who were set for the defence of the truth, as it is in Jesus; and who, with the first Christian martyr Stephen, full of faith and fortitude, stood forth in support of the gospel with such firmness, that their adversaries could not resist the spirit and wisdom with which they spake *. These windows Jehovah declares he would make of agates, a species of precious stones, of which there are different sorts of various colours. These may represent, not only the value, but the great diversity of the ordinances of Divine institution, from whence the people of God derive large measures of knowledge, holiness, and consolation.—Or the expression may import, that those who acted as the bulwarks and supports of Divine truth, were to be furnished with various eminent abilities for accomplishing the important work assigned them by divine Providence: in either view they contain an inestimable benefit.

And thy gates of carbuncles. The gates may denote those ecclesiastical societies, or meetings of the overseers, pastors, and rulers of the Church, assembled in the name and by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, to determine, according to the canon of scripture, who are to be excluded from, and admitted into the holy city, to enjoy its sacred immunities. As by the gates of fortified cities proper persons are allowed to enter, and those who are deemed unworthy are prevented; so admission to the privileges of the Church is granted to those only who are approved by the watchmen

* Acts vi. 8.

men placed on the walls of Jerusalem.—These gates the Lord declares he will make of carbuncles—a sort of valuable gem of a deep red colour, tinged with scarlet, that is exceeding bright and sparkling, that is not hurt by the fire, and is said to possess the virtues of all other precious stones. This promise then may import, that those of whom the sacred assemblies now mentioned are composed, shall possess clearness of understanding, purity of mind, holiness of life; whilst the prudence of their decisions, and their zeal for the Divine glory, shall not be injured by any fiery trials they are called to suffer.—*And all thy borders of pleasant stones.* By the borders of the Church may be meant their best citizens, who by their gifts and graces decorate the city of the living God, and give to it comeliness and splendor. These shall be of pleasant stones, that are viewed with peculiar pleasure and delight, as contributing to the elegance, magnificence, and stability of the habitation of God through the Spirit, and shew that it is the work of the great architect, ‘who buildeth his stories in the heavens*.’—There is not indeed a stone in this large edifice, that does not shew the hand which formed it to be divine, that does not display some lovely grace and virtue. Though they do not all possess the same excellencies in the same measure, they all contribute to the comeliness of Zion, and unite in manifesting the glory of the Lord.

Having considered the import of these particular promises; of what hath been said, this is the sum. The Church of God is encouraged to expect, that they shall be adorned with the most splendid, valuable attainments, so as to exhibit a delightful, admirable appearance. No such society on earth, none so truly excellent, as that of which Jesus Christ is the saviour and the head. All the living members of this great community are made light in the Lord; their beauty is perfect, through his comeliness put upon them; the Spirit of God and of glory resteth on them.

* Amos ix. 6.

them. They are furnished with the inestimable gifts of knowledge, of wisdom and ability in their several stations, to shew forth the praises of him that called them to glory and virtue. They are endowed with the Divine graces of faith love, humility, meekness, patience, spirituality, and purity, contentment, hope, repentance, and joy, to which they add godliness, virtue, temperance, brotherly kindness, with those corresponding good works whereby God is glorified. They participate of the most precious benefits, resemblance to their Lord, liberty of access into his presence, the protection of his Providence, a good conscience, the residence of the Holy Spirit, and the earnest of eternal inheritance. In all the disciples of the Son of God is some degree of the spiritual excellence and beauty, which is here delineated by the elegant figures we have been contemplating.—These promises were realized in the happy state of the first Christian churches, that were founded in several kingdoms of this world; and, after excluding hypocrites, who say they are Christians and are not, the Church of God still experiences, in some measure, their accomplishment.

13. And all thy children *shall be* taught of the Lord, and great *shall be* the peace of thy children.

Divine instruction and sacred tranquillity are promised to the people of God, as a source of consolation under all their depressions. The Church may be considered as a seminary of learning, instituted for the benefit of those who are admitted to share in the privileges of that highly-favoured community, who are initiated in the most valuable branches of knowledge, over which the Lord God presides as the principal teacher. The persons to whom the assurances are given, of the inestimable blessings here mentioned, are the children of the afflicted Church, the citizens

of the New Jerusalem, with their spiritual posterity, the members of the body of Christ and of the household of faith. All these shall be taught of God, or, as the words import, thy sons shall be the disciples of the Lord. The doctrine wherein they are instructed is the truth which God himself hath revealed by his Spirit, that shews the deplorable condition in which mankind, by transgression, are involved—that points out the all-sufficient remedy for removing the evils whereby we are afflicted, the way of reconciliation to God, and conversion from the error of our ways—It makes known the nature, the excellencies, and gracious operations of Jehovah, what may be expected by us from him, and what he requires of us in every capacity and condition. It enjoins us to look to him for direction, assistance, and blessing, and teaches that all our ways and works ought to be committed to his disposal, whilst it opens a paradise of delights to his children under all the calamities of life.—To give efficacy, and to insure success to his instructions, on these and other important topics, the Lord opens the mind to understand the Scriptures, to perceive the high importance, the intimate connection, and great design of sacred truths, and to feel their sanctifying influence. By this inward teaching he dispels the ignorance that obscured the mind, he disposes the heart to attend diligently to the things spoken concerning salvation; he imparts a humble, teachable disposition, whereby his children are inclined to believe and learn the great lessons he inculcates.

To this scripture the Lord Jesus appeals in proof of the truth of his doctrine, at which the Jews murmured *. ‘It is written (saith he) in the prophets, ‘they shall be all taught of God,’ &c. From this prediction he infers, that ‘whosoever hath heard and ‘learned of the Father cometh unto him.’ Every one that hath hearkened to the doctrine of the gospel, revealed by the Father, and hath learned the way of salvation, the all-sufficiency of the Saviour, and the necessity

* John vi. 45.

necessity of reliance on him, so as to perceive, understand, and approve, to receive, believe, and obey the truth—Every one of this description cometh to Jesus Christ, that he may obtain that life and salvation which is in him, with eternal glory. If then, brethren, we are taught of God, we will place entire confidence in the Redeemer.—What a precious blessing is contained in the promise we have been considering, for the accomplishment of which we ought to wait upon God. All the knowledge derived from other sources is comparatively trivial and insignificant. By acquaintance with business, the arts or sciences, we may acquire daily bread and the comforts of this life; whereas, by being taught of God, we obtain the bread that endureth to everlasting life, and have our minds replenished with a rich store of Divine knowledge. By means of rhetoric and eloquence, the passions are moved, and the finer feelings of the heart are excited; whereas instruction from God captivates the whole soul into the obedience of faith and love, and constrains each to say for himself, ‘I delight to do thy will, O my God.’ Philosophy investigates the works of the Almighty around us, and discovers much of their beauty and grandeur; whereas the teaching of God makes acquainted with Jehovah himself, and the operations of his grace, whereby men are formed into his resemblance, and prepared for his glory. History records memorable events of providence, the rise, progress, and fall of cities, kingdoms, and empires; whereas the testimony of God informs us of whatever is proper to be known respecting the creation, preservation, and consummation of all things. By the study of law, we learn the way by which our persons and property may be secured from the encroachments of fraud, or the attacks of violence; whereas, by Divine teaching, we are acquainted with the law of the Lord, and the charter by which we have right to the kingdom of heaven. By applying to the study of medicine we come to know the causes, the nature,

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and remedies most proper for alleviating or removing bodily distempers; whereas God teacheth by what means spiritual disorders may be cured, and the soul so restored to health as to live for ever. In all things, then, Divine instruction hath the pre-eminence, and therefore we ought assiduously to apply for this great promised blessing, to him who only can bestow it.

And great shall be the peace of thy children. This inestimable benefit, arising from the conquests of Jesus Christ, and the victories obtained by his disciples through the word of his testimony, comprises every thing requisite to their happiness and comfort. It is a choice blessing which they possess, undisquieted and uninterrupted by the vicissitudes and afflictions of this mortal life. Without it, riches are only gilded thorns, that wound and vex; honours are but vain baubles, that increase anxiety and uneasiness; yea, health itself becomes the source of pungent distress. It is the precious legacy that Jesus Christ hath bequeathed to his disciples, in these memorable words recorded in his New Testament *. ‘Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you.’ The peace which the world gives, is merely a freedom from outward disturbance; it is transitory, uncertain, and incapable of composing and solacing the mind in time of trouble. Far more excellent is the peace here promised, which consists in sacred tranquillity of mind, resulting from reconciliation to God, acquittal from guilt and condemnation, restoration to the Divine image, and the enjoyment of the most important privileges. It is the rich donation of the God of Peace, acquired for his children by the Prince of Peace. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit of Peace, which, after having withstood the storms that beat upon it in this tempestuous world, shall reach maturity in the realms of love and peace.—‘Seek peace and pursue it, for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers †.’

14. In

* John xiv. 27.

† 1 Peter iii. 11, 12.

14. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee.

The Lord God gives comfortable assurance to his Church of continued support, and defence from their enemies, and consequent deliverance from perplexing fears. Having given a beautiful description of their internal prosperous state, he shews, that in this happy condition they were to be free from molestation, and the dread of being destroyed by their adversaries.—*In righteousness shalt thou be established.* Righteousness is one of the glorious attributes of Jehovah, in the exercise whereof he uniformly acts in strict conformity to the most perfect equity, by rendering to every one according to their works, agreeably to the declarations he hath made in his word. This Divine perfection, manifested in the dispensations of Providence, gives ample security to the Church, that they shall enjoy stability and perpetuity; that all their interests shall be adjusted by their gracious Lord, according to impartial justice, and the promises he hath given, whereby he is engaged to defend them against every adverse power.—Righteousness is a term used in Scripture to denote the perfect obedience unto death of the Messiah, the sure foundation whereupon the Church is built, and on which their stability and perpetuity depend. In this righteousness they enjoy the countenance and favour of God, and are maintained in the possession of the privileges assigned to them, particularly the establishment and perpetuity of which they are assured. Righteousness also imports the exercise of those graces and virtues wherein consists resemblance to God, and conformity to his holy law both in temper and conduct. Though this righteousness does not fulfil the demands either of the law or the gospel, and is not the ground of justification before God, it is the way whereby the establishment

establishment and continuance of the Church is secured, and seems chiefly intended in the expression before us.

Thou shalt be far from oppression, &c. Thou shalt not be deprived, by fraud, violence, or rigorous exactions, of thy just rights and valuable enjoyments. Justice shall not be perverted, judgment shall not be delayed, nor the claims of conscience invaded. Through Divine mercy, thou shalt be removed at so great distance from grievous encroachments, that the terror and consternation which they excite shall not come near thee, to occasion perplexity and distress. Blessed with good pastors and rulers, who exhibit illustrious examples of righteousness, clemency, and other virtues, thou shalt have nothing to fear under their administration. The measures they adopt being founded on equity, and directed by wisdom and prudence, shall conduce to your real benefit. Thus secured from the dread of internal evils, thou shalt not be seized with consternation or panic at the approach of thy external foes, and their hostile designs, but in patience possess your souls.—By this prediction, which must be understood with some limitations, the Christian churches are assured of the peculiar care of Divine providence, of triumph over their enemies, and preservation from the evils whereby their existence might be endangered, and their comforts imbibited.

15. Behold, they shall surely gather together, *but not by me*: whosoever shall gather together against thee, shall fall for thy sake.

These words plainly intimate, that the utmost efforts of the enemies of the people of God, to accomplish their destruction, shall not only prove fruitless and vain, but that those who conspire to injure them shall be overthrown and fall into ruin. They also shew, that, notwithstanding the Church was to enjoy security

security under the protection of the Almighty, they were not to be exempted from the assaults of adversaries, who were to unite their endeavours to disturb and lay them waste. For their encouragement, the Lord God informs them, that, by the interposition of his kind providence, he would prevent or frustrate the execution of the wicked designs of those who aimed at their destruction.—*Behold, they shall surely gather together, &c.* to oppose and injure your best interests. The expression is similar to the complaint made by the sacred Poet of his persecutors*. ‘They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps when they wait for my soul.’ It imports, that their confederate enemies, instigated by malice and rage, would combine, upon the principles of worldly policy, if possible to extirpate them from the face of the earth.—*But not by me*, saith the Lord. Not in obedience to my authority, yea contrary to my express command; not with my countenance and approbation, nor with a view to advance my honour and glory, but to vex and oppress my inheritance. More is implied than expressed. Their counsel and work being of men, and not of God, shall come to nought †; their hostile intentions shall be defeated, whilst they themselves shall be consumed.

Whosoever shall gather together against thee, &c. Whether internal or external foe, and shall endeavour secretly to undermine, or openly to act against my people, shall fall short of attaining their end. ‘I will deliver them from their persecutors, for they are stronger than they, and bring their soul out of prison, that they may praise my name ‡;’ whilst their adversaries shall fall into certain ruin. In consequence whereof, those against whom they were collected, and thought to destroy, shall rejoice and triumph with them that remember the name of the Lord our God, because of the downfall of their enemies, and their own deliverance and safety.—This shall be done *for thy sake*, on account of my peculiar people,

* Psal. lvi. 7. † Acts v. 37. ‡ Psal. cxlii. 6, 7.

people, for whom I bear the most tender affection, to whom I have given exceeding great and precious promises, and over whom I exercise constant attention and care; therefore I will defend them from the powerful machinations of their enemies.—Many great efforts have been made, from time to time, to harass and destroy the saints of the Most High, which, contrary to expectation, were baffled; and those who were combined against them have fallen and perished. Many striking instances of the deliverance of the Church of Christ, in seasons of imminent danger, are recorded in sacred and profane history, by some of which the prediction before us hath been remarkably verified. This consideration ought to excite us to trust in him who hath delivered, and who will yet deliver to the glory of his name.

16. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work, and I have created the waster to destroy.

Attention is demanded to the agency of the supreme Ruler of the universe in the formation of instruments to accomplish the designs of his providence, and in superintending the actions of those he employs to chasten his people, and to inflict righteous vengeance on their adversaries.—*Behold, I have created the smith, &c.* Consider that Jehovah hath given existence, skill, and ability to the tradesman, whose employment is to make instruments proper for doing his own work to the best advantage, and to fabricate the destructive weapons used in war. You do not blame him for acting in this manner, in following his occupation, and for supplying those who are at variance, with the arms whereby they destroy each other. When, therefore, the Lord God raises up men, glowing with ambition, to kindle and excite the flames of war, to devise measures and to carry
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into effect the inimical designs formed against his Church, you cannot censure or find fault with his conduct.—*I have created the waster to destroy*, to lay waste cities, provinces, and kingdoms, and to execute righteous judgments on those who have long abused the mercies and the privileges wherewith they have been favoured. Persons of these descriptions, as do other creatures, depend on my pleasure; they are circumscribed by my providence, they act by my authority or permission, all their counsels and actions are subject to my control. Beyond them we ought to look to him who ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever he pleaseth.—Since, then, God hath created men of every character, and assigned to them their several businesses, he can easily counteract or give efficacy to their designs and artifices, his servants ought not to be intimidated by the hostile preparations of their enemies to effect their destruction. Infinite wisdom hath appointed, that through much tribulation and many afflictions they must enter the kingdom of heaven, so that they should not faint, but glory in them, knowing that our Lord's words must be verified *. 'In the world ye shall have tribulation: be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' This declaration of him who is faithful, ought to inspire his disciples with firm confidence in his wisdom and omnipotence, knowing that no power, however great, shall prevail against them; that no affliction shall befall them, but under his direction who hath the means of safety entirely at his disposal.

17. ¶ No weapon that is formed against thee, shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.

The portion of our prophet's discourse that we have been considering, concludes with an explicit assurance, that every attempt to overthrow the Church of Jesus Christ shall prove unsuccessful.—Various weapons have been employed by their implacable enemies to subvert and demolish this sacred society. Secret fraud, open violence, tortures, racks, persecutions, have been used for this purpose. The tongue, that world of iniquity, which adorneth unrighteousness, hath branded them before judgment-seats with the most opprobrious names, and falsely accused them of the most complicated crimes. They have been charged with forming the most horrid devices, with perpetrating the most atrocious wickedness; and having been thus calumniated, they suffered the greatest cruelties, by the most iniquitous decisions—None of these instruments have succeeded or prevailed; the Church of Christ, after all the struggles and hardships they have sustained, subsists to this day under the protection of the Almighty. Particular churches, in certain places, have been desolated as the just punishment of their abuse of the privileges they enjoyed; but the holy seed, the substance thereof, hath sprung up in other countries, increased, flourished, and brought forth fruit abundantly. But with respect to the Church in general, barbarous oppressors, with malicious tongues, have been frustrated in their designs by Divine providence, which hath ever been, and will always continue to be, their sure defence. And those who have been valiant for the truth as it is in Jesus, by the noble defences they have made, wherein it appears, that it was not so much they that spake, as the Spirit of their Father in heaven, put to silence the ignorance and malice of wicked men. By them the truths of God have not only been vindicated and established, but the principles and practices of their adversaries have been condemned as uncharitable, unjust, and cruel in the extreme—Others, in a different way, and perhaps with no less success, have replied to those who falsely accused

accused

accused their good conversation in Christ, by well-doing according to the will of God.—In this manner, brethren, let us clear ourselves from those unjust aspersions and calumnies, that are laid against us, ‘re-joicing, inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, we may be glad with exceeding joy *.’

This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. The benefits contained in the preceding promises, are their most valued portion and best inheritance, to which they have undoubted right, of which they have the enjoyment in some measure, and the prospect of full possession. On the blessings and privileges we have been considering, they look with the highest satisfaction; in them they rejoice and glory, from them they derive defence and safety, righteousness, peace, and consolation. Each, therefore, may adopt the words of David, the servant of the Lord, when solacing himself with the view of his rich inheritance: ‘The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage †.’ ‘Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart ‡.’—This is the peculiar right and prerogative of the *servants of the Lord*, who, deeply sensible that his service is both their duty and interest, prefer him to every other master; who submit to his authority, solicitous to obey every intimation of his pleasure, and to acquiesce in his appointments, assured of his support, protection, and, in due time, of receiving the recompence of their labour of love. To people of this description, the above predictions shall be fulfilled. What a beautiful, what an excellent heritage! Compare it, if you please, with the portion of a wicked man, of which a large detail is given by Zophar, in the 20th chapter of Job. By contrasting the one with the other, you may perceive the transcendent worth and glory of the heritage pertaining to them that do the will of God.

And

* 1 Pet. iv. 13.

† Psal. xvi. 6.

‡ Psal. cxix. 111.

And their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. The righteousness to be brought in by the Messiah, with which I am well pleased, is of my appointment, it is my gift; and being reckoned unto all them that believe, in virtue thereof they are pardoned and accepted. The right principles and good dispositions wherewith their minds are furnished, the exercises of holiness and righteousness in which they are employed, proceed from me, the Father of lights, who worketh in them to will and to do of my good pleasure.—This important truth should cherish humility and gratitude, amid the enjoyment of the inestimable privileges which the saints of the Most High are taught to expect.—And it ought to excite every one to whom it is made known, to seek with importunity, righteousness from the God of Salvation. ‘Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness, and in thy righteousness let me be exalted.’ The blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be upon you, and remain with you for ever. Amen.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

HAVING finished the prophetic and consolatory part of his discourse, Isaiah goes on to invite Jews and Gentiles, desirous of life and salvation, to come and participate of the precious blessings obtained by the sufferings and death of God's righteous Servant, which are exhibited under the emblems of those temporal good things that are most pleasant and refreshing, verses 1, 2.—He then particularly addresses the Jews, who were slow of heart to believe, and negligent in attending to their best interests, and generously offers to their acceptance the mercies promised of old to the patriarch David, ver. 3.—To excite to pious emulation, and speedy compliance with his proposal, our prophet introduces the gracious design of the Lord God, to enlighten the Gentile nations, and to bring them to the communion of the Church, who were gladly to embrace his invitations, ver. 4, 5.—As many of those who should be pardoned and saved were enveloped in error, and addicted to various crimes, might despair of attaining salvation, he calls them to repentance and return to God, who will have mercy on them, ver. 6, 7.—After which he teaches, that unbelief, and the disobedience of the wicked, shall not make void the counsel and gospel of God, that he shall effect his purposes and designs, which far surpass human comprehension, ver. 8.—**II.**—This portion of the discourse concludes with a beautiful figurative description of the joyful effects, that were to accompany the promulgation of the gospel, and the happy change which was thereby to be made in the state of the world, ver. 12, 13.

C H A P. LV.

HO, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.

A general invitation is given to those who are desirous of salvation, to come and partake of the most important benefits. The subject is introduced by a word used to claim attention from those to whom it is directed. The expression seems to allude to the practice of those who, having discovered a fountain of excellent water in some parched desert, call loudly to them who are feeble and faint, to come and share in the privilege which is open to all that choose to hearken to their voice.—The persons addressed are *every one that thirsteth*, whatever in other respects are his particular circumstances; none are excluded. Every one that thirsteth, in the sense intended by our prophet, feels that he is destitute of what is requisite to remove his deplorable ignorance, insensibility, and impurity, and to restore to him spiritual refreshment, vigour, and consolation. He hath an acute sense of his absolute need of an all-sufficient Saviour, to rescue him from sin and destruction, of pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace, with every thing necessary to supply his wants. Ready to faint for the word and salvation of God, he feels a vehement desire of obtaining those blessings which only can satiate his longing expectations, and diligently uses the means whereby they may be procured. This affecting sense of his necessities, though humiliating and painful, is both the presage, and the warrant to comply with his invitation, whose work is before him, and whose reward is with him, and who makes his

his offers of mercy and grace the means of conveying these benefits to the needy and destitute. The character is farther described in these words—*And he that bath on money*, no equivalent, no valuable compensation to give in return for the precious blessings of pardon, reconciliation to God, purity, liberty, and joy, he is solicitous to receive, and which his soul ardently desires. Convinced that he is poor and miserable, all his expectations are founded, not on his performances, acquisitions, or possessions, but on the free favour and good will of him who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not. To the door of mercy, therefore, in obedience to the call of God, he humbly repairs, he asks, he seeks, and he knocks, entreating that he whose compassions fail not, would, for his great name's sake, supply his urgent necessities.—To such the gracious invitation, is especially directed.

Come ye to the waters. The inestimable blessings flowing from the fountain of life, are significantly represented by waters, to which, in some respects, they bear a strong resemblance, on account of their vast abundance, the freedom with which they are bestowed, and their absolute necessity to satisfy those fervent desires, which nothing else can fully gratify. Come to the waters, the ordinances of Divine institution, where the truths and promises of the gospel are exhibited, where Jesus Christ, with his precious benefits, are to be enjoyed, and where the gifts, the graces, and comforts of the Holy Spirit are plentifully dispensed. From these waters of the sanctuary, attended with the presence and blessing of the Almighty, thirsty souls receive refreshment and consolation; they are restored to spiritual health and vigour, their just desires are fulfilled, and they become fruitful in every good work, to the glory and praise of God. As the imagery here employed is graceful, so the invitation is tender and affectionate; it takes hold on the heart, and can hardly be exceeded in warmth and urgency. To enforce compliance, the call is thrice repeated. Come then to the ordinances of divine institution,

institution, to which you are kindly invited, with enlarged expectations of obtaining every thing necessary to your happiness and salvation. Your compliance with this call is a part of that homage which you owe to your Creator and Lord; and therefore it ought to be performed with alacrity, and reverence for his authority who requires your attendance. It is your privilege, as well as your duty, and consequently you should approach the waters of the sanctuary with high estimation of the benefits which are there to be enjoyed, in sacred intercourse with God and his people. Besides, it is the appointed means of spiritual improvement, from which you may derive the most substantial advantages, and most agreeable satisfaction.

Buy and eat, &c. In the ordinary way of procuring any thing valuable that we need, money, or some equivalent, must be given for it, whereas the manner of purchase here mentioned is very different,—without money and without price. The expression, which is in substance repeated by Jesus Christ *, intimates, that somewhat must be parted with, in order to comply with this direction, and to enjoy the comforts which in this way are to be obtained. Corrupt passions, sinful practices, bad company, and anxious worldly sollicitudes, with all that may properly be called ours, must be parted with, or surrendered on demand, would we acquire the choice spiritual provision represented by wine and milk. Much precious time, the thoughts of many hearts, and diligent labour in the use of appointed means, must be employed, that we may get the inestimable benefits intended by our prophet. After all, he declares that they are bestowed without money and without price; no adequate compensation can possibly be made for them, nothing can be parted with or performed that bears the least proportion to what is received.—The invitation requires not only to buy, but to eat, to lay hold on the offered spiritual provision,

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* Rev. iii. 17, 18.

to appropriate it to ourselves, and actually to receive it with keen desire and strong relish of its excellence and utility, that thereby we may be strengthened unto all long suffering with joyfulnefs, and furnished for the performance of every good work.—Real good wine, (which is the most excellent and grateful of all liquors, revives the spirits, and makes men forget their poverty and misery,) may denote the sublime comfortable doctrines of the gospel, which are the means of removing spiritual indigence and wretchedness, and of conveying vigour and consolation to the mind. Milk, which you know is a kind of food that is pleasant, nourishing, and strengthening, may signify the plain simple truths of sacred Scripture, which are restorative, yielding sustenance and refreshment to those who receive them with faith and love.—To you, brethren, the word of salvation is sent; to you these pressing invitations are addressed by the Lord God, merciful and gracious. In obedience to his call, come to the ordinances of the gospel, with your spiritual wants, distempers, miseries and sorrows, that you may obtain that relief for which you have no compensation to offer. The blessings you are bidden to partake of, are of inestimable value; he who offers them is not in the least need of you; the benefits, whereof he solicits your acceptance, are already procured for you at a dear rate; nothing beside them can supply your necessities. Let him, then, ‘that is a-thirst come; and ‘whosoever will, let him take the water of life ‘freely *.’

2. Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which* is not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which* is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

To enforce compliance with the preceding invitation, the Lord God expostulates with men, respecting the extreme folly of those who refuse, and the great advantages which attend the thankful acceptance of his offers.—In the first part of the verse, there seems to be reference to the conduct of rich people, who expend their money in purchasing those articles which they consider as requisite to their convenience and comfortable subsistence; and to the practice of the lower ranks of the community, who subsist on what they gain by their labour and industry. Each of them, in his own way, expects to enjoy satisfaction; the former, in laying out their wealth to procure the comforts of life; the latter, in enjoying the fruits of their toil and diligence, whilst both classes find, by experience, that their hopes are disappointed, that their days are sorrow, and their travel grief*. Money may here denote whatever is esteemed most valuable and useful, which people are ready to bestow, that they may obtain the objects of their desire. Bread is the most common, necessary and excellent provision, whereby mankind in general are supported, and therefore called the staff of life. Why do you lavish away all your time and strength in acquiring that which is not bread, that cannot gratify the enlarged desires of your hearts, or support the life of your souls? Why do you give away what you reckon of the greatest worth for trifles, that can add very little, if any thing, to your real happiness? Why do you allow yourselves to be imposed upon by delusive appearances, and set your hearts on that which is not? The riches, the pleasures, and honours of this world, for the acquisition of which many lay out their labour and money, far from yielding permanent satisfaction to their possessors, give rise to vanity and vexation of spirit. Even knowledge, which bids fairest to impart happiness to the human mind, is insufficient for this purpose. ‘He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow, and that which

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* Eccl. ii. 23.

‘is wanting cannot be numbered*.’ All created enjoyments are only bread that satisfieth not; they are but cisterns, wherein the water is apt to putrify; they soon become almost empty, and what remains, hath neither flavour nor sweetness; yea, they are broken cisterns, full of chinks, by which the good runs off, and leaves nothing but what hath a disagreeable, unpleasant relish.

Hearken diligently unto me, &c. Eager attention to the word of the Lord is a happy mean to induce compliance with his gracious invitations. However kind and generous, if not regarded, they will neither be valued nor accepted. He who formed the ear, and endowed men with the faculty of hearing, requires, that, placing ourselves in a hearing posture, we earnestly listen to the words of his mouth, so as from the heart to believe and obey them. Hearken then diligently, brethren, to every part of the word of God, not only to its sublime doctrines, but to its holy precepts—not only to its precious promises, but to its kind invitations. Take heed that faith be mixed with it, that you humbly receive the truths it contains, that you cordially embrace the blessings it reveals, that you depend on the encouragements it exhibits, and submit to whatsoever it enjoins.—This important duty, which is well adapted to promote our best interests, is, alas, shamefully neglected. The old prophets of the Lord were often disregarded by those to whom they were sent; even the Son of God, who spake as never man spake, found it necessary to call for attention from the multitudes; and perhaps there is no less need now than in any former period, to urge the practice of this important duty. Many pay little regard to the word of God: curiosity, decency, and a respect to good order, induce some to attend to it; but of those who read and hear it, how few who hearken diligently. Indolence, drowsiness, vain thoughts, and indifference to Divine things, contribute, with other causes, to render the
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* Eccl. i. 18.

word unfruitful. Do you then carefully attend, and seriously consider what God saith to you :

And eat of that which is good, &c. By the good and fatness here mentioned, may be meant those rich and precious blessings that flow from the Divine bounty, and the fulness that is in Christ Jesus, which afford the highest pleasure and gratification to the mind. Of this sort are the pardon of sin, communion with God, the sanctifying, strengthening, and comforting influence of the Holy Spirit, the instructions derived from his word and providence, the sacred peace which arises from walking in Wisdom's ways, and the lively hope of eternal life. Of this excellent spiritual provision, presented in the good word of God, you are invited to participate, and thankfully to receive, that from thence you may derive nourishment and strength to your hearts. Let your souls solace themselves in this delicious entertainment, which the author of every good and perfect gift hath prepared for your support and consolation. Delight yourselves in the enjoyment of the rich, substantial blessings exhibited and offered to your acceptance in the gospel. anticipating, with the prophet David, the pleasing satisfaction expressed in the following words. ' My soul shall be satisfied, ' as with marrow and fatness,—with the goodness of ' thy house, even of thy holy temple *.'

3. Incline your ear, and come unto me : hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even* the sure mercies of David.

The gracious invitation, contained in the latter part of the preceding verse, is repeated, amplified, and enforced, by the immense advantages resulting from compliance with what is demanded.—*Incline your ear.* Listen attentively, and diligently apply your

* Psa. lxxiii, 5. and lxx. 4.

your minds to the instructions and invitations now addressed to you, which relate to matters of the greatest moment. Consider well what I say, and cheerfully obey my commands, whereby you are acquainted with my good pleasure. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.—*And come unto me*, saith the Lord God. Abandon, in affection and practice whatsoever hath kept you at a distance from me. In the exercise of faith, and hope, and confidence, approach my presence by him who is the way, the truth, and the life; for no man cometh unto me but by him, through whose mediation, and by whose Spirit, you can obtain comfortable access. Come unto me with filial freedom and humble boldness, that you may receive the cure of your spiritual distempers, the redress of your grievances, and the supply of your necessities.—Hear the voice of God, so as to understand, believe, and obey what he requires.

And your soul shall live, &c. The intelligent spirit, whereby you are distinguished from inferior creatures, the spiritual and most excellent part of your nature, which is dead, in consequence of the awful sentence of death denounced against transgression, in these words: ‘The soul that sinneth shall die.’—This soul that hath been dead in sin shall live, shall be delivered from condemnation, and shall pass from death to life; it shall be quickened, together with Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life. This Divine life proceeds from superior principles, is maintained by different means, and is accompanied with operations and effects distinct from those experienced by them that walk as men. Remarkable to this purpose are the words of the apostle Paul *, ‘I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.’ As this life is communicated to the soul by the Lord God, who raiseth the dead, and is supported by means
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* Gal. ii. 20.

of doing the will of our heavenly Father, which to those who are made alive unto God, is as their meat and drink, so its tendency is to glorify God, and to conduct to the everlasting enjoyment of his kingdom and presence. What a precious benefit is this, far transcending, in worth, and excellence, and perpetuity, that frail precarious life, for which a man will give all that he hath! The assurance of it should therefore be a powerful inducement to hear the voice of God, and to come to him—especially when it is added,

And I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, &c. The word covenant commonly signifies a solemn agreement, entered into by two parties, upon certain stipulated conditions for their mutual benefit*. It is used in various senses in scripture, which I stay not at present to enumerate. In the verse before us it may import, that Jehovah will assume you to be his peculiar people, that he will be your God, that he will fulfil to you his faithful promises, and effectually dispose you to observe his commandments with your whole hearts. The covenant, of which this is the sum †, the Lord God declares he will make with you that come to him. The Hebrew word signifies to strike, in allusion to the ancient custom of killing and dividing asunder some animal, at the ratification of a league of amity and friendship; to intimate, that the parties wished that like them they might be cut in pieces, did they not adhere to the solemn treaty into which they had entered. The expression in this passage may denote, that the covenant shall be firmly established and faithfully performed by ‘the Lord God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him, and observe his commandments‡.’—It is said to be everlasting, because it is founded on the immutability of Jehovah, and the unalterable purposes of his grace, and because of the irrevocable nature and endless perpetuity of the blessings it contains. God will remember

* 1 Sam. xviii. 3. † Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12. ‡ Neh. i. 5.

remember your sins no more, your righteousness and peace, your life, consolation, and salvation, shall be everlasting, and without end.

Even the sure mercies of David. These words were cited by the apostle Paul, in his discourse to the men of Israel at Antioch, to prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead *. The Messiah, David's son and Lord, is sometimes spoken of in the prophecies of the Old Testament by the name of David, who was an eminent type of him †. That the Messiah is here intended by this designation, seems to be confirmed by what follows in the next verse, where he is said to be given for a witness, a leader and commander to the people. All the blessings contained in the covenant that God makes with those that hear his voice, were procured for them by his interposition; into his hands, the distribution of them is committed, and by him they are dispensed. They are his mercies, inasmuch as they flow from his sovereign grace to the most unworthy, they are bestowed for his great name's sake, and display the exceeding riches of his mercy. And with great propriety are the blessings obtained by the Messiah for his people denominated sure mercies; because God, who cannot lie, hath promised to confer them on those who come to him.—These promises are recorded in his word of truth, sealed by his Spirit, attested by the most credible witnesses in heaven and earth, confirmed by his oath, and ratified by the death of his Son.—in human transactions, men may engage to do what they are unable to perform, or a variety of unforeseen circumstances may occur to prevent the fulfilment of their engagements; whereas, to the omnipotent Jehovah all things are possible, and nothing can happen to hinder the accomplishment of his promises. Health and reputation, riches and friends, may fail, spiritual strength, and peace, and comforts may decay; but the mercies of God are from everlasting
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* Acts xiii. 34.

† Ezek. xxxiv. 23.

to everlasting on them that fear him, and his covenant abideth for ever.

4. Behold I have given him *for* a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

To excite compliance with the gracious invitation, contained in the preceding verses, another consideration is mentioned, derived from the suitability of the Messiah to relieve the wants of mankind. Our circumstances require that we be acquainted with the will of God; that we be conducted in the path of life; and that we be animated and protected in the way which leads to the heavenly and better country. To supply these necessities, and to encourage people to come to him, the Lord God calls us to contemplate the fitness of his righteous Servant to grant all the aid that we want. To intimate the perfect certainty of what is affirmed, the event is spoken of, in prophetic language, as if already come to pass.

I have given him for a witness to the people. The office of a witness is to give evidence respecting some important truth, or fact, he is intimately acquainted with, which otherwise could not be properly ascertained, and to produce satisfying proofs of the certainty of his declaration. In this character, which is often attributed to Jesus Christ in the Scriptures, he acts with the utmost propriety, candour, and fidelity. He hath clearly stated the most momentous discoveries which are worthy of God to reveal, and accommodated to the circumstances of those to whom they are made known—relative to the nature, the perfections, purposes and will of Jehovah, how he stands affected toward men in their apostate condition, and what he requires to the advancement of his glory and their salvation. He only was capable of performing this arduous work; for no man knoweth

knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him*. ‘The things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God †.’ The Scriptures of truth, which are emphatically denominated ‘his testimony ‡,’ are admirably adapted to dispel the perplexing fears which proceed from a sense of guilt, and to gratify the intense desires of happiness that arise in the human mind. Assurance is given of a perfect atonement provided for sin, of a complete remedy for spiritual disorders, and an immortal felicity that far transcends the most enlarged expectations. With these, and the other topics concerning which he hath emitted his declaration, he discovers the most intimate acquaintance, as himself affirms. ‘We speak that we do know, and testify ‘that we have seen §’ His consummate excellencies give the fullest assurance that he hath revealed all that is necessary for men to know, believe, and practise, and that no error or mistake can be found in his testimony. His inviolable faithfulness gives the strongest security, that all things which he hath spoken are just and true, that he hath not disguised any one truth, or misrepresented any one fact. Indeed, he hath given satisfying evidence of the truth of what he hath said, by the stupendous miracles he performed, by his perfect example, and by laying down his life in confirmation of his doctrine, which is attested by them that bear record in heaven and earth—Particularly by sending the Spirit of truth, who is able to understand, believe, and obey this faithful and true witness. In this manner did Jesus Christ execute the office assigned to him, of being a witness to the people.—Thankfully receive, and cordially embrace his testimony; so as thereby to regulate your conduct and expectations, and thus set to your seal that God is true ||.

I have given him for a leader to the people. Acting in this capacity, he conducts them, by his example,

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* Mat. xi. 27.

† 1 Cor. ii. 20.

‡ Rev. i. 2.

§ John. iii. 11.

|| John iii. 33.

and by his Spirit, through this world to the heavenly and better country. The best of men are subject to mistakes and infirmities; they are apt to deviate from the perfect rule of righteousness, and therefore ought to be followed with great caution and prudence. Whereas he who is given to be our leader is an unerring guide, and hath set us an example, that we should walk in his steps. Some eminent men of God, who have exhibited illustrious examples of good conversation and conduct, have in certain instances greatly erred; their light hath been confined within narrow limits, and soon sunk into obscurity: whereas Jesus Christ, like the sun in the firmament, diffuses his salutary light over the world, and affords infallible direction to his disciples, so that whosoever followeth him, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. No cross accident, no corrupt passion, no temptation, allurements, or danger, ever seduced him from the path of righteousness. At all seasons, in every respect, and in every condition, he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Like the pillar of cloud and of fire, that conducted the Israelites through the howling wilderness, he clearly points out the way, which leads through the diversified scenes of this world, to the land of everlasting uprightness. That he might be such a leader as our circumstances require, he puts his Spirit within us, and causes to walk in his statutes, to keep his judgments, and do them—he guides us into all truth. By his Divine agency, he works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure, he enlightens our understandings to see the road wherein we should go, and orders our steps in the way of life.

Jehovah hath also given his righteous Servant for a commander to the people. In this, as in every other character, he possesses unrivalled excellence and glory: he is infinitely wise, righteous, and powerful, condescending, and victorious. He assigns to every one his particular station, he furnishes with abilities suited to their employments, he directs their several movements,

movements, he points out their duty and danger; he gives instruction, relative to their conduct in every capacity and situation, how they ought to behave toward him, toward their brethren and their enemies; how they ought to acquit themselves in time of conflict, and in seasons of tranquillity; he teaches their hands to fight in the spiritual warfare; he shews them how to manage their spiritual armour, in the circumstances wherein they are placed; he goes before them in the path of obedience, in the way of suffering, and in the road that leads to final conquest and immortal glory, affording the most ample encouragement to fortitude and fidelity. And, to prevent mistakes respecting the orders he hath issued, he gives an understanding to know, and ability to obey his commands.—He makes liberal provision for the safety and comfort of his followers, giving them not only food and raiment for their bodies, but the bread of life and the garments of salvation for their souls, strengthening with might in the inner man, and supplying with help in every time of need.—Besides, this commander does what no other can do; he vanquishes all the enemies of his people, and gives them the assurance of complete victory.—The safety and success of other commanders, depends on the strength and valour of their troops; whereas their safety and success is entirely owing to him who gives power to the faint, and to them who have no might increaseth strength.—Nor is this all. He promises them abundant recompence for their labour of love, for the patience of hope, and the severe struggles they have had with their spiritual foes. To the faithful he will give a crown of life, righteousness, and glory; and to him that overcometh he will grant to sit with him on his throne, even as he overcame, and is set down ‘with the Father on his throne *.’

To these important offices the Messiah was destined in the decree of Jehovah; under these characters he was exhibited in ancient prophecy; and in the fulness

* Rev. iii. 21.

ness of time, he was actually given to the nations of the world, that he might accomplish the benevolent purposes we have been considering. What a rich and suitable donation! How strong and manifold the obligations we are brought under to believe this Witness, to follow this Leader, to obey this Commander, who is the Lord of lords, the best friend of mankind, from whom we have received the most substantial favours; the compassionate Redeemer, who gave himself a ransom for us, and rescued us from destruction!

5. Behold, thou shalt call a nation *that* thou knowest not, and nations *that* knew not thee, shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

The invitations given by the Messiah in the gospel were to be extended to distant kingdoms, where they were to be attended with happy success. The prediction before us may be considered as directed to Jesus Christ, who is the witness, the leader, and commander of the people, who, by his apostles and ministers of the word, calls men to fellowship with him in virtue and glory. The joyful sound of this call was to 'reach unto all the earth, and their words to the 'ends of the world*.' This important benefit, whereby sinners of mankind are effectually delivered from ignorance, sin, and misery, and translated into a state of knowledge, holiness, and happiness, is in Scripture emphatically denominated 'vocation, or 'calling.' Our prophet declares, that this call was to be given to a nation that the Messiah had not hitherto known. This circumstance may at first sight seem paradoxical, but properly viewed, is easily explained. In the sacred oracles, God is said to know those whom he loves and approves †, and not to know them for whom

* Rom. x. 13.

† Psal. i. 6.

whom he does not manifest peculiar affection and regard *. The great Redeemer, whose eyes do see, and whose eyelids try the children of men, who knoweth all things, is perfectly acquainted with the principles, the actions, and views of all mankind. Notwithstanding he is here affirmed not to know the kingdoms of the earth, whose conduct he did not approve, with whom he had not cultivated intimate intercourse, and on whom he had not conferred any distinguishing marks of his favour. The Gentile nations are certainly intended by this expression, who, under the former dispensation, did not enjoy the light of Divine revelation, and were suffered to walk in their own ways. These nations were also to be among the called of Jesus Christ.

And nations that knew not thee, shall run unto thee. Those who hitherto had been destitute of the knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, sitting in the region and shadow of death, unacquainted with the perfections, the providence, the word, and salvation of Jehovah.—*Shall run unto thee.* The call given to the Gentiles by the Messiah shall not be in vain. Perceiving the imminent danger to which they were exposed, and the astonishing grace of the Saviour, published in the gospel, they shall have recourse to him with the utmost promptitude and alacrity. They shall run to him for safety, and flee to him for refuge, as the only hope set before them, that they may obtain the remission of sins, the promised Spirit, and eternal inheritance. To this cheerful compliance with the Messiah's invitation they shall be induced—*Because of the Lord thy God,* who is plenteous in mercy, and ready to forgive; who by his powerful grace disposes them to resort to the all-sufficient Redeemer; who adorns his people with spiritual beauty, enriches them with glorious privileges, and continually resides among them. Jehovah is denominated the God of his righteous Servant, inasmuch as he prepared him for his arduous work—
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* Mat. vii. 23.

he sent him forth to execute it, invested with his authority—he afforded him constant support and defence—he was the ultimate end he kept continually in view—and the everlasting portion he now enjoys.—*And for the holy One of Israel*, who manifested his consummate purity in all the transactions he had with the posterity of Jacob, in the deliverances he wrought for them, in the laws he gave them, and in the privileges with which they were honoured. These things were to attract the notice and admiration of the Gentile nations, and to prove strong inducements to engage them to run to the Messiah, and to embrace his salvation.—*For he hath glorified thee*, by raising thee triumphant from the dead, a mighty conqueror over death and the grave, by exalting thee to the right hand of the Majesty on High, and by committing into thy hands all power in heaven and on earth. To intimate the perfect certainty of these events, which were to be considered as reasons why the Gentiles should run to Jesus Christ that they might be saved, they are spoken of in the prophetic style as already past.—In consequence of this prediction, we, sinners of the Gentiles, are the called of Christ Jesus to his eternal kingdom and glory. What returns of gratitude and obedience are due to him for his adorable condescension and distinguishing goodness! Let us then walk worthy of our holy and heavenly vocation, and shew forth his praises who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

6. ¶ Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.

These words, which are closely connected with the preceding verse, urge to the practice of an important duty, and point out the season wherein it ought to be performed. As the same exercise is inculcated in both parts of this verse, I shall explain
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and illustrate them together.—To *seek the Lord* is, from real conviction of indigence, and a firm persuasion of his benignity and grace, to endeavour diligently, in the use of prescribed means, to obtain from him the precious blessings he hath promised to bestow. To *call on the Lord* is, from a just sense of manifold necessities, and his readiness to hear the supplications of the needy, earnestly to intreat his gracious interposition and suitable communications of mercy and deliverance. Sometimes the expression is used more extensively, to denote in general the sacred homage and worship that is given to the Most High.—More particularly, To *seek the Lord and to call upon him*, proceeds from heartfelt conviction of human depravity and guilt; that we have lost the image of God, wherein man's highest glory consisted; that we have forfeited his favour, that is better than life, and communion with him, in which lies our chief happiness; and that, by transgression, we are obnoxious to his dread displeasure. Just apprehensions that this is indeed our spiritual state excite to seek the Lord with fervency and importunity. Nor is it less requisite to the right performance of this duty, that we be firmly persuaded that the Lord God, merciful and gracious, may be found in the way he hath revealed and prescribed. No man will seek what he knows he cannot obtain, nor call on him by whom he will not be regarded. Fully satisfied, that though our losses are great, they are not irretrievable; that though our case is deplorable, it is not hopeless; that God is still to be found; that we may escape the fatal consequences of sin, that we may be restored to his resemblance and favour, and re-admitted into communion with him, the Lord God ought to be called upon and sought with the whole heart. In the diligent use of the means instituted for this end, solicitous that they may be accompanied with the Divine blessing, we ought earnestly to entreat his face and favour above all things, being assured that none shall seek him in vain.—The season

to be appropriated to this exercise is specified in the following words:

While he may be found, and while he is near. To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven. The time specified, as most proper for the performance of the duty here recommended, may comprehend this present life, whilst the forbearance and long-suffering of God is experienced—the season of our merciful visitation, wherein God waits to be gracious, and requires to be sought.—More especially, the period in which we enjoy the gospel of the grace of God, wherein we are urged to the practice of the duty above mentioned, by all those weighty arguments that can move the springs of human actions. Proclamations of indemnity for the past are issued to all who will thankfully accept of mercy—expostulations are addressed to transgressors to induce them to throw down their weapons of rebellion—invitations are given to return to their duty and allegiance—the reasonableness, the necessity, and the advantages resulting from compliance, and—the terrible consequences of obstinate refusals, are exhibited in strong colours.—It may have more particular respect to the season wherein God is pleased to strive with us by his Spirit, reaching conviction to the heart of sin and danger, and our absolute need of the Saviour and his salvation. Some of you, my hearers, know by experience the truth of what I say. Have not you occasionally found serious impressions made on your minds, of the immense importance of your eternal interests. If these are effaced, if good motions are suppressed, if kind suggestions are stifled, if gracious operations are resisted, and you neglect to call upon God, you let slip a favourable opportunity of seeking the Lord, who is then near. Whereas, by improving such seasons, you may hope that he will be found of you to your present comfort and everlasting joy. For the Lord's sake, for your own sake, engage without delay in this important work, to which you are often invited and
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amply encouraged; and persevere in it until your labour is crowned with success.

7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Transgressors of every description are invited to repentance and return to God, by the most animating motives.—The call is particularly addressed to the wicked, whose name, in the Hebrew language, is derived from a word that signifies to be unquiet. This designation well agrees with the turbulent dispositions for which people of this character are often remarkable. Unquiet is their name, and unquietness is with them. They cannot cease from sin, which renders them unstable and fluctuating, and oftentimes uneasy to themselves and troublesome to society. In contempt of God and his authority, they are restless and assiduous in the practice of iniquity.—It is addressed also to the unrighteous, who give not unto God the things that are God's, nor unto men the things that are men's, but withhold from them their just right, and that which properly belongs to them.—Who refuse to submit to the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, though destitute of the righteousness demanded by the law of God. To persons of these characters the word of salvation is sent.—Let the wicked forsake his way, the vicious course of life wherein he hath walked, and the atrocious transgressions that he hath committed. Let him abandon his way of contemning the worship of God, of profaning the name and Sabbaths of the Lord, and of injuring his neighbours in their persons, property, and reputation. Let him lay aside those corrupt dispositions and evil habits, wherein he hath indulged,

to which he hath been addicted by natural constitution, by external situation, and strong temptation. The words do not merely give permission to do what is required, but contain an explicit authoritative command to renounce subjection to former impetuous passions, and to desist from every criminal indulgence or pursuit.

Let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts, the evil imaginations he hath cherished, the bad purposes he hath formed, and the unjust sentiments he hath adopted respecting the perfections, the providence, the word, and salvation of Jehovah. Let him leave off the wrong apprehensions he hath entertained respecting himself; the invidious censures, the revengeful thoughts he hath harboured concerning his brethren of mankind. These, and all other evil thoughts whereby his mind hath been occupied, and its depravity increased, he is required to abandon, that he may return to God with his whole heart.—How reasonable, how just and friendly, the requisition which demands your immediate compliance. Real reformation and returning to God commences at the heart, every deliberate action arises from some forethought, which forms a connection between the operations of the mind, and those which are outward and visible.

And let him return unto the Lord. There is a returning, but not to the Most High, which comes far short of what is intended by this exhortation. People may part with some sins, wherein they have indulged, because temptation is withdrawn; they may forsake certain gross sins, whilst they retain affection for others; or they may be guilty of those which are not commonly censured with severity, such as pride, earthly-mindedness, and self-righteousness, whilst they avoid such as are more generally detested and execrated. Such a partial return is owing not to the grace of God changing the heart, but to the providence of God altering their situation, and is very different from that which is here required, whereby the wicked and unrighteous return to the Lord. Deeply affected

affected with a humbling sense of their sin and folly, like the prodigal, mentioned in the parable by Jesus Christ, they arise, and go to their heavenly Father, with the becoming acknowledgment, 'We have sinned before thee'—We now return to thee, our rightful sovereign, that henceforth we may yield dutiful subjection to thy authority and disposals—and to our offended Father, requesting to be admitted into thy family, and to enjoy the privileges of thy children. Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render to thee the calves of our lips. Let all our thoughts, purposes, and actions, be regulated by thy will, and directed to thy glory.—To induce compliance with this gracious invitation, these comfortable words are subjoined :

And he will have mercy upon him. Misery is the proper object of mercy, and supposes its existence in those to whom it is extended. Misery unobserved, felt, or concealed, like a shadow follows the transgressor, from which Divine mercy effectually delivers; it rescues from the punishment sin deserved; it quickens to the exercise of a spiritual life; it begets a lively hope of an incorruptible inheritance, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In mercy Jehovah grants audience and answer to prayer; he administers comfort to the dejected, and rest to the weary; he redeems from iniquity, and in the end bestows everlasting life. This is a powerful argument to engage the wicked and the unrighteous to forsake their evil ways, and to return unto God. Some may pervert this truth to another, and to a bad purpose, but that is not its proper tendency. Pardon offered to a rebel, who lays down the weapons of rebellion, and returns to allegiance to his sovereign, gives no encouragement to continuance in acts of hostility.—This is not all—The Lord God will abundantly pardon, or, as the Hebrew words denote, he will multiply to forgive. Persons of the above description, reviewing the number and atrocity of the crimes they have committed, might be apt to sink into despondency,
and

and to say, with the dejected Church of old, ‘ Our hope is perished from the Lord *.’ To encourage them to return to the Lord, they are assured, that in great mercy he multiplies pardons to multiplied offences; ‘ that as sin hath abounded, grace shall much more abound †.’ Despair then, of the mercy of God, is no less dangerous than presumption that it shall be dispensed in any other way than he hath declared. This moving consideration should induce the vicious and the unjust to forsake their sins, and to return to the Lord, from whom they shall meet with a kindly reception, and obtain plenteous redemption. ‘ Yet return again to me, saith the Lord ‡.’

8. ¶ For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

Jehovah affirms the infinite superiority of his counsels and dispensations to the apprehensions and actions of men. His thoughts may here signify his purposes and designs, effected in the matchless beauty and order of the universe, in the operations of Providence—in the government of the world—in the revelation of his will—in the laws he hath enacted—in the gospel he hath promulgated—in the gifts of his Son and Spirit he hath bestowed—in the ordinances he hath instituted—in the Church he hath established—in the redemption, conversion, sanctification, preservation, and salvation of his people—and in all the works that he hath done. God’s purposes and designs, discovered in these manifold operations, far transcend our feeble conceptions. Steadily contemplate the immense wonders which they exhibit, and then say, doth not the thoughts of Jehovah, that are sublime, wise, extensive, invariable, infinitely surpass our imperfect, limited, fluctuating apprehensions?

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* Lam. iii. 18.

† Rom. v. 20.

‡ Jer. iii. 1.

—Two or three instances, adduced from Scripture, may serve to illustrate and confirm this truth. Nothing was farther from the intention of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, in detaining the Israelites in bondage, than magnifying the name of God, and fulfilling his purpose; yet Jehovah rendered the tyranny and cruelty of that proud monarch the means of executing his decrees, and of declaring his name throughout all the earth. By appointing the enrolment and taxation of his subjects, the Roman emperor, Augustus Cæsar, probably had no other view than ascertaining the number of his people, and obtaining necessary supplies to government; whereas the Lord God had a higher end to accomplish by that decree, namely, to shew that the child Jesus was actually born, according to prophecy, in the town of Bethlehem. The chief priests, the scribes, and the rulers of the Jews, seem to have designed nothing more by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, than to gratify their malevolent disposition, and to punish one that they imagined was guilty of blasphemy and sedition; whereas God meant, by that execrable deed, to demonstrate the enmity of men at true goodness and perfect innocence; to fulfil ancient predictions and types; to make atonement for sin, and to accomplish the redemption of his Church. What a great disparity between the thoughts of God and the thoughts of men!

Neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. His ways may denote the dispensations of his providence, which are far superior to the limited apprehensions of mankind. Human wisdom employs the best means, and the most suitable instruments, in order to attain the ends it hath in view to accomplish; and after much deliberation, having taken the advice of those who are eminent for knowledge and prudence, adopts those measures which seem most likely to be attended with success. How exceedingly superior are the ways of God in providence, who overthrows the wisdom of the wise, and brings to nought the devices

devices of the prudent, of which many memorable instances occur in the sacred records*. He often uses the most improbable means, and most insignificant instruments, to execute the most important purposes. ‘God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and things which are despised hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are †.’—Great also is the dissimilitude between the ways of God’s precepts and the ways of men, who, in their conduct, endeavour to make void the commandments of God, and in many instances manifest a strong opposition to his righteous authority. His judgments, as a king of Israel observed, are far above out of sight ‡. Though in most instances their equity and utility may be acknowledged, still they greatly exceed, in excellence, purity, importance, and suitableness, whatever human sagacity could have devised. Of this sort are humility in the highest elevation, self-denial, bearing the cross, rendering good for evil, forgiveness of injuries, and abstinence from revenge.—The ways of God in the salvation of the Church far transcend any thing that could have entered into the heart of man. How wonderful in our eyes is the incarnation of the Son of God, the union of the Divine and human nature in his person, his appearance in the likeness of sinful flesh, so that he was considered and treated as a sinner! How astonishing is the substitution of this innocent and holy One in place of the guilty, that he might effect their redemption; that for this purpose it pleased the Lord to bruise him, to put him to shame, and to deliver him to the death for us all—That in consequence of this marvellous constitution, sinners of mankind, by faith in the Redeemer, should be justified and saved; that God, who distributes favours and punishments with perfect equity,

* Gen. xi. 3. *et seq.* and 2 Sam. 17.

† 1 Cor. i. 27. *et seq.*

‡ Psal. xx. 5.

equity, should confer upon any of them the forgiveness of sins, and the enjoyment of his loving-kindness! How infinitely superior to our feeble apprehensions are the ways of God, in translating men from darkness to light, by the renovating power of the Holy Ghost; whereby they are made partakers of the salvation of his Son, brought to resemble God, and are prepared for his enjoyment—How very high are these thoughts and ways of Jehovah above our thoughts and ways!

9. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

To illustrate and amplify the subject, to place it in a clearer and more conspicuous point of view, a comparison is stated, wherein is united sublimity and beauty, and which, for splendor and magnificence, cannot be exceeded. Whilst the similitude assists the mind in contemplating the truth it is intended to elucidate, it impresses the idea, that such is its immense magnitude, that it far exceeds the most elevated conceptions. Looking up to the starry heavens, beyond which human sight, with its best contrived assistances, cannot penetrate, we survey and admire the immense altitude of the celestial orbs above this earth, we observe them encircling, enlightening, and refreshing our habitation. In them, as in a glass, we behold the immeasurable height, the boundless extent, and salutary influence of the mercy of Jehovah, which infinitely transcends our feeble apprehensions, and reaches far beyond the most exalted thoughts of which the human mind is capable. In them we see an instructive emblem of the vast superiority of the thoughts and ways of God above our thoughts and ways, which ought to excite the highest admiration of his glorious excellencies, and to engage us to worship him with
 profound

profound humility, whose ways are past finding out. I conclude this article in the words of Solomon*,
 ‘ A man cannot find out the work that is done under
 ‘ the sun; because, though a man labour to seek it
 ‘ out, yet he shall not find it; yea further, though a
 ‘ wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able
 ‘ to find it.’—Beware then, brethren, of presuming
 to censure the dispensations of Providence, or the
 revelations of his grace. Take heed, lest you mur-
 mur at the stations he hath allotted you, lest you
 quarrel with the rectitude of his laws and institutions,
 lest you reject the offers of his gospel, or press its
 doctrines into the service of sin, and pervert them
 to your own destruction. Say not, because God is
 merciful, you may indulge in the practice of iniquity;
 but improve the comfortable truth we have been
 considering, as a powerful argument to engage you to
 return to God, if so be that he may have mercy on
 you that you perish not.

10. For as the rain cometh down, and the
 snow from heaven, and returneth not thither,
 but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring
 forth and bud, that it may give seed to the
 sower, and bread to the eater.

The divine efficacy attending the word of God is
 illustrated by a beautiful similitude, taken from
 natural objects that come under human observation.
 The rain and the snow (whatever be their natural
 causes) do not fall merely by accident, but by the
 appointment of the Lord God, who claims this as his
 peculiar prerogative, that he causes rain and gives
 showers from heaven †. According to his sovereign
 pleasure, he fixes the time, the place, the quantity,
 and the continuance of them, so as to effect the pur-
 poses he hath in view to accomplish. He sends
 them forth out of his treasures, not only to give
 evidence

* Eccl. viii. 17.

† Jer. xiv. 22.

evidence of his goodness, and to display his overruling Providence, but to water and fructify the earth, that its inhabitants, who are supported by the fruits of the ground, may be supplied with abundant suitable provision—and that the husbandman, who cultivates the fields, may have seed wherewith to sow, in due season, the lands which he occupies, in the prospect of receiving a plentiful crop in the next harvest. The words, in which this comparison is stated, are so plain, as not to require farther exposition.

II. So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

The rain and the snow, which come down from heaven, exhibit a graceful emblem of the salutary doctrine contained in the scriptures, that proceeds from the Father of lights, the giver of every good and perfect gift. Like the rain, which softens, refreshes, and fructifies the earth, the word of God mollifies and makes soft the hearts on which it falls; it renovates them, it promotes spiritual growth and fertility, and causes them to become pleasant and fruitful. Wherever it comes with Divine efficacy, and receiveth blessing from God, it reaches the heart and conscience, and prevents them from being barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This beautiful image conveys a just idea of those beneficial, blessed effects, produced by the word of God, when it drops as the rain, when his doctrine distils as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass*. Still, however, this similitude comes short of what it is designed to illustrate, for the sacred

truth that proceeds from Jehovah produces such a spiritual change in the minds of men, as neither rain nor snow can effect on the face of the earth. It changes the nature of the soil, it transforms them into a state resembling good ground, it kills at the root those hurtful lusts, which would choke the good seed, and hinder its growth and fruitfulness.—The word here intended is said to go forth out of God's mouth. Though delivered by men of like passions with ourselves, it is declared to be the word of God, because it was spoken and written by holy men, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; because it bears the impression of his authority, and should be received, as it is indeed the word of God. Ungodly people may endeavour to render it of none effect, by rejecting, disobeying, and contemning it; but their criminal conduct shall not frustrate, but shall verify what is here said. Explicit assurance is given by Jehovah himself, that it shall not return to him void, destitute of those important effects it is given to produce. If it do not meliorate, it will harden; if it does not prove the favour of life unto life, it will become the favour of death unto death.

But shall accomplish that which I please, &c. What is the good pleasure of God respecting his word, and for what purposes doth he send it? The things which chiefly please him, and the ends for which he sends it, are such as these—To convince men of their sin and misery, to make them sensible of the deceitfulness and wickedness of their hearts, of their manifold transgressions, whereby they have violated his law and incurred his dread displeasure, and, by consequence, of their need of pardon of sin, and the renovation of their natures.—To acquaint them with the all-sufficient Saviour he hath provided, and the great salvation he hath obtained, that they may be induced to have recourse to him, that they may participate in his redemption, and receive every blessing necessary to supply their wants—To convert them from the error of their ways unto the wisdom of the just,

just, and to be the means of translating them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified.—To instruct them in their duty and destination, to direct them in the way wherein they ought to walk, and respecting the hopes they ought to entertain.—To console them under the calamities of life, by assurances to the upright, that the Lord God will help under infirmities, support under distresses, that he will never leave nor forsake, that all things shall work together for good to them that love him.

Such are the salutary effects, for the accomplishing of which the word of Jehovah shall prosper. It may fall on some, whose hearts in hardness resemble the wayside; on others, who may be obdurate like stony places; on some, where it may be choked by the thorny cares of the world; but it shall also fall on others, who, like good ground, shall bring forth the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, to the praise of God. In every age, the efficacy of the word of truth, accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit, hath been experienced. How glorious and extensive were the fruits it produced at the time of Pentecost, and in periods that immediately followed! In these last days, and even in this assembly, I hope there are not a few who have felt it to be the power of God unto salvation. When your hearts were hard, this was the hammer that broke them; when cold, this was the fire that dissolved them; when obstinate, this was the power that subdued them; when diseased, this was the medicine that healed them; when feeble, this was the cordial that revived them. No instrument can act but by his agency who uses it: Paul might plant, by disseminating the doctrine of the gospel; Apollos might water by his persuasive eloquence; after all, God only can give the increase. Deeply impressed with this truth, earnestly pray that God may render his word effectual, for accomplishing

plishing to you the important ends for which it is sent.

12. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.

Beholding in spirit the apostles, the evangelists, and their fellow-labourers in the work of the gospel, going forth to execute their mission among the Gentile nations, our prophet foretels, that they were to engage in their work with alacrity, and to perform it with pleasure and gladness of heart.—He delineates, in strong colours, the happy effects which were to accompany the ministry of the word, in the contemplation whereof the whole creation is represented as breaking forth into joy and praise, to celebrate its glorious triumphs. The Jews having rejected the Saviour, put away from them the word of God, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, the ministers of the gospel turned to the Gentiles, who were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord*. Happy in the honourable employment assigned them, these good men went forth under the conduct of the Captain of Salvation, animated by the spirit of truth and love, to carry the Divine lamp of the gospel to those who were sitting in darkness—to publish the message of peace and reconciliation, and to promulgate tidings of great joy to those among whom they itinerated. Commissioned to preach peace to them that were afar off, no wonder that they themselves exulted and triumphed, and that those to whom they were sent, received them with gratitude and gladness. Consult the Acts of the Apostles, read with attention the epistles of Paul, and you may be fully satisfied respecting the fulfilment of this prediction,

* Acts xiii. 46. *et seq.*

diction, which in succeeding ages, hath been further accomplished. Not only at Theſſalonica, but in many other places, hath the goſpel come to men, not in word only, but in power, and with joy of the Holy Ghoſt, ſo that they have become followers of the Lord, and their faith Godward hath ſpread abroad.

The mountains and the hills ſhall break forth, &c. In theſe bold and beautiful ſtrains doth Iſaiah predict the felicity and joy which was to reſult from the miniſtry of the word of God among the heathen. Had the mountains, the hills, and the trees, been capable of teſtifying gladneſs, they would have burſt forth into ſongs of praiſe, at the peaceful tidings which Jehovah was pleaſed to publiſh by his ſervants unto all people. If the expreſſion be underſtood in its figurative ſenſe, it denotes, that thoſe kingdoms and ſtates, thoſe princes and great men, to whom the word of God was preached, were to receive its miniſters with cordial affection, and to ſignify their felicity and gratitude on this deſirable event. Reproaches, dangers, and afflictions, even death itſelf in all its horrors, could not diſturb the joyful ſenſations, and ſacred tranquillity of mind, poſſeſſed by our Lord's ſervants in the goſpel. This remark was nobly exemplified in the apoſtle Paul, in his ſon Titus, and is in ſome meaſure verified in thoſe who are heartily engaged in the ſame bleſſed work with them. And as for thoſe to whom the goſpel comes with power, the meſſage was heard with joy by all who believed it: hence it is recorded in the Acts of the Apoſtles, that there was great joy in their cities*. By you, my friends, it ſhould be received, not only with faith and love, but with pleaſure, and thankſgiving to him who hath vouchſafed to grant you this ineſtimable benefit, and improved with a view to the future account you muſt render to him that judgeth righteouſly.

13. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree : and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.

The wonderful effects produced by the word of God, attended with Divine power, are here described in beautiful figurative language. The desert of the Gentiles having been watered by the word of God, the most surprising, delightful change, was to take place ; the wilderness was to be converted into a perfect paradise, to the praise and glory of God. The thorn and the brier are too well known to need a particular description. They are prickly shrubs, that cannot safely be meddled with ; for most part they are hurtful, and mar the fruitfulness of the ground, being useful only for fences and fuel. They exhibit a significant emblem of bad, mischievous people, who are dangerous to society, who entangle and hurt good men, by various means impeding their growth and usefulness, though sometimes employed by Providence to protect the godly ; and when cut down, they are cast into hell fire.—The fir-tree is remarkable for height and good appearance, for the number and closeness of its branches, for the excellence of its timber and continual verdure. On these, and other accounts, it affords a significant representation of one who is distinguished for eminent attainments in Christianity, for manifold graces and virtues, for whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, and for real worth and excellence.—The myrtle-tree, of which there are various kinds, is a comely fragrant evergreen, that yields a kind of fruit which is said to resemble an olive, and may represent such as possess spiritual beauty, who bring forth the fruits of righteousness, and diffuse around them the sweet favour of the knowledge of Christ. The meaning, then, of the prediction

prediction before us is shortly this, that the word of God, being accompanied with power from on high, shall effect a change in the temper and conduct of men, like that which would take place in nature was the thorn removed, and a stately fir-tree put in its room; was a brier taken away, and an odoriferous myrtle substituted in its place. Instead of those who were noxious and troublesome, shall arise such as are valuable and useful; instead of fierce, malicious, revengeful people, who were the pests of society, shall appear those who are gentle, courteous, and humane. Instead of those who were spiteful and malignant, shall come up those who dwell together in unity, and who, being fruitful in good works, prove blessings to them among whom they reside.—Such is the happy change here foretold to be effected by the word of God in them that believe, such is the salutary operation and joyful consequence of the gospel of the grace of God.

And it shall be to the Lord for a name, &c. The above-described wonderful alteration, which gives an illustrious display of the efficacy of Divine truth and grace, shall infinitely redound to the honour and glory of Jehovah. Comparing the former with the present temper and conduct of those who have become conspicuous for faith and holiness, for every amiable grace and virtue, people shall be obliged to acknowledge, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and to celebrate the praises of the great author of this remarkable change, which is a perpetual memorial of his mercy, power, and faithfulness.—*For an everlasting sign, &c.* These words seem to allude to the practice of raising monuments to the honour of persons of great celebrity, who have been the patrons and benefactors of their country, with a view to preserve in remembrance the good exploits they have performed. Every one that is born of God and made partaker of his holiness, is a living monument of the kindness and grace of Jehovah, on which his name is inscribed, and on account of which he shall
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be for ever honoured and magnified. Whilst the monuments erected by men are destroyed by the hand of violence, or perish in the ruins of time, this sign, exhibited by divine omnipotence, shall remain unimpaired throughout all ages in its pristine excellence, justly admired and extolled. We therefore conclude, in the words of a truly sublime Poet, after having contemplated the dispensations of Providence toward his Church, ‘Thy name, O Lord, endureth for ever, thy memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations *.’

* Psal. cxxxv. 13.

PRELI-

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

IN that portion of the prophetic discourse contained in this chapter, addressed especially to the Church under the New Testament dispensation, they are instructed that the promises and the commands of God are of equal extent ; that those who observe the laws shall have right to the privileges of the gospel. Our prophet, having described the benefits to be enjoyed by the people of God under the new œconomy of grace, proceeds, by Divine conduct, to state the duties required of those who expect to be favoured with the prerogatives belonging to the kingdom of God, and who may hope to enjoy their continuance, ver. 1.—He then celebrates the felicity of the man who diligently applies his mind to the practice of holiness and righteousness, and who endeavours to perform them with fidelity and diligence, ver. 2 —He shews that every one whatever be his external circumstances, may appropriate to himself the signal advantages enjoyed by the servants of God, which were to be extended to persons of every description, in all the nations of the earth, ver. 3.—7.—He foretels that the Lord God was to collect into the communion of his Church, not only the dispersed of Israel, but to call into their fellowship many from among the Gentiles, ver. 8.—After which he exhibits a moving picture of the Church thus enlarged, degenerating into a corrupt state, through the sloth, negligence, avarice, and luxury of their overseers and rulers, ver 9. *et seq.*

CHAP. LVI.

THUS saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation *is* near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.

This section of our prophet's discourse commences with an exhortation to maintain the exercises of righteousness and equity, which is enforced by two powerful motives. Well knowing the aversion of mankind to the practice of many parts of their duty, and the cold reception they are apt to give to such directions as are contained in this verse, he introduces them with the greatest solemnity, he urges to obedience by the supreme authority of Jehovah, and the manifold obligations which his peculiar people lie under to him, for the revelation of his grace.—*Keep ye judgment, and do justice.* Judgment and justice are often mentioned together in the holy Scriptures, and cannot indeed be separated in good practice. The former may relate chiefly to the understanding and conscience, the latter to the rectitude and integrity of conduct, both of which should be regulated by the law of the Lord, whilst the one serves to illustrate and explain the other. Both expressions, which are of similar import, strongly recommend sacred regard to righteousness in every transaction, the utmost solicitude to follow that which is altogether just, and to render to every one his due. They demand uniform persevering respect to the golden rule, prescribed by Jesus Christ in these memorable words, 'Whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.' This is frequently inculcated in each of these writings, it is the sum of what they teach relative to the reciprocal good offices that men owe one to another, it is one great design of the instructions

Instructions and precepts in both these parts of Divine revelation. The precept requires assiduous endeavours to avoid whatsoever might encroach on the sacred rights of judgment, or prove injurious to equity, and to perform every social virtue, such as brotherly-kindness, forgiveness, mercy, and beneficence—That abstaining from every species of fraud, deceit, and oppression, we carefully cultivate the practice of all goodness, righteousness, and truth, with a strict regard to probity and justice.

The learned Vitringa and some other commentators are of opinion, that the words under consideration ought not to be restricted to the duties that people owe to their neighbours, but should be considered as comprehending the whole doctrine delivered by Jesus Christ and his apostles, which is perfectly just and true, and the rule whereby judgment respecting God and his salvation ought to be formed—as comprising, what is afterward mentioned in this chapter, keeping the Sabbath, refraining from evil, choosing the things that please the Lord, taking hold of his covenant, loving the name of the Lord, and being his servants. In this extensive sense, the exhortation imports, that the doctrines and precepts of the gospel ought to be carefully preserved pure and entire, as a valuable treasure committed to the Church, for the improvement of which they are responsible to its blessed Author—That they should be believed with the heart, confessed with the mouth, and uniformly obeyed throughout the whole of life.—Let us, who profess to be the disciples of the holy and just One, walk honestly as in the day, and endeavour, by the exercises here enjoined, to demonstrate the sincerity of our faith in Jesus Christ, and to remove those obstructions that might hinder renewed communications of Divine mercy and grace.—Compliance with this direction, is urged by two considerations :

1st, *My salvation is near to come, &c.* Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, may be here meant, who is emphatically

emphatically denominated ‘the Salvation of God;’ because he obtained it by his death, bestows it by his Spirit; because it consists in conformity to him, in communion with him, and the enjoyment of him.—He is near; the time of his advent quickly approached, when he was to appear to the glory and joy of those who were waiting for the consolation of Israel: He is ever near, to enlighten your path, to conduct, assist, and animate you by his example, word, and Spirit, to afford you protection and deliverance from every adverse power.

2d, *And my righteousness to be revealed.* The righteousness of Jehovah may denote the rich displays which he was about to give of his justice and holiness, of his love, faithfulness, and other glorious perfections, in the redemption of his people, through the obedience, sufferings, and death of his own Son. He had manifested his righteousness in his holy law, which strictly prohibits all manner of iniquity, and in his providential dispensations, wherein he hath shewn his just displeasure against all unrighteousness of men; and, at the time this prediction was announced, his righteousness was soon to be revealed in the gospel, for the remission of sins. Hitherto it had been more obscurely made known, but then the happy period was not far off, when it was to be gloriously exhibited before the world. In the energetic language of the apostle of the Gentiles, writing to the saints at Rome, ‘the righteousness of God is manifested, by setting forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness—that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus *.’—The salvation and righteousness of Jehovah being revealed, and the hope that we cherish of their farther and clearer manifestation, should operate as a powerful incitement to keep judgment, and to do justice. The accomplishment of God’s promises brings us under the strongest obligations to observe his statutes; and the more precious the blessings

* Rom. iii. 25, 26.

sings he bestows, the more assiduous ought we to be to yield the universal subjection he demands.

2. Blessed is the man *that* doth this, and the son of man *that* layeth hold on it: that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

That he might shew the high importance of complying with the preceding exhortation, our prophet affirms, that the practice of the duties he inculcated renders the person thus employed truly happy and comfortable. Blessed is the man that keeps judgment and does justice, and the son of man who layeth hold on it—who firmly retains it as he would do any thing valuable, of which he is in danger of being deprived by force or fraud, or of letting go through inattention. He closely and steadily adheres to the truth of the gospel, and the obedience of its precepts; he holds fast his profession, the good thing committed to his trust, endeavouring to keep the commandment, without spot and unrebukeable, until the appearing of Jesus Christ *. ‘He endureth to the end, and shall be saved †.’—Such a person is really happy, and pronounced blessed by the God of truth, whose word cannot be reversed, or fail of taking effect. He enjoys the favour of God, a good conscience, and many substantial benefits; he performs the duties essentially connected with salvation; and cherishes the blessed hope of everlasting life and felicity in the future world. It must be so, for in doing judgment and justice, he in some measure resembles the blessed God, who exerciseth judgment and righteousness in the earth, and delighteth in these things. He possesses internal tranquillity and comfort; for in the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof is no death; he finds, that, walking by this rule, peace and mercy is multiplied unto him,

* 1 Tim. vi. 14.

† Mat. xxiv. 13.

him, and the reviving prospect is opened of entering in through the gates into the city of the New Jerusalem *.

That keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it. This is an essential ingredient in the character of a blessed man. The institution of this day of sacred rest, by the command, example, and benediction of Jehovah, is recorded Genesis ii. 2, 3. The observation of it, consisting in a total cessation from worldly employments, in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and in performing sublime spiritual exercises, suited to the design of its appointment, was enjoined among the precepts delivered to the Israelites from mount Sinai †. Of such vast importance is the sanctification of the Sabbath, that the command respecting it was not only engrossed on one of the tables containing the moral law, but it was annexed both to the judicial and ceremonial law ‡. It seems plainly to have been intended as a commemorative sign, a solemn memorial of the creation of the universe, by the omnipotent Word of Jehovah, in the space of six days; and of the great Creator's having rested from all his works on the seventh day, a circumstance expressly mentioned in the fourth command. It was also a memorial of the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, as appears from Deut. v. 15. where, immediately after reciting the statute respecting the observation of the Sabbath, that people were required to remember that they were servants in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord their God brought them out thence. It besides afforded them an instructive type, or figure, of the eternal redemption of the Church of God from the service of sin and Satan, and their introduction into glorious liberty and rest, accomplished by the Son of God in the fulness of time. At the promulgation of the law, when God rested from a glorious work he had effected, and was establishing his worship among his people, in the view of their entrance into rest in the land of Canaan, he re-appointed

* Rev. xxii. 14.

† Exod. xx. 8.

‡ Exod. xxiii. 23, 12, 13. and chap. xxxi. 12, 13.

pointed the observation of the Sabbath. And now, under the gospel, that the great work of redemption is finished by the Son of God, that the predictions and types of the former œconomy are verified, the law of God is fulfilled, the enemies of the Church are vanquished, the promise of the Spirit accomplished, the sure foundation is laid in Zion by him, who, on his resurrection from the dead, entered into his rest—The old covenant being abolished, the day of the Sabbath is changed from that whereon God rested from his works of creation to the first day of the week, whereon the Son of God, the author of the new creation, rested from his works. The Sabbath day, then, is changed for the same reasons that the state of the Church is altered from what it was under the law, to what it is now under the gospel. These circumstances, joined with the example of the apostles of Jesus Christ, and the presence and blessing of God on his worship performed on this sacred day, ever since the foundations of the Christian Church were laid, combine to enforce the sanctification of the Lord's day. They unite in evincing the truth here asserted, that a blessed man will keep the Sabbath from polluting it. With pleasure he will cautiously abstain from whatever might profane the portion of time that bears the name of the Lord's day, which ought to be kept holy to the Lord, and appropriated to the devout contemplation of his works, the grateful remembrance of his mercies, and the duties of his worship, whereby we may glorify him on their account. As no other precept of the law is here mentioned, it may be designed to comprehend the whole table of the law to which it belongs, and to signify, that a truly happy man does not profane the worship, the name, or Sabbaths of the Lord, but, with sacred veneration, gives him the homage and glory he demands.

And keepeth his hand from doing any evil. He carefully abstains from every species of transgression, particularly those which might prove hurtful to his neighbour, that seem to be chiefly intended in this expression.

expression. The happy man does not neglect the duty incumbent on him in the several stations and relations wherein he is placed, but performs them with fidelity and diligence. He does not indulge the corrupt passions of envy and anger, of malice, revenge, and cruelty; but patiently endures the injuries he receives, and is ready to relieve the wants, and to promote the comfort of his brethren. He not only shuns gross acts of immorality, but those gratifications which tend to encourage impurity, such as idleness, intemperance, and bad company. He not only forbears dishonest practices, and avoids indolence, profusion, and unlawful means of acquiring any enjoyment; but uses every proper expedient to procure and preserve them, such as industry, frugality, and fidelity, with dependence on God for blessing and success. He not only refrains from saying or doing any thing inconsistent with truth, and the reputation of his neighbour; but he maintains a strict regard to veracity, and endeavours to support the credit and good name of those who are injuriously treated. Free from discontent and avarice, he is satisfied with the station allotted to him by infinite Wisdom, and submits, without repining, to the dispensations of Divine Providence; placing his chief happiness in God and his salvation, and rejoicing in his gracious administration.—Such is the character and conduct of the man here pronounced blessed; and from these few strictures you may learn if you, my friends, can ascertain your claim to true happiness.

3. ¶ Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joyed himself to the Lord, speak, saying, the Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I *am* a dry tree.

Isaiah declares, that the privileges of the gospel, and the blessings of Divine grace, were to be extended to persons of every description, in every situation; even to those who, under the former dispensation, had not been permitted to participate equally with the posterity of Israel in the privileges of the Church. He teaches the same doctrine which the apostle Peter afterward preached, that ‘ God put no difference between Jews and Gentiles, purifying their hearts by ‘ faith *;’ that the children of both were to be admitted, without exception, into the city of the living God.—All the nations of the earth, beside the posterity of Israel, were considered, under the Old Testament dispensation, as strangers and aliens from the covenants of promise, destitute of right to the immunities belonging to the peculiar people of God. In the days of Solomon there were numbered, in the land of Canaan, above one hundred and fifty-three thousand persons of this description—Among them, there were some that joined themselves to the Lord, thankfully accepting of the blessings contained in his promises, and devoting themselves to his service, were admitted to share in the privileges of his Church. Their children, however, might be apt to think, that they should be excluded from the benefits to be enjoyed under the new œconomy of grace, to which they had no claim in virtue of lineal descent from the father of the faithful. To prevent such mistaken apprehensions, they are cautioned against propagating this injurious sentiment—*The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people, &c.* Such a dishonourable suspicion respecting the Divine conduct was not to be indulged or communicated. lest it might prove a discouragement to those who were in this peculiar situation, from entering into the kingdom of God, to which they have equal access with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are therefore dissuaded from entertaining this unfavourable opinion of their circumstances, that

they could no more claim a share in the blessings enjoyed by the people of God under the New Testament, than men of other nations could have inherited the land of Canaan with the congregation of the Lord.

Neither let the eunuch say, &c. Persons in this state were laid under several restrictions, and excluded from some advantages of no small importance, under the former dispensation. They were prohibited from officiating in the service of God; they were not admitted into the priesthood; they could not expect to have the pleasure of a numerous offspring, the blessing promised to the posterity of the renowned progenitors of the Jewish Nation. In these circumstances, they might imagine they were to suffer no less hardships under the New and better œconomy of grace. To check such desponding thoughts, they are informed, that they were not to be shut out from the Church of God, and the royal priesthood, who should offer up spiritual sacrifices unto him, through Jesus Christ; and that, though they had not children, they should yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, which, through the one Mediator, redound to the praise and glory of God.—In this manner doth the Holy Spirit, by our prophet, plainly intimate, that, in the Christian Church, there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, no distinction is to be made on account of external condition; that all shall participate equally in the blessings of God's kingdom—‘that the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him*.’ That the righteousness of God, ‘which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all, and upon all them that believe, for their is no difference †.

4. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please me, and take hold of my covenant.

Reviving

* Rom. x. 12.

† Rom. iii. 22.

Reviving assurances are given by the Lord God, to persons who are particularly described by their peculiar circumstances and qualities. The words before us are addressed to eunuchs, who, destitute of certain powers common to mankind, are nevertheless the objects of Divine regard as much as others, who may be more esteemed in the world. Three things are mentioned, appertaining to their character, which are worthy of notice.—*They keep my sabbaths*, they conscientiously and devoutly observe the Sabbath, as often as it returns, not only when they have few temptations to neglect that duty, but even when strongly solicited to profane it, by unnecessary recreations and employments. In the sanctification of this holy day they uniformly persevere, notwithstanding the many oppositions, from within and from without, wherewith they have to contend. They contemplate, with pleasure, the wonderful works of God; they remember, with gratitude, the glorious deliverances he hath wrought; they humbly admire the operations of his grace; they cordially approve of the institutions he hath appointed; and endeavour to give unto the Lord the glory due to his name.—Thus do they celebrate the rest he hath enjoined, and look forward with hope and joy to the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

And choose the things that please me, doing justly and loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, proving what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Of this sort, are the celebration of his praises, and ‘the magnifying of his name with thanksgiving*.’—The sacrifices of righteousness, presented with reverence, faith, and affection †—Truth in the inward parts, integrity, and uprightness of heart and conduct ‡—The faithful performance of relative duties: hence the obedience of children to their parents is urged by this consideration, that it is well-pleasing to the Lord §—The doing good, and communicating

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* Psa. lix. 31.

† Psa. lix. 19.

‡ Prov. xi. 20.

§ Col. iii. 20.

to supply the necessities of those who are in want *. Far from considering these things, which are pleasing to God, as a drudgery or weariness, the persons spoken of diligently practise them as their chief business, which affords them the highest pleasure and satisfaction. God working in them to will and to do, they labour in all things to be accepted of him.—*And take hold on my covenant.* Cordially approving of that Divine constitution, which Jehovah hath established and revealed in the Scriptures, wherein he hath declared what men may expect from him, and what he requires of them, they betake themselves to it as their hope and salvation, relying on his power and faithfulness for the accomplishment of his promises, that they may be assisted and encouraged in the ways of obedience.—They apprehend Christ Jesus, the Mediator of the covenant; they depend on him for righteousness and strength, with all the blessings contained in the promises of this well-ordered covenant.—Let us, brethren, be solicitous to attain this amiable character, and to avoid every thing inconsistent with the acquisition and possession of it; then may we hope to enjoy the high privileges mentioned in the next verse.

5. Even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

On persons of the above description, the Lord promises to confer the signal benefits here recited. The expression may allude to the division of the land of Canaan among the tribes, the families, and houses of Israel. Every one had his inheritance assigned to him by lot, and his portion bore the name of the tribe and family to which it belonged: hence we

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* Phil. iv. 13.

read of the land of Judah, of Zebulun, &c.—Or it may refer to the custom observed by the Priests and Levites, to each of whom was assigned a particular place, office, and station, in or about the temple, which was known by his name, and transmitted to his posterity. Such were reckoned to have right ‘of standing and ministering in the house of the Lord, of lifting up their hands in the sanctuary, and blessing Jehovah *.’—The Hebrew word; rendered place, signifies a certain determined, circumscribed space; and in this sense it is used, Ezek. xxi. 19. where that prophet was required by the word of the Lord, ‘to choose him a place at the head of the way to the city.’ This promise, which is given especially for the comfort of the persons above described, seems to import, that the Lord God will grant them a more illustrious and permanent station in his Church, under the New Testament, prefigured by the temple of old, than any memorial that could have been transmitted concerning them to following ages, by means of their posterity—that he will honour them with reputation and celebrity in his kingdom, far preferable and more durable than the fame which fathers of families acquire by their children. It contains an explicit assurance, that though hitherto they had been excluded from holding honourable offices in the Church, they were to have conferred upon them a designation and employment of great respectability and perpetuity.—*I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.* Ye shall be called the children of God—the priests of the Lord, the ministers of our God—a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people—kings and priests to God, even the Father, that ye may offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable through Jesus Christ. This is an everlasting priesthood, to which ye shall be admitted, a name that shall never be obliterated, but be held in highest respect, and pleasing remembrance, throughout all generations. This distinguishing privilege ye shall

* Psa. cxxxiv. 2.

shall enjoy in common with all those that choose the things which please me, so that in spiritual matters there shall be no difference betwixt you and them.

6. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant.

Another class of people is described in this verse, both with respect to their external circumstances and spiritual state. They are the children of the stranger, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, who could not claim any privilege on account of their descent from that renowned patriarch, but were dispersed over the face of the earth.—*That join themselves to the Lord to serve him.* Having abandoned those iniquities which separated them from God, renounced every other Lord beside him, and cordially embraced the gospel, they enter themselves members of the Church of Christ, and are admitted to enjoy communion with the Father of Spirits, and them that are spiritual.—*To be his servants.* Deeply sensible of his adorable grace, of his unalienable right to their subjection, and their infinite obligations to advance his glory, they deliberately choose him for their Lord, making his will the rule, and his approbation the scope of their actions. Depending on him for support, protection, provision, and recompence, they attend to the intimations of his pleasure, and diligently endeavour to occupy the talents wherewith they are entrusted, so as to promote the honour of their master in heaven.—*And to love the name of the Lord,* which may denote the amiable discoveries which he hath given of his nature, character, perfections, and salvation, in the works that he hath made, in the administration

stration of his providence, and the revelation of his grace. It may more especially signify the name by which he proclaimed himself from heaven*, the name which the Lord Jesus declared, that he manifested to the men given him out of the world, the name by which he is known and honoured by his servants, wherein they trust, and remember with delight. This worthy name, whereby they are assured that he is ready to pardon, to pity, and help, they love with undisssembled affection, they revere the glorious titles by which he hath made himself known, they admire the wonderful displays he hath given of his Divine attributes, they gratefully acknowledge his inestimable benefits, they delight in the illustrious manifestations he hath exhibited of his love and grace in the gospel, they receive his word, observe his institutions, and obey his commands. To such, his name is as ointment poured forth; it is their confidence and hope, their defence and stay, their consolation and joy.

Every one that keepeth the Sabbath, &c. The observation of this day of sacred rest, is here mentioned a third time in this chapter. It is stated in ver. 2d to be an essential ingredient in the character of a truly happy man. It is represented in ver. 4th as indispensibly requisite in those who would enjoy the accomplishment of the gracious promises of Jehovah. Here it is introduced to illustrate and amplify the description of the children of strangers, to whom belong the privileges contained in the verse that immediately follows. This repetition plainly shews, that the sanctification of the Sabbath is a momentous duty, acceptable to God, necessary to the enjoyment of real happiness, and the precious blessings which are promised in the word of God. How unfriendly, then, are they to their own best interests, and the good of society, who convert this holy day into a day of business and amusement, who, instead of sanctifying it according to the commandment,

* Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, 7.

ment, profane it by worldly employments and recreations. On this day, which the Lord God hath blessed and appropriated to his own honour and service, let us contemplate his glory, displayed in his works, in his law and gospel, and heartily comply with his will therein made known—Let us cordially approve of this divine institution; and whilst we celebrate this rest of Jehovah, let us aim, by means of it, to enter into the rest that remains for the people of God, which Jesus Christ hath obtained for them by his complicated labours and sufferings.—*And take hold of my covenant*, relying on the promises it contains as their portion, trusting in Jesus Christ, the Mediator, as their righteousness and strength, and cleaving to its precepts as their counsellors and guides.—These exercises, that we have been considering, are intimately connected, and cannot be separated. They, and they only who join themselves to the Lord, will be his servants: none but they who love the name of the Lord, will do him acceptable service; and only they who keep his Sabbaths, will lay hold on his covenant, as all their salvation and all their desire.

7. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

In language suited to the former dispensation, Jehovah gives explicit assurance, to persons possessing the character above delineated, of the most valuable privileges.—Mount Zion, whereon stood the city Jerusalem, the palace of the kings of Israel and Judah, and the house of the Lord, was an eminent type of the Church of Jesus Christ under the New Testament. It was denominated holy, because the Lord
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God sanctified it, to be the place of his special residence, where the public exercises of his worship were to be performed, and where his people were honoured with the symbols of his presence. These circumstances rendered that highly-favoured place completely emblematical of the Church, for which Jesus Christ gave himself, that he might sanctify them, and make them truly glorious. Thither, God promises that he will bring persons of the above description, under the conduct of his good providence and Spirit, that they may attend on the services of his house. He will not only dispose them to go there, but he will send forth his light and truth to be their guides; he will not only bid them welcome when they come, but he will shew them his glory, and beautify them with his salvation.

And make them joyful in my house of prayer. The temple of Jerusalem was emphatically designed the house of God, because it was built by his express appointment; it was appropriated to his worship, and favoured with his gracious presence. It was a house of prayer, wherein his chosen people presented their supplications to him continually, and when they had not opportunity of going there, they looked toward it during the time they offered their requests to the Most High. Now that this holy house does not exist, we fix our attention on the house which is the Church of the living God, that was thereby prefigured. In the assemblies of his Saints, the Lord God promises to make them joyful by a comfortable sense of his presence, by manifestations of his power and glory, the pledges of his love, the communications of his Spirit, communion with him and his Son Jesus Christ. He declares, that he will make them glad in attending his ordinances, where he vouchsafes to meet with them, and where they receive spiritual light, strength, and comfort, from which result the most pleasing satisfaction. What happiness and joy must arise from approaching the fountain of life, and source of all felicity, from drawing nigh to him who

knoweth our wants, and can supply them; who is acquainted with our doubts and fears, and is able to dispel them; who observes our weaknesses and distresses, and can relieve them; who knows our sins, and can subdue them. These circumstances contribute, with others I stay not to mention, in promoting the felicity of God's servants, especially when they are enabled to take the comfort which such benefits are suited to produce. This reviving assurance hath been fulfilled in the experience of many, who, with sorrowful hearts, have come to the congregation of the Lord, from whence they have retired glad in heart, and gone on their way rejoicing.

Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices, &c. As the promises contained in this verse seem to refer chiefly to the œconomy of grace under the New Testament, this expression is to be understood in its figurative sense. The offerings and sacrifices here intended, may be broken and contrite hearts, the fruit of the lips, prayer and thanksgiving, doing good, and communicating to the assistance of the needy, with the exercises of righteousness. With such sacrifices God is well pleased; 'for, (saith the Lord) 'they shall be accepted upon mine altar.' As in the tabernacle, and afterward in the temple, an altar was made by Divine appointment, whereon offerings and sacrifices were presented to God; so under the New Testament dispensation, Christians have an altar whereon the sacrifices of God are offered, and by which they are sanctified*. This is no other than Jesus Christ, in virtue of whose atonement and intercession, our offerings are accepted, and become well-pleasing to the Lord. The words, divested of figure, strongly intimate, that the Lord God takes special complacency in the services performed by his people, who take hold of his covenant. It must be so, they themselves being joined to the Lord; they present before him sacrifices of righteousness, which he himself hath required, and cannot but approve of, being
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* Heb. xiii, 10.

the effects of his own grace, and the means of advancing his glory.—What great encouragement is suggested by these promises to the upright servants of God, who possess not equal external advantages with many of their brethren! Though they may suffer considerable inconveniences, yet, if they love the name of the Lord, he will bring them to his house in the multitude of his mercy, he will graciously regard their services, and they shall find, that he who feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.

For my house shall be called, &c. These words were cited by Jesus Christ, when he went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that bought and sold in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves *. On that memorable occasion, he said, ‘It is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.’ By the wonderful display he then gave of his omnipotence, he shewed, in the most convincing manner, that the temple dedicated to the worship of Jehovah ought not to be profaned by applying it to any other purpose than that to which it was consecrated. By this emblematical action, whereby he manifested his solicitude for the purification of the temple, our blessed Saviour displayed his ardent zeal for the sanctification of his Church, which is the house of God. Thither people of all nations, and of all conditions, shall resort, that they may participate of the blessings and privileges which are there to be enjoyed. The distinctions that were long preserved between Jews and Gentiles being done away under the gospel, no difference is to be made among the servants of God, whether Greeks or barbarians, bond or free, circumcised or uncircumcised, for they are all one in Christ Jesus †. All are formed into the same image, all are interested in the same privileges, subjected to the same authority, and employed in the same reasonable service,

* Mat. xxi. 12.

† Gal. iii. 28.

service, one essential part of which is prayer. Hence the Church, as here foretold, is called a house of prayer, into which are collected people of all descriptions, and of all countries.

8. The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, besides those that are gathered unto him.

These words contain a remarkable prediction of the enlargement of the Church, by a copious accession they were to receive from among the Gentiles.—Of the many amiable characters the blessed God hath assumed, the one now before us claims particular attention. He here speaks who gathereth the outcasts of Israel. This is truly a glorious work of omnipotence and grace, on account of which his praises should be for ever celebrated, as the royal Poet enjoins: ‘Praise ye the Lord,—for he gathereth ‘the outcasts of Israel *.’ After the Church of Israel had provoked him to execute upon them the fierceness of his wrath, he scattered them among the heathen. Having made them sensible of the enormity of their sins, he extended tender compassion to them, he brought again their captivity, and gathered them from among the nations where they were dispersed. This wonderful work, whereby they were disposed to return to their own country, and those who had carried them captive were inclined to allow them to depart, could have been effected only by Divine power; and from this astonishing interposition of Providence, God takes the designation mentioned in this verse. The gathering of those who were ejected, into the land given to their fathers for inheritance, from the different regions into which they had been driven away, should remind us of a more important restoration from a much worse captivity, and transfer

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our thoughts to the collecting of the redeemed of the Lord from north, south, east, and west, into his kingdom; accomplished by his Almighty agency, for whom all things are possible—to the gathering together in one the children of God, that were scattered abroad *. This glorious person saith,

Yet will I gather others to him, &c. The Lord God had already gathered into his Church many profelytes from among the Gentile nations, who joined them because of the name of the Lord, whereof they had heard. To them a very considerable addition is promised to be made by the great Shepherd of the flock, who was to bring his elect from the four winds of heaven, and who, after he ascended on high, actually gathered into his fold, by the ministry of his servants, great numbers of Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and of every nation on the earth. As this prediction does not seem to be limited to any particular period, it may be considered as receiving farther accomplishment in following ages, wherein multitudes were brought into the Church of Jesus Christ, to the knowledge, belief, and obedience of the gospel, from among the Germans, the Britons, and other kingdoms. Though the prophecy was in some measure fulfilled, by the ministry of the apostles and evangelists, it hath doubtless a farther completion in the spread and success of the gospel in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, which shall introduce the happy period, when all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ.—With this bright prospect fully in view, let us employ every instituted mean, and embrace every proper opportunity of doing what lies in our power of conveying instruction to the ignorant, of reclaiming the vicious, and of restoring those who have gone astray to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls.—To every effort for accomplishing these benevolent purposes, let us unite fervent prayer to God, that the conquests of our glorious Redeemer may extend from the rising of the sun to the

* John xi. 52.

the going down of the same, that in every place incense may be presented to him, and a pure offering.

9. ¶ All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, *yea*, all ye beasts in the forest.

This order to execute awful judgments upon those who are not particularly mentioned, but who may be easily known by what is subjoined in the following verses, is abruptly introduced. It is addressed, not to those animals that roam in the fields and forests, but to people who resemble them in strength, rapacity, and cruelty, and who, like them, inhabit wild uncultivated places, viz. the barbarous uncivilized enemies of the kingdom of God. Though nothing is more distant from their intention than the fulfilment of God's purposes, he is sometimes pleased to employ them, to inflict deserved punishment on his Church for their sins. The prophet Jeremiah, having introduced Jehovah declaring his purpose of punishing his people for their sins, by giving them into the hands of the Chaldeans, he addresses them in similar terms with Isaiah, in the verse now before us, 'Come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, 'come to devour*'. Ye people who are fierce and voracious, like the inhabitants of the fields and forests, come and seize upon those who have become the objects of my just indignation; at your pleasure cruelly harass, and greedily consume them, even as ferocious animals do their prey.—This order, or prediction, call it by what name you please, hath been accomplished, by the ravages made by the Saracens, Tartars, and other barbarous people, who invaded the more cultivated countries inhabited by Christians, and who, by terrible irruptions, destroyed great multitudes of those who bare the Christian name.

10. His

* Chap. xii. 9.

10. His watchmen *are* blind: they *are* all ignorant, they *are* all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

The Lord God, by our prophet, having administered consolation to his servants, by many precious promises of his favour, and their enlargement, makes a sudden transition, to represent the very deplorable state to which the Church was to be reduced, in consequence of the corruptions of the ecclesiastical orders among them. He delineates in figurative language, adapted to the subject, their lamentable incapacity and infidelity, as the causes of the desolating calamities wherewith they were to be visited. — *His watchmen are blind.* The ministers and pastors of the Church are, in this and other passages of scripture, denominated watchmen, in allusion to the employment of shepherds, who tend their flocks with vigilance and care, or of those who, in cities, keep guard by night, to prevent disturbances, and to give notice to the inhabitants of approaching danger. That they may perform aright the duties of their function, be attentive to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers, and the interests of the city of our God, with which they are intrusted, they ought to possess acute discernment and clear sight, that at all times, and in all things, they may watch as they that must give account. — How deplorable then the state of the Church of God, when they whose office requires vigilance and prudence, are blind, ignorant, and unskilful, negligent in warning the people committed to their inspection of their duty and danger, acting as if they knew not what was incumbent on them in their different capacities! — When they shew, by their conduct, that they are unacquainted with the import, connection, and design of the doctrines of salvation, and with the nature and order

order of Divine dispensations—that they do not understand and attend to those things which are requisite to strengthen the weak, to instruct the ignorant, to convince gainayers, to restrain the licentious, to direct the perplexed, and to comfort the afflicted and dejected. In this manner they discover that they are blind leaders of the blind.

They are dumb dogs, &c. They are not only blind, but they are also dumb. This expression seems to allude to those ill-trained domestic animals, who, when employed to watch over cattle, do not gather into the shepherd those who stray at a distance, and are silent when they should give notice of the approach of what might scatter or injure the flock. It intimates, in strong terms, the indolence and inactivity of the pastors and teachers of the Church, who, through timidity or carelessness, were silent when they ought to have admonished the people committed to their trust, of the sins whereby they might provoke God to send among them threatened desolating judgments, and of the necessity of their return to Jesus Christ, the chief Shepherd. Inattentive to the important charge wherewith they were invested, instead of incessantly lifting up their voice to shew God's people their transgressions, and faithfully pointing out the way of escape from impending evils, they are unconcerned about their best interests, and give no signals of coming danger.—*Sleeping, lying down, &c.* The animals, to which our prophet alludes in this description, when not actively employed, are inclined to take ease and sleep. In reference to this circumstance, he represents the persons of whom he speaks as addicted to laziness, idleness, and aversion to labour. Though occupying a station that requires diligence, vigilance, and activity, they indulge in ease and sloth, indifferent to the performance of the duties which are necessary to please their Master, and to promote the happiness of those intrusted to their care. The most pernicious consequences cannot fail to result from persons of this character holding office in the Church
of

of God, to those with whom they are connected, who look to them for seasonable instruction, good example, and active exertions for their benefit.

11. Yea, they *are* greedy dogs, *which* can never have enough, and they *are* shepherds *that* cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter.

The watchmen, whose character is here delineated, are farther described by their insatiable avarice, and fondness of those things which may conduce to their own pleasure and advantage. Possessing a sordid, covetous disposition, and strongly attached to worldly enjoyments, they are dissatisfied with the emoluments they receive, and eagerly desire to have larger incomes. Their minds being occupied, not with concern about their flocks, but with the cares of this life, they seek not the profit of many, that they may be saved, but their own secular interests. Such is the malignity of a prevailing worldly temper, that it perverts the order of things, it establishes in the heart an opposite interest to the kingdom of God, and gives that affection, solicitude, and confidence to the creature, which is due to the Creator. Every one may easily see, that this criminal attachment to the present world is most unsuitable in those who profess to serve God in the gospel of his Son, and that it must incapacitate them for the faithful discharge of their office.—*And they are shepherds that cannot understand.* Absorbed by worldly cares, engaged in vain amusements, and fond of sensual pleasures, they cannot assiduously study to advance the eternal salvation of their people. Involved in ignorance of Divine things, and hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, they have little time, inclination, or ability, to attend to the sacred interests of those over whom they are called to watch. They cannot prudently distinguish the different spiritual conditions of

those who constitute their flocks, nor do they diligently endeavour to feed them with sound knowledge and understanding, in the fear of the Lord.

They all look to their own way, &c. These words represent the extreme selfishness and ambition of the watchmen who are here described. Regardless of the honour of God, the prosperity of his Church, and the salvation of men, the great objects they ought to have kept continually in view, their chief aim is to acquire worldly gain, and to aggrandize themselves and families. So general was the corruption at the time especially referred to, that every one (there were very few exceptions) was earthly minded, pursuing the riches, the honours, and pleasures of this life, each anxious in his place to increase his revenue and possessions. As the pious Mr. Henry observes, their leading enquiry is, What shall we get, not what shall we do. Let them have the wages, and they care not whether the work be done or not. In this manner they appropriated to themselves the odious character, of the prevalence of which the apostle Paul complains in these words: ‘ All seek their own things,’ their own convenience, profit, and honour; and not the things which are Jesus Christ’s—the spread, establishment, and success of the gospel, with his Spirit and presence to accompany the ordinances of his institution. ‘ For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple *.

12. Come ye, *say they*, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink, and to-morrow shall be as this day, *and* much more abundant.

Our prophet exhibits the watchmen of whom he speaks, encouraging each other in voluptuousness, intemperance, and riot. One invites his companions to an entertainment, with an assurance of plenty of good

* Rom. xvi. 18.

good wine, of which they might drink without restraint. By such an immoderate use of strong drink as is inconsistent with their profession and office, they give bad example, they abuse the blessings of Divine providence, they injure their health, they squander away their time, and are rendered incapable of attending to the duties of their sacred function.—*And to-morrow shall be as this day, &c.* Notwithstanding they know not what shall be on the morrow, or what a day may bring forth, they promise themselves the continuance and increase of the good things of this present life. The words are expressive of an indolent, dissipated temper, indifferent to the practice of those spiritual exercises incumbent on the pastors of the Church of God, and plainly shew that sensual indulgences are insinuating and pernicious, especially to those invested with the character of watchmen.

The fulfilment of this prophecy, respecting the profligacy of the clergy, commenced early in the Christian Church, and became very conspicuous in the third century. A celebrated historian, treating of that period, says, ‘That the form of ecclesiastical government, which by imperceptible steps varied from the primitive rule, was soon followed by a train of vices, which dishonoured the character and authority of those, to whom the administration of the Church was committed. For though several yet continued to exhibit to the world illustrious examples of primitive piety and Christian virtue, yet many were sunk in luxury and voluptuousness, puffed up with vanity, arrogance, and ambition, possessed with a spirit of contention and discord, and addicted to many other vices that cast an undeserved reproach upon the holy religion of which they were the unworthy professors and ministers*’—And after having traced through following ages the growing corruptions of the ministers of the Church,

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* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, translated by Dr. M'Laine, Vol. I. page 216.

he thus writes, when giving an account of the sixteenth century : ‘ The greatest part of the bishops and canons passed their days in dissolute mirth and luxury, and squandered away, in the gratification of their lusts and passions, the wealth that had been set apart for religious and charitable purposes*.— And I may add, upon evidence that cannot be controverted, that this prediction hath been lamentably verified in subsequent periods of the Church.

* Ibid. Vol. III. page 292—2d edition.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

HAVING described the odious character of the pastors and teachers of the Church, from whom corruption frequently proceeds to the people in general, our prophet delineates, in the section of his discourse now to be considered, the degenerate, deplorable state of the whole collective body at the time to which he looked forward.—He begins with condoling the miserable stupor and insensibility that had seized upon all ranks, and arrived at such an alarming height, that, without uneasiness or concern, they observed righteous and good men removed from approaching calamities to the enjoyment of undisturbed tranquillity and repose, ver. 1, 2.—Jehovah is then introduced, calling before his tribunal the apostate Church, who are sharply reprov'd for having cruelly harrassed and persecuted his upright servants, the valiant confessors of the truth, ver. 3, 4.—He charges them with having perpetrated the enormous crimes of idolatry, superstition, and murder of the innocent, whose blood they had shed without provocation; and on these accounts denounces Divine judgments, ver. 5—13.—The amendment and reformation of the Church from this vicious state is next foretold; and the ministers of the word are excited to engage in effecting this great work which is assigned to them, ver. 14.—After which the chapter concludes, by exhibiting the riches of Divine grace, manifested in granting to the penitent and broken-hearted, who truly repent, and humbly accept of the mercy of God, the forgiveness of sins, admission into favour, and the consequent enjoyment of that sacred peace, from which the wicked are excluded, ver. 15—21,

C H A P. LVII.

THE righteous perisheth, and no man layeth *it* to heart; and merciful men *are* taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil *to come*.

These words, which may be considered as introductory to what follows, contain a mournful complaint, that there were very few who applied their minds to consider the immature and violent death of remaining good men, and who viewed this dispensation of providence as a sad presage of approaching judgments.—The righteous here spoken of are those who have attained this character by faith in the great Messiah, the Lord our righteousness, in whom all the seed of Israel are justified, and glory, who is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth.—Having the precious seeds of righteousness sown in their hearts, they cherish every divine grace, they practise every amiable virtue; such as piety toward God, justice and beneficence to their brethren of mankind, diligently endeavouring, from unfeigned love to God and their neighbour, to abound in the fruits of holiness and righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory of God.—Merciful men are next mentioned. Being full of mercy, they are replete with its precious fruits. Having put on bowels of mercy, they feel tender sympathy with the distressed; they are affectionately concerned to succour them under all their afflictions, whether proceeding from soul or body. Beholding, with real compassion, their fellow mortals labouring under dangerous spiritual distempers, and laying up in store wrath against the day of wrath, grieved with the dismal prospect, they do what lies in their power, that they may be delivered by him who is able to save to the uttermost. From
love

love to God, and a sense of his authority, they feed the hungry, they clothe the naked, and visit the destitute, especially among the disciples of Jesus Christ, on whom they confer substantial fruits of unfeigned affection. They distribute to the necessities of those who are in straitened circumstances, and shew mercy with cheerfulness, aiming, as they are required, to be merciful as their Father in heaven is merciful. How valuable, how useful are such people! what a blessing to all around them, and what an immense loss is their departure to the society wherewith they are connected, when

They perish, and are taken away, through necessity and want, through the malignity and barbarity of their persecutors, through the false accusations of their adversaries, and the iniquitous sentences of their judges. They are taken from off the earth, in some instances, by alarming strokes of divine Providence; in others, by the wicked hands of men, who have accounted them unfit to live in society. Those who have escaped such tragical exits, who have not suffered the trials of scourgings, of imprisonments, of tortures, whereof the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews speaks, chap. xi. 36, 38. have decayed and died, according to the course of nature, and perished from among the children of men. They are then lost to those with whom they formerly had been conversant, even as wisdom is said to perish from the ancient, when they cease to enjoy the benefit of it. In whatever way they are removed from the places of their residence, whether by extraordinary calamities, by violence, by contagion, disease, or decay, the societies to which they proved essential blessings must sustain an immense loss, by being deprived of their examples, their counsels, prayers, and reproofs, their good conversation, and beneficent cares and labours. How deplorable the state of the Church, when—
No man layeth to heart such afflictive dispensations!
Such was the lamentable insensibility of those who survived at the period referred to, that, far from being
suitably

suitably affected with bereavements of this sort, which ought to have been laid to heart, not only by the godly, but also by their neighbours, and even by their enemies, they discovered the utmost indifference and unconcern—

None considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. What a distressing scene is here described! The choicest blessings which God vouchsafes to bestow on a degenerate age, which ought to be highly esteemed and improved, little regarded whilst continued; and taken away without sorrow or regret by those among whom they dwelt, and by whom they were known. People in general were so inconsiderate and senseless, that very few seriously thought of the design which infinite Wisdom had in view to accomplish by the removal of the excellent ones of the earth. The operations of Providence, respecting these eminent men of God, did not attract the attention, or occupy the thoughts of the careless multitude, who did not consider their death as indications of the Divine displeasure toward those who were deprived of their salutary influence, and sad presages of approaching judgments. Their minds were not impressed with a proper sense of such mournful events, whereby the hearts and the hands of those who remained were enfeebled, the interests of religion were like to decay, and that awful judgments would probably follow. These deplorable effects, which often accompany the departure of the servants of God from the stations they filled, were not viewed as fatal omens of future miseries, intended by *the evil to come.*—Many remarkable instances might be adduced of the kindness of God, in taking away his people before he sent terrible things in righteousness, which were not to be looked for by those around them. I shall mention only one of many: Josiah, king of Judah, who humbled himself before the Lord, was laid into his grave in peace, and his eyes did not behold the evil which God brought on
Jerusa-

Jerusalem *.—I conclude this article with the prayer of David, king of Israel. ‘Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, and the faithful fail from among the children of men †.’ Thou hope of Israel, and favour thereof in times of trouble, thou alone canst afford us the assistance and relief that we need. Help us, we earnestly beseech thee, humbly to submit to thy all-wise disposals; support us under our bereavements; preserve us from despondency and every evil temper; moderate our affections toward the creatures, and set them on things above. Enable us to place our entire dependance on thee for wisdom, grace, and comfort, who canst supply all our wants, that we may improve by our losses, to thy glory, to our own benefit, and the good of our brethren.

2. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, *each one* walking in his uprightness.

The righteous and merciful man is taken away from evil, and admitted into a state of tranquillity and repose. The first part of the verse represents the felicity into which his soul is admitted after his departure from this present state. Through the gate of death, his immortal spirit makes its escape from fears and cares, animosities and reproaches, from miseries and sorrows, whereby he was perplexed and distressed during his abode on earth. Completely delivered from all those disturbances and uneasinesses whereby he was here annoyed, he is introduced into those serene and peaceful regions, where there is nothing to hurt or destroy, where perfect love, harmony and joy, reign for ever. When in this world, the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, entering into his heart and mind, kept him calm and tranquil; but on his demise, he enters into abundant

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peace,

* 2 Kings xxii. 18. *et seq.*

† Psal. xii. 1.

peace, which shall last not only while sun and moon endure, but after these glorious luminaries are extinguished, through immortal ages. Having been regenerated by God's Spirit, guided by his counsel, and continually attended by goodness and mercy while on earth, on his removal, the Lord receives his spirit, to dwell in everlasting habitations. 'He re-
'deems his soul from the power of the grave, for he
'will receive him *.' After the example of the prophet David, of the martyr Stephen, and of a greater than they, in the immediate prospect of dissolution, he saith to his God and Saviour, 'Receive my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth †.' In this joyful prospect, he is confident and willing, as saith the apostle Paul, to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

They shall rest in their beds, &c. This expression may relate to the bodies of the righteous and the merciful. The graves, wherein their bodies are deposited after death, are represented in Scripture as a bed, wherein they rest from the labours and toils which they sustained in this life, from the troubles with which they were afflicted, the griefs whereby they were agitated, from the temptations and sins that here disturbed their repose ‡. In reference to the rest and quiet enjoyed in bed, the state into which the dead bodies of the saints are consigned, is spoken of as a sleep §, which intimates the true signification of the Hebrew word here used, which denotes a composed settled condition.—Though it sometimes happens, in an evil time, that the bodies of the righteous are not treated with the respect due to them, but denied decent burial, have been exposed in the streets, cast into the fire or the water, or devoured by wild beasts, yet for most part they are interred in graves; and those which have been worst abused, were totally insensible to the rage and insults of their persecutors; so that, in some sense, the truth here as-
serted

* Psal. xlix. 15.

‡ Job iii. 13. *et seq.*

† Psal. xxxi. 5.

§ Psal. xliii. 3.

ferted is verified to all who are waiting for the redemption of their bodies. Death putting a period to all the afflictions and sorrows of this life, 'in the grave the weary be at rest.'—This is the peculiar happiness of the righteous and the merciful; and to prevent mistakes, it is added, as farther descriptive of their character,

Each one walking in his uprightness, or, as the Hebrew words are rendered on the margin of some bibles, they are men of kindness or godliness, each acting uniformly in the service of God; and, proceeding progressively in the paths of righteousness, they press forward to obtain the prize of their high calling. Walking worthy of God unto all well-pleasing, they go, under the direction of his good Spirit, in the way of his commandments; under a lively sense of his presence, they decline not to the right hand or to the left, but take heed to order their steps according to the word of God, solicitous to advance his honour, and to promote the welfare of their brethren of mankind. In this line of good conduct they steadily proceed, with uprightness and integrity of heart, with sincerity before God, and honesty in the sight of men, remembering the proverb, which saith, 'He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord *.' He who acts with unfeigned simplicity, is habitually influenced by the fear of the Lord, which consists in departing from evil. Such is the character of those who shall be admitted into the peaceful mansions of eternal rest, that await the faithful servants of God in the future world.—This prophecy, which hath been fulfilled in the several ages of the Church, was remarkably verified at the time referred to in the conclusion of the preceding chapter, wherein iniquity greatly abounded, and the love of many waxed cold. In the ninth and tenth centuries, when corruption in the Church mounted to the most enormous height, men were shamefully illiterate and stupid; and, being immersed in ignorance and sensuality,

* Prov. xiv. 2.

ality, were addicted to the most flagitious crimes. Even then, there were among them a few names which defiled not their garments, who walked in their uprightness, and departing this life, entered into peace, and rested in their beds. The Lord, who forsaketh not the righteous, having guided them by his counsel, received them afterward to his glory.

3. ¶ But draw near hither, ye sons of the forcerers, the seed of the adulterer, and the whore.

Our prophet proceeds, in the name of God, to convince the apostate Church, he now addresses under very odious designations, of their atrocious wickedness and grievous defection from God. He calls upon them to draw near, and seat themselves before the righteous tribunal of the Almighty, that he might arraign their cruel treatment of his good and faithful servants. He bespeaks their attention, as being the posterity of evil doers, who had been perfidious in God's covenant, who vouchsafed to be called their husband; having formed connection with those who pretended to foretel future events, with whom they consulted in circumstances of distress. Their progenitors committed these crimes, and their descendants approved their conduct, and imitated their corrupt practices. The Lord God, who visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, reminds them of the sins of their ancestors, and their intimate connection with them whose example they followed. These circumstances ought to have excited profound self-abasement, and true penitence in those to whom this discourse is directed, especially when attention is demanded to the heavy charge brought against them, and the dreadful doom to which they were exposed.

4. Against

4. Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falshood?

Against whom do ye sport—exult, and glory, as unworthy of your regard, and proper objects of contempt, rejecting, with scorn and ridicule, their admonitions and reproofs, and vilifying, by odious aspersions, their doctrine, worship, and conduct?—*Against whom make ye a wide mouth*—in laughter and derision, in noisy exclamation, in grievous accusations, abusing them as the pests of society, and the off-scouring of all things?—*And draw out the tongue*, that with insolent contempt ye may scoff and ridicule them, as did the enemies of David, king of Israel, when they opened their mouths wide against him, and said, ‘Aha, aha, our eye hath seen *?—*Are ye not children of transgression*, whose minds being at enmity against God, ye presumptuously violate his laws, ye obstinately persist in rebelling against his authority, and in treacherously departing from him whose wrath and vengeance ye have incurred?—*A seed of falshood* and deceit, who pretend to be what in truth ye are not, who cherish the most delusive imaginations, who endeavour, by fraudulent methods, to have your wishes gratified, and have become the instruments of seducing many into your evil ways?—These pointed interrogatories strongly intimate, that the ancestors of those who are here addressed, were replete with iniquity and deceit, and that they, their children, bare to them a very striking resemblance in temper and practice, whilst they forcibly describe the prodigious height of depravity at which they had arrived.

7. Enflaming

* Psal. xxxv. 21.

5. Enflaming your selves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the vallies under the cliffs of the rocks?

The apostate Church is next charged with idolatry, superstition, and murder, of all other crimes the most heinous and detestable.—I suppose that Isaiah, in this passage, describes the private idolatry of the Romish Church under the New Testament, in terms that have an obvious reference to the rites and ceremonies of ancient times. The Hebrew word, signifying an idol, denotes a thing of no value, that is good for nothing. In conformity to this idea, the apostle Paul affirms, ‘that an idol is nothing ‘in the world.’ Though the materials whereof it is composed are somewhat, it is not what it is supposed to be: it is not God, it is not self-existent and omnipotent, it is incapable of governing the universe, nor can it afford any aid to its votaries. Notwithstanding all this, the people described were extremely fond of serving them, they were mad upon their idols; urged by ardent desires of having their impetuous passions gratified, even by unlawful means, they frequently and fervently implored their assistance.—*Under every green tree* performing superstitious rites, and paying religious honours to those whom they considered as illustrious heroes, the benefactors and guardians of mankind, who were imagined to have the immediate direction of the blessings and calamities of life.

Slaying the children in the valleys, &c. In this article of the charge, there seems to be an allusion to the custom of some ancient nations, who, when their princes or governors found that they were discomfited by their enemies, and reduced to great distress, in order to appease the gods, and to induce them to execute vengeance on their conquerors, they slew their children, and offered them in sacrifice to their dei-

* Rom. iii. 25, 26.

deities *. The idolaters among the Jews seem to have adopted similar sentiments. Hence the inquiry, made in the prophecies of Micah †, by those who were sensible of their transgressions ‡. They brought their children into a valley, appropriated to the most inhuman purposes, where they made them to pass through the fire, where they slew them, and offered them in sacrifice to the idols which they served. This valley, situated near Jerusalem, was called the valley of Hinnom, because of the roaring of the children, and Tophet on account of the prodigious noise made to prevent the shrieks of those that were slain and sacrificed from being heard. Such horrid instances of barbarous cruelty were not unfrequent, even among parents who were instructed in the good and perfect will of God, as the royal Psalmist acknowledges §. ‘They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils,’ who were considered as the great agents in nature, the distributors of benefits and calamities among the inhabitants of the earth. The abominable rites and institutions, which at the period referred to, dishonoured the Christian Church, derived their origin from the errors and barbarous customs that prevailed among heathen nations, and the absurd notions entertained concerning the Supreme Being, who they imagined was rendered propitious by costly sacrifices.

6. Among the smooth stones of the stream *is* thy portion; they, they *are* thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink-offering, thou hast offered a meat-offering. Should I receive comfort in these?

Our

* 2 Kings iii. 27.

† Chap. vi. 7.

‡ See Philologus Hebreo-Mixtus Auctore Johanne Leusden Dissertatione Quadragesima Secunda, &c.

§ Psal. cvi. 36.

Our prophet inveighs, with great vehemence, against the practice of superstitious idolatrous rites, and points out their fatal consequences. The custom of worshipping certain kinds of stones was frequent in some places in ancient times; and this usage was adopted, it seems, by those to whom this discourse was particularly directed. Having made their adorations to the smooth stones found in some stream or valley, these worthless things, from which they could not derive any assistance or satisfaction, were to prove their portion and inheritance. Whatever be your foolish expectations, however you may applaud your conduct, they, insignificant as they are, shall be the portion which you shall have from him who renders to every one according to his works. He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity*; he shall feel the loss of his misemployed talents, and the disgrace that results from his egregious folly.—*Even to them hast thou poured, &c.* Thou hast presented to these detestable objects of thy adoration, those oblations and acts of homage, which thou oughtest to have offered to the only living and true God: Withholding them from him to whom alone they are due, thou hast transferred them to lying vanities; and having provoked to anger the Lord God, to whom belongeth recompense, it is just that you should inherit your own choice.—*Should I receive comfort in these things* which are offered to them that are substituted in my place, and to whom you give the honours which are due to me alone? Can you be so absurd as imagine that I take pleasure in those, who, instead of worshipping me according to my command, are employed in the service of the most trifling objects? The question plainly intimates, that the threatened vengeance is founded in the strictest equity, and must approve itself to the consciences of well informed impartial people—and that though God is long-suffering, he will certainly avenge his injured honour, and punish atrocious transgressors

* Prov. xxii. 8.

transgressors in a manner suited to his majesty and their crimes

7. Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed : even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice.

The apostate Church are charged with having committed, in a public and conspicuous manner, the most abominable superstitions, and idolatrous practices. The bed which is here mentioned, may denote the couches whereon, according to an ancient custom in eastern countries, they rested at festivals and banquets, observed in honour of the gods that they served. According to this sense of the word, the expression imports, that, far from keeping their sacred feasts in groves and sequestered places, where they might not be noticed, they were guilty of lewd, detestable transactions, in the most open and public manner. For this purpose, the most conspicuous places were chosen for their entertainments, where various criminal passions were indulged.—*Even thither wentest thou up to sacrifice.* The sacrifices offered to Jehovah, under the former dispensation, were required to be presented at the temple of Jerusalem, which stood on Mount Zion. In reference to this institution, probably, sacrifices were offered to idols on high grounds, by those against whom this charge is preferred. Such was the prevailing superstition of the times, that people brought their oblations to places of the greatest eminence and publicity, and there presented them to those who by nature are not God.

8. Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance : for thou hast discovered *thyself to another* than me, and art gone up : thou hast enlarged thy bed, and

made thee *a covenant* with them ; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it.

The fifth article contained in this heavy charge, is expressed in these words which are now to be considered. By the remembrance here mentioned, is meant the images and household gods, which were the objects of the people's frequent recollection, respect, and veneration. These figures, or small statues, were supposed to preserve in safety the families wherein they had their station, and were often placed, as our prophet intimates, beside the doors and door-posts, that those who went out and came in might call them to mind, and have opportunity of paying them homage.—*For thou hast discovered another than me*, (saith God) ‘Thou hast provoked me to anger with strange gods, with gods whom thou knewest not, with new gods that came newly up, and hast forsaken the God that formed thee*.—*And art gone up to high places*, to do them service, and to pay them honours.—*Thou hast enlarged thy bed*, and greatly extended the places wherein you find the most pleasing indulgencies and highest sensual gratifications, in revellings and banquetings, and abominable idolatries †.—*And made thee a covenant with them*. Notwithstanding I admitted thee, (saith God) into intimate relation with myself, and thou becamest bound faithfully to adhere to me and my service, thou hast divested thyself of dependence on me, and perfidiously joined thyself to other lords beside me.—Thou lovedst their idolatrous rites, and observedst the superstitious ceremonies whereon many place their trust, and repose themselves with some degree of ease and satisfaction.

9. And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and

* Deut. xxxii. 16.

† 1 Pet. iv. 3.

and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase *thyself even* unto hell.

The apostate Church is farther charged with having paid too great veneration to some person of eminence, and given to him the honour due to Jehovah, from whom only salvation is to be expected. As our prophet does not name the prince he intended, various conjectures have been formed respecting the person who is meant. If the charge is considered as brought against the people of Judah, the Assyrian monarch may be alluded to; for to him messengers were sent from king Ahaz, saying, 'I am thy servant and thy son, come up and save me out of the hand of the King of Syria *.' These ambassadors, which were sent to Babylon, probably carried with them, according to eastern custom, a present of some excellent oil and rich perfumes, along with the silver and gold which are expressly mentioned in the history of that transaction †. By this unworthy expedient, the Jewish people debased themselves and dishonoured God, whose assistance they ought to have implored.—But as this prophecy, according to the hypotheses I have adopted, relates chiefly to the Christian Church when degenerated and corrupted, the Roman Pontiff, the king of mystical Babylon, may be intended, who, for ages, was considered as the vicar of Jesus Christ, and the dispenser of his grace to the children of men. To this haughty, powerful potentate, ambassadors were dispatched, with valuable gifts from different parts of Asia and Europe, to conciliate his favour, and to obtain his benediction. By this mean, servile compliance, those who acted in this manner shamefully debased themselves, and incurred the dread displeasure of that God who will not give his glory to another.

10: Thou

* 2 Kings xvi. 7.

† Ver. 8.

10. Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; *yet* saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.

The crimes committed by the corrupt Church became more heinous by their obstinate perseverance in wickedness.—In the first part of the verse, there seems to be allusion to a traveller, who, having entered on a long and hazardous journey, in which he has to surmount many obstacles and difficulties, becomes much fatigued whilst he continues to go forward, in the expectation of arriving at the place of his destination with considerable advantage. The way spoken of, is the course whereby those who are travelling to another and better country proceed, in order to reach the end they have in view. The greatness of the way, wherein they were tired, consisted in its being irksome, long, and tedious, in consequence of many incumbrances and obstructions, arising from superstitious, idolatrous practices. How laborious and troublesome, and, at the same time, how frivolous and vain, the superstitious rites and observances that have been introduced into the simple, spiritual worship of the living God, instituted by Jesus Christ and his apostles. Instead of serving the one true God, through the one Mediator, by the one Spirit, many objects of adoration, and many intercessors have been devised. To the observation of one day in seven, have been added numbers of holy days and festivals, to be kept throughout the year. To the sacred worship due to the Most High, have been joined innumerable splendid acts of devotion of human contrivance. The remission of sins through the blood of Christ, freely offered in the gospel to the believing and the penitent, hath been connected with penances and offerings of silver and gold. The plain institutions of baptism and the Lord's supper
have

have been loaded with ridiculous pompous ceremonies. By these, and many other impediments, placed in the way of salvation, men have been greatly fatigued and discouraged.

Yet saidst thou not, there is no hope. Though wearied by these troublesome observances, thou didst not intimate thy determination of refraining, and proceeding no farther in this tiresome path. Notwithstanding thou hast found, by experience, that no real permanent benefit could be obtained by the practice of superstition, and that thou hast not received any substantial favour from the king to whom thou hast yielded obeisance, thou hast foolishly persisted in cherishing expectations from these quarters, and hast not taken one step toward reformation.—*Thou hast found the life of thine hand.* The hand being the chief instrument of action, the expression may denote, that, by activity and persevering industry, some temporary advantages and sensual pleasures had been acquired, that were suited to gratify the desires of the flesh and the corrupt mind. In the course which thou hast held, thy vicious taste and vain imagination hath been cherished, by the idolatrous rites and worship in which thou hast been employed. The consequence is such as might be expected.—*Therefore thou wast not grieved.* Thou hast not felt uneasiness or anguish of mind, nor experienced penitential sorrow for what thou hast done offensive to God, ruining to thy self, and dishonourable to thy profession.

11. And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid *it* to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?

The extreme folly and inconsistency of the superstition above described, is sharply reprov'd. That
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the reprehension might make the deeper impression on the mind of the delinquent, it is stated in the form of an inquiry, which demands a proper reply. I ask, *Of whom hast thou been afraid?* Hast thou not feared objects utterly unworthy of the least homage or reverence, whilst thou hast neglected to stand in awe of the glorious majesty of Jehovah, and his righteous judgments?—*that thou hast lied*, and dealt deceitfully with the God of truth, by not acting toward him with veneration and esteem, whom thou art obliged, by the strongest ties, to serve and honour.—*And hast not remembered me*, the magnificent displays I have given of my infinite grandeur and excellence, in the works of my hands, in the operations of my providence, in the revelations of my grace, and the ordinances of my institution. Thou hast not recollected aright my sacred ordinances, my holy precepts, and awful threatenings, which ought never to be forgotten. Instead of these important subjects, which ought seriously to be considered and laid to heart, thou hast substituted various unmeaning ceremonies, about which thou hast been occupied with much care and attention.—*Have not I held my peace*, and kept silence whilst thou hast forgotten and neglected me? I have not employed my faithful servants to admonish and rebuke thee for thy abominable superstitions and idolatries, nor have I punished thee as thy transgressions justly deserve. Notwithstanding this forbearance—*Thou fearest me not*. Thou hast neither regarded nor improved my clemency and patience, thou hast not abandoned thy detestable iniquities, thou hast not obeyed my authority, nor been influenced by suitable respect to the institutions of my worship.

The style and prophetic terms, used by Isaiah in this prediction, seem rather to describe the ancient idolatry of Israel and Judah, than the superstitious devotions of the Christian Church under the New Testament. If, however, the general scheme pursued by him, the connection and design of this discourse, are impartially considered, and compared with the circumstances relative to the state of the Church previous

previous to the glorious Reformation.—If the similitude of language is marked, that is adopted on this subject in some of the apostles' writings, with what is here used, the application of the prophecy to the See of Rome, and its connections at the period now mentioned, will appear both natural and just. The great bulk of that large community were the posterity of those who dealt perfidiously with God, and departing from him, entered into the service of other lords, and thus proved false and deceitful. As if in sport, they treated with derision and contempt the upright servants of Jesus Christ. What extreme fondness have they discovered for images, statues, and pictures, which were placed in houses, temples, and public places, before which they prostrated themselves and worshipped! Such hath been their superstitious zeal and fury, that they persecuted to death immense numbers of living saints, whilst they treated some of them that were dead as if they had been gods, and ascribed to them the honours that are due to God alone. About the twelfth century they put to death, with barbarous cruelty, thousands of the children of God, the disciples of Jesus Christ, the confessors of the truth, who were remarkable for the purity of their lives and firm attachment to the gospel, inhabiting the vallies of Piedmont and other countries. To all the abominable superstitions they were addicted, which had been practised in ancient times by Israel and Judah. To the king, that was supposed to be the vicar of Jesus Christ, the dispenser of divine grace to men, many ambassadors, with valuable presents, were dispatched from different quarters, soliciting from him that sitteth in the temple of God, saving benefits and privileges. By doing him that homage, which belongeth not to man to receive, they disgracefully debased themselves. Though quite tired with the observation of many foolish ceremonies, unaffected by the long-suffering of God, and their own extreme folly, they persisted in their evil ways, not despairing

dispairing of success attending the measures they had pursued. From this application of the prophecy, we clearly see, that the innovations and corruptions of the apostate church of Rome are not merely glanced at, or obliquely intended by our prophet, but that they are plainly and particularly intimated. A general expectation of these predicted events, which were anticipated in the Jewish Church by their idolatries and corruptions, rendered good men attentive and inquisitive, whilst it prepared them for the full conviction which their actual accomplishment was designed to produce.

12. I will declare thy righteousness and thy works, for they shall not profit thee.

Divine judgments are denounced against an evil and adulterous generation, as the just punishment of their woful apostacy from God and his sacred worship. Notwithstanding they had forsaken Jehovah, and grievously corrupted his institutions, they were not destitute of what was reckoned righteousness, and works whereby they hoped to maintain their cause and to stand in judgment before God. They maintained, that they were the repository of revealed truth, the infallible judge of controversies; whilst they presumptuously imagined, that, by persecuting unto death and consigning to flames and tortures those whom they branded with the name of heretics, they did God good service. They openly asserted, that there were among them many saints, who were possessed of such abundant merit, as to be able to spare some of it to their needy friends, who in that respect were miserably deficient. Though they professed to be denied to worldly honours and pleasures, they had every where spacious temples, and splendid images richly adorned, fine altars, and costly pontifical garments. Of these and the like things, they made their boast, and on them they placed great dependence.

dependence. The Lord God solemnly declares—*They shall not profit thee*; when brought into public view, and impartially examined, they shall appear contemptible, and destitute of those advantages with which they seemed to be connected. Their performances, divested of specious names, of ostensible beauty and importance, shall be seen in their true colours, blended with detestable hypocrisy, avarice, impurity, luxury, ambition, cruelty, and superstition, and lose all the value which had been falsely attached to them. When God doth this, it shall fully appear that the righteousness of sinners, which consists in the obedience and death of Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, hath been greatly obscured, and that the worth of good works hath been grossly misrepresented, and much over-rated. Those who are acquainted with the history of the Church prior to the Reformation, and at that period, may easily perceive the fulfilment of this prediction, when the delusive artifices invented by superstition were brought to light, and declared vain and unprofitable, and the doctrines of grace were rescued from the darkness wherein they had been involved.

13. ¶ When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee: but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take *them*: but he that putteth his trust in me, shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain.

The deplorable condition of the apostate Church, when reduced to an afflictive sense of imminent danger, and obliged to supplicate aid and deliverance, is contrasted with the happy state of those who place their confidence in Jehovah.—When thou soliciteest help in time of thy necessity, go to those auxiliaries on whom thou hast relied for assistance and support, apply to them for succour and relief from impending ruin—*But the wind shall carry them all away.* False

doctrine. which, though fluctuating and uncertain, is powerful in its operations, shall drive them away from their stations, as a strong wind does the chaff and the stubble, so that they shall be incapable of granting the desired succour. The awful judgments of God shall carry them away like smoke, shall frustrate all their attempts to maintain the cause of superstition, and render their intended support vain and ineffectual.—*Vanity shall take them.* All their efforts to preserve the decaying interests of the false system, which had been long established, shall be baffled, and prove unprofitable for that purpose.

But he that putteth his trust in me, &c. He that placeth his dependence on the Lord God, to remove the evils that he sustains, to avert the dangers that he fears, to supply the wants that he feels, and to bestow the blessings that he needs—He that, divested of anxious perplexing solicitude, aims at the faithful performance of his duty, commits himself, with all his interests, to the protection and disposal of Jehovah, reposing his confidence in his power, grace, and faithfulness, shall find his heart established, his sorrows alleviated, his fears dispelled, his mind composed, and his just desires fulfilled.—*He shall possess the land.* After his enemies, oppressors, and persecutors are cut off, and have melted away as the fat of lambs, he shall enjoy the good things which infinite Wisdom sees proper to bestow. In the words of the royal Psalmist *, ‘The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.’—To this possession he hath a plenary right, in virtue of the promise and gift of the great Lord of all; and he shall enjoy it with quietness and contentment, neither repining at the smallness of his portion, nor envying others for what is assigned to them. The land, I suppose, which he that trusteth in the Lord shall occupy, is the same which was promised to the father of the faithful, under the name of the world, which the apostle Paul hath mentioned in the inventory he gives of the property of real Christians. Is it

* Psa. xxxvii. 29.

is doubtless the earth, which Jesus Christ declares shall be inherited by the meek, who, with true humility of mind, and admiring views of the grace of God, cordially submit to his all-wise dispensations, cheerful and satisfied with the blessings conferred on them by their heavenly Father.—*And shall inherit my holy mountain*,—the peculiar privileges belonging to the Church of God under the New Testament, over which the glorious Redeemer presides as king; wherein his peculiar people perform the solemn exercises of his worship, and enjoy, with pleasure and gratitude, many inestimable advantages.—After the forces of the kingdoms and states had been collected, which were the supports of the Church, deprived of its former beauty and purity, and had received the pontifical benediction, they suffered dreadful slaughter, and were completely defeated—Whereas the upright worshippers of Jehovah, who trusted in his name, were rescued from the power of those who spoiled and laid them waste, and were permitted to enjoy, without molestation, the blessings of Providence, and to celebrate the worship of the Most High.

14. And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.

The majestic voice of God is now heard, calling those to engage in the reformation of the Church, to whom this great work especially belonged, who are directed to remove whatever is obnoxious or offensive. The words, though especially addressed to those in public capacities, and possessed of distinguished abilities, are not to be confined to them, but extended to all, who, in their several stations, ought to contribute their aid to this good work.—The Lord God, who had for a long time held his peace, and been silent, gives this express order—*Cast ye up*. The repetition of this order, taken in connection with

with what follows, plainly shews the Divine good pleasure that the business prescribed should be executed with the utmost promptitude and alacrity, notwithstanding the difficulties, oppositions, and dangers, that lay in the way. In this expression, there is an obvious allusion to the reparation of a high way, that, being long neglected, hath sunk and become uneven, and which requires to be laid with hard materials, to render it smooth and easy to travellers. In mending public roads, the first thing to be done is, to throw up the earth that hath fallen into the gutters by the way-side, and to remove every obstruction that might hinder passengers in their journey. In allusion to this well-known practice, the way required to be repaired comprises all that is necessary to be believed and performed, in order to attain eternal salvation.—The rule of faith and obedience, which shews what is to be avoided, and what is to be done, in the worship and service of God by his people, who are pressing forward in their journey toward the heavenly and better country.—The way of truth, whereby faith must be regulated; the way of God's precepts, in which the Church must proceed in acceptable worship and good discipline.

This road of duty is required to be cast up, which intimates, that it had fallen into disrepair, and become disagreeable and tedious, so that it needed to be restored to its former state, and new made, that travellers might not err therein, and that it might serve the purposes for which it was intended. Much labour and pains were to be bestowed by those called to this arduous work, in arranging, explaining, and illustrating the doctrines, the precepts, the worship, and discipline contained in the Scriptures, that they who walk according to that rule might make the greatest progress with ease and satisfaction.—*Take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people*, which ignorance, tyranny, superstition, and prejudice, hath laid in the way of God's salvation—clear it of the errors

errors which have been introduced, of the rubbish wherewith it is clogged, and of those occasions of people's falling into sin, and losing their integrity, that justly give offence. By such measures render the way smooth and plain, take heed that every thing be consistent with the new œconomy of grace, and the testimony of Jesus Christ and his apostles; that so no impediment may hinder the servants of God from advancing in the way of truth and holiness.—If you wish to be acquainted with the fulfilment of this prophecy, read the history of the Reformation, effected by means of those eminent men that the Lord God raised up, and qualified for accomplishing this great work, whose astonishing exertions he crowned with glorious success, insomuch that from the time of the apostles, nothing comparable to it had ever been done in the world or the Church. At this momentous epoch, to which our prophet seems to refer, when the most illustrious of all the revolutions that happened in the state of Christianity, since the days of its Divine, immortal Founder, was introduced that happy change into religion, which is known by the name of the glorious Reformation. By this memorable event, which adorns the records of the sixteenth century, the way of the Lord was prepared, occasions of stumbling were taken away, truth was cleared from those mistakes whereby it had been obscured, the worship of God was rescued from idolatry and superstition, the Scriptures were brought into use, explained and applied, and the way of salvation, through faith in the obedience of Jesus Christ, was freed from the incumbrances with which it had been loaded. The present age sensibly feels, and future ages will continue to perceive the inestimable advantages produced by this grand revolution, which extended its influence not only to the kingdoms of Europe, but the most distant empires on the earth.

15. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* holy, I dwell in the high and holy *place*; with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

These words contain a magnificent description of the infinite grandeur of Jehovah, and an amiable representation of his adorable condescension and grace, which are intended to administer consolation to the humble and broken spirit. The sentiment, which is truly sublime, may be considered either in reference to what preceded, as a reason why the Most High foretold the reformation of the Church, that those who deeply lamented the prevailing corruption of the times might be assured of the presence and consolations of God.—Or, it may be viewed as connected with what is subjoined in the following verses, and designed to comfort their hearts, who, having abandoned the errors they had embraced, and returned from their iniquities into the way of truth, with the reviving assurance that Jehovah would dwell in them, and vouchsafe to bless them with the communications of his grace. Though this, like the other prophecies, came not of old by the will of man, but the servants of God ‘spake as they were moved ‘by the Holy Ghost,’ it is remarkable, that, when they uttered things of peculiar moment and interest, which might be credited with difficulty, to give the more authority to what they deliver, the subject is introduced with words of similar import to those before us.

For thus saith the high and lofty One, who, in respect of existence, perfection, dominion, and glory, is greatly exalted above all who are called gods. As Solomon acknowledged, ‘He is higher than the highest *’ of the creatures

* Eccl. v. 8.

creatures he hath made, who are infinitely inferior to him in excellence, dignity, and glory. He is the first and the last, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He alone, who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach, hath immortality; though angels, and men also after the resurrection, shall never die, it is the peculiar prerogative of Jehovah, that he hath immortality, which is an essential property of his nature—*Whose name is holy.* He is perfectly free from all manner of impurity, being infinitely and immutably holy, in his nature and attributes, in his word and works, of which he hath exhibited the most striking proofs and demonstrations. He calls his people unto holiness, he actually renders them holy, declaring that he himself is the source, the pattern, the rule, and motive of all the sanctity they possess.—*I dwell in the high and holy place.* The blessed God hath his peculiar residence in the highest heavens, which are emphatically denominated the habitation of his holiness; where he is contemplated, adored, and served by all the celestial hosts. Though his presence fills heaven and earth, he affirms that he dwells on high; because he there affords the brightest manifestations of his transcendent glory, and his exalted worshippers are admitted to delightful intercourse with him. By this very sublime description, he asserts his infinite exaltation above the whole creation, and their entire dependence on his sovereign pleasure.

With him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit. He who dwelleth not in temples made with hands, whose throne is the heaven, and whose footstool is the earth; amid all the splendors of his glorious habitation, the great God condescends to look, with gracious regard and tender compassion, on the humble and contrite, whose minds are grieved, and whose hearts are broken, on account of their depravity, imbecility, and innumerable transgressions—*Whose spirits are depressed with an afflicting sense of their*
spiritual

spiritual poverty, of the weakness of their graces, of the deficiencies attending their best services, of the strength of their corrupt passions, and their unspeakable need of the righteousness and grace of the great Redeemer. With persons of this character the eternal Jehovah is pleased to dwell. He not only visits, but he takes up his abode with them, he takes possession of their hearts, he erects his throne in their souls, he converses with them as one does with his intimate friend. He beautifies them with Divine grace, he imparts to them the enlightning, sanctifying, and comforting influences of his Spirit; by his power, he affords them protection and establishment; by his wisdom, he supplies them with instruction and direction; by his tender compassion, he relieves them under all their troubles; and from his goodness, he enriches and abundantly satisfies them. Those who are thus highly favoured of the Lord, admiring and adoring his wonderful condescension, adopt with pleasure the exclamation of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, ‘What is man that thou art mindful of him *’ ‘Though God be high he hath respect to the lowly †’.

—How generous the design which Jehovah effects by this gracious dispensation! intended

To revive the spirit of the humble. To administer succour, and to pour divine consolations into the heart dejected by an afflictive sense of the awful displeasure of the Almighty, manifested against sin—To solace the disconsolate mind, depressed by disquieting grief, and languishing under penitent convictions of the malignity and guilt of transgression—To grant deliverance from distress and dreaded calamities, and by his quickening Spirit to render lively, vigorous, and cheerful. The expression is repeated, to intimate the absolute certainty of this happy effect, which shall not fail to result from the residence of the Lord God in the humble heart. He will support and animate the contrite, in all their sharp disquietudes and

* Psal. viii. 4.

† Psal. cxxxviii. 6.

and sorrows, from whatever causes they proceed, by establishing faith in his kind providence, in his paternal care, in his faithful promises, in the good conduct of the leader and commander of the people, and by the pleasing hope of glory, honour, and immortality. When weak and languid, timorous and desponding, he will mercifully refresh and invigorate their fainting spirits with the light of his countenance, and a comfortable sense of his gracious presence. In this way doth the Most High sustain the feeble, dismayed soul, and impart that strong consolation, which, like the sweet fragrance of the richest perfume, and the restorative power of the finest cordial, gives new life, strength, and energy, to the heart; in consequence whereof, the person thus revived is enabled to exercise grace, to perform duty, and to endure afflictions. The vigour of the spiritual life is renewed and increased, and progressively carried forward to its final consummation in immortal felicity.—This astonishing display of the grace of God toward the humble and contrite hath been enjoyed in every age. About the time of the Reformation, this prediction was remarkably verified to real Christians, in Bohemia and other countries, who were eminently distinguished for humility, constancy, and zeal in the service of God: And if you, my brethren, are meek and lowly in heart, you also may expect to experience its fulfilment.—Be not, however, rash and presumptuous, nor too diffident and timid in claiming this character: If these are the prevailing, habitual dispositions of your minds, though attended with lamented deficiencies, you ought to rejoice in the privilege of which you are assured.—Whereas, if you are destitute of these essential ingredients in the Christian character, though occasionally alarmed with a view of your sin and danger, you cannot, in present circumstances, enjoy the precious benefit we have been considering. Until your spiritual state is changed, your condition is deplorable.

16. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls *which* I have made.

The reason is here assigned why the Lord God vouchsafes to dwell with the penitent and lowly, why he is pleased to alleviate and shorten the calamities wherewith he visits his people. Did he always deal strictly and severely with sinners, who violate his law, they could not entertain the least hope of pardon and favour. Observe, that it is not said that God will never debate nor strive with his people who have offended him; for, according to the constitution he hath established, 'if they forsake his law, and walk not in his judgments, he will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes *.' 'Because he hath known them above all the families of the earth, therefore will he punish them for all their iniquities †.'—Notwithstanding his administration is conducted according to these maxims, the Almighty assures his Church, that he will not contend for ever; he will not always chide, nor keep his anger continually, but in the midst of deserved wrath he will remember mercy. His people shall not be permitted to remain in heaviness any longer than is necessary to promote their real benefit, and after calamities have executed the designs for which they were sent, a way of escape or deliverance shall be opened. 'After he hath torn, he will heal; after he hath smitten, he will bind up; he will revive and raise up, and cause them to live in his sight ‡;' 'for he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.'

For the spirit should fail before me, &c. The expression seems to refer to the distressed situation of those who are so oppressed with grief and uneasy thoughts, so discouraged and faint in their minds, that

* Psa. lxxxix. 30. *et seq.* † Amos. iii. 2. ‡ Hos. vi. 1, 2.

that, overwhelmed by fears and perplexities, they refuse to be comforted. The spirit and soul, I suppose, are synonymous terms, denoting the spirit which God breathes into man when he becomes a living soul, which at death returns to him that gave it. By his omnipotence he creates and unites it to the body, when properly disposed for the reception of this intelligent inhabitant. Hence he claims this as one of his glorious titles, that 'he formeth the spirit of man, which is in him *.' On this account he is called, by an inspired apostle, 'the Father of spirits †.' Heavy and long continued afflictions would make the souls even of good men, that have been renewed after the Divine image, and rendered capable of important services, to fail before God, and incapacitate them for the work to which they are assigned—Their spirits, involved in sorrow and sadness, would fall into despondency, misconstrue providential dispensations, and, despairing of relief and consolation, become languid and depressed. In this feeble and forlorn state, they would be altogether unfit for any vigorous exertion, and answering the ends for which they were made. To prevent them from degenerating into this unhappy condition, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, doth not forsake the work of his own hands: he mitigates and shortens the calamities wherewith his Church are visited, and brings them out of trouble, that they may praise his name. How admirable in this, as in every other respect, doth the mercy and compassion of Jehovah appear, in his management of the concerns of his peculiar people, who, when their strength, fortitude, and patience, are ready to fail in waiting for his salvation, he seasonably interposes in their behalf, and permits them not to sink under the pressure of affliction!

17. For

* Zech. xii. 1.

† Heb. xii. 9.

17. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him : I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.

These words clearly shew, that any reformation, or change to the better, which God effects in his Church, is a work of sovereign mercy and grace. That he might reclaim them from error, and reduce them into the way of truth and holiness, he chastened them in various ways ; but none of the methods he adopted produced repentance and amendment, they still went on in their trespasses, and departed farther from God. In these circumstances, it became necessary that he should either inflict on them severe judgments, or come to their relief by extraordinary displays of his grace and kindness. In this last-mentioned way he was pleased to appear for their deliverance. To illustrate his wonderful compassion, God saith—*For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth.* To impress the more deeply this truth on the minds of every one concerned in the crime specified, an individual only seems to be intended. By this particular mode of expression it is intimated, that the omniscient Jehovah is perfectly acquainted with the temper and conduct of all those of whom his Church is composed, that they are so closely linked together in society, that the sin of one was in some measure chargeable on the whole community—Covetousness proceeds from a heart inordinately set on worldly objects, from a false, extravagant estimate of the precarious possessions of this present life, which are considered as essential to happiness and comfort. By consequence, the mind is occupied with immoderate desires of acquiring, and anxious cares of preserving them ; with excessive joy in viewing, and perplexing fears of losing them ; and when they are removed, it is distressed with extreme vexation. The utmost exertions, incessant labours, and unjustifiable means

means are employed to obtain that wealth and affluence, which cannot felicitate or satisfy. He who acts under the corrupt influence of this iniquity, hesitates not to withhold from God the thankful acknowledgments due to him for his bounty, to defraud his neighbour of his just rights, and to deprive himself of the use of the blessings conferred upon him by Divine providence. So abominable is this sin in the sight of God, that he abhorreth the covetous *, and hath declared that they shall not inherit his kingdom †. No wonder then, that he saith, for this iniquity,

I was wroth, &c. The blessed God was highly displeased at his professing people, on whom he had conferred many signal advantages, for having indulged in the sin of avarice. If, as saith the proverb, the king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion, how terrible must be the wrath of the King of kings, which in Scripture is represented by consuming fire, that burneth to the lowest hell! He testified that he was angry with them, by withholding the blessings of his providence and grace, and giving them to feel many other dreadful effects of his hot displeasure, because they had departed from him, and forsaken his service. — *And smote him.* To accomplish the salutary purpose of their recovery from this predominant sin, and to warn them of their extreme danger, the righteous Lord smote them with the sword of his mouth, by the hand of his faithful servants, and by various judgments sent upon them in the course of his providence.— *I hid me,* by withdrawing those proofs of my presence and favour which he formerly enjoyed, such as the refreshing light of Divine truth, and the sanctifying influence of my Spirit; in consequence whereof— *He went on frowardly, &c.* All the admonitions he received, all the evils he experienced, did not restrain his avarice; still he obstinately persisted in covetous practices, proceeding, without controul, in that course of conversation and action
which

* Psal. x. 3.

† 1 Cor. vi. 10.

which accorded with his bad principles and views. By this Divine procedure, it might have been expected that he would have been induced to abandon his iniquity, and to return to the Most High; but alas, refusing to be reclaimed, he perversely adhered to the way devised by his own evil heart.—What then shall be done? Shall Jehovah vex and consume him in wrath, and make him like Admah and Zeboim? No, saith he; ‘my bowels are turned in me, my repentings are kindled together; since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy on him.’—This gracious purpose is expressed in the following verse.

18. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners.

Comfortable assurance is given, that He who delighteth in mercy will extend compassion to those on whom he might have manifested his righteousness in the punishment of their sins.—*I have seen his way*, saith God, who understandeth men’s thoughts afar off, and who pondereth their paths. I have observed the sacred operations of his mind, and every part of his conduct; from my knowledge, to whom the darkness and the light are alike, nothing hath been concealed. I who look down from heaven, and behold from my dwelling place all the children of men, I have considered the ways of the heart and of the life of every individual in my Church, so that nothing hath passed unnoticed. I have perceived that many of his evil ways proceeded from ignorance and precipitance, from imprudence and erroneous sentiments, which have proved the sources of manifold transgressions. This appears to me a proper time to display the riches of my mercy and
grace,

grace, in his deliverance, and restoration to a prosperous and comfortable condition.—*I will heal him.* God, who had been witness of all his wicked ways, might have threatened to destroy and cast him off for ever; but he, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, instead of denouncing righteous judgments, proclaims his tender mercies, and announces his gracious design of applying an effectual remedy, to remove the evils wherewith he was afflicted. I, who am an almighty, skilful, and tender-hearted physician, whose ability no disease ever reproached, and who hath a sovereign remedy for every distemper—I will administer relief when the help of man is vain, yea, I will heal him, by granting the remission of those sins which brought on the evils whereby he is endangered, and by effecting the cure of those distempers under which he groans and decays. I will restore him to a state of soundness, in doctrine and discipline, in worship and manners, in consequence of which a most important, happy change shall take place in his faith and practice.

I will lead him also, &c. The blessing here promised is truly valuable. Every one acquainted with his own ignorance, and the treachery of his heart, must be sensible of the high importance of Divine conduct. Through the darkness of the human understanding, the perversity of man's will, and the disorder of his affections, even the upright in heart are apt to turn aside and go astray from God. In this state, wherein he is prone to err, how useful and seasonable the direction of the wonderful Counsellor, the benefit of which the Church is assured! *I will lead him also,* saith Jehovah, out of the way of ignorance and vain traditions, of falsehood and superstition, and will conduct him, by the light of my word and Spirit, into the paths of truth, righteousness, and holiness, wherein he shall enjoy tranquillity and consolation.—*And restore comfort to him, &c.* I will confer upon him, saith God, those temporal benefits whereof he hath been long deprived. By remarkable

able interpositions of my Providence, by the ministry of my faithful servants, accompanied with power from on high, he shall be encouraged and solaced. By the dispensation of ordinances, and communications of grace, his knowledge, faith, and holiness, shall be promoted and established, his spiritual consolations shall be increased and confirmed. These reviving comforts shall be restored not only to him, but to his mourners, who deplore his forlorn condition, and lament the prevailing iniquities and abounding evils in Zion, whereby the people of God have been distressed, and from which they saw no prospect of deliverance.—We celebrate thy praises, O Lord, who turned again the captivity of Zion, and hast done great things for us, whereof we are glad; who, in sovereign mercy, healed the broken hearted, led them to the rock of ages, and administered to them Divine consolation. We remember, with admiration and gratitude, the agency of thy mighty hand in the blessed Reformation of thy Church, which, like the sun in the firmament, hath powerfully operated even where it was not seen. We request, O faithful God, that thou wilt verify, to the humble and contrite among us, these promises to the glory of thy holy name.

19. I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to *him that is far off*, and to *him that is near*, saith the Lord, and I will heal him.

In these words Jehovah asserts his all-sufficiency to bestow the precious benefits he had promised, and the certainty of their accomplishment.—*I create the fruit of the lips, peace.* In the course of my providence, and by the efficacy of my Spirit, I give peace, which includes reconciliation to God, serenity of mind, and external tranquillity, with every blessing requisite to real happiness. This important privilege, which is the operation and the gift of Jehovah, is represented

ed as the fruit of the lips, whereby interesting, useful truths are circulated among mankind. By this expression may be meant the doctrines of the glorious gospel, promulgated by the ministers of the Son of God, whose office is to publish the joyful tidings of salvation, which, when accompanied with Divine power, are the means of conveying peace into the hearts of men. Hence thanksgiving to God, which is one of the most excellent fruits that proceeds from man's mouth, is called by an inspired writer, 'The fruit of the lips *.' His powerful agency, however, who calls the things that are not as though they were, is absolutely necessary to accomplish this end; and therefore he declares, that peace is effected by the exertion of his creating power, and that to him the praise and glory ought to be ascribed. Nothing less than omnipotence can impart peace to the troubled mind, harassed by uneasy contending passions, at variance with God and with itself, and can restore harmony to the society that hath been disturbed by animosities and discords.

Peace to him that is afar off, &c. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the saints at Ephesus †, says, That 'Jesus Christ, who is our peace, came and 'preached peace to you who were afar off, and to 'them that were nigh.' By him that is afar off may be intended sinners of the Gentiles, to whom this description well agrees. Alienated from God, and ignorant of his perfections, his will, and salvation, they were strangers to the covenants of promise and the commonwealth of Israel, unacquainted with his righteousness and Spirit, having no hope of the advent of the promised Messiah, and of that redemption he was to obtain for transgressors.—By him that is near may be signified the Jews, who of old were the peculiar people of God, who was nigh unto them in all they called upon him for. To them were given

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L 1

promises

* Heb. xiii. 15.

† Chap. ii. 17

promises of a Saviour, and the inestimable blessings he was to bestow, exhibited in many types and figures, and explained in the writings of the prophets, that were raised up among them to make known the will of God. To both Jews and Gentiles the gospel of peace should be preached, which the apostle Paul asserts 'is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jews first, and also to the Gentiles *.' The expression under consideration may import, that God would send forth faithful ministers to preach the gospel of Christ to all nations; and, by his countenance and blessing, render their ministry effectual for the reformation of the Church, and for conveying to people of every description the most substantial benefits, which flow from his creating power and boundless munificence.—To give the utmost certainty to this reviving declaration, these emphatical words are subjoined, *Saith the Lord*, who is faithful, and who will assuredly fulfil all these words in their season. *And I will heal him* of the breaches that have been made upon him, and of the disorders whereby he hath been long distressed.—This glorious work of providence and grace, which was effected in a wonderful manner about the time of the Reformation, God hath been pleased to carry forward in following ages, to the praise of his own name, and the comfort of his people. The Lord gave the word, and great hath been the company of those who published it †; and still greater the number of those who believed it, in those kingdoms and cities where it hath been preached, accompanied with power from on high.

20. But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

The

* Rom. i. 16.

† Psal. lxxviii. 12.

The impious and profane, who persist in their transgressions, are excluded from the enjoyment of the quiet and tranquillity which the Lord God conveys to his Church. In the kingdom of God, there are two classes of people of very different descriptions. Besides the humble, penitent, intrepid confessors of the truth, for whom peace is ordained, there are the unrighteous and the wicked who continue in their evil ways, and refuse to abandon the crimes to which they have been addicted. The prophet David thus describes their temper and conduct, their conversation and thoughts, Psalm xxxvi. 1. *et seq.*

' There is no fear of God before his eyes ; for he
 ' flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity
 ' be found to be hateful. The words of his mouth
 ' are iniquity and deceit ; he hath left off to be wise,
 ' and to do good. He deviseth mischief upon his
 ' bed, he setteth himself in a way that is not good ;
 ' he abhorreth not evil.'—Agitated by strong, impetuous passions, they strenuously endeavour to extinguish every appearance of reformation, and are incessantly employed in distressing the upright servants of God, and counteracting their benevolent designs. Like the troubled sea, which is in continual motion, whose waves rise in quick succession to a great height, they are in perpetual disquiet through evil consciences, and various contending passions, such as voluptuousness, ambition, anger, and revenge. And as the waters of the sea throw up to the surface the mire and dirt that lay at the bottom, so the wicked rest not until they discover those abominable pollutions, which lay concealed in their bosoms, unnoticed by those around them.

21. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

Persons

Persons of the above description do not participate of the prosperity and happiness, which is the peculiar privilege of the servants of God. On the contrary, they often experience painful remorse and anguish, from the recollection of the crimes they have committed, and from the prospect of the misery and woe that shall be their portion hereafter. At variance with God, with themselves, and frequently with the best of those among whom they live, they are tormented by the stings of guilty consciences, and a fearful sense of impending destruction. Who can describe the terrible vengeance of Almighty God, to which they are consigned at their dissolution, the despair and torture which precedes the worm that never dies, and the fire that shall never be quenched *! —That the wicked may have the most explicit assurance of the momentous truth here affirmed, our prophet solemnly declares, that what is expressed in the words before us, contains the unalterable decision of his God, by whose direction and authority he announced this awful sentence. The certainty of this decree receives confirmation from the moving spectacles of horror which some profane people have exhibited in seasons of solitude and sickness, and in the view of death. Having illustrated this subject when treating chapter xlvi. 22. I shall not enlarge at present. —Permit me, before I conclude, to address you in the words of God, by the prophet Ezekiel: ‘Cast away from you all your transgressions, where-
 ‘ by you have transgressed—For I have no pleasure
 ‘ in the death of him that dieth †, saith the Lord
 ‘ God.’ Abandon, with abhorrence and grief, those iniquities which you have hitherto held fast, on which you have set your hearts, committed with greediness, and refused to let go. Be assured, that every species of wickedness is not only detestable and unprofitable, but hurtful and dangerous in the extreme. Diligently attend to the ordinances that
 God

* Mark ix. 48.

† Chap. xviii. 31, 32.

God hath instituted, which he is pleased to honour with his presence and blessing, and to render effectual for conveying those spiritual benefits which he hath encouraged them who wait upon him to expect. And may he effectually turn you from your evil ways, that iniquity may not be your ruin, and that, being delivered from destruction, you may walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

PRELI-

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE section of our prophet's discourse, which is now to be considered, is addressed, in a peculiar manner, to those who do not unite to the performance of the exterior duties of religion, the practice of true devotion and piety—Who join, with an external profession of respect for the ordinances of Divine appointment, strife and contention, with the neglect of their poor afflicted brethren. People of this description he sharply reproveth, and demonstrates the absolute necessity of abstaining from these prevailing evils, in order to enjoy the favour of God, and the accomplishment of the promises made unto the Church. He declares that would they amend their ways, celebrate instituted rites, and discharge the duties incumbent on them with uprightness, purity of heart, and unfeigned charity, free from animosities and discords; that did they return to God, in the exercises of true repentance, they might expect to be blessed with the acceptance and salvation of Jehovah. —The chapter commences with the command of God directed to his faithful servants, clearly to set forth to his people the enormous transgressions, which, like a dangerous contagion, had spread among them their contaminating influence, ver. 1.—To represent the hypocrisy and dissimulation which were blended with their sacred services, particularly their fastings, in which they cherished dissensions, and exacted labours of their dependants, ver. 2, 3.—To shew that the worship and homage yielded by them to the most High, especially that their fasts were not observed according to the law of the sanctuary, but intermixed with sensual gratifications, and works inconsistent with the right performance of these duties, ver. 4.—And to evince the vanity and absurdity of pretending to serve God, whilst the

study

study of integrity, and the practice of good works were neglected, ver. 5.—Isaiah then proceeds to describe in what manner an acceptable fast to the Lord, and the exercises especially incumbent in such seasons, ought to be observed, ver. 6, 7.—In the latter part of the chapter, he represents the joyful consequences which should certainly attend the right observance of fasts, and the conscientious sanctification of the Sabbath, on which the happiness and comfort of Christians in some measure depends; for in this way they may hope to enjoy the fulfilment of the precious promises made to the Church, ver. 8—14.

CHAP. LVIII.

CRY aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

An express command is given to Isaiah, and with him to faithful ministers of the word of God, strenuously to endeavour to convince his people of their transgressions. For this purpose, they are required to *cry aloud*, to speak with earnestness and vehemence, with authority and firmness, that they may discover anxious solicitude for the welfare of their hearers, rouse them from supine negligence, gain their attention, and prevail with them to comply with what they forcibly urged.—*Spare not*, Omit not to exert your utmost efforts in this important work; be instant in season and out of season, cease not to admonish, with seriousness and frequency, though your labours may not be accompanied with success, and though you incur the displeasure of some
with

with whom you have to do. Connive not at their faults, forbear not the prudent industrious performance of your duty, but speak with freedom and plainness, when you represent the aggravations, the number, and the desert of their iniquities.—*Lift up thy voice like a trumpet.* Speak with animation and force, sound a loud alarm in their ears, warn them faithfully of the danger to which they are exposed by going on in their trespasses, which incur the Divine displeasure. Point out, in the strongest and most decided manner, their defection from God, their many deviations from the rule of his word, and the advancement of his glory, at which they ought uniformly to aim.—*Shew my people (saith God), the house of Jacob their sins.* Though the posterity of Israel might be primarily meant, yet I do not suppose they were chiefly intended. The charge brought forward in the following verses is restricted to the abuse of fasts, and the neglect of sanctifying the Sabbath, sins to which the men of Judah (as appears from the prophecies), were especially addicted after their return from captivity at Babylon. Notwithstanding these accusations might be more immediately laid against them, I apprehend the Church, under the New Testament, are the main subjects of this discourse, who, after their egress from mystical Babylon, and their relinquishment of their idolatrous practices, were no less guilty of these crimes. Nor does it militate against the application of the following charge to the subjects of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, that they are denominated the house of Jacob. This is the very name by which they are called in the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary, the mother of our Lord. ‘He shall be great (said he), and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.’ Luke i. 32, 33.

In performing this important difficult work, assigned to the servants of God, it behoves them to represent in strong terms to his people the evil and malignity of their trespasses, their secret and more open violations of the law of God, which have been committed through ignorance, or against knowledge, of those whereof they are insensible, and those they are ready to confess; of those whereby they are already infected, or are in imminent danger.—And to acquaint them with the aggravations wherewith they are attended, the calamities to which they are exposed, in what respects they ought to reform, and how their reformation ought to be conducted, so as that it may be complete and permanent. In this arduous service we are employed, in obedience to the authority of the Lord God merciful and gracious, looking to him for assistance, acceptance, and the Holy Spirit to render our exertions successful.

2. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice: they take delight in approaching to God.

That no mistake might arise concerning the persons to whom the following reproofs are to be administered, their character is particularly delineated. On hearing the preceding command, it immediately occurs, who are the people that are here intended, whose transgressions should be exhibited in the manner described? They are depicted as having a very plausible and splendid profession, and doing many things laudable, from which they cherished a favourable opinion respecting their spiritual state.—1st, *They seek God daily.* Conscious of their absolute need of his favour, and the blessings of his salvation to render

them truly happy, they frequently attend the ordinances of Divine institution, wherein the presence of the Most High is to be found. . They employ much time and care in performing the public and private exercises of his worship, and in using the means appointed for cultivating acquaintance with his word, providence, and grace, whilst they neglect not to implore his forgiveness whom they have offended. In these exercises they seek God, not on some extraordinary occasions only, when peculiarly affected with a pressing sense of their indigence, and urged to this duty by conviction of their need of Divine mercy, and the interposition of the Almighty in their behalf. This is their ordinary business, wherein they are employed from time to time, in which they feel some degree of satisfaction and comfort.—*And delight to know my ways.* . The ways of God may signify the purposes and designs of his heart, the operations of his providence in the government of the universe, and the salvation of the Church, with the dispensations of his mercy and grace toward his peculiar people, in their various circumstances, whereby he manifests his own glory, and promotes their happiness. The ways of his precepts are doubtless especially intended, which he hath required to be observed with our whole hearts, that we may enjoy great peace in our own minds, communion with him, and attain the everlasting enjoyment of his presence and glory. To become acquainted with these ways of God, the people whose character is here described frequently read the holy Scriptures, and meditate on them; they compare one passage with another, the more obscure with those that are plain, prophecies and promises with events; they endeavour so to dispose and digest the system of sacred truth, and to arrange providential dispensations, as to have a full, connected view of the whole. In this knowledge they find much pleasure and delight. Far from being disgusted with the discoveries contained in the word of
God,

God, or the dispositions of Providence, they are greatly satisfied with the ways and works of God.

As a nation that did righteousness. They not only abstained from profanity and impiety, from fraud and injustice, but aimed to give to every one his due, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour, and tribute to whom tribute is due. They not only declaimed loudly against wrong, deceit, and iniquitous transactions, but they manifested, in their conversation and conduct, high respect to equity and honesty, so that, in their collective capacity, they assumed the appearance of a kingdom, or large society, wherein persons of all ranks were devoted to the service of God, and followed after righteousness, faith, charity, and peace with them that call on the Lord.—*And forsook not the ordinances of their God.* Amid the various temptations whereby many are seduced from punctual, profitable attendance on them, the people whose character is delineated, having formed the good resolution of pious Nehemiah, expressed in these words: ‘We will not forsake the house of our God,’ did not desert the sacred institutions of Divine worship, appointed to be observed in the Church, as part of the homage due to Jehovah, and as means of improvement, in preparation for the services of the heavenly sanctuary. Neither allurements nor dangers could deter them from solemnizing the institutions he had established, for promoting his honour and their benefit. To this steady conduct they were urged by the consideration, that the ordinances which they observed proceeded from their God, who had brought them under manifold obligations firmly to adhere to his service.

They ask of me the ordinances of justice, to point out what ought to be believed, and what should be done, that thereby they might regulate their faith and practice. Solicitous to be well informed of the will of God, respecting the duties of devotion and of righteousness, they applied to him, requesting that he would be pleased clearly to discover them, and to make

make them understand the way of his precepts. In this manner they expressed dependence on Jehovah, the one law-giver, who presides over his Church, and their fervent desires of having made known to them his good and perfect will concerning them.—*They take delight in approaching to God*, that, as indigent creatures, he may supply their wants; that, as servants, they may receive fresh intimations of his pleasure; that, as children, they may obtain his benediction; that, as friends, they may be admitted to intercourse with him. Drawing near to God they consider to be at once their privilege and duty, convinced that all the benefits they enjoy, or hope to receive, proceed from his bountiful hand, they come with frequency and pleasure into his presence, who is the source of all excellence and goodness.—Such, my brethren, is the description of the people to whom God, by our prophet, administers reproof, on account of the formality and hypocrisy that were blended with their best performances, which therefore were not found perfect before God. Do you then seriously consider if your hearts are right with God, and sound in his statutes; if there is an intimate correspondence betwixt your hearts and your holy profession. Examine your spiritual state, inquire into your conduct. Though you are not addicted to profane swearing, to profanation of the Sabbath, to sins inconsistent with the love of your neighbour, or negligent in the performance of relative duties; if you have confidence in yourselves, and do not worship God in the spirit, you are destitute of the life and power of godliness. Notwithstanding you may be frequent in reading, hearing, and meditating on the word of God, and much employed in prayer, fasting, and conversing on religious subjects; if you trust to these things, and make them the foundation of your hopes; if you are intemperate, unjust, censorious, discontented, cruel, and uncharitable, you build your hopes on the sand, and are not a whit better than those of whom Isaiah here speaks. Be
careful

careful to live and walk uniformly, as becomes persons who really wish to have the testimony of God, of their own consciences, and of men also, that they are in truth what they profess.

3. ¶ Wherefore have we fasted, *say they*, and thou seeest not? *wherefore* have we afflicted our soul, and thou takeest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

Inquiry is made why God did not testify his regard for the homage presented to him by his people, to which answer is given in the latter part of the verse.—*Wherefore have we fasted*, in obedience to the Divine authority, after the illustrious examples of eminent men of God, and in whole, or in part, abstained from food and sensual indulgences? In reply, I say, that abstinence from the gratification of bodily appetites may be necessary to some, in certain circumstances, and to others it may prove a signal act of self-denial. This restraining from carnal enjoyments, though accompanied with a demure, penitential appearance, like bodily exercise, availeth little, and therefore Jesus Christ directs his disciples not to appear to men to fast, but to their Father in heaven*. That a difference in sentiment and practice in this matter may not prove a source of contention among Christians, the apostle Paul, under the conduct of his Master, gives this salutary direction: ‘Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not, and let not him who eateth not, judge him that eateth †.’ The heart is what God principally regards, and to it chief attention should be fixed. The main business of a fast-day, as intimated in the following words, is to afflict the soul with the remembrance of past transgressions, of the dishonour done to God, and the injury done to ourselves—to give check to those licen-

tious

* Mat. vi. 18.

† Rom. xiv. 3.

tious desires and corrupt appetites, from which deliverance is not to be expected, but by frequent repression and steady opposition; and for these purposes fasting may be conducive, through the Divine blessing—Especially, if it is attended with a deep sense of the evil and burden of sin: with self-abasement, godly sorrow, and the sacrifice of a contrite heart: with ingenuous shame, penitential confession of sin, peculiar attention to the word of God, joined with thanksgiving and alms-giving; for nothing can be more suitable to those who request mercy from God, than dispensing relief to their poor brethren.

Precept and example unite in urging the practice of this religious duty, which may be considered either as a mean to dispose, and assist in other spiritual exercises, or as a sign and evidence of true penitence and humiliation before God. Both purposes may be served by private fasts, but the latter is chiefly intended by those which are public and general; wherein the people of God make solemn confession of their sins, deprecate the wrath of God, and implore his gracious interposition. This duty was early enjoined by the Lord God on the children of Israel, who were commanded annually to observe a solemn fast, on the tenth day of the month Tizri, when they rested from every kind of labour, and spent the day in prayer and penitential exercises. Many instances are mentioned in Scripture of good men, who, on various occasions, appropriated some time to this reasonable service. Before the appearance of our Saviour, several more fasts beside the one I now referred to, were observed by that people, as is evident from Zech. viii. 14. The stricter sort among them fasted twice in the week. Not only the Pharisees, but the disciples of John the Baptist fasted often, and our blessed Lord, far from reprobating this practice, was pleased to give directions how it ought to be regulated. Though he did not expressly command his disciples to fast, he informed them, that, notwithstanding they omitted this exercise during
his

his continuance on earth, after his departure they were to fast often. Indeed, occasions frequently occur that are highly proper for this duty; particularly, when impending calamities threaten to fall with a crushing weight upon individuals or societies, or when some signal mercy, or success in any important enterprize, is to be solicited in prayer. Many circumstances unite to enforce this practice, which is better adapted than mere confession of sin, to express suitable apprehensions of its malignity and desert; it gives a more forcible expression of a sense of guilt, and the forfeiture of every blessing, than verbal acknowledgements. It contributes to increase sorrow for sin, it reminds that we have more momentous concerns to attend to than the gratifications of sense, whilst it cherishes humility, gratitude, circumspection, and vigilance.

Wherefore then have we fasted and thou seeest not, &c. Thou Lord takest no notice of our humiliation and penitence, nor dost thou testify thy approbation and acceptance of our sacred services. We are surprised that thou, who seeest all the ways of the children of men, hast not shewn marked regard to the fasts we have kept from time to time, by delivering us from the distresses we deprecated, and by raising us to the prosperity and happiness we implored. 'What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the 'Lord of hosts *.' The reason of this complaint is obvious; and, had it been attended to, the complainers might have discovered that they regarded iniquity in their hearts, and consequently the Lord would not hear them, on account of their base hypocrisy and deceit. Whatsoever professions they made on their solemn days, however bitterly they lamented their condition, however loudly they declaimed against their sins, they cleaved closely to them, and would not let them go. Jehovah took no knowledge of them, he did not testify his acceptance of them; he did

* Mal. iii. 14.

did not send them deliverance, nor granted the requests which they asked, because they proceeded from feigned lips, and their hearts were not upright before him. They did not fast in obedience to his authority, from desire to enjoy intercourse with him, and to do him honour; but to get ease from the load that they felt, and to avert the miseries which they feared

Behold in the day of your fast you find pleasure, &c. This reply to the preceding inquiry plainly intimates, that people on fast days should not only abstain from the pleasures of sin, but from those gratifications which may be lawfully enjoyed at other times. This charge taxes those against whom it is brought, with having neglected to celebrate their fasts according to the prescriptions given in the word of God, and with accommodating the observance of them to their own humours and the desires of their hearts. The covetous, who are exceedingly parsimonious of their time and expences, reckon that not only to be lost which is given to the poor, but that which is taken from the season wherein they might have been gaining by industry, with reluctance abstain from their employments. The voluptuous, who are averse to lose any opportunity of enjoying the pleasures they find in social intercourse with their companions, spend great part of the day in visiting and receiving visits, and in convivial entertainments with their friends. The vain and the gay, who abhor restraint and whatever might interrupt their mirth, are occupied in dressing and adorning themselves with ornaments and fineries in the earlier part of the day, that they may make a more brilliant appearance in the evening, in the meetings and companies to which they are to resort. The multitude of the common people, who are regardless of things sacred, pass the day in idleness, in amusements, and in those dissipations which are most suited to their taste. Others, some of whom profess to be religious, do not remit their labours in such seasons, but assiduously

ously prosecute some parts of business—*And exact all their labours from their dependants and domestics, which at other times they demand.* The Hebrew word here used signifies, that they require with rigour all those things whereby they grieve and distress others; exacting of their servants, and those in their employ, such work as they perform on other days. These things have been often substituted in the place of the devotional exercises to which fast days ought to be appropriated, or in some measure have been blended with them. In this manner the Divine acceptance of the services presented to God on such occasions hath been hindered, and he hath declared, ‘When ye make many prayers, I will not hear*.’—Let us conscientiously beware of every error, and of every practice inconsistent with integrity and the faithful discharge of duty; let us guard, in particular, against attempting to impose upon God, by performing some small part of what he requires, instead of the whole, which is much more absurd hypocrisy than endeavouring to deceive our fellow creatures.

4. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye shall not fast as *ye do this* day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

The contentious, factious spirit with which fasts were observed, and the ostentatious manner in which they were spent, are sharply reprov'd. Religious fasts, such as God hath enjoined, being instituted, among other purposes, to banish from society discord, with its disagreeable concomitants, how disgraceful, how criminal, for people to counteract these benevolent designs, by keeping such days for ends diametrically opposite! To convince those to whom this discourse was especially directed, that this was indeed

the fact, they are required to review their conduct, that they might see their sin and folly. You say that you have fasted, but have you performed this duty according to the commandment, to heal your divisions, to allay your animosities, to remove your differences, and to forsake your wicked ways? The fasts which you have solemnized served to promote purposes the very reverse of these, such as contention, with every evil work; therefore they have not been acceptable to God, but are deserving of sharp reproof. From the very face of this charge it appears, that there subsisted among those against whom it was brought, parties at variance one with another, and that each blamed the misconduct and sins of the other, as the cause of their distresses, from which they had not been delivered. In consequence whereof, those devotional exercises, which should have been the means of establishing reconciliation and harmony, became a bond of contention, and added new force to the voice of faction. People in general, instead of judging themselves, which is the proper business of a fast day, unjustly condemned their brethren who differed from them, injured, insulted, and wickedly endeavoured to afflict and oppress them.

Ye shall not fast as ye do this day, &c. Your fasts have not been so observed, that you can expect God will regard and accept of your confessions and supplications. You shall not continue to do in time to come as you have done in time past; you shall be deprived of such favourable opportunities as you have enjoyed, or you shall improve them to better purposes, being divested of your hypocrisy and vanity, whereby you have been induced—*To make your voice to be heard on high.* In this manner, assuming the appearance of extraordinary sanctity and fervent devotion, which you were desirous should be noticed, you acted, whilst devoid of corresponding dispositions of mind. The Lord God, highly displeased at their dissimulation in his service, and their
vain

vain ostentation of penitence, whereof they were really destitute, solemnly declares, that they should not be allowed much longer to continue their hypocritical fasts.—By this consideration we ought to be excited to study sincerity and uprightness in all our professions of repentance, and to take heed that they be the genuine expressions of unfeigned humiliation and contrition, lest God be provoked to deprive us of the advantages we enjoy.

5. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? *is it* to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under *him*? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

Isaiah inquires of the people he now addresses, if they indeed imagined that God would regard and accept of the fasts which were observed in the manner above mentioned. To suppose that God, who requires to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, approves and takes pleasure in the external services performed by those who are devoid of suitable dispositions of mind, is highly unreasonable and absurd. If you foolishly think, that by abstaining for a short time from animal gratifications, whilst the soul is subject to the dominion of sin, and is not purified from vicious affections, you can please God, you must admit either that God does not regard the heart, and that he is indifferent as to the state of mind the person is in who engages in his service—or that external homage, such as proceeds not from the heart, meets his approbation, and is all that he requires. Such extravagant notions are absurd in the extreme, and inconsistent with the character of Jehovah, and the declarations contained in the holy Scriptures. Some of the fasts no doubt, mentioned in the Old Testament, as that of the Ninevites, were not such, in all respects,

respects, as God requires, yet were they graciously regarded by him, and proved the means, through the Divine clemency, of averting for a time deserved calamities. Their humiliation seems to have been sincere, and joined with an afflicting sense of merited awful judgments, which were followed with temporary exemption from the miseries they had incurred.

A day for a man to afflict his soul, or, as the Hebrew words may denote, ‘to afflict his soul for a day, so as to be distressed and grieved on account of his untimely and ungrateful conduct toward God, who had daily loaded him with benefits; and his return to folly after solemn confessions, protestations, and many warnings and admonitions.’—*To bow down his head as a bulrush*, which during a storm bends to the ground, and after the tempest ceases, again rises to its ordinary height. In like manner, those who are here reprovèd, during a fast-day seem to be deeply humbled for sin, though their hearts on that account are not dejected; but when the day is past, they assume a new appearance, they return to their former line of conduct, and become as proud and vain as ever they were before.—*And to spread sackcloth and ashes under him*, which was considered of old as the ceremonial part of repentance. The practice was anciently adopted in time of great affliction and sorrowful lamentation, on account of prevailing iniquity and impending judgments, as a badge of deep humiliation and self-abasement*. In this manner they pretended that they were much grieved because of their transgressions, when in truth they felt no compunction of soul, no godly sorrow for the sins they had committed.—*Wilt thou call this a fast, &c.* Doth such a superficial observance of a day, set apart for the exercises of genuine repentance, deserve this designation? Do you really imagine, that a portion of time appropriated to the solemn service of God, spent in this manner, can be acceptable

* Job xlii. 6.

able in his sight who hath pleasure in uprightnes, and knoweth all things? Do you indeed suppose, that external professions of humility, destitute of contrite hearts, can be well-pleasing to the Lord, who requires truth in the inward parts? A day wasted in hypocritical acts of devotion does not deserve the name of a fast day, and instead of being acceptable, must be an abomination to the Lord, who hates every species of dissimulation.—Recollect seriously, my friends, in what manner you observed the fast days which of late were appointed for promoting pious purposes, and if they have proved subservient, through the Divine blessing, for advancing your best interests.

6. *Is not this the fast that I have chosen?* to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke.

The exercises suited to an acceptable fast are particularly described, from whence it is evident, that the external profession of penitence is unavailable in the sight of God, unless accompanied with corresponding good dispositions, and the practice of those duties which are connected with such a profession. If you wish to know in what manner a fast ought to be observed, full information is given in this and the verse that immediately follows, to which you should carefully attend. True repentance is to be manifested by a hearty renunciation of former sins, and the faithful performance of the opposite duties. The former of these is mentioned in this, and the latter in the next verse. Let us consider them in the order in which they stand.—The fast that God hath chosen, of which he approves and graciously regards, is designed

To loose the bands of wickedness. Wickedness may here denote criminal indulgence in sin, the avowed practice of every species of transgression, and an obstinate

nate opposition to the authority and the service of Jehovah. Iniquity hath its cords, and wickedness hath its bands, whereby those who are under its influence are confined to its service, and unhappily restrained from subjection to God.—Corrupt inclinations, vicious passions, foolish pretexts joined to false maxims, strong attachments to present advantages, form the bands whereby wickedness retains her votaries under her control, and constrains people to yield obedience to her dictates. On a fast day these bands ought to be loosed, and broken asunder; former intimate connection with sinful gratifications should be dissolved, that, being freed from the fetters of iniquity, they may participate of the glorious liberty of the children of God.—*To undo the heavy burdens.* The words must be understood, not in their literal, but in their figurative sense, in order to know the true meaning of the expression, and to learn one important design of a fast day. Sins of various kinds, which are a heavy oppressive load, are doubtless the burdens here intended. In this view the king of Israel considered them, in the psalm he wrote to bring to remembrance, where he says, ‘ Mine iniquities are gone over my head, as a heavy burden; they are too heavy for me *.’ They deprive those who submit to bear their enormous weight of real freedom, they prevent true enjoyment, they occasion much labour and toil, they subject to servitude and oppression, and often give much uneasiness both to soul and body. A chosen fast is intended to undo these burdens, by separating them from each other, and removing them from off those who had been entangled and distressed by them, that they may walk at liberty in keeping God’s precepts.

And to let the oppressed go free. People may be oppressed in their persons, by confinement and rigorous exactions of hard labour; in their reputations, by unmerited reproaches; in their estates, by being forcibly or fraudulently spoiled of their goods; and in their

* Psa. xxxviii. 4.

their minds and consciences, by severe impositions and restrictions. Those who suffer in any of these ways should be liberated from the hardships and restraints to which they have been obliged to submit, and restored to the enjoyment of the advantages whereof they were unjustly deprived. The grievous sin of oppression must be abandoned, and that which hath been injuriously taken away must be given back. Neither that which is wrong must be imposed, nor that which is right withheld from the most helpless, such as the stranger, the poor, the widow, and the fatherless; but whatsoever molested or distressed them should be removed.—*And that ye break every yoke.* These words serve to explain and illustrate the preceding articles, whilst they significantly represent another important exercise, suitable to a fast day. Deliverance should not only be granted to the oppressed, but those grievous yokes should be broken whereby people have been galled and detained in bondage, whereby they have been obliged to labour and suffer, so as to have felt painful effects in their bodies, minds, or circumstances. All these hurtful incumbrances, under which they have groaned ought to be removed, and broken in pieces, so that they never more serve the cruel purposes to which they have been applied. The amount of these particulars seems to be shortly this, that, to the right sanctification of a fast, it is requisite that those who observe it do what lies in their power to set at liberty those who have been oppressed by the dominion of sin, by the tyranny of unjust usurpation, and the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. Indeed, every one, who has sense enough to know what he is about, will exert his utmost efforts, especially on such an occasion, to accomplish these benevolent purposes.

7. *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out*
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to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Fast days are instituted, not only that persons may supplicate mercy from God, but that they may perform acts of kindness and compassion to their needy brethren. Works of charity, hospitality and beneficence, which are the best proofs of real repentance, and of conformity to him who hath said 'it is more blessed to give than to receive,' are well adapted to the fasts which God hath chosen. The first instance of liberality that is mentioned is, *to deal thy bread to the hungry*, who are destitute of daily food, who have not what is necessary for their sustenance, and therefore stand in need of assistance and relief. To those who are in straitened circumstances, and in real indigence, provisions ought to be distributed with prudence and discretion, and supplies granted as ability permits, as necessity requires, as opportunity offers, and information suggests to be most expedient. To this humane, kind exercise, the most ample encouragement is given in the sacred Scriptures, where it is often required by the supreme authority of Jehovah. The practice of this duty is there urged, by the dictates of humanity and the tenderness of human nature; by the love of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; by exceeding great and precious promises, respecting this and the future world; and therefore it should be performed with alacrity and pleasure.—*And that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house.* The indigent, who, notwithstanding their honest efforts and persevering industry, are unable to support themselves, and those for whom it is their duty to provide, claim peculiar attention at all times, especially on fast days, which ought to be appropriated to this, among other purposes. Such needy people, distressed with want, ought to share in the hospitality of the day, and in those domestic comforts

comforts of which the family are daily participating. They ought either to be brought to the house, as here directed, or to have what is necessary to their relief sent to them, that the poor and him that hath no helper may be delivered.

When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him. Those who are destitute of clothing sufficient to cover and defend them from the inclemency of the weather, and to enable them to make a decent appearance in society, ought to have their wants supplied, to be furnished with garments, however homely, or with what is needful to procure them. Plausible profession and good words, however soothing, cannot excuse from offices of humanity and charity, which should be proportioned to the abilities of the giver and the necessities of the receiver. The rich in this world must be rich in good works, willing to distribute and ready to communicate, particularly on days of fasting. Thus did upright Job, who was willing to have submitted to various severe afflictions, had he seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering *. *And that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh.* Men are brethren to each other, being all partakers of the same flesh and blood. The hungry, the poor, and the naked, are intimately connected with the wealthy, who live in affluence, on the best provisions, and are dressed in the finest apparel. The rich, mindful of this circumstance, ought not to decline looking on objects of compassion, but to open their bowels and their hands for their assistance; and, on days set apart for humiliation and prayer, to shew mercy with cheerfulness. Thankful ought they to be, that by acts of beneficence, they are called to imitate the blessed God, who gives to all liberally; that they are honoured to be the instruments of diminishing the miseries of the wretched; that they are lending of their substance to the Lord, who will repay; that they are laying up in store a good foundation for the time to come; that they

remove at least one obstruction that might prevent their cries for mercy from being heard; and that they are offering the sacrifice of doing good, which is acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ, who will not permit a cup of cold water given to one of his disciples to pass unnoticed and unrewarded.—These are the exercises to be performed on such fasts as God hath chosen; and, if rightly considered, they ought to restrain even pretenders to religion from deriding or thinking meanly of this practice. Though they may judge such seasons useless to them, yet they are not so to others, who in many respects have experienced their salutary influence and blessed effects.

8. ¶ Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward.

The happy consequences resulting from fasts, observed in the manner above prescribed, are delineated in beautiful figurative language.—*Then shall thy light break forth as the morning.* You shall not only be delivered from the evils whereof you complain, but you shall be advanced to a comfortable and joyful condition. The light promised to arise is not to be understood in the literal, but in the figurative sense, denoting prosperity and felicity, which, like the light of the sun, are cheering and refreshing. It may comprehend increasing knowledge of Divine truth, progressive holiness, and conformity to the will of God, with those sublime consolations which are reviving and pleasant to the mind, as natural light is to the eyes of men. This light shall break forth as the morning, which suddenly appears at the appointed time, affects more sensibly than the brighter light at noon, and gradually advances until it arrive
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at meridian splendour. Though your state be afflictive and sorrowful, disconsolate and perplexing, like the condition of those who are bewildered during the darkness of the night, the Lord God will make that light to break forth upon you, which shall dispel distresses and griefs, and shine with increasing lustre, until it reach the perfect day. By a growing practical acquaintance with the ways of God and enlarged experience of his Divine consolations, you shall certainly and speedily find, that 'light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart *' Such is the excellence, the worth, and the utility of the benefits here intended, that they far transcend the powers of language fully to describe them.

And thine health shall spring forth speedily. This expression, remarkable for its beauty and elegance, contains a reviving assurance of a precious blessing to be enjoyed by those who keep acceptable fasts to the Lord. Sin hath spread a mortal contagion through the whole human constitution, which hath deprived it of its primitive soundness and vigour. Both the souls and bodies of men are liable to disorders and diseases which are exceedingly dangerous, and difficult to be removed. Attention to this circumstance, which is too little considered, may serve to shew the high importance and inestimable value of the benefit contained in this promise. If it is made to the Church in general, as a happy fruit of observing such fasts as God hath chosen, it comprises the cure of those backslidings and divisions, which, like corroding maladies, had preyed on their vitals, and thereby enfeebled and injured their spiritual strength and comeliness. If viewed as given to the people of God in their individual capacity, the health of the body may be included, though not mainly intended, especially restoration to that spiritual soundness and ability, which is often, with much solicitude, sought in vain, and which is health to the flesh and marrow to the bones. Of all temporal mercies, health

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is the most excellent, and of all spiritual blessings, the prosperity of the soul is the chief and most desirable.—This health is foretold to *spring up speedily*. The expression may allude to a tree, which for some time having decayed inwardly, or having been cut near the ground, fresh vigorous shoots arise from the root and remaining trunk, which rapidly grow to considerable height and strength. In like manner the Church of God, and his servants individually, find, that by means of the faithful observance of the facts, the body of sin and death is destroyed, corrupt passions are mortified, farther spiritual decay is prevented, the health and prosperity of the soul is restored. Graces and virtues, which formerly had not been visible, quickly spring up and flourish with new beauty and vigour, to the glory of God and their own comfort.

And thy righteousness shall go before thee. Though all the good things which God confers upon his people flow not from the merit of their best performances, but from his sovereign grace, and are conveyed to them through the Lord our Righteousness, a certain right to them accrues from the gracious promises of Jehovah, in consequence of their possessing the characters of those to whom the assurances are given. The righteousness of your Lord and Saviour, with whom you are intimately connected, and in whom you confide, shall go before you, to procure deliverance from evil, protection from danger, victory over enemies, with every thing necessary to your happiness. And your own actual righteousness and good conduct, to which you are directed and assisted by that Spirit, whose fruits are in all goodness, righteousness and truth, shall also precede you, to evince the justice of your claim, to the accomplishment of the true and faithful sayings contained in the word of God.—*The glory of the Lord shall be thy re-ward.* There seems to be an obvious reference in these words to the protection which the Almighty granted to Israel in their journies towards the land of Canaan,
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by means of a pillar of the cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night *. The glory of the Lord may here signify his gracious presence, accompanied with illustrious displays of his omnipotence, and other Divine excellencies, which are employed for the defence and safety of his peculiar people. Whilst righteousness shall go before them to prepare their way, and shall set their steps in his way †, the glory of Jehovah shall go behind them, to afford the feeblest of them complete protection from the enemies that would molest and injure them in their progress through this world, to enlighten their path, and to render it pleasant and comfortable.

9. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, *Here I am*: if thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity.

Gracious assurance is given, that Jehovah will be propitious to his servants, and that speedy returns shall be made to the prayers which they present before him.—The word then seems to have a special reference to the time in which they keep an acceptable fast unto the Lord, and soon after it hath been observed in the manner he requires. That this declaration might prove the more encouraging, it is addressed, like those contained in the foregoing verse, to every individual who sanctifies such a fast as God hath chosen. Prayer to God is expressed by various names in Scripture, which serve to point out the nature of this devotional exercise, or the postures wherein it should be performed. Supplicants at the throne of grace are said to ask, to seek, to knock, to enquire after God, to lift up their souls to him, to wrestle with him, to pour out their hearts before him,

* Exod. xiii. 20, 21. and Chap. xiv. 19. † Psal. lxxxv. 11.

him, to make known their requests to him, to bow the knees, and to spread forth the hands. The phrases here used are calling upon God, and crying unto him, intimating, that the person thus employed, deeply impressed with a sense of his necessities and miseries, implores with earnestness and fervour, with vehemence and importunity, the gracious attention of Jehovah to his circumstances and requests. This, you know, is not only a high privilege, but an indispensable duty, enforced by the supreme authority of the Lord God, who explicitly requires this homage. It is the sacrifice he is pleased to accept, when offered according to his prescription, it is the blessed mean of maintaining intimate intercourse with him, and one of the ordinances he hath instituted for advancing his own glory, and promoting the happiness of his people. It is admirably adapted to their present indigent condition, to express their dependence on God, to obtain from him the supply of their wants, and the accomplishment of his promises. To this becoming exercise they are strongly urged, not only by their own feelings, but by the amiable characters and attributes of Jehovah, by the mediation of his son, the office of his Spirit, and the assurances of being heard and answered.

The Lord shall answer, and he shall say, here I am. There is not, perhaps, any duty to which God hath given greater encouragement, and so many precious promises, as he hath given to prayer. A remarkable instance is contained in the words now read. Having appropriated to himself the character of the hearer of prayer, he hath explicitly declared that he will grant the supplications of his servants; and the fullest assurance is given that he will not suffer one jot of his word to fail of its accomplishment. Though for good reasons he granted not the request of Moses, that he might go into the land of Canaan, and the prayer of David for the recovery of his child, he commonly does more than gratify the prayers of his servants, as in the instances of Abraham, Jacob, and Solomon.

Solomon. What speedy answers did the Lord God give to the requests of Elias, of Daniel, of Hezekiah, of Jonah, Cornelius, &c. and those who prayed for the liberation of the apostle Peter. Indeed, the experience of the saints in all ages give testimony to the truth which is here affirmed. And have not some of you, my hearers, found that, when you called upon the Lord, and cried to him in distress, he sent you relief; that when in necessity, he supplied your wants; that when in danger, he granted deliverance; that when in perplexity, he resolved your doubts; and in time of temptation, he seasonably interposed. Be assured, that he who hath heard and delivered will continue to give ear to your supplications. He who hath bestowed the greatest mercies will not refuse to confer lesser favours. He who spared not his own Son, will not deny, to those who thankfully receive his unspeakable gift, grace and glory, with every good thing. How complete, how satisfying, the evidence of the comfortable truth we have been considering.

If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, &c. These words seem to be connected more properly with what follows in the next verse, than with what goes before. They clearly state what is indispensibly requisite to the well-grounded expectation of the answer to prayer, and the enjoyment of prosperity and comfort. To obtain these important privileges, the heavy yoke of sin and oppression, which was spoken of in verse 6. must not only be broken, but quite removed. I apprehend that it is unnecessary to add any thing at present to what was then said on the subject. Another bad practice which must be laid aside, is—*The putting forth of the finger*, which is sometimes done in way of contempt and ridicule of those who are the objects of reproach and detestation. In this case it commonly proceeds from pride and vanity, and is directed toward those who are meant to be insulted and derided. In this expression may be comprehended every other indication of
haughtiness

haughtiness and insolence, which must be laid aside by those who entertain hopes of the Divine acceptance, and of experiencing the happy effects of fasting and prayer. It is added—*And speaking vanity*, which in the holy Scriptures denotes unprofitable, idle, false, deceitful, malicious conversation, and foolish altercation, which among many who profess Christianity is lamentably prevalent. The sum of this article is comprised in the apostolical exhortation *, ‘ Let all
 ‘ bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and
 ‘ evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all ma-
 ‘ lice. And be ye kind, one to another, tender-
 ‘ hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for
 ‘ Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.’

10. And *if* thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day.

The exercises of beneficence are also required of those who would enjoy the precious blessing mentioned in the latter part of this verse. In the sacred Oracles, the word soul is used in somewhat different senses. In this expression, it may denote the strong inclination and desire of the mind, which is doubtless its meaning in Prov. xxvii. 7. where the wise man saith, ‘ The full soul loatheth the honey-comb,’ *i. e.* one whose desire or appetite is satisfied, is averse to the most delicious food. Chrystom, the eloquent father in the Church, having cited this proverb in his sermon against superfluity and excess, thus proceeds: ‘ Is it not extreme madness to shun a table covered
 ‘ by frugality, where all good things are enjoyed with
 ‘ pleasure, and sweetened by the love of God, and to
 ‘ spread another table replete with innumerable cala-
 ‘ mities, that are unpleasent and mortal, and, which is
 ‘ the most grievous thing of all, is highly provoking

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* Eph. iv. 31, 32.

‘to God.’—The late Bishop of London justly remarks, that this is an obscure phrase, used by Isaiah in the beginning of this verse, and without example in any other place; and he therefore thus translates the words: ‘If thou bring forth thy bread to the hungry.’ And to justify this translation, he says, that there are eight Manuscripts which have the Hebrew word for bread, instead of that which is rendered soul. We may, if you please, in explaining the prophet’s meaning, unite both readings of the text. The expression then may denote, that those who wish to possess the annexed privileges, must, on all proper occasions, manifest a benevolent disposition, by bringing forth bread to the hungry, who are destitute of provision necessary for the support of life, and by cheerfully giving them what is requisite to supply their urgent necessities. The following words serve to illustrate this kind affection.—*And satisfy the afflicted soul*, the person who is distressed either in body or mind, either in his temporal or spiritual interests. To such, relief should be readily administered, in such a way and measure as may gratify his just desires, and afford him good reason for satisfaction and contentment.—These are essential ingredients in the character of the man that God graciously regards, of the upright, on whom light ariseth in darkness: they are substantial evidences of subjection to his supreme authority, and of that generous temper toward the indigent, which is strongly inculcated in the holy Scriptures.

Then shall thy light rise in obscurity, &c. What a valuable collection of precious benefits are brought forward in this and the two next verses, to be enjoyed by him whose disposition and conduct is delineated in this and the preceding verses!—The obscurity and darkness, whereof our prophet speaks, may denote the evils and miseries wherein the person had been involved that he describes, the distressed, disconsolate condition, to which for some time he had been reduced by private and public calamities. This forlorn state, into which he had fallen, shall be reversed,

and happily exchanged for that which is prosperous and comfortable. By the word and Spirit of the living God his way shall be illuminated, and he shall be conducted in the way of righteousness and peace. By the favour and blessing of God he shall be enriched and delighted; his laudable enterprizes, ripened into maturity, shall be crowned with success, so that he shall rejoice in the prosperity to which, through the mercy of God, he is advanced. In both the expressions here used, I suppose the sentiment is nearly the same; and being repeated, the certainty of the event is more forcibly intimated, and the high degree of felicity and comfort to which he shall be elevated, is more sensibly impressed on the mind. In place of affliction shall be health; in room of disturbance, tranquillity; mourning shall be turned into joy, and he shall be made glad according to the days wherein he hath seen evil.

II. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

Exceeding great and precious blessings, whatsoever contributes to render one safe and happy, are promised to be conferred on the truly penitent and benevolent.—*The Lord will guide thee continually.* The high importance of this benefit is best understood, by considering how prone even the upright among men are to deviate from the path of life, and to turn to the right hand or to the left. This circumstance places this assurance in a very interesting point of view, and should excite admiration and praise of the rich grace from whence it proceeds, whilst it serves to convey a just sense of its worth and suitableness. The Lord God, the Wonderful Counsellor will be thy unerring guide; in the course of providence he
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will make his way plain before thy face ; he will fend forth his light and truth, to afford thee direction ; he will give thee the good conduct of his word and Spirit, and teach thee the way wherein thou shouldest go, not for a season only, or at some critical juncture, but continually, in all affairs, in all places, and at all times. Thus, guided by his counsel, thou mayest boldly say, This God is my God for ever, and he will be my guide even unto death.—*And satisfy thy soul in drought.* Whilst other people are distressed by awful judgments, the poison whereof drinketh up their spirits, so that they are consumed by the displeasure of the Almighty, he will mercifully preserve thee from overwhelming calamities. He will not suffer thy expectation to perish, but will fulfil thy enlarged desires of temporal and spiritual blessings ; he will satiate thy longing soul, and thou shalt be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and ‘ thy mouth ‘ shall praise him with joyful lips *.’

And make fat thy bones, or, as the Hebrew word denotes, he will strengthen and make them rejoice. One of the fathers in the Church, descanting on these words, quotes the proverb, which saith, ‘ a good report maketh the bones fat ;’ the meaning of which is, he says, it increaseth the virtues. This interpretation he thus illustrates :—Commendation is due to virtue, praise excites emulation, emulation stimulates to virtue, and virtue produces happiness and comfort †. It is the part of a wise man not rashly to condemn what he but partially understands. Our prophet’s words seem to import, that the humble and charitable, far from being debilitated and emaciated by the performance of the various exercises of Divine worship, shall thereby be invigorated and gladdened. As sin and sorrow drieth the bones, and enfeebles the strongest human constitution, so the duties of devotion and benevolence, rightly discharged, strengthen and refresh both body and mind. Therefore will the liberal man express gratitude to God, with the royal

* Psal. lxxiii. 5.

† Hieron. in loc.

royal Poet, who says, ' My soul shall be joyful in the
' Lord, it shall rejoice in his salvation: All my bones
' shall say, Lord who is like unto thee, who delivereth
' the poor from him that is too strong for him,' &c *.

And thou shalt be like a watered garden. Isaiah, who deduces the principal ornaments of his discourse from natural objects, exhibits, by two agreeable, elegant comparisons, that are familiar and perspicuous, different in kind, but correspondent in some circumstances, the prosperity and felicity of the humble and benevolent, to whom God grants the answer of their prayers. Such a one shall resemble a fine fruitful garden, which during the heat and drought of summer is frequently watered, that abounds with fragrant flowers, with vines, olives, and delicious fruits, and being in a most flourishing state, displays a delightful appearance of grace, beauty, and fertility. By this pleasing similitude, he decorates and illustrates his subject, and places, in a very conspicuous light, the more lovely and thriving state of the man who, refreshed by the seasonable influx of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, is filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God. That nothing might be wanting to amplify and embellish the felicity of this highly favoured person, it is farther affirmed—*He shall be like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.* In eastern countries, during the extreme heat of summer, many streams and rivers are dried up, and there is a great scarcity of water; springs, especially those which continue to flow at all seasons, are considered as truly valuable and useful. Divine grace, and its happy effects, are compared, with great propriety, to a perennial spring, from which the thirsty traveller quenches his thirst, that fertilizes the adjacent grounds, and conveys the salutary influence of its waters, even to places very remote. Thou shalt not be like the streams which, increased by the rain of winter, overflow their banks, and for a short time display a copious torrent, but are soon dried up. Thy prosperous

* Psal. xxxv. 9, 10.

prosperous state shall resemble a living fountain, whose waters incessantly overflow, and are copiously dispersed in every direction, refreshing the countries through which they take their course. By these agreeable similitudes, the pleasing aspect, the flourishing happy condition, the strength, vigour, and perseverance of the godly man are represented. Replenished and enriched with grace and truth, they shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life, so that neither his own hopes, nor the expectations cherished concerning him shall be frustrated. Blessed is the man that is in such a case!

12. *And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in.*

In consequence of the fulfilment of the above promises, the desolations of the Church shall be repaired, the foundations shall be cleared, and the superstructure reared up to its former height and glory. The persons to be employed in this arduous work are so described, as to shew that they are members of the household of God, who having been admitted into his family, are children of the Most High. These men being highly favoured of the Lord, shall build the old waste places, by which may be meant particular churches, or societies of professing Christians, that for a long time had been immersed in ignorance and superstition, and deprived of the peculiar care of Providence, and the communications of his grace, had so fallen into ruin, that they had forfeited the very name they were honoured to bear. Those who were born and educated in the Church shall build these waste places, they shall unite their efforts skilfully to dispose of the materials with which they are furnished, to connect them with the sure foundation

dation God hath laid in Zion, and to carry on the edifice they mean to rear, so as it may attain its former beauty and splendor. They shall exert their utmost endeavours to establish those who are under their influence in their most holy faith, to reduce them to entire dependence on the Rock of ages, that they may thereon erect a comely superstructure, complete, and wanting nothing to render it a fit habitation of God through the Spirit.—*Thou shalt raise up the foundations* of the prophets and the apostles, the great fundamental doctrines which they delivered, and which are contained in the word of God, that had been buried in obscurity, and intermixed with human inventions. These leading truths of the gospel were to be examined, compared, and joined together, in order that upon them, after having been cleared from rubbish, men might place their faith and hope, and by them regulate their future temper and conduct.—The foundations are said to be *of many generations*, either because for a long period they had been overthrown, and lain in ruins, not serving the purposes for which they were designed—or because they were to subsist for many ages after they were restored to their proper use and order, so as to answer the great ends for which they were intended, supporting the magnificent structure which was to be raised to the honour of God.

And thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach, &c. This name shall certainly be given thee, and thou shalt truly deserve this honourable appellation, so as to be indeed what thou art called. The enormous sins whereby the people had undermined sound doctrine, overturned the pure worship of God, and departed from the practice of holiness and righteousness, which is at once the evidence and ornament of a Christian profession, had made a gap in the hedge of the divine protection, and opened the way for the awful vengeance of the Almighty. This breach was to be repaired and built up; the apostate Church, which had gone into decay and been long neglected,
were

were to be recovered from the degenerate condition into which they had fallen, and were again to be re-established in the enjoyment of the primitive doctrine, discipline, and worship, revealed in the Scriptures.—*A restorer of paths to dwell in*, or rather, according to the more proper translation of Dr Lowth, paths to be frequented by the inhabitants, who might commodiously have constant recourse to them. By these paths may be intended, the rules and laws published for the benefit and direction of the people of God. These ways, which had been greatly encumbered, so that they could be observed with difficulty, and many had wandered from them, were to be freed from the obstructions by which they had been clogged. In consequence whereof the Church of God, reformed from those gross abuses whereby their faith and practice had been corrupted, brought to a just sense of their transgressions, and amendment of their conduct, were to be re-established in a happy and prosperous state. On these accounts they were to receive the designations here given them. And from the circumstances above mentioned, we are naturally led to suppose that this discourse hath a direct reference to the memorable æra of the Reformation, when these predictions were remarkably verified.

13. ¶ If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, *from* doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words.

The Lord God having clearly shewn in what manner a fast, that is acceptable to him, should be observed, he proceeds particularly to describe how the Sabbath ought to be sanctified, pointing out what he

he requires to be carefully avoided, and what to be faithfully performed.—*If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath*, instituted by divine wisdom and goodness to be a day of sacred rest. The name of the Sabbath refers to the time wherein it was originally instituted, after God had finished his works; and to the chief purpose for which it was intended, to be a pledge of the rest that remains for the people of God. Under the former dispensation it was observed on the seventh day of the week; but now under the new œconomy of grace, old things being done away, the old law, the old worship, and the old Sabbath are laid aside, the new heavens and the new earth having commenced, new men in Christ Jesus having been created, and he having rested from his works on the first day of the week, the Sabbath is changed to that day ever since his resurrection. His disciples, after his example, under the conduct of his good Spirit, have convened for sacred worship on this holy day, wherein they have celebrated his praises, enjoyed his presence and blessing, and found their edification promoted.—Would you enjoy the precious benefits mentioned in the next verse, it is required that—*Thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath*, that you refrain from the ordinary businesses and recreations in which you are employed during six days of the week. In the Scripture stile, the motion of the foot is used to signify the occupations wherein persons are industriously engaged, in order to procure the necessaries and conveniencies of this present life, with those temporal advantages that administer to pleasure or comfort. In this sense the direction, given Prov. iv. 26. is to be understood, where the wise man saith, ‘Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.’ Weigh well every part of your conduct, that by prudent consideration all your ways may be ordered aright. In like manner, the words before us may signify, that to the sanctification of the Sabbath, there must be an abstinence not only from vicious actions, but from worldly affairs, that
you

you may attend, without hinderance or distraction, to your spiritual interests and the worship of God. — *From doing thy pleasure on my holy day*, which I have appropriated and sanctified to sacred purposes. You must abstain not only from sinful pleasures, prohibited at all times, but from those which may be lawfully enjoyed on other days; not only from prosecuting your worldly employments, but from the gratification of those sensual appetites which are inconsistent with proper respect for the Sabbath. Cares and solitudes about temporal matters, as well as vain amusements, must give place to those devotional exercises by which the mind may be improved and elevated, and intercourse with God may be maintained. The day is the Lord's peculiar property, which he hath consecrated to himself; and therefore no part of it, except what is employed in works of necessity and mercy, may be alienated from the benevolent purposes of its institution.

And call the Sabbath a delight. You ought so to esteem the Sabbath, that you may not consider it as troublesome or burdensome, or an encroachment on liberty, which obliges you, with reluctance, to desist from your worldly affairs, whereby your temporal interest may be promoted. Thus did many of the Jews under the former œconomy, as appears from the discourses of the prophets, particularly from the heavy complaint, mentioned Amos viii. 5. ‘When will the new-moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?’ You ought to look on it as a sacred privilege, granted to you by the great Lord of the universe, for advancing his glory and your spiritual interests; and, abstaining from worldly businesses, you should be delightfully employed in contemplating the causes and designs of this gracious institution, and in corresponding spiritual exercises, which enlarge, refresh, and comfort the devout mind.—*The holy of the Lord.* The day that Jehovah hath consecrated from among

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other days, for the most important purposes, should be devoted to the sacred employments and enjoyments whereby his name is sanctified, and the purity of his Church promoted. Since he hath been pleased, for wise reasons, to sanctify it, it must not be profaned or abused; and, since he claims it as his peculiar right, it should be spent in holy services.—*Honourable*. because set apart by Jehovah to be an august symbol of his completion of the works he created and made; and of the accomplishment of the still more astonishing work of man's deliverance from sin, temptation, labour, and affliction and restoration to the favour and resemblance of God; with a view to their entrance into the rest of God, and the full enjoyment of his salvation and glory. He that looks upon the Sabbath in this honourable light, and spends it in the sublime exercises to which it should be appropriated, doth treat it as indeed estimable and worthy of high respect

And shall honour him, by testifying, in thoughts, words, and actions, profound veneration for the Lord God of the Sabbath, who hath challenged a special propriety in that day, which he hath made for us to rejoice in — *Not doing thine own ways*, refraining from those occupations that relate to temporal concerns, which on other days engage attention and pursuit.— *Not finding thine own pleasures*, whether connected with business or amusement, that might unfit for the sanctification of this holy day, or encroach on the duties which ought then to be performed.— *Nor speaking thine own words*, avoiding impious, injurious, vain, and idle discourse, which is inconsistent with keeping holy the Sabbath, according to the commandment. Whatever in the institution of this day was peculiar to the state of the Church under the Old Testament, either in its nature, use, or signification, being laid aside, the important duties here mentioned ought to be conscientiously performed, that the Lord's day may be observed in the devout manner

ner he requires.—Let us then, brethren, highly prize the Sabbaths of the Lord our God, as preparations, emblems, and foretastes of the eternal rest, enjoyed by the saints in heaven, who are employed in acts similar to those here recommended. Let us never consider that as a drudgery, or as a weariness, which constitutes the felicity and joy of the ransomed of the Lord; but let us diligently improve days of sacred rest, as anticipations and types of the happiness and glory for which we wait and hope. And if we thus honour God on the day that he claims as his special property, then may we expect to be honoured by him on the other days, which he hath given us for our own use.

14. Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken *it*.

The precious blessings consequent on the right sanctification of the Sabbath are next mentioned.—*Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.* In the holy Scriptures, this sublime exercise is sometimes represented as a duty *, and sometimes it is spoken of as a privilege, connected with return to God and acquaintance with him †. Indeed every duty is a privilege, and every privilege is combined with duty. At present we consider it in both views, as including pleasing meditation on the attributes, the works, the word, the ways of God, and the inestimable benefits which proceed from the overflowing fountain of his mercy and grace—Firm confidence in the exceeding great and precious promises which God hath given to his Church, of the accomplishment whereof his
goodness

* Psa. xxxvii. 4.

† Job xxii. 26.

goodness, power, and veracity, give the fullest assurance—Obeisance to his commands, in all the duties of devotion, benevolence, and charity, which when done with a good conscience, and with a comfortable sense of the Divine favour, are always attended with real pleasure and complacency.—Lively views of the fruits of the loving-kindness of the Lord, and happy experience of the immense felicity to which his servants are admitted, who honour him and reverence his ordinances.—Consider him as your supreme Lord, clothed with honour and majesty, possessing every Divine excellency, infinitely worthy of adoration and praise, of homage and subjection, to whom you are unspeakably indebted, who requires nothing of you that is grievous, and in the keeping of whose commands you are well assured there is a great reward. What sublime satisfaction may you experience, by the transformation of your mind, to prove the good and acceptable will of God, by being made free from the law of sin and death, by the law of the spirit of life, so as to say in sincerity to the God you aim to serve and to glorify, ‘I delight in thy law, after the inward man.’ Contemplate him as your all-sufficient portion, who can relieve all your distresses, supply all your wants, and enrich you with the choicest blessings, who knows your frame and all your interests, who will administer to you the purest consolations, who intends to advance your happiness, and to grant you his salvation. What exultation and joy arises from resemblance to his moral perfections, from conformity to his lovely example, from the assurance of his unchangeable love, from communion with him, and the lively hope of his eternal kingdom and glory! What a high privilege, what an indispensable duty to delight in the Lord, the prince of life and peace, who repairs the desolations of many generations, who hath scattered innumerable blessings over the world, and in whom all the nations of the earth shall be blessed!

The

The joys of those who profane the Sabbath are as the crackling of thorns under a pot, that make a loud noise and a great blaze for a little, leaving nothing behind but smoke and ashes; whereas delight in the Lord is a permanent source of the purest joy, and affords a pleasant foretaste of the rivers of pleasures that are in God's presence for evermore.

And I will cause thee to ride on the high places of the earth. An expression similar to this is used in the song of Moses, where the praises of Jehovah are celebrated, on account of the benefits conferred upon the Israelites, by the sacred Poet, in these words: 'The Lord made him to ride upon the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields*.' The inspired writer probably refers to the conquests which Israel was to obtain over the Amorites, whose lands were situated in the mountainous parts of Canaan, on which their strongest fortifications were erected. In allusion to the triumphs of his people over their enemies, when like mighty conquerors they rode along the hills and rising grounds, viewing the fortresses and strongholds which they had vanquished, the Lord God assures every one that keepeth the Sabbath, that he shall overcome his spiritual foes, over whom he shall from time to time acquire most important advantages; that he shall exult in the high privileges, the distinguished honours and choice blessings, in the possession whereof he shall be invested. The God of Jacob will enlarge his boundaries, increase his felicity, and give him to enjoy the spoils of his enemies, he shall be exalted to inherit true liberty, happiness, and glory. He shall be elevated to a prosperous and honourable state, in which he shall rise superior to places of the greatest eminence and influence.

And feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father. The land of Canaan, with the valuable immunities connected with the possession of that rich and fertile country,

* Deut. xxxii. 13.

country, assigned to his natural posterity as their goodly inheritance, was literally the heritage of the patriarch Jacob. To this land his descendants had an indubitable claim, in consequence of the disposition which God gave to their progenitor, Abraham, of that kingdom. On the excellent provisions which it afforded they fed, and were comfortably sustained. To this portion of Jacob, his spiritual children from among the Gentiles, who I suppose are chiefly intended, have no right or any ground to expect the possession. The heritage therefore, of which they have the assurance, comprises the precious benefits of Divine grace, adumbrated by the good things where-with the land of Palestine abounded, the precious fruits of God's favour included in the promises made to Jacob. 'In blessing I will bless thee; and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed *.' The blessed God, and the inestimable benefits flowing from communion with him, are significantly denominated 'the portion of Jacob †,' and his spiritual offspring.—To feed on this heritage, is to enjoy with pleasure and benefit whatsoever it contains, so as thereby to obtain the gratification of the most enlarged desires, and from thence to derive agreeable satisfaction, strength, and consolation. Such, if I mistake not, is the import of these gracious promises.—The prophet concludes this period of his discourse with these remarkable words, which ought to exclude all doubt respecting their veracity, and which lay a sure foundation whereon faith may rest the expectation of their fulfilment.—*For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it* He who is faithful and true, and will not falsify his word; he who is able to do what he hath said, notwithstanding every intervening obstacle and difficulty, will assuredly accomplish these promises, in all their large extent, to those who observe his Sabbaths, and devoutly perform the duties of his worship. As he is gracious in giving his promises,

* Gen. xxviii. 14.

† Jer. x. 16.

mises, so he is faithful in fulfilling them, and never fails to verify his good word, though to human view the events may seem improbable. 'O praise the Lord all ye nations, praise him all ye people; for his merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise ye the Lord*.'

* Psa. cxxxix

PRELI-

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE Lord God having sharply reprimanded, by our prophet, his professing people, for the sins they had committed in his worship, and inculcated, by the most forcible motives, the sanctification of the Sabbath, he proceeds to represent the enormous crimes that prevailed among them at the period to which he especially refers, ver. 1—8.—This description is followed by mournful complaints of the deplorable consequences with which their iniquities were attended, that rendered their condition truly forlorn, and seemingly almost past recovery, ver. 9—15.—When in these distressing circumstances, and the Church apparently stood on the brink of ruin, expecting nothing but immediate destruction, unless extraordinary Divine interposition prevented, the Son of God, their Saviour and avenger, appears for their deliverance, ver. 15, 16.—This glorious and mighty One is introduced as an illustrious hero, furnished for the enterprize with suitable clothing and armour, prepared to decide the controversy between the Church and their adversaries, and to execute awful vengeance on those who oppressed them, ver. 17, 18.—In consequence of this event, a large accession was to be made to the Church of God, by the conversion of the Gentiles throughout the world, whilst the enemies of his kingdom should be effectually opposed by eminent men, who were to be raised up by the Spirit of God, ver. 19.—The chapter concludes with an explicit assurance, that the great Redeemer would make himself known to his servants by his power and presence; that his word and covenant, with the operations of his Spirit, were to be perpetuated throughout all ages, ver. 20 and 21.

C.H A P. LIX.

BEHOLD, the Lords hand is not shortned, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.

The first part of this chapter I consider as primarily directed to the Jewish Church under the Old Testament, delineating the corrupt state to which they were reduced not long after their return from captivity at Babylon. I consider it also as addressed especially to the Church of Jesus Christ under the new œconomy of grace, representing their deplorable condition some time after their egress from mystical Babylon, when, their zeal having abated, they gradually fell into the practice of enormous crimes, which were succeeded by manifold calamities. In this forlorn state, they are assured, that the true cause why they were not assisted and delivered was not any deficiency in the power of Jehovah, who is omnipotent and unchangeable. Think not that the everlasting God, the Lord, who, with a strong hand and stretched-out arm, wrought redemption for his people of old, is now become faint, that his strength is impaired or exhausted, and that he cannot rescue you from the evils in which you are involved: he is as perfectly able now to effect salvation for his people as in any former period of time. This reviving truth you ought attentively to contemplate and review.—Imagine not, that the reason why he hath not granted your requests, is because he hath not hearkened to your prayers.—*Neither is his ear heavy that it cannot bear.* The omniscient God is perfectly well acquainted with your necessities and supplications, and is always ready to afford relief to those who call

upon him in truth. He hath heard the prayers offered to him in all generations, nor does he now disregard the desires of the humble, but is still as willing to answer their requests as in any former age. If then your petitions are not granted, this is not to be attributed to any lassitude or deficiency of knowledge, power, or compassion in the blessed God. The reason must be sought for in yourselves—there you may find it; and, lest you perceive it not, it is specified in the following words.

2. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear.

The transgressions of the people of God are the real cause why he doth not answer their supplications, and send them deliverance. Such trying dispensations are not to be ascribed to his inability to save, to his incapacity to hear, or to his aversion to effect your deliverance, but they proceed from your trespasses, which separate between you and your God that you professedly worship, who hath been your protector and guide, your instructor and deliverer, who hath given you all the good things you ever received or do enjoy. Like a thick cloud, which intercepts the rays of the sun, and hinders them from extending their benign influence to the objects whose prosperity and fruitfulness are thereby promoted, the sins of men, which are opposite to light, truth, and equity, coming between God and them, prevent the comfortable enjoyment of the Divine favour, and the answer of their prayers.—*And your sins have hid his face from you.* The face of God may denote his gracious countenance, whereby he manifests his good will and kindness toward his people, and affords them pleasant displays of his grace and glory. This is hid when displeasure appears in his dispensations, when he withholds the testimonies of his

his love and tender regard, when he conceals from their view the designs of his operations, and the purposes he is about to accomplish—When he delays to send answers to their prayers, and withholds the communications of his mercy, and the consolations of his Spirit, which impart satisfaction and joy to the mind. Sins are the procuring causes of all these bereavements and distresses; they separate between you and God, the infinite, eternal fountain of all good; they dissolve the intimate union that should subsist between God and the creature, and effectually prevent the enjoyment of the good things which God is ever ready to impart to the obedient and faithful. Abandon then all your iniquities, which, if persisted in, will terminate in your final separation from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, according to the awful sentence which shall be pronounced on impenitent transgressors at the day of judgment.

3. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity, your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

This, and the five following verses, contain a moving description of the prevailing sins, which provoked God to hide his face from his people.—Instead of clean hands, washed from wickedness, they are polluted with the innocent blood which you have iniquitously shed. The expression may refer to those unjust wars, reciprocal injuries, and acts of violence, wherein human blood had been spilt. Every sin contaminates and corrupts the minds of men; but of all the crimes committed against man, murder contracts the deepest defilement, and leaves on the conscience an indelible stain; it exposes to awful judgments, and so pollutes the land wherein it is committed, that it cannot be cleansed but by the blood of him
that

that shed it.—*And your fingers with iniquity.* By fraudulent transactions and violent dealing, you have deprived others of their just rights, and alienated their property from the purposes to which it was destined. Your actions and aims have been directed to accomplish the most iniquitous designs—*Your lips have spoken lies*, which are an abomination to the Lord, who possesses unchangeable veracity, and who hath strictly prohibited falsehood and deceit. In your discourses, disputes, and conversations, instead of studying moderation, equity, and candour, you have misrepresented those from whom you differed in sentiment, you have treated them with hatred rancour, and envy; you have traduced their character, and charged them with supporting erroneous opinions, by frivolous arguments, and imputed to them consequences they rejected with abhorrence.—*Your tongue hath muttered perverseness.* You have privately said things inconsistent with reason, truth, and justice. Regardless of the authority of God, the reproofs of providence, and the remonstrances of conscience, you have frowardly endeavoured to counteract the order the Most High hath established, to calumniate his servants, and to blend pernicious errors with sacred truths.

4. None calleth for justice, nor *any* pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

Our prophet proceeds in the enumeration of the sins that were prevalent among those that professed to be the people of God.—Justice, which consists in giving to every one his own, is an excellent virtue, which produces the most salutary and valuable fruits. This complaint intimates, that justice had in great measure deserted the Church, that there were but very few that desired her return and residence among

among them—That there were hardly any who reasoned justly, who reprov'd with equity, who fairly stated religious controversies, who candidly examined, who impartially discuss'd them, and who acted upon good principles.—*Nor any pleadeth for truth.* Truth may here signify the word of God, in opposition to every species of falsehood, and to human testimony, which is often blended with deceit or mistake. There are very few who aim to establish the truth with that accuracy of discernment, with that unbiass'd judgment, and that impartial regard to its sacred interests, which they certainly demand—Who, convinced that the knowledge of salvation deserves the greatest application of mind, give to the subject the time and attention that are proportioned to its importance; that each difficulty may have its solution, that each proof may have its weight, and each benefit its real worth.—*They trust in vanity,* in that which is untable, deceitful, and unprofitable, which hath no real existence or excellence, except in the deluded imaginations of men, and therefore must disappoint the expectations formed concerning it. The word may denote all those terrestrial objects on which people are apt to place their confidence, and by which they think themselves most gratified; such as wealth, power, and honour, whereof wrong opinions are formed by the bulk of mankind. On these precarious things they depend, without suspicion, for happiness and comfort, and so find their hopes frustrated.—*They speak lies.* They are crafty and designing, taking pleasure, by unjust representations, in deceiving others, and, by assertions inconsistent with the truths contained in the holy Scriptures, they grieve the hearts of the righteous, and strengthen the hands of the wicked.—*They conceive mischief.* They deliberately frame wicked devices, dishonourable to God and injurious to men; their hearts, their heads, and their hands, are employed in contriving and executing what is hurtful and destructive.—*And bring forth iniquity.* The evil thoughts they have cherish'd, and the pernicious
plots

plots they have formed, when carried into effect produce the most abominable crimes.—Mark the progress of wickedness, thus described by the apostle James, in words somewhat similar to those before us. ‘Lust, when conceived, bringeth forth sin, (which is its natural offspring) and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death *.’

5. They hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spiders web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and *that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.*

These figurative expressions, which are used by Isaiah to illustrate the subject whereof he treats, were borrowed from objects well known to the inhabitants of Judea. As the imagery he employs to embellish his discourse was taken from what occurred to his senses, it must have some connection with its immediate origin and natural soil. To form a correct judgment of the propriety and elegance of the figures here introduced, we must recollect the circumstances of the writer, the natural history of the country, and the peculiar genius of the Jewish people, among whom he exercised his office. After attending to these things, some degree of obscurity may still arise, from our imperfect acquaintance with the different objects which are applied, without peculiar marks of comparison to give energy and force to the sentiment, which lies not in the literal sense, but in something that is not directly expressed. Not to dwell on the external sense of what is here said, which might bewilder us in uncertain conjecture, I proceed briefly to ascertain the meaning of our prophet’s words.—*They hatch cockatrice eggs.* The cockatrice was a poisonous kind of serpent, whose bite is said to be mortal, and who propagated their species by means of eggs deposited by the females. The expression seems

* James i. 15.

seems to denote, that the persons described, after having wrought into the form of demonstration or system, some pernicious principles and tenets which they had devised, and which, when brought into view, seemed at first sight to be sound and beautiful, but being more closely examined and laid open, were found full of deadly poison.—*And weave the spider's web*, which, being spun out of her bowels, is exceeding weak and easily destroyed, yet affords her a sort of covering, whilst it serves to ensnare and detain her prey. It exhibits a just representation of the system of false doctrine, artfully devised by evil men and seducers, and supported by specious reasonings, which, though destitute of reality or substance, is considered as a sufficient defence to those who formed it, whilst it serves to entangle and deceive the simple and unwary.—*He that eateth of their eggs dieth*. Whosoever, deluded by fair appearances, adopts their pernicious sentiments, and embraces their dangerous tenets as the rule of faith and practice, giving up dependence on the truth, righteousness, and salvation revealed in the Scriptures, resigns the well-grounded hope of life and immortality, and is ready to perish.—*And that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper*. The pernicious principles that had been disseminated, being detected and examined, and divested of the disguise under which they were concealed, somewhat poisonous and dangerous is discovered, lurking under plausible pretexts, very different from what was imagined.

6. Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works *are* works of iniquity, and the act of violence *is* in their hands.

The vanity and unprofitableness of the practices above delineated is represented in figurative terms, corresponding to the preceding description. The
fine

fine speculations which were artfully devised, interwoven with many ostensible but false allegations, should not be sufficient to cover the deformity of their authors, to protect them from the evils to which they were exposed, or to beautify their minds. Nor were they to be able to shelter themselves from calamities by their own performances, which are affirmed to be *works of iniquity*, proceeding from a corrupt source, and done for bad purposes. The words forcibly describe the perverse disposition with which they acted, not occasionally through inadvertence, but assiduously pursued by the wicked practices wherein they were industriously employed.—*The act of violence is in their hands.* Those things which they have forcibly, or injuriously laid hold of by means of fraud and injustice, of extortion and rapine, whereby they have invaded the just rights of others, and deprived them of their property, are still in their possession, and testify against them.

7. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity, wasting and destruction *are* in their paths.

Our prophet proceeds, in this and the following verse, to delineate the general corruption and depravity of manners which was visible in the Church at the period referred to. In the stile of Scripture, the course of action wherein people are ordinarily employed is said to be their way or path, and their feet denotes the power of action, which, in proportion as it is exerted, they go or run. The phrase before us imports, that the persons spoken of went on, with the utmost alacrity and diligence, in the practice of all kinds of wickedness.—*They make haste to shed innocent blood.* They were bent on the commission not only of transgressions of lesser magnitude, but on perpetrating the most enormous crimes. Instigated by

by hatred, envy, and other malevolent passions, they were exceeding active in oppressing the poor, in persecuting the servants of God, and in murdering those who were harmless and inoffensive.—*Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity.* Their thoughts, which have a strong influence in forming their sentiments, in exciting their affections, in fixing their resolutions, and in conducting their actions, were foolish, perverse, and sinful. They cherished vain imaginations respecting the blessed God, malicious, revengeful intentions concerning their neighbour, and self-confident opinions of their own importance.—*Wasting and destruction are in their paths.* To these words the apostle Paul seems to refer, in the account he gives of the general depravity of mankind, in the third chapter of his epistle to the Romans, where he affirms of both Jews and Gentiles, that ‘destruction and misery are in their ways.’ All the methods they pursue to molest and ruin other people tend to their own destruction; by their vicious course of life they consume their time and talents, and expose themselves to wo and wretchedness.

8. The way of peace they know not, and *there is* no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein, shall not know peace.

They discover entire ignorance of the way pointed out in the word of God, by which real happiness and comfort is to be attained, with that tranquillity of mind which is a fruit of the Spirit, springing from reconciliation to God through the death of his Son. They are destitute of experimental acquaintance with the ways of wisdom, wherein this inestimable benefit is enjoyed; nor are they addicted to the practice of holiness and righteousness, which is accompanied with internal quiet and serenity. Instead of following the things that make for peace, whereby one may edify

another, they are deceitful, quarrellsome, and contentious.—*And there is no judgment in their goings.* They do not manifest either judgment or prudence in the exercise of their intellectual powers, in the resolutions they adopt, in the decisions they pronounce, or in the objects that they prosecute. On the contrary, they shew, by the improper management of affairs, that they are devoid of that sound understanding, and real integrity, which ought to have marked every part of their conduct.—*They have made them crooked paths.* Being formed not according to the unerring rule of the Holy Scriptures, but agreeable to their own corrupt dispositions, they discover the perversity of those who made them, and that they are very different from the straight paths people are required to make for their feet.—*Whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.* They shall not experience the felicity that results from reconciliation to God, from the love of God's law, and undisturbed tranquillity of mind.—The representation of the deplorable state of the Church, which we have just considered, is peculiarly applicable to the period that commenced not long after the glorious Reformation, which was followed by lamentable degeneracy and corruption of manners. To perceive the justice of this remark, it might be proper to take a retrospective view of the verses we have been illustrating, and observe how the predictions correspond to the facts recorded in history, and how the events fulfil the prophecies. This hath been done with considerable success by the learned Vitringa, from whom assistance may be derived by those who wish to investigate the subject*.

9. ¶ Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darknes.

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* Comment. in Isaiam, vol. II. p. 785, 786.

The faithful servants of God are introduced, bemoaning the calamitous state to which the Church was reduced, as the just consequences of the crimes committed among them. This mournful complaint plainly indicates, that they considered their distresses and disappointments as clear proofs of the Divine displeasure having gone forth against them. Because they had greatly transgressed the commandments of the Lord, their condition was to be the reverse of what they expected.—*Therefore is judgment far from us.* Judgment may here signify deliverance from affliction, and the punishment of sin, effected by Divine providence, according to the rules of consummate equity and righteousness. This expected, wished-for deliverance, is removed at a great distance from us, who look for it with longing desires, solicitous to see better days, and to enjoy a more prosperous state.—*Neither doth justice overtake us.* By departing from God, and the path of duty, we have made light of that salvation which hath been offered to our acceptance, we have shunned what we ought to have fought for, and have not waited for the Divine interposition in our favour. Whilst transgressors are eagerly prosecuting the works of iniquity and violence, judgment stands aloof, and justice falls behind, as if not having intention to come nigh and hold agreeable intercourse with us.

We wait for light, but behold obscurity, &c. We cherish the pleasing expectation of deliverance from the manifold evils and calamities we have sustained, and of restoration to a happy, flourishing state, in the enjoyment of desirable important benefits. We hope for the highest degrees of felicity and prosperity, in which we should be advanced to the possession of all those blessings and privileges which promote the spiritual excellence, comeliness, and comfort of the Church of God. How great the disappointment to us, who have wishfully been looking forward to better times, when instead of obtaining the gratification of our fond desires, we experience
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the very reverse of what we promised ourselves, and often anticipated. Behold obscurity and darkness, destitute of joy and consolation respecting both our internal and external condition, deprived of the gratification of our wishes, we continue involved in adversity and perplexity, groaning under complicated distresses, from which we do not perceive how we can be extricated.

10. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if *we had* no eyes: we stumble at noon-day as in the night; *we are* in desolate places as dead *men*.

The people of God acknowledge, that they were left in a state of uncertainty and anxiety, encompassed with evils from which they could not see any way of escape. In this condition, like blind folks, who endeavour to make up for the want of sight by feeling for objects around them, they groped that they might discover where they could find shelter and safety.—*We stumble at noon-day as in the night.* The light is commonly strong and brightest at noon, when objects are best seen: hence the well-known proverbial saying—Clear as the light at noon. Amid the light of Divine revelation, with which we have been favoured, and many other advantages; we have fallen into dangerous errors and mistakes, and acted nearly in the same manner as if we had not enjoyed these privileges.—*We are in desolate places as dead men.* Through our insensibility, and the ignominy and neglect we have experienced, our situation resembles, in some measure, the state of those who, being deprived of life, are buried in places remote from the habitations of the living, are cut off from all intercourse with human affairs, and remain in the place of silence and forgetfulness.

11. We rore all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but *there is none*; for salvation, *but it is far off from us*.

There were many in the Church, especially at the period to which our prophet refers, who roared, and made a loud clamorous noise, like bears when hurt or wounded, on account of the great afflictions and sorrows which they endured.—*We mourn sore like doves*, that make a plaintive, melancholy noise, when deprived of their mates or habitations; we bitterly lament the prevalence of iniquity, the many evils that we feel, and the Divine displeasure that we have incurred by our heinous transgressions.—*We look for judgment, but there is none*. We wait, with longing expectation, for the interposition of the Almighty, to extricate us from the direful calamities that we suffer, and to relieve us from the dread of the miseries to which we are obnoxious.—*For salvation*, from the distresses and dangers which we have deprecated, and the enjoyment of the blessings we have supplicated.—*But it is far from us*. We perceive no symptoms of its approach, nor do we see how or when it shall come. We have dishonoured our profession, we have refused to abandon our iniquities, and to return to the Lord, in consequence whereof we have gone far from salvation, and salvation hath departed from us.

12. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions *are with us*, and *as for our iniquities*, we know them.

Having poured forth their mournful complaint, the servants of God engage in humble confession of their sins. Their first acknowledgment is thus expressed:—*For our transgressions are multiplied before thee*. The variety of language used in this verse, indicates

dicates sincerity and humility in those by whom it was dictated, whilst it adds force and energy to the confession. The number of our transgressions is immense. He only, who counts the number of the stars, can reckon them, for innumerable evils have compassed us about; they are more than the hairs of our heads, therefore our hearts fail us*. All our trespasses, whether open or secret, have been committed in the presence, and under the immediate inspection of the omniscient God.—*And our sins testify against us.* They bear witness of our infidelity to God, to whose service we are under solemn engagements—they bear witness of our ingratitude to the God of our mercies, who hath loaded us with his benefits—they attest our forgetfulness of the Rock of Salvation, from whence all our comforts have proceeded, and—thus they give evidence that we have forfeited every favour from the hand of God. They accuse us of perfidy, ingratitude, and disobedience, whilst they evince our unworthiness of the interposition of heaven in our behalf.—*For our transgressions are with us.* We have not put away from us the evil of our doings, the enormous load of guilt that we have contracted is not removed, the odious pollution whereby we have been contaminated still adheres to us, so that we are disqualified for appearing in the Divine presence, and holding communion with God who is holy. Our vicious practices still continue to prevail, to damp our confidence in God, and to give proof that we have not laid aside our iniquities.—*As for our iniquities, we know them.* We are sensible that they are not only innumerable, but highly aggravated; that we have contemned the authority of Jehovah; that we have abused his goodness; made light of his salvation; and that we have not laid to heart the awful judgments whereby he hath manifested his displeasure against us; which might have shewn what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from the Lord our God.

13. In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

The servants of God proceed to acknowledge, more particularly, some of those trespasses whereby they had violated the authority and offended the majesty of God. They begin with mentioning those by which he was most directly dishonoured. In transgressing against the Lord, not only through ignorance and inadvertency, but with fixed determination and daring presumption, we have greatly provoked him to anger. *And lying against the Lord.* By misrepresenting his character, his dispensations, and the truths contained in his law and gospel, and exhibiting them in a false and improper light, (as did Ahab and Zedekiah, who spake lying words in God's name, which he had not commanded them) he may be provoked to pour out upon us his fierce wrath. This atrocious sin, which is highly offensive to God, the Church begins their confession by acknowledging.—*And departing away from our God.* Indifferent to communion with God, in which our highest happiness consists, we have not sought his favour with our whole hearts; averse to subjection to his righteous authority, we have not obeyed his commands. Instead of cleaving to him with purpose of heart, we have forsaken the fountain of living water, and hewn to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water; and, by acting in this manner, we have practically declared, that we have found a better master and a better service than those from which we deserted.—*Speaking oppression and revolt.*—We have not only molested and distressed those who were in our power, by laying heavy burdens upon them, by depriving them of their just rights, and by imposing unwarrantable hardships on their consciences, but we have endeavoured to vindicate

cate and support these grievous measures. Far from speaking of them with regret and abhorrence, as pernicious and sinful in the extreme, we have talked of them with approbation and complacency, as necessary and useful.—*And uttering from the heart words of falsehood.* We have said things inconsistent with truth, not merely through ignorance and mistake, but after artful contrivance, under various pretexts, we have published them with a view to deceive. The falsehoods we have told were the effects of pride, and passion, and prejudice, being devised in our hearts, from whence proceed evil thoughts, wickedness, deceit, with all those evils that defile the man *.

14. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

The upright servants of God particularly specify some things of which they were deprived, that are indispensably requisite to the prosperity of the Church.—*Judgment is turned away backward.* If I mistake not, judgment and justice signify somewhat different here from what they were intended to denote in verses 9. and 11. of this chapter. There we considered them in reference to the deliverance expected by the people of God—here they relate to the unhappy state of the Church prior to their liberation from the evils whereof they complain. Just and prudent decisions were not given in courts of judicature; and when at any time they were pronounced, they were not duly carried into execution; so that judgment, which, like a great river, should have gone on its course bearing down all opposition, meeting with powerful obstacles, left its former channel, and was turned away backward.—*And justice standeth afar off.* Being supplanted by deceit and oppression, it retired from

* Mark vii. 21. *et seq.*

from that respectful attention which it ought to have occupied in every transaction.—*For truth is fallen in the street*, by the wounds it hath received; and in that degraded state, destitute of friends to support its interests, it is trampled under foot by those who should have defended and cherished this precious deposit.—*And equity cannot enter*. Standing excluded from social intercourse, it finds not admission among those who neither hear nor regard its voice, whilst they give favourable entertainment to fraud and injustice.

15. Yea, truth faileth, and he *that* departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that *there was* no judgment.

The salutary influence of truth became feeble, its sacred interests were disregarded, it did not meet with that respect which it ought always to have preserved; and therefore, in a decayed state, it deserted the station which it occupied in time past.—*And he that departeth from evil*, &c. Who feeling a just abhorrence of all manner of iniquity, abandons farther connection with it, not as one leaves a friend for whom he entertains a kind affection, with the intention of again returning to his embraces, but as one goes from a malignant, dangerous enemy, with the fixed purpose of never having farther intercourse with him—firmly determined to desist from the practice of evil—conscientiously to strive against it—and to shun every appearance of it, in humble dependence on God for assistance and success. Now, in the time when the tide of iniquity runs high, a person of this character—*Maketh himself a prey*, or, as the Hebrew words are rendered in the margin of some bibles, *He is accounted mad*, because he complies not with the sinful customs of the time, but hearkens more unto God than unto men; because

he bears testimony against abounding transgressions, which brings upon him the rage and resentment of the wicked; and because, by his illustrious example, he severely reproveth the conduct of the ungodly and profane. On these accounts he becomes a prey to the malevolent and the vicious, who condemn the friends of religion for their strict regard to its precepts, which is attributed to weakness, hypocrisy, and enthusiasm.

And the Lord saw it, and it displeased him, &c. Jehovah, whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men, particularly observed all the defections of the Church, and the sins that abounded among them. He saw that their hearts were turned away from him, that they had declined from the paths of righteousness, that the crimes above mentioned greatly abounded, and that his interposition was indispensibly requisite, to give an effectual check to the progress of iniquity, and to put them into the way of salvation.—*And it displeased him that there was no judgment.* This was the result of the accurate survey of the circumstances wherein his people now were. No wonder that the Most High was offended at what he observed of those who had been educated in his Church, to whom he had given his word and ordinances, with many signal advantages, who were become so wicked and profane, and had egregiously violated his holy precepts. Having fallen into this degenerate, corrupt state, he testified his dread displeasure against them by awful dispensations of his providence.—Sinners shall not pass unnoticed and unpunished; the righteous Lord will make them see and feel that it is an evil and bitter thing that they have forsaken the Lord their God, and that his fear is not in them*.

16. And

* Jer. ii. 19.

16. ¶ And he saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness it sustained him.

The Lord God, having inspected the condition of his Church, and viewed the miserable circumstances to which they were reduced, observed very few who acted worthy of the character they sustained, very few that distinguished themselves by the love of truth, and the practice of equity; and who exerted their influence to effect a reformation of the evils that prevailed. Destitute, in general, of courage, activity, and zeal, they endeavoured not to stem the torrent of corruption, which threatened devastation and ruin.—*And wondered that there was no intercessor.* In condescension to human weakness, and to assist our feeble apprehensions, the dispositions and affections that properly belong to mankind are sometimes attributed to Jehovah, of which a remarkable instance occurs in the words now read. The circumstance here mentioned affords just cause of astonishment; and had surprize been consistent with the consummate perfection of the Divine nature, it would have been excited on this occasion. How truly wonderful to observe, that among the many who professed to be the servants of God, in a time of general defection, there were hardly any possessed of fortitude and abilities, who boldly stood forth the champions of truth and righteousness, to oppose the encroachments made by the tide of iniquity! The blessed God, beholding this affecting scene, sees none arising to support the interests of his afflicted people, at least comparatively very few with what might have been expected. Only a small number, who were distressed and alarmed by the prevalence of iniquity, made the above confessions, interceded for the Church, appeared in behalf of those who became a prey, pleaded the cause of truth and holiness, and wrestled with God to avert his

his just displeasure.—In this forlorn state, when destitute of human aid, the Lord God was graciously pleased to interpose for their deliverance.

Therefore his own arm brought salvation, &c. By the arm of Jehovah is meant his omnipotence, whereby he rescues his peculiar people from impending calamities, and executes righteous vengeance on their enemies. This almighty power of Jehovah wrought deliverance for his Church, by extricating them from the temporal distresses under which they groaned, and by removing the spiritual evils which they lamented. To accomplish this great work, he was to raise up from among his people some illustrious men, possessed of magnanimity and other eminent virtues, who, like Gideon and his companions, were to overthrow the enemies of the Church, who were unexpectedly to effect deliverance for the oppressed, to defeat the counsels of their adversaries, and to frustrate their machinations and efforts. He was to raise up persons distinguished for graces and abilities, who were to be instrumental in rescuing his people from the contaminating influence and thralldom of iniquity, of bringing them into glorious liberty, and the enjoyment of the most valuable privileges.—*And his righteousness it sustained him.* His sacred regard to equity in his administration, and to fidelity in the fulfilment of his promises, united with solicitude for vindicating his own honour, the rights of his injured heritage, and for inflicting merited vengeance on their oppressors.—These things, combined with others of a similar nature, such as just indignation and desire of being avenged on those who opposed and afflicted them in whom he is deeply interested, upheld and induced him to perform the work in which he was engaged.

17. For he put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head ;

head; and he put on the garments of vengeance *for* clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.

Jehovah is beautifully described, going forth to execute his intended enterprize as a mighty hero, clothed with armour suited to the occasion. The Son of the Highest, the King and Head of the Church, the Lord of lords—*Put on righteousness as a breast-plate.* He assumed the exercise of that right which appertained to him, of vindicating his Church from the hands of their enemies, of rendering them victorious over their oppressors, and of restoring them to liberty and tranquillity. Righteousness peculiarly belongeth to him, his heart is set on advancing its interests; it is not more conspicuous in the equity of his laws, than in the dispensations of his providence, whereby he repays fury to his adversaries, and exalts his upright servants to happiness and comfort. This righteousness he is said to have put on, so as openly to shew that it belonged to him, and that every hostile weapon directed against him and those he was going to avenge, should rebound on themselves with irresistible force.—The breast-plate was a piece of defensive armour, anciently worn by warriors to protect that part of the body wherein the vitals are contained from being hurt; and having their breasts thus secured, they attacked their adversaries with boldness and intrepidity. Furnished with righteousness for a covering, the most Mighty went forth with invincible courage to attack his enemies, well knowing that all their efforts were incapable of wounding him, or of preventing him from obtaining the victory.—*And an helmet of salvation on his head.* The helmet, made of a plate of brass or hard metal, was intended to cover the head in battle, and to defend it from the danger to which it might be exposed in the contest. In allusion to this well-known piece of armour, the Son of God is represented having on a helmet

met of falvation, becaufe it affords him perfect fecurity from all the infults that are aimed at him by his foes, and preferves him in complete fafety when contending for conqueft with thofe that rife up againft him.

To this verfe the apoftle Paul probably alludes, in the conclufion of his letter to the faithful in Chrift Jefus at Ephesus, where he directs them to put on the whole armour of God. He particularly mentions the breaft-plate of righteoufnefs, chapter vi. ver. 14. and the helmet of falvation, ver. 17.—In thefe refpects, Chriftians fhould be conformed to their Divine mafter, and they ought to be furnifhed with the fame armour, in their fpiritual warfare, that he ufed in vanquifhing their enemies. Arm yourfelves likewise with the fame mind that was in Chrift Jefus, and ftudy in all things to walk even as he walked. The bufinefs of a Chriftian, yea, the very thing that conftitutes a Chriftian, is conformity to his Lord and Saviour.

And he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing. The expreffion may refer to the under garment, that was anciently worn by fome eaftern nations below their coat or cloak. The garments of vengeance may denote the fword, the bow, and the fpear, with the other inftruments that were to be employed in executing awful vengeance on his perfecuting foes, and in fhewing himfelf ftrong in behalf of thofe who truft in his name. Thefe he put on when he determined immediately to avenge the wrongs done to himfelf and his Church, and fhewed himfelf openly the redreffer of their grievances, the affterer of their liberties, and difcovered his fixed purpofe to difplay his glory in punifhing the injuries done to his people.—*And was clad with zeal as a cloak.* Zeal is not properly a detached principle, but it is a mixed affection, combined of love and difpleafure, manifested by vigorous exertions to advance the welfare of the beloved object, and, by every proper expedient, to exprefs difpleafure againft thofe who have injured the perfons

in whose happiness it is interested. Properly speaking, it is not a single passion, but an essential ingredient, necessary to the lively exercise of every other affection. When attributed to Jehovah, it denotes his tender regard for the interests of his kingdom and glory, and his just indignation at every thing that opposes their establishment and prosperity.—With this zeal he was clad as with a cloak, worn by the warriors of ancient times. The words may import, that the Lord God would publicly demonstrate, by his interposition in favour of his servants, that he was truly solicitous to promote their safety and happiness; and, by the execution of righteous vengeance upon their enemies, that he would not permit those who disturbed the peace of his Church to remain unpunished.—Such was foretold to be the august appearance of Jehovah; when displeased with the prevalence of iniquity among his people, he was to go forth in his glory and majesty to repay the insolence and opposition of their oppressors.

18. According to *their* deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies, to the islands he will repay recompense.

The design of Jehovah, in exhibiting the above-mentioned magnificence, is, that he may inflict just punishment on his adversaries, who have acted in hostility against him, violated his laws, opposed his interest, and persecuted his people—Who, in open defiance of his power and grace, obstinately refuse to submit to his authority, and practically say, ‘Who is the Lord, that we should obey him.’ To those who in this manner shew themselves inimical to his government and glory, and the good of his Church, especially to those of this description who dwell in the islands of the sea, Jehovah declares, *He will repay fury &c.* Though God may bear long with the evil manners

ners of such people, and not execute sentence speedily against their evil works, when the time of retribution arrives they shall certainly receive the just reward of their deeds. The righteous Lord will exactly requite their former conduct. No contrivance of art, no exertions of power, no combinations of interests, shall be able to resist his omnipotent arm, which shall frustrate all their enterprizes, and shall execute deserved vengeance, proportioned to the crimes they have committed. Lesser judgments, inflicted in anger, wrath, and indignation, having proved ineffectual for bringing them to repentance and reformation, they persisted in despising the servants and ordinances of God, in corruption and oppression, the Almighty gives explicit assurance that he will visit them in fury and the fierceness of his wrath. This recompense shall be conducted according to the strictest equity, so that none shall have cause of complaint. God, who knows perfectly the nature and demerit of crimes, will adjust his judgments to the guilt contracted, so that men shall be constrained to acknowledge, ‘As the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us *.’—Would to God, my friends, that you would seriously lay to heart the solemn truth we have been considering, and habitually remember that God, the righteous Judge, will render to every one according to their works. If any of you imagine that this threatening shall not be verified, I request your attention to the awful words of God, recorded Ezek. xxiv. 14. ‘I the Lord have spoken, it shall come to pass, and I will do it, and I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways and according to thy doings shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God.’

13. So

* Zech. i. 6.

19. So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun : when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.

The merciful interposition of Jehovah in behalf of his Church, and the dreadful vengeance inflicted on his enemies, shall be followed with remarkable displays of his power and presence.—The name which a person bears, is the designation whereby he is known and distinguished, or the reputation he hath acquired by some celebrated actions. The name and glory of the Lord may denote the perfections essential to his nature, whereby he is highly exalted ; the admirable manifestations he hath given of his infinite excellencies, in the operations of providence and grace, whereby people are induced to revere and adore him who alone doth wondrous works.—This blessed name men shall fear ; they shall be happily disposed to entertain a holy, reverential awe of the majesty and glory of Jehovah, his attributes, and dispensations. From filial reverence and profound respect, they shall yield to him the sacred veneration and homage which is for ever due to the Most High over all the earth, and which constitutes a chief ingredient in the worship he demands. In few words, this fear of the Lord, which he himself puts into the heart, arises from an awful sense of his presence and glory, and lively views of his infinite grandeur. It renders persons solicitous to acquire the knowledge of his will ; it excites to vigilant circumspection, to careful avoidance of whatever might offend him, and puts into a proper temper to wait upon God for the accomplishment of his promises, in the faithful performance of the duties he hath required.—The benign influence of this fear of the Lord is foretold to extend

From the west, and from the rising of the sun, and to reach the opposite points of heaven. This promise does not give encouragement to expect, that every individual in the western and eastern regions shall possess this gracious disposition, for there never hath been, and probably there never shall be, a period wherein the fear of God will so universally prevail in every kingdom of the world, that some will not remain destitute of it. The prediction, I suppose, only means, that at the time whereof the prophet speaks, a large number of converts was to be made to the Church of God from among the inhabitants both of the western and eastern parts of the earth. Even in this limited sense of the words, how noble, how pleasant a prospect is opened to view—all the ends of the earth remembering and turning to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations worshipping before him!—Do you ask, as the disciples did of their Master, When shall these things be? I answer in his words *, ‘It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.’ It is enough to be assured that they shall be fulfilled in their season, to which we should look forward with faith, and hope, and joy.

When the enemy shall come in like a flood. The Church of God hath had enemies in all ages. Under the former dispensation, the Egyptians and Assyrians, with many other nations, were inimical to their liberty and prosperity; and under the new œconomy of grace, all the wicked of the earth, who molest and disturb them in the enjoyment of their sacred immunities, are adverse to their peace and felicity. The period fixed for the Divine interposition is, when the foe comes in like a flood or mighty torrent, that hath an alarming aspect, threatens to inundate the whole land, and to spread terror and desolation wherever it reaches. At the time of apprehended general danger, when infidelity and error, immorality and profanity, threaten the safety of the Church—*The spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.* A
standard

* Acts i. 7.

standard or ensign, which commonly bears some representation or inscription, being erected in a conspicuous place on the appearance of danger, intimates to soldiers, that they ought to resort to their proper station, in order to make a vigorous defence against the encroachments of the enemy. In reference to this practice, it is foretold, that the Spirit of Jehovah, by his mighty influence, shall draw together to the standard of the cross of Christ, as a centre of unity, many eminent men, distinguished for their magnanimity and firm attachment to the doctrines of the gospel, who, by displaying the love of God, and preaching Christ crucified, shall, through the assistance of their Divine Master, put their enemies to flight, as the words are rendered in the margin of some bibles.—Verify, O Lord, we beseech thee, thy faithful word, and do as thou hast said. When the enemy of thy glory comes in with impetuosity, as if he would deprive thy people of their most valuable possessions, grant a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of truth; that thy beloved may be delivered, save with thy right hand, and hear me*.

20. ¶ And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.

The fulfilment of the above prediction shall be attended with the joyful consequence here described. The Son of God is doubtless the person intended, to whom the designation of Redeemer is given, with great propriety, in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testaments. He only is qualified to accomplish the redemption of transgressors. To rescue us from thralldom, he laid down his life a ransom; and that he may actually deliver his people from spiritual bondage, and recover them to liberty and the possession

* Psal. lx. 4, 5.

feſſion of their rightful owner, he exerts his omnipotence. This glorious perſon—ſhall come to Zion, which is the name frequently given to the Church, wherein Jehovah is worſhipped, and eſpecially reſides, and from whence is enjoyed the moſt delightful proſpects. It is evident, from the connection in which this prediction ſtands, that what is here foretold does not relate to the manifeſtation of the Son of God in the fleſh, when he obtained eternal redemption for his people. It hath ſpecial reſpect to what he will do for the benefit of his Church in latter times, by the interpoſition of his providence and grace. The apoſtle Paul, writing to the ſaints at Rome, quotes the words of our prophet with ſome variation *. Iſaiah declares, that the Redeemer ſhall come to Zion; the apoſtle ſaith, there ſhall come out of Zion the deliverer. The ſeeming difference is eaſily reconciled. The Hebrew ſervile letter here uſed, ſometimes ſignifies *to*, as it is rendered in the prophecy before us, and ſometimes *from*, or *out of*, as tranſlated in the epiſtle referred to. The Redeemer ſhall come from the heavenly Zion to the Zion of his Church on earth, to execute his gracious purpoſes. There is a perfect agreement between the prophet and the apoſtle, who gives the true meaning of the words under conſideration. At the time to which this prediction looks forward, the Redeemer ſhall remarkably appear, to effect two gracious purpoſes. He ſhall come for the deliverance and comfort of thoſe that forſake their ſins among the poſterity of Jacob, who are the peculiar objects of his kindneſs and care. He ſhall come alſo for the conversion of many in Iſrael, that he may turn ungodlineſs from them, and bring them to repentance for the atrocious ſins, the ungodly deeds they have committed. In conſequence whereof his praiſes ſhall be celebrated with pleaſure and gratitude, in the language dictated by the royal Poet: ‘ Lord, thou haſt been favourable to thy land, thou haſt brought back the
 ‘ captivity

* Chap. xi. 26.

‘captivity of Jacob, thou hast forgiven the iniquity
 ‘of thy people, thou hast covered all their fins*.’

21. As for me, this *is* my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My spirit that *is* upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.

The prediction concludes with this memorable testimony of the great love that Jehovah bears to his Church, composed of Jews and Gentiles. He gives the reviving assurance, that they shall never be deprived of the precious treasure of his word, nor of his Spirit, to illuminate, sanctify, and comfort them, and to give them the right understanding of the doctrines concerning Salvation—and that these important benefits shall be continued with them until the end of time.—*As for me, saith the Lord.* These words introduce to particular notice the precious promises contained in this verse. The expression intimates that they proceed from God, who is faithful; that their certain accomplishment may be expected; and that when the state of the Church requires the interposition of his providence and grace, to maintain what he hath wrought for them, they shall uniformly and constantly be verified.—*This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord.* This is one important article, contained in the testamentary deed, that shall never be invalidated, which I have ratified and confirmed in the most solemn manner, and given to my people, as the sure ground of their hope and confidence. This is the sacred obligation into which I have entered with them who turn from transgression in Jacob; my irrevocable faithful promise, founded on the immutability of my nature, and my irreversible purpose; and inseparably

* Psal. lxxxv. 1, 2.

parably connected with my gracious designs toward the house of Israel.—*Saith the Lord*, the almighty God, for whom all things are possible, the faithful God, whose veracity is unchangeable and everlasting. This is the promise I oblige myself to perform, this is the benefit I solemnly engage to bestow.

My Spirit that is upon thee, &c. As a spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind, as a spirit of grace and supplication, being given to instruct, sanctify, and comfort thee, is the chief blessing contained in my covenant. All spiritual life and light, strength and consolation, with every gift and grace in their various measures, proceed from him. On him depends the efficacy of sacred institutions, and the distinguished abilities whereby the edification and preservation of the Church is effected, with every thing truly excellent enjoyed by them that fear my name. All these things are wrought by the same Spirit, who abides with thee, and distributeth to every one severally as he will.—*And my words which I have put in thy mouth*, revealed in the holy Scriptures, as the foundation of faith and the rule of conduct, the source of comfort, and the charter of eternal inheritance.—These words especially, which respect the glory of the Redeemer's person, his official character, his illustrious actions, his complicated sufferings, his atonement and subsequent exaltation—these words which represent the relations wherein he is connected with thee, and his consummate ability to supply thy wants; the necessity of being interested in him, and brought into the way of salvation, that you may have your hearts and lives regulated by his authority, and act toward him and for his honour, so as to be accepted and truly blessed. These my words I have put into thy mouth, and commanded thee to have them in thine heart, to 'teach them diligently unto thy children, and to talk of them when thou fittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou lyest down, and when thou risest up *.'

Shall

* Deut. vi. 6, 7.

Shall not depart out of thy mouth, &c. My word of salvation, which shews the connection between sin and misery, between grace and duty, between faith and holiness, between obedience and happiness, shall not cease to be the pleasing subject of investigation and discourse in every age of the world. It shall have perpetual residence in the Church, throughout all generations; and, attended with the dispensation of the Spirit, shall continue with my servants and their posterity without interruption, and without end, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.—Joyful thought! amid all the changes and revolutions that happen on this earth, the omnipotent, faithful Jehovah hath given explicit assurance, that his people shall have his Spirit and his word to abide with them unto the end of the world. In this confidence, let us earnestly pray that the Spirit may be given to illumine our minds to understand the Scriptures; to open our hearts to receive them; to keep us under their commanding power; and to disclose to us those sacred sources of delight and joy, whereby we may be refreshed in our journey toward the inheritance of the saints in light. Let us diligently study the word of God, the blessed appointed mean of sanctifying and comforting his people, and often meditate on the sublime subjects it contains, which tend to improve, to enlighten, to elevate, and console the minds of those who delight in his commandments. And now, O Lord God, the word which thou hast spoken, establish it for ever; and do as thou hast said, and let all the people say, Amen.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

IN the last section of this long prophetic discourse, contained in the chapter before us, Isaiah, favoured by the Spirit of Jehovah with a clear view of the future felicity and glory of the Church of God, sets forth, in very sublime language, the great enlargement and flourishing state to which they were to be advanced. This noble subject is exhibited in the most splendid colours, under a variety of beautiful images, which convey magnificent ideas of the glories to which the people of God shall be elevated when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, when the Jews shall be gathered from their dispersions, and all the nations of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. With this joyful prospect fully in his view, our prophet, perceiving the happy period approaching, announces the welcome tidings that the day of deliverance had already dawned, and calls upon the Church, sitting in the obscurity of a dark and tedious night, to arise, for the object of their expectation was drawing near, urging to immediate compliance by some powerful incitements, ver. 1, 2, and 3.—He then requires their attention to the immense number of converts who were to join them, with all their wealth and influence, that they might participate in the privileges and felicity wherewith they were blessed, ver. 4—9.—After which he teaches, that the princes and great men of the earth were to come into their fellowship, and to bring with them their glory and honour, with whatever might prove subservient to promote the interests of the city of the living God, and to adorn his habitation ver. 10, 11.—Having foretold the certain overthrow of those who afflict and oppose his servants, in ver. 12th, he describes, in sublime terms, the happy change that should take place in the condition of the Church that
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had been long in afflicting circumstances, and assures them, that persons in the most eminent stations were to protect and cherish them—that the best men were to preside among them—that they were to be secure from calamity and violence—that they were constantly to enjoy the light with which they were favoured, and—that their citizens, distinguished for uprightness, were to receive a large increase of their number, ver. 14. to the end.

CHAP. LX.

ARISE, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

Our prophet, in the name of the Son of God, who was expected by the islands, who, in ver. 16th, is mentioned as the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob, directs his discourse to the inhabitants of the city of the Lord, the new Jerusalem, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel, whose walls strangers were to build, and whose gates were to be always open. Acting in the character of a vigilant watchman, he suddenly calls upon them to *arise*. Having fallen by thine iniquity into a state of degeneracy and corruption, of insensibility and security, wherein thy spiritual senses have not been exercised to discern good and evil, thou hast been sitting in darkness, and lying under the pressure of affliction. I now call upon thee to arise from thy slumbering, disconsolate condition, in which thou hast continued for a long time, to the vigorous use of all thy powers and faculties. Awake from indulgence in sin and sloth, to behold the works and the glory of the Redeemer; the night is far spent, the day is at hand, cast off therefore the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light—

obey the voice that now sollicitly attention. Indeed it is not easy to point out the peculiar force and energy of the word in the sense it is here used.—*Shine*, appear in thy native splendour and beauty. Whilst thou wast depressed by affliction, fear, and sorrow, that comeliness and splendour hath been obscured, which those who are light in the Lord ought to manifest to the world. Come then into the light of knowledge and holiness, of comfort and joy, that, being enlightened by him who is the light of the world and the life of men, thou mayest illumine those around thee. Resume that brightness which hath been long beclouded, and display clearly that pleasant light, which, being reflected, may throw an agreeable lustre on all the beholders. Time is precious, let no part of it be squandered away in sloth or idleness; the duty to which thou art called is of immense consequence, and ought not to be delayed.

For thy light is come. The day-spring from on high hath visited thee. the Sun of righteousness is arisen with healing under his wings; the Messiah, the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world, which the prophets and evangelists unite in magnifying—this glorious light is come, and all thy adversaries shall no more be able to retard its progress, than to stop in his course the sun in the firmament. Thy prosperous and happy state is commenced, wherein thou shalt be blessed with every thing requisite to thy salvation, that can yield matter of thanksgiving and praise. This Divine light, which shall shine more and more unto the perfect day, shall dispel thy fears, thy distresses and sorrows, and cause thy health and beauty to spring forth speedily.

And the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. If these words are intended merely to amplify what is contained in the preceding expression, they import that the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, who is emphatically denominated the Glory of Jehovah, shall exhibit, at the time to which this prediction refers, illustrious manifestations of his Divine excellencies,

lencies, in the operations of his providence, and in the ministration of the gospel. If the glory of the Lord here spoken of alludes to the symbol of the Divine majesty, with which the camp of Israel was honoured, it may denote the eminent displays of the presence and favour of God, which the Church shall enjoy when he arises to inflict awful judgments on their enemies, to afford them his gracious protection, and the copious effusion of the holy Spirit, to illuminate and sanctify, to direct and so to regulate their conversation and conduct, that they shall walk worthy of the Lord, unto all well pleasing in his sight.— This glory, in whichever of these senses it is meant, is said to be risen at the period our prophet had in his eye. The expression is taken from the most beautiful, magnificent image in nature, the rising of the sun upon the earth, which dispels the darkness of the night, and is attended with the joyful consequences of light, warmth, and vegetation. In like manner, the rising glory of Jehovah was to dissipate the darkness wherein the Church was involved, during the tedious night of adversity, and to favour them with bright manifestations of the power and presence of their Lord and Redeemer, which were to produce the most salutary effects. I conclude this article with the words of the apostle Paul, which point out the practical improvement of this subject: ‘ Wherefore, he saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light *.’

2. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

These words represent a very moving scene, the contemplation of which might discourage the expectation of what was foretold, and therefore they are followed

* Eph. v. 14.

followed with an explicit assurance of the predicted happy event.—Behold the darkness of ignorance, vice, and calamity, shall overspread the inhabitants of the earth at the time wherein the Lord God shall make to arise upon his Church, not only the light disseminated by the doctrines of the gospel, but that which proceeds from the true spirit of the gospel, and the advancement of the interests of his kingdom. Though my information respecting the state of Christianity throughout the world is limited, and may not be altogether correct, I may venture to say, after what I have read and heard—That a large portion of Europe, having either rejected or corrupted the glorious gospel of the Son of God, embrace erroneous principles, and walk not according to the precepts contained in the Holy Scriptures. In the extensive continent of America, many who profess Christianity are nothing better than those who are sitting in darkness, in the region and shadow of death. Great part of the inhabitants of Asia and Africa remain involved in the darkness of Paganism and Mahometism, living in profound ignorance, and groaning under a despotic yoke, which prevents the improvement of their condition. In the great body of the Church a variety of sects have sprung up, which hath given rise to an uninterrupted succession of controversies, and, among others, the famous contest between theology and philosophy, between faith and reason, which hath been long maintained with much animosity and perseverance. These warm debates have been succeeded with lamentable degeneracy of manners, very distant from the purity required by the precepts of Jesus Christ, whereby the beauty of the Church hath been obscured, and they have brought down on themselves the just judgments of the Almighty.—The contrast to this gross darkness is stated in the following words :

But the Lord shall arise upon thee, &c. Both expressions seem to be nearly of the same import, the latter explaining and illustrating the former. When the
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the Lord arises on his Church, he causes his glory to shine upon them, and renders conspicuous the displays of his Divine attributes, of his providential care and rich grace in their behalf. Obscurity shall retire, and every cloud vanish at the approach of the Sun of Righteousness, under whose benign influence the people of God shall prosper, and be perfected in every good work.—*And his glory shall be seen on thee*, the amiable lustre of his mercy, power, and faithfulness, and his other excellencies, with their happy effects, shall be sensibly felt and clearly seen in many remarkable instances. The bright manifestations of his love and grace, and tender compassion, which he exhibits in the dispensations of his providence, and in his ordinances, shall be visible to every attentive beholder. The Spirit of God and of glory, the beauty of the Lord our God, shall be seen upon thee, and he shall establish the work of thy hands.—Rejoice then, brethren, that the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and that all flesh shall see it together. From the advanced ground of the promises of God, look forward with pleasure to the blessed day when affliction and sorrow shall flee away, and everlasting joy shall be upon the people of God, and this prediction shall be fulfilled. Did we properly contemplate this luminous prospect, it might inspire with magnanimity, courage, and zeal, in surmounting the obstacles that impede the accomplishment of this prophecy, and cause the transient glory of this world in great measure to disappear.

3. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Joyful consequences are foretold to result from the fulfilment of the prediction contained in the latter part of the preceding verse. The nations of the earth, which had not hitherto been favoured with the light of the glorious gospel, convinced of the supreme excellence,

excellence, the adorable all-sufficiency and grace of the Redeemer, shall resort to the Church of God, that they may share in the precious benefits enjoyed by this highly-favoured society—That they may receive the instructions delivered by Jesus Christ and his apostles, and follow their illustrious examples—that they may behold the manifestations of the divine glory, which God is pleased to grant to the assemblies of his people—that they may walk in the light he conveys by his word and Spirit, and participate in the great salvation he bestows, which constitutes their beauty, felicity, and glory.—Nor were the lower classes of the people only to come to the knowledge and obedience of the truth, men who fill the most elevated stations, and possess supreme authority, shall also testify their desire of being admitted into the Church.—*And kings to the brightness of thy rising.* Princes of the greatest celebrity, invested with the most extensive power and influence, esteeming it their honour and happiness to be fellow citizens with the saints, shall enter into the kingdom of God. The expression here used may farther intimate the early approach of such personages to the light whereby the Church is illuminated. Preferring the happiness and prerogatives of the people of God to the riches and grandeur of this world, they shall join themselves to the Lord, that they may walk in his ways and live to his glory.

4. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee, thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at *thy* side.

As a ground of consolation and joy, the servants of God are directed to observe the vast concourse of people that flock to them from every quarter.—Look around you, and behold every where a pleasant glorious spectacle, many nations, and kings too, collecting
together

together, encouraging each others hearts, and strengthening each others hands, going up to the mountain of the Lord's house, that he may teach them his ways, and that they may walk in his paths! See them coming from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, to enjoy the choice prerogatives and blessings wherewith you are felicitated!—*They come to thee*, not with hostile intention to molest and injure, but with the friendly design of partaking of the refreshing light which is risen upon thee—*Thy sons shall come from far*. The children of God, and of the New Jerusalem which is from above, the mother of us all, shall come from distant lands, wherein they have been dispersed, to share in the sacred immunities with which thou art honoured and blessed.—*And thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side*. The feeblest and tenderest of thy young converts, who are not yet established in the knowledge, faith, and obedience of the gospel, nor instructed in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, seem to be the persons intended by this designation. Those who are of this description shall be nursed at thy side, under thy peculiar care and immediate inspection, having seasonably dispensed to them, as they are able to bear, the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. The Lord God will graciously provide for their support and safety, he will uphold and cherish them in the everlasting arms of his mercy. Having had occasion repeatedly to treat of this pleasant subject, I proceed to verse

5. Then thou shalt see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

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These words describe the various emotions that shall be excited by the sight of the large accessions made to the Church by the nations, bringing along with them all their wealth which could conduce to their external convenience and comfort. Dr. Lowth's translation of this verse appears to me both just and elegant; it runs thus: 'Then shalt thou fear and overflow with joy; and thy heart shall be ruffled and dilated; when the riches of the sea shall be poured in upon thee; when the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee.' The Hebrew word rendered *see*, signifies also fear; and the Bishop, supposing that the passions, awakened by the scene whereof the prophet speaks are chiefly intended, he translates it by the word *fear*, the first affection that should arise in the minds of those who shall contemplate this surprising spectacle. Timidity and terror draws together the finer parts of the blood to the heart, in consequence of which the face becomes pale and wan. Joy and gladness, on the contrary, are said to expel them from the seat of the vitals to the more distant members of the body, so as to redden and enliven the countenance. Beholding the nations flocking into the Church, the servants of God shall experience both fear and joy, these affections shall alternately agitate their minds. Astonished at this wonderful exhibition, they shall at first tremble with fear, so that their hearts shall be contracted and ruffled lest there may be any mistake or illusion. Viewing, however, this great object in a proper light, their souls, filled with admiration, shall be expanded with joy and gladness. Among such a numerous society, the accomplishment of this predicted event must excite very different emotions: some shall be moved with fear and dread, whilst others shall exult with joy and delight.

Because of the abundance of the sea, &c. The riches and wealth which by means of ships are conveyed from one country to another—all those valuable articles of commerce which are transported from distant kingdoms, shall come into the possession of
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the people of God, who constitute his Church, and shall be converted from the purposes to which they were formerly applied, to their use and benefit.—*The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.* The armaments fitted out by the nations that had not hitherto been admitted into the communion of the Church, and which had harassed and opposed the servants of God, changing entirely their conduct, shall have recourse to them; and, professing love and obedience to our Lord and Saviour, shall desire to have fellowship with his disciples in their glorious privileges, and to walk with them in the ways of righteousness and peace.

6. The multitude of camels shall cover thee: the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah: all they from Shebah shall come: they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord.

The immense riches of the east, particularly the wealth of the Arabians, which chiefly consists in the articles here specified, shall come into the possession of the people of God.—Great numbers of camels, that are remarkable for patiently enduring thirst, and for yielding a kind of fine hair, of which stuffs are made that are worn in eastern countries, are used by the Arabians in conveying merchandise through the vast dry deserts—Multitudes of these animals shall cover thee, and supply with clothing those who shall become the subjects of the kingdom of God.—*The dromedaries of Midian, &c.* Midian was the name of one of the sons which Abraham, the father of the faithful, had by Keturah, and Ephah was the name of the eldest son of Midian, whose posterity are supposed to possess the eastern parts of Arabia. These people have great numbers of dromedaries, that are remarkable for travelling exceeding swiftly, and for bearing heavy loads, which they employ in carrying various kinds of wares into Egypt, Palestine, and

other countries. These also shall cover thee; they shall convey divers kinds of goods to those who fear the Lord, with which they shall be clothed and adorned—They shall carry to them many of the conveniencies and comforts of life. The expression intimates, that their proprietors shall have intimate intercourse with the followers of Jesus Christ, and become fellow-citizens with them in the kingdom of God.

All they from Shebah shall come. Shebah, or Sebah, was the name of a grandson of Abraham *, and also of a grandson of Cush †, and from one or other of them a country in Arabia had its name. Concerning the inhabitants of this land, it is foretold, that they shall resort to the Church of God, and shall bring with them gold and incense. The prophet Ezekiel says, that in times of old they traded with the Tyrians in spices, precious stones, and gold ‡. The queen of Shebah, when she visited king Solomon, came to Jerusalem with a splendid retinue, and with camels that bare spices, very much gold, and precious stones §, wherein the riches of the country consisted. Many of the Sabeans, or men of Shebah, shall join themselves to the Lord, bringing with them the most valuable productions of their kingdom, that they may consecrate them to the honour of Jehovah, and be employed in promoting pious purposes.—*And they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord.* The owners, the employers of the camels and dromedaries, and the inhabitants of Shebah, observing the signal favours conferred upon the Church, the amazing increase of their numbers, and the sincerity of their faith and subjection to the gospel of Jesus Christ, were to celebrate with gratitude the mercy and grace of God, who called such immense numbers of people out of darkness into his marvellous light, who made known to them his salvation, and openly shewed his
righteousness

* Gen. xxv. 3.

† Gen. x. 7.

‡ Chap. xxvii. 22.

§ 1 Kings x. 2.

righteousness in the sight of the heathen*.—Let us join them, brethren, in this sublime exercise of praise, which is the delightful work of heaven, and the noblest service wherein we can be employed on earth. We serve God by prosecuting our lawful business, as he directs; but this is accompanied with much labour and trouble. We obey him by performing the duties of holiness and righteousness, which contribute to the happiness of society; but these are attended with many obstructions and difficulties. We honour him by works of mercy and beneficence, which constitute an important part of practical Christianity; but these require self-denial and superiority to worldly things, which many people do not seem to have attained. We do him homage by the various acts of worship which he hath enjoined; but these remind us of our imperfections and distance from God—Whereas, in praising the Lord, there is no such mixture of uneasy sensations; we acknowledge, with pleasure and gratitude, our obligations to him; we honour his name, and offer him the best return we can make for his exuberant goodness and manifold mercies.

7. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.

Kedar and Nebaioth were the names of two of the twelve princes that were born to Ishmael, the son of the patriarch Abraham. The castles and towns, and probably the countries possessed by their posterity, were called by their names. They were remarkable for having great numbers of cattle, and large flocks of sheep and goats. Hence the prophet Ezekiel, describing the immense riches and extensive commerce

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* Psa. xcvi. 2.

of the merchants of Tyre, thus writes * : ‘ The Arabians, and all the princes of Kedar, traded with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats.’ These flocks, Isaiah foretels, shall be collected, that they may minister to the benefit of the people of God. They are spoken of as intelligent beings, yea as priests, whose office was to minister unto the Lord, in name of his people. The expression, which refers to the services performed under the former dispensation, cannot be strictly understood in the literal sense, requires to be figuratively explained. The proprietors of the flocks of Kedar, and the rams of Nebaioth, being converted to the knowledge, faith, and obedience of the gospel, shall consecrate their wealth to the honour of God, and to the service of his Church.—*They shall come up with acceptance on mine altar.* The sacrifices that were of old presented unto God, became sacred and holy in consequence of their being brought to his altar; for, as Jesus Christ declares, ‘ the altar sanctifies the gift †.’ In like manner, the offerings presented to Jehovah under the New Testament, are rendered acceptable to him by the great high Priest of our profession, prefigured by the altar under the law. Accordingly God promises, that the oblations offered to him by the Kedarenes, through Jesus Christ, shall be grateful and well pleasing in his sight. Their persons shall be accepted, through his prevalent mediation, their sins expiated by his perfect atonement, their sacrifices and services shall be to him an odour of a sweet smell ‡. All their wealth, which they shall dedicate to the glory of God and the good of his people, shall meet with the Divine acceptance and approbation.

And I will glorify the house of my glory. The house of God, according to the apostle Paul §, is the Church of the living God. He formed the plan in his own eternal mind, he laid the foundation, and he rears up the whole superstructure, fitly framed together, to be
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* Chap. xxvii. 21.

‡ Phil. iv. 18.

† Mat. xxiii. 19.

§ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

an habitation for himself, through the Spirit. He beautifies this living temple with the most precious ornaments; and, having furnished it with every thing necessary to advance his honour and the prosperity of his servants, he therein takes up his peculiar residence. 'It is the house of his glory.' What grandeur and brilliancy appeared in the model of this superb building, when exhibited in vision to the apostle John, which he describes in the 21st chapter of the Revelation. It is truly glorious, being highly exalted above the hostile attempts of every enemy, and every opposition made to its interests; especially as it is blessed with the glorious presence of Jehovah, who dwells therein, who admits his servants to contemplate his glory, and from thence administers his laws and ordinances.—Upon this house, God here promises to confer some additional glory, by giving brighter displays of his Divine excellencies than had hitherto been enjoyed by his people, by granting them larger and more comfortable proofs of his gracious presence, by pouring out his holy Spirit abundantly upon them, by imparting his enriching blessing to the assemblies of his saints convened for his worship, and by rendering them fruitful in every good work, to his praise and glory. Reproaches, corruptions, contentions, and calamities, being removed, whereby the beauty of my house was obscured, my people shall triumph in my praises, and perform my service with harmony, delight, and joy.

8. Who *are* these *that* fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

This inquiry, with the beautiful similitudes whereby the subject of it is illustrated, plainly intimates the surprize and admiration excited by observing crowds of people flocking with haste into the kingdom of God. Two comparisons are employed to represent the accelerated motion of this vast concourse:
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the first describes their rapid progress and speedy flight, and the latter their immense numbers.—Who are these that fly as a cloud, violently agitated by a strong wind which the art and power of man cannot retard or control? These, from whatsoever quarter they come, sensible of the danger to which they are obnoxious, and the absolute necessity of escape, surmounting every impediment that would stop their progress, are fleeing with speed to lay hold on the only hope set before them in the gospel. As the motion of the cloud is visible and conspicuous, so their flight to the Saviour, and their recourse to his Church, is remarkable, by their renunciation of former sins, and their diligence to be found in Christ in peace.—*They fly as the doves to their windows.* On some apprehended danger pigeons betake themselves in great numbers for shelter and safety to their place of residence, where they alight with seeming pleasure, and with one consent, as if moved by the same instinct. In like manner, the gathering of the people to Shiloh shall proceed from an awakening sense of imminent danger, whereby they shall be impelled to flee to Jesus Christ for refuge, and in multitudes to hasten with unanimity to the Rock of ages, and the house of defence, where they shall find safety, provision, and comfort.—No wonder that this uncommon, this excellent and pleasing spectacle, should excite surprize and inquiry, especially when the difficulties that lie in the way to the Saviour are considered, and what is necessary to overcome them. If the conversion of an individual, (I mean of Saul, afterward called Paul) raised the astonishment of the Church of Christ, who when they heard that a persecutor was converted into a preacher of the gospel, glorified God in him—how much more ground of surprize to see large numbers turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, and from the service of dead idols to the worship and obedience of Jehovah!

9. Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God: and to the holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

Explicit assurance is given, that a numerous accession of converts shall be made to the Church, many of whom shall be brought from very distant lands. By the isles, which the Son of God promises shall found their expectation and dependence on him, are meant the Gentile nations, particularly those who inhabit countries encompassed by the sea. By his powerful, though secret agency on their minds, he will dispose them to come into his Church, to receive his gospel with readiness of mind, to confide in his mediation, to rely on his promises, and, grateful for his inestimable benefits, to receive the law from his mouth, and to submit to his authority.—*The ships of Tarshish first.* Tarshish was the name of one of the sons of Javan, the son of Japheth, the son of Noah. By him and his brethren were the isles of the Gentiles divided, every one after his language, after their families in their nations*. The possessions of Tarshish, or the city built by him or his posterity, had given to it the name mentioned by our prophet. This country or city, wherever situated, seems to be the Tarshish here intended. Whilst others endeavour to ascertain the situation of the place, I mean to explain the prediction. The ships belonging to that city or country, *i. e.* the mariners who navigate them, shall be first, in point of time and order, to transport from distant lands, into the society of the faithful, converts to the faith and obedience of the gospel. The extensive commerce carried on by the merchants of that place shall give them early opportunities of conveying the knowledge of the truth to remote nations

* Gen. x. 1, 5.

nations and countries, and of bringing them that believe in Jesus Christ, with their substance, within the boundaries of the Church, to associate with the servants of God.—*Their silver and their gold with them.* The most valuable articles they possess, their precious treasures, shall be brought along with their proprietors to minister to the benefit of the Church, that they may be expended in erecting and endowing schools, churches, and asylums for the poor and afflicted, and in disseminating the knowledge of the Saviour and his salvation. The silver and the gold, the incense and the cattle, mentioned in this and the preceding verses, which shall be brought into the Church by real converts, are emblematical of the true riches, the spiritual treasures, which by their means shall be much augmented. These consist of the inestimable blessings of Divine grace, the fruits of the spirit, and the beauties of holiness, which adorn the Christian profession, and render people rich toward God. Though I have only glanced at the figurative and more recondite sense, yet I apprehend it may be principally intended: in order to comprehend the whole meaning of this prophecy, and to render it every where consistent with itself, it must be chiefly considered

Unto the name of the Lord thy God, &c. To do honour to his great name, who is the Lord of all, and the God of his peculiar people, and to be employed in his worship and service. The Lord thy God shall bring to pass this wonderful event for the glory of his name, and to display his divine excellencies, who is the Holy One of Israel, that sanctifies them, and is sanctified by them. The reason is subjoined why vast numbers of people shall resort to the Church of God. *Because he hath glorified thee,* by raising thee from an afflicted, disconsolate condition, to a prosperous and honourable state, the renown whereof hath gone forth among the heathen. He hath made thee a praise in the earth and magnified thee in the sight of the nations; therefore thy children shall be multiplied as the buds
of

of the fields. He hath increased thy greatness, and comforted thee on every side. He hath conferred upon thee the most important benefits and privileges, accompanying his ordinances with his Spirit and presence, and rendering thee superior to all the efforts of thy enemies. On these accounts, multitudes of every rank and of every nation shall come into the kingdom of God, that they may participate of the choicest blessings.

10. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee; but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.

The predictions respecting the felicity and glory of the Church are amplified by the introduction of various circumstances, which shall essentially contribute to the advancement of their honour and interests.—*The sons of strangers*, who were the patrons of heathenism and false religion, and who had never been admitted into the communion of the Church, a privilege which they looked upon with hatred and contempt—The children of those who were strangers to the covenants of promise, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, who had no more connection with the Church of God than foreigners had of old with the benefits peculiar to the posterity of Jacob. The descendants even of these people being brought into the obedience of faith, and observing that the city of God required reparation and enlargement, on account of the immense concourse that resorted to it, and that its former inhabitants were unequal to the work, they engaged with great promptitude in the performance of this business. They exerted themselves to add whatsoever constitutes either beauty or defence, that might distinguish the citizens from the men of the world, and protect them

from the assaults of enemies. This work, which is attributed to Jehovah by the sacred Poet *, is here foretold to be executed by strangers, that he is pleased to employ for this purpose, who, according to their ability, shall contribute to the enlargement and improvement of the Church of God, and to promote the spiritual beauty and stability of Divine worship.

And their kings shall minister unto thee. Princes and great men, possessing opulence, power, and authority, shall employ their influence to suppress the practice of all manner of iniquity, and to advance the interests of true godliness. They shall make proper provision for the support of ministers of the gospel, to whom they shall give all suitable encouragement, to the faithful discharge of the duties of their office, by excellent laws and pious examples. They shall erect and endow schools and seminaries of learning, where proper persons shall be educated, with a view to sacred offices and useful employments. They shall maintain and defend the rights and liberties of the Church, and do what in them lies to excite the people to diligent attendance to the ordinances and precepts enjoined in the word of God; to edify and comfort each other by good conversation and prudent conduct.

For in my wrath I smote thee. The remarkable happy change in the state of the Church, which our prophet foretels is not to be ascribed to the merits of God's servants, but to the rich mercy of Jehovah. The Almighty, who had been greatly displeased with his degenerate people for their hypocrisy, formality, and perfidy, visited them in anger with divers calamities, to make them sensible of their sins and follies, and to bring them back to himself and their duty. He verified to them his faithful word, by chastising them with the rod of affliction when they kept not his commandments, to reclaim them from their evil ways, and to bring them to repentance and reformation.—*But in my favour have I had mercy on thee.* The Lord God reminds them, that the change in his dispensations

* Psal. cxlvii. 2.

dispensations proceeded not from their rectitude and worth, but from his own free favour and undeserved kindness—That all the privileges and blessings whereby they were felicitated, were not to be attributed to their excellence and the goodness of their performances, but to be considered as the fruits of sovereign mercy and grace. All the precious benefits which they enjoyed seem to be comprised in shewing them mercy. Remembering not against them former sins, God had turned unto them according to the multitude of his tender mercies, and had speedily prevented them when brought very low. He punished them less than their iniquities deserved, and moderated the corrections he judged proper to inflict.—These interesting truths ought to be deeply impressed on our minds, brethren, and frequently called to our remembrance, that thereby we may be excited to gratitude to God for his mercy, to fidelity and diligence in his service.

11. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually, they shall not be shut day nor night, that *men* may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and *that* their kings *may be* brought.

Another remarkable circumstance is mentioned, that shall conduce to increase and enlarge the Church of God, which is here spoken of as a flourishing city. The gates by which the just enter into the city of the living God, shall be always open for the admission of princes and people of all nations, who wish to become fellow-citizens with the saints. The expression intimates, that none who believe in Jesus Christ, of whatsoever kingdom or country, shall be denied access into the community of the faithful—That in every period of time, in season and out of season, the watchmen shall be ever ready to grant admission to those who apply for this privilege, and—that the city of the Lord shall be blest with perpetual tranquillity.

quillity, and security from external foes; there shall be no ground of fear of any enemy to annoy the inhabitants, who shall enjoy the undisturbed possession of their glorious privileges.—The design of the gates being kept constantly open is specified in the following words :

That men may bring unto thee, &c. the strength and wealth of the nations, that multitudes of people, with all their opulence and spiritual riches, may have easy access to the enjoyment of the felicity and fellowship with which thou art favoured.—And that their kings may be brought as the willing subjects of the Lord Jesus Christ, to have intimate communion with God and the Redeemer, to delight themselves in God's abundant goodness, to enjoy manifestations of the Divine glory, with the pledges of Divine love. These pleasing circumstances exhibit a happy and glorious state of the Church, the prospect of which ought to animate our hopes, and to excite to frequent, fervent supplications for its commencement.

12. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish: yea, *those* nations shall be utterly wasted.

Desolating judgments are threatened to be inflicted on those who shall obstinately refuse to join in promoting the welfare of the Church of God. This prediction, though similar to one delivered by the prophet Zechariah*, is still more extensive. The people, whose destiny is here foretold, are not only those who oppose the interests of the Church, but those also who will not yield subjection to the righteous authority of Jesus Christ, by whom his disciples are governed, and in obedience to whose commands they enjoy real liberty and happiness. As it is the duty, the honour, and the interest of every nation under heaven, to endeavour to advance the prosperity of the kingdom of God, so it is just and equitable,

* Chap. xiv. 17.

table, that those who refuse to contribute their services towards this great object, should feel the effects of the Divine displeasure. Our prophet therefore foretels, that they, who in this manner act contrary to the will and command of God—*Shall perish and be utterly wasted*, by temporal calamities or spiritual judgments, wherewith they shall be visited in the course of providence. They shall either be entirely overthrown and deprived of their existence as a people, or be divested of their power, wealth, and influence. History testifies, that there is not a nation, or empire on earth, which hath virulently opposed the prosperity of the Church, that hath escaped the judgments of God. And at the period to which Isaiah looked forward, when this prediction shall receive a sure and full completion, the nation shall be consumed and exterminated that will not do homage to the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ.

13. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious.

Whatever is grand, magnificent, and beautiful in nature, all the choice emblems that can dignify the description, adorn the subject, and afford matter of pleasing meditation, are brought forward to represent the glories of the Church.—The glory of Lebanon consisted in the abundance of the stately cedars, and other kinds of trees wherewith it was covered, which exhibited a striking appearance of majesty, strength and comeliness. Of the fir, the pine, and the box-trees, I took notice when treating chapter xli. 19. where they were mentioned. These trees, remarkable for excellence, utility, and ornament, are here introduced to represent persons of great abilities, of splendid accomplishments, of immense virtues, and extensive

extensive usefulness, that God shall raise up to defend, to adorn, and console his Church. The propriety of the parabolic style, frequently adopted by our prophet, hath been shewn already from divers places of this sacred book. Indeed, if rightly considered, it serves many useful purposes: it whets the understanding; it excites desires of knowledge; it keeps alive the attention; and, by the exercise of investigation, improves the mind.—Even truth itself acquires additional beauty when discovered through the veil of elegant imagery.—The illustrious men, intended by these beautiful figures, shall come into the Church of God.

To beautify the place of my sanctuary, &c. The expression, I suppose, relates directly to the Church of Jesus Christ under the New Testament, that is the subject of this prophecy, plainly refers to the temple built for Jehovah under the former dispensation, which was sanctified to be his dwelling-place, and which prefigured the dignity and happiness to be enjoyed by the people of God under the œconomy of grace, after having attained its highest excellence and glory. In the innermost apartment of the magnificent house of rest, which king Solomon built unto the Lord, was the most holy place, the sanctuary wherein was the mercy-seat, honoured with the symbol of the Divine glory; and beneath was the ark of the covenant of the Lord, which was literally the place of God's feet*. This grand edifice, with its several parts, were superbly ornamented with timber of the different kinds of trees here mentioned. And Isaiah, probably having this elegant structure in his eye, foretels that the Church, which is the house of God under New Testament, the sanctuary he hath set apart for his peculiar residence, where he manifests his gracious presence, and which he fills with his glory, shall be adorned with men of eminent gifts and graces. There shall come into the Church persons of extensive knowledge, persuasive eloquence, true wisdom, and unblemished holiness, who shall be ornaments

* 1 Chron. xxviii. 2.

ornaments to their profession, and the light of the world. They shall render the society with which they are connected comely and glorious, and prove the objects of admiration to all that are possessed of spiritual discernment. The subjects of the King of Glory ought to rejoice and triumph in the view of the enlargement and prosperity of his kingdom, which in due time shall be effected by the power and grace of Jehovah.

14. The sons also of them that afflicted thee, shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, the city of the Lord, the Zion of the holy One of Israel.

Such shall be the prosperity and glory of the Church of God, that the posterity of their enemies and persecutors, who contemned them, shall yield to them the most profound submission. The fathers, who had opposed, oppressed, and despised the people of God, having gone to their place, and many of them having been cut off by Divine judgments, their children, convinced by satisfying proofs that the righteous are the objects of the Divine favour, the sanctuary of God, and the blessed of the Lord, shall come and pay them humble obeisance. Of all persons, they were the most unlikely to have acted in this manner. Having imbibed the principles of their fathers in early youth, it might naturally have been expected that they would have followed their example, whereas this prophecy teaches, that, at the happy period to which it refers—*They shall come bending* unto those who were detested and persecuted by their progenitors. *They shall bow down themselves at the soles of thy feet.* Those who despised the servants of the Most High, as the filth and offscouring of all things, shall come,

come, acknowledging with humility their former blindness, prejudice, and ill-directed furious zeal. They shall approach thee with profound respect, testifying their high esteem for the Church of God, as the most excellent society on the earth, truly worthy of being honoured and revered.

And shall call thee the city of the Lord, which he hath built for the honour of his majesty, which bears his name, which he hath fortified with impregnable walls and bulwarks, beautified with the graces of his Spirit, replenished with the blessings of his goodness, and felicitated with his gracious presence—the city wherein reside the peculiar people of God, his chosen, called, and faithful, who are the beloved of the Lord, on whom his eyes and his heart are continually fixed, and that he esteems above all the kingdoms and empires of the the world.—The Zion of the holy One of Israel. The illustrious monument he hath erected to display his holiness and glory, and which he hath furnished with every thing requisite for the purification and refreshment of the upright among men.—The place from whence grace and salvation proceeds, wherein the Lord God delights to dwell, wherein he manifests himself to be the holy One, who admits his people to intimate intercourse with him, and confers on them the choicest privileges and benefits.

15. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through *thee*, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations,

A happy change is foretold to take place in the circumstances of the Church, in consequence of the fulfilment of the preceding predictions.—The Lord God, provoked by the sins of his people, hath often seemed to forsake them, when he hath withdrawn from them the fruits of his former loving kindness, whereby they have been invigorated and solaced, and permitted

mitted them in despondency to bewail their forlorn condition. Often have they been deserted and hated by the men of the world, who act upon principles, and with views diametrically opposite to those whereby they are influenced. Those who hate the Lord and Saviour have been always ready to cast upon the afflicted followers of Jesus Christ some portion of that reproach and contempt, which they poured plentifully on their Divine master. The language of such people hath been, God hath forsaken them, let us persecute and take them. Hence the earnest prayer and mournful complaint of the Church of old, recorded Psalms cxxiii. 3, 4. ‘Have mercy upon us, O Lord, ‘have mercy upon us; for we are exceedingly filled ‘with contempt. Our soul is exceedingly filled with ‘the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the ‘contempt of the proud.’ Such treatment the servants of God have frequently experienced from their adversaries, according to the true proverb, which saith, ‘He that is upright in the way, is abomination ‘to the wicked *.’ When in this degraded, despised condition—*No man went through thee.* Very few entered into the Church, admiring the firmness of the foundation whereon they were built, the precious immunities which they enjoyed, their cheerful subjection to God, their intimate connection with his blessed Son, and the mighty influence of his Holy Spirit, whereby they were strengthened and comforted.

I will make thee an eternal excellency. I will exalt thee to such distinguished eminence, and to such high degrees of prosperity and glory, that thou shalt become the object of delightful admiration. I will render thy citizens righteous; and, by consequence, more excellent than their neighbours. I will make them partakers of the Divine nature, I will form them into my resemblance, I will adorn them with the graces of my Spirit, I will enrich them with the most substantial blessings, and felicitate them with the

light of my countenance, and that peace which passeth understanding. I will introduce them into glorious liberty, and afford them all necessary direction, assistance, and protection, and confer upon them those inestimable benefits, requisite to possess them of real worth and unrivalled dignity, to render them truly excellent, glorious, and comely. This excellence shall not fade and decay after a short period, like that of worldly things, but it shall be permanent, and continue throughout all ages; it shall not be sullied or obscured, but, like the light of the sun, it shall appear with increasing splendor, until it arrive at perfection.—*A joy of many generations.* The Lord God will create thee a joy, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing*. Thou, in return, shalt greatly rejoice in the Lord, in thy intimate relation to him, in the benefits and prerogatives wherewith he hath blessed thee, and in the pleasing prospect of their continuance and perpetuity. Thou shalt be the joy of the whole earth, who shall behold thee walking in the truth, and glorifying God by thy subjection to the gospel of Christ. Nor shall this joy be transient and of short duration; it shall be perpetuated through a succession of ages, and thou shalt be to me a name of joy, a praise, and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto thee †.

16. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings, and thou shalt know that I the Lord *am* thy saviour and thy redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.

The princes and the nations of the earth shall employ their power and riches for the support and benefit of the people of God. These figurative expressions

* Zeph. iii. 17.

† Jer. xxxiii. 9.

sions, which require not to be minutely explained, sufficiently intimate, that the wealth and strength of both potentates and their subjects shall be conveyed into the Church—that by means of the laws, edicts, and interpositions of rulers, and the constitutions of their governments, the prosperity of the kingdom of God shall be advanced—that these things shall contribute, through the Divine blessing, to the good of the Church, and serve as effectually to promote their interests as milk conduces to the nourishment and health of the child. From the most honourable personages, and nations of the greatest celebrity, who shall reckon it their happiness to minister to their necessities, they shall derive, in various respects, growth, establishment, and comfort. This, if I mistake not, is the import of the prediction that now lies before us.

And thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour, who defends thee from innumerable evils to which thou art exposed, who delivers thee from many powerful enemies, and who exalts thee to safety, happiness, and honour.—*And thy Redeemer*, who, in consequence of a great ransom, hath redeemed thee from iniquity, servitude, and misery, and restored thee to holiness, to liberty, and glory.—*The mighty one of Jacob*, who, by my omnipotent arm, can do all things requisite to secure thy welfare, to advance and perpetuate thy prosperity and felicity.—These endearing characters, these comfortable truths, thou shalt know by the awful judgments inflicted on your enemies, and the distinguishing favours you enjoy. This acquaintance with these characters shall powerfully operate on your hearts and lives, and dispose you to hearken to my voice, to attend to my worship, and to obey my precepts. Assured of my faithfulness in my promises, of the wisdom and goodness of my dispensations, you shall fear, and love, and serve me with alacrity and delight, as a proper return for the kindnesses you receive.

17. For brafs I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring filver, and for wood brafs, and for ftones iron: I will alfo make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousnefs.

Another fubftantial benefit is promifed to be conferred upon the Church, whereby their condition fhall be changed greatly for the better. In confequence of the wealth of the nations being transferred into the kingdom of God our Saviour, a large acceffion fhall be made to the opulence of its citizens, who fhall enjoy abundance of all the good things of this prefent life. But the foretold happy alteration relates chiefly, if not altogether, to the change that fhall take place in the fpiritual ftate of the people of God.—The ancient poets defcribed the different periods into which they diftributed the exiftence of the world, by the names of the four metals that are here mentioned.

And in Scripture, the four great empires which fucceffively arofe in the world were represented by gold, filver, brafs, and iron, in the book of Daniel *. In the prediction now to be confidered, the extenfive change that fhall take place in the Church of God is depicted under the fame beautiful images, which feem intended to fignify—That inftead of thofe things of inferior quality and value, which in former times were common, fhall be introduced thofe of much fuperior worth and excellence—That in room of perfons of lefs importance and ufefulness, fhall arife thofe who fhall be more eftimable, and of greater celebrity and utility—That thofe endowments, which are fplendid and fhining as brafs, fhall be exchanged for fuch as are truly precious and glorious like gold—That in place of thofe gifts and benefits, which were of little intrinsic worth, fhall be fubftituted fuch as are truly beautiful and admirable. The alterations that fhall be made in the Church, in every inftance, fhall be for
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* Chap. ii. 32, 33.

the better. The Lord God shall replenish and adorn the members of his family with extensive knowledge of sacred truths, with acute discernment of their import, with precious faith, with the beauties of holiness, and their concomitant virtues. They shall abound in works of piety and charity, in which they shall arrive at greater degrees of excellence and perfection than had hitherto been attained. In consequence whereof, they shall possess larger measures of those inestimable graces and virtues, which enrich the Church of God, than had ever been enjoyed in former times, and that shall then shine forth with unequalled splendor and brilliancy.

I will make thy officers peace, &c. Peaceable, equitable men, are foretold to bear office in the Church. The officers that preside over the city of God are such as bishops and ministers of the gospel, that the Holy Ghost hath made overseers; to whom Jesus Christ hath committed the word of reconciliation, the inspection of his flock, and the dispensation of his ordinances; to whom he hath given commandment to watch for souls, and to walk with him in truth and equity.—*Thy exactors*, may signify the chief men of distinguished eminence, who hold offices in the Church or in the state, whose business is to inspect the people, to collect taxes, and to remind them to give unto God the things that are God's, and to man the things that are man's.—*These officers shall be peace.* In this manner the Hebrew language emphatically expresses by the substantive where we commonly use the adjective. They shall be men admirably adapted to fill the station they occupy, possessing a meek, humble, disposition, remarkable for moderation and equity, at peace with God, following the things that make for peace, whereby one may edify another, and as much as in them lies living peaceably with all men. They shall be men of unblemished integrity, uprightness, and equity, avoiding, in the administration of their functions, rigour and strife, contention and oppression, or laying burdens

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on their brethren, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. As becometh the servants of God, they shall be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves *. Firmly attached, by principle and practice, to the interests of righteousness, they shall exhibit a striking contrast to the watchmen mentioned in the fifty-sixth chapter of this prophecy.

18. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise.

A third benefit to be enjoyed by the Church, at the time to which this prophecy refers, is freedom from rapine and injury, with internal and external tranquillity. They shall not be disturbed by fraud or oppression, nor be forcibly deprived of their property and privileges. Princes shall not encroach on their valuable rights, ministers of the gospel shall not impose upon them wrong interpretations of the Scriptures, men of opulence, possessing power, shall not distress the weak, or hurt the indigent, enemies shall not molest or afflict them. There shall be no just ground for complaints of such iniquitous practices; all clamours, on such accounts, shall be completely silenced. Goodness, righteousness, and benevolence, shall universally prevail, whilst the opposite sins, as ashamed, shall hide their face. This sentiment, on which it is unnecessary to dilate, is illustrated in the following words.—*Wasting nor destruction within thy borders.* Even the most remote places inhabited by the people of God shall be exempted from those calamities, which terminate in desolation and ruin. They shall not only be free from such evils and miseries, but they shall enjoy complete safety, peace, and comfort.

But

* 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

But thou shalt call thy walls salvation. Contemplating thy happy situation, thou shalt triumph in the protection of the Almighty, who is thy refuge and thy defence. Thy walls, whereby thou art inclosed and protected, within which thou enjoyest perfect safety and the most precious immunities, shall be distinguished and known by the name of *Salvation*; because no enemy can destroy them, and they shall effectually repel every hostile attack that can be made upon them. Jehovah himself having become thy strength and salvation, and being not only the glory in the midst of thee, but a wall of fire round about, thou art placed in a state of perfect security, and thou mayest boldly say, the God of my mercy is the God of my defence *.—*And thy gates praise.* Thy gates, where thy important interests are deliberated upon and decided, and by which persons are admitted to the enjoyment of the glorious privileges belonging to the citizens of Zion, shall be highly celebrated and applauded. Though, in dark and cloudy days, the way of access into your community was often complained of, as narrow and troublesome, at the approaching period of the Church's prosperity it shall be commended and extolled, as admirably adapted to serve the purposes for which it is intended. Then those who obtain admission into the courts of the Lord's house shall unite in praising him for his great and manifold mercies, who hath blessed them with such a goodly heritage.

19. The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

In these sublime and beautiful expressions, the Church is assured of the perpetual enjoyment of luminous

* Psal. lix. 17.

minous displays of the Divine glory, whereby they shall be enlightened and delighted. The prediction is not designed to intimate, that, at the period referred to, the course of nature shall be changed, and that there shall not then be any need for the luminaries of heaven, to give light to the inhabitants of the earth. The state of grace neither disturbs nor changes the order which God hath established in the works of nature, that shall continue to the end of the world. This prophecy, which cannot be explained, consistently with truth, in the literal, must be understood in the figurative sense of the words. In this view it imports, that such shall be the happy flourishing state of the Church of God, that their spiritual splendor and glory shall greatly surpass the light emitted by the brightest celestial orbs; that they shall shine forth before men with a radiance and brilliancy superior to the sun and the moon in the firmament of heaven. It denotes, that their spiritual lustre, beauty, and majesty, shall exceed every other glory, and shall eclipse the most admirable, magnificent lights, that adorn the universe. Their felicity not depending, like worldly things, upon natural causes, but proceeding from Jehovah, shall be abundant, unremitting, and perpetual. In consequence whereof they shall greatly rejoice in the incomparable, steady light wherewith they are favoured from on high.

But the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light. God, who is light, and dwelleth in light, who causeth light to arise on his people when sitting in darkness—this God shall be thy light, he shall impart to thee plentiful supplies of knowledge, holiness, and consolation; by his providence he shall advance thee to the enjoyment of all manner of prosperity; and by his Spirit he shall so enlighten and sanctify thee, that thou shalt have abundant matter of joy and gladness. In his light shalt thou see objects in their true colours, thou shalt discover the deceitfulness of sin, the devices of Satan, the vanity of this present world, the purity of the Divine law, the beauties of holiness, the excellency

excellency of the gospel, and the glory of the salvation of Jesus Christ. In his light thou shalt walk with God in the path of life; thou shalt work the works of God, and conduct thyself unblameably in every condition. Thou shalt be cheered and refreshed by the light of his countenance, which shall enhance the value of every blessing, and animate thee to the faithful performance of every part of duty.— This light shall be everlasting; it shall be imparted without interruption, and without end. The light conveyed to the natural world by the sun and the moon is continually varying, it is either increasing or diminishing; whereas the light which the Lord God shall impart to his people, whereby they will be felicitated and comforted, shall be constant and everlasting.

And thy God thy glory. Thy God, who hath chosen thee for his peculiar treasure, and set thee apart for himself as the lot of his inheritance, to whom thou art devoted as thy Saviour and Lord, and in whom thou art nearly interested—this thy own God shall be thy glory. This assurance includes all that is valuable and excellent, every thing pleasant and desirable, requisite to the enjoyment of true happiness. In God thou shalt find all that is good, without the least mixture of evil, holiness without blemish, righteousness without partiality, strength unimpaired by weakness, truth unfulled by error and deceit, love surpassing all parallel, light unclouded by darkness, beauty perfectly free from the least deformity, fulness of blessings without any deficiency. In this God thou shalt glory, as the rich donor of all the benefits and privileges you possess, as the inexhaustible fountain from whence proceed all the substantial favours you receive. He shall be the object of thy highest esteem, of thy supreme affection, and ardent gratitude, in his perfections, his providence, his favour, and salvation, thou shalt rejoice and triumph, with the king of Israel, ‘In God is my defence and my glory, the rock of my strength; and my refuge is in God*.’

20. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

The spiritual prosperity and consolations of the Church shall be uninterrupted and perpetual.—The Lord Jesus Christ, who is emphatically denominated the Sun of Righteousness, who enlightens, quickens, conducts, and comforts his people, shall shine upon them with unremitting splendor and glory. They shall no more be involved in obscurity and darkness, from time to time, as in former periods. Those who derive Divine light from him to communicate to the Church, shall not undergo such changes as they formerly experienced, but shall uniformly yield a steady light to those who look to them for direction and comfort. The light of the glorious gospel of the Son of God, which far excels the most valuable created comforts, shall constantly illuminate the inhabitants of Zion, who shall be thereby refreshed and solaced. In consequence whereof, their happiness shall not suffer such diminutions or alterations as formerly had taken place, nor be succeeded by intervals of ignorance, vice, or persecution. It shall not be chequered by adversity, nor be liable to such variations as happen in the appearance of the moon. The words of the prophet Zechariah are of the same import *, where he foretels, ‘It shall be one day, which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night.’ The vicissitudes of light and darkness shall not then be experienced. And in the very sublime figurative description that the apostle John gives of the New Jerusalem, in the book of Revelation, he seems plainly to allude to the prediction before us †. And the city ‘had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.’

And

* Chap. xiv. 7.

† Chap. xxi. 23.

And the days of thy mourning shall be ended. In the present state of things, the servants of God are frequently called to lament over prevailing iniquities, impending dangers, and great calamities. At the time, however, whereof our prophet speaks, the scene shall be changed, these days shall come to a period, the causes of public sorrow shall cease to operate. Consistently with the fulfilment of this prediction, we may suppose that private sources of grief, though not dried up, yet shall be greatly moderated by kind providence. The servants of God, walking in the light of his countenance, and favoured with the comforts of his Spirit, shall rejoice in his gracious administration, and cordially acquiesce in his dispensations, assured that the evils which befall them, shall be tempered with great mercies. The long dark night of the Church's affliction being past, a glorious day of prosperity shall commence, wherein his peculiar people, forgetting their sorrows, shall unite in grateful praises to the Lord God omnipotent, who hath glorified himself in Israel. Then shall they be glad according to the days wherein they have been afflicted, and the years wherein they have seen evil; his work shall appear unto his servants, and his glory unto their children; and the beauty of the Lord our God shall be upon them, &c. *.

21. Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

The character of the citizens of Zion, who shall be blessed with the above-mentioned excellent prerogatives, is here specified. They shall claim the designation of righteous, in consequence of their interest in
Jesus

* P^{sa}l. xc. 13. *et seq.*

Jesus Christ and his righteousness, which is by faith unto all, and upon all them that believe*. In their apostate state there was none of them righteous; by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified, for if righteousness came by the law, Christ died in vain. This character they shall attain by lively faith in the Lord our Righteousness, a faith which purifies the heart, and produces good works; and by means whereof all the benefits resulting from his mediation become their portion. To them this character shall belong, who are renewed in righteousness and true holiness by the Holy Ghost, so as their understandings are enlightened, their sentiments rectified, their passions subdued, and their ways directed to keep God's precepts. By consequence, they shall abound in the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God; thus shall they give evidence of their subjection to their Lord and Saviour, and demonstrate that they are indeed righteous before God.—Isaiah foretels, that the people admitted into the Church shall be all righteous. The expression must be understood not strictly, but with some limitation, as containing a general truth, to which there shall not be many exceptions. Instances of this mode of interpretation of Scripture seem to be fully authorized by the inspired writers of the New Testament. The apostle Peter said to the men of Judea †, ‘The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off.’ These words he thus explains and paraphrases: ‘Even as many as the Lord our God shall call.’ Those who shall be admitted into the Church of the living God, at the time referred to, shall be actually renewed and sanctified; or, according to the law of charity, they shall be considered as possessing this character, though there may be among them unknown sinners and hypocrites. The happy society shall be composed almost wholly of upright men, who shall dwell in God's presence, concerning whom it is foretold

They

* Rom. iii. 22.

† Acts ii. 39.

They shall inherit the land for ever, not the land of Canaan, which is not appropriated to the possession of the Church under the New Testament; nor the heavenly inheritance, which is not enjoyed in this present life. It may rather denote those places of the earth, and that portion of the good things of this world, which are assigned to them by the supreme Lord of all. The tenure whereby they shall hold the possession of these benefits, is of all others the most free and unmerited, the most certain and secure, and, at the same time, the most honourable and comfortable. This agreeable circumstance, of having the undisturbed enjoyment of the blessings God conferred upon them, shall contribute, with others, to augment their felicity. They shall have an unquestionable right to possess the comforts with which they are favoured, and they shall transmit them to their posterity as their inheritance. On these accounts, they may be said to inherit the land for ever,

The branch of my planting. The word branch is used in scripture to signify not only the bough of a tree, but is one of the designations given to Jesus Christ in the prophecies, as in *Zech. iii. 8* where the prophet foretold, 'Behold I bring forth my servant the Branch.' It is a name given also to his disciples; on account of their connection with him, their resemblance to him, and dependence upon him, as in *John xv. 5*. where our Saviour thus addresses his followers, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' In the words under consideration, I suppose the Church is intended by the branch of God's planting. Every one that is planted by Jehovah is broken off from the olive tree, that is wild by nature, and grafted, contrary to nature, into the 'good olive tree, to partake of its root and 'fatness *.' Each of them is planted in the likeness of Christ's death and resurrection, is watered by the dew of his blessing, is protected by the care of his providence; and, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, is rendered

* Rom. xi. 17. *et seq.*

rendered fruitful in holiness and righteousness. 'Every plant (saith Jesus Christ) which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up *.' Those who are merely formalists and hypocrites in the Church, that maintain the profession of godliness, destitute of its life and power, shall either decay and die, or, being offended, or detected, shall be exterminated from among the faithful in Christ Jesus. This branch, which God planted in the heathen world, as Israel had been in the land of Canaan. is also said to be—*The work of his hands.* All men are the work of God's hands, inasmuch as he hath made and fashioned them, and breathed into them the breath of life. His people are in a peculiar manner the work of his hands, because created by him anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. He rectifies the disorders that sin hath introduced into their constitution, he gives to them new hearts, he forms them after his own image; and, in due time, he whose work is perfect, will complete what he now begins, to the praise of his own glory.—*That I may be glorified.* by the rich displays of my Divine excellencies, exhibited in the renovation, establishment, and prosperity of the subjects of my kingdom, and by their good works, that men shall behold in the day of visitation.

22. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.

This prophetic discourse concludes with foretelling the immense increase of the inhabitants of Zion, at the time to which these predictions refer. The Church hath merited at different periods, the designation of a little and small one. How small was this society when, of all the families of the earth, the Lord God knew only the family of Abraham. And again,
when

* Mat. xv. 13.

when the names of those whereof it was constituted were only one hundred and twenty, met together in an upper room. Besides, how delicate hath been their situation, which hath often resembled that of a little one, who is constantly obnoxious to injury, and always in need of instruction and protection,—The Church, that hath assumed this mean and inconsiderable appearance, shall be exceedingly multiplied, far beyond human expectation.—*A little one shall become a thousand, &c.* Their numbers shall be increased as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or counted. They shall flourish like grass on the earth; a new generation shall still be springing up, innumerable as the blades of grass that grow in the fields. Great numbers of all nations, kindreds, and tongues, shall come under the shadow of this goodly cedar, until they shall form a populous and powerful kingdom, that shall never be destroyed. If, as saith the proverb *, in the multitude of people is the king's honour—if the royal robes, the chair of state, the crown of majesty, and sceptre of authority, do not dignify the prince as doth the number and happiness of his subjects, what honour and glory shall result to the Lord Jesus Christ from the prodigious increase, strength and stability of his willing people!—The prophecy concludes with these significant words.

I the Lord will hasten it in his time This explicit assurance gives the strongest security for the accomplishment of the above-mentioned glorious predicted events. The Lord God, who doth all things in the most proper season, who hath causes and means at his disposal, will certainly effect, without any unnecessary delay, what he hath promised, notwithstanding every intervening obstacle. He for whom all things are possible, will not fail to verify his faithful word, nor defer to execute his gracious purposes in the time appointed by infinite wisdom and love.—How reviving and comfortable the prospect! Come, Lord
Jesus,

* Prov. xiv. 28.

Jesus, fulfil thy promises, answer the prayers of thy people, hasten the happy period thou hast taught us to expect. Let the glory and the praises of the Lord our God fill the earth throughout, that thy servants may be glad and rejoice, and give honour to thee, who liveth and reigneth, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

PRELI-

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

ISAAH having foretold the future fortunes of the Church of God, from the period wherein he exercised his ministry to the end of time, proceeds, under Divine conduct, to explain and illuminate some important subjects, which he had briefly mentioned in his former discourses. These illustrations and amplifications, as we suppose, begin here, at the fourth sermon contained in the fifth part of these prophecies. It commences with the introduction of a person of distinguished eminence, sent by Jehovah to announce good tidings, and to dispense the most important benefits to those who most needed them, ver. 1—3.—It then copiously sets forth the happy consequences and precious benefits which were to result from the unction and ministry of this great Prophet, ver. 4—6.—After which it beautifully delineates the glorious privileges whereby the disciples of this extraordinary teacher were to be honoured, and acknowledged as the blessed of the Lord, ver. 7—9.—The chapter concludes with strong expressions of exultation and joy, excited in the Church of God by the inestimable blessings with which they were felicitated, and the pleasing prospects opened to their view, ver. 10, 11.

CHAP. LXI.

THE spirit of the Lord God *is* upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*.

The illustrious person here brought forward, declares the important designs of his unction and mission into this world. These words being applied to himself by Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, the great Prophet of the Lord *, no doubt can remain that they refer chiefly, if not wholly to him, though they might primarily, in a limited sense, have respect to Isaiah, by whom they were written. The Lord Jesus opening this prophecy, expounded it in the synagogue at Nazareth, and demonstrated that it received its fulfilment in him.—*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me.* That Spirit, who is a living, powerful, intelligent agent, to whom is ascribed in Scripture those names, perfections, and dispensations, with that sacred homage which are the peculiar rights of Jehovah, and to whose operations are to be attributed the most excellent gifts and graces.—This Spirit was upon Jesus Christ from his nativity; from his childhood he waxed strong in Spirit, and, from the time he entered upon his public ministry, he was full of the Holy Ghost. At his baptism, before he began to act in his official character, he received that unction, which was attended with a visible sign and audible voice from heaven, which was the seal the Lord God affixed to the commission given him, to execute the blessed work here mentioned. Thus approved of God, he performed, through the Spirit, those stupendous miracles whereby he confirmed his mission; he

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* Luke iv. 16.

was strengthened and comforted under the temptations and sufferings he sustained; through the same Spirit he offered himself a sacrifice unto God, of a sweet-smelling savour; and by him he was quickened and restored to life.

Because the Lord hath anointed me, &c. Under the Old Testament, those who were invested with the offices of prophet, priest, and king, were anointed with oil, of which instances occur in Elisha, Aaron, and Solomon. This typical ceremony seems to have been intended to signify, that the persons on whom it was performed were furnished with abilities and qualifications requisite to the discharge of the duties belonging to the office in which they were thus installed. It was also designed to prefigure the unction of the Messiah by the Holy Spirit, whereby he was solemnly inaugurated in his mediatorial office, and perfectly qualified for executing the arduous work to which he was destined. Being thus anointed, he was fully authorized and capacitated for doing every thing with honour and success that relates to his office—of magnifying the law of God, vanquishing the enemies of his Church, of managing their concerns, and accomplishing their eternal salvation, and

To preach good tidings to the meek. In this prophecy six purposes are specified to be effected by the ministry of Jesus Christ, toward every individual to whom his word comes with power and energy. As each of them is of high importance, let us separately consider them.—Those who are denominated the meek by our prophet, are called by the evangelist Luke, the poor. As there is little difference in the Hebrew language between the words denoting these two characters, so it is not easy to discriminate the one from the other. Those who are poor in spirit are calm, humble, and meek; under provocations, they are teachable and composed, behaving with modesty and moderation in the several circumstances wherein they are placed. Those who are meek are poor in spirit; being convinced by the law and Spirit of God

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of their necessitous, destitute condition, they are depressed in their minds, abased in their own eyes. Firmly persuaded of the riches of Divine mercy and grace, and of their absolute need of help from on high, they have recourse to the all-sufficient God, that he may supply their wants; they eagerly listen to every intimation he is pleased to give of his good will.—To persons of this description the Saviour was anointed to *preach good tidings*. The doctrine preached by Jesus Christ, and promulgated by his servants, contained in the books of the New Testament, is called, with great propriety, good tidings, or the gospel. It brings to the ears of sinners, groaning under the servitude of sin, and liable to the curse of the law of God, the most desirable joyful news of pardon of sin, of life, liberty, grace, and salvation. Though our Lord preached the gospel to all who came to hear him, his words were attended with power and efficacy especially to the meek and the poor, who were sensible of their necessities, and the excellence of his instructions. Such persons are, in a peculiar manner, the objects of the Redeemer's compassionate regard; they are possessed of the dispositions suitable to his disciples, and they receive his word, which is able to save our souls, with meekness of wisdom.—He farther declares,

The Lord God sent him to bind up, &c. He sent him into this world as his Ambassador, invested with authority, that in his name he might proclaim peace to those who were enemies to him in their minds, and by wicked works—that he might execute that benevolent and arduous work, which was to terminate in his own honour and glory, and in the salvation of them that were lost. This mission of the faithful witness, represents the blessed God in a most amiable light, and affords a pleasing discovery of his love and grace, in which jealousy itself cannot find any deficiency, especially when taken in connection with the fidelity of the messenger of the covenant. How gracious the errand on which he came! To bind up the
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the broken hearted, who have a quick sensibility, not only of outward misconduct, but of inward corruption; not only of open transgressions, but of secret faults. Such people are deeply affected with the truths of God, with the dispensations of providence, and the awful displays of the Divine displeasure against sin, and are earnestly desirous to make a right improvement both of mercies and judgments. Many things are valuable when whole, which, being broken, are little worth; but it is otherwise with the human heart. When contrite, Jesus Christ was sent to bind it up, and to heal it. The expression refers to the kind office performed by a skilful hand on one who, having received a fracture, or dangerous contusion, feels great debility and pain. In like manner Jesus Christ, having applied a sovereign remedy to the broken heart, tenderly binds up the wounds, in order to effect a complete cure. In the gospel he prescribes, what by his Spirit he applies, so as to allay its pains, and fears, and sorrows, whilst by his promises he administers a rich cordial to revive the spirit. Having forgiven the iniquity which brought on the disorder, and healed the disease, he dismisses the patient with this salutary advice, 'Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee.'—The Messiah was also sent

To proclaim liberty to the captives, who having been carried away by divers lusts, and enslaved by their spiritual enemies, were detained in their tyrannical yoke, and submitted to the most ignominious servitude.—Who, having been kept under the law, were shut up unto the faith, and grievously oppressed by the spirit of bondage.—To people in this miserable state Jesus Christ was sent, to proclaim liberty by his own blessed mouth, and by the cheering voice of his servants. In the gospel he publishes the joyful tidings, and by that means actually confers this immense benefit. He delivers from the curse incurred by transgression, and restores to the divine favour; he rescues from the dominion of sin and the thralldom of the
god

god of this world, and introduces into the glorious liberty of the children of God. By the law of the Spirit of life, he makes free from the law of sin and death, and the bondage of corruption, that they may have their fruit unto holiness, and in the end everlasting life. Thus made free by the Son of God, they are free indeed. And having called them into liberty, he will not allow them to use it as a cloak of licentiousness, but requires them to stand fast, that they be not again entangled in the yoke of bondage.

And the opening of the prison to them that are bound. There is a beautiful climax in this verse, which deserves marked attention. The illustrious speaker rises from one kind office that he performs, to another still more interesting and glorious, whilst he describes the state of those he relieves as truly deplorable, receiving new aggravations from every circumstance that is suggested. Persons may be meek or poor, yet not broken hearted; they may be broken hearted, and not be captives; they may be detained in captivity, yet not bound in person. Good tidings may be preached to them, yet liberty from bondage may not be offered; liberty may be proclaimed, yet the prison doors not be thrown open, nor the shackles loosed. Whereas all these benevolent acts are performed by Jesus Christ, who, in every respect, is admirably suited to relieve the necessities of those to whom he is sent.—He opens to them the prison, wherein they are in a state of confinement, so that they cannot do the things that they would, nor can they walk at liberty in keeping God's precepts. He frees from the restraints under which they groaned, and sets before them an open door, that leads to the enjoyment of true felicity. To them that are bound by the cords of iniquity, whereby they are so held fast, that they cannot extricate themselves by their own efforts from the deplorable circumstances in which they are involved,—to them he gives freedom, he knocks off their fetters; he looses their bonds, he bids

bids them go forth and shew themselves; he sends them out, free of those incumbrances with which they were oppressed. Thus, by the blood of the covenant, does he send forth the prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water, as foretold Zech. ix. 12.

2. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn.

Other gracious purposes, beside those already mentioned, were to be effected by this great Preacher, after he was anointed and sent into the world.—1st, *To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.* This expression hath an obvious allusion to the year of jubilee, which the Lord God commanded to be published by the sound of a trumpet throughout the tribes of Israel *. In that year of release every man was to return to his possession; and the family lands, that had been alienated from their proper owners, were to be restored, debts were to be discharged, and servants were to be set at liberty. It was a year of rest both to the inhabitants and to the land itself; God having promised that the ground should spontaneously yield her fruits. On these and other accounts, it prefigured the acceptable year of the Lord, proclaimed by the great Messiah.—The precious season of grace and salvation, wherein the poor have the gospel preached to them; the broken hearted are healed; the captives of sin and Satan are set free; prisoners are liberated; forgiveness is conferred; and forfeited rights are restored. Though they that hear the proclamation are not delivered from temptation, corruption, affliction, and death, they are rescued from worse evils, viz. the curse of the law, and the tyranny of their enemies, that they may serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness.—This limited period,

* Lev. xxv. 9.

period, prescribed by infinite Wisdom, is indeed an acceptable year, or, as the word imports, a year of free favour, of rich grace and good will; wherein God is pleased to accept of men, and to deal bountifully with them, a season which we ought diligently to improve for obtaining help and salvation.

And the day of vengeance of our God. The accepted time is represented as a year, the season of vengeance as a day; probably, to intimate that the latter period shall be much shorter than the former. Vengeance belongeth unto the Lord, who employs the instruments that he judges proper to inflict tremendous judgments on his enemies, proportioned to the crimes they have committed. The infinite purity of his nature, his impartial justice, his providential dispensations, and his awful threatenings, unite in giving explicit assurance, that he will severely punish those who obstinately oppose the interests of his Son's kingdom. That just retribution which God will render to his adversaries, this illustrious Preacher of salvation to mankind did not omit to publish in his discourses. What terrible things in righteousness did he denounce, in person and by his apostles, against his incorrigible foes*! The gospel publishes not only good will toward men, with pardon, peace, and salvation to those who will accept of them; but it declares, that the most terrible judgments shall be executed on those who refuse to hear, believe, and obey him that speaketh from heaven. Obstinate neglect and contempt of the mercy and grace of God must inevitably terminate in destruction. Those who despise the remedy Divine love hath provided, and who refuse to accept of the deliverance and life which the great Redeemer offers to bestow, shall be reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men †. Let us mingle our voice with that of much people in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto

* Mat. xxi. 41. *et seq.* Luke xix. 27. Heb. x. 27.

† 2 Peter iii. 7.

‘ unto the Lord our God ; for true and righteous are
 ‘ his judgments *.’

To comfort all that mourn. Mourners in Zion are heartily grieved and distressed, not with worldly losses and calamities, which produce the sorrow that worketh death, very different in its operations and tendency from godly sorrow. Sometimes He, that hath all hearts in his hand, hath rendered the sorrow of the world introductory to that which worketh repentance to salvation, and thus prepared the way for those Divine consolations which he imparts to those, who, on spiritual accounts, are depressed in their minds. The persons especially intended, are those who mourn for their own iniquities, and the sins of others, because they are offensive to God and grieve his Spirit ; because they have thereby forfeited the most precious blessings, and exposed themselves to the most dreadful evils. They also mingle their tears of sympathy with those of the people of God who are enduring sufferings. All of this description, the Lord Jesus was sent to console. He hath provided for them those abundant consolations, that are sufficient, not only to alleviate their sorrows, but to convert them into songs of praise. These comforts he seasonably imparts by his providence, word, and Spirit, in all their tribulations ; so that, as the sufferings of Christ abound in them, their consolations also abound by Christ †. In consequence whereof, they experience the benediction of Jesus Christ, who hath said, ‘ Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted ‡.’

3. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be

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called

* Rev. xix. 1, 2.

† 2 Cor. i. 5.

‡ Mat. v. 4.

called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

The preceding gracious proclamation, issued by the Messiah, who is not only the publisher, but the dispenser of the Divine benefits, is intended actually to convey to his disciples those dispositions of mind, which are suited to the prosperous state he hath assigned them.—To those who unfeignedly mourn and deplore in the Church abounding iniquities, and impending calamities, who are the objects of his peculiar regard, Jesus Christ allots, with certainty and effect—*Beauty for ashes.* In seasons of great grief, people were wont to express their sorrow not only by lamentation and weeping, but by sitting on the ground and covering their heads with ashes. By this practice, frequent in ancient times, their persons were sullied and their faces disfigured. In allusion to this custom, the anointed of Jehovah declares, that he ordains to those who are in a disconsolate, afflicted condition, a happy change in their circumstances—that he will reverse their state, and, in place of distress and dejection, he will give comfort and joy; in consequence of which they shall assume a pleasant and comely appearance—That he will beautify them with the graces of his Spirit, invest them with the most glorious privileges, and pour into their hearts those Divine consolations whereby they shall be revived and soled. Though they have been among the pots, deformed and neglected, they shall emerge from affliction and wretchedness, and rise to the possession of spiritual beauty, dignity, and comfort.

The oil of joy for mourning. To give greater force and ornament to the subject, it is embellished by the vivacity and boldness of the figures here introduced. In this and the following expression, there may be allusion to the solemn rites which were held in the highest veneration by the Hebrews, and which, if properly considered, are truly significant, and re-
plete

plete with useful instruction. The priests that ministered before the Lord, under the former dispensation, on solemn festive occasions, were anointed with oil; which being of a healing, beautifying, and exhilarating nature, was emblematical of the diversified operations and graces of the Holy Spirit. This oil of gladness is of peculiar excellence, and produces the most salutary effects, at once refreshing, comforting, and cheering the dejected mind. The expression before us imports, that He, whom God hath sanctified and sent into the world, will grant to mourners in his Church, by the communication of the Spirit of all grace, such measures of consolation and joy, as shall effectually dispel the sorrows whereby they have been distressed.—*The garments of praise for the spirit of beatitudes.* In these words, I suppose, there is allusion to the magnificent ornaments of the sacerdotal vestments, wherewith the high priest of old was decorated, and which he put on for glory and beauty. Arrayed in these garments, he must have made an exceeding graceful and venerable appearance, such as could not fail to excite the admiration and praises of every beholder. In reference to this elegant dress, our prophet represents the Messiah appointing to the disconsolate in his Church the garments of praise, whereby they shall be covered, adorned, and discriminated. In place of sorrow and dejection, he will assign to them ample ground of exultation and joy, in consequence whereof they shall employ all their powers in celebrating the praises of him who hath called them from darkness into his marvellous light. Assuming a new and splendid appearance, suitable to their dignity and privileges, they shall adopt the grateful acknowledgment of the royal poet *, ‘Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness, to the end my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.’

That

* Psal. xxx. 11, 12.

That they might be called trees of righteousness. That they might be truly and properly denominated and acknowledged by this figurative description—Trees of righteousness, right upright trees, on account of their peculiar excellence, strength, and stability, and on account of their beauty, growth, and fruitfulness.—*The planting of the Lord*, who hath placed them in the courts of his house, where, enjoying his protection, and the means of improvement, they may flourish and bring forth fruit unto everlasting life.—*That he might be glorified*, by their redemption, by their graces, by their prosperity and good works. As every privilege and blessing comes to them from God, through Jesus Christ, so the glory ought to be ascribed, through him, to God.—How noble, how generous the purposes which the great Redeemer came to execute! He was anointed not only to publish, but to dispense the precious blessings of salvation, and thereby to demonstrate his supreme excellence and incomparable grace. With what admiring gratitude, warm affection, and firm attachment, should we contemplate his wonderful condescension and kindness.

4. ¶ And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

The happy consequences that were to arise from the accomplishment of the preceding predictions, are delineated in a rich variety of expressions. Those who have been healed by the Messiah, and by him introduced into glorious liberty and comforted, shall exert themselves to bring acquainted with communion with God, and the happiness attending his service, strangers to these valuable privileges. Our prophet, with his accustomed elegance, represents their benevolent exertions for this purpose.—*They shall build the old wastes*, they shall be the happy instruments

ments of repairing those places of the earth, which have been covered with devastation and ruin, and of restoring them to a prosperous and flourishing condition.—*They shall raise up the former desolations*, those places which, for a long time, had been in a deserted, deplorable state, no efforts having been made to alter or improve their situation.—And they shall repair the waste cities which had fallen into decay, immersed in idolatry and superstition, in ignorance and wickedness—These shall be replenished with inhabitants, blessed with those precious privileges to which they had long been strangers.—*The desolations of many generations.* Those uninhabited countries, which had continued for a considerable period in a deserted, miserable state, shall be cultivated and improved; and, being invested with important advantages, they shall bring forth fruit unto God, to the unspeakable joy of those who have been honoured to recover them from ruin.

5. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien *shall be* your plowmen, and your vine-dressers.

Some of the benefits to be enjoyed by the Church are specified in this verse, which must be understood, chiefly, not in the literal, but in the spiritual sense of the words. Corporeal objects, and rural employments, are emblems of things spiritual, and of those exercises that relate to them. Spiritual objects are substantial realities, things corporeal are representations and shadows of them. A remarkable instance of the truth of this remark lies before us. These words, in their plain and obvious meaning, import, that, on the reparation of waste places, their inhabitants shall contribute their assistance to the people of God, in works of husbandry and agricultural improvements; but more is certainly intended. The Church is here spoken of under three instructive similitudes, each of which shew the intimate relation wherein they stand

stand to the blessed God, his gracious regard for them, and their duty toward him. Particular societies of Christians, to whom the gospel is preached, who are delivered from spiritual thralldom, who possess spiritual beauty and Divine consolations, are emphatically denominated flocks in Scripture. These flocks strangers shall feed. Men, who were afar off from God, and unacquainted with his truths and salvation, having become converts to the Christian faith, and being reconciled to God by the death of his Son, shall nourish and comfort his people with sound knowledge and understanding, in the fear of the Lord, and watch over their interests with prudence, care, and fidelity.—*And the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen.* The children of foreigners, being converted to the faith and obedience of the gospel, shall be employed in breaking up the fallow ground of men's hearts, in casting the precious seed of the word of God into their hearts, in enriching them with the blessings of Divine goodness, and in managing the concerns of God's husbandry.—*And your vine-dressers.* The Church is the vine-yard of the Lord of hosts, which his own right hand hath planted, and which is the object of his peculiar care and delight. The choice vines, which the Lord hath planted, shall be cultivated, pruned, watered, and supported, by the descendants of those who were estranged from God, and alienated from his worship and service.

6. But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord: *men* shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall you boast yourselves.

The servants of God shall be treated with the highest respect, and be distinguished by those designations which are descriptive of the employments wherein they are engaged. To this honourable character of priests of Jehovah, to this office of peculiar

liar dignity, ye are consecrated, in virtue of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, whereby your guilt and impurity is removed; and by the precious unction of the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are furnished with gifts and graces suited to the exercise of this function. Ye are invested in the sacerdotal office, to present before God not expiatory sacrifices, but the incense of fervent prayers and intercessions, the thank-offerings of praise, of alms, and of doing good; spiritual sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, through the one Mediator. Ye are clothed with this character, that ye may bless the whole Church in the name of Jehovah; and, as becometh the royal priesthood, ye endeavour to avoid the pollutions of the world, and uniformly to maintain such a holy conversation, as accords with the sacred services ye perform. On these, and similar accounts, ye shall justly be denominated the Priests of the Lord.—*Men shall call you the ministers of our God*, whose business is to wait upon him in those places and ordinances to which he hath promised his presence, that ye may receive the intimations of his pleasure, execute his commands, attend to the affairs of his house, and faithfully guard, instruct, and comfort his people. For these and the like reasons, ye shall receive the honourable appellation of the servants of God.—How dignified these characters! Did you, brethren, rightly consider what they comprehend, you would certainly conclude that those who are invested in these offices are worthy of double honour. And did they who are occupied in these services attend to their unworthiness, and inability for properly performing the duties of their office, they would be indeed humbled, and astonished at the Divine condescension, that hath exalted them to so great dignity!

Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, &c. These riches, literally, include their immense wealth, with all the temporal good things they possess; or, in the figurative sense of the word, the abundance of spiritual gifts and graces, with those substantial blessings
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and advantages whereby the Gentile nations were to be felicitated by means of the gospel—Of them the ministers of God shall eat, they shall largely participate of them, so as thereby to receive support, nourishment, and satisfaction.—*And in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.* Heathen people having been brought to the knowledge, the faith, and obedience of the gospel, the ministers of God, who were honoured to be instrumental in performing this service, shall be admitted to share with them in whatever was reckoned most estimable and excellent. They shall exult especially in the professed subjection of Gentile converts to Jesus Christ, and in the glorious privileges therewith connected, which are indeed objects of true glory. In these things the priests of the Lord were to make their boast, and in them greatly to rejoice.

7. ¶ For your shame *you shall have* double; and *for* confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

A comfortable change is foretold to take place in the circumstances of the people of God. By unjust reproaches, malignant calumnies, and cruel persecutions, they have oft times been exposed to shame and ignominy. In various ways have their enemies endeavoured to render them contemptible, and to cover them with disgrace and infamy. Hence the mournful complaint, ‘Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us*.’ For this shame they shall have double. They shall not only be freed from contempt, and the insults of their adversaries, but they shall be advanced to respect and honour, which shall wipe off the foul disgrace they have suffered. Their
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* Psa. xlii. 13.

minds shall be filled with triumph and joy, which shall more than counterbalance their past infamy and sorrow. The Lord God will render unto them not barely in proportion to their afflictions, but according to his great mercies.—To give the greater certainty to this encouraging promise, and to heighten the comfort it is intended to convey, it is repeated in the most peremptory manner.—*In their land they shall possess the double.* In pity to their weakness, and to strengthen faith and hope, the Lord God is pleased to give the strongest security to his servants that they can desire, of the truth of his promises.—*For confusion they shall rejoice in their portion,* in the sure and all-sufficient inheritance, which infinite Wisdom hath assigned them, and with which they are satisfied and delighted.—*Everlasting joy shall be unto them.* The joy they experience being of celestial origin, a fruit of the Spirit, and of a Divine and spiritual nature, arising from the possession of the most important benefits, and the most pleasing prospects, shall be permanent and durable.—How gracious and bountiful is our Lord, who thus liberally recompenses the shame and reproach sustained by his servants, and assures them of perpetual joy, that hath for its basis the blessings of providence and grace.—Would you enjoy this happy temper, attend diligently to the ordinances and duties of religion, carefully cherish every Divine grace, and frequently engage in the sublime exercises of praise and thanksgiving.

8. For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering, and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

These words contain one chief ground whereupon the preceding declaration is founded.—You cannot justly be surprized that Jehovah confers so many proofs of tender regard on his people, who are re-

deemed and sanctified by him, and who worship him in Spirit and in truth, if you recollect his amiable character—*For I the Lord love judgment.* I take pleasure in that which is right, and just, and good, in purity of heart, and uprightness of conduct. I delight in those things which are conformed to my holy nature and revealed will, which are agreeable to sound reason and a pure conscience. I approve of that spiritual worship, that unbiaſſed equity, and active beneficence, inculcated in my word of truth. Such is my ſacred regard to judgment, that I not only puniſh the unjuſt, but I abundantly recompenſe thoſe who do righteouſneſs at all times.—*I hate robbery for a burnt-offering.* The burnt-offering may here denote all the ſacrifices and ſervices, of whatever deſcription, that are preſented to God by his royal prieſthood. I deteſt every ſpecies of fraud, oppreſſion, injuſtice, and rapine, which are direct violations of my laws, that are holy, juſt, and good. I utterly abhor all kinds of violence and diſhoneſty, though committed under the ſpecious pretext of applying what hath been injuriouſly obtained to my ſervice. The faireſt pretences of piety and devotion, aſſumed to conceal unjuſt practices, is an abomination in my ſight. ‘Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and ſacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than ſacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams *.’ How awful the word of God, by the prophet Ezekiel †! ‘The people of the land have uſed oppreſſion and exerciſed robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy—therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them, I have conſumed them in the fire of my wrath; their own way have I recompenſed upon their head, ſaith the Lord God.’

I will direct their work in truth. I, who am the all-wise God, who have counſel and underſtanding, will take my ſervants under my own conduct. I will ſhew them the work they ought to do, and in what manner

* 1 Sam. xv. 22.

† Chap. xxii. 29, 31.

manner it should be executed. I will instruct and teach them the way wherein they shall go; I will guide them with mine eye, and grant them not only the protection of my providence, but the direction of my Spirit, in the work and way of righteousness. I will point out how they may do their work in truth, without hypocrisy or dissimulation, in sincerity and uprightness, so as to find real enjoyment, and to obtain assistance, countenance, and success on their exertions in my service. What ample encouragement is given, by this and similar assurances, to the faithful servants of God, employed in his work, that is honourable and glorious, especially in perplexing circumstances, in which they know not what to do. In such a trying situation, how reviving the promise, 'I will direct their way in truth.' Verify, O gracious God, to us, thy unworthy servants, the good word which thou hast spoken, and do as thou hast said.—*And I will make an everlasting covenant with them.* Having made some remarks on these words, which occurred in Chap. lv. 3. it may suffice at present to observe, that the repetition of this comfortable assurance intimates the perfect certainty of what is foretold; that it claims the greatest attention, and should fix the deeper impression of this truth on the minds of those to whom it is addressed. The Lord God will most undoubtedly confer upon his people the precious blessings he hath promised; he will not turn away from doing them good, nor fail to enrich them with temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings.

9. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they *are* the seed *which* the Lord hath blessed.

The posterity of God's servants shall be distinguished by the nations among whom they reside, as the objects

jects of their Lord's peculiar gracious regard. They shall be acknowledged the spiritual children of those who, being born of God, are made partakers of the Divine nature, and become new creatures—Such persons shall be discriminated by their friends and neighbours, on account of the happy effects produced by the ministry of the word, accompanied with the holy Spirit. They shall be known every where by their detestation of idolatry, their diligent attention to the word of God, the blamelessness and purity of their manners. Those who behold them walking in the truth, shining as lights in the world, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour, shall take knowledge of them, that they have been with Jesus Christ; and that by acquaintance with him they have been changed into his resemblance, who is holy, harmless, and undefiled.—This prediction is amplified in the latter part of the verse, where it is foretold,

All that see them shall acknowledge them, &c. as the generation which the Lord hath blessed above all the sons of men, not only with temporal but with spiritual benefits, and shall own that when the former have been withdrawn, the latter have been continued and increased. In few words, that they are truly happy, because the benediction of him that made heaven and earth resteth upon them.—Perhaps it may be said, that this prediction is inconsistent with well-known facts. Have not Christians, in several ages of the Church, been contemned, calumniated, and persecuted by those among whom they lived, as our Lord informed his disciples. ‘Ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake*.’ ‘Whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service †.’ Have they not been branded as the filth and offscouring of all things, as those who turn the world upside down, as pestilent fellows, composing a sect every where spoken against. Hath not the Author of Christianity been blasphemed, and Christianity itself, with its professors, been ridiculed

* Mat. x. 22.

† John xvi. 10.

culed and grossly abused. All this hath happened, as the pious Mr Henry shews in his sermon, entitled, CHRISTIANITY NO SECT, because its adversaries do not know it—because they do not like it, and—because it speaks against them. Notwithstanding, there have not been wanting those, divested of prejudices and open to conviction, who have admired the truths believed by the servants of God, the principles whereby they are influenced, the rule and the example according to which they walk, the privileges and prospects whereby they are animated. They have been esteemed by the intelligent, sober, and dispassionate of mankind, as the excellent ones of the earth, the light of the world, and the favourites of heaven. By their means multitudes have been brought into subjection to the gospel of God, who have gloried in the Cross of Christ, and been followers of him as his dear children.—Know then, brethren, that the generation of the upright are the blessed of the Lord. If you doubt, ask them, and they will tell you, that a life of true godliness is incomparably the most pleasant and most honourable life in the world, and that it conduces to advance people's present and eternal interests. They will acknowledge, with those who know them best, that a firm belief of the doctrines of the gospel improves the intellectual powers; that a close adherence to its precepts is the safest guide; and a cheerful dependence on its promises is the source of the most sublime hopes and joys, whereby they are felicitated.

10. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.

The servants of God, impressed with a grateful sense of the Divine benefits, are introduced exulting and glorying in the happiness and dignity to which they were elevated. To intimate their unanimity in the resolution before us, each one is represented as adopting it; and, the more forcibly to express their cordial agreement, the determination is repeated.—*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, &c.* Joy in God is that sublime, devout affection, which is a fruit of the Spirit, arising from the actual possession, and pleasing prospect, of the inestimable blessings that flow from his excellent loving kindness. This Divine grace is exercised, with exquisite pleasure, on the glorious perfections of Jehovah, on the blessings of providence, on the amiable discoveries he hath given of his consummate goodness and rich grace. It is experienced in the way of his precepts, and in the hope of his eternal kingdom and glory. It becomes more lively and vigorous by the contemplation of the character, and qualifications, and offices of the Messiah, who was sent into this world to accomplish the most benevolent designs—to rescue his people from the greatest evils, and to raise them to the enjoyment of complete felicity, to invest them in the most valuable privileges, to comfort them with the most precious promises, and to inspire them with the exalted hopes of bearing his resemblance, and enjoying his presence. What joy, unspeakable and full of glory, springs up in the mind that recollects, with complacency, his past labours on earth, his present employment in heaven, and that looks forward to his appearance, when he shall be glorified in his saints, and admired of all them that believe!—The operations and government of God extend to the inward as well as the outward man, in the soul is the chief seat of his empire, which consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost. He hath promised to his servants *, that ‘their hearts shall rejoice,’ and their unanimous determination is, every one for himself, My soul shall be joyful in
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* John xvi. 22.

my God, who enriches me with all spiritual blessings, and who is my all-sufficient portion—I greatly rejoice in the mercies of Jehovah, which are to me a permanent source of the purest and most sublime pleasure that can occupy the human heart.

For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation. The metaphor in these words is taken from the apparel wore by the priests under the Mosaic œconomy, and is here applied to beautify the figurative description of the immense favours conferred on the saints of the Most High. One principal source of the spiritual joy which fills their hearts, and induces them to break forth in songs of praise is, their being invested with salvation as with a garment. This raiment is composed of the best and most precious materials,—freedom from condemnation, and restoration to the Divine favour; deliverance from the dominion of sin, and conformity to the image of God; devotedness to his service, and interest in his love. The spiritual blessings, contained in the salvation of the Lord, appropriated and applied by faith, cover the spiritual deformities of those on whom they are bestowed; they protect them from injury; they render amiable and acceptable in God's sight; whilst they prove highly comfortable to those who are interested in them.—The subject is dilated, and diversified by another analogous expression, of similar import with the former.—*He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.* The sentiment is repeated, varied, and amplified, the more fully to express the idea, and to strike the mind with the greater force. The Author of every good and perfect gift, (saith every one of the upright among men) hath arrayed me in the righteousness of the saints, which is of such exquisite workmanship, that he hath declared that he is well pleased with it. He hath invested me with interest in the perfect obedience and complete atonement of Jesus Christ; he hath furnished me with the graces of his Spirit; and enabled me to manifest my gratitude for these inestimable benefits, by shining forth in the beauties

beauties of holiness. With this splendid, variegated robe, doth the Lord God distinguish and dignify the subjects of his Son's kingdom, whilst they, with joy and praise, ascribe to him their righteousness and salvation.

As a bridegroom decketh himself, &c. The subject is illustrated by a similitude from which it derives peculiar lustre and beauty. Clothed with these comely garments, the people of God are compared to a bridegroom, or bride, elegantly dressed in the finest attire, with the richest ornaments. The costly apparel, wherein such persons appear at marriage solemnities, exhibits a pleasing emblem of the more excellent spiritual raiment and decorations, wherein those are invested who are betrothed unto God for ever, and in which they appear with much superior beauty and dignity.

II. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth: so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

The joyful consequences which arise from the benefits mentioned in the preceding verse are represented under two well-known similitudes. The earth that we inhabit and cultivate, produces regularly, from year to year, by the appointment and blessing of God, great variety of buds and blossoms, which, in due season, are converted into excellent fruits, that nourish and comfort those by whom it is dressed. The garden properly enriched and improved, through the same blessing, cherishes the various kinds of seeds sown in it, which produce those flowers, roots, and fruits, whereby the proprietor is regaled and delighted. This well-known progress of vegetation, that takes place in the field and in the garden, exhibits an instructive emblem of what Jehovah promises to
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do in his Church.—*So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all nations.* He who causeth the grafs to grow for cattle, and herb for the service of man, who bringeth forth food out of the earth, will not fail to verify this faithful promise, and to bestow the precious blessing it contains. He will make to flourish, in the garden of his Church, those excellent graces, and virtues, and fruits of righteousness, which shall prove substantial benefits to his people, and advance the glory of his great name. With them shall arise the homage of praise and thanksgiving to him who sowed the seeds of Divine grace in their hearts, who preserved and cherished them, and carried them forward to maturity. With the practice of righteousness shall be joined songs of praise, which shall extend to distant regions, where they shall be perpetuated by all nations that come and worship before the Lord.—After contemplating the happy period, wherein this prediction hath been, or shall further be fulfilled, let me call on you, my hearers, to be instant in prayer, that the Lord God may cause that righteousness to spring forth among us, which constitutes the excellence, the ornament, and glory of Christian profession—And, by cheerfulness in the righteous ways of God, to endeavour to wipe off the frequent, but groundless aspersions, that those who believe the gospel are gloomy and morose. None have such plentiful sources of joy and praise as the beloved of the Lord, the expectants of glory, honour, and immortality.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

WE are now to consider another section of our Prophet's fourth discourse, contained in the fifth part of these prophecies. Isaiah, addressing the servants of Jesus Christ, who expect a more full manifestation of the kingdom of God, confirms their faith and hope by most encouraging promises.—This prophetic oration may be distributed into three parts.—In the first, those who preside over the community of the faithful, having expressed their resolution of persevering in fervent prayers, and vigorous endeavours to promote the prosperity of the Church, a large accession is promised to be made to their numbers, and a new name to be given them, whilst they are taught to expect protection from their enemies, ver. 1—5.—In the second, explicit assurance is given of the peculiar care of Divine providence to provide for them pastors who shall continue, with unremitting assiduity, their labours for the benefit of Zion, until God shall be pleased to fulfil his gracious promises, ver. 6, 7.—In the third part, the promises that God hath made for the comfort of his people are ratified by his oath; and they are informed, that every impediment that lay in the way of their accomplishment shall be removed—in consequence whereof, proclamation is ordered to be made to places the most remote, of the prosperity and salvation of the City of God, ver. 8. to the end of the chapter.

CHAP. LXII.

FOR Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp, *that* burneth.

Having foretold the felicity and glory of the Church, our prophet, in his own name, and in that of faithful instructors of the people of God, expresses his devout resolution of employing assiduous endeavours for advancing the prosperity of Zion. What becoming solicitude does he manifest for promoting the salvation of men, and the interests of the kingdom of God, for preserving and perpetuating the privileges belonging to the subjects of his empire, for increasing their numbers, and enlarging their boundaries. These important objects justly claim the strenuous exertions of the servants of God, of which Isaiah exhibits an illustrious example—*For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, &c.* Zion and Jerusalem were the places wherein the worship of God was established under the former œconomy. From thence the gospel was promulgated and extended over the world, carrying along with it these names; and wherever the doctrine of the kingdom is preached, there is Zion and Jerusalem, which, in their figurative sense, denote the Church of God. For the sake of this highly-favoured community, for the sake of the sacred truths whereby they are instructed and comforted, and the inestimable privileges they enjoy—I will not hold my peace; nor be silent before God, but will continue instant in fervent prayer and supplication—That whatever stands in opposition to the enlargement and establishment of the kingdom of Messiah may be removed out of the way—That the word of the Lord
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may gradually spread in every direction, and be accompanied with the Spirit and blessing of God, until all the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ.—*I will not rest*, nor cease from vigorous endeavours to promote this blessed design. Convinced that importunity in prayer for the prosperity of Zion should always be attended with assiduous exertions, for attaining this end, I will labour diligently, by my instructions and example, that by their means this desirable object may be carried forward. By unwearied efforts in the ministry of the word, I will aim to awaken transgressors to a sense of their danger; and by the practice of truth and justice, of patience and resignation, and readiness to every good work, to animate the faithful to activity in the service of God.—In the pleasing hope that, through the Divine blessing, many may be persuaded to abandon their transgressions, and to join themselves to the Lord; and that the citizens of Zion may be excited to abound in the work of Jehovah.—This laudable determination ought to be adopted by every Christian, who may be useful, in some measure, in promoting the welfare of the Church of God, by earnest prayer and good example. Let us, brethren, join to our professions of love to God and zeal for his honour and interest, incessant requests for the spread and success of the gospel, and unite, with those who possess more influence and opportunities, our best efforts for its establishment, and extension to all the nations of the earth,

Until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, &c. The righteousness that constitutes the beauty and glory of Zion was brought in by the great Messiah, who answered the demands of the law of God, and fulfilled all righteousness. This precious benefit, when received and relied on by the people of God, is always accompanied with actual conformity to the will of God, and manifested by habitual holiness of heart and life, which is essential to their character, and necessary to demonstrate the reality of their profession.

feſſion. This valuable object, the ſervants of the Moſt High are ſolicitous may go forth as brightneſs, that its real excellence and luſtre may appear conſpicuous, ſo as to excite admiration, eſteem, and gratitude, and that its benign influence may be extenſively experienced.—*And the ſalvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.* By the ſalvation intended may be meant the deliverance of the Church from the evils wherein they were involved, and the enjoyment of the precious bleſſings of which they heard joyful tidings, that they were taught to expect, and which they were earneſtly deſirous to obtain. This ſalvation, our prophet was deeply concerned (with all who are like minded) ſhould go forth ſpeedily, as a lamp that burneth, to give light to them that ſit in darkneſs, in every age, country, and condition, to afford them conduct and comfort, to preſerve them from the dangers to which they are obnoxious, and to lead them forward to true happineſs and glory.—In this becoming reſolution, let us alſo cordially unite; and, with unfeigned regard to the glory of God and the proſperity of his Church, endeavour to carry it into execution, in the confidence that our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord. The more you reſemble God in goodneſs, love, and mercy, the more active will you be that the kingdom of God may come with power throughout the whole world.

2. And the Gentiles ſhall ſee thy righteouſneſs, and all kings thy glory: and thou ſhalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord ſhall name.

The earneſt prayers and affiduous exertions of the ſervants of God in behalf of the Church, ſhall be followed with joyful conſequences—*The Gentiles ſhall ſee thy righteouſneſs.* Heathen nations, ſitting in darkneſs, with their princes and rulers, ſhall behold, with admiration and delight, the righteouſneſs, and glory of
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the kingdom of God; they shall so contemplate them with the enlightened eyes of their understandings, as to participate in these precious benefits, and to rejoice in the felicity they convey.—*And thou shalt be called by a new name.* Thou shalt be known and distinguished by those designations which describe the new privileges and dignity to which thou shalt be exalted. Thou shalt be named Hephzi-bah, for the Lord delighteth in thee, ver. 4,—the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord, a city not forsaken, ver. 12,—the city of the Lord, the Zion of the holy One of Israel, chapter lx. 14,—The name of the city shall be from that day **THE LORD IS THERE**, Ezek. xlviii. 35. And thy happy and honourable condition shall exactly correspond to these titles, whereby the word of the Lord hath declared thou shalt be discriminated from all other societies.—To this blessed community, brethren, we professedly belong, and therefore it behoves us to shew that these denominations are justly applied. What avails a new name if we are not new creatures, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Let us demonstrate, in dependence on the grace of God, that these characters indeed belong to us, by making it our daily business to please God, and to serve him in newness of life.

3. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

The high honour to which the Church shall be advanced, and their perfect safety in the protection of the Almighty, is delineated in language of peculiar elegance and sublimity.—The kingdom of God is represented in prophecy by various beautiful similitudes, taken from sensible objects, on which men set the highest value, and are most solicitous to obtain. In the words before us it is spoken of as a crown, or royal diadem, which is the ensign of power and grandeur.

deur. Royalty is the highest pitch of human greatness to which persons can aspire in this present state, and those who possess it have arrived at the summit of worldly splendor and magnificence. A crown, which distinguishes the prince that is invested with supreme authority, is here mentioned, to illustrate the glory and beauty of the Church of God, when elevated to a flourishing and prosperous condition. Favoured with the special presence of God, and signal marks of his gracious regard, adorned with the graces of his Spirit, and shining forth in the beauties of holiness, they are infinitely more valuable in the sight of God, and a greater honour to him, than the richest diadem, set with precious jewels, is to an earthly monarch. There subsists betwixt God and his peculiar people not only an intimate relation, but a reciprocal interest; in consequence whereof, they are represented as being to God what he is to them. I will explain what I mean—In the xxviii. chapter of this prophecy, at the 5th verse, the Lord of hosts promised ‘That he would be for a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, to the residue of his people.’ In the words under consideration, he assures them, that they shall be in his hand a crown of glory, and a royal diadem. His power and glory shall be richly displayed in raising them to high honour and extensive influence, so as not only to attract admiration, but to acquire renown and celebrity among their enemies. In any other hand their elevation might have exposed them to danger, arising from the envy and opposition of their adversaries, but in the hand of Jehovah they are in perfect safety.

In the hand of the Lord thy God. The expression, which is frequently used in Scripture, is mentioned once and again in this verse, to signify the favour, the power of Jehovah. His mighty, gracious regard for his people, renders them truly honourable, and in that state exempt from danger. He holds them as in his hand, intimating his complacency in them, and that he considers them as valuable and beautiful. He takes
pleasure

pleasure in shewing them to the world as his peculiar treasure, which he hath purchased; as his workmanship, wherein he delights; as the subjects of his kingdom, wherein he will be glorified. In the hand of the Lord, who maketh great, who giveth strength unto all, they appear amiable and glorious. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee and praise thy glorious name—and we request that thy hand may be on all them that seek thee, for good; that the glory of thy grace, and their felicity, may be thereby advanced.—Remember, brethren, that God justly expects suitable returns from his people for the choice blessings they enjoy. Doth he vouchsafe to speak of them as a crown of glory, a thankful sense of his condescension should induce them to live to his praise, and to manifest their spiritual dignity and beauty, by fearing, loving, obeying, and serving him, in the practice of mercy, righteousness, and holiness. To you I direct the words of Jesus Christ, ‘ Hold fast that which thou ‘ hast *;’ retain, with vigilance, firmness, and care, the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel—the faith, integrity, and purity, which you have attained, that no man take your crown, and deprive you of your most precious advantages.

4. Thou shalt no more be termed, Forfaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed, Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land, Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

A permanent, happy change is foretold to take place in the state of the Church. The people of God may be considered either with respect to their spiritual and internal state, as they appear in the sight of God, or in respect of their external condition, in the view of men. In the former capacity, they always enjoy the favour and protection of God, who is their constant defence; and who hath said he will never leave

leave nor forsake them; in the latter, they are often looked upon as deserted and desolate, when God, by his providential dispensations, apparently treats them as if he had rejected and cast them off, and there are few or none to befriend and support their interests: Such was the state of the posterity of Israel, at the time they were carried captive to Babylon; when their situation resembled that of a disconsolate widow, bereaved of her husband. After the period to which our prophet refers, they are assured that they shall no more be reduced to this unhappy external condition; on the contrary, the Lord God will continue to exercise his paternal care over them and all their concerns. Under his kind protection, they shall adopt the triumphant language of the royal Psalmist, in Psalm xli. 11. 'By this I know that thou favourest me, 'because mine enemy doth not exult over me.'

But thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, which, being interpreted, signifies the Lord delighteth in thee. What a glorious privilege, including the greatest happiness and highest honour! The blessed God taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy. According to his promise, 'The Lord thy God will 'save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest 'in his love, he will joy over thee with singing*.' As they delight in him, and in his great goodness, and prefer him to their chiefest earthly joy, so he is pleased to delight in them and in their prosperity. Having formed them for himself, that they may shew forth his praise, he takes complacency in his own living image, after which they are renewed as the first fruits of his creatures, being consecrated to his service as members of his family, and the heirs of his kingdom. As sin renders people deformed and odious in his sight, so those who are redeemed and sanctified, are well-pleasing unto him; he approves of their way and their work, and withholds from them no good thing. What can be so grateful to a good man, who approves things truly excellent, as to be beloved of the

Lord of heaven and earth, to have found grace in his sight, as did Moses ; to enjoy the testimony given to Enoch, that he pleased God ; and the happiness of Daniel, who was a man greatly beloved of God. If the favours conferred by an intelligent, faithful friend, though of little intrinsic worth, are valued as testimonies of regard and affection, how highly ought the kindneses of God to be estimated, who rejoices over him to do him good !—How great the condescension of Jehovah, in forming his servants into his own resemblance, in disposing them to live a sober, righteous, and godly life ; in close connection with the great Redeemer, in humble dependence on his grace, and in patient resignation to the dispensations of his providence, wherein they experience the most sublime pleasures, and whereby God himself is glorified !

And thy land Beulah, &c. The inhabitants of the land are doubtless intended, the ground itself being a subject incapable of marriage, which the name denotes. Our prophet foretels, in these words, that the Church, which formerly had been desolate, shall be admitted into a most intimate, honourable, and endearing relation to the Lord God. Thou shalt be married—to whom? To the God of heaven and earth, as we learn from the following verse. Astonishing thought! Happy they who are thus joined unto the Lord, and are the objects of his tender affection and Divine complacency! Though the conjugal relation be intimate and pleasant, it exhibits but a faint representation of the still closer union into which the Church is assumed by their Lord, to whom true Christians are said to be joined, so as to be one spirit. To those brought into this connection with him, to whom belongs the designation of *Beulah*, he opens the treasures of his goodness, from whence he enriches them ; he discloses the fountain of his love, from which he plentifully conveys his precious benefits. He gives them grace and glory, and withholds from them no good thing. Those who are unacquainted with their enjoyments cannot estimate them properly.

properly. None have a less troublesome, and less dangerous, and at the same time a more real and comfortable possession of the good things of this life than they. And with respect to things spiritual and future, their circumstances are the most pleasant that can be desired, and their prospects the most glorious.

5. For *as* a young man marrieth a virgin, *so* shall thy sons marry thee: and *as* the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, *so* shall thy God rejoice over thee.

The subject mentioned in the preceding verse, is illustrated by a similitude of peculiar beauty and excellence. A double connection is formed by those who are joined together in the sense here intended. The spiritual children of the faithful, in whom the Lord delighteth, are so nearly related to those from whom, as means, they derive their spiritual existence, that the connection, in some measure, resembles the conjugal union. The regenerated children of God's servants are deeply interested in those with whom they join in communion; they cherish affectionate concern for their welfare, which they assiduously endeavour to promote, and becoming solicitude for their happiness and comfort. On the other part, the citizens of Zion embrace those who enter into fellowship with them, with cordial affection, they become helpers of their joy, they honour them with many honours, and shew them that respect and confidence to which they are justly entitled. There subsists between them reciprocal, unfeigned affection, accompanied with mutual assistance, real benefit, and true enjoyment. The renovated posterity of the faithful enter into the Church, that they may be refreshed and edified by their faith and example; and the Church receives them as their spiritual progeny, and acknowledges
that

that they are their rejoicing. They are helpful in advancing each other's comfort, by kind sympathy and good offices, which are the blessed effects of this union, that is here compared to the marriage relation.

And as the bridegroom rejoiceth, &c. Those in whom the Lord delighteth become not only intimately connected with his Church, into which they are admitted, but the Lord God himself triumphs in their endearing relation to him. Marriage serves, among other purposes, as a figure of the permanent union of the Son of God with his disciples, according to the doctrine taught by the apostle of the Gentiles, in his epistle to the Ephesians *, in which he affirms this is the mystery contained in that institution. And in the words before us, the joy wherewith God rejoices over his Church, is compared to the joy of the bridegroom over the bride. Indeed, whatever is excellent and desirable in the character and state of such a person, affords only a faint emblem of the exquisite delight that God hath in his Church, which he hath chosen for his peculiar treasure, above all the people that are on the earth. He rejoices in their happiness and prosperity, and in the mutual affection that subsists between them, whilst in his love, that passeth knowledge, they rejoice as they that find great spoil. He expresses himself highly pleased with their spiritual beauty, and speaks of their graces as ornaments in his sight, of great price, whilst they solace themselves by the contemplation of his glory, and the enjoyment of the fruits of his loving kindness. From these circumstances, with others that might be mentioned, appear the justice and propriety of the comparison stated in this verse.—This subject, which is transcendently wonderful, ought to excite pleasing admiration and humble gratitude to the God of all grace, joined with solicitous concern to become the objects wherein the Lord God will rejoice, which
must

* Chap. v. 31.

must prove a source of never-failing consolation to those who participate in this privilege.

6. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, *which shall never hold their peace day nor night*: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence.

These words, directed to the citizens of Jerusalem, represent the peculiar care of Divine providence, in furnishing them with pastors and teachers, intent on promoting their safety and comfort. Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judea, was remarkable for the beauty of its fine situation, for the strength of its walls, the compactness of its buildings, and the number of its inhabitants. It was an opulent city, a royal residence, and well fortified by nature and art. On these accounts, it afforded an eminent type of the Church of God under the New Testament, which in this passage, as in many other places, bears its name. This city of the living God, of which glorious things are spoken by the prophets, is encompassed as with walls, whereby the citizens are separated from the world, and defended from enemies.—On these walls, the Lord God declares that he set watchmen, whom he hath qualified for their work, and to whom he hath assigned their several stations, to attend to the best interests of those committed to their inspection, to prevent disorders, and to give notice of approaching danger. This is indeed a wise and benevolent institution, admirably adapted, through the blessing of God, to advance the prosperity of the Church, and that requires great vigilance and exertion from those who are invested with this important office.

Which shall never hold their peace, &c. Their character and employment is delineated in these few words. The watchmen set over the Church shall not be silent on any proper occasion, wherein it is expedient for them to speak, either in giving intimation to the
people

people intrusted to their care of what is requisite for their safety, and to present supplications to God, that he may give efficacy to their admonitions and labours. In the ministry of the word, they shall be instant in season and out of season, not ceasing to teach every man, and to warn every man, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*. They shall shew all good fidelity in all things; and, after the illustrious example of one eminently diligent in his work, they will endeavour so to act, that with him they may be able to say each for himself, ‘I ceased not to warn every man night and day with tears.’—Nor shall they hold their peace before the throne of grace, and refrain from fervent prayers to the Lord God Almighty for the prosperity of Jerusalem. Animated with active concern for the welfare of the kingdom of God, they shall pray without ceasing, that the Lord would bless Zion, and give them to see the good of Jerusalem all the days of their life †. That he would do good unto Zion ‡, &c.

Ye that make mention of the Lord, or, as the Hebrew words are rendered in the margin of some Bibles, *ye that are the Lord's remembrancers*. Either translation justly describes the character of those to whom our Prophet addresses his exhortation. In their conversation, they inform their fellow citizens of the wonderful works that God hath done for them, they record the memory of his great goodness, and speak of the important duties that they owe to God in consequence of the manifold obligations he hath brought them under to his service. They remember the Lord, and cherish frequent pleasing recollection of the name, the providence, the presence, the benefits, the salvation, and promises of God. In their prayers and praises they celebrate his Divine excellencies, they extol the glorious honour of his majesty, they relate his righteousness, and earnestly plead for the accomplishment of his good word, and the advancement of his kingdom.—Persons of this description are directed

* Col. i. 28.

† Psal. cxxviii. 5.

‡ Psal. li. 18.

rected not to be silent. Take heed that you do not abstain from frequent pleasing remembrance of Jehovah; omit not to think and speak of his glorious grace, to publish his praises, and to call on his name, who is the hearer of prayer. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, and feeling the constraints of the love of Christ, you should be solicitous to make his name to be remembered throughout all generations.

7. And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

The incessant importunity of God's servants cannot in the least disturb or interrupt the perfect tranquillity of Jehovah, the complacential enjoyment of his consummate felicity and glory. In the expression there is a bold figure, taken from the urgent circumstances of a prince, who, being fatigued by long attendance to the importunate petitions of his subjects, hath little time left him for repose. The number and frequency of the applications made to him, in a manner constrain him to grant the requests of his petitioners. This subject is finely illustrated by Jesus Christ, in the parable which he spake, to teach men to pray always, and not to faint *. Follow the example of the importunate widow, in unwearied supplications to the Lord God, encouraged by the argument suggested by our Saviour in that figurative discourse. If unremitting applications to an unjust judge proved successful, how much more may you expect to experience the efficacy of persevering requests, presented to a gracious God, who is ever ready to give good things to them that ask him. Prayer is his own ordinance, which he hath instituted for obtaining the blessings he hath promised, which he delights to honour, and by means of which his people, in all ages, have got, for themselves and their brethren, the most precious benefits.

Till he establish, &c. The watchmen set on the walls

* See Luke xviii.

walls of Jerusalem, ought not to desist from informing the citizens of whatever is requisite to their safety and comfort; nor should they cease from assiduous applications to the God of all grace, until he shall be pleased to settle their sacred interests, and to give them the agreeable prospect that their privileges shall be secured to their posterity. This establishment is the peculiar work of Jehovah, for the performance of which he hath given the strongest assurance, and invested his own Son with all power in heaven and earth for its accomplishment. Indeed, no power but that of the Highest can effect this arduous enterprise. It was not devised by human wisdom, nor executed by human power, but is the work of omnipotence, which all the adverse powers of hell and of earth shall never be able to shake to its foundations, or to divest it of beauty and glory. The Lord will establish Zion; he will confirm, enlarge, and perpetuate the privileges of her inhabitants; he will invigorate and improve their graces and virtues; and preserve them in the faith and obedience of the gospel, so that none shall ever be allowed to undermine their interests, or to destroy their walls and bulwarks.—*And till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth*, an object worthy of admiration, esteem, and applause. How beautiful, how glorious doth the Church of God appear, when the ordinances of the gospel are dispensed in simplicity and purity, and every thing in the house of the God of heaven is transacted according to the will of the God of heaven!—When the holy Spirit, accompanying Divine institutions, produces a blessed change in the state and temper of men, turning them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the living God, quickening them from death in sin, and rendering them alive unto God through Jesus Christ—When the proud, the covetous, the sensual, and ambitious, renouncing their former vain pursuits, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and follow after those things which are honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report.—When God eminently adorns

adorns his people with the gifts and graces of his Spirit, and disposes them to let their light so shine before men; that they, seeing their good works, are induced to glorify their Father who is in heaven— And when the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom are greatly enlarged, so that the nations of the earth see his glory, and submit to his government.— He who is infinitely good hath fixed the time wherein this happy event shall be accomplished, and therefore it is the best: He who is infinitely wise hath determined it, and therefore it is the most proper: He that is infinitely powerful hath appointed it, and therefore it shall take place. After the illustrious example of the prophet Daniel, who understanding, by books, that God was about to rescue Jerusalem from desolation, let us seek the Lord by prayer and supplication, that he would make her a praise in the earth.

8. The Lord hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn *to be* meat for thine enemies, and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured.

The strongest security is given, that the Lord God will send continued tranquillity and prosperity to his Church; that being delivered from their enemies, they shall rejoice in the blessings of his goodness.— God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath*. The Lord hath sworn, he hath brought himself under the strongest obligations that can be imagined, to accomplish what he hath foretold, and, in the most solemn manner, connected the perfections of his nature with the fulfilment of his word. The expression intimates the irreversible purpose of

God to do what he hath said. His right hand, and the arm of his strength, are mentioned as symbols of his omnipotence, whereby the preservation and safety of his people are effected. And by this declaration, the almighty power of Jehovah is pledged, to grant them the mercies he hath engaged to bestow, notwithstanding every obstruction that may arise to impede their accomplishment.

Surely I will no more give thy corn, &c. These words plainly indicate, that the calamity which is promised to be averted had been felt, in former times, by the subjects of the kingdom of God, as the just punishment of their sins. It is indeed a sore judgment for people to be deprived of the best provisions they had collected for their support; and to see them in the possession of their enemies, who are thereby strengthened and encouraged in their hostile designs. This severe affliction, the Almighty solemnly declares that he will not any more inflict upon his Church. In the literal sense, the words import, that notwithstanding their residence was among heathen nations, in places where they were exposed to annoyances and depredations, God would in mercy preserve them in safety, and not suffer their possessions to be laid waste. In tranquillity and security they should enjoy the good things Divine providence had put into their hands, the necessaries and comforts of life, which they acquired through the blessing of God on their labour and industry, which are sanctified by the word of God and prayer, and to be received with thanksgiving of them that know and believe the truth*. Being delivered from persecution and external disturbance, they shall rejoice in the benefits wherewith they are favoured, and employ them to the glory of the giver.—In the figurative sense, the expression intimates, that the word of God, with the other means of salvation, whereby the peculiar people of God are invigorated, satisfied; and comforted, shall be plentifully enjoyed by them, free from external disturbance,

or

* 1 Tim. iv. 5.

or anxious fears of being deprived of them by their enemies. Our prophet, delineating the very prosperous state of the Church, might have both these objects in view, so that the words may be intended to comprehend both senses, and to denote the quiet, uninterrupted enjoyment of both temporal and spiritual mercies, whereby they were to be blessed.

9. But they that have gathered it, shall eat it, and praise the Lord; and they that have brought it together, shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

The subject introduced in the former verse, is continued and farther explained.—Those who have collected the precious fruits of the earth, put forth by the sun and the moon in their proper season, shall not experience the disappointment and vexation that arises from being violently deprived of the necessaries and comforts of life by enemies and persecutors: Seeing, as the wise man observes *, ‘ That it is good ‘ and comely to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the ‘ good of their labour,’ they shall take the temperate, cheerful, and thankful use of the benefits which God puts into their power, that they may thereby be disposed for the faithful, diligent performance of their duty. In the metaphorical, and more recondite sense of the words, the corn and the wine may denote the means of spiritual life and salvation, which are enjoyed with peculiar advantage in the courts of God’s holiness. When attending in his sanctuary, his people derive from his word and ordinances nourishment, stability, and consolation. In this view the prediction imports, that the adversaries of God’s servants shall not be allowed to deprive them of the religious worship and sacred institutions, whereby their minds are nourished and refreshed, or to take from them the
spiritual

* Eccl. v. 18.

spiritual provision of his house, by which they are invigorated and solaced—That, under the Divine protection, and enriched with the fruits of Divine goodness, they shall enjoy, with cheerfulness and gratitude, the signal benefits conferred on them by the great Lord of all.—*And praise the Lord.* There are many who, after they have eaten and are full, forget God, and say in their hearts, ‘My hand hath gotten me ‘this wealth*.’ By such unthankful conduct, their blessings are turned into a curse; whereas, by the humble, grateful acknowledgment of the donor, they are continued and enjoyed with the highest relish and satisfaction. This becoming, profitable exercise of praising the Lord, ought never to be omitted, on the receipt either of temporal or spiritual mercies. In all things, in all situations, and in all seasons, ought we to praise and magnify the Lord for his great goodness.

10. ¶ Go through, go through the gates; prepare you the way of the people, cast up, cast up the high-way, gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people.

A solemn admonition is given to the watchmen, the pastors and teachers, that God had set upon the walls of Jerusalem, to remove every obstacle that might impede the Gentiles from resorting into the communion of the Church. They are required to go through the gates thereof, to come forth from the retirements wherein they remained in times of persecution, and to enter into the most public places of resort, that they might publish the important truths contained in the Scriptures, free from the errors wherewith they had been blended, and take away those hindrances that might prevent people from entering the city of the living God. As this is a matter of immense importance, the call to this business is repeated.

* Deut. viii. 14.

repeated. Endeavour to reform the worship and discipline of the Church from the abuses that have crept into them; and, by the ministry of the word, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, make known to men the only way of salvation by Jesus Christ, who conducts to the enjoyment of God.—*Prepare you the way of the people, &c.* In the 40th chapter, at the third verse, of this prophecy, the order was published, ‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord;’ and now proclamation is made, Prepare the way of the people. Let the sacred truths and duties inculcated in the word of God be plainly set before them, so that he that runs may read, and understand them. Take heed that there be no schisms, heresies, discords, and emulations among the people entrusted to your inspection. Every one may see that this requisition alludes to the reparation of a public road, that hath fallen into decay, and become almost impassable, so as to require to be mended and put in order for the convenience of passengers. The words, therefore, must be understood, as now explained, in their figurative sense. It is added—*Lift up a standard for the people.* As a signal for them to gather together with expedition, from all quarters; let the standard of truth be publicly displayed, that they may enter by the prepared way into the city of the Lord of Hosts, where they shall enjoy the most valuable immunities.

11. Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold thy salvation cometh; Behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

The people of God, in times of affliction, having been dispersed over the face of the earth, public intimation is ordered by Jehovah to be given to the most distant lands, that the deliverance of the Church was

at hand—That they were to emerge out of the calamities under which they had groaned, and to receive ample recompense for all the troubles they had sustained.—*Say ye to the daughter of Zion, &c.* The daughters of a city signify, according to the Hebrew idiom, the inhabitants who reside in it. The command imports, that the following comfortable information should be carried to the citizens of Zion—*Behold thy salvation cometh.* Consider attentively the joyful tidings respecting a glorious deliverance, which Jehovah requires to be published to those who dwell in the most remote regions of the earth—Thy salvation is fast approaching, wherein mercy and truth meet together, wherein righteousness and peace mutually embrace each other; deliverance from evil, with every thing necessary to true happiness, is granted to all who humbly and thankfully accept of them. The wisdom, power, and compassion of Jehovah, with his other attributes, are engaged to effect this great salvation from enemies and evils, and to put his peculiar people in the full possession of the felicity and glory contained in his promises. The knowledge of this important benefit is gradually extending over the world, the blessing itself is actually conveyed to multitudes from day to day, whilst all its interests are progressively advancing toward their consummation.—Be it our chief concern, that, deeply sensible of our need of salvation, the gospel, which reveals it, may be the mean of bringing it nigh to us, of rendering us partakers of it, and so become the power of God to our salvation.

Behold his reward is with him, &c. The Lord God, when he comes with salvation, will abundantly recompense his faithful servants, who, expecting his appearance, patiently endured, on his account, many trials and afflictions. He will not fail richly to remunerate his chosen, and called, and faithful, by conferring on them more intimate extensive acquaintance with his truths and ways; by advancing their sanctification, and by granting them larger measures

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of peace and joy, with the lively hope of victory and triumph over their enemies. Having spoken of this subject when treating of chap. xl. 10. I shall not enlarge.—*And his work before him.* The Almighty never fails to produce the effects he intends, and to attain the ends he hath in view. He hath a full view of the whole work that he executes, and of every part whereof it is composed, and is perfectly acquainted with all the obstacles that lie in the way of its accomplishment. He keeps continually in view the rise, progress, and consummation of the glorious work which, in due time, he will perfect, and is ever ready to carry it forward in the most proper season. He hath always in his eye the conversion, sanctification, consolation, and preservation of his people, which he uniformly advances on all occasions, until he conduct them to the complete enjoyment of his presence and glory.—Let thy work, O Lord our God, appear unto us thy servants, and thy glory unto our children. For this end, let thy beauty, favour, and grace, be upon us, and establish the work of our hands; bless and prosper us in our Christian warfare, that so we may be glad and rejoice in thee all our days.

12. And they shall call them, The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, a city not forsaken.

When the salvation of the Lord, and his reward, is bestowed upon his Church, they become the just objects of respect and esteem.—*They shall be called a holy people*—Separated from the ungodly and profane, cleansed from impurity, adorned with Divine grace, and appropriated to the service of God, who hath called them to be holy as he is holy. In resemblance to God in purity, consists their spiritual beauty and glory, whereby they are distinguished from all other people.

people, and do honour to their Father in heaven. This is one of the peculiar designations whereby they shall be known and acknowledged by the world around them.—*The redeemed of the Lord*, that he hath ransomed from the ignominious slavery wherein they had been detained, the complicated misery in which they were involved, and the vain conversation wherein they had indulged.—Not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and blemish. And by the out-stretched arm of Jehovah they were actually delivered from the hands of their enemies, that they may serve him in holiness and righteousness, and that he may be celebrated and extolled as the author of their redemption.—*Sought out, a city not forsaken*. The Church of God is spoken of, with great propriety, by the similitude of a city, which contains a large number of inhabitants, collected from different places, of various conditions, among whom good order is maintained by wholesome laws, and by whom important privileges are enjoyed. In like manner, the Church, the city of the Lord of hosts, contains an immense multitude of people, gathered from north, south, east, and west, whose circumstances are greatly diversified, who are governed by laws that are holy, just, and good, blessed with the ordinances and promises of the gospel, and the peculiar care of Providence.—This city is sought out, and searched for with great industry, like that which we bestow in investigating some obscure or difficult matter. In times of affliction and persecution, this sacred community had been neglected and overlooked; whereas, at the period to which this prophecy looked forward, this city was to be inquired for by many, with persevering diligence, who were desirous to participate in the felicity and glory to which the people of God were advanced. Hence forward they are assured that they shall not be deserted by Jehovah as in times past, but continue to be favoured with his protection, presence, and blessing.—From this combination

bination of honourable epithets, bestowed on the Church of God, we are taught how precious they are in his sight, and how highly they ought to be respected by all nations. The peculiar people of the Most High possess internal, spiritual excellence and glory, in consequence of union to the Son of God, and the participation of his righteousness, presence, and Spirit, manifested by cheerful obedience to the will of God, and cordial submission to his dispensations. Deeply sensible that the world is greatly indebted to their piety, prudence, probity, and prayers, let us highly esteem them in love, on account of the endowments and prerogatives wherewith it pleases God to honour them. Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and the prosperity of them that love her. Peace be within thy walls—because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good *.

* Psa. cxxii. 6. *et seq.*

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

WE proceed to the exposition of the fifth discourse, contained in the fifth part of Isaiah's prophecies, which seems intended to explain and illustrate some of the preceding predictions. Our prophet having introduced the Son of God*, in the character of a mighty hero, clothed with armour, going forth to vindicate his Church from the power of their adversaries, and to inflict righteous vengeance on those who had afflicted and oppressed them.—This triumphant conqueror is here brought into view, returning from victory, having his raiment stained with the blood of his enemies, that he had vanquished in a foreign land. The extraordinary appearance of this great personage gave rise to enquiries concerning him, and the reasons why he shewed himself in a manner so very different from the aspect he assumed on former occasions. To these questions, satisfying replies are made in ver. 1—6.—Isaiah then proceeds to commemorate the inestimable benefits, which God had conferred of old on the posterity of Israel, especially the great deliverance wrought by the angel of the Lord, when he rescued them from bondage in Egypt, and conducted them in the way of salvation, ver. 7, 8.—After which he represents the ungrateful behaviour of that people, in their obstinate rejection of his counsels, whereby they grieved and provoked him to become their enemy, ver. 9, 10.—This is followed with a graphical description of the miserable state to which they were reduced, and the terrible calamities they sustained after the Most High had forsaken them, which are aggravated by contrasting them with the favours they had enjoyed in ancient times, ver. 11—14.—At the remembrance of these things, the upright servants of God address fervent supplications to the throne of grace, humbly request-

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* Chap. lix. 16.

ing that Jehovah would be pleased to extend mercy to them, and deliver them from under the pressure of affliction, for which they were encouraged to hope by the contemplation of his glorious perfections, and the confidence they reposed in his goodness, ver. 15, 16. —To their prayers are subjoined earnest expostulations, that the Almighty would interpose for their salvation, and humble acknowledgments, that the enormous sins they had committed, were the causes of the severe judgments whereof they complained, ver. 17—19.

C H A P. LXIII.

WHO is this that cometh from Edom, with died garments from Bozrah? this *that is* glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

Isaiah having exhibited to his contemplation, in a prophetic vision, an illustrious warrior, clothed with armour, having his garments sprinkled with blood, naturally enquires, Who is this? I hesitate not to reply, that this is the glorious personage who is celebrated in the book of Revelation, by the august title of the Word of God *, all whose words, commands, and actions, are accompanied with power; that this is he who is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. He appeared to the apostle John, when he beheld him in vision, having his eyes bright and penetrating as a flame of fire; on his head were many crowns, intimating his large empire and numerous conquests; he had also a name written that no

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* Chap. xix. 13.

man knew but he himself, in allusion probably to the sublime descriptions given of him in the prophetic scriptures. When the beloved disciple saw him, he was clothed in a vesture dipt in blood, indicating that he is the person who voluntarily submitted to have his blood shed upon the cross, where, by his irresistible power, he triumphed over his enemies, and made expiation for the sins of his people. He is farther described by the apostle, as treading the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, having on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS, signifying his universal empire over all the potentates and princes that are in the world.

The remarkable appearance of this magnanimous conqueror attracted our prophet's attention and curiosity, and rendered acquaintance with him, and the arduous enterprise wherein he had been employed, truly desirable. Similar enquiries respecting this very person were made on other occasions, as when he ascended into the celestial temple with immense pomp and splendor *. Who is this King of Glory? said the admiring poet. To this question the answer is given, The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Isaiah had been favoured with a view of the Messiah in his glory, sitting on his throne, high and lifted up †. He had seen him when, having no form or comeliness, he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ‡. And now he contemplates him as a glorious victor, returning from the conquest of his own and his people's enemies. Struck with his dignified, martial aspect, he asks,

Who is this that cometh from Edom? Edom, or Idumea, were the names of a country situated to the southward of Judea, occupied by the posterity of Esau, who was also called Edom, one of the sons of Isaac, and elder brother of Jacob.—Bozrah, which signifies a fortified city, was anciently the name of the

* Psal. xxiv. 8.

† Chap. vi.

‡ Chap. liii. 2, 3.

the metropolis of Edom. From these places, possessed by the inveterate enemies of the people of God, or from some country or city analogous to them, this mighty conqueror was seen advancing. We have been already informed *, that the Lord had a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea, which was made either by Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, or Judas Maccabeus. Neither of these devastations by the sword seem to be intended in this prediction, which I suppose refers to some dreadful destruction effected, or that shall be made, of the implacable adversaries of the Church of God under the New Testament. If this remark be just, Edom and Bozrah are names which must be figuratively understood. In prophetic language, countries, cities, and persons, possessing the same properties and characters, have the same designations given them. Jerusalem is called Sodom †, because its inhabitants resembled the Sodomites in wickedness. Rome is spoken of by the name of Babylon ‡, on account of the remarkable similarity of the iniquities that abounded in these great cities, and the judgments threatened to be inflicted on them. The Messiah has given to him the name of David, who was king of Israel §, and an eminent type of Jesus Christ. And, in the verse before us, Edom and Bozrah may denote the land and city occupied by the obstinate, cruel enemies of the servants of God, of whom the Messiah is the Saviour, and the avenger of the wrongs done to them.

With dyed garments, &c. of a red, scarlet, or crimson colour, such as princes, warriors, and generals were accustomed anciently to wear. The expression may refer either to the purple military robe, which commanders of armies used to put on in the day of battle; or to his clothes having been sprinkled with blood, when he tread his enemies in his anger, and trampled them in his fury.—*This that is glorious in his apparel,*
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* Chap. xxxiv. 6.

† Rev. xviii.

‡ Chap. i. 10.

§ Psa. lxxxix. 20.

The dress of this illustrious conqueror corresponded to his exalted character, and the hard work wherein he was engaged, whilst it added lustre to his magnificent appearance. He was not clothed in a soft delicate habit, such as is worn by those who are in kings' palaces; but in raiment covered with blood, such as is suited to a hero returning from victory. — *Travelling in the greatness of his strength*, which continued unimpaired. He did not flee before his enemies, as one intimidated at their formidable appearance; he did not retreat from the field of contest, like one enfeebled and dismayed by his adversaries; he did not seem exhausted or ready to faint, after having sustained the fatigue of severe conflict in the day of vengeance; but he marched on his way triumphant, in solemn pomp and majesty, as became his splendid character and noble achievement. — Answer is returned in the following words to the preceding questions:

I that speak in righteousness, and treat every subject of which I discourse with consummate rectitude and equity. All that I say may be depended on, as just and true, free from ambiguity and illusion. I always speak from right principles, in a plain, perspicuous manner, free from every wrong bias; according to the rules of righteousness, saying neither more or less than justice demands, and is requisite to effect the purposes I have in view. The Hebrew word may signify, I announce, or speak concerning, righteousness and salvation, which of all topics are the most important, and the most necessary to be inculcated on those who, having deserted the interests of truth and equity, endeavour to support the cause of falsehood and iniquity. Compare what I do with what I have spoken, and you will find that my actions verify my words, and that the truths I have uttered justify what I do. — This article reminds us of the excellence of his doctrine, the equity of his laws, the justice of his threatenings, and the faithfulness of his promises, which claim our veneration and esteem. — *Mighty to save.*

save. The Son of God is infinitely able to rescue his people from all the dangers, calamities, and enemies, whereby they are distressed; whatever difficulties may be in the way, however great the opposition he may have to encounter. He is fully sufficient to deliver them from all the evils, temporal and spiritual, whereby they are beset; and, by his providence and grace, to recover them to a state of safety and comfort. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him, to set them free from the bondage of corruption, the artifices of their adversaries, and to exalt them to felicity and glory. The many living evidences of this comfortable truth, with those recorded in Scripture, clearly demonstrate its unquestionable certainty.—The illustrious person, who here speaks, supposes that by these peculiar characteristics he may be easily known. Indeed, Christians, who believe the record of God, cannot justly doubt that this is the Son of the Highest, the Word and Wisdom of God, the Angel of his presence, to whom is committed the defence and salvation of his Church, who always prevails over their enemies.—Commit yourselves then, brethren, to the care of this mighty Saviour, to the conduct of this Captain of Salvation; repose your confidence on the omnipotent arm of this glorious Conqueror, that he may render you in all things more than conquerors, assured that he can preserve you from every evil work, to his heavenly kingdom.

2. Wherefore *art thou* red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?

Our prophet, being fully satisfied with respect to the person about whom he inquired, asks farther why his clothes were all over stained with blood. I wish to know with whom thou wast contending in battle, what cause thou hast been engaged in maintaining,
and

and whose strength thou hast brought down to the earth. One of thy majestic countenance, of thy stately mien and martial appearance, deeply tinged with blood, must have been employed in executing some great enterprize. I humbly entreat to be gratified as to these matters—When surprized at what we observe or hear respecting this mighty One, let us, after the example of *Isaiah*, have recourse to him that speaks in righteousness for the solution of difficulties, convinced that what at first may seem disparaging to his dignity, when understood, shall afford rich displays of his glory.

3. I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people *there was none with me*: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

Such is his amiable condescension and grace, who is mighty to save, that he declines not to answer the inquiries of his servants as to the reasons of his appearances and dispensations. This reply is given in figurative language, corresponding to the terms in which the questions were asked.—*I have trodden the wine-press alone*. The magnificent delineation of Divine vengeance is expressed by imagery taken from the wine-press, wherein grapes are bruised, by means of their being tread by those who are employed in this work. By this strong figure, is significantly represented the triumph of the Son of God over all opposition, and the complete overthrow of his own and his people's adversaries. Clusters of ripe grapes, that are red, put into the press, where they are broken and deprived of their juice, exhibit an image, in this description, of the cruel, bloody persecutors of the disciples of Jesus Christ, that being fitted for destruction,

tion. are cast into the wine-press of the wrath of God *; which is accompanied with a copious effusion of their blood. This expressive figure is introduced, Rev. xix. 15. to intimate the dreadful devastation of the objects of Divine vengeance. The Lord, strong in battle, having been engaged in punishing his adversaries, his garments were covered with blood, so that he seemed as one that had been treading the wine-fat.—The victory from which he was returning, he obtained purely by his own omnipotence, having not received from the people, whose wrongs he had been avenging, the least assistance. Being weak, helpless, and overwhelmed with perplexing fears, they were incapacitated to give him any aid or support in the work he had effected. Indeed he did not need their help, being himself fully sufficient for the conquest he had accomplished.

For I will tread them in mine anger. This illustrious personage speaks not of his victory in dubious terms, but asserts, in plain language, in a dignified and decisive manner, his determined resolution. Justly incensed at the objects of his displeasure, and having them fully in his eye, he stays not to delineate their character and conduct, but announces his fixed purpose of executing righteous vengeance upon them. The expressions he uses are easy to be understood, and clearly intimate his certain, glorious triumph over his enemies, and their utter destruction.—*I will tread them in mine anger as the mire of the streets; I will trample them in my fury, which none can withstand, and of which none knoweth the power. In my wrath and indignation I will consume them with irresistible force, so that neither tears nor entreaties shall allay my dread displeasure.—And their blood shall be sprinkled on my garments.* Such shall be the terrible conflict, that it shall be attended with a copious effusion of their blood who have contended with me in proof of which my raiment shall be all over stained with their blood shed in battle. Though

the enemies of the Son of God may for a time make themselves drunk with the blood of his faints, in their turn they shall have put into their hand the cup of the wrath of God, poured forth without mixture. Their blood shall be profusely spilt by the most Mighty, when he girds his sword upon his thigh, with his glory and majesty, and in his majesty rides prosperously, because of meekness, truth, and righteousness, to avenge the blood of them that were slain for the word of God, on them that dwell on the earth.

4. For the day of vengeance *is* in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed *is* come.

The grounds are specified on which the preceding declaration is founded.—The day of vengeance denotes the time that God hath fixed in his purpose, for inflicting righteous judgment on the enemies of his Church. Notwithstanding that appointed season may seem to human view to be long of coming, it shall come and shall not tarry. Delayed just vengeance shall be executed at the determined period, in consequence whereof the voice of thanksgiving shall be heard, saying, ‘ We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come—that thou shouldest destroy them who destroy the earth *.’ This day of recompense is said to be in the Redeemer’s heart, so as that he could not possibly forget it, or neglect to perform the work to which it was appropriated. Being deeply impressed on his mind, he kept it fully in his eye, as a period wherein he was engaged to avenge the wrongs done to his servants.—*And the year of my redeemed is come.* As a year was fixed for the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, and a time specified wherein the Jews were freed from captivity

* Rev. xi. 17, 18.

tivity in Babylon, so a year is appointed for the deliverance of the Church, under the New Testament, from oppression and persecution. This period is emphatically denominated the year of the Messiah's redeemed. Of this expected season, the Son of God speaks with peculiar satisfaction, and of the intimate relation wherein his people stand, connected with him as his redeemed. Though these words were delivered in the prophetic style long before the period destined for their accomplishment, yet, to signify the perfect certainty and speedy approach of the events they describe, they are spoken of as if they had already happened.—Sensible that the day of vengeance on the enemies of the Church, and the year of the redeemed are intimately connected, let us fervently pray, that these great events, which are in the Redeemer's heart, may be speedily fulfilled. Such should be our firm faith in his word of truth, concerning the promised deliverance of his people, and the overthrow of their adversaries, that we ought to look forward with hope and joy to the happy time wherein they shall be verified.

5. And I looked, and *there was* none to help; and I wondered that *there was* none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury, it upheld me.

These words of the great Messiah were used on a similar occasion, in chap. lix. 16. To what was then said in their illustration I shall add but little. A person of a brave, heroic spirit, when about to make a generous attempt in favour of those who were subjected to calamities and dangers, is naturally disposed to look around him for some to join in the difficult work he intends to effect. If none, or very few, are disposed to contribute assistance in the execution of his design, it affords just ground of the surprise here expressed. In allusion to this circumstance, the
mighty

mighty Redeemer is exhibited, wondering that there were few, if any, possessing courage and intrepidity to join their efforts with him against the foes of his kingdom, to plead the cause of the oppressed, to support and carry forward the arduous achievement. Far, however, from being discouraged or intimidated on this account, he immediately adds—*Therefore mine own arm brought salvation.* When every refuge failed, his all-mighty hand and holy arm gained him the victory over those who were inimical to his empire, whilst he accomplished the deliverance of his people. By these illustrious acts, his Divine power and grace were gloriously displayed, and salvation was wrought for those with whom he is so nearly connected, and for whom he hath such a strong affection, that he speaks as if the deliverance had come to himself.—*And my fury it upheld me.* My just displeasure and indignation at the hostile attempts made against my honour and interest, prompted me, with vigour and fortitude, to vindicate my servants from oppression, and to execute upon their adversaries righteous vengeance. The Almighty Saviour is the patron of the injured and oppressed; he will maintain their cause, and in due time rescue them out of all their troubles, whilst those who afflicted them shall suffer proportionably to their deserts.

6. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

The glorious Redeemer declares his determined purpose to subdue the adversaries of his kingdom, and to go forth conquering every power adverse to the prosperity of his subjects. In proof of his entire conquest, of the utter inability of his foes to make any effectual resistance, and of the ignominy and contempt wherewith they shall be treated, he declares he will tread them down. In manifold instances

stances hath he triumphed over those who have acted in opposition to the interests of his people. He smote great nations, and slew mighty kings for their sake; some of whom were in height like the cedar, and strong as the oak; he destroyed their fruit from above, and their roots from beneath. Once and again he announces his fixed resolution, that though fortified by many important advantages, he would trample them under his feet—*And make them drunk, &c.* The disordered mind and senses of a drunken man, the natural effects of intoxication, afford a proper representation of the disturbed, infatuated judgment of those who are misled by folly and deceit. To this miserable condition, wherein deprived of understanding and strength, they shall be utterly incapable of making any resistance, doth this triumphant conqueror declare that his enemies shall be reduced. To this low and despicable state they shall be brought down in his anger and fury, which are repeatedly mentioned in this passage of Scripture, intimating that he would punish them in the dreadful fierceness of his wrath. As he is a sun and shield to enlighten and protect his people, so he is a consuming fire to destroy the wicked; as he is very gracious to his servants, so he is very terrible to his implacable adversaries, whom he will tear in pieces, when there shall be none to deliver.

And I will bring down their strength to the earth. He who speaketh in righteousness declares, that however formidable those who opposed him appeared, he would divest them of whatsoever constituted their power and glory, and lay them low, even in the dust. Like blasted fruits, that are blown down to the ground by a violent tempest, they should be deprived of every support, and be reduced to a mean and contemptible condition.—The judicious Calvin, the learned Vitringa, with other commentators, consider this portion of prophecy as relating to some terrible judgment, which the avenger of the wrongs done to the Church of God shall inflict on their enemies and persecutors.

persecutors. The late Bishop of London says, in his notes on Isaiah, page 266, that there are prophecies, which intimate a great slaughter of the enemies of God and his people, which remain to be fulfilled, as those in Ezekiel 38th chapter, and in the 20th chapter of the Revelation, and that this prophecy of Isaiah may refer to the same, or the like event. The order of these prophecies, and the series of events to which they refer, seem to indicate, that the execution of the judgment here denounced is still future, and therefore prudence requires to leave their accomplishment more fully to explain them. In the mean time, I only observe, that the forcible images which embellish this description clearly shew, that the threatened destruction shall be great and dreadful, such as the boldest figures cannot fully represent.

7. ¶ I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord, *and* the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.

Our prophet, having explained and illustrated the prediction contained in chap. lix. 16. *et seq.* proceeds to expound and amplify the prophecy delivered in the 20th verse of that chapter, relating to a more extensive conversion of the Jewish people than in ancient times. For this purpose, he comes forward, in name of the posterity of Abraham, happily brought to repentance and faith in the Messiah, presenting before God penitent acknowledgements and fervent supplications suited to their circumstances. He begins by expressing his firm determination of extolling Jehovah for the signal benefits which he had conferred upon them.—I will mention, or, as the Hebrew word

word denotes, I will call to remembrance, and thankfully commemorate the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, the many precious blessings flowing from his free favour and superabounding grace, which he hath bestowed on our nation. I will especially celebrate, with gratitude, the wonderful deliverances which, on various memorable occasions, he hath wrought for them, that afford ample ground of admiration and praise. These fruits of the Divine benignity, whereby his infinite excellencies have been illustriously displayed, are indeed worthy of being faithfully recorded and retained in affectionate remembrance, as rich manifestations of his good will and peculiar kindness.—The mercies with which the Lord God hath crowned us, my brethren, are very great. Respecting this present life, he hath given us all things richly to enjoy, he hath liberally furnished us with every thing necessary, and abundantly more than we deserve. And as to that which is to come, he hath granted us the means of attaining it, to which he hath annexed the promise of his presence and blessing. These inestimable favours ought never to be forgotten, but should be frequently recollected with praise and thanksgiving.

And the praises of the Lord. Blessing, thanksgiving, and praise, I apprehend, are sometimes used in Scripture as synonymous terms, and some times a certain distinction seems to be intended. Blessing respects the benefits received; thanksgiving the expected returns of gratitude; and praise the celebration of the glorious perfections of Jehovah, displayed in the good things he bestows. In this sense of the word, the person here speaking resolves to extol the Divine attributes, more anciently and more recently exhibited by the benefits and deliverances bestowed on the posterity of Israel.—*According to all that the Lord hath bestowed, &c.* Isaiah, solicitous, as every one ought to be, that the praises he offered to God, in the name of his people, might correspond in some good measure to the mercies received, resolves to magnify
Jehovah

Jehovah in a manner suited to their number and excellence. For this end he is concerned to have his mind deeply impressed with their worth and importance, and diligently to improve them for promoting faith, love, and obedience to God, determined that the more the loving kindness of the Lord was visible in them, the larger should be the expressions of gratitude.—*And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, &c.* By this expression, which is of similar import with the preceding one, our prophet shews, that he was exceedingly desirous that his praises might be suited to the kindnesses received from God, not only by his contemporaries and himself; but that they might accord with the manifold favours conferred in every age on the house of Israel.—In this, as in many other instances, he exhibits a laudable example, which we should carefully imitate. We ought to celebrate the praises of Jehovah, not only for personal benefits, but for those we enjoy in our social capacities, and for the Divine goodness shewn to the Church and kingdom wherein we reside, both in the present and in past generations.

According to his mercies, &c. The distinguishing blessings and privileges whereby the Israelites were enriched and felicitated, are justly denominated mercies, because they relieved them from the miseries wherein they were involved. They are spoken of under the name of loving kindnesses, to intimate that they flowed from the generous compassion and unbounded liberality of God. They are mentioned in the plural, to indicate their vast variety and rich abundance, and that they served to relieve, at different times, the necessities of innumerable multitudes. Both expressions may be considered as including all the temporal and spiritual benefits and privileges that they enjoyed, among which were the following: The Lord God chose them from among all other nations, to be his peculiar people, the objects of his love and care. He early interposed for their deliverance from bondage, and brought them into liberty and a wealthy place.

place. He formed them into a nation; he protected them by his providence; he promulgated for them the most salutary laws; he honoured them with the symbols of his Divine presence; he supported them with bread from heaven, and water from the rock; he gave them power to vanquish their enemies; he placed among them the throne of his glory; he committed to their custody the sacred oracles; he established his worship among them; he conducted them by his good Spirit, and led them to inherit the good land promised to their fathers; whilst, by his servants the prophets, he taught them the way of life and salvation, which, in the fulness of time, was to be made manifest by the great Messiah. All these, and other prerogatives, he bestowed upon them in great mercy and unmerited kindness, as Moses of old instructed them *.—With them let us join in celebrating his praises, whose mercies endure for ever, whose grace faileth never. Let us extol his essential attributes, and magnify him for their exertion in his wonderful works done in behalf of his people.

8. For he said, Surely they *are* my people, children *that* will not lie: so he was their saviour.

The blessed God is introduced speaking after the manner of men, who say, *that* shall certainly happen, which may be reasonably expected to take place according to the nature of things. Jehovah, to whom all things are perfectly known from the beginning to the end, who foretold, by his servant Moses and the prophets, the future, perfidious conduct of the Israelites, perfectly knew that they would deal deceitfully with him, and that they would prove unstedfast in his covenant. Notwithstanding he is here represented anticipating what he had just ground to look for, namely, that the highly-favoured posterity of Abraham would not deal unfaithfully with him.

After being enriched by him with the most important blessings, and honoured with many inestimable privileges, he had good reason to say, Surely my people will not lie. Those who are my children, that I have nourished and brought up, who are peculiarly indebted to me for manifold mercies, who are bound to my service by the strongest ties, must be inviolably attached to me and my worship. Other nations are very averse to leave off the service of the gods of their fathers, though they never did them any good, surely then, my people, who have avouched me to be their God, and that I have adopted for my children, and always treated with paternal affection, will not bely their solemn profession, nor deal perfidiously with me! The conclusion is natural and just, and must have been verified, had they not, by their treachery and wickedness, counteracted the order of things, and burst asunder the powerful obligations they were brought under to the Almighty.

So he was their Saviour, from the hard bondage wherein they were detained in the land of Egypt—from the many imminent dangers to which they were exposed, at the red sea and in the howling wilderness—from the powerful enemies whereby they were distressed, and in their extremity he always rescued them from ruin. He was their saviour from captivity at Babylon, by raising up a powerful prince, who, by royal proclamation, granted them liberty to return to their own land, and to enjoy the privileges whereof they had been long deprived. And in the fulness of time, according to his promise, he sent to them the Messiah, to bless them, in turning them from their iniquities; that, being delivered from the hands of their enemies, they might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness. This great salvation, this most wonderful display of God's great goodness, was anciently foretold, and prefigured by the temporal deliverances which he wrought for them under the Judges and Kings, who presided over them.—Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath become the Saviour,

viour not only of the Jews, but also of sinners of the Gentiles. Let us admire his astonishing grace, let us diligently attend to the nature of this salvation, and thankfully accept of the offers made of it to us in the gospel. Neglect not, I beseech you, this precious comprehensive benefit, whereby innumerable multitudes are rescued from ignominious servitude, and the jaws of destruction ; and formed to the noblest sentiments, exalted to the most sublime services, and to the enjoyment of the highest honour and felicity.

9. ¶ In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them : in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

In these words, the benevolent disposition and tender affection of God toward his people is expressed in very strong terms. Notwithstanding the posterity of Israel were the objects of his special regard and peculiar care, yet by their manifold, atrocious transgressions, they were frequently reduced to the most pinching straits. On account of their murmurings, they were overthrown in the wilderness ; because they tempted God in the desert, they were destroyed of serpents ; because they did evil in the sight of the Lord, he sold them into the hands of the king of Mesopotamia ; because they followed other gods and served them, the Lord strengthened against them the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Amalakites ; because they ceased not from their evil doings and their stubborn way, the Lord sold them into the hand of the king of Canaan ; and they were greatly distressed by the Midianites and the Philistines. The consummate righteousness of Jehovah did not permit such high provocations to pass without severe chastisements : yet in all these, and their other afflictions, the Most High is said to have been afflicted. The expression

expression strongly intimates the near relation in which he stood connected with them, his tender compassion toward them, and his deep concern for their welfare in all their troubles. It also indicates his constant readiness to relieve them from their distresses on every proper occasion, after the end was effected for which they were sent. In all the afflictions of Israel, such were the kind compassions of God, who possesses power and inclination to help and deliver his people, as far as compatible with the infinite perfections of his nature, that he is represented as feeling for them, and ready to embrace the earliest opportunity of rescuing them from evil.—How refreshing the consolation contained in the words we have been considering—how reviving the thought to the people of God, when in trouble, that they have the pity and sympathy of an omnipotent friend, who commiserates the afflicted in all their sufferings and sorrows!

And the angel of his presence saved them. From this designation it is evident, that the illustrious person here mentioned, to whom is attributed the salvation and support of Israel, must in some sense be distinct from Jehovah, whose messenger he is, whilst the operations ascribed to him plainly shew, that he is possessed of the perfections of Deity, which the following circumstances fully confirm. The Lord God being determined to bring forth the children of Israel from servitude in Egypt, the angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush, to Moses, whom he appointed to be their leader, and said, ‘i am the God of thy fathers *,’ &c. The person who rescued the Israelites from bondage was the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night †. And after the promulgation of the law from mount Sinai, Jehovah informed that people, Exod. xxiii. 20. ‘Behold I send an angel before thee,’ &c. ‘This is he, (said the first Christian martyr Stephen) who spake to Moses at mount Sinai,

* Exod. iii. 2.

† Exod. xiv. 19, 20.

‘ Sinai, and to our fathers, who received the lively oracles to give unto us *.’ Of him Isaiah saith, that he saved the people of Israel from the dangers, evils, and enemies wherewith they were encompassed.— *That in his love and pity he redeemed them* from the miserable condition to which they were reduced. When almost ready to perish, through the cruel hardships they sustained, he brought them forth from the furnace of affliction, and rescued them from the terrible calamities whereby they were oppressed. Indeed their salvation could not have proceeded from any other source than his love and pity, who redeemed their great progenitor, the patriarch Jacob, from all evil †. To the same angel should be ascribed the praise of the redemption of his posterity, who is the Son of God, infinitely superior to all the other angels, the Redeemer, and the avenger of the Church, the Light, the Holy One of Israel, their Saviour and Lord, who, under the new œconomy of grace, is called ‘ the Brightness of the Father’s glory ‡.’—The same causes which operated to effect their redemption, still induce him to bestow deliverance on his chosen people, and to confer upon us all the mercies we receive. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath rescued from the hand of the enemy, and led forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation §.

He bare them, and carried them all the days of old. When ready to be overborne and pressed down by the grievous calamities they sustained, incapable of supporting themselves, and greatly in need of his friendly aid, he stepped in to their relief. He sustained them in their several exigencies; he supported their minds; he put strength into them, whereby they were upheld and kept from fainting.— *He carried them.* This expression may be considered as an advance on the former, and may denote, that he not only sustained them, but fortified their minds and comforted

* Acts. vii. 38.

† Gen. lxviii. 16.

‡ Heb. i. 3.

§ Psal. cvii. 2, 7.

comforted their hearts under their sufferings and sorrows, thereby giving them remarkable proofs of his kindness and care, which are thus celebrated by Moses * : ‘ The Lord your God, who goeth before you, he shall fight for you,’ &c.—Are there not some of you, my hearers, who have enjoyed this high privilege? What then shall you render unto the Lord for the displays of his love, care, and faithfulness? In humble dependence on his grace, act with vigour in his service, and labour to abound in every good work, to the glory of God your Saviour.

10. ¶ But they rebelled, and vexed his holy spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them.

The ungrateful conduct of the Israelites, for the important benefits they received from God, with the severe punishment which they suffered on that account, is here described in strong terms. Instead of being thankful and obedient to their liberal benefactor, they were most undutiful and rebellious, according to the testimony of Moses and the prophets. How explicit the charge brought against them by their leader and legislator, in these words, ‘ Remember, and forget not how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord *.’ When the Lord God sent his servant Ezekiel to speak unto them, he told him, ‘ I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation, that hath rebelled against me †.’ They were uniformly hard-hearted, and obstinately persisted in the most enormous transgressions. At three different periods, however, did they more grievously revolt from God, and acted in daring opposition to his authority; namely, in the days of Moses, who thus addressed them,

* Deut. i. 30, 31. † Deut. ix. 7. ‡ Ezek. ii. 3.

them : ' You have been rebellious against the Lord ' from the day that I knew you *.' Their conduct in this respect became again most notorious in the period prior to the captivity at Babylon, when they mocked the messengers of God, despised his words, and misused his prophets, as it is written †. Nor was their behaviour less criminal at the time the gospel was published by Jesus Christ and his apostles, and there was a large effusion of the Holy Ghost; for then they put away from them the word of God, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life ‡. By thus acting in direct opposition to the will of God

They vexed his holy Spirit, who in the Old Testament is called the Spirit of Jehovah, the good Spirit of God, the Spirit of grace, and by several other names, in reference to his special agency, and the effects he produces. His peculiar work is to foretel, by his servants, future events relative to the Church, as he did of old by Moses and the prophets; and to demonstrate, by infalible signs and wonders, the truths which he reveals to those who are inspired by him. In accomplishing the salvation of men, he convinces them of sin; he enlightens their minds; he purifies their hearts; he elevates their affections to divine objects; he restrains them from evil, and furnishes them for the practice of that which is good; he endows with knowledge, wisdom, love, and confidence; and administers comfort to the afflicted and dejected. This holy Spirit was given to the children of Israel, under the former œconomy, that he might instruct them, as was acknowledged by good Nehemiah §. Far from cherishing his benign influence, and submitting to his salutary instructions, they vexed and grieved him. The expression alludes to the uneasiness and sorrow felt by a kind friend, when he observes his counsels and admonitions rejected by those in whom he is deeply interested. In reference to this well known circumstance, our prophet affirms, that the holy Spirit was grieved by the posterity of Abraham,

* Deut. vii. 24.

† 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

‡ Acts xiii. 46.

§ Chap. ix. 20.

Abraham, who were ungrateful for his benefits, who stubbornly resisted his authority, and, by obstinate impenitence, infidelity, and disobedience, rejected his convictions and counsels. To this odious conduct they were shamefully addicted. Notwithstanding they saw his works, and received his mercies, they grieved him forty years in the desert. Afterward, when the Lord God testified against them by his Spirit, they would not give ear*. The same heavy charge, brought against them by Isaiah, was renewed by Stephen before his death, who thus accused them: ‘Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye †.’—Beware of grieving the Holy Spirit, either by omission of duty or commission of sin. Take heed that you counteract not his gracious influence, who is a Spirit of light and love, of holiness and consolation, and so provoke him to depart from you. Listen to his kind suggestions, his faithful admonitions, and salutary instructions, who intends, by his various operations, to refine you from the dross of corruption, and to form you into the Divine resemblance.

Therefore he was turned to be their enemy, &c. This tremendous judgment was inflicted on the descendants of Israel, for their having vexed the Holy Spirit. He who in former times had acted toward them as a kind friend, was so highly displeased at their contemptuous conduct, that he deserted them, and deprived them of those important benefits wherewith they had been favoured. He withdrew the Divine light that had shone upon them, and left them under the power of darkness, in blindness of mind and hardness of heart. He made them hear, in place of the word of life and salvation, terrible denunciations of dreadful calamities, and made his judgments to go forth as the light. He withheld from them his reviving, strengthening, and comforting communications, and suffered their minds to be filled with consternation and terror, so that, as
Moses

* Neh. ix. 30.

† Acts vii. 51.

Moses foretold, they should be afraid at the shaking of a leaf*.—*And he fought against them*; as he had predicted, he heaped mischiefs upon them, and spent his arrows upon them †. Thus was verified the awful threatening which the Lord God denounced against them by his servant Jeremiah, in these words: ‘And I myself will fight against them with an outstretched hand and strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath ‡.—Alarmed by these dreadful denunciations of the Almighty, let us avoid, with the utmost vigilance, every thing that might in any measure incur these miseries that beset the Jewish people, at the several periods to which I have already referred.

11. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, *saying*, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy spirit within him?

The merciful interpositions of Jehovah in behalf of the children of Israel, and the distinguishing favours which he conferred upon them, are here brought into view. Commentators are divided in opinion respecting the person spoken of, some attributing the words to God, who is mentioned in the preceding verse; others ascribing them to the house of Israel, on whom the Lord had bestowed manifold mercies, ver. 7.—As the matter is involved in obscurity and uncertainty, I shall consider the words before us as expressed by both parties, that you may adopt either of the sentiments that seem to you most agreeable to the design of the inspired writer. View them first as proceeding from God. Then, at the time the Holy Spirit turned to be the enemy of Israel, who had long vexed him, he called to mind days of old, wherein he bare and carried them, the declarations of mercy he

published by his servant Moses; how he tenderly regarded his people under the afflictions wherewith he visited them; and how, in the midst of deserved wrath, mercy was always intermixed. The recollection of these circumstances, which he kept fully in view, induced him to spare them, and to mitigate their calamities. The very reasons, on account of which he might have increased and continued their miseries, are converted into arguments for displaying the riches of his forbearance and mercy. Thus mercy rejoiceth against judgment.—Consider the words before us as uttered by the house of Israel, who for long time had been forsaken by the Spirit of God. Then, when thus abandoned, they are introduced as an individual deeply affected with his deplorable condition—Remembering the days of old, wherein, notwithstanding many great provocations, God's servant Moses, and the people entrusted to his care, were safely brought out from oppression and bondage, they were greatly encouraged. Though they frequently incurred the Divine displeasure, and were severely punished for their transgressions, yet God spared them, and did not execute upon them all the fierceness of his wrath. Recollecting the days of old, and the great deliverances which God wrought for their fathers; that God himself is unchangeably the same; and that his tender mercies fail not; each of the truly penitent was to comfort himself. In this view, the conduct of Israel is highly worthy of our imitation, and the resolution of the royal Prophet very proper to be adopted. ‘I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High, I will remember the works of the Lord, surely I will remember thy wonders of old*.’

Where is he that brought them out of the sea. The person enquired for can be no other than the Lord God, who alone could perform the works here mentioned. Our prophet, in name of the penitent Jews, calling to mind the great goodness of Jehovah toward

toward their nation in time past, is earnestly desirous that, in their present forlorn circumstances, the fruits of his loving-kindness might be renewed. He therefore enquires, with solicitude, Where is he that rescued our fathers from the perilous circumstances wherein they were involved at the Red Sea, that led them on safely under the conduct of those he appointed to be their guides, and enriched them with the most substantial benefits? Six of them are specified in this and the three following verses—*1st*, Where is that glorious, omnipotent Jehovah, who brought them up out of the sea. This wonderful interposition of the Almighty, which is frequently celebrated in Scripture, is expressly ascribed to him by his servant Joshua, in his pathetic address to the Israelites before his death. ‘For the Lord our God is he that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, among all the people through whom we passed *.—*With the shepherd of his flock.* At the period wherein God wrought this mighty deliverance, the posterity of Jacob are spoken of as a flock, on account of their weak and defenceless condition amid the enemies whereby they were encompassed, and because of their proneness to wander and go astray from God. Indeed, such was the destitute circumstances to which they were reduced, that had he not been pleased to protect, to conduct, and to provide for them, they must have perished. Moses was the shepherd to whose care they were committed, according to what is written in Psal. lxxxvii. 20. where the kindness of Jehovah toward that people is celebrated in these words: ‘Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.’—Grant, blessed God, that we, who are also the sheep of thy pasture, may enjoy the same important privileges wherewith they were favoured. Be thou ever with us in every stage of our journey through life, until, having by thy
grace

grace surmounted the difficulties that lie in the way, and supported by thy providence, we arrive at the land of everlasting rest, to enjoy thy presence and glory for ever.—2dly, *Where is he that put his holy spirit within him.* This expression may probably relate to the remarkable transaction recorded Numb. xi. 16, 17. where God promised to take of the spirit which was upon Moses, and to put it upon the elders of Israel. The precious donation of the Holy Spirit, which is the fruit of his distinguishing love and favour, he bestows upon his peculiar people, whereby they are discriminated from the world around them. The blessings of providence are conferred promiscuously upon the children of men, whilst this inestimable benefit is reserved for the objects of his special regard. By putting within the men of Israel the spirit of wisdom and understanding, they were enabled to attain the knowledge of his will; by giving them the Spirit of grace and supplication, he assisted their devotions; by his counsel and direction, they were conducted into the possession of the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He furnished Moses and Aaron, the elders, and no doubt many of the Levites, with gifts and graces requisite for the performance of the various services incumbent upon them. He raised up many eminent prophets and teachers, who foretold future events, and instructed the people in the worship and law of the Lord. It was therefore natural for the posterity of that highly-favoured nation, on returning to the Lord, early to enquire after him who brought up their progenitors from the sea, and honoured them with the inestimable blessing of his Holy Spirit.—This invaluable benefit, which God graciously imparted to some of our fathers, we ought to be solicitous, by fervent prayer, to obtain from the Father of Mercies.

12. That led *them* by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before

fore them, to make himself an everlasting name?

Two more memorable instances of the Divine goodness toward the house of Israel are mentioned in these words. Moses, as we have heard, was the person employed by Jehovah to lead his people through the sea and the howling wilderness, and he is said to have conducted them by his right hand, wherein he held the pastoral rod, by which the omnipotence of Jehovah was exerted in punishing the Egyptians, in dividing the red sea, and in performing, for their benefit, the most stupendous miracles.—*With his glorious arm dividing the water before them.* By this expression is intended the Angel of God's presence, who is the great Power of God, by whom he executes his gracious purposes respecting his Church, and by whom he delivered the Israelites from cruel bondage. This is he who preceded the camp of Israel, and who, like a good shepherd, guided, defended, and supported them. This is he who fought their battles, who vanquished their enemies, and thrust them out from before them, whose everlasting arms were underneath them, and who rode on the heaven to their help*.—The astonishing event to which our prophet refers, that was effected by the glorious arm of Jehovah, and by the right hand of Moses, is described Exod. xiv. 21, 22. The King of Egypt, who derived considerable advantages from the service of the Israelites, was determined not to let them go, and long persisted in his resolution to detain them, until the Almighty, by a great miracle, opened a passage through the sea for his people, wherein Pharaoh and his host were drowned.—*To make himself an everlasting name.* The wonderful interpositions of Jehovah in behalf of the children of Israel were intended to display his honour and glory, that he might acquire renown and praise over the world, throughout all ages. 'For this purpose he raised up Pharaoh, that he might
' shew

* Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27.

‘ shew in him his power, and that his name might be
 ‘ declared throughout all the earth *.’ Accordingly,
 Rahab told the spies, sent by Joshua into the land of
 Canaan, that the inhabitants of the country had
 heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea
 for them, when they came out of Egypt, and what
 they did to the kings of the Amorites †. And by
 recording these memorable transactions in his holy
 word, that is committed to his Church, gathered from
 among all nations, the knowledge of them is trans-
 mitted to every subsequent generation. Thus hath
 God made to himself an everlasting name, and mani-
 fested his mercy, power, and faithfulness, by the
 salvation of his peculiar people.—‘ Help us, O God
 ‘ of our salvation, for the glory of thy name, and de-
 ‘ liver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name’s
 ‘ sake.’

13. That led them through the deep, as an
 horse in the wilderness, *that* they should not
 stumble?

The Divine goodness toward the house of Israel, is
 celebrated on account of another remarkable circum-
 stance, that deserves attention. It seems highly pro-
 bable, that the Lord God not only divided the sea,
 that they might pass through in safety, but that he
 also rendered its bottom dry and firm, so that men,
 women and children, with their baggage, might easily
 and speedily walk over the deep channel which was
 occupied by the sea. The royal Psalmist, therefore,
 when recounting the wonders which God wrought
 for their salvation § particularly mentions, that ‘ the
 ‘ Lord rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up; so
 ‘ he led them through the deeps as through the wil-
 ‘ derness.’ He conducted them in perfect security to
 the opposite shore, along an untrodden path, as if it
 had been a public road wherein passengers were
 accustomed

* Exod. ix. 16.

† Psal. lxxix. 9.

‡ Josh. ii. 10.

§ Psal. cvi. 9.

accustomed to travel.—*As a horse in the wilderness, &c.* that is constantly apt to go aside from the right way, requires to be guided, or led, by his master or keeper; so, by the direction of Jehovah, they went on firm ground, that did not yield to their feet, without slipping or fatigue, and were kept from turning into dangerous by-paths.

14. As a beast goeth down into the valley, the spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.

Our prophet completes the enumeration of the signal benefits which the Lord God bestowed on his peculiar people in times of old.—The subject is illustrated by a comparison which requires little explanation. As an animal pursued by some rapacious creatures, seeks for safety and rest in some sequestered valley or low ground, where he may be free from those by whom he was chased and endangered—so the Spirit of Jehovah, who was the counsellor and guide of the posterity of Jacob, caused them to descend into the deep valley, which had been covered by the sea, that by this means they might escape from their enemies, and arrive, under his conduct, at a place of safety, liberty, and tranquillity. And, ever attentive to relieve their weaknesses, and to supply their wants in their journey thither, he always pointed out the most proper times and stations, wherein they might have rest and freedom from annoyance.—*So didst thou lead thy people.* Thus did the great Shepherd of Israel conduct them, like a flock, through the deeps of the sea and deserts of Arabia, until he brought them into the good land he had promised unto their fathers.—*To make thyself a glorious name.* The expression is nearly of the same import with that which occurred in the 12th verse. An everlasting name is a glorious name, and a glorious name must be everlasting.

everlasting. Matters of the highest importance, wherein one is deeply interested, and as to the success of which he is solicitous, are in many cases repeated, as in the instance before us. The chief design of God, in conferring on the Israelites the favours that hath been mentioned, was, to exhibit illustrious displays of his Divine attributes; to magnify the riches of his mercy; to shew his omnipotence infinitely superior to all opposition; and to manifest his unchangeable veracity by the fulfilment of his promises, notwithstanding the seemingly insurmountable difficulties that lay in the way of their accomplishment.

In this manner did Isaiah, in his own name and in the name of his countrymen brought to repentance and faith in the Messiah, commemorate the kindnesses of Jehovah toward their progenitors. He called to grateful remembrance the blessings of Divine goodness, wherewith the posterity of Abraham had been favoured, and celebrated the perfections and glory of Jehovah, displayed in the deliverances that he wrought for them. He contrasted the mercies which they had received in times past, with the miseries of their condition at the period to which he looked forward; he laid open the sources of hope and comfort; and investigated the causes which contributed to bring down upon them the wrath of Jehovah in the latter days. From the time wherein they were emancipated from bondage in Egypt, they were perverse, disobedient, and rebellious, notwithstanding the Most High did great things for them, whereof they had reason to be glad and rejoice. But after having committed the atrocious, capital crime of crucifying the Prince of Life, and put away from them the word of God, they remain blinded by ignorance of the way of salvation, and hardened through obstinacy and impenitence: ‘ Even to this day the veil is upon their heart; nevertheless, when they shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away *.’

15. ¶ Look

* 2 Cor. iii. 15, 16.

15. ¶ Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where *is* thy zeal and thy strength, the founding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained?

Fervent supplications are presented to God, that he would be pleased to interpose in behalf of the miserable posterity of Israel.—*Look down from heaven, thy holy and glorious habitation*, called by the prophet Ezekiel, ‘the place of the glory of the Lord *;’ by Jesus Christ, ‘his Father’s house †;’ and by the apostle of the Gentiles, ‘the third heaven ‡.’ ‘From thence the Lord looketh down, and beholdeth all the ‘sons of men §.’ There the anchor of our hope is fixed, and the minds of the saints are directed in all their prayers and praises. From this celestial residence Jehovah is entreated to look down on his degenerate people in pity and tender compassion, as he looked in mercy on their fathers of old, when groaning under affliction and bondage, and he came down to deliver them. Behold them dispersed and distressed among the nations, and be graciously pleased to come for their relief, and command deliverance for Jacob, so shall they shew forth thy praises to all generations.—In all our addresses to God, who dwelleth on high, let us remember that he is in heaven and we upon earth, and therefore our words ought to be few and well ordered. He is highly exalted above all in respect of dignity and glory, he possesses infinite ability to grant our requests, to supply our wants, and to punish our presumption. This consideration, joined with a deep sense of our insignificance and unworthiness, ought to cherish humility and lowliness of mind, especially when we come before his throne with our supplications.

Where is thy zeal? Where is thy intense desire of manifesting the glory of thy consummate excellen-

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cies,

* Chap. iii. 12.

† John xiv. 2.

‡ 2 Cor. xii. 2.

§ Psal. xxxiii. 13.

cies, in thy merciful dispensations toward thy once beloved people? Where are now the proofs of that ardent affection, which were formerly exhibited by the wonders thou didst work for advancing their safety and welfare?—*Where is thy strength*, whereby thou didst subdue the people under thee, defeated their powerful enemies, and shewedst thyself strong in securing their interests in spite of all opposition, so as to acquire a glorious name?—*The sounding of thy bowels*. The expression hath an obvious reference to the sensations of pity and sympathy, which good people feel for those who are in distress. Where is thy tender affection and paternal solicitude toward thy people in affliction, which thou didst choose for thine inheritance, and that thou didst admit into covenant with thee. Remember, we beseech thee, the kindness of their youth, the wonders thou hast wrought in their behalf; remember Abraham thy friend, and Israel thy servant, and extend thy compassion to their posterity in forlorn circumstances.—*And thy mercies toward me*, which have been many, great, and seasonable, whereby I have often been relieved from the miseries wherein I have been involved.—*Are they restrained?* Though the expressions of thy grace and favour have been withheld, thou, O Lord, art the same; thy zeal is not diminished; thy omnipotence is not impaired; thy compassions are not failed; but in thy just displeasure thou hast shut up thy tender mercies. ‘Return, we entreat thee, O God of Hosts; look down from heaven, and behold and visit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted*.’

16. Doubtless thou *art* our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; thou, O Lord, *art* our father, our redeemer, thy name *is* from everlasting.

The

* Psal. lxxx. 14, 15.

The preceding request is urged, by an argument taken from the intimate relations wherein the posterity of Israel stand to the blessed God. Most certainly, say they, thou art our father, and we are thy offspring, to whom thou hast given life, and breath, and all things. Thou art our father, who hast adopted us into thy family, and dignified us with the endearing character of children, having acknowledged, ‘ I am a father to Israel, and Israel is my first-born* ;’ and again, ‘ ye are the children of the Lord your God †.’ To this agree the words of the apostle Paul, Rom. ix. 4. where he affirms, that ‘ to Israel pertaineth the ‘ adoption,’ whereby they were instated in all the relations, rights, and privileges, of children born in the family. Far from being amiable, and possessing real worth and merit, they were foolish, perverse, and disobedient ; consequently, the honour and the immunities to which they were admitted, proceeded from the sovereign mercy and grace of Jehovah.

Though Abraham be ignorant of us. The names of only two of the renowned patriarchs are mentioned, namely, of Abraham the friend of God, and of Israel, who as a prince had power with God and prevailed, Isaac, who was the father of Esau as well as of Jacob, being omitted. Those who are named, may be considered as including the other celebrated progenitors of the Jewish nation. Concerning them it is supposed, that they are ignorant of their posterity ; that they acknowledge them not. I shall not enter into the controversy, whether or not the saints in paradise are acquainted with the state of the Church on earth, a subject which requires too much time for me at present to discuss. I only remark, that the intercourse between heaven and earth is intimate and constant ; that in the celestial world, that which is in part is done away, and that which is perfect is commenced ; and the spirits of just men, being made perfect, know even as they are known. I presume not, however, to say how far the knowledge of the heavenly inhabitants extends. The expression before us

seems

* Jer. xxxi. 9.

† Deut. xiv. 1.

seems to signify no more, than that the patriarchs mentioned did not possess, in the separate state, such acquaintance with the condition of their posterity as they experienced when they were here on earth—That Abraham and Israel, with their ancestors of the greatest celebrity, did not know their degenerate children, who were addressing God from the depths of their distress, by resemblance to them in temper and practice, nor did they feel for their descendants the same paternal affection and solicitude that they had for them when in this world.—Convinced, then, of the vanity of all human help, and disclaiming dependence on ourselves, let us, after the example here recorded, have recourse to our Father in heaven, and earnestly implore his gracious aid, who encourages us to prefer before him our requests, with the pleasing expectation that he will answer our prayers.

Thou, O Lord, art our Father, &c. The supplicants whose prayer is before us, claim connection with Jehovah as their parent and redeemer, and express entire dependence on him for salvation. Renouncing all confidence in the merits of our progenitors, who were dear in thy sight, and all reliance on our own performances, we entreat that thou who art merciful and gracious, for the sake of the great Messiah, wilt rescue us from the calamitous state, in which for long time we have continued—We beg, that by kind interposition in our behalf, thou wilt manifest thyself to be our father and redeemer, in the highest and most important sense of the words.—*Thy name is from everlasting.* Thy glorious excellencies are eternal and immutable, like thyself, and from the beginning they have been displayed in behalf of thy peculiar people. We therefore trust, that they shall farther be exerted in our favour in subsequent generations.—If God be your father, my friends, you will honour, love, and obey him; and you will enjoy comfortable access to him under this endearing relation, who perfectly knows what things you have need of, and who is able to do for you beyond what you can ask or think.

think. You are brethren to his only begotten Son ;
 ‘ for, (saith he) whosoever shall do the will of my
 ‘ Father, who is in heaven, the same is my brother and
 ‘ sister *.’

17. ¶ O Lord, why hast thou made us to
 err from thy ways? *and* hardened our heart
 from thy fear? Return for thy servants sake,
 the tribes of thine inheritance.

Supplication for mercy is urged by another argu-
 ment, taken from the awful spiritual judgments,
 which the Jewish nation hath long sustained. The
 converts from among the people candidly own, that
 they had long persisted in a grievous error, and that
 their hearts had been hardened through the deceit-
 fulness of sin, whereby they were alienated from the
 fear of God. By the ways of God, from which they
 had erred, may be meant either his ways toward
 them, or their conduct toward him. The acknow-
 ledgment may include both senses. They had devi-
 ated from God’s ways in principle and in practice.
 They had misinterpreted, because they did not un-
 derstand, the dispensations of his providence and
 grace ; they had formed wrong and perverse senti-
 ments respecting sacred truths, and the salvation of
 sinners by the Messiah. They had also fallen into
 egregious mistakes with regard to the precepts of
 the Divine law, made known for the obedience of
 faith. Of these right ways of the Lord, they had re-
 tained injurious apprehensions, from them they had
 widely departed, and had greatly violated them as
 the rule of judgment and action.

And hardened our heart from thy fear. The fear
 of God is sometimes used in Scripture in a more limit-
 ed, and sometimes in a more extensive sense. It may
 here denote that holy, reverential awe of the infinite
 majesty of God, which arises from just apprehensions
 of

* Mat. xii. 53.

of his supreme excellence and sovereign dominion; a deep sense of human depravity and guilt; and of our obligations to yield to him the homage and obedience he justly demands. This gracious disposition, which God puts into the hearts of his people, forms an essential ingredient in the character of the servants of the Most High; and in Scripture it sometimes expresses the whole of true godliness, comprising all those dutiful regards due to God.—From this fear, the persons engaged in prayer complain, that their heart was hardened. Through ignorance of Divine truths, incredulity, foolish prejudices, perverse dispositions, and carnal affections, their hearts had become so obdurate, that they resisted the means employed to make salutary impressions on their minds. The commands, the promises, the predictions, and threatenings which ought to have formed them into a proper temper, produced no better effect than to render them more insensible, and more inflexible.—They expostulate with God why he had made them to err, and hardened their hearts. The inflicting these awful judgments they ascribe to the Lord God, who, in the sacred oracles, is said to do what he does not hinder from being done by others. A striking instance of the truth of this remark occurs Ezek. xiv. 9. where God saith, ‘If the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken any thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet.’ I suppose the expression intimates, I have not preserved him from being deluded, but have allowed him to follow the imaginations of his own heart, whereby he hath been led astray. In like manner, the words before us may import, that God had permitted the Jewish people, as the just punishment of their transgressions, to follow the devices of their own evil hearts; that he allowed the god of this world to impose upon them, and that he withheld from them the forfeited supplies of his grace; in consequence whereof they resisted the truths of God; they perverted his ways, and remained destitute of filial reverence for his authority. The penitent
among

among them, who had observed and felt these Divine judgments, enquire why the Lord God, merciful and gracious, had suffered them to continue so long in error and obduracy. The atrocity of the crimes they had committed, the righteousness and faithfulness of Jehovah in accomplishing his predictions, may be assigned, in connection with other things, as the reasons of this awful dispensation.

Return for thy servants sake, &c. After having long sustained many grievous calamities, as the just punishment of their sins, they implore that the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would, in great mercy, bestow upon them renewed proofs of his favour and lovingkindness. They earnestly entreat that he would return from his fierce anger, which hath been long kindled against them; that he would restrain the terrible judgments they have suffered for ages past; that he would visit them with his sweet mercies, and reverse their deplorable condition.—In effect, they plead in the words of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 36. ‘The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and none shut up or left.’—For thy servants sake, whom thou hast set apart for thyself, that they may serve thee in holiness and righteousness, because of thy interest in them and their subjection to thee.—*The tribes of thine inheritance*, the posterity of the twelve families, into which the children of Israel were divided. We entreat that their descendants may rejoice and be felicitated with the blessed fruits arising from their early appropriation to thy service, and their destination to possess the benefits promised to their fathers, who were honoured with the designations of thy heritage, thy portion, and thy peculiar treasure.

18. The people of thy holiness have possessed *it* but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary.

Gracious audience and answer to the requests presented to God is entreated, by the consideration of the short space they had possessed the land appointed to be their inheritance. The posterity of Abraham, who were consecrated to the service of Jehovah, and denominated a holy nation, are doubtless the people here intended. They held the possession of Canaan but for a little while, in comparison of the long time they have been exiled from that country. Though Joshua, the son of Nun, conducted them thither, exterminated many of the inhabitants, and divided by lot that good land among the tribes of Israel, yet they did not enjoy it undisturbed until the reign of David their king. Under his government, they subdued all the nations from the river of Egypt unto the great river Euphrates, and conquered all that extensive region. Not long after Solomon, the Son of David, mounted the throne of Israel, troubles began to arise, and in a little time the Lord cut them short, and sent into captivity those who inhabited the land situated beyond Jordan*. Afterward, Tiglath Pilezer subdued those that dwelt in the northern parts of the 'land and carried them captive to Assyria†.' In a short time the kingdom of Judah was vanquished, and great numbers were carried captives to Babylon, from whence many of them never returned. From all which circumstances the truth and justice of what is here said plainly appears.

Our adversaries have trodden down thy Sanctuary. The sanctuary may either denote the temple built on mount Zion, to the honour of Jehovah, which hath this designation given to it, 2 Chron. xxix. 8.—Or it may signify the land of Canaan at large, which bears this name in the song of triumph, recorded Exod. xv. 17. In both senses, what is here affirmed is certain. Those who were adverse to the peace and prosperity of the posterity of Israel, have not only destroyed and buried in ruins the sacred edifice, erected for the worship of the Lord God at
Jerusalem,

* 2 Kings x. 32.

† 2 Kings xv. 29.

Jerusalem, but they have debased the ordinances instituted among them; and reduced themselves to great misery and contempt, polluting, by idolatry and wickedness, the land promised to their fathers. Hence the mournful complaint of the afflicted Church, when bewailing the alienation of their inheritance, the profanation of God's sanctuary, and the desolation of the beloved city. 'They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled the dwelling-place of thy name, casting it to the ground.'—'When we represent in our prayers, (saith the pious Dr Horne, commenting on Psal. lxxix. 1.) the sufferings and humiliation of the Church, we take an effectual method of wakening the compassion, and recalling the favour of heaven. Every redeemed soul is the inheritance, the temple, and the city of God. When sin enters and takes possession, the inheritance is alienated, the temple defiled, the city desolated.'

19. We are *thine*, thou never barest rule over them, they were not called by thy name.

The distinguishing privileges wherewith the children of Israel had been favoured, are adduced as another argument, whereby they entreat that God would regard their supplications. We are thine, O Lord, not only by creation, but by redemption; thou gavest men for us, and people for our life. We are thine also by profession, having solemnly avouched thee to be our God, and devoted ourselves to thy service. We are therefore encouraged to supplicate, that thou wilt in mercy regard our prayers, and rescue us from the deplorable circumstances wherein we have long remained.—*Thou never barest rule over them.* Thou hast not exercised that paternal authority over other nations, nor afforded them that kind protection which we have experienced in times past. Or the words may intimate, We are become as those

over whom thou never didst bear rule, being dispersed, neglected, and despised.—*They were not called by thy name.* The descendants of Abraham and Jacob, under the former œconomy, were honoured with the appellations of the people, the servants, and children of God, and by these designations they were distinguished from all the nations of the earth. The expression may also import, that as God's name was not called upon them, so they called not on his name, but lived without him in the world. We therefore look up to thee, (say they) for that relief and deliverance which thou hast taught thy people to expect, and that we hope thou wilt in mercy bestow.—The intimate relation subsisting between God and his peculiar people, suggests strong encouragement in their supplications at the throne of grace. The Lord God is more ready to give good things to them that ask him than earthly parents are to give to their children. They may be poor, niggardly, or hard-hearted; whereas the treasures of our heavenly Father are inexhaustible, his liberality is unbounded, and his compassions never fail. We are thine, we are called by thy name, and we call upon thy name, earnestly requesting that we may be saved, according to thy word, to the praise of thy glory.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE portion of our prophet's fifth discourse, which is now to be considered, exhibits, in strong colours, the peculiar care of Divine providence, manifested toward great part of the Jewish nation. Fervent supplications are presented to Jehovah, that he would appear gloriously for their salvation, and gratify the expectations of mercy and favour, which they were taught to cherish under the new œconomy of grace, ver. 1—4.—They next proceed to vindicate the ways of God, to acknowledge their sins and miseries; and, renouncing dependence on themselves, they take encouragement from the contemplation of the Divine goodness, ver. 5—7.—After which they deprecate the wrath of God, whereof they had felt the dreadful effects, humbly imploring his tender compassion may be extended toward them, ver. 8, 9.—The chapter concludes with a sorrowful lamentation, and complaint of the calamities they had long sustained, which are followed with an earnest entreaty, that God would extricate them from their afflictions, ver. 10—12.

CHAP.

C H A P. LXIV.

OH that thou wouldst rent the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.

In the requests which are here presented to God, he is considered as a great and powerful monarch, residing amid ineffable splendor and glory, having the heavens for his throne, from whence he is entreated to descend, that he may illustriously display his Divine excellencies in the salvation of his people. In other places of Scripture he is addressed in similar figurative language*, taken from the memorable condescending exertions of his power and providence, manifested when he delivered his people from bondage in Egypt, and published his law from mount Sinai. These actions, which possess a conspicuous place in the history of the Hebrews, were accounted by them the most splendid and magnificent exhibitions of grace and omnipotence, and to them therefore they frequently allude. Indeed, the imagery borrowed from these illustrious events is so grand and sublime, that the human mind cannot conceive any thing more noble and dignified. In reference, then, to these wonderful appearances of Jehovah, he is requested to inflict righteous judgment on the enemies of his people, and to appear in his glory for their deliverance. The prayer, dictated in allusion to the tremendous scene exhibited on mount Sinai, expresses intense desires, that the Lord God omnipotent would manifest his gracious presence among them, and display his Divine perfections in their favour—That he would demonstrate his power and glory, by such providential dispensations as might surmount every obstacle that lay in the way of their salvation, and afford them visible proofs of his gracious regard.

That

* As in Psa. xviii. 7, 8. and xcvi. 5.

That the mountains might flow, &c. At the awful solemnity to which this address alludes, the earth trembled, the hills melted like wax, the heavens were covered with blackness, the lightnings flashed, the thunders roared, and the more dreadful voice of the Lord God was heard. To this memorable appearance of the Divine Majesty, the inspired writers refer in divers places of the Old Testament. Instances occur*, where the hills are said to have melted as wax at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. Our prophet, foreseeing the very calamitous state to which the posterity of Israel were to be reduced, entreats, in their name, that the Almighty would manifest his favour toward them, by similar wonderful interpositions of his providence to those exhibited of old at Sinai—That thereby the greatest obstructions, and the most formidable opposition, arising either from internal or external causes, to their restoration, might be removed, and clear demonstration given that Jehovah is their friend and protector.

2. As *when* the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, *that* the nations may tremble at thy presence.

The effects of the requested gracious interposition of Jehovah are illustrated by a well-known similitude. A strong fire, kindled for melting of metals by its vehement heat, that they may be separated from the dross with which they are intermixed, and formed into a new shape, or for making the waters placed over it to boil, and to excite in them a great commotion, yields an instructive emblem of the benefits requested from God. As a great fire, by its intense heat, softens and liquifies the metals thrown into it, purifies them from refuse, and renders them easy to be formed into any mould—as the heat of the fire causes a considerable agitation

* Micah i. 3, 4. Hab. iii. 3, 4.

agitation in the waters set over it, we entreat, O Lord, that thou, by thy providence and grace, wilt so soften, purify, and bring us into conformity to thy holy will, that thou wilt raise among our enemies such commotions, as may alter their dispositions toward us, and open the way for vindicating us from their power and influence.—*To make thy name known, &c.* The supplicants here specify some important ends that might be attained by the answer of their prayers, namely, that the glorious attributes of Jehovah would be thereby illustriously manifested. By this argument the Church frequently urges gracious audience and answer to their supplications, as in Psalm cxliii. 11. and in Jer. x. 21.—*That the nations may tremble at thy presence.* That those who have been adverse to our interests, and acted toward us in a cruel oppressive manner, may be constrained to acknowledge that God is with us of a truth, and be filled with awe and dread on beholding the remarkable displays of his adorable providence, in his marvellous grace toward us, and his just displeasure at our enemies—That, in consequence thereof, the kingdoms of the earth may sing forth the honour of his name, and make his praise glorious, who is terrible in his works, and through the greatness of whose power his enemies shall submit themselves*.

3. When thou didst terrible things *which* we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.

These words obviously refer to the same tremendous exhibition of the glorious majesty of God, to which there is allusion in the preceding verses. He wrought wonders in the fields of Zoan, and inflicted on the Egyptians those dreadful plagues, whereby he punished them, and wrought astonishing deliverance for his people Israel. He divided the sea, and opened

* Psal. lxvi. 2, 3.

ed for them a safe passage into the land promised to their fathers, whilst he overthrew Pharaoh and all his hosts in the great deep. He afterward descended on mount Sinai, from whence he promulgated his law with august pomp and grandeur, so that the mountains are said to have flowed down at his presence. These memorable events, with the many unexpected deliverances he wrought for them, are recollected, in order to strengthen faith and hope in the mercy and omnipotence of Jehovah, who was entreated to exert himself again as in days of old.

4. For since the beginning of the world, *men* have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, *what* he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

Gracious regard to the prayer here presented to God, is urged by another argument, taken from the future more glorious manifestations of Divine grace and power expected to be enjoyed. The supplicants express their persuasion, that Jehovah would do for them things greater and more illustrious than he had ever performed in times past; and that he would make known to them the salvation accomplished by the Messiah, wherein the glory of the Lord is revealed. The apostle of the Gentiles, in his first letter to the Church of God at Corinth, cites the words before us, with some variation, to shew the superior excellence of the mysterious wisdom manifest in the gospel of Christ, (which proceeds directly from God, and is ordained to the glory of the saints) above the wisdom of this world.—And that the wisdom, which cometh from above, far surpasses human ability to devise and understand it aright, unless revealed by the Spirit of God.—*For since the beginning of the world, when God created all things by the Word of his power, and formed man upon the face of the earth, in no period, and*
in

in no portion of this globe, have men heard, perceived, or seen the glorious things which God hath in reserve for his peculiar people. They could never have been discovered, and communicated to mankind by means of their external senses, nor could they have been contrived and disclosed, as the apostle Paul declares, by their intellectual powers. The utmost efforts of human genius are incapable of finding out and representing the preparations of infinite wisdom and love, to consummate the felicity of God's servants; nor when revealed can they spiritually understand them as they ought, until God is pleased to give them eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand. The words under consideration plainly intimate, that the eternal God hath laid up in his counsels and covenant, in his predictions and promises, those precious blessings which have never been fully known, and far transcend our conceptions. The manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, his profound humiliation, his painful, ignominious death for transgressions he never committed; his triumphant resurrection from the dead, his glorious ascension into heaven, the operations and graces of his Spirit, the gathering in of the Jews, with the fulness of the Gentiles, the preservation of the Church amid virulent opposition and persecution, and the invisible glories of the future state.—These things, and such as these, neither sense, nor reason, nor imagination could have suggested; and the doctrines, wherein these sublime topics are disclosed, are but imperfectly comprehended in this present state. The most inquisitive people after knowledge, in times the most devoted to research, never attained complete acquaintance with them.

O God, besides thee, &c. There is none that perfectly knows, beside thee, the inestimable benefits and glorious privileges which thou hast made ready, and will confer on him that waiteth for thee—Who, in the exercise of intense desire of enjoying thy presence and blessing, of pleasing expectation, of the fulfilment of thy promises, of cordial submission to thy holy will,
of

of persevering fortitude in surmounting every difficulty that lies in the way of attaining thy salvation, in the use of appointed means, diligently endeavour to attend to all the intimations which thou givest of thy good pleasure. He who thus patiently waits on God, may be assured that there shall be an end, and that his expectation shall not be cut off. From this circumstance the supplicants derive encouragement in their prayers, hoping that God would do still greater things for them than he had done for their ancestors, by revealing more clearly to them his great salvation.—How powerful the motive!—My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him. Wait for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plentiful redemption. Let the animating truth we have been considering not only command your attention, but excite your admiration, accompanied with humble patient waiting for God.

5. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, *those that* remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth, for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

The supplicants applaud the Divine conduct toward the righteous, whilst they humbly confess their own unworthiness. They acknowledge, that the calamities with which they had been visited were to be ascribed not to the severity of God, but to their own perversity and iniquity. The interview here intended, is not that which is merely occasional and transient, as one may meet a foe or a friend, and immediately pass on, neither receiving hurt or benefit from what has happened. The expression seems to allude to what is recorded Exod. xxix. 42, 43. where the Lord promised to meet with the children of Israel,

and to speak unto them at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. He graciously condescends to meet with the persons who are here described; to testify his friendship, and to manifest himself to them; to admit them into fellowship with him, and to converse with them; to impart to them the knowledge of his will and of his glory; to hear their requests, to confer on them the pledges of his love; and to refresh them with renewed communications of wisdom, strength, and consolation. How kind and beneficent the designs of God, when he meeteth him

That rejoiceth. &c. not with the joy of the hypocrite, which is but for a moment, and terminates on a thing of nought, but with that sublime joy which is experienced in the paths of God's commandments, and in the ways of wisdom, which are ways of pleasantness! The joy felt by the servants of God in the paths of righteousness, is much more excellent and permanent than that which results from the most refined sensual gratifications, or from the contemplation and enjoyment of the most valued earthly possessions. It flows from the Spirit of God, being one of his blessed fruits; it is cherished by connection with the most glorious objects; and maintained by the exercises of faith and obedience to God, and delight in the law of the Lord.—With this joy is combined the working of righteousness, the most excellent employment wherein man can be engaged; for we know, 'that every one that doeth righteousness is born of God *.' The children of the Most High have assigned to them the work of righteousness, the effect of which is peace; and by the faithful performance of this pleasant and honourable service, they distinguish themselves from the hypocrite and the profane; they shew that they are partakers of the grace of God in truth, and that they resemble Jesus Christ the righteous. Thus employed, God meets with them and blesses them. This consideration ought to stimulate us, my brethren, to be steadfast and immovable,

* 1 John ii. 29.

able, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know, that our labour is not in vain in the Lord*.

That remember thee in thy ways. That maintain a habitual sense of God upon their minds, so as to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. That frequently recollect with pleasure the hand of God in the dispensations of his providence and grace, and call to mind his mercy, power, and faithfulness, which are therein conspicuously displayed—That lay up in the repository of their memories the knowledge of God's ways, which they have acquired, that they may bring it forth on every proper occasion—That cherish lively apprehensions of the presence and perfections of Jehovah, and have such impressions of them on their hearts, as are requisite to excite veneration, love, and confidence. These are the delightful exercises of him that God meets, with whom he carries on a pleasant and profitable correspondence.—It highly concerns us attentively to consider if these particulars are descriptive of our character, that we may learn whether or not we may justly expect to enjoy the precious privilege here mentioned.

Behold thou art wroth. We see with grief that thou, O Lord, art greatly displeas'd with us, and that thine anger hath been long kindled against us. For many generations have we sustained the awful effects of thy just indignation against our iniquities. And who can abide thy fierce anger, who causest the heavens to tremble, who makest the earth to stagger like a drunken man, who rends the rocks, who tears up the mountains, and shakes the foundations of the universe? Avert from us, we beseech thee, thy dread displeasure.—*We have sinned.* ' We humbly acknowledge our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against thee. Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory; remember, break not thy covenant with us†.' We are entirely in thy hand, who hath

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

† Jer. xiv. 20, 21.

hath given us to know that the Lord our God is gracious and full of compassion, that he delighteth in shewing mercy. Encouraged by the mercies of thy nature, and the declarations of thy word, we confess before thee our trespasses — *In those is continuance.* In those ways of thy clemency and compassion, which we recollect with admiration and gratitude, thou didst long persevere. To our fathers, notwithstanding they grievously provoked thee, thou continuedst to shew favour and kindness. And though we have persisted in our transgressions, and refused to return to thee, we are not consumed; and we trust that thou hast preserved us to be illustrious trophies of thy ever-enduring grace.—*And we shall be saved.* We despair not of deliverance from the calamities and miseries wherein we have been long involved, and of participating in that great salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all people. We trust that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, even as others.

6. But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

The penitent supplicants confess to God the miserable, polluted spiritual state into which they had fallen by their iniquities.—*But we are all as an unclean person.* I think person is a more preferable word to supply here than that inserted by our translators. I suppose there is allusion to the legal impurities contracted under the former dispensation, and particularly to the case of the leper, which was truly deplorable. Seized with an infectious, loathsome, and dangerous disease, he was excluded, according to the law of Moses, from the camp of Israel. Afflicted with this miserable distemper, he was ordered to depart from the society of his brethren, (lest the contagion might

might have spread among the people) covering his upper lip, crying unclean, unclean. The person labouring under this calamity exhibited a striking emblem of sinners yielding to the power of impenitence and unbelief. All we, say those who are penetrated with an affecting sense of sin, all we resemble the leper, or unclean person, under the Mosaic œconomy. We are contaminated by the leprosy of sin, which hath diffused its malignant influence throughout all our faculties, so that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing. Like an inveterate canker, it consumes, and endangers the whole body; it renders our condition perilous in the extreme, and incurable by medicine of human device. Nor is this the pitiable state only of a few persons, but all are acknowledged to be infected by this mortal malady.—What greatly aggravates our distress is, that

All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, &c. Our professed obedience to the moral and ceremonial law, our religious performances and works of charity, done when destitute of inward purity and integrity of heart, when acting under the power of infidelity and impenitence, are unavailing in the sight of God. They are as rags, totally insufficient to cover spiritual deformity, to introduce with acceptance into the Divine presence, or to found a title to happiness and salvation.—Yea, they are as filthy rags, which ought to be renounced with detestation, as incapable of covering blemishes, and of rendering people well pleasing to the Lord.—*And we all do fade as a leaf.* The decayed, degraded condition of those who make this acknowledgement, is illustrated by a well known similitude. When flourishing under the auspicious care of Jehovah, we resembled a thriving tree, covered with leaves and fruit; but now our frail decayed state is significantly represented by the withered leaf that hath lost its verdure and beauty, and is ready to drop to the ground. The comparison is just and instructive. The Jewish people, after having attained to eminence and dignity, soon began to lose their former excellence

lence, and being divested of the distinguishing privileges they had enjoyed, they were subjected to many injuries and instances of contempt.

And our iniquities as the wind have taken us away. Our many atrocious sins have not only made us decay as a leaf ; but, like a stormy wind, which, by its violence and impetuosity, carries every thing before it, they have driven us away from God, and the enjoyment of the pleasant things whereby we were felicitated in the land of Canaan. Our transgressions have not only deprived us of our excellency, but they have carried us away into captivity and servitude, into infamy and disgrace, dispersed us over the earth, and involved us in manifold direful calamities.— His humbling confession, brethren, we may justly adopt. We are all impure, tainted by the pollution of sin ; our righteousnesses are no more to be accounted of than filthy rags, all our goodness fades like the leaf and ‘the flower of the field.’ Hath not the comely profession of not a few withered and dropt off as the leaves in autumn ? And hath not our iniquities carried us also away from God, and the possession of some of the most important prerogatives that we once enjoyed ? On these accounts, let us humble ourselves before the Lord, and earnestly implore his mercy to pardon our sins, and his grace to help us in this time of need.

7. *And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.*

The general formality and luke-warmness with which devotional exercises were performed, whereby God was greatly provoked, is here acknowledged and lamented. The confession must be understood with some restriction, for, in its most extensive sense, it doth not agree to any period of time. The expression
certainly

certainly intimates, that there were very few who called upon God, and fought him in the manner he prescribed—who invoked his sacred name, and intreated his favour with their whole hearts—who, when engaged in prayer, mixed with lively faith, true repentance for sin, unfeigned humility, placid resignation, firm reliance on the mediation of the great Redeemer, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to help infirmities in this important duty. There were but a very small number who, in this sublime exercise, realized the Divine presence, who cherished entire dependence upon God, who maintained delightful intercourse with him, and who received from him the promised blessings of salvation.—*That stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.* The want of vigorous endeavours in prayer, which is here confessed, supposes opposition and difficulties to arise, which must be combated and surmounted, that, like Israel, we may wrestle with God; and, as princes, by strong and honourable exertions, we may have power with God and prevail. These are well known in the experience of men of God, and need not to be here enumerated. The acknowledgement imports, that there are but few who strenuously endeavour to get free from that imbecility and langour that hath seized on people in general, and, by lively faith, apprehend him who is the righteousness and strength of his people, that they may vanquish every obstacle which might hinder importunity and perseverance in prayer. Alas! the number of those is so small, who, assuming the confidence of faith, assiduously aim to conquer natural despondency, and those discouragements that lie in the way of access to the throne of grace, by taking fast hold of the mercy, power, and faithfulness of Jehovah.—In this complaint we have also just reason to join, with sorrow and contrition of heart. How rare the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man, that availeth much! In the prospect of performing duty, let us earnestly solicit the Divine direction and assistance; and in the view
of

of meeting with affliction, let us, with pious ardour, request his presence and support.

For thou hast hid thy face, &c. In some cases the servants of God may imagine, that he withholds from them the light of his countenance, whilst in reality they stand high in his favour. In some instances the apprehension is just and well founded, as with those who here make this complaint. Having, for a long period, abused the bounties of his providence, and the blessings of his grace, the Lord God withheld from them the communications of his favour and the influences of his Spirit, and made them feel the dreadful effects of his sore displeasure. The clouds having arisen, which intercept clear views of the glory and loving kindness of the Lord, they lament that God did not behold them, as formerly, with a pleasant countenance, but that in anger he had turned away from them.—*And hast consumed us, &c.* The Hebrew word signifies, to melt metals, to dissolve hard substances, and is here employed to denote the destruction of the Jewish civil and ecclesiastical constitution, whereby they were formed into a solid compact body. On account of their enormous wickedness, the Lord God, in his righteous administration, divested them of that wisdom, strength, and fortitude, for which they were celebrated in times of old, and so consumed their nation, that the residue is wandering over the earth, despised and contemned, eagerly desirous of earthly things, indifferent to the better and more enduring substance.

8. But now, O Lord, thou *art* our Father: we *are* the clay, and thou our potter, and we all *are* the work of thy hand.

The continuance of the Divine displeasure, whereof the posterity of Israel hath long felt the direful effects, is here deprecated on account of the intimate relation which subsisted between God and them.—

But

But now, O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who gave us existence, and formed us into a nation, who adopted us for thy children, and invested us in the possession of many invaluable immunities, we humbly crave, that thy tender compassion may be extended to us, and that we may experience thy paternal love and care.—*We are the clay, &c.* to which, according to thy good pleasure, thou gavest form and beauty, making us vessels unto honour, fitted for thy service.—*And thou our potter*, who hast right and power to dispose of us as seemeth good in thy sight, and therefore we presume not to find fault with thy dispensations, which we know are all conducted by perfect wisdom and righteousness.—*We are all the work of thy hand.* Thou madest us, not we ourselves; we are thy people, the sheep of thy pasture. Our connection with thee we remember with pleasure and gratitude, and thence we are encouraged to hope, that thou, whose workmanship we are, wilt have mercy upon us, and never forsake the work of thine own hands. Perfect that which concerneth us, O Lord; thy mercy endureth for ever.

9. ¶ Be not wroth very fore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we *are* all thy people.

The awful displeasure of Jehovah is entreated to be averted, or mitigated, because of the relation wherein the supplicants stand to God, who had appropriated them to himself as his peculiar people. They request not that God would altogether remove from them the tokens of his anger, but, referring that matter entirely to himself, they entreat that his wrath, which had gone forth against them, may be allayed. They plead not to be freed from rebukes, for these might be in some measure necessary for their benefit, but that the Lord God would not chasten them in his hot displeasure.—*Neither remember iniquity for ever.*

Humbled under the mighty hand of God, they implore that their transgressions may not be perpetually kept in remembrance, that they may not be punished as they deserve, and that they may no longer feel the terrible effects of the anger and indignation of Jehovah. According to thy gracious word, remember our sins no more, that we may for ever celebrate the praises of thy forgiving mercy.—*Behold, see, we beseech thee, &c.* We pray that thou, O Lord, wilt attentively consider our forlorn circumstances, and the dreadful calamities which we have suffered, who are the people thou hast chosen above all the people that are on the earth. We glory in this connection, and therefore we expect from thee all that relief which our case urgently requires. We are thy people, and should not a people seek unto their God.

10. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.

How affecting the representation of the very deplorable state to which the cities and country of Canaan hath been reduced. The cities of Judah, wherein God was well known, which were in a peculiar manner his property, and the objects of his special care, are denominated holy, because they were inhabited by people devoted to God, and professedly employed, according to his appointment, in his worship and service. These cities the Almighty hath turned into a barren desert, because of the wickedness of them that dwelt therein.—Zion, that once highly-favoured mountain, whereon stood the royal palace and the temple of the Lord, with the beautiful range of hills situated in its vicinity, which were highly cultivated and very fruitful—All that pleasant land is laid waste, and converted into a desolate wilderness—Jerusalem, that was great among the nations, and prince among the provinces, that was celebrated for its strength, beauty, and populousness, is become a heap

heap of ruins, sits solitary as a widow, and is become tributary *. Because of the wickedness of the inhabitants ' the Lord hath done that which he devised ; ' he hath fulfilled his word, that he had commanded ' in the days of old ; he hath thrown away, and hath ' not pitied †.' If you enquire, why is this astonishing reverse of condition ? wherefore hath these calamities come upon this renowned city and country ? the answer is given in few words ‡, ' For the greatness of ' their iniquity.' Memorable are the words of God by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. ii. 17. ' Hast thou ' not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God.'

II. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire ; and all our pleasant things are laid waste.

The magnificent temple which was built on mount Zion by Divine appointment, agreeable to the plan delivered to God's servant David, for the honour and worship of Jehovah, is doubtless the house which is here intended. It was a holy house, because solemnly consecrated to the service of the Lord God, who there exhibited visible symbols of his gracious presence, and received the homage which was offered to him by the people he had appropriated to himself. It was likewise a beautiful edifice, built of the finest stones, of the most exquisite workmanship, and elegantly finished with cedar wood and pure gold. Such was its unrivalled splendor and superb appearance, that it became the admiration of the world ; and princes, delighted with its grandeur, were induced to submit themselves unto God §. In this holy and beautiful house, the servants of Jehovah celebrated his praises, presented their sacrifices and supplications

* Lam. i. 1.

† Lam. ii. 17.

‡ Ezek. xvi. 15. *et seq.*

§ Psal. lxxviii. 29.

plications before him, and blessed his name who made heaven and earth. They extolled and praised him with psalteries, harps, and cymbals, and in songs composed by the sweet fingers of Israel, Moses, Deborah, David, Asaph, and others.—This house was burnt up with fire, which was thrown into it by some of the soldiers in the army of Titus, after the first and second temple had stood about 1130 years.—*And all our pleasant things are laid waste.* Our pleasant land, which was the glory of all lands, our sumptuous houses, wherein resided the gay and affluent, our rich vineyards, gardens, and fields, our goodly furniture, and the costly utensils belonging to the temple, with our pleasant acquaintances and friends—These, all these, are laid waste and destroyed. Justly may we say the joy of our heart is ceased, our dance is turned into mourning; the crown is fallen from our head; wo unto us that we have sinned*.

12. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

The penitent Jews conclude their supplications by humbly expostulating with God, that he would consider their desolate condition, and arise and plead their cause. Wilt thou, O righteous Judge of all the earth, decline any longer to appear for our deliverance, now that thy beloved land is desolated, thy cities laid waste, thy temple buried in ruins, and thy once highly-favoured people scattered among the nations, under evident tokens of thy displeasure? Shall the injuries and the contempt they have suffered for a long period remain longer unnoticed by thee, to whom belongeth recompense?—*Wilt thou hold thy peace*, and not interpose in behalf of the posterity of thy servants, after having observed them and their interests despised and trampled upon for many ages? Hold not thy peace, O God of our praise; speak and act.

* Lam. v. 15, 16.

act, we beseech thee, for the conviction of our adversaries, and the relief of thy afflicted people, and let us not evermore be the objects of scorn and derision. We presume not to prescribe what thou shouldest say, or what thou shouldest do. We leave these things entirely to thy infinite wisdom and righteousness; but this we earnestly request, that thou wilt not afflict us very sore for a long period of time. Build up Jerusalem, gather together the outcasts of Israel. O Lord our God, turn our captivity, and have compassion upon us; return and gather us from all the nations whither thou hast scattered us*.

* Deut. xxx. 3.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE penitent among the Jews having complained to Jehovah of the severity of his judgments toward them, he is introduced in this chapter, vindicating the ways of his providence, and defending the consummate rectitude of his dispensations. He begins by shewing, that he had invited into the communion of his Church those heathen nations which had not hitherto called upon his name, from whence might be clearly evinced his infinite readiness to shew mercy to transgressors—And that the people who had been called by his name, by forsaking him, and obstinately persisting in horrid wickedness, in abominable idolatries, and detestable hypocrisy, became the objects of his righteous vengeance, and are set forth as an example of his just severity against sin, ver. 1—5.—The reasons of this Divine procedure are next specified, which display at once the riches of his grace, and the righteousness of his administration, ver. 6, 7.—Our prophet then proceeds to shew, that all the posterity of Abraham were not to continue under the wrath of the Almighty, that a remnant of them, according to the election of grace, should be saved, to whom the promises made to their progenitors were to be accomplished, ver. 8—10.—To convince the perfidious and incorrigibly wicked of the atrocity of their crimes, he describes the awful punishment which they are destined to suffer, ver. 11, 12.—After which he represents, by a striking contrast, the remarkable difference of the state of the upright worshippers of Jehovah, and that of the idolatrous, superstitious, and wicked; in consequence whereof the name of God was to be honoured over all the earth, ver. 13—16.—The chapter concludes with an elegant description of the felicity and glory of the Church of God, when he shall disclose the riches of his grace, and liberally confer upon them the most precious benefits, ver. 17—25.

CHAP. LXV.

I am sought of *them that asked not for me* :
 I am found of *them that fought me not* : I
 said, behold me, behold me, unto a nation *that*
 was not called by my name.

The Lord God justifies his procedure in calling the Gentiles into the communion of his Church. The apostle Paul quotes these words, with some variation, in his epistle to the Romans *, when treating of the vocation of the Heathen to the enjoyment of the privileges contained in the gospel. The apostle thus introduces the citation: 'Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that fought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.' Our prophet, endowed with a noble, heroic spirit, and acting with undaunted intrepidity in the service of God, asserted the truth before us, notwithstanding he well knew the Jews could not endure with patience this doctrine, at which they were greatly offended. The philosophers among the Gentile nations were engaged in searching for the wisdom of this world, that cometh to nought. The common people were employed in pursuing earthly objects, suited to gratify their corrupt inclinations; whilst those who pretended to more religion than others, were occupied in attending to superstitious rites and foolish ceremonies. God was not in all their thoughts; for, according to Divine testimony, 'there is none that understandeth and seeketh God †.' None that seeketh him with the whole heart, with fervour and diligence, as he requires. Though he sent them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and filled their hearts with food and gladness, that they should seek him, if haply they might feel after him and find him, they knew him not, nor glorified him as God.

But

* Chap. x. 20.

† Psal. xiv. 2.

But after it pleased God to reveal himself to them by the ministry of the gospel, and to pour out his Spirit from on high, what a mighty change ensued. Sinners of the Gentiles fought, with earnestness and assiduity, acquaintance with the word and salvation of the Lord, and inquired early after God.

I am found of them that sought me not. Such is the astonishing goodness and grace of Jehovah, that he hath manifested himself to those who asked not for him, and who were not solicitous about his salvation. The Divine conduct toward the heathen nations verifies this comfortable truth; and memorable instances of individuals, who experienced this mercy, are recorded in Scripture, and impressed on the minds of many, which serve to illustrate and confirm what is here asserted. Need I mention Saul of Tarsus, and Zaccheus the publican, as having found that salvation which they did not seek to obtain. Indeed the fountain of mercy was disclosed when we enquired not for it, and the refreshing streams issuing from that blessed source are sometimes conveyed to those who seldom, if ever, requested the benefits they impart.—If the Lord is found of them that sought him not, if he answers before they call, what may not be expected by those who ask, and seek, and knock. Seek then, brethren, the Lord with earnestness and importunity, assured that they who are thus employed, shall not want any good thing*.

I said, behold me, &c. The Lord, having manifested himself to the heathen world, repeatedly calls upon them, by the ministry of the word, to fix their attention upon him. Turn away your minds from every object that would attract your thoughts, and steadily contemplate the glorious proofs I have set before you of my infinite majesty and adorable grace, who, though highly exalted above all blessing and praise, waits to be gracious, and exalted in shewing mercy. Acquaint yourselves with me, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto you. Look unto me, all the
ends

* Psa. xxxiv. 10.

ends of the earth, and be ye saved. Behold me with earnest desires of enjoying my favour, which is better than life, and of participating in my salvation, exhibited in the everlasting gospel.—To intimate the high importance of complying with this requisition, the call is repeated, *unto a nation* (saith God) *that was not called by my name.* This urgent demand, which affords a rich display of marvellous condescension, and earnest solicitude for the happiness of mankind, hath been often made on people of this description. To those nations who called not upon God's name, but had recourse, for the solution of their doubts and difficulties, to magicians and astrologers, to soothsayers and oracles, from which they expected direction, hath the word of salvation been sent. Even to people sunk in ignorance and superstition hath God made himself known, and hath addressed the warmest and most pathetic invitations, and thus prevented them with the blessings of his goodness.

2. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way *that was* not good, after their own thoughts.

The reason is assigned why the Lord God rejected the obstinately wicked part of the Jewish nation, and shewed mercy to the heathen.—Spreading out the hands is a gesture used by persons who endeavour to persuade those whom they address to comply with their requests or admonitions. The expression intimates, that under the former dispensation, God, by his servants the prophets, and by the ministry of John the Baptist; and afterward by Jesus Christ, and his apostles, warmly urged and expostulated with the Jewish people, to induce them to accept of his mercy, and to obey his precepts. In this affectionate manner did God testify the utmost readiness to extend to them the blessings promised to their

fathers, and his desire of their penitent return to him. These kind entreaties God continued all the day, during the whole time of the Mosaic œconomy, and even to the conclusion of that dispensation, until, by their perverse obstinacy, they provoked God to reject them.—The apostle Paul, writing to the saints at Rome *, plainly declares, that Israel were the people of whom our prophet speaks, to whom God spread out his hands. Often did they rebel against God; they refused his wise counsels; they despised his reproofs; they would not hearken to his wholesome admonitions; they crucified the Lord of glory; they persecuted his apostles, and rejected his glorious gospel.—*Which walketh in a way that is not good.* This was uniformly their practice, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, in the land of Canaan, in prosperity and in adversity. Notwithstanding entreaties, admonitions, and reproofs, they obstinately persisted in their evil ways, as is abundantly evident from the sacred writings. They followed the imaginations of their own hearts; they walked contrary to God, and would not obey his voice; and therefore, as the surest mark of his displeasure, and the heaviest punishment of their disobedience, he gave them up to walk in their own counsels.

3. A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face, that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick.

The froward and rebellious people of Israel, to whom God had in vain manifested his tender regard, are farther described as addicted to the most odious superstition. Uninfluenced by a sense of the omniscience of Jehovah, unawed by his authority, undimmed by his power and righteousness, they committed, under his inspection, the most abominable

crimes;

* Chap. x. 21.

crimes; they avowed their gross disobedience, and affronted him as it were to his face. By this flagitious conduct, joined with the basest hypocrisy, they provoked him to anger, and excited his just displeasure, of which they were made to feel the direful effects. Nor did they proceed in this vicious course on some extraordinary occasions only, when under the influence of strong temptations; but, regardless of their manifold obligations to the service of God, this was their uniform, constant practice.—Some of the idolatrous rites that they observed are specified in the following words:

That sacrificeth in gardens, &c. They did not present their offerings to God in the sacred place where the solemn worship of Jehovah was required to be performed, but in gardens and groves, where they might have opportunity of attending to various prohibited superstitions and impure rites, in the retirement and shade of these sequestered places.—*And burneth incense on altars of brick.* The crime for which the posterity of Jacob are here reprov'd, consists in treating with contempt the express order delivered by the Almighty, Exod. xxi. 24. *et seq.* where the altars on which they offered sacrifices to him were required to be made of earth, or stone that was not hewn. In disobedience to this Divine appointment, they constructed altars of brick, covered with plaister, whereon were engraved hieroglyphical representations and inscriptions.—This article of the charge conveys to us the important instruction, to which we ought carefully to attend, namely, that all our acts of Divine worship ought to be performed in the manner which God hath prescribed in his word, that they may find acceptance in his sight.

4. Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels.

Isaiah proceeds to delineate the superstitious, forbidden customs observed by those with whom God was greatly offended. The burying-places and tombs in Judea, being situated at some distance from the towns and cities, were made so large, that living persons might reside in the entrance, or court, before the caves, which was commonly about six cubits square. In these gloomy, solitary receptacles, many took their residence, from the persuasion that the souls of the deceased remained, for some time, near the corpses they had left, that they might consult on interesting topics with the departed spirits.—*And lodge in the monuments*, erected in order to perpetuate the memory of some illustrious men, or of some remarkable event, with which they were connected or had achieved. Solicitous to become acquainted with some unknown or future circumstance, they resorted to those retirements, where they expected to receive that information from spiritual intelligences, which God alone could reveal.—*Which eat swines flesh, &c.* This kind of food was expressly forbidden to be used by the posterity of Israel under the former œconomy, in the statute recorded Lev. xi 7, 8. Eating this sort of flesh by that people, after this strict prohibition, must have been highly displeasing to the Lord, and is here reckoned among the flagrant crimes whereby they provoked the Most High—*And broth of abominable things, &c.* Highly pleased with the prohibited idolatrous practices wherein they indulged, they preserved portions of the sacrifices offered to idols, and parts of those animals which to them were unclean, whereon they feasted with their friends and neighbours.

Such were the foolish, superstitious, and forbidden customs to which the rebellious people of Israel were addicted, whereby they exposed themselves to the dread displeasure of Jehovah. Though the several parts of this discourse are primarily applicable to them, yet as the crimes here recited exhibit a just represen-

tation of the sins of many professing Christians under the New Testament, who, departing from purity of faith, and the prescribed institutions of Jesus Christ, are chargeable with gross hypocrisy and regard to idolatrous rites, we ought to consider ourselves deeply interested in what is here said. If we obey not the calls and commands addressed to us in the gospel; if the homage we present to God is not instituted in his word; if it is not offered to him through Jesus Christ, the altar appointed to sanctify the gifts brought before him under the new œconomy of grace—If our services are regulated by human traditions, decisions, or pretended revelations, and not by the sacred records of Divine truth; if they are contaminated by the pollutions of the world, and the corrupt principles of those who serve not God, but their own bellies; if we carry with us into the presence of God those things which he hates, and, like the Pharisees of old, make clean the outside of the cup, but within are full of extortion and excess, our character exactly corresponds with that which is delineated in the verses under consideration.

5. Which say, stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou: these *are* a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

The language which is here introduced, discovers, in those who adopt it, the most detestable pride, overweening self-conceit, and base hypocrisy. It plainly intimates, that they esteem themselves much better than their neighbours. Do not approach, but stand at a distance from me; I am pure and thou art unholy, and therefore I avoid intercourse with thee. Such a vain speech is a sure indication of an arrogant, haughty spirit, which is an abomination to the Lord. The excellent ones of the earth, men who are eminently holy, far from thinking of themselves more
highly

highly than they ought to think, far from speaking contemptuously of other people, though inferior to them in goodness, by their unassuming conduct, manifest true humility and self-denial. Whereas insignificant people, destitute of real worth, often over-rate themselves, and despise those who much surpass them in goodness and usefulness, as did the Pharisees, and as their successors in temper and practice do to this day. Concerning persons of this description, the Lord God declares—*These are a smoke in my nose, &c.* They are most disagreeable and offensive to him who hateth a lofty look and a lying tongue, the certain indications of an arrogant, deceitful man. Pride and self-conceit, of all sins seem to be most odious to God; and throughout the Sacred Record, many signal proofs are exhibited of his perfect abhorrence of this sin, which is here branded with a peculiar mark of infamy. People acting under the influence of this corrupt passion, are as a fire that burneth all the day, which consumeth themselves, and proves extremely dangerous and destructive to those with whom they are connected, as well as hateful to God; the more fuel that is laid to it, the more strongly it burns.—Would you then, brethren, avoid this detestable conduct, pray earnestly to God for a humble spirit; recollect your ignorance and meanness, the disorders of your hearts, and the follies of your lives; and contrast with them what you observe in those around you that seems to be good and laudable, and in this way endeavour to cherish lowly sentiments respecting your own qualifications and importance. Thus aim to quench the fire, that would burn continually.

6. Behold, *it is* written before me, I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom.

The certain retribution of the crimes above mentioned, is announced to be irreversibly determined by the Lord, who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. In the first part of the verse, there seems to be an allusion to the decisions pronounced by princes or judges, which are recorded to serve as precedents to establish their fixed resolution, and as rules whereby their future procedure is to be regulated. —In reference to this custom, the Lord God calls upon those who have committed these great evils, which he threatens to punish, to consider that he hath them ever in remembrance, and is irrevocably determined that they shall receive a just recompense. —*I will not keep silence*, and suffer such notorious transgressors to pass without the just reward of their deeds. I will not refrain from inflicting deserved punishment on such atrocious wickedness; I will not conceal my just indignation against the enormous sins committed by those who profess to be my people; but I will assuredly manifest my dread displeasure by the severity of my judgments.—*But will recompense*, &c. I will proportion their punishment to the magnitude of their crimes, and make them know and see what an evil and bitter thing it is that they have forsaken me, and that my fear is not in them. In this awful manner, doth the Almighty declare, he will proceed to execute righteous vengeance upon presumptuous transgressors, after his abused long-suffering comes to a period. Prior to the time wherein this prediction was fulfilled by the Romans, he had intermixed his judgments with great mercies; but when he finally requited the Jews as a nation, for all their wicked ways, he acted according to the most perfect equity.—To rouse from security those who put far from them the evil day, and to convince them the more effectually of the absolute certainty of the approaching calamities; and that the dreadful foretold events might make the deeper impression on their minds, the assurance is repeated once and again. For promoting these useful purposes, the Spirit of God often urges, by his servants

servants the prophets, the important declarations they were intrusted to deliver, as in the instance before us.

7. Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, (saith the Lord) which have burnt incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.

The reasons of the severity of the threatened judgments are here subjoined by the Lord himself. Your iniquities, who have been restored from captivity at Babylon, whereby you have degraded yourselves, indulged in gross wickedness and odious hypocrisy, whereby you have rejected the salvation offered to you by the Messiah, offended me, and deserted my service—These are the procuring causes of the calamities you are to suffer—And the iniquities of your fathers, who before that captivity were addicted to all manner of idolatry and superstition, whereby they became like to the heathen nations that know me not. As a strong proof of their defection from my worship, *They burnt incense upon the mountains*. Notwithstanding they were strictly commanded *, ‘utterly to destroy all the places wherein the nations ye shall possess served other gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree, and to break down their altars,’ &c. The subsequent conduct of this people, who were exceedingly prone to adopt the idolatrous rites of the heathen, plainly shewed that this was indeed a wise and necessary precaution. Notwithstanding the strict prohibitions delivered on this subject, instead of sacrificing in the place to which they were required to bring their offerings, they presented their sacrifices, and burnt incense upon the mountains, the hills, and high places, as we learn from
many

* Deut. xii. 2.

many passages of the Old Testament. By acting in this manner, they disobeyed the authority of Jehovah, they derogated from his glory, they reproached his perfections and ordinances, and encouraged neighbouring nations to revile and speak evil of the God of Israel, whose worship they had deserted, and whose laws they had violated.

Therefore will I measure, &c. By suiting my judgments to their sins (saith the Lord) I will fully repay all their transgressions. Though they were my peculiar people, who were called by my name, and blessed by me above all the nations of the earth, yet after they have obstinately persisted in rebellion against me, and filled up the measure of their iniquities, I will requite their former wicked works, and render into their bosom a just recompense for all their evil ways and doings.—These and similar predictions, relative to the destruction of the Jewish people, announced at different times by different prophets, unconnected with each other, and accomplished in their season, demonstrate the perfect righteousness, and exact foreknowledge of Jehovah, who is acquainted with all the actions of men in every period, and renders their sins subservient to the advancement of his glory. Though the fulfilment of ancient prophecies be delayed, yet nothing shall fail that he hath foretold; his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.

8. ¶ Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one* saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing *is* in it: so will I do for my servants sakes, that I may not destroy them all.

The Lord God solemnly declares, that the awful punishment he threatened to inflict on the posterity of Israel should be moderated, not toward the wicked, but with respect to his chosen generation, who were

to be saved from direful calamities, even as Noah was rescued from the deluge, and Lot from the destruction of Sodom. A remnant was to be saved, according to the election of grace. The subject is illustrated by a similitude taken from the gathering of grapes in the time of vintage, when the bad and spoiled ones are thrown away—He who hath the inspection of this business, observing some clusters of good grapes, that might yield excellent wine, directs that they shall not be cast away, or injured, but be carefully preserved.—*So will I do, &c.* The application of this comparison is not difficult to be understood. Jehovah declares, that he who orders all the affairs relative to his Church, will not permit his upright worshippers to be rejected and destroyed with the ungodly, but will mercifully spare them amid the multitude of transgressors destined to perish—That those who are united to Jesus Christ, the true vine, who possess a living principle of faith in God, and in his Son, who are full of the blessing of the Lord, replenished with the graces of his Spirit, and bring forth those good fruits which are acceptable in his sight, shall be delivered from the terrible calamities inflicted on the wicked and hypocritical. This prediction was remarkably verified when the Jews were cut off by the Romans, and their civil and ecclesiastical state was terminated. At this eventful period, many of the disciples of Jesus Christ escaped the general desolation. For their sake God did not destroy all that people, but separated his servants from those devoted to misery and death. For their sake, our Lord declares, the days of calamity were shortened, which had they been prolonged, no flesh could have been saved*.

—What inestimable blessings are the servants of God to those places wherein they reside! What gracious regard doth God shew them in the Son of his love! what honour hath he put upon them, in perilous times, by not only delivering them from danger, but, on their account, sparing families and cities! How highly,

* Mat. xxiv. 22.

highly, then, ought they to be esteemed, on whom rests the blessing of the Lord, and who are of essential benefit to the societies with which they are connected.

9. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.

In this and the verse which immediately follows, the Lord God promises to bestow upon his chosen people the blessings of his providence and grace, whereby they should not only be rescued from the calamities by which the wicked were cut off, but be elevated to the possession of very important advantages. The subject, introduced in the preceding verse, is so explained and illustrated, that two things seem at once to be intimated, the one exhibiting a strong resemblance of the other, and serving to adumbrate what is chiefly intended. The Almighty declares, that he would raise up a numerous posterity to the patriarch Jacob, who was surnamed Israel, to whom, with his servants of the tribe of Judah, he would give the secure possession of the mountains in the land of Canaan, which in prophetic language are called the mountains of God. That rich country they were to inherit, as the portion assigned to them by Divine providence. This circumstance serves to represent a much more momentous event, to which the prophecy seems especially to refer.—The upright worshippers of Jehovah, the genuine disciples of Jesus Christ, who, I suppose, are principally intended, were not only to be delivered from the destruction in which great part of the Jewish nation were involved, but to enjoy the precious blessings prefigured by the benefits wherewith that people had been favoured in the land of Palestine. The spiritual posterity of Jacob, the children of God, shall be invested with the sacred

facred privileges, represented by the advantages peculiar to the descendants of that renowned patriarch. They shall be honoured with the gracious presence of God; they shall have access to his throne of grace; they shall be admitted to communion with him in the exercises of his worship; they shall be favoured with his gracious protection; and be solaced with the fruits of his abundant goodness, wherein they shall greatly rejoice.—*And mine elect shall inherit it, &c.* My chosen people and faithful servants, diligently employed in my service, shall have an honourable title and indubitable claim to all the privileges and blessings contained in the exceeding great and precious promises of my word, in consequence of their intimate relation to me and the Mediator of the new covenant.

10. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have fought me.

Sharon was remarkable for the fertile fields, the rich pasturage, the fine flowers and fruits with which it abounded, and for the small inclosures wherein flocks of cattle rested at noon and in the night. This figurative expression may signify, that the people of God, who are the flock of his pasture, shall be favoured with abundance of the best spiritual provision, to which they shall have easy access, and feed on with pleasure, in the most agreeable tranquillity and repose.—*And the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in.* This pleasant and fruitful plain, situated near the city Jericho, was the first place in the land of Canaan on which the children of Israel entered the possession. It had this name given to it, because that Achan, or Achar, who took of the accursed thing, contrary to the express command of God, was there stoned to death. This valley was given to them

as a door of hope, or ground of encouragement to expect that God would grant them, in due time, the whole promised inheritance, with complete victory over their enemies. In this place, our prophet foretels the herds shall lie down, after having fed to the full on the luxuriant pasturage which the valley afforded. More than temporal good things, which the words literally denote, are doubtless included in this prediction. Our minds must rise from the literal to the figurative and spiritual sense of the prophecy, in order to comprehend its whole import. Both expressions used in this verse serve to intimate, that the Lord God will conduct his servants, who seek him with steadfast hearts continually, into the most eligible situations, wherein they shall enjoy those mercies and privileges, which shall prove pledges and preludes of the precious blessings whereby they shall be fully satisfied, in the green pastures of his word, and beside the still waters of the sanctuary.

11. ¶ But ye *are* they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink-offering unto that number.

Isaiah, in the name of Jehovah, addressing his countrymen, the apostate Jews, specifies four of the crimes on account of which he denounces against them awful judgments.—1st, *Ye are they that forsake the Lord.* Ye have committed two great evils, in departing from the fountain of living waters, and hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water*. Notwithstanding the high privileges which the Almighty hath conferred upon you, you have most ungratefully deserted his service, rejected his authority, and preferred the worship of dead idols to the worship of the living and true God. By these detestable practices you have provoked him to anger.—2dly,
That

* Jer. ii. 13.

That forget my holy mountain, the place that I appropriated for you to perform my solemn worship, and to bring my offerings, that you might serve me in the beauty of holiness, and enjoy the symbols of my gracious presence. This mount Zion, sacred to the purposes of devotion, ye have neglected, unmindful of the privileges ye might have enjoyed, and the manifold obligations ye lie under to have honoured me in the place that I appointed.—3dly, *That prepare a table for that troop*, &c. The Hebrew words, rendered troop and number, were probably names given to the sun and moon, to which the Jews were prone to yield idolatrous worship *, and which were anciently adored by the Syrians and Phenicians. These celestial luminaries were the objects of early veneration and homage, as is evident from the caution given to the Israelites by God's servant Moses †, where he bids them, take good heed, lest they corrupt themselves—'lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and 'when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, 'even all the host of heaven, thou shouldst be impelled 'to worship them.'—4thly. Notwithstanding, for them they prepared a table, after the manner of the heathen nations, and offered to them those drink-offerings which ought to have been presented to the true God.—I suppose the words admit of a more refined spiritual sense, and may comprehend a more improved kind of superstition and idolatry, of which they are guilty who worship, beside the living God, those who by nature are no gods, and who direct the homage they yield to him, not through the one Mediator only, but through the merits and intercession of a number of advocates, on whose interposition they place great confidence. Such people come under this description, and expose themselves to the awful judgments mentioned in the following verses.

12. Therefore

* Jer. vii. 18.

† Deut. iv. 15. *et seq.*

12. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear, but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose *that* wherein I delighted not.

Awful punishment is denounced by the Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, against the profane, idolatrous, and hypocritical, on account of the enormous crimes that are expressly specified. Those who, from false and unworthy apprehensions of the blessed God, worship him, not according to his own prescriptions, but in a manner suited to their own foolish imaginations, who forsake the Lord and serve other gods, shall suffer the punishment of the sword, or be slain by other hostile weapons employed for their destruction. And though the sword may seem to devour promiscuously one as well as another, yet the superintending hand of Providence shall prevent it from exceeding the number assigned to that calamity.—*And ye shall bow down to the slaughter.* As ye have prostrated yourselves before the idols that ye have served, so ye shall have the just retribution of your crimes; ye shall bow down to receive the fatal blow, whereby as sheep ye shall be slaughtered. The reasons of this threatened judgment are subjoined in the following words.—*Because when I called ye did not answer, &c.* By the profusion of blessings I have conferred on you; by the severe chastisements I have inflicted on you in the course of my providence; by the intimations of my will given in my law; by the instructions of my servants; the remonstrances of conscience; and the motions of my good Spirit, I have called upon you to attend to the things that belong to your peace, and to avoid the evils and dangers you have incurred. Notwithstanding I have called to you in these various ways with peculiar earnestness,
and

and spoken to you on the most interesting subjects, ye did not answer or regard. How astonishing, that the Almighty sovereign of heaven and earth should have spoken to his people, and they would not reply; that the heavenly Father should have addressed his children, and they would not hearken; that the all-wise God should have instructed those who would not attend; that the Lord of all should have offered mercy, which men would not accept!—Are there not many among us to whom God hath spoken, who refuse to hearken to his voice, and to desist from their transgressions? They are suspicious of God's willingness to save them, whilst they continue averse to come to the Saviour, that they may have life. They suppose, that were he as willing to save them as they are to be saved, they would not be in the smallest danger. The very reverse of this is the truth; for the chief part of the salvation which God calls us to accept, consists in deliverance from the love and practice of sin. Now, there are not a few who consider freedom from the service of iniquity as a bereavement, or confinement, rather than a favour and privilege, and therefore decline to obey the voice of the Lord.—*And did evil before mine eyes, &c.* The expression may be understood in its utmost latitude, comprehending every error, in principle and practice, committed by the Jews, contrary to what God had prescribed for their observance. God required from them spiritual worship, they were pleased with subjection to carnal ordinances; God required them to be denied to their own righteousness as the ground of their acceptance, they stumbled at this stumbling-stone, and went about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting to the righteousness which is by faith in the Mediator. The sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite heart, whereas they appeared before him with minds elated by pride and vain-glory. In this manner they acted under his immediate inspection, whose eyes go to and fro through the earth, beholding the evil and the good. In these, and other respects

respects, they exhibited a striking representation of those, who, whilst they perform some external rites and duties, are indifferent to the spiritual services which are acceptable unto the Lord.

13. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed:

14. Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.

In these verses, a striking contrast is stated between the happy condition of the servants of God, and the miserable state of idolatrous, obstinate rejecters of Divine institutions and Divine precepts. To give the greater solemnity to this prediction, it is introduced as the determined purpose of the Lord God; and, to claim the greater regard, every article commences with a note of attention.—*Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, &c.* Those who are devoted to my fear, and do the things that please me, shall not only be blessed with temporal good things, suited to their necessities, whereby they shall be supported and comforted, but they shall feast with delight on precious spiritual blessings, and be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of the Lord, and the sacred provision of his house, whereby they are nourished and strengthened. They shall eat and be satisfied, and praise the Lord*.—*But ye shall be hungry.* Ye who forsake the Lord, who neglect his instituted worship, and do evil before his eyes—Ye shall be reduced to miserable circumstances, wherein ye shall be destitute of every thing necessary to gratify your craving appetites. And having ungrate-

fully rejected the urgent invitations given you, to come into the kingdom of God, and to enjoy its privileges, ye shall be for ever excluded from the enjoyment of them, and feel those consequent painful sensations that arise from disappointment and want.—*Behold, my servants shall drink.* They shall have abundance of those temporal comforts that are requisite to fulfil their just desires, and to yield them entire satisfaction. They shall drink of the water of life, that flows in the river of God's pleasures, from the fountain of life, and from thence receive abundant refreshment and consolation.—*But ye shall be thirsty.* Ye who are of the above description shall feel intense desires of enjoying those things that might relieve you from the painful sensations whereby ye shall be distressed, which ye shall never be able to attain.—*Behold, my servants shall rejoice,* with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in the manifold, pleasing testimonies they receive of God's providential care and kindness; in the choice mercies that he vouchsafes to bestow; in the ordinances that he hath instituted; in the privileges he confers; in the services he requires; in the sublime pleasures he imparts; and in the glorious prospects he opens to their view.—*But ye shall be ashamed,* ye shall be covered with shame and confusion at the recollection of your egregious folly, and your enormous transgressions, which shall be highly aggravated by your disappointment in not attaining the objects from whence you expected to enjoy considerable benefit.

Behold, my servants shall sing, &c. Their joy shall be unfeigned, proceeding from the inmost sensations of their souls; and being exceeding great, it shall be expressed in songs of praise to him who hath gratified their desires, granted their requests, and fulfilled their expectations. The counterpart to this felicity and joy is truly affecting.—*But ye shall cry for sorrow of heart,* &c. Through excessive, pungent grief, and vexation of spirit, your joy shall be turned into mourning, and your laughter into heaviness; and ye shall weep and howl

howl for the miseries that are come upon you.—How diametrically opposite the conditions which are here described! the one a state of affluence, felicity, and joy; the other a state of want, misery, and sorrow. Choose you then, this day, whom you will serve: whether will you serve the living and true God, who exalts those who do his will to honour and happiness, or dead idols and lying vanities, subjection to which shall terminate in ruin.—These predictions were in some measure verified at the commencement of the new œconomy of grace; and in following ages, when the servants of the Most High did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, rejoicing in his abundant goodness and great salvation, whilst the wicked, who rejected Jesus Christ and his gospel, were overwhelmed with calamity and sorrow.

15. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name.

The terrible punishment of these wicked apostates from God was to be so extraordinary, that their destruction should be considered as a remarkable instance of the severity of Divine judgments. The name, which it is foretold they shall leave as a memorial of their iniquity, is that of ‘unbelieving, disobedient, gainsaying, and rebellious,’ the designations often given to them in the Scriptures. The prediction imports, that they were to be covered with ignominy and reproach; that the punishment of their crimes should be so great, that when a curse was imprecated by any one on the objects of his execration, he would introduce the people here spoken of as exhibiting an example of a very grievous malediction. The subject may be illustrated by an instance

stance somewhat similar, mentioned by Jeremiah*, where it is thus written: 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Ko-laiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah—Of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, the Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire.'—*For the Lord God shall slay thee, &c.* A change of persons, from the plural to the singular number, occurs in this verse, which may intimate, that every one whose name is left for a curse, shall suffer the awful punishment threatened by Jehovah. Thou shalt be cut off from the earth by dreadful temporal calamities, and a violent death, and thou shalt perish from among my people by means of spiritual judgments. The nation shall be desolated, the temple, and the external worship to which thou art attached, shall be abolished.—This prophecy was remarkably verified by the terrible slaughter made of the Jews by the Romans, when their holy house and Jerusalem were laid in ruins, and great part of the people perished.

And shall call his servants by another name. The name whereof our prophet speaks is not an empty title, but such a designation as includes a just description of the real character and privileges of those on whom it is conferred. The appellation of CHRISTIANS, whereby the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ were distinguished from Jews and Gentiles, seems intended in this prediction. This honourable name, of extensive import, given to the Church, (though almost lost through ignorance and error, hypocrisy and formality) is a small tribute of respect due to Jesus Christ, from those who are saved by his grace, and subject to his authority. A Christian, indeed, possesses the most excellent and honourable name, that can be attained in this present life; that intimates his resemblance to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Prince of the kings of the earth; that he possesses his
Spirit

* Chap. xxix. 21, 22.

Spirit and temper, solicitous to imitate his perfect example. It denotes, that from just views of his supreme dignity, and the inestimable blessings contained in the salvation of Christ, in reliance on his all-sufficient mediation, the Christian forms his sentiments and practice, according to the sacred model his Lord and Saviour hath exhibited. This amiable name, derived from these circumstances, is, I suppose, the designation by which Jehovah foretels that his servants shall be called. The Greek word, used in Acts xi. 26. where it is written, 'that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch,' signifies, they were Divinely warned that this should be their name, that they were so called by Divine appointment, agreeably to the prediction before us.—Though it may not be in your power, brethren, to acquire eminent worldly dignity and reputation, you may nevertheless attain the honour of bearing his name and image, in whom the whole great family in heaven and earth is called. Be it therefore the object of your assiduous pursuit, to exemplify the Christian temper and conduct, and to walk worthy of him in whose name you were baptized, and who hath called you to his eternal kingdom and glory.

16. That he who blesteth himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the God of truth, and he that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

Our prophet foretels, that the happy period was approaching wherein the name of the God of salvation was to be known, honoured, and worshipped over all the earth. One who blesses himself, and who would be indeed blessed, must possess those advantages which are requisite to his temporal happiness, such as
health,

health, prosperity, tranquillity, liberty, riches, and long life ; with those blessings which are necessary to spiritual felicity, such as remission of sins, peace with God, true holiness, Divine protection and consolation. Now, that one may bless himself in another, he must depend upon him, and derive from him all those precious benefits which are essential to his felicity. The august Person, in whom the servants of God, called by a new name, and partakers of a new nature, bless themselves, is the God of truth, the only true God, or the God who is truth. The Hebrew word, here rendered truth, denotes the certainty, the veracity, the importance and excellence of what is affirmed, and is used adverbially by our Saviour, to give solemn assurance of the truth of what he declares, as in John iii. 3. where he thus speaks, ‘ verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ It is one of the names which he hath assumed * ; where he thus writes to the Angel of the Church of Laodicea : ‘ These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God,’ the true Messiah, who came in God’s great name to be the Light of the world, and the Life of men ; to make known the way of salvation, and to obtain eternal redemption for us. He is the true God †, possessing real divinity with the eternal Father and Holy Ghost, and claiming the same perfections, operations, and worship, which belong to the true God alone. Christ Jesus is also the God of truth, inasmuch as he is the truth and substance of all the prophecies, types, and figures, instituted under the former œconomy. He is the true tabernacle, the true bread, the true Prophet, Priest, and King of his Church. The words, then, under consideration, give the real and proper character of Jesus Christ, concerning whom it is foretold, ‘ That men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed ‡.’ Whilst worldly men bless themselves in the abundance

* Rev. iii. 14. † 1 John v. 20. ‡ Psal. lxxii. 17.

dance of their wealth, the servants of God shall bless themselves in Jesus Christ, who is their Saviour, their righteousness, their strength, their portion, and who to them is all in all.

And he that sweareth in the earth, &c. An oath is an act of sacred homage, wherein the attributes of Jehovah are acknowledged, and a solemn appeal is made to the true Omniscient God, the avenger of falsehood, as witness of the truth of what is asserted. Swearing by the God of truth denotes, that in this manner people shall testify their respect and subjection to him that liveth and reigneth over all. The prediction plainly intimates, that the true God shall become the only object of religious worship; that the nations of the earth, being emancipated from idolatry and superstition, shall honour him, and give him the glory due to his great name.—It is added, as a reason of this happy change in men's sentiments and practice—*Because the former troubles are forgotten.* Idolatry and superstition being abolished, and the Gentile nations brought to the faith and obedience of the true God, many causes of the disorders and calamities whereby people had been afflicted would be removed so effectually, that the very remembrance of these evils should be obliterated; nor would they be called to mind as in times past. The wrath of God, which had been revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, to the senses of mankind, as matter of experience and certain fact, shall not be so visible, nor so recollected, as in former periods.—*And because they are hid from mine eyes.* The horrid scenes of profanity and human depravity, on account of which the wrath of God came upon the children of disobedience, being no longer the objects of Divine observation, they shall not prove the sources of adversity and misery. The Divine judgments, which they justly merited, shall be restrained.

17. ¶ For behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

To explain and confirm the preceding prediction, the Lord God explicitly declares, that he would elevate his Church to a new and glorious condition, wherein they should be not only delivered from many evils they had suffered, but put in possession of whatever is requisite to their prosperity and felicity. This prophecy, to which we are invited to attend with peculiar earnestness, relates not to the material heavens and earth, but to an extensive mighty change, which was to be effected in the spiritual world by the omnipotence of Jehovah.—In delineating and embellishing illustrious future events, Isaiah frequently alludes to the memorable actions of former times which hold a conspicuous place in history. When, therefore, he foretels, by the Spirit of prophecy, the extraordinary happy alteration that Jehovah was to make in the state of his Church, he so describes it as if universal nature was to be renovated and changed. Nothing of this kind is more forcible and elevated than the imagery taken from the formation of the world.—*I create* (saith God) *new heavens and a new earth.* I am about to give my Church a new and beautiful form, by introducing a new dispensation of grace, accompanied with other privileges and ordinances, of superior excellence and glory to those hitherto enjoyed, with new modes of sacred acceptable worship. Under this œconomy of grace, which was established by Jesus Christ and his apostles, the whole appearance of the spiritual world is altered, both in respect of the intercourse of mankind with God, and with one another. The false gods that the nations worshipped, are removed; the earth is possessed by inhabitants of a new description, who worship God, who is a spirit, in Spirit and in truth. The
darkness

darkness that covered the earth is gradually dispelled, the shadows are gone, and the true light now shineth; the Sun of Righteousness being risen, with healing under his wings, on them that fear God's name. Even the material heavens, the sun, the moon, and the stars, and the earth whereon we dwell, serve new purposes, and are viewed in a new light by those who are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Such, if I mistake not, are the new heavens and the new earth, which the Lord God declares,

I create, and will gradually bring into existence. The material heavens and earth were made in six days, whereas those which are here intended are formed by a slower progress, that the displays of Divine power and glory, exhibited in their gradual establishment, may be contemplated to greater advantage. To make way for the City of our God, and the temple whereof he is the light and glory, the city Jerusalem, and the holy house built on mount Zion, were removed. Carnal ordinances were abolished, to give place to the sublime services now appointed by Jehovah. Heathen empires were overthrown, that the kingdom of God our Saviour might be extended over all the earth. The power of Satan shall be destroyed, that the kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, may be enlarged and established. And at last this present world shall be consumed, that the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, may appear in all their beauty and glory. Thus shall this great work of God progressively advance toward perfection, until it be consummated, to the honour and praise of its Almighty Creator and Lord.

And the former shall not be remembered, &c. These words, I apprehend, do not import that the dispensations of providence and grace, toward the Church of God under the Old Testament, should be neglected and forgotten. The prophet Malachi concludes his book with these remarkable words: 'Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, with the statutes

‘and judgments *.’ Whofo then is wife, and will obferve thefe things which are there recorded, fhall underftand the loving-kindnefs of the Lord. By carefully recollecting and ftudying them, acquaintance with the ways of God is enlarged, knowledge of illuftrious perfons and events is acquired, which ferves to eftablifh faith and other graces, and to excite to the praftice of holinefs. By comparing the Old with the New Teftament, the fuperior glory of the latter above the former may be clearly feen, whilst many of the perfons and fervices, mentioned under the Mo- faic difpenfation, exhibit inftiuctive figures and types of good things which were then to come. The ex- preffion under confideration feems only to intimate, that the privileges, the happinefs, and confolations belonging to the inhabitants of the new heaven and the new earth, were to be fo transcendently excel- lent, as to furpafs the prerogatives and attainments enjoyed of old by the fervants of God, and to efface the remembrance not only of former diftreffes and forrows, but alfo of their joys and triumphs. So glori- ous are the objects of contemplation prefented to view in the gofpel; fo fublime the exercifes wherein the Church is employed; fo noble the advantages where- with they are favoured, that the recollection of old things fhould pafs away as a vifion of the night, and be called to mind merely as paff distant objects, wherein people are little interefted, in comparifon of thofe placed before their eyes.

18. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create: for behold, I create Jeru- falem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

The fervants of the Moft High are directed to be exceeding glad in his new creation, and the flourifh- ing ftate of his Church. It becomes you to be cheer- ful, and to exult for joy in the poffeffion and prof-
pect

pect of the inestimable blessings and privileges peculiar to those who serve the God of truth. Let your joy be superior to that which results from the criminal indulgence of corrupt passions, which poison human comforts, which excite feelings of regret and disgust, and prove inimical to the practice of piety and virtue. Let it exceed that momentary mirth, which arises from the expectation of the best external advantages in a present world, which are uncertain and unsatisfying, and often interrupted by weariness, discontent, and dejection. Be you glad, with that pure and permanent joy which results from lively views of the sublime realities of the spiritual world, and which is admirably adapted to correct the intemperate effusions of extravagant gaiety. And take heed that your joy be progressive, constant, and perpetual, until, through the influence of the Spirit of joy, it become your habitual, settled temper of mind.

For behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, &c. By Jerusalem is here meant, as in many other predictions, the city, or Church of God under the new Testament. This highly-favoured community, Jehovah declares, he will create a rejoicing, or joy. The sacred writers frequently attribute to the subjects of which they treat, those qualities in the abstract, which are more commonly applied to them in the concrete. I shall explain what I mean by an example. Forcibly to express the emptiness, instability, and unprofitableness of man, the royal Poet says, in one word, 'Man is vanity *.' In like manner, God, by our prophet, calling his servants to consider the great things he was about to do for his Church, saith—*Behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.* I will render the subjects of my kingdom joyful themselves, and they shall prove a source of gladness to other people who shall view them aright. The beauty and glory of the new creation, its tendency toward perfection, notwithstanding every obstruction, the

* Psal. xxxix. 5.

the felicity enjoyed by the people of God, and the high satisfaction which he expresses in their prosperity, justly entitle them to this description.

19. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

Almighty God expressly declares, that his Church shall be advanced to such a happy state, that he himself will participate in the joy arising from their prosperous condition. This pleasing sentiment is not peculiar to this passage, but is asserted in many other places of Scripture *. It certainly denotes, that God will manifest, toward his people created in Christ Jesus unto good works, the most tender affection—that he will exercise over them unremitting care and attention—that he will view with complacency their flourishing, happy condition, as the effect of his own condescension and grace; as exhibiting the glory of his Divine excellencies, and bearing deep impressions of his infinite goodness and love. This city of the Lord, rescued from the hands of its enemies; and its citizens, freed from their vices and deformities, shall appear without those spots and blemishes whereby their native beauty and purity was stained, invested with the lovely image of him who created them.—*And the voice of weeping shall be no more heard.* These words must be understood in consistency with the order which God hath established among mankind since the introduction of sin into the world, and their present state of subjection to the awful effects of transgression against the Lord. In this view they give assurance, that, in the happy period which our prophet delineates, the people of God were to be free from public calamities, from oppression and persecution, that give rise to general sorrow and lamentation —That

* See Jer. xxxii. 41. Zeph. iii. 17.

—That private distreffes, which give occasion to grief and mourning, should be so moderated by Divine providence and grace, that, far from proving prejudicial to their best interests, they were to be rendered useful for promoting their holiness and comfort—And that such were the precious blessings whereby they should be enriched, that abundant matter of gratitude and joy in their liberal Benefactor, was to be so constantly afforded, that all just ground of complaint and sorrow shall be removed.—Learned men do not agree in their expositions of this prophecy, and in their opinions respecting the period to which it refers. Some think that it delineates the glorious state of the Church of God, when that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come. Others understand the prediction as describing the prosperous state of the kingdom of God under the new œconomy of grace. In depicting this subject, very strong expressions are used in prophecy, which require to be softened to a sense that accords to the condition of the Church on earth. Of these, a remarkable specimen occurs in the chapter now under consideration, where, in allusion to the happiness of the inhabitants of Jerusalem in ancient times, the felicity and glory of the Church of God under the New Testament, is represented in very strong and glowing colours.

20. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner *being* an hundred years old, shall be accursed.

Isaiah here foretels another ingredient, whereof the happiness of the kingdom of Jesus Christ shall consist, when arrived at eminent splendor and glory. On this verse, as to the meaning of which there hath been much controversy, I shall say little, lest I darken counsel by words without knowledge. I suppose the
word

words cannot, consistently with truth, be understood in their literal sense, and therefore it is requisite to consider what may be their figurative import.—*There shall be no more thence an infant of days.* From the time in which the accomplishment of this prediction shall commence, so copious shall be the means of instruction conveyed by the glorious gospel of Christ, that, if improved aright, and accompanied with the promised Divine blessing, there shall not be a little child in understanding. All shall possess, even babes in Christ, an extensive intimate acquaintance with the word, the ways, and salvation of God.—*Nor an old man that hath not filled his days*; whose time seems to have been only an empty space, wherein little or nothing valuable hath been done. An aged person shall rarely be found, who hath not employed his days in acts of true devotion and real beneficence, whose mind is not replenished with sacred knowledge and Divine grace.—*For the child shall die an hundred years old.* Very young persons, those in the early stages of life, shall at their decease be possessed of spiritual knowledge, prudence, Christian experience, and attainments in holiness, equal to those who have lived to old age.—*But the sinner being an hundred years old, shall be accursed.* The impenitent transgressor, secluded from the privileges of the Church, notwithstanding the many important advantages he hath enjoyed, and reaching to the utmost verge of human life, shall die accursed. Deserving the curse annexed to transgression, he shall be cast out of the kingdom of God; and, according to the Divine appointment, devoted to everlasting punishment. Such, if I mistake not, is the meaning of this abstruse prediction.

21. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

In this and the two following verses, the people of God are assured of agreeable security, and the continued enjoyment of the good things with which they are favoured. The predictions they contain are delivered in terms similar to those which were literally fulfilled to the Israelites, under the Mosaic dispensation, when they hearkened to God's voice and obeyed his commandments. They plainly intimate, that the external circumstances of the servants of God shall be comfortable, and greatly preferable to what they have been in times past; when one built, and another possessed; when one planted, and another did eat the fruits. In proof of their situation being easy and pleasant, through the peculiar care of Divine Providence, they shall build houses for their accommodation; and having built convenient habitations, they shall have the pleasure of possessing them undisturbed. This favourable circumstance may represent the comforts and stability of their spiritual state, wherein they shall be blessed with every thing requisite to render their situation pleasant and permanent.—*And they shall plant vineyards, &c* They shall be employed in the most agreeable and profitable exercises, by means of which their circumstances shall be improved, and become more and more desirable. Nor shall they be deprived, by calamity, fraud, or force, of the delicious fruits produced in their vineyards. This article may figuratively denote, that they shall be engaged in promoting the interests of the kingdom of God; and that they shall be delighted with the joyful consequences resulting, through the Divine blessing, from their prudent exertions.

22. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree, *are* the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

To illustrate and confirm the remarkable event foretold in the preceding verse, the prediction is amplified, and repeated in a form somewhat different. The servants of God shall assuredly enjoy the benefits arising from their building and planting; they shall have the satisfaction of seeing their labours, both as to temporal and spiritual matters, attended with happy effects, in which they shall largely participate.—*For as the days of a tree are the days of my people.* Declining to enter upon any curious disquisition, respecting the particular tree that might be intended by Isaiah, and the term of its continuance in a thriving state—it may suffice at present to remark, that the perpetuity of the promised blessings is strongly intimated by this beautiful similitude, whereby they are assured their prosperity shall be long continued. Their useful and pious labours shall not be soon terminated, nor shall they be interrupted or retarded by strangers. And during their long residence on earth, they shall be vigorous, flourishing, and fruitful in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God.—*Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.* My chosen people, that I have set apart for myself, that they may be holy and without blame before me in love; these chosen, excellent ones of the earth shall reap the fruits of their labours, respecting both their temporal and spiritual interests, not during a short but a long period of time.

23. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble: for they *are* the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

To intimate the absolute certainty of this desirable event, and to enliven the expectations of God's peculiar people, the agreeable assurance is repeated. They shall not be idle, but employed in work which shall prove so successful, as to be sufficient for their subsistence

sistence and comfort. They shall be free from the vexation and distress that arises from disappointment, and from being deprived of the fruits of their industry. They shall possess the advantages resulting from their labours, and the pleasing satisfaction they are suited to impart.—*Nor bring forth for trouble.* The uneasinesses and anxieties of the servants of God shall not be increased by the follies or by the afflictions of their children, which in great measure shall be restrained, or alleviated by favourable dispensations of providence and grace.—*For they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord,* on whom he hath conferred not only abundance of temporal good things, with prosperity and success; but also enriched with spiritual benefits, the forgiveness of sins, the renovation of their natures, the graces of the Spirit, and the supply of their necessities. This blessing shall extend to their offspring, who shall participate with the parents in the benediction of the Lord. This agreeable circumstance shall contribute much to increase the happiness both of old and young. What a delightful sight, to behold the accomplishment of this promise; people, with their children, enjoying the favour and blessing of the Lord!

24. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

The most delightful, profitable intercourse shall be maintained betwixt God and his servants, as a satisfying proof of their love to his presence, and dependence on his tender compassion; and of his paternal regard and peculiar care. They shall not only be favoured with immediate answers to their prayers, presented to God for things agreeable to his will, but such is the infinite grace of Jehovah, who knoweth their necessities, that he will anticipate their desires, and relieve their wants even before they express their

requests, or whilst they are employed in this exercise. Striking instances of this sort are recorded in Scripture. Whilst the prophet Daniel was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel was sent to give him a favourable reply to his supplications *. Cornelius the centurion, when engaged in prayer, was informed by an angel that his prayers and alms were come up for a memorial before God †. The Lord God declares by Isaiah, that such shall be the happy privilege of his servants at the time to which this prediction refers. Though they may imagine that God doth not hear and answer their supplications, yet they are assured that he will regard their requests; that he will accept of their persons and services, as acts of homage whereby they honour him, and acknowledge his Divine excellencies. Though angels may not descend to give them this pleasing intimation, the Holy Spirit may so enlarge their hearts, and enliven their affections, as to convey comfortable returns to their prayers. He will either grant the mercy desired without delay, or some more valuable and necessary favours than those which had been sought. What an inestimable privilege! in which every one ought to be solicitous to participate. By the speedy answers of prayer, you may obtain the fulfilment of your just desires, the supply of your wants, the redress of your grievances, deliverance from troubles, and security from evil. When you find trouble and sorrow, and are deprived of health, strength, affluence, liberty, and friends, and are destitute of Divine light and consolation, by calling on the name of the Lord, you may have reason to say with the royal Psalmist, ‘ He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears and distresses ‡.’ For this you have the best security that heaven and earth can afford, the promise of the God of truth.

25. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock :

* Dan. ix. 21. † Acts x. 4. ‡ Psal. xxxiv. 4.

bullock : and dust *shall be* the serpents meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

Isaiah concludes this portion of his prophecies by foretelling the general tranquillity and harmony that shall prevail in the Church of God. The prediction is expressed in terms highly figurative and allegorical. The animals here mentioned denote people who resemble them in temper and practice, as I endeavoured to shew when illustrating Chap. xi. ver. 7. and 8.—The wolf, which is an exceeding fierce, rapacious creature, and greedy of devouring its prey, exhibits a striking emblem of the barbarous enemies of the flock of Jesus Christ, who are remarkable for savage cruelty, and eager desire to hurt and devour them. The lamb, well-known for its innocence, harmlessness, and usefulness, significantly represents the disciples of Jesus Christ, who are distinguished for humility, meekness, and inoffensive behaviour. Respecting persons of these opposite natural dispositions, it is foretold, that those of the former description, being divested of their natural ferocity, and converted to the faith and obedience of the gospel by the power of Divine grace, they shall feed together in the green pastures of the word and ordinances of God, maintaining with each other agreeable intercourse and harmony.—The lion, that is reckoned one of the strongest, fiercest, and most intrepid beasts of the forest, exhibits a proper emblem of the powerful, terrible, blood-thirsty adversaries of the people of God, who, when permitted, are ready to tear them in pieces. The bullock may be considered as symbolical of the laborious, useful servants of God, who are under the peculiar care of the great Lord of all, and employed in patient continuance in well-doing. Concerning people of these contrary tempers, our prophet foretels, that those of the former sort, being divested of their ferocity and enmity by the influence
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of the Holy Spirit, and rendered mild and peaceable, they shall familiarly feed together on the same simple provision, and be nourished by the doctrines of the gospel, which shall be most agreeable to their taste, and suited to yield them satisfaction.

And dust shall be the serpents meat. The serpent, though beautiful, is a very subtle, malicious, poisonous creature, and on these accounts may denote those who, though they assume an agreeable external appearance, are very artful and designing men, lying in wait to deceive, and, under various specious pretexts, discover implacable malice at the servants of God, whom they endeavour to seduce into ruin, and to hurt by their deadly poison. Such people shall have dust for meat; they shall feed upon those things which are as incapable of yielding substantial support and real satisfaction, as the dust of the earth. The expression may signify, that the persons intended shall in a special manner, be subjected to the curse denounced Genesis iii. 14.—that they shall be reduced to an ignominious condition, wherein they shall experience the unsatisfactory nature of whatsoever they choose for their portion. Feeling the insupportable weight of the Divine malediction, acting under the destructive influence of ignorance and error, instigated by violent vicious propensities, in a state of deep depression, they shall have recourse for support to the most trivial and contemptible objects.—*They shall not hurt nor destroy, &c.* To conclude—That the happiness of the kingdom of God may be complete, it shall be free from every pernicious, destructive annoyance; the holy mountain of God shall not be molested, or injured by fierce, insolent, and cruel enemies. And this agreeable security shall not be confined to some particular place, but shall be extended to the whole large community of the faithful. To give certainty to the predicted events, and to excite the pleasing expectation of their accomplishment in due season, these solemn words are added, *Saith the Lord.*—This prophecy, expressed mostly in a negative

a negative form, comprehends more than it seems at first sight to include ; and is intended to assure the servants of Jesus Christ, that the time approaches wherein they shall be preserved from external violence and internal discords, and be blessed with the undisturbed enjoyment of all that is requisite to their felicity.—Such, my brethren, are the new heavens and the new earth, which the Lord God hath promised to create out of the disorders and confusions which abound among the nations of this world. This glorious, happy state of the Church of God, shall be gradually introduced, and established by the omnipotence of Jehovah, whilst many alterations and desolations may precede the completion of this great work. As workers together with God, we beseech you to cooperate with him in the way of his providence, in attendance on his ordinances, and in the obedience of his commandments.—And may the Lord be with you, and never fail nor forsake you. Amen.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

SUCH is the connection and resemblance between the portion of prophecy contained in the preceding chapter, and that which is recorded in the one now to be considered, that the latter may be viewed as the amplification and the illustration of the former. Having foretold the rejection of the Jews, and the vocation of the Gentiles, Isaiah proceeds to obviate an objection, which might be urged in the prospect of these great events. It might be said on the abolition of the Mosaic œconomy, that the magnificent temple built on mount Zion, which had been erected and repaired at an immense expence for the worship of Jehovah, would be neglected and the house deserted. The Lord God introduces the solution of this difficulty, by intimating that he hath a far more superb and glorious habitation, better suited to his infinite Majesty and amiable condescension, than a temple made with hands, ver. 1, 2.—He then declares, that the sacrifices presented to him in that house by the wicked and hypocritical, were no less odious in his sight than the detestable crimes committed against the precepts of his law, on account of which awful judgements are threatened, ver. 3, 4.—He next proceeds to comfort his upright worshippers, who for his sake had suffered many injuries, inviting them to rejoice in the great success that attended the vocation of the Gentiles, which is spoken of in the figurative language of prophecy, ver. 5—9.—After which he exhorts his servants, who love the prosperity of his Church, to unite in testifying their gratitude and joy for the abundance of precious blessings wherewith he would enrich them, ver 10—14.—This is followed by an awful denunciation of terrible calamities, which shall be inflicted on the wicked and disobedient, and an explicit assurance that he will bring his chosen people to the enjoyment of delightful intercourse with himself
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and their brethren, in the exercises of his worship ver. 15—21.—In the conclusion, all the promises scattered throughout these prophecies are ratified and confirmed by Jehovah, who solemnly testifies, that in due time he will perfect the new heavens and the new earth, that the inhabitants of the world, beholding his glory, may be induced to honour and worship him who makes his Church a praise in the earth, ver. 22—24.

CHAP. LXVI.

THUS saith the Lord, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where *is* the place of my rest?

The Lord God resolves the difficulty which might arise to some people on being informed of the destruction of the Jewish temple, and the abolition of their œconomy. The subject is introduced by an expression that is truly sublime and full of majesty, which intimates his eternal, immutable existence, his infinite grandeur and magnificence. The words are quoted by Jesus Christ in his sermon on the mount, when dissuading from profane swearing *. They are referred to by the first Christian martyr Stephen, in his discourse before his death †; and by the apostle Paul, when preaching to the men of Athens ‡. They are not to be literally, but figuratively understood, as representing the immensity, sovereignty, and dominion of the Creator and Governor of the universe, whose presence fills both heaven and earth.—*Heaven is my throne*, where
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* Mat. v. 34, 35. † Acts vii. 49. ‡ Acts xvii. 24.

my glorious excellencies are most conspicuously displayed; where I exercise my authority over the universe; where my servants see my face, and, with unceasing delight, celebrate my praises; and where they partake of the most refined pleasures and joys. How exquisitely beautiful and splendid that throne which is so nobly adorned, and illuminated by consummate wisdom, and where perfect happiness and harmony reign for ever! Had we even the distant prospect of viewing this royal residence of the Most High, curiosity and expectation should excite vigorous endeavours to attain this distinguished honour.

And the earth is my footstool, entirely under my subjection and at my disposal, which I use according to my good pleasure, and where less brilliant manifestations of my presence and glory are exhibited. The universe, comprehending the heavens and the earth, is my habitation, the immense theatre whereon I display, in different ways and degrees, my excellency and majesty.—Whilst we admire the conveniencies and beauties of the footstool of Jehovah, whereon we reside, let us beware of clinging to it with our best affections, of rejoicing in it as our portion, or mourning for the loss of earthly things, as if our chief felicity were gone, and thus render them impediments in our way to the heavenly mansions. Let us often elevate our thoughts to the throne of God; let us approach him with humility and reverence; let us walk before him circumspectly and unblameably, and obey him with alacrity and cheerfulness.

Where is the house that ye build unto me? This question was anciently directed to hypocritical professors among the Jewish people, who, having decorated the temple, which of old was consecrated to the worship of Jehovah, rejected the glorious gospel of the Son of God, unconcerned to get their hearts purified by faith, and to have their lives governed by his laws. To persons of this description, whose minds were occupied about the grandeur of the material temple, little solicitous as to the adorning of the hid-
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den man of the heart, God said, 'Where is the house that ye build unto me.' The inquiry plainly indicates the little value the Almighty, to whom belongs the world and all that it contains, set on the house built for his worship on mount Zion, which was to remain no longer than the Levitical dispensation. However stately the structure ye have erected, however pompous the worship ye there perform, they are unsuitable to my eternal majesty, and insignificant in my sight. Though that house was built by my appointment, from indulgence to the posterity of Israel, as a figure of the true temple, which God hath pitched, and not man, it shall continue only to the time of the restitution of all things.—*And where is the place of my rest?* Under the former œconomy, Jehovah was pleased to choose Zion for his habitation. In the beautiful hymn, composed probably by Solomon, and sung at the dedication of the temple, the request, 'Arise, O Lord, into thy rest,' is followed with this assurance, 'The Lord hath chosen Zion—This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it*.' That typical dispensation being abrogated, the figurative place of Jehovah's rest is removed, and now, as saith the prophet, 'the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.' The place of his peculiar residence, wherein he finds complacence, is not the most superb edifice, erected by human art and power, but the hearts of the humble, and the assemblies of the faithful. There he hath fixed his habitation, there he manifests his gracious presence, there he appears in his glory and beauty, there he dwells with peculiar delight, there is the place of his rest.

2. For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the Lord: but to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is poor*, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

By the omnipotence of Jehovah all things were created, the heavens with all their hosts, the earth with all that are therein, the sea with all that it contains, the world with its fulness, all derived from him their existence. The universe, with all its constituent parts, are the work of God. By him all things were made that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him*. This important truth, established in the Scriptures of truth, we ought devoutly to acknowledge, with those around the throne, who worship him that liveth for ever, saying, ‘Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power, for thou hast created all things †.’—*And all those things have been.* All the revolutions effected in the world—all the dispensations of mercy and grace—all the awful judgments that have been inflicted on the children of men—all events, whether prosperous or adverse, have been so ordered, as illustriously to display the glory of Jehovah, who worketh all in all, and to accomplish the great purposes he had in view. The secret operations of faith and obedience, of hypocrisy and wickedness, have all been done under his inspection, whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, and who sits at the helm, steering the vessel of his Church, through the sea of this world, toward the haven of eternal rest. And will this glorious Jehovah vouchsafe to notice mean, unworthy creatures, sinful dust and ashes? Yes;

To this man will I look, &c. Attend to the character of the person he graciously regards. He is *poor* in spirit. The expression doubtless refers chiefly not to his external circumstances, but to the temper and state of his mind. He actually feels that he is an indigent, dependent creature, and that all his happiness and comfort is derived from the riches of God’s mercy in Jesus Christ. Convinced of his meanness, of his depravity, guilt, and unprofitableness,

* Col. i. 16.

† Rev. iv. 11.

ness, he acknowledges that he is less than the least of God's mercies, he earnestly implores his gracious assistance, and thankfully receives the supply of his necessities.—*And he is of a contrite spirit.* Conscious of his manifold transgressions, he hath a feeling sense of the malignity of sin; and deeply affected with the number, the atrocity, and desert of his iniquities, he is truly humbled by a penitential view of his trespasses. He highly prizes the method of relief which infinite wisdom hath devised; solicitous that he may not offend God, he patiently submits to the appointments of his Providence, and aims to yield unreserved obedience to his precepts.—*And trembleth at my word.* Reverencing the tremendous majesty of God, he stands in awe of his supreme authority; he is afraid of his dreadful threatenings and alarming judgments, desirous to understand, believe, and obey all the discoveries of his will. Nor is this tremor a symptom of culpable weakness, or base timidity, but a proof of becoming sensibility of heart. How tremendous that voice which smites the sinner, that slays the wicked, that causes the pillars of heaven and the foundations of the earth to shake!

To this man will I look, saith the Lord, with tender regard and Divine complacency, that I may advance his best interests. I will so look upon him as to commiserate him in his distresses, to assist him under his weaknesses, to direct him in his perplexities, to attend to his supplications, to make provision for his necessities, and to comfort him in his dejections. What honour, what happiness is included in this reviving assurance! The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous; he beholds the upright with a pleasant countenance, who relish the enjoyment of his favour, and the fruits of his loving-kindness. After contemplating this promise, let us adopt the prayer of the man according to God's own heart. 'Look upon us, and be merciful unto us, as thou used to do to those that love thy name*.' And let us cherish the gracious

* Psa. cxix. 132.

cious dispositions peculiar to the man who may expect the accomplishment of this comfortable declaration, spiritual poverty, contrition of heart, and profound reverence for the word of God.

3. He that killeth an ox, *is as if* he slew a man: he that sacrificeth a lamb, *as if* he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation, *as if* he offered swine's blood: he that burneth incense, *as if* he blessed an idol: yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.

Our prophet affirms, that the sacrifices offered by the wicked and hypocritical among the Jews, being attended with enormous crimes and profane rites, and not presented with pure hearts, according to the Divine appointment, were an abomination to the Lord. They intermixed impious ceremonies, and odious superstitions, with the sacrifices which they offered to the Most High; and, by perverse disregard to his institutions, they profaned his worship, they contemned his law, and defiled his house of prayer.—*He that killeth an ox, &c.* to present in sacrifice unto the Lord, whilst he indulges corrupt passions and criminal practices, is no less guilty before God than he that commits manslaughter or murder.—*He that sacrificeth a lamb, &c.* whilst he obstinately persists in transgression, is no more acceptable to God than had he offered an animal prohibited in the law to be slain for a sacrifice.—*He that offereth an oblation, &c.* unto the Lord, of whatever kind, which he professes to have dedicated to his honour and service, if he brings it with a wicked heart, acts no better part than if he offered the blood of a creature prohibited to be presented unto Jehovah.—*He that burneth incense, &c.* who brings a mixture of sweet spices, to be consumed on the golden altar before the Lord, whilst he continues in the love
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and service of iniquity, is no more pleasing to him than he that does homage to a strange or false god. The import and design of these expressions seems to be shortly this: So exceeding detestable in the sight of God are the hypocritical services presented to him, from bad principles, under the influence of vicious passions, that they are no less abominable to him than the most atrocious sins. This sentiment, with which our minds ought to be deeply impressed, is contained in the proverb, which saith, 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord *.'

Yea, they have chosen, &c. People of the above description prefer, to the undissembled performance of the service of God, the foolish devices of their own hearts, and choose rather to walk in their own evil ways, ruining to themselves and offensive to God, than in the path of his commandments. By this bad and pernicious choice, they violate the Divine law; they contemn the authority of Jehovah; they pervert his salutary institutions; and, though they know the judgment of God respecting such practices, they deliberately commit things worthy of death, yea, they take delight in what they ought to detest.—This important circumstance, exhibited in a very striking light, places the character of the acceptable worshippers of Jehovah, and the operations of their minds, in such a view, as to render them matters of great moment. Let us then, brethren, take heed that our character correspond to our holy profession; and that our conduct in the service of God accord with the spirituality of his nature, and the rule of his word, so as it may prove well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.

4. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not

* Prov. xv. 8.

not hear : but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose *that* in which I delighted not.

The Lord God declares, that he will recompense the disobedient and hypocritical, who have abused the institutions of his worship, by inflicting on them the awful judgments that they dreaded. They had perversely chosen their own ways, and took pleasure in their abominations, and therefore they are informed, that, as the just punishment of their iniquities, the Lord God would deliver them up in righteousness to the service of the corrupt lusts wherein they had indulged. They had dissembled with him in his worship, and therefore he would render unto them according to their works, disappoint their expectations, and bring upon them the calamities they most feared. What were the evils whereof the Jewish people were most afraid? They were particularly mentioned in a council of the chief priests and pharisees, of which we read, John xi. 48. ‘ If we let Jesus Christ alone, (said they) all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away our place and nation.’ They were terrified that the people would believe on him as the promised Messiah, and yield subjection to him as their king—that the Romans, consequently, who were jealous of their power, and attentive to crush every thing that had the aspect of rebellion, would send against them powerful armies, who might destroy the temple, the place of their worship, and lay waste their cities and country. These were the calamities which they most feared ; and that they might avoid them, they rejected Jesus Christ and his glorious gospel. The event of this conduct is well known to have deluded their expectations, and to have been accompanied with the most awful judgments that were ever suffered by any people. The certain, dreadful, speedy desolation of the posterity of Israel is exhibited by the prophet Hosea, under four elegant similitudes †, (insinuating the sudden, violent destruction that awaited them)

them) which may be applied to illustrate the desolation here predicted. They shall be as the morning cloud and the early dew, which were soon to disappear through the intense heat of Divine judgments; as the chaff driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney are suddenly carried away; so were the Jewish people to be violently and widely dispersed by irresistible calamities.—The causes of these tremendous judgments are specified in the following words, which are very nearly the same that occurred chapter lxxv. 12. where the reason is assigned why God would number the Jews to the sword. To what was there said, I shall not at present add any thing, but only observe, in vindication of the ways of God toward them—that they obstinately refused to amend their doings; that they were extremely averse to hearken to reproof, and would not be reclaimed; but perversely went on in their evil ways, even in the presence of God, therefore wrath came upon them to the uttermost.

5. ¶ Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word, your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my names sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

Our prophet, in name of Jehovah, directs his discourse to the disciples of Jesus Christ, who were to constitute the spiritual temple, wherein he was to dwell after the material temple was destroyed. He addresses them under the peculiar character whereby they were distinguished in ver. 2.—Ye who tremble at my word, spoken by my servants, distinguish it from the traditions of men;—who receive, believe, and obey it with reverence and awe; who lay it up in the repository of your minds, and observe its precepts with your whole hearts.—Listen with attention to the message I now deliver to you in the name of
Jehovah,

Jehovah, and consider it as coming directly from the God of the whole earth. Harken to it with faith and suitable affections, as containing what is highly interesting, and what ought to inspire you with hope, and confidence, and joy.—*Your brethren that hated you.* Those who with you are descended from the same progenitors, partakers with you of the same human nature, inhabitants of the same country, and members of the same community, who ought to have wished you well and done you good.—Notwithstanding the manifold ties by which they were bound to regard you with brotherly affection, they detested and contemned you, because you received the gospel of Jesus Christ, because of your poverty of spirit, your contrition of heart, and reverence for my word, and because of your resemblance to your master, and your unlikeness to them. This implacable hatred they discovered by casting you out, or excommunicating you, according to the prediction of the Messiah recorded John xvi. 2. where he foretold, ‘They shall put you out of the synagogues,’ &c. They have misrepresented, slandered, and reviled you, as those who turn the world upside down, as pestilent and seditious, as the filth and offscouring of all things. They have excommunicated you from their society, debarred you from the congregation of Israel, and excluded you from those advantages which other people are allowed to possess. The expression may include all the affliction and persecution which the early disciples of Jesus Christ suffered on account of their firm attachment to their Divine master.—These hardships they sustained for *my name’s sake*. On account of their steady profession of faith in the Divine mission and doctrine of Jesus Christ, which in Scripture sometimes bears this designation, as in Rev. ii. 13. where he applauds the Church in Pergamos, ‘because ‘they held fast his name, and denied not his faith.’ The language of those who cruelly treated the followers of our Saviour, was—*Let God be glorified*. Let the attributes of Jehovah be conspicuously displayed by the
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the punishment we inflict on you, as the judgment you deserve. Or the expression may intimate the contempt and ridicule wherewith the servants of the Most High were treated by their adversaries. You comfort yourselves with the hopes of deliverance, let us see if your expectations shall be realized by remarkable Divine interpositions, and the truth of your profession be in this manner vindicated. In the words of the prophet Jeremiah *, ‘ All that found ‘ them devoured them, and their adversaries said we ‘ offend not, because they have sinned against the ‘ Lord.’—*But he shall appear to your joy.* God shall magnify his name, and manifest his regard for your welfare, by defeating the hostile designs of your enemies, by vanquishing the evils to which you are exposed, and by espousing the cause that you support, and thus afford you real ground of gladness and rejoicing. ‘ He will shew you a token for good, that ‘ they who hate you may see it, and be ashamed, be- ‘ cause the Lord hath holpen and comforted you †.’—*And they shall be ashamed.* They shall be covered with disgrace and confusion when they behold their expectations frustrated, and their attempts to exterminate the disciples and doctrine of Jesus Christ prove unsuccessful. ‘ They shall be confounded and ‘ turned back, for a reward of their shame ‡.’

6. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies

These words seem to describe the terrible consequences that were to follow the appearance of Jehovah, to the joy of his people and the confusion of their enemies. I do not suppose that the voice of noise, which was to proceed from the city Jerusalem and the temple on Mount Zion, whereof our prophet speaks, was the sound of the gospel, which is not a

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tumultuous

* Chap. l. 7.

Psal. lxxxvi, 17.

† Psal. lxx. 3.

tumultuous noise ; nor the cry of the enormous crimes committed in these places, calling for vengeance, which would be inconsistent with what is said in the latter part of the verse. The vociferation here intended was made probably by those who hated and excommunicated the disciples of Jesus Christ, when terrified at the entrance of the Roman armies into the city and temple, and in the immediate prospect of perishing by the hands of their enemies. Then was fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah*, which saith, ‘ It shall come to pass in that day, that a great ‘ tumult from the Lord shall be among them, and ‘ they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his ‘ neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the ‘ hand of his neighbour.’—*A voice of the Lord, that rendereth recompense to his enemies.* ‘ The tremendous noise made by the hostile armies rushing into the city Jerusalem, laying waste the temple of the Lord, and executing deserved vengeance on a people devoted to destruction, seems to be meant by this expression. ‘ This dreadful noise may be called the voice of the Lord, to intimate, that in his adorable providence he employed the enemies of this hypocritical people to be the avengers of their impiety and wickedness, and that it should be very great, alarming, and tumultuous.—The above predictions were remarkably verified to the first followers of the Lamb of God. Their brethren among the Jews, the scribes and pharisees, who ought to have treated them with candour and kindness, hated, excommunicated, and persecuted them. God, however, was graciously pleased to interpose in their behalf ; whilst their enemies perished in their shame at the destruction of Jerusalem amidst hideous cries, the disciples of Jesus Christ lifted up their heads with joy.

7. Before

* Chap. xiv. 13.

7. Before she travailed, she brought forth : before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child.

A new subject, closely connected with the former, is here introduced, namely, the wonderful increase of the Church of God, especially among the Gentiles, represented under the beautiful figure of a woman's unexpected delivery of a child. I hope that none of you find fault, as improper, with this species of allegorical writing, wherein something is meant quite different from what the words are commonly known to express, which occurs frequently, not only in profane writing, but in the sacred books. If Isaiah knew not how to express himself, the all-wise God certainly did, and he never fails to use the language which is best adapted to the subject, and the end he hath in view. The Church is here spoken of under the emblem of a mother, and converts to truth and righteousness as her children. Her being in travail may denote her fruitfulness, that from her proceeded a numerous spiritual progeny, composed of Jews and Gentiles, who through Jesus Christ were born heirs of eternal inheritance. The speedy delivery of a man child, may intimate the sudden introduction and appearance of the Christian Church, which, notwithstanding every difficulty and danger, was to burst through all opposition into the glorious liberty of the children of God, possessed of a strong, masculine piety.—*Before her pain came, she was delivered, &c.* The apostles, and other ministers of the word, did indeed sustain great labours, and travailed as in birth, until Christ was formed in men's hearts, until they received the adoption of sons, and became members of the household of faith. Though this circumstance ought not to be concealed or overlooked, the expressions before us plainly indicate the rapid success with which their exertions and sufferings were to be attended, so that all their pains and sorrows were to be absorbed

forbed in exultation and joy. The attentive perusal of the Acts of the Apostles, and of their epistles to the Churches, clearly demonstrate the comfortable truth we have been considering.

8. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day, or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

The obvious intention of these words is to magnify and extol the surprising event, mentioned in the preceding verse.—Who hath heard of a woman's being delivered of a child before she travailed, and her pains came upon her! Who ever read, or heard of such a thing, or who hath been a spectator of such extraordinary things as these to which I refer?—*Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day?* Shall any considerable portion of this earth, inhabited by the children of men, be made to bring forth her fruits in the space of twenty-four hours? The ground requires a considerable time to put forth buds and blossoms, and gradually to ripen its fruits to maturity.—*Shall a nation be born at once?* Shall the inhabitants of such a populous kingdom as that to which we belong be born at one time? Every one knows that these are wonderful events, which have never been heard of in any country, and which are never expected to happen. ‘Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it *?’ Nothing was ever known so truly admirable and astonishing as the sudden large increase of the Church and kingdom of the living God. Nothing was ever heard, or seen, or read, comparable to

to the wonderful propagation and success of the gospel after the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. No sooner had the apostles, with their fellow-labourers, engaged in their painful work of bringing people into the family of God, and put forth their zealous efforts for this purpose, than their word, accompanied with the power of the Highest, was cordially received, and brought forth abundant fruits. The doctrine of the gospel, sown in the hearts of men, speedily sprung up, and spread with amazing rapidity throughout all the kingdoms of the earth, insomuch that the apostle of the Gentiles, writing to the saints at Rome, says, that their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world*.

9. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut *the womb*? saith thy God.

The reason is assigned of the vast increase of the children of God, at the period to which our prophet looked forward. Figurative expressions of this sort seem to have been used among the Jews, and doubtless were well understood by them. In a time of imminent danger, good king Hezekiah sent messengers to Isaiah, saying, 'This day is a day of trouble, rebuke, and blasphemy, for the children are come to the birth, and there is no strength, to bring forth †.' Great troubles were come upon them, from which they could not extricate themselves by their own wisdom and strength, and their help could come from him only who made heaven and earth. Wherefore our prophet was requested to lift up his prayer for the remnant that were left. Viewing the words before us as proceeding from the Lord God, they forcibly express this important truth, Shall I begin and not complete my work? Shall I, who in the course

* Rom. i. 8.

† 2 Kings xix. 3.

course of my providence uniformly operate for the preservation and continuance of mankind on the earth—Shall I decline to interpose in favour of my Church, and not render my word, and the efforts of my servants, effectual for producing a numerous spiritual progeny, that may be to the praise of my glory? Shall I, who open where no man can shut, and shut where no man can open, adopt such an imperfect mode of procedure, and not crown with success the exertions of my servants? Shall I sow the incorruptible seed of my word, and not accompany it with the power of my Spirit, that it may become effectual for multiplying the subjects of my kingdom? Such conduct I entirely disavow; and, by asking these questions, I place the impropriety of it in a very conspicuous light, that ye may be fully satisfied that I will not withhold my hand, but in the fulness of time grant speedy, glorious deliverance to my Church, as I have taught them to expect.—Thus it came to pass when, according to the words of the Evangelist Mark, ‘The apostles went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, confirming the word by signs following *.’

10. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her.

Those who are deeply interested in the welfare of the Church of God, are excited to the pleasant exercise of joy and gladness, on account of the enlargement and increase of that highly favoured community.—The invitation is addressed to them that love Jerusalem, who seek her prosperity, who feel ardent concern for the advancement of her interests, who cherish tender affection for her citizens; because of their relation and resemblance to God, because they are the objects of his gracious regard, and he is their Redeemer, Lord,
and

* Chap. xvi. 20.

and portion. With them are joined—*All ye that mourn for her.* Though respecting your personal interests, you have reason to felicitate yourselves, and to be thankful, you have great heaviness, and continual sorrow of heart, for the small success attending the gospel, the impenitence of transgressors who keep not God's law, and make light of the Saviour and his salvation—You are sincerely grieved at the injuries offered to the people of God, and at every thing tending to mar their beauty and happiness, or to expose them to danger and calamity. Persons of this description are required—*To rejoice and be glad with Jerusalem.* The invitation supposes that her citizens have great cause of cheerfulness. It is their peculiar happiness to rejoice in God, their only Lord, who is able to do for them beyond what they can ask or think, in the care of his Providence, in the blessings of his grace, and in the hope of his glory. The comforts enjoyed by worldly men are weak, and insufficient to solace them under the pressure of affliction; whereas, from the sources of strong consolation, to which the servants of God have access, they derive joy unspeakable and full of glory. Those who tenderly sympathize with the inhabitants of the City of the Lord, are repeatedly called to rejoice, and be glad at their increase and prosperity. This is their indispensable duty and high privilege, the exercise for which they ought to be always prepared, and in which they should greatly abound.—Pray earnestly, brethren, and use your best endeavours for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem, and then may you hope to participate in the joys of your friends and companions.

11. That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations: that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

The happy consequences of sharing in the privileges of the peculiar people of God, and participating of their joys, are represented in figurative language, suggested by the metaphor used in the preceding verses, where the Church is spoken of as a fruitful mother. Here she is said to have plenty of spiritual provision for the support of her numerous children, who are desirous to imbibe largely of her consolations. The breasts of consolation, from which the regenerated children of God receive their spiritual subsistence, may denote the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the law and the gospel, the writings of the prophets, and the apostles of the Lord. These sacred records are big with reviving comforts, which solace and invigorate the mind that is anxious to obtain refreshment. From these breasts, converts to God, who rejoice with Jerusalem, may acquire, by means of the ministry of the gospel, the ordinances of Divine institution, and the exercise of faith and hope, abundant supplies of the sincere milk of the word, which being appropriated and applied to their own use, they grow thereby, and increase in those Divine gifts and graces which invigorate and cheer their minds. From the precious promises relative to the prosperity of the kingdom of Christ, the redemption of the Church, the gift of the Spirit, and the presence of God with his people in the dispensation of his ordinances, they derive much reviving consolation.—They may receive whatever is requisite to animate their hopes, to satisfy their enlarged desires, and to nourish them up in faith, holiness, and comfort. From these rich stores they may draw forth the most pleasant and wholesome nutriment, and have their minds consoled with the hope of everlasting life, promised in Christ Jesus—*And be delighted with the abundance of her glory*, with the many excellent spiritual benefits and privileges whereby the Church of God is felicitated, and carried forward toward perfection. They shall be highly gratified, in a peculiar manner, with the presence and salvation of God, which impart true happiness,

happinefs, and fhall prove to them what the fun is to the natural world, and what the rain is to the grafs; in confequence whereof, they fhall adopt the words of the royal Pfalmift *. ‘As we have heard, fo have we feen, in the city of the Lord of Hofts.’

12. For thus faith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing ftream: then fhall ye fuck, ye fhall be born upon *her* fides, and be dandled upon her knees.

The future prosperity and felicity of the Church of God is introduced as a powerful motive to induce them to be glad and to rejoice.—Thus faith the Lord, the eternal, omnipotent, and faithful God, who will moft certainly fulfil all his promifes and predictions relative to the happinefs of his people.—Behold, attentively confider the fure ground of exultation and joy, of which I now give you explicit affurance—I will extend to the citizens of Jerufalem vaft abundance of all manner of bleffings requifite to their profperity. They fhall poffefs internal quietude and ferenity, arifing from a comfortable fenfe of my loving-kindnefs, from cordial acquiefcence in the Divine difpofals, and placid fubmiffion to my will. They fhall alfo be favoured with external tranquillity, freedom from perfecution and the annoyances of enemies. To intimate the very great copioufnefs of thefe precious benefits, they are compared to a river overflowing its banks, extending its waters far and wide, covering and fructifying the adjacent grounds. In reference to this well-known fimilitude, Jehovah declares, that he will convey to his Church, in large meafures, the ineftimable bleffings which conftitute their happinefs and glory.—*And the glory of the Gentiles as a flowing ftream.* This article of the prophecy is likewife illuftrated by a beautiful comparifon.

fon. As a flowing stream is rapidly and incessantly conveying its pure waters along the channel in which it runs, to the place of their destination, so the Lord God will impart to his people vast abundance of all those good things whereby they shall be delighted and refreshed. The glory of the Gentiles that is here intended, consists not so much in external magnificence and splendour, in sumptuous buildings and large possessions; or in riches, power, and celebrity; as in their spiritual glory, comprehending those sacred immunities and precious benefits which constitute their spiritual beauty, riches, and honour. This prediction secures the people of God in the plentiful enjoyment of all these good things. The peace and glory of the Church shall not resemble a land flood, that is soon dried up, but they shall prove like a river, or stream, which, continually receiving new supplies of water, glide gently on without interruption, until they reach the end of their course.

Then shall ye suck, &c. Ye shall derive, from the copious sources of consolation, provided for your refreshment, by means of faith and the ordinances of the gospel, seasonable nourishment and support.—*Ye shall be born upon her sides.* Ye who participate in the joys and sorrows of Jerusalem, shall be sustained in all your weaknesses and despondencies by your fellow-citizens, and be cared for by them in the most endearing, affectionate manner. Ye shall experience all the tenderesses shewn by a kind parent to her helpless, beloved children, to whom she wishes to shew every instance of benevolent attention and fond indulgence.

13. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

The Lord God assures those who are deeply concerned in the welfare of his Church, that he will con-
sole

sole them with as much tenderness as an affectionate mother does her children when disconsolate. Maternal pity, in its operations and effects, presents a faint emblem of the compassions of Jehovah toward his children, who mourn over the afflictions of his people; and to this there is here an express allusion. God doth nothing in vain; he always accomplishes the end he hath in view. Parents may try to solace the minds of their offspring when they are dejected, and yet be unable to produce the desired effect, whereas the Most High never comes short of his aim. He hath pledged his faithfulness that his servants shall be comforted; and having himself engaged to perform this kind office, he will certainly give efficacy to the means he employs, and crown them with success. Their minds shall be exhilarated by a comfortable sense of his love, by peace and joy in believing, and the sublime consolations of the Holy Ghost. In consequence whereof, they shall join with the apostle Paul in thanksgiving to God, for the manifold mercies of which he is the author, and the consolations which he is pleased plentifully to bestow*.

14. And when ye see *this*, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants, and *his* indignation towards his enemies.

The happy effects which shall result from the fulfilment of the above predictions, are delineated in glowing colours; whilst the servants of God are informed that Jehovah will remarkably appear in their favour, and that his enemies shall feel the weight of his vengeance.—*And when ye see this.* When ye shall be blessed with the enjoyment of this distinguishing felicity, beholding peace extended to the Church, and the glory of the nations flowing into it,
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* 2 Cor. i. 3.

the signal benefits wherewith ye are favoured; and the awful judgments inflicted on your enemies.—*Your heart shall rejoice*, in the rest, and peace, and consolation with which ye are felicitated, in seeing the name of God magnified, his salvation made known, his promises accomplished, and his consolations copiously dispensed.—*Your bones shall flourish as an herb*. The expression is highly figurative. The metaphor is taken from the material part of the human constitution, and applied to embellish that which is immaterial. It denotes, that all their spiritual powers shall be thereby invigorated; that their knowledge, faith, and hope, with their other graces, shall acquire new strength and stability. In allusion to plants, cherished by the genial warmth of the season, they shall assume a beautiful and prosperous appearance, as a prelude to their future fruitfulness. The words convey a pleasing idea of the benign influence that shall attend the events of providence, and the operations of grace, which shall take place at the period to which this prophecy refers.

And the hand of the Lord, &c. The mighty power of Jehovah shall work glorious deliverances for his people, he will strengthen them unto all long-suffering, with joyfulness; he will thoroughly furnish them for every good work, and enrich them with the choicest blessings. So remarkably conspicuous shall be the interpositions of the Almighty in their favour, and so important the advantages he shall confer upon them, that they shall be thankfully acknowledged, to the praise of his glory.—*And his indignation toward his enemies*. The fierce anger of Jehovah, kindled against the adversaries of his kingdom, visible in the terrible calamities wherewith they are visited, shall be well-known, and universally acknowledged as just and dreadful. The wrath of God shall be awfully revealed from heaven against those who obstinately refuse to submit to the Divine authority, who contemn the riches of his grace, and oppose his honour and interest in the world.—O that men were wise,
that

that they would be persuaded to flee from the wrath of God, which shall come upon the children of disobedience; that they would take shelter in the Rock of Ages; that they may be for ever safe from the impending storm of Divine vengeance!

15. For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

Our prophet proceeds to shew the terrible punishments which the righteous Lord will inflict on the profane, the wicked, and hypocritical opposers of his gospel and the advancement of his kingdom. In delineating this awful subject, the Lord God is represented as a mighty prince or judge, incensed with rage, coming with fire and sword to destroy his insolent adversaries. The punishment of the wicked is often spoken of in Scripture under the emblem of devouring fire, as in the 50th psalm verse 3, and 2 Thess. i. 8. According to these predictions, Jehovah will come to execute terrible consuming judgments on the wicked and hypocritical, as the certain prelude of their future condemnation and perdition.—*And with his chariots like a whirlwind.* The advent of Jehovah, to inflict righteous vengeance on his implacable enemies, shall not only be very awful, and attended with dreadful demonstrations of his wrath and fiery indignation, but it shall be exceedingly sudden. Chariots armed with scythes and javelins, driven with prodigious velocity among the enemy in battle, tore to pieces whatever came within their reach, were anciently used in war. In allusion to this practice, the instruments of Almighty vengeance are described as coming with unexpected rapidity, resembling the whirlwind, which instantly arises and carries away every thing within the circle wherein it moves. The
angels

angels, who are denominated the chariots of Jehovah*, and who are employed as the ministers of executing Divine judgments, may probably be intended by this figurative description. With them he shall suddenly appear—*To render his anger with fury, &c.* To inflict those terrible calamities which are the signs and the effects of his righteous displeasure, the just retribution of the crimes he intends to punish according to their desert—*And his rebuke with flames of fire*, which shall manifest his glorious majesty and fierce anger, and spread universal terror and desolation wherever their influence is felt and extended.

16. For by fire, and by his sword, will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many.

The preceding intimation of Divine vengeance, to be executed on the enemies of the kingdom of God, is illustrated and confirmed. The manner in which God will vindicate his own honour, and the injured rights of his Church, viz. *by fire and sword*, is truly alarming and awful. He had pleaded a controversy with them respecting their disobedience to his laws, and contempt of his government; he had represented to them, in strong terms, their sin, folly, and danger. But, as by these means they were not brought to repentance and amendment, he declares his determination to plead with them by fire and sword. The people, toward whom he foretels he would thus act, are denominated *all flesh*. The words must be understood, not as comprehending the whole human race, but only the reprobate, hypocritical, wicked part of the Jewish nation. In this restricted sense Jesus Christ uses the expression, where he thus speaks, 'Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved †.'—*And the slain of the Lord shall be many.* Those who were to be cut off by the
deadly

* Psal. lxxviii. 18.

† Mat. xxiv. 22.

deadly instruments here mentioned, shall be a very great multitude. All the adversaries of God shall be involved in these terrible calamities. This predicted tremendous destruction of those inimical to the gospel and kingdom of Jesus Christ, was remarkably verified by the prodigious slaughter of the Jewish people made by the Romans.

17. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens, behind one *tree* in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse; shall be consumed together, saith the Lord

The criminal practices here mentioned are assigned as the causes of threatened severe judgments; and the characters spoken of in verses 3. and 4. of this chapter are more fully delineated.—*They that sanctify, &c.* Setting themselves apart to some religious exercises, by certain sacred rites, in gardens and groves, having no regard to decency and appointed order, shall be among the slain of the Lord.—*Behind one tree in the midst.* I shall not trouble you with the various expositions and conjectures of commentators respecting the meaning of these words, but simply state what I apprehend is their import. Among those who should be cut off by Divine judgments, were especially to be numbered persons who, having abandoned the worship of the God of Israel, did publicly purify themselves, one after another, along with idolaters, by those foolish ceremonies which were observed by people of that description—*Eating swine's flesh*, that was strictly prohibited to the posterity of Israel in the statute recorded Lev. xi. 7, 8. 'The swine, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven footed, yet he cheweth not the cud, he is unclean unto you, of their flesh ye shall not eat.'—*And the abomination.* Among the various kinds of meat that were forbidden them, was every species of reptiles, which are included under

under this designation, Lev. xi. 41. ‘And every ‘creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall ‘be an abomination, it shall not be eaten.’—*And the mouse* is expressly mentioned among the unclean animals that were not to be used for food, Lev. xi. 29. Notwithstanding these plain prohibitions, the Jewish people were described are charged with having violated these precepts; and on that account, among many others, the awful threatening is denounced.—*They shall be consumed together*, and utterly destroyed, so as few or none shall escape.—To intimate the infallible certainty of the event these words are added, *Saith the Lord*, who faithfully accomplishes his promises and threatenings.—The prediction was literally fulfilled by the awful judgments inflicted on the Jewish nation, after they had profaned Divine institutions, and transgressed the commandments of Jehovah. Having crucified the Son of God, rejected his glorious gospel, persecuted his apostles, and indulged in the most atrocious crimes, and the most abominable superstitions, they perished; and are set forth as an awful instance of God’s righteous vengeance upon impenitent, incorrigible transgressors. This terrible destruction seems intended to represent the awful calamities which shall be inflicted on the idolatrous, the impure, and wicked, at the final judgment, when God will render to every one according to his works:

18. For I *know* their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see my glory.

The solemn truth contained in the first part of this verse may be considered as the conclusion of the preceding prediction, or as an introduction to the following prophecy.—*For I know their works and their thoughts.* Being perfectly acquainted with their miserable

ferable apostacy from my worship, with their detestable hypocrisy in my service, with their base superstitions, and their perverse disobedience to my authority—Having clear discernment of their criminal affections, their wicked thoughts, and evil intentions, the springs from whence their actions proceed, and of all the circumstances relative to every part of their conduct, I will therefore certainly execute upon them terrible things in righteousness, which they justly deserve.—Or the words may be considered as having immediate respect to what follows, and then they will import—That the Lord God, having an accurate knowledge of the odious temper and behaviour of the Jews, and of their virulent opposition to the interests of his kingdom, is determined to call the Gentiles to the faith and obedience of the gospel.—*It shall come that I will gather all nations, &c.* The time approaches, wherein Jehovah, who gathereth the outcasts of Israel, shall collect, by means of his providence, word, and Spirit, into one community, under one head, people of all nations and languages, dispersed over the face of the whole earth, though separated from each other by rivers, mountains, and seas; that, being closely united in interest, affection, and design—*They shall come and see my glory.* They shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall contemplate, with admiration, his righteousness and faithfulness, displayed in cutting off from the communion of his Church the hypocritical, the impenitent, and disobedient, who obstinately persisted in their iniquities. They shall behold with pleasure the exceeding riches of his grace, manifested in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ, promulgated in the gospel, and the wonderful displays of his love, mercy, and power, in rendering them conform to his own blessed image, in supplying their wants, and in bestowing upon them all spiritual blessings, that they may be to the praise of his glory. The glory of Jehovah, in this manner revealed, shall shine with such resplendent brightness, as to obscure all the

collected splendor of this world, and to afford happy preludes of their future felicity and dignity.—Come then, brethren, and with open face, as in a glass, behold the glory of the Lord, until you are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.

19. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them, unto the nations, *to* Tarshish, Pul and Lud that draw the bow, *to* Tubal and Javan, *to* the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.

The manner in which the nations were to be gathered into the Church of God, and the instruments to be employed in effecting this great work, are here described.—*And I will set a sign among them.* By this sign may be meant, the extraordinary gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit, whereby the apostles demonstrated their Divine mission, and approved themselves to the people as the messengers of God. With these miraculous powers they were furnished, not to promote their own personal benefit, but to advance the interests of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Of this sort were the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. By these supernatural means, the Holy Ghost bare witness to their ministry, and gave efficacy to the gospel which they preached. These were the signs of an apostle, as St Paul observes, writing to the Corinthians*, the wonders and mighty deeds wrought among them. According to our Lord's prediction, the most remarkable signs followed them that believed †. Thus did God bear them witness, both
with

* 2 Cor. xii. 12.

† Mark xvi. 17, 18.

with signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will; and verified what is here foretold, for bringing the nations to the obedience of faith.

And I will send those that escape of them, &c. The messengers that God was to employ in converting the nations were the apostles and the evangelists, with their companions, who, having eluded persecution, went forth with the Divine lamp of the gospel throughout the whole known world. By these feeble instruments did the invisible, omnipotent hand of Jehovah render the cause of Christianity triumphant; and to them, under his blessing, it owed a considerable portion of its rapid progress and surprizing success, as the Acts of the Apostles and their epistles abundantly testify. Their sound went unto all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world *.

—*To Tarshish*, a city in Cilicia, celebrated for having given birth to the apostle Paul; or Carthage, anciently a powerful city on the coast of Barbary; or a flourishing city in Spain, which formerly was called by this name.—*To Pul*, that was probably the same with Philas, an island formed by the river Nile, toward the north border of Abyssinia, on the frontiers of Ethiopia.—*Lud* may denote the kingdom of Lydia, the chief cities of which were Sardis, Philadelphia, Thyatira, &c. into which the gospel was early introduced. The inhabitants of these countries were, it seems, famous archers, and well skilled in the use of bows and arrows.—*To Tubal and Javan*. Tubal was the fifth, and Javan was the fourth son of Japheth the son of Noah. It is probable, that the land possessed by the posterity of the former, on the east of the Black Sea, might be called by the name of their progenitor. The Greeks, who are considered as descended from Javan, inhabited Achaia, Macedonia, Corinth, Lacedemon, &c.—*And the isles afar off*. Among these may be reckoned the islands of Great Britain and Ireland, with many others, situated at a great distance from

* Rom. x. 18.

from the land of Judea. The character of the people who dwelt in these regions is next mentioned.

That have not heard my fame, &c. that have not been made acquainted with my glorious excellencies and mighty deeds; with the report of the gospel concerning my good will and kindness, manifested to the children of men.—*Neither have seen my glory.* They have not been favoured with those bright discoveries of the beauty of my infinite perfections, exhibited in the revelations of my grace, which shine with incomparable splendor in the face of Jesus Christ; and consequently have not given me the tribute of esteem and praise, which they justly demand. Into these countries, which had not known the true God, but were immersed in the most odious superstitions, and addicted to the most atrocious crimes, Jehovah declares that he would send his servants, to publish the glad tidings of salvation, and to make known the blessed gospel of his beloved Son, wherein his glory is richly displayed.—The event hath exactly corresponded with this prediction. Sacred and profane history record the faithful accomplishment of this prophecy, in consequence whereof we, my brethren, are assembled to-day in this house, to worship the one living and true God, through the one Mediator, by the one Spirit. ‘Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, ‘let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days, ‘these words from the mouth of the prophets*.’ And let your voices be tuned to sing unto the Lord a new song, such as becomes renewed men to sing in the new heavens and the new earth, which constitute the kingdom of the Son of God. Publish his salvation by your words and by your actions, from day to day, until you shall resume the sublime exercise of praise in the celestial world.

20. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations,

* Zech. viii. 9.

tions, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel, into the house of the Lord.

The signal success is foretold, which should attend the labours of God's servants, who were to be sent into all nations, to gather them into the communion of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The people to be presented unto the Lord, are the brethren of those who were sent unto them, children with them of the same heavenly Father, partakers of the same Divine nature, walking by the same rule, united to each other by the bond of charity and fraternal affection, and heirs with them of the same incorruptible inheritance. All of this description, of whatever country, *were to be brought for an offering to the Lord, out of all nations.* These holy brethren, distinguished from those above mentioned, who hated and excommunicated the disciples of Jesus Christ, were converts from among the Gentiles, who turned from dead idols to serve the living God. Being reconciled to God, through the death of his son, by means of the ministry of the gospel, it is foretold, in allusion to the oblations offered to the Lord under the Mosaic œconomy, that they should be presented before him, and, with all their powers and possessions, devoted to his service, that they might be employed to his honour and glory. The manner of their conveyance next deserves attention.

Upon horses and in chariots, &c. The words literally import, that many of the converts, added to the Church under the New Testament, were to be people of opulence and respectability, desirous of becoming members of this great community with all possible expedition. In their figurative sense, they intimate, that those who were joined to the society
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of the faithful, notwithstanding every external disadvantage, should have an honourable and pleasant admission into the kingdom of God—That people of every nation shall be consecrated to Jehovah, bringing with them into the Church whatever may prove useful and advantageous to themselves and their brethren—And that the transition from Pagan superstition to Christian worship, from heathen customs to holy obedience, from gross darkness to God's marvellous light, is not only most remarkable, but that the progress is quick and gradual.—The subject is illustrated by the following similitude. *As the children of Israel bring an offering, &c.* The sacred services performed by the posterity of Jacob, under the former dispensation, exhibited, in many respects, an instructive representation of the spiritual worship of the Christian Church. The offerings brought to the house of the Lord in clean vessels by the Israelites, according to the law of the sanctuary, were designed to prefigure the offering of the Gentiles here foretold, who were to be presented to God, after having been sanctified by the Holy Ghost. The clean vessels that contained their oblations, afforded an emblem of minds purified from the pollution of wickedness and hypocrisy, accompanied with a good confession, a holy conversation, and adorned with those external virtues that correspond to their inward renovated state. The apostle seems to have referred to this prediction, where he affirms, 'That he was made a minister of Jesus Christ, ministring the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost *,'—'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.' By complying with this comprehensive apostolical exhortation, delivered in sacrificial terms, you make the becoming acknowledgment that you belong unto the Lord, in whom are united the rights of Creator,

Preserver,

* Rom. xv. 16.

Preserver, Benefactor, and Redeemer; rights supreme and unalienable, that can neither be diminished nor superseded; you perform a service which you must be convinced is perfectly equitable and reasonable, and therefore ought not to be omitted.

21. And I will also take of them for priests, and for Levites, saith the Lord.

The peculiar privilege to be conferred on some of the Gentiles, that were to be brought for an offering to the Lord, is described in reference to the offices held under the former dispensation. What is here said does not relate to the spiritual priesthood, common to all the saints under the New Testament; for then the prediction would have run thus: I will take them for priests and Levites; whereas the words are, *I will take of*, or from among them. Those who were invested, according to the law of Moses, in the offices here mentioned were, by Divine appointment, set apart to the service of God; they were employed in ministering before the Lord, and in taking care of things sacred. On these accounts they prefigured pastors, teachers, and ministers of the gospel, with other subordinate officers in the Church of Christ. Though all who believe in the Son of God are priests unto the Father, and have right to approach Jehovah, and to enter by the blood of Christ into the holiest of all; yet ministers of the word, dispensers of the mysteries of God, whose business is publicly to officiate in sacred things, possess, in a peculiar manner, the characters here assigned to them, and to them they especially belong. This promise intimates the tender care of Jehovah toward his Church, for whose benefit he would raise up eminent men, on whom he was to confer distinguished honour, that they might serve him in the gospel of his Son, and be employed in advancing the interests of his people. It also shews, that though the priesthood under the Mosaic econ-

my was confined to a particular family, and the Levitical service to one tribe; under the new and better Testament there is a change, not only in the priesthood, but also in the law *, and that God now employs men of every nation to serve in holy things. — To this prediction these solemn words are subjoined, *Saith the Lord.*

22. For as the new heavens, and the new earth which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.

We are now arrived at the conclusion of the Prophecies of this Book : which unfolds what shall be the final portion of the upright servants of God, and of the wicked and hypocritical. It commences with an explicit declaration of the stability and perpetuity of the new œconomy of Grace; of the continuance of the spiritual posterity, and renown of the faithful worshippers of the living God. Indeed, the former includes the latter; for if the new creation, the glorious work of God, shall abide for ever, the spiritual children of those whom he hath renovated to shew forth his praise must continue throughout all ages. Their existence must be of equal duration with the Church, which could not subsist but by new accessions of converts; and, therefore, in the words before us solemn assurance is given by Jehovah, that the generation of the upright shall remain before him. After those who were assiduously employed in the work of God are called off the stage of time, and enter into rest, others are raised up to succeed them in their labours; so that, according to ancient prophecies, ‘ shall be a generation to serve the Lord while sun and moon endure †.’ ‘ Instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth ‡’ Joyful thought! ‘ The children of thy

* Heb. vii. 12. † Psal. lxxii. 17. ‡ Psal. xlv. 16.

‘thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee*.’ The Church of God, scattered abroad over the whole earth, constituted of them who believe in Jesus Christ, who are furnished with the graces of his Spirit, and walk according to the rule of his word, have communicated to them the following pleasing information—That, though the former dispensation, with its rites and institutions, were not permanent, and, after sometime, were removed to make room for others that were more excellent and durable, the new œconomy of grace, which is spiritual and complete in all its parts, shall not suffer any material alteration, nor be abolished, whilst the heavens and the earth remain—And that throughout all ages, the spiritual posterity of those who love the Lord shall be continued, that being blessed in him, they may call him blessed, and ever glorify his name.—The fulfilment of this prediction is truly remarkable. Even in periods of the Church the most degenerate and corrupt, when iniquity abounded, and the love of many waxed cold, amid ignorance, error, and persecution,—in such perilous times there hath stood forth heroic confessors of the truth, who exposed the delusions of error, maintained the primitive simplicity of Christian doctrine, worship, and manners, inculcated in the Scripture. And in the present age, there are not wanting those who, animated by love to God and the Redeemer, consecrate their pious labours, and the powerful influence of edifying examples, to advance the interests of the kingdom of God our Saviour, whose names shall be transmitted with honour to following generations.

23. And it shall come to pass, *that* from one new-moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.

The joyful consequence resulting from the perpetuity of the generation of the upright, shall be regular, constant attendance on the instituted worship of Jehovah. This prediction is delivered in terms that allude to the Old Testament dispensation, when sabbaths and new-moons constituted well known periods of time, at the return of which some additional sacred services were to be performed. In reference to these seasons, the stated public worship of God, (is foretold) shall be waited on in every age by the spiritual posterity of God's servants, who are spoken of under the designation of all flesh. The expression, which is not strictly, but figuratively to be understood, is frequently used in reference to the gospel œconomy*. It describes the peculiar character of that dispensation, wherein the kingdom of God is extended over all the earth, and comprehends the nations of them that are saved: In obedience to the will of Jehovah, people of every kindred and language shall come, with alacrity and pleasure, to worship before him.—To worship God, is, from heart-felt conviction of his infinite excellencies, displayed in his works and by his word, to recognize his supreme dominion, to adore his glorious Majesty, and cordially to embrace, with esteem and gratitude, the riches of his grace, and the blessings of his salvation. The prophecy then imports, that men, in whose hearts are the ways of God, impressed with lively views of the Divine glory and mercy revealed in the gospel, and convinced that nearness to God is their highest honour and greatest privilege, shall come out of every country, and frequently and stately present themselves before his throne of grace. They shall come into the assemblies of his saints with profound humility and reverence; and, animated by the pleasing encouragements he hath given in his word, they shall approach him by the new and living way he hath

* See Psal. lxxv, 2. and Joel ii. 28.

hath opened for them into his presence.—The truth of this declaration is certified in these words, *Saith the Lord.*

24. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me : for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

The prophecy concludes with an awful representation of the dreadful misery of unbelieving, impenitent transgressors, subjected to the power of that spiritual death, which, begun in this present state, shall terminate in everlasting destruction. Even within the precincts of the Church of God, in its best estate on earth, there are some, as the prophet Zechariah observes, ‘ who will not go up to worship the Lord at Jerusalem, on whom shall be the plague wherewith the Lord shall smite the heathen who refuse to do him homage *.’ There are children of the kingdom that shall be cast into outer darkness ; who having despised the admonitions of the Most High, and rejected his gospel, their hearts have been hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Such shall be reserved as monuments of the righteous judgment of God, who will render tribulation and wrath to every soul of man that doeth evil. Those who worship Jehovah, mentioned in the preceding verse, going forth from the solemn services wherein they were engaged, will observe the deplorable state of the enemies of God, who shall be for ever excluded from his presence and glory. They shall look upon the carcases of the men slain by the word of God, who, deprived of the spirit of life, remain under the power of spiritual death. They shall see them cast out as vagabonds from the earth, as objects of Divine vengeance, to endure the wrath and curse of God, which they have chosen. Such carcases shall be viewed, by the devout worshippers of God, with horror and contempt,

as tremendous instances of the Divine severity against sin, and of the inexpressible anguish that shall be the portion of the wicked.

For their worm shall not die, &c. This figurative description of the extreme misery of obstinate transgressors, taken from objects that excite the most acute pain, forcibly intimates, that they shall for ever feel the most excruciating torments, arising from the direful effects of the wrath of God, the keen reproaches of evil consciences, and the rage of despair, malice, and other corroding passions.—It also intimates the endless perpetuity of this extreme anguish. The influence of Divine grace being suspended, the current of Divine mercy toward them being stopt, all hope of pity and deliverance is vain and fruitless—*Neither shall their fire be quenched.* This emblematical expression strongly represents the exquisite torment which the wicked shall suffer from the inexorable wrath of the Almighty, and the agonizing prospect of its endless duration. Our blessed Saviour, speaking of this awful subject, seems to refer to the words under consideration *.—*And they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.* The term all flesh must be restricted, as in the preceding verse, to the upright servants of God, who appear before him to worship. To people of this description, incorrigible transgressors against God shall be objects of abhorrence and execration, as the Hebrew word imports. Excluded from communion with God, the source of all excellence and happiness, and from fellowship with all his holy ones, devoted to destruction, thrust down into a state of contempt and misery, to sustain the punishment of all their wickedness, they shall be the objects of detestation to all the loyal subjects of the kingdom of God, who rejoice in their allegiance to Him that liveth and reigneth for ever and ever.—With this affecting representation of the opposite states of the righteous and the wicked, the characters which comprehend the whole human race, doth Isaiah conclude his prophecies.

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* Mark ix. 44, 46, 48.

God grant, for Christ's sake, that our portion may be with them that fear and love his name, that cleave to his truths, and persevere in every good work, in the pleasing hope of receiving from the Lord Jesus Christ the gracious invitation, 'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

Thus have I finished the exposition of these prophecies. The consequences attending the ministry of the word of God are truly great and awful. How solemn, how interesting the truth delivered by the apostle of the Gentiles*. To them that are saved, 'we are the favour of life unto life; and to them that perish, the favour of death unto death.' If the important truths delivered in the course of these Lectures have been received with faith and love; if they have been the means of introducing you into a state of friendship with God, of enlightening your minds, of purifying your hearts, and of conducting you in the paths of righteousness—You may expect to enjoy the inestimable immunities and benefits delineated in these prophecies.—Whereas if you have put far from you the words of eternal life, if you persist in rejecting the mighty Saviour, who is the chief subject of these predictions, and in disregarding his kind offers and salutary precepts, I testify unto you, that you shall surely perish.

I conclude by humbly acknowledging my infinite obligations to the God of all grace, the Father of mercies, who hath kept me alive to this day, and enabled me to complete this exposition. With gratitude, I ascribe to God, through Jesus Christ, thanksgiving and praise, for the direction and assistance he hath afforded me in the illustration of this inspired book. If, through ignorance, prejudice, or inattention, any thing hath been advanced derogatory to the glory of Jehovah, or inconsistent with his holy word, I am ready, on conviction, sincerely to retract and condemn it. Whatever hath
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* 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

been spoken through the conduct and aid of his good Spirit, agreeable to his will, and tending to promote the interests of his kingdom, I pray may be accompanied with his enriching benediction, and prove the means of your sanctification and salvation. I request, my brethren, your fervent prayers, that in all things I may approve myself a minister of God; that my labours in the gospel may be crowned with success; and that many of you may be my joy and rejoicing in the day of Christ. In the words of an apostle, ‘I beseech you, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me’—
May the peace of God, that passeth understanding; may the love of God, that passeth knowledge; may the abundant grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the delightful communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen and Amen.

FINIS.

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