

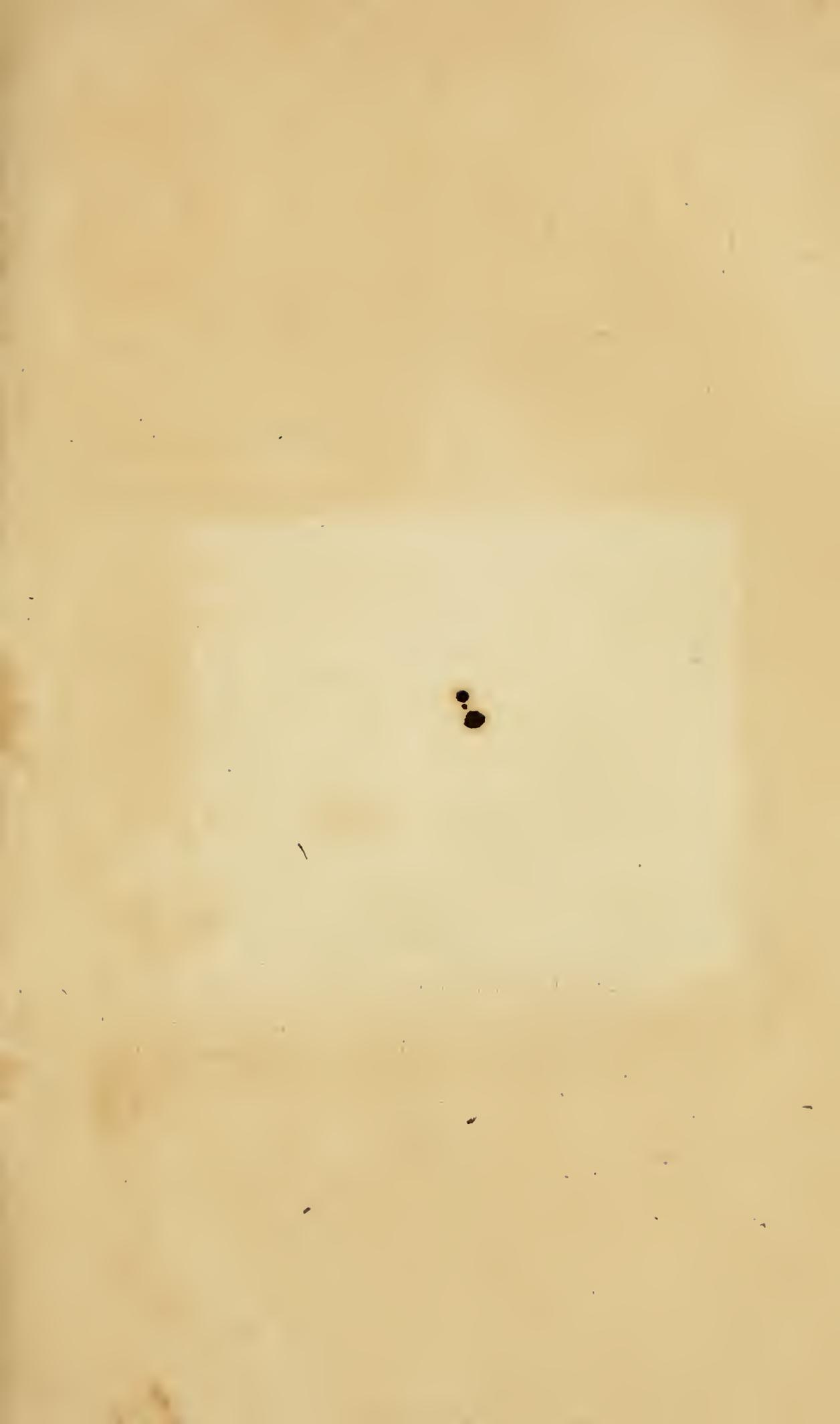
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A. H. Kitchie

I remain most truly yr
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ORIGINAL THOUGHTS

ON

VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE;

BEING

THE SUBSTANCE OF SERMONS

PREACHED BY THE LATE

REV. RICHARD CECIL, A.M.

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

TAKEN DOWN BY MRS. HAWKES,

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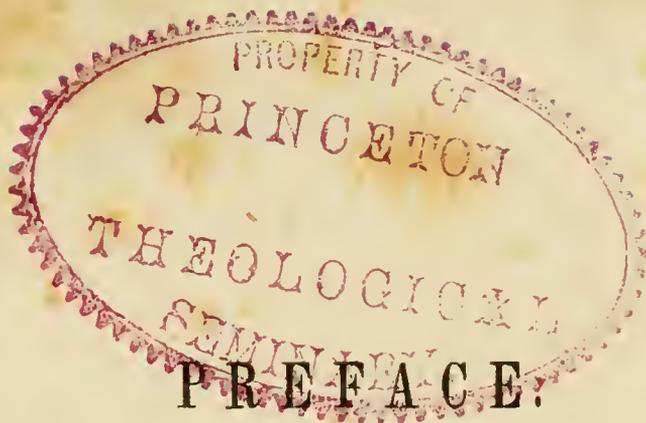
CATHARINE CECIL.

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"Holding forth the word of life."—PHIL. ii. 16.  
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NEW YORK:
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1849.





Love for the heavenly truths contained in the following pages, has led to the devotion of much time, and to persevering endeavor, in order to recover from faint pencil-notes (written partly in obscure short-hand,) the substance of sermons preached by my late revered Father, as taken down by the late Mrs. Hawkes, whose Memoirs have recently come before the public. To those Memoirs some Fragments of this nature were attached as an Appendix. From the same rich mine of Mrs. Hawkes' papers, many more sermons of Mr. Cecil's have been derived, which contain so much to interest and instruct, that it appears to be a talent committed to my trust; and I feel that I should not act as a faithful steward, if I did not offer, for the benefit of others, some of those precious materials left by my late beloved godmother, and originally intended only for my own use.

The date of the year in which each sermon was preached, has been added in every case where it could be ascertained.

This volume is now consigned to the press, in the humble hope that it may not be unaccompanied by the Divine blessing; nor prove unacceptable to the Christian public.

C. CECIL.

MOUNT FORT LODGE,
BARNBURY SQUARE, ISLINGTON,
July 29th, 1848.



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ORIGINAL THOUGHTS, ETC.

THE SCHOOL OF ADVERSITY.

So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?—
RUTH i. 19—21. [1807.]

LIFE has been, by some, compared to a journey, in which wisdom is found watching on the way, and careful where she arrives at the end. This is a great abuse of the truest wisdom: he only is wise who is made wise from above; that is the truly wise man! But how shall this wisdom be produced? and that in such a trifling, careless, inconsiderate creature as man? God prepares a school of affliction to this end. There is more real wisdom to be gathered from sanctified affliction than all the world can furnish. The text exhibits the effects of becoming instructed in that school.

A pious woman, who was called Naomi, *i. e.* blessed, was driven by famine into the country of Moab, together with her husband and two sons. Her husband was taken from her by death; and next, her two sons, who had each of them married wives of the daughters of Moab. “And the woman was left of her two sons

and her husband. Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab; for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread." . . . "So they went till they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is not this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi," *q. d.* that name does not suit my state and condition now—call me not "blessed:" I have passed a trying path since I have been from home! "Call me Mara," *i. e.* bitter; the Lord, in his providence, has called me so: "I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty." Call me, then, as the Lord has called me by this dispensation: and seeing he has called me to possess bitter things, I would remain as he has appointed.

This subject was chosen in order to SHOW THE BENEFIT OF AN AFFLICTIVE DISPENSATION. Let us look at it in two or three points of view.

1st. *This is God's mode of carrying on a heavenly education.* It is his mode of curing the idolatry of the heart. We are all idolaters by nature. It is mere trifling to say, we do not worship idols of wood and stone. If our heart departs from the Lord, and fixes upon any creature whatever, we must be cured of this idolatry. Ephraim shall be made to say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" It must not be my wife, or my children, which I call my property, nor my reputation; but it must be *my God*. It is a miracle of grace where the love of God is shed abroad in the heart of man. Whenever this is brought about, the Lord himself tells us how this is done. "I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms." Hosea xi. 3. I drew my Church "with the cords of a man,

with bands of love :” you teach your children to walk ; you do not teach them difficult things at first : I taught Ephraim—I softened his hard heart—I taught him to weep over his stiff neck—I taught him to wear the yoke—I educated him, in order to make him humble and teachable, like a little child. What can you do with your children while they are stubborn ? what can you do with the best seal, while the wax is hard ? You must soften the wax, before you can make an impression. Without this discipline and education, they would have said, “ Our tongues are our own ; who is Lord over us ?” But “ I taught Ephraim”—I softened his spirit,—I taught him that a proud reptile is a complete wretch. If the will be not broken, self-will will become the ruin of that heart. A heathen may call a proud spirit a virtue : the Bible calls it sin.

A young heedless child, whipping a top upon the edge of a precipice, is a complete picture of the levity and inconsideration of man by nature. He says, Let me be amused ; let me not go to school and be instructed ; let me not wear any yoke. But what says the Lord ? “ I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit :” I have ordained that this shall be the first lesson in my school ; and when there begins to be some proficiency in this lesson, there will be a new manner of speaking : “ I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus : Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke : turn thou me, and I shall be turned ; for thou art the Lord my God.” Then, the Lord says, “ Is Ephraim my dear son ? Is he a pleasant child ?” Now, he is taught to go ; his education is somewhat advanced. This is the school into which God brought Naomi.

The Scriptures not only set before us precepts, and

show us the benefit of our being torn up by the roots, and every pleasant thing being taken from us, but here is a picture of this before us. "Is not this Naomi?" No; it is not. Call me not Naomi—call me Mara: for the arrows of the Almighty have pierced my spirit.

2ndly. Another benefit of a suffering dispensation; when sanctified by God, is, *that it produces a moral sensibility*: it impresses on the mind and heart this sentiment—God is here! Call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. The sensitive conscience, when instructed in the school of adversity, sees God acting in every thing; and traces back the present dispensation to the cause of it. When trouble comes upon an unrenewed heart, the sinner rages, and does not mark God's hand. But how different was the effect upon Job! He says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee." It is thou who hast done it. "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." *q. d.* Now I am brought to the interior understanding of the dispensation, and realize a sensibility of mind. I see that not a sparrow falls to the ground without God. David felt this, when he wrote the cxxxixth Psalm: "Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways." It is one great work of regenerating grace to bring the heart into this state of sensibility: to teach Eli to say, "It is the Lord,"—that is enough,—"let him do what seemeth him good!" When an unbeliever meets with trials, the first thing he begins to feel is resentment. He falls upon the enemy; but David says, Draw not thy sword against Shimei: you are a set of poor carnal reasoners: I see that a dog could not move his tongue against me if the Lord had not bid him do it. Or, as he says in another place—"I opened not my mouth,

because thou didst it." "I opened not my mouth"—I was dumb before thee.

It is this spirit which is exemplified in the text: "Call me not Naomi;" *q. d.* God hath crushed all my hopes in this world; but I desire to lie as clay in the hand of the potter. The Lord has not only taught me to call myself Mara, but I would wish others to call me so: since it is his will, I choose it. But, though he has cast me down, he can lift me up: it is the Almighty who has done it; and he can build me up.

3rdly. Such a dispensation of sanctified affliction *produces a light in a dark place.* It enables a Christian to stand forth and show what Christianity is. It shows that there has been a transaction between God and the soul,—a holy friendship and acquaintance. That religion which does not bring God and man together is nothing. Naomi, in an idolatrous land, was as a light in a dark place: her example had made such an impression upon the mind of Ruth, that she could not tear herself away from her mother-in-law; and though Orpah was less constant, yet her heart was so much affected, that she felt the separation very difficult, there was something so attractive in her spirit and principles.

There are certain things in chemistry which have an affinity with each other; every particle will find out that part which unites with itself, and will affect it. There seems to have been a natural affinity between the minds of Naomi and Ruth; and, as Christians, they were made to drink into the same spirit. Thus the conduct of Naomi,—her light shining before men, working together with the attachment between her and her daughter-in-law,—enabled this poor afflicted woman to become a missionary, and to be the means of bringing at least one idolater to the knowl-

edge of the true God. We see that God does not seek the learned to do his work ; he makes Naomi a light in the midst of darkness.

That difficult passage in the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, of which I have seen fourteen different explanations, seems to bear upon this subject. "Else, what shall they do who are baptized for the dead?" or baptized over the dead?—take their place. It is certain that the blood of the Martyrs was the seed of the Church ; and while some were cut off, others rushed in—drank into their spirit,—because of "the better hope." It is astonishing what an effect may be produced upon a family, and even upon a neighborhood, when one person shall thus stand forth and demonstrate that he has passed from death unto life !

4thly. Another benefit of an afflictive dispensation is, that *it prepares the mind for prosperity*. We have an instance of this in the text. See the changes which Naomi underwent. Driven away by famine ; stript of her husband and her children, she comes back, saying, "Call me not Naomi ; call me Mara !" This was the forming of her character. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." God brings down to build up again. See her concluding history, in the last chapter of this book : "And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. . . . And they called his name Obed : he is the father of Jesse, the father of David." No greater honor could have been put upon her than to have thus been brought into the line of David.

There is no state more desirable in the eyes of the young than that of prosperity. "Let me be rich !" "let me be honorable !" "let me be great !" and "let me make great friends in the world !"

Oh that I could set before you the consequences of that wish, even if it could be obtained! Oh that I could show you the consequences of your passions being gratified! I should show you something like oil being poured into the fire,—I should show you Satan gaining his grand point,—I should show you what would be your greatest misfortune! The best thing you can obtain, is the spirit of Naomi, after she was taught of God; or, more properly, the mind of Christ, who bore his cross, and carried our sorrows: who, “though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered.” An old poet has thus admonished the young:—

“Pitch thy behavior low—thy project high.”*

God calls us to bow, to submit to our dispensation, to learn to abhor ourselves. This is the consecrated path, the “narrow way,” the road to “glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life.” The way to honor is first to know ourselves—to submit to God; otherwise we are not prepared for prosperity: we are not in that state of mind which will prevent prosperity from becoming mischievous to us.

Naomi sowed in tears; and what says the Psalmist? “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Psalm cxxvi. 6. For some time, it may seem to be thrown away; yet, if he goeth forth, he shall doubtless come again with rejoicing. Thank God, if you have the mark of “sons,” and not “bastards.” (Heb. xii. 8.) Though you may be under trying dispensations, God has heard your prayers: he is remembering you with the favor which he bears to his people. Beware of saying, “How doth

* Herbert's “Church Porch.”

God know? can he judge through the dark cloud?" Job xxii. 13. Let us learn what is the true and acceptable disposition—I do not say to the world, but to God—a child-like submission to our dispensation, *i. e.* to God.

A word to the stout-hearted, that think the contrite spirit meanness, and want of courage. How far from God are ye! Hear the word of the Lord to them whom he proposes to bless: "I will take away the stony heart,"—the hard heart,—“and will give them a heart of flesh.” And again: “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” And again: “Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” And again: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls.”

It is a wonderful condescension in God, that when we cannot come up to meet him on his ground, he will come down to meet us upon our own ground. He will, in mercy, use arguments to melt our hard hearts, and subdue our proud spirits. “The heart must be humbled before it can be helped or healed. God forms his sons in the wilderness.



THE DISCIPLINE OF CHRIST.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.—MATT. xi. 29, 30. [1791.]

WHEN our Lord came upon earth, he came with every mark of the true Messiah: yet his own received him not.

“Whereunto shall I liken the children of this generation?” says Christ. They found fault with John because he came “neither eating nor drinking;” and they now find fault with our Lord, because he came both “eating and drinking:” vers. 18, 19. By this they showed their indisposedness to receive the truth. Christ shows them the punishment which such a conduct will incur: vers. 20, 21.

But, that no true penitent may be discouraged by these threatenings, he says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Here is a counsellor, in the text, who can fulfil this promise of rest, as well as all others, for time and eternity.

The term “yoke” signifies service—subjection. See 1 Kings xii. 4; and 1 Tim. vi. 1. Here might also be an allusion to the law of Moses. There is the yoke of legal ceremonies. See Acts xv. 10; and Gal. v. 1. They are called a yoke in respect of their variety, and the difficulty of performing them; in respect of their chargeableness and inefficacy, being only shadows of good things to come. Heb. x. 1. Therefore our Lord seems to say to his disciples, “You have been used to a yoke: I am a Master, and have a yoke: the self-denial, the afflictions, the trials, the conflicts, to which my servants are called, make a part of it; but, in comparison to every other, “my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

“My yoke is easy,” *i. e.* a gracious, reasonable, profitable, advantageous service. It shall not be a grievous, oppressive, heavy burden. If I call you to sustain a weight, I will give you strength to bear it.

How heavy a yoke was contained in that sentence, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them!" Compare it with the Gospel rule, 1 John v. 3. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

The man that knows what a slavish, wretched yoke sin puts upon the shoulders—how it drives peace and comfort from his heart—how it puts him upon expense and labor to seek a little rest, in one vain pursuit after another—will allow that no yoke and service is so heavy as that of Satan. Christ says—I am a Master, and a good Master. You have hitherto served a bad master, and he has put a very heavy yoke on your shoulders.

We are apt to think only of gross sins; and forget the sin of "a stiff neck" and a "stony heart." The text implies that we should not only enter into Christ's service, but learn how to serve him. We should not resist the discipline of God with us. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked:" God had strong hold upon him, but he kicked. When he became submissive—when he learned to wear the yoke—God says, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Surely, after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh." Then God says, "Is not Ephraim a pleasant child?" He has now taken my yoke.

In the school of Christ there are certain paradoxes, seeming contradictions which it is our interest to study. The text holds out one, namely, that we shall gain freedom by wearing a yoke, and ease by bearing a burden. There are schools for every science—philosophy, astronomy, physic, &c. Let us never forget the school of Christ, where the scholar is taught this grand lesson, among many others—that by the cross of Christ we

overcome, and obtain all things: that we conquer by submission: that there is laid up for us an eternal weight of glory, but that the way to it is through the valley of humiliation.

The true Christian begins with the mind of a little child: he goes on like a child that "is weaned of his mother:" he proceeds as a submissive child: he takes the yoke. These words imply, Seek rest in my yoke. There is no help under our rising doubts—doubts that rise and spring up like locusts, and devour our green things, but in asking, What does God say? This is the only way to get the mind decided.

Is a man oppressed and worn with pain? Who sends pain? The Lord sends it, as a wise Physician. He could take it away in a moment: but as he will sanctify it, and as he has wise ends for leaving it, he says only, "Take my yoke," and be easy. This is taking it away while leaving it. We may want to choose a way of our own; we may want to go this way, while he is turning us the other: but let us not dispute with our Master, and be like the "bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." Let us believe that his way is the best way.

If any are under the dominion of pride, self-will, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind," let them remember, these are fatal to the kingdom of Christ, which is set up for the overthrow of the kingdom of darkness. Christ proposes his yoke that we may wear it; not merely hear of it from the preacher—talk about it—speculate upon it; but, put it on and wear it. This is the characteristic of a true Christian.

"Learn of me." If ever we wear the yoke to any purpose, it must be by learning of Christ. Take my cross, says Christ, and bear it to the end, and my cross shall bear you up. This is the grand secret. Nothing else can bear you up.

The conquest as well as the counsel of Christ gives us rest. It is as though he should say, "Be of good cheer—bear up; make a stand; think not to despond; consider who I am; how I have overcome before you; consider the steps I have taken; consider how I spoiled death; remember, I have not only overcome before you, but for you; sin shall not have dominion over you. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Here is a remedy for your depraved nature.

If there is any pain in bearing Christ's yoke, it is because the wearer has "a stiff neck," a neck "unaccustomed to the yoke." You may have been long in the world's and the devil's service; but has it afforded any rest? Christ says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" renounce the former service, accept my offer; is it not freely offered? is it not the "one thing needful?" Remember, if you object to wearing the yoke of Christ, there is no other alternative; you must either have his yoke, or a millstone that will sink you into eternal ruin: "for the wages of sin is death."

If we would be inquiring how our Lord would act in such or such a case, let us hear him saying, "Learn of me;" I am a meek teacher; I can have patience. "Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." "I am meek and lowly of heart." St. Peter, in the second chapter of his first Epistle, shows us how this example of Christ bears on our case: "If, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. . . . Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps. . . . Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." We must, all the way we go, be learning of Christ.

“And ye shall find rest to your souls.” “The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.” Isaiah xxxii. 17. Ye shall find rest in my blood: “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God—to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” Rom. iii. 25, 26.

The freedom from slavery which this service brings is a perfect evidence of the truth of Christianity. A man may boast of his freedom—of his liberty—of his wearing no yoke; but, is he not torn by passion? is he not led captive by the love of money? is he not the slave of custom, of pride, of pleasure? is he not the dupe of every folly which the world, the flesh, and the devil can present? And can this man boast of freedom? See 2 Peter ii. 19. “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.” The prodigal says, “If I can but throw off this yoke, I shall be free:” instead of which, he rivets the chains of slavery upon him.

The language of the text is confirmed by Christian experience. St. Paul, who was “in labors more abundant: in stripes above measure: in prisons more frequent: in deaths oft: beaten with rods: suffering shipwreck: in perils: in weariness: painfulness: watchings: hunger and thirst: cold and nakedness;” see 2 Cor. xi. 23; yet, when his account of the yoke of Christ was summed up, says, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” And again: “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy

to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." See how Moses estimated Christ's yoke: "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Heb. xi. 26.

My dear hearers, the fact is, we have been followers of vanity, and are bound, as captives, till the yoke of Christ sets us free. Let such as have obtained freedom rejoice in the yoke, and recommend it to others. The prospects, aids, and supports that are afforded us should teach us to take up cheerfully whatever yoke Christ lays upon us; to glory in his cross, and count it our highest privilege to be in his service.

Christ undertakes for his children, when he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." What a vast weight is taken off the believer's shoulders, by his leaving all consequences to God! A Christian ceases to ask, How shall I bear this trouble? how shall I act in such a difficulty? how shall I get through such deep waters?—He leaves it all to God.

SUBMISSION TO GOD.

I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.—

PSALM XXXIX. 9.

[1793.]

It is reported of one of the wisest men among the ancients,* that the first step which he took with his scholars was to teach them silence; and this he enjoined on them for a considerable time, as a restraint necessary to check their natural impetuosity. Certain it is, that God teaches this to all his scholars: for man is a creature of self-will; he is proud, and fond either

* Pythagoras.—Ed.

of boasting or complaining: and, therefore, he must be taught, by various dispensations, though it be like breaking in a wild ass's colt. There is, through this Psalm, reflection subsequent to silence. "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. . . . I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good; and my sorrow was stirred."

Let us endeavor to enter into the Psalmist's frame of mind, while we consider some of those circumstances under which such a silence would become us.

It may be suitable *to a gracious soul under a sense of guilt*. Such a one can find no comfort till he feels the pardon and favor of God. He may be under the smarting rod for some actual transgression, like David. If such a man (I speak of a gracious soul, *i. e.* one that has felt the love of God, and the spirit of adoption) feels that he is not well with God, then, every thing goes ill with him. But if he is in a state of mind fit for reflection, humiliation, and submission to rebuke, deeply conscious of his past weakness and unworthiness, he will feel it vain to palliate the fact: he will speak like Reuben—"We are verily guilty concerning our brother!" For, however we may think to commit sin secretly, God's word will never be broken: "Be sure your sin will find you out." If a man has been sowing the wind, and reaping the whirlwind—if God has come down to him as he did to Adam, saying, "Where art thou?"—then, if he is in a right mind, he will say, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him:" my business is to be silent before God: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." There is a fine picture of this kind of silence in Eli: he did not attempt to excuse himself: he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good!" Sin will send a man into "the

depths." See Psalm cxxx. 4. What trouble and sorrow does it always bring! If a man has a hard heart, and cannot pray to God as he has been used to do, what a depth is that to a Christian! But it is never too late to go to God for help: to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, that he may exalt us in due time. Thus God says by the prophet Ezekiel, "When I am pacified towards thee, thou shalt no more open thy mouth:" *q. d.* you have been used to be clamorous, and to complain; you have been used to boast, and to censure: but "when I am pacified towards thee, thou shalt no more open thy mouth." Ezek. xvi. 63.

2. Suppose a man to be *visited with a providential reverse of circumstances*: so that, like Job, to-day he is prosperous, and to-morrow he has lost every thing; and one messenger comes after another to inform him of his calamity. How does he receive this affliction? Does he have recourse to self-murder? Does he talk of being broken-hearted?—Not if he is taught of God. It will be a sign of spiritual health, if he is patient and resigned under his trials: it will be a symptom that he is in a state of pardon and reconciliation with God, if he says, in the spirit of the text, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Job was tempted to speak unadvisedly with his lips; but when he recovered himself, what does he say?—"Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no farther."

3rdly. Suppose a man to be *under oppression*: this was frequently the case with David; therefore he says, "I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." How remarkable a demonstration of this did he give in the case of Shimei, as though he had said, I dare not resent; for I know what God is doing

by that reviler! But I know how to stop the mouth of this man, by letting him alone: "I was as one that heareth not, and in whose mouth there are no reproofs." Oh that, through life, we could do this! that we could say, "This, and the other matter, is in the hand of God; and I will leave it to him."

4thly. This silence before God will become *a man who is arrested by disease*, so that, day after day, he has no rest in his bones. What is all this? The physician may say, "Your case is incurable; but you must keep up your spirits, and show fortitude!" But the Scripture says, "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God." In pain, sickness, or want, methinks I hear God saying, "Take this medicine: it is exactly suited to your case; weighed out by my own hand: take this medicine from ME." Thus while an ungodly man is quarrelling with all around him, the instructed Christian says, This medicine is my remedy: this bitter is sweet: God could have relieved me, but he does not: therefore I will continue to bear this affliction. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it."

5thly. This language becomes a Christian's lips, *when God takes away the delight of his eyes*. God said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thine eyes run down. Forbear to cry:" *i. e.* be silent: "because I have set thee for a sign to the house of Israel." And herein Christianity appears so worthy of its author, in that it lifts a man above himself, and enables him to exercise dependence, trust, and submission to God when he cannot see a step before him. Philosophy may infuse stubbornness, but it is religion only that can give faith; that can make Aaron hold his peace when his two sons are devoured by fire from the Lord; (see

Lev. x. 3.) and, in so doing, to justify God. This silence is most expressive, for it seems to say, "I cannot *now* comprehend what God is about; but I can look forward to a time when I shall; by and by, I shall know how much better it was for me that my wife, or my child, should be taken away!" A man justifies God, when he says under bereavements, The Lord has only resumed what he lent me for a time: He saw it would become my snare. No man is a destitute man who has faith in exercise. It is in this way that a Christian glorifies God: where others sink into the creature, he says, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."

It is not enough that we are persuaded of certain truths, as a system: we must be taught them by various methods. If you put a seal upon the wax while it is cold, there will be no impression: or, if it be hot, and you lay the seal on lightly, there will be no strong impression: but if the wax be warm, and the seal be pressed, the impression will be perfect. So, we shall find, that when a man has learnt truth, it is necessary for God to bring it home by some strong impression upon his heart: he will bring it into use and exercise. If, therefore, the delight of your eyes be taken away with a stroke, could you have prayed for any thing better? Is not this the plucking of a brand out of the burning?

If a worldly man is bereaved, he *is* bereaved: if he has no fruit in his vine, where has he any? If he loses the delight of his eyes with a stroke, where must he turn for comfort? If in this world he can gain no help from man, where can he gain any? If he is seeking after the honor and fashion of this world, let him see where it ends: for in order that no thoughtless creature should be deceived, nor have to say that no one ever

told him the end thereof, our Lord himself has undrawn the curtain : “ There was a certain rich man clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day ;” but presently the scene changes : “ and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” See Luke xvi. 19.

From this subject, I would leave on your minds three general hints :—

1st. The text teaches us *the right state of mind under bereaving providences*. It points out to us a grand lesson in the school of Christianity : “ I was dumb, I opened not my mouth ; because thou didst it.” The Christian world has not been sufficiently instructed in this duty of submission to God. There is a sort of fashion in religion : this, or the other grand truth, is made the prevailing one of the day : but this spirit of humiliation, this silent submission to God, which includes the very spirit of religion, has been too much overlooked. But, “ 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.” This temper of mind is set before us in a variety of ways in Scripture, to show its importance and weight.

And here I cannot help exposing the false taste, which holds up to admiration such a man as Cato, who committed suicide because he would not bear the ills of life. It involves important consequences. What is it that has brought Europe to such a state, as of late ? It is the spirit of those who said, “ Our tongues are our own ; who is lord over us ?” I ask, what language and spirit can be more opposite to that of the text ?

2ndly. Let us learn, that *there is a school for God's children* ; even his well-beloved Son “ learned obedience

by the things that he suffered :” he learned the *nature* of obedience experimentally—learned the *advantages* of obedience, and the *difficulty* of suffering : but being “made perfect,” having completed the work he undertook, having run his race, and finished his course, and obtained the victory, he declared it was “finished :” he became “perfect” as our Mediator, and “the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey him.” With what dignity did the Son of God go through the unutterable encounter ! And if God’s own Son “learned obedience by the things which he suffered,” no wonder we should be sent to the same school, in which are different forms, and some hard lessons, to be learnt by heart. There are none among us but are apt to revolt at this discipline, and cry out,—*comfort, comfort ! honor ! &c.* But we must remember, that this learning obedience is highly enriching, when we have learnt to renounce our own understanding and will ; and have had our affections brought off from the idols of this world, and set upon things above. It is a disposition to give up all *to* Christ, and to take all *from* him.

I trust we meet here to day to learn of Jesus Christ ; to inquire, What does our Master say ? Let us listen to him, while he says, “Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.” I was led as a lamb, to the slaughter ; and as a sheep before her shearers was dumb, so I opened not my mouth : I took the bitter cup, and drank it even to the dregs, saying, “Not my will, but thine be done !” “He, in the days of his flesh, poured out strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.” Every suffering was a school, as well as a formal act of obedience. These sufferings, which our Lord endured in the discharge of his priesthood, were not only sacerdotal sufferings, an expiatory act, but he learned

to sympathize with our infirmities: "We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but who was in all points tempted like as we are; yet without sin." Christ bore the cross, and suffered shame, among other reasons, to teach us *how to go through suffering*. He taught us that silence and submission are not inconsistent with deep sorrow. It is not a sinful action of the mind to feel our afflictions acutely: but one of the greatest lessons we have to learn is, *obedience* and *submission*. Real obedience to Christ, is salvation begun in the soul: therefore St. Paul says, "That I may know him, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." What does the whole Gospel teach us, but to put our mouth in the dust—to be silent before God—in order that we may enter into that peace and joy which are the proper fruits of sanctified affliction?

Whatever we may know of Christianity, we are instructed very imperfectly indeed if we have not learnt something of that silence and submission expressed in the text: so that, "when the Lord ariseth to shake terribly the earth," or to shake us by various personal and family afflictions, we may consider that the spirit of Christianity will lead us to say with the Psalmist, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it."

There is a clear distinction between *silence* and *sullenness*. A holy silence is the result of submission to God, confidence in Christ, and that consolation which is derived from Him.

A Christian does not lose his feelings, or right estimate of things, when they come before him; but he asks, Whence came this? "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the

ground." "A sinner," says one,* "has no right to complain; and a believing sinner—who has God's favor, support, and consolation—has no reason to complain." As to being sullen and desponding, a Christian will say, God can help me now, as well as before; and therefore I will now praise him.

3rdly. *God has appointed a present silence to be the harbinger of future praise.* We are often brought into circumstances in which, if we could command the help of the whole earth, the whole earth could not help us. But it is the principle of the true Christian to say, Though human help is vain, yet this one thing will I do—I will stand in silence: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints." Psalm lxxxv. 8. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower; and I will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd." I will submit; I will answer, I am a sinner; but, as a believing sinner, I will accept an act of grace: I will watch for special direction: I will expect, and wait for, a gracious answer from him who reproves. Though God will teach us silence and patience, yet they who wait for the Lord shall not wait in vain. A believer must never take his eyes off from God as his reconciled Father in Christ Jesus: the evil in his heart is the grand evil; and it is a blessed distress that brings any in earnest to get upon his watch-tower, and there wait in silence till God shall open his mouth in praise. See the next Psalm to that from which the text is taken: "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my go-

* The Rev. John Newton.—ED.

ings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God : many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." Now, I am no longer silent ; now I can say, " Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust." " He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Psalm cxxvi. 6.

THE THORN IN THE FLESH.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness.—2 COR. xii. 8, 9. [1804.]

It is a very remarkable thing that while experience is considered valuable in all common matters, it should be so slighted in matters of religion : and the reason is, that other things are thought more important than religion:

True religion is a transaction between a man's soul and God : hypocrisy is an affecting of this transaction, prepared for the eyes of man : but true religion is not ostentatious.

Philosophers have always treated man as they have seen him—an afflicted creature : but it is not a philosophic account of trouble which I have to consider, but a dispensation of trouble. Trial is universal ; it belongs to man, and more especially to the Christian : as a *man* you are born to trouble ; but as a *Christian* you have special trials : there is a universality of buffetings that belong to the Christian, as such. There was a positive dispensation of trial sent to St. Paul ;—

not a common course of affliction, but what was sent specially to him. We have here the account of his painful "thorn," which he calls "a messenger of Satan," to buffet him. "For this thing," says he, "I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." The man that is taught of God, is taught to look upward, while others are looking about them. From the words of the text we learn,

I. THE NECESSITY OF AFFLICTION.

II. THE APOSTLE'S RESOURCE UNDER A PAINFUL DISPENSATION: "*For this thing I besought,*" &c.

III. THE ANSWER HE RECEIVED: "*My grace is sufficient for thee.*"

I. THE NECESSITY OF AFFLICTION.

While affliction is the lot of man, affliction is also the school of man: whatever the devil vexeth us with, it is a school to teach us, like Job, *to abhor ourselves in dust and ashes*. While we are children at school, there will be particular exercises: things are intended for the exercise of grace; to put us upon prayer—to make us acquainted with our own hearts—to humble us, and preserve us from being lifted up. There seems a necessity for some trial or other, to call faith into exercise. The Lord would teach a poor dependent creature to live upon him in every thing. Even such a man as St. Paul must be taught his dependence. The eldest child in God's house must be taught to live upon God for his favor and blessing. There is in nature a love of independence; but such as are taught of God will be taught that they have no stock of their own; that in their flesh dwelleth no good thing; that how long soever they may have been in the road to

heaven, they have no stock to live upon ; no habit of grace that will do, independent of fresh supplies from God ; no elevation of character that will raise them above lying at the foot of the cross. I do not say, there is no elevation by holiness of heart and life in the character of the Christian ; but there is no elevation of character that will supersede the necessity of abiding in the " True Vine." Even St. Paul must be taught, by his trials, to despair of any help within or without himself, except in Christ. Christ relieves his people, not by removing their trials, but by affording them supporting and sanctifying grace under them, and by making a way of escape, that they may be able to bear them. They are not only intended to produce resignation, but to wean and mortify our inordinate affections : there must be in our hearts a certain degree of what may be called a holy indifference : we must be taught to treat flesh and blood as it ought to be treated. If it has taken root in our hearts, it must be torn up again : but, in order to this, there must be a continual work of the Great Physician, there must be a dispensation of trial. So it was in St. Paul's case ; there was sent a " thorn in the flesh : " God acts like a surgeon, who says, " This is a particular case ; and, in order to cure, I must pierce." There is not a creature-comfort upon earth, but if God is pleased to make a thorn of it he can, and he does do it : and the reason is, that faith may be called into exercise : for, who prays till he is made to do it ? who casts the anchor of hope till he is in distress ? We must be stripped of that in which we wrap ourselves up : and there must be many a sharp instrument to " circumcise the foreskin of our hearts," and many a thorn in the flesh to awaken us to prayer. We would live a life of ease : nature seeks it at any rate ; it says, Let me be quiet—

let me escape this, and that! The lancet is brought; but we would sooner die, at our ease, than suffer the operation that is intended for our benefit. We cry, *Spare!* and if the Great Physician means to teach us through some creature, which acts like our own depraved character, by showing ill-will and hatred, we cry to have it removed. But we are to be taught, first, who makes the difference. There are thorns in the flesh, there are distresses in the spirit, that will often break the spirit. We look to the creature, and say, "Who is there of my friends that will help me under my trials?" But sometimes the very nature of the case tells us that it is in vain to look to the creature for help: there are troubles in which all the friends upon earth, if they would, could not afford the least assistance. But St. Paul knew there was ONE that could relieve him, and he knew that the prayer of faith was never unheard, as to the matter of it, though it might be as to the letter of it. Is there, at this time, something piercing thee, distressing thee? Are you looking around and find no helper? Say so no more: while you look around in despair, remember Him who has said, "Look unto me and be saved,"—which leads me to consider,

II. THE APOSTLE'S RESOURCE UNDER HIS PAINFUL DISPENSATION: "*For this thing I besought the Lord thrice;*" *i. e.* that I might be delivered from it.

He that giveth in wrath often denies in love. God gave the murmuring Israelites a king in his wrath: so this request of the apostle's was denied in love. He was to learn the peculiar suitableness of Christ to meet his case: "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect

through sufferings :” and, therefore, because “ we have such an High Priest, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy.” This was the apostle’s resource under his thorn in the flesh. I tell you, as though he had said, This was my resource, “ I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart.” How natural ! Who has not felt this ? “ O, this burden presses upon me !” Well, but it may do you good :—“ but, O that it might be taken off ! O that this thorn might depart from me !” Thus we shrink from trouble, not considering the need, the benefit of it ! We cry, “ Spare me ! spare me ! This trial is so peculiar : I could bear any other better !” Certainly creatures can do nothing : they are but broken cisterns : riches and greatness can do nothing ;—nothing in pain—nothing in death : death will not be bribed. See Hezekiah. If the message comes, “ Thou shalt die, and not live !” man can do nothing ! yet there is something that can be done : “ Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed.” The first sign of spiritual life, and the last exercise of it, is—PRAYER. It was well for Jehoshaphat that he knew where to look in trouble, Jacob also, and David : but Christ will consult his own glory in the manner of answering prayer. His grace was to be shown to be not an idea, but a reality. That is best for a man which keeps his soul near to God, and which teaches him his need of watchfulness, and the necessity of keeping his armor on : which leads me to consider,

III. THE ANSWER WHICH ST. PAUL RECEIVED : “ *My grace is sufficient for thee ;*” as though God should say, I will not take away the thorn, but I will support you under it.

Before St. Paul received this comfortable answer in

the text, the temptation in his flesh had taught him to pray ;—not merely to use a form of words, which is a very different thing ;—but it brought him as a destitute sinner to Christ ; as able, and willing, and ready, to help. Though the prayer of faith is the great secret of the Christian, and it is in the prayerful use of means he may expect success, yet he may not be answered to the letter of his prayers. The answer given to St. Paul was not in *kind*, but it was something better,—it was in *kindness*. It was as though God should say, “My favor shall be exerted towards you, and my power shall put strength into you ; my favor is better than life, and my power sufficient to support you under the trial. If I press you down with one hand, I will hold you up with the other. My grace being sufficient is a greater gift than to remove the trial : and, by and by, you may see the intention of it : and, moreover, the soldier is not crowned till he has first fought and strove : therefore you shall be upheld, and bear testimony to those younger than yourself.” “I have fought a good fight ; I have kept the faith.” Christ’s grace, in this passage, is to be taken in its fullest sense ; not only free favor, but power ; Christ would not remove the thorn, because he would more fully manifest to the apostle his all-sufficiency. No matter how Satan shoots his fiery darts, if Christ says, My grace shall bear thee up—my grace is all-sufficient ; for this will sanctify the affliction.

This text has an allusion to that in Genesis xv. 1. “Fear not, Abram : I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward :” *i. e.* I am God all-sufficient. So, in the apostle’s case, God seems to say, “Do not be cast down, as if thy present case were hopeless : but think rather, that I am God all-sufficient.” There is something in the life of faith that shall put the world,

the flesh, and the devil, under our feet. A Christian is a man who, instead of living upon outward temporary things, is building upon the ROCK OF AGES; and, therefore, safe: for this is that from which nothing can separate him. This is what St. Paul triumphantly asks, in the eighth chapter to the Romans—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution?" No, nothing shall! it is eternal union! As Christ has taken hold of my hand, and I of his, he says to me all the way I travel on, "Fear not!" He will take away present, perishing objects, to give better things; to give his own "unsearchable riches." We want nothing but this: if we can enter into the spirit of the subject, and feel in sympathy with the text, we shall not be saying to this or that creature—Come and comfort me! or asking, "Who will show me any good?" but we shall go to the all-sufficient God, who says, *My grace is to be your sufficiency.* With this grace, outward things cannot sink us; he can lift us above them all, whether painful or pleasant; nor can they afford us any real comfort if we have not this grace.

This passage seems to express that God will strip us of every thing but his GRACE: He will reduce us to HIMSELF. The grandeur of God's character is not sufficient, nor his holiness, nor the gifts he bestows: but, when he says, "My grace is sufficient for thee"—my favor—"the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush" shall be manifested towards thee,—then man feels it is enough! That St. Paul should be supported under the thorn—that he should glorify Christ by it—this is infinitely more than removing the thing: it is the being lifted up above it!

Some people cannot understand this, and call it enthusiasm: but God seems to say, It shall be demon-

strated that man, when he depends upon ME, does not depend upon any outward thing : it shall be seen that I carry him and the burden too ! I will lift him above it : I will sometimes strip him, so as to make him feel that I can supply the loss of every thing. I will take away his ALL, that I may give something better than all. Therefore, brethren, seek the grace of Christ, and you will feel you have every thing. It was said by one, "I am so poor, that none but God can help me !" but he who takes his case to God, and thus obtains his grace and help, shall find he has enough.

Let me, in conclusion, address a few words to Christians under trouble.

1st. Learn from this passage what I will call, *The divine philosophy of trying dispensations*. None but Christians understand this. Learn to make the most of them, to improve them : this is, in Christianity, *managing our accounts*. Practical, experimental Christianity must be learnt in extremity. God is to be met in every thing ; and his grace is the only thing to be secured. St. Paul's is no strange case : it is a beaten path : it is a common case. If we have not this peculiar thorn, yet we all have one thing or another : see Abraham, Jacob, and others had them,—and have not we ? God alone sends these things ; and he alone can sanctify them. A poet could say,

" Sweet are the uses of adversity."

but St. Paul explains this :—"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

2ndly. Learn *the holy simplicity of faith*. The apostle went, as a little child, to Christ ; believing he was able to do more than he could ask or think. There are few but know what it is to be brought into diffi-

culties : but, for God to stretch out his right hand, we must simply take the matter to him, and, with a holy simplicity of faith, put the whole of our case into his hands. It is true, there may be something in our family, and in our hearts, that may be well called “a thorn in the flesh :” it may be indescribable to man : no matter : it is describable to God ! You may be like David, having nothing to rest upon—nothing but waves and billows going over you : but, in this, and all such cases, St. Paul gives us a lesson : it was enough for him that he was bid to cast his burden on the Lord.

Some people stand confounded or perplexed at the mysterious motions of the wheels of Providence. The stoutest heart is sometimes alarmed in contemplating them : “They were so high, that they were dreadful.” But faith looks to him in whose hands the wheels, and their motions, are : it does not examine the wheels (we have no eyes to look upon them) : it looks to the GREAT MECHANIC. It would be a surer and a shorter way, to turn our eyes from the wheels, the height of which may confound, and do as St. Paul did—turn our eyes to Christ : that is the safest way : “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice,” and he gave me an answer : and, depend upon it, the prayer of faith shall be answered.

3rdly. You have here *a holy consecrated antidote to despondency*. The true secret of a Christian is, to cast his burden on the Lord. There are many antidotes proposed by the world ; the house of mirth—business—human courage—pride, &c. But these are not consecrated. St. Paul has shown what this consecrated antidote will do for a man : I speak to the man that has found nothing in the world, in his family, or in his own heart, to comfort him—who can get no sympathy. I say—St. Paul stands up to-night as a preacher to you,

and may God enable you to listen! There is not only the lesson of *affliction*—that painful lesson—but there is also the evangelical lesson of the *antidote*: this is the peculiar lesson of the saint; who is taught, like Hezekiah, to turn his face to the wall, and pray; and like St. Paul, to take his case to God.

But there may be some present who feel no interest in this discourse. Some young man, rejoicing in the days of his youth, and letting his heart cheer him. He may be ready to say, You speak about some painful thorn, but I have none. I would, however, ask one question,—What may be the reason of this? Did you ever read of “the strong man armed, keeping his goods in peace?” Our Lord speaks of this as descriptive of the government and empire of Satan. Do you call it happiness to be like a felon, full of levity and trifling, going to be executed? But, do you say, you have no “thorn in the flesh,”—no painful trial? I do not read that Demas had any; therefore, he loved the present world, and the world him: but do you call him happy? Esau did not halt like Jacob: but was he happier than Jacob? Certainly, we cannot comfort you from the twelfth chapter to the Hebrews, where St. Paul says, “Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.” We are commanded to say to the righteous—though tried, tempted, afflicted—“it shall be well with him:” but, “Woe to the wicked; it shall be ill with him.” For the day is coming, when “all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” Mal. iv. 1.

Finally, If we have a heavenly science to learn, and a journey to pursue, let us patiently take the steps to accomplish it. The highest state we can attain is, to

honor Christ under a sense of our own entire weakness. This the apostle did by continuing to endure. In the verse following the text, we see him glorying in the effects of Christ's strength imparted to him: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Heavenly attainments are the lifting up of a man. Here we behold the greatest magnanimity of mind with the greatest poverty of spirit. If we would distinguish between the "poor in spirit" and a *poor spirited* man, let us look at St. Paul! St. Paul was lifted up when he was taught to say, "When I am weak, then am I strong." And who was this? A man whose rage had persecuted all that were "poor in spirit," and who sought to destroy them! What a triumph of divine grace is here!

THE DAY OF TROUBLE.

Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.—PSALM 1. 15. [1796.]

THERE is a maxim in divinity by which we must ever abide: namely, that as creatures we are bound to obey the will of God; and yet, that of ourselves we can do nothing. If this bring trouble upon our minds because we cannot do what we are commanded, then let us ask help of him who has promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that seek it. And if you can have help for seeking, why should you complain because, of yourselves, you cannot do any thing?

There is here given us a COMMAND, and a PROMISE.

I. A COMMAND: “*Call upon me in the day of trouble.*” It is your duty to obey as creatures; and as needy and guilty creatures, it is your privilege to do so.

“Call upon me in the day of trouble:” you have a warrant to come at all times, but more especially in the time of trouble: which signifies, generally, a time of particular trial or visitation, like that of Job; or of suspense, like that of Moses, when the people wanted to turn back into Egypt; or, a time when God seems to withdraw that help which he gave us reason to expect. Trouble is sometimes so sharp and secret, that a man cannot describe it to any but God; like that of David, (2 Sam. xii.) When he fasted, and prayed, and lay all night upon the earth, the people thought it was his sorrow for the child: but it was a complicated affair; there was guilt in the cup.

“Call upon ME in the day of trouble.” Luther said he never understood the Book of Psalms till he was in trouble. There are troubles that none but God can help us under. The efforts of friends, in some cases, prove only an aggravation of grief.

II. THE PROMISE: “*I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*”

The Scripture is full of facts that prove what may be called the omnipotence of prayer. Prayer is omnipotent, as it takes hold of the hand of God. Haman, being not a man of prayer, fell down from the highest pinnacle: but Esther, who knew where her true resource lay, saved herself and her whole nation. If the believer can bring God near to him, as “a very present help in time of trouble,” he has accomplished every thing: he has then done with difficulties. We read of an afflicted believer coming and bringing his

child to Christ, Mark ix. 17: trouble had got into his house, and pierced his heart. His faith is weak, but he makes the effort; he says, "If thou canst do any thing;" Jesus said, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

"I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." God is glorified when his perfections are exhibited and acknowledged: when we say, Difficulties are nothing; all things are in his hand. The history of Asa, and of Hezekiah, exemplify this. They manifested their dependence upon a character that was worthy to be trusted. This is to glorify him: this is to treat him as God: a solitary, praying Christian, glorifies God.

None of us sufficiently honor Jesus Christ, by saying,—“While I am praying, He is conducting the ‘wheels full of eyes’ with reference to *me*.” But, is not this presumption? I answer, That is not presumption which is founded on God’s word. Jeremiah was put into a miry pit: but he knew there was a way to God even through it: and while men were working below upon earth, God was working from above. So in the history of Joseph.

Let every one know, that when he is laid upon a bed of sickness, and has thereby had a prayer wrung out of him, that God is in this thing. He is saying, “Call upon me in the day of trouble.” Whatever discouragements, clogs, and hindrances we find—however our minds may be entangled and occupied, still let us be steadfast in the principle which we have found to be the golden key that opens the treasure-house,—and which we have found to be the true weapon against our spiritual enemies. Though temptations surround us, and sometimes our backslidings distress us, yet, let us remember that God has said, “Call upon me in the day of trouble; so will I deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify

me." The prophet Jonah stands as an example to us in this respect: "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."

My dear hearers, you cannot be reminded too often, that there is not a single particle of good, not one drop of real comfort and happiness, but what proceeds from God. Every thing has just so much good in it as he infuses,—and no more. Bereavements, of near and dear connections in life, are some of the best expounders of the Bible: they explain it to the *heart*. The Christian, in such cases, feels that he has lost his best earthly comforts, and is constrained, with greater earnestness than ever, to draw nigh to God: and thus, heavenly comforts are poured into his soul. A man may enjoy the *goods* of Providence; but he must not make them his *gods*; his heart must not go out after them.

If any trial, if any temptation or duty lies before us, the Gospel contains promises and assistances sufficient for our support. A believer, therefore, need not be afraid: let him meet his difficulties like a man: or rather, I should say, let him meet them like a Christian, "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." We do not give Christ half trust enough. The waters of Jordan were divided, when the time came for passing over. The moment we come in contact with the difficulty, it shall vanish. O that in every step we take in life, we could seek God first by prayer! being taught by dependence never to say,—This, or that, is too hard! The true posture of poor feeble worms such as we are, is to relinquish the language of sense, and, like Abraham, when he offered up Isaac, to lean upon the promises of God.

In the day of trouble, take heed of the temptation, which the devil always presents, that nothing can be

done. Take heed of unbelief. God does not always afford particular light till we are just about to take a step that needs it. It is no doubtful case whether God *can* help us; nor ought it to be any doubtful case, after what he has done, whether he *will* help us.

We must take care to keep in the path of duty: see Joshua vii. 10, 11. The Lord said unto Joshua, "Get thee up, wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing;" "Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies," *i. e.* because I am not on their side. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

Learn to stir up your own hearts to the continual remembrance of all known duty, and received truths; and also recollect your former experiences of help and deliverance in times of affliction and temptation; and say with David, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him."

In the world's eye, that man is the wisest who has the most expedients. But the believer is taught far differently: he runs to the throne of grace, and gets, like Habakkuk, upon his watch-tower. He goes to God with the promise in his hand, as one goes to the bank for payment, saying,—This has been by me for some time, but now it is due: thou saidst, "Call upon me in the time of trouble, and I will deliver thee."

God is glorified by our faith and patience in our trouble, as well as in bringing us through it. "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

RESOURCE IN TROUBLE.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee : he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.—PSALM lv. 22. [1796.]

THERE is a distinction between human learning and divine. In human things, the opinions of the learned in one age, are different from the opinions of the learned in another age ; but in divine learning, this is not the case. 'There is "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph. iv. 5, 6. God's children are all taught the same lesson, bear the same testimony, tread in the same steps.

But who are the persons to whom these words are addressed ? They are the righteous, *i. e.* persons resting on the atonement ; being justified by faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. They are renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and are enabled "to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world." But while they do this, God has never told them they should have no trouble, no cross, no burden, no anxiety ; but, on the contrary, he tells them they shall : for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." But while they have their trouble, they are directed what to do with it. They have—

I. A CHARGE GIVEN THEM : "*Cast thy burden upon the Lord.*"

II. A PROMISE GIVEN THEM : "*and he shall sustain thee.*"

I. This CHARGE is the same as that in 1 Peter v. 7. "Casting all your care upon him ; for he careth for you." Also, that given by our Lord, Matt. vi. 25—34 :

“Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life.” And Luke xii. 22—32: “Consider the lilies, how they grow.” The Scriptures not only give us the charge, but set before us examples of those who acted upon it.

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord:” whether it be the burden of guilt, like that of David, Psalm li; and Peter, Matt. xxvi. 75; or the burden of overwhelming care, Gen. xxxi. 13; or the burden of fear, like that of Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 9—11; of danger, like that of Hezekiah, Isa. xxxvii. 15; and of Asa, 2 Chron. xiv. 11. Whether it be a peculiar temptation, like that of St. Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 8—10; or some special visitation from God, like the sickness of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 1—6; or if it be the burden of an ungovernable imagination. If the imagination be burdened, life is embittered, and one sits like a sparrow upon the house-top: but whatever it be, if it be a burden, and we are groaning under it as such—if our life is embittered thereby—and though others may think lightly of it, yet if our shoulders are oppressed by it—we are invited to cast it upon the Lord, with the assurance, “he shall sustain thee.” He will bear thee up in his arms, “lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” This leads me to consider,

II. THE PROMISE GIVEN: “*He shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*”

Unbelieving thoughts will make a man ready to stumble. One that has a burden on his back, can hardly step at all: but if a stumbling-block be put in his way, it will be much more dangerous for him. God does not promise to take off the load, but he promises to sustain us under it. We must take the cordials of God’s word as well as the precepts: we need the prom-

ises to encourage us. Let us remember, that none of us has any burden but what God has put on our backs, and he alone can make it easy: "He shall sustain thee." Throughout the Scriptures we are told what the people of God did with their several burdens, that we may know what to do with ours. Psa. xxxvii. 5—7.

"He shall sustain thee," or hold thee up. How was Elijah sustained, when fleeing before Jezebel? (See 1 Kings xix. 5—8.) How comfortable is St. Paul's account of his support under his spiritual temptation, or infirmity; (2 Cor. xii. 8—10.) and the martyrs, each of whom had his burden; but we find that they never stood up so well, as when the burden seemed to lie the heaviest upon their backs. Their shoes were iron and brass; and as their day, so was their strength; for the Lord sustained them: "He will never suffer the righteous to be moved." He does not say, he will never suffer them to be alarmed; they may be shaken, but they shall not be moved: they shall not be moved from the foundation upon which they stand: they have cried to the Lord, and he has placed them on a rock, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail: they shall never be moved from their lot: (Psalm xvi. 5,—cxxv. 3;—Dan. xii. 13.) they shall not be swept away: they shall not be confounded. Psalm lxix. 6. Therefore David's resolution should be ours: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Psalm lvi. 3. Instead of repining under our burdens, let us cast them upon the Lord; and let us ask how we came by them. Trouble is the only thing the Lord has promised to his children, without prayer.

We are commanded to cast our burdens on the Lord, acknowledging that he only can bring us out of trouble. How sadly deceitful, and how condemned, is every other refuge! "When Ephraim saw his sick-

ness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." Hosea v. 13.

What we know, we must know by believing God's word; and this word, which gives us the direction, is the act and the deed of God, sealed by the blood of Christ. He has told us to take no anxious care: he has sent us to the birds of the air, and to the lilies of the field, for instruction. Let us leave the heathens to groan under their burdens—to take anxious care for the morrow—who have not got our resources.

God makes burdens excellent commentators on the word: the burden sending us to the word, and the word sending us to God, and directing us what to do with our burdens. Do not make your burdens heavier by conjecture; but read your charter, and pray over it. The Church is a "vineyard;" and has no less benefit from cloudy days than from sunny days.

However the believer is torn, however tempted, however buffeted or assaulted, he shall not be "moved." He has an anchor for the worst storms that ever fell upon the universe. His relief, his hope, his profession, differs from that of any other individual upon the face of the earth. "Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me," says David, "yet thy commandments are my delights." The Psalmist found firm solid rock to keep him up through all.

Have you ever fled to Christ? There is no refuge for the hypocrite. The "righteous" referred to in the text, are, in other parts of Scripture, called "saints"—separate from the world—the "faithful"—the "called:" they bring forth the fruits of faith: they look unto him whom they have pierced, and mourn. God counts them righteous. What a privilege is granted to such! Eyes to overlook, hands to direct all their concerns!

Your heavenly Father knows your need: none are left without resource. Mary cast her eyes into the sepulchre: Hannah, to the Lord. However burdened, let us still hold fast the heavenly charter: let us tell God that we cannot cast our burdens on him without his help. All who obey this direction will experience God's faithfulness: "They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the
night?—JOB. xxxv. 10. [1799.]

WE are induced, from the enormity of certain crimes, to rejoice when they meet with punishment: but few consider the grand crime which proceeds from practical Atheism. In the midst of the trials and inquietude to which flesh is heir, none, comparatively, saith, "Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?" See verse 9. The cry is, there is nothing but oppression and affliction: "by reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty." But this is not the greatest evil: what then is it? Elihu complains, that in the midst of all this, there is none saith, "Where is God my maker?" Let me lead your attention to this subject, by considering,

I. THAT HE WHO MADE MAN CAN ALONE TRULY COMFORT HIM, AND GIVE HIM SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

II. THAT GOD FREQUENTLY BRINGS MAN INTO THE NIGHT OF AFFLICTION IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE HIS POWER TO LIFT HIM ABOVE IT, AND TO GIVE HIM OPPORTUNITY TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIM.

I. Let us think of God, as THE TRUE AND ONLY COMFORTER IN SORROW. Whatever our circumstances are, whether prosperous or adverse, God has assigned them to us ; and we should remember, that while he has assigned to us our work, and our trials, he is not regardless of us ; he is our only comforter. We can never come near the seat of the Divine Governor ; but we must not lose the Friend in the Governor. Who can abide his anger ? True ; yet “the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him ;” (Nahum i. 7.) *i. e.* While God is chastizing the world, and proves his dominion and universal power, he looks down to a poor broken reed, and says, “Lean on ME :” I am not more to be feared than loved : if I bring a night, I can give you “songs in the night.”

“He giveth songs :” *i. e.* he giveth matter for a song—a song of praise—a song of joy—a song of triumph. If “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” he teaches his children to sing, even in the fires, “Worthy is the Lamb :” he gives his Spirit to guide us to the light : he has given us matter for songs, to comfort, exhilarate, and cheer us through the dark night of affliction : and he gives us ability to sing them. He could enable Stephen, when he was stoned, to look up steadfastly into heaven and see the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Hezekiah, when he received the message, “Thou shalt die, and not live,” could turn his

face to the wall, and speak to God as a Father, and a Friend. When he takes all creature comforts away, the Christian says, There is enough left : my main comfort is not touched : take all in this world away, there is matter enough left for a song ! See Paul and Silas in the prison, praying and singing praises to God ! Who in this place needs to be told of the dark and stormy nights that the Martyrs weathered, singing their songs in dungeons, and at the stake ! For there are times when a man is pressed beyond measure, and there is nothing left him but the truths of the Gospel. The prophet Habakkuk understood this, when he said, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Spiritual comforts are real and permanent.

The believer delights to think upon God in the night-season, when all is quiet and peaceable. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."—Psalm iv. God's name is also his solace in the night of affliction : "I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night," says David, "and have kept thy law." The best discovery That God has made to us of his name is in Christ : therefore we should seek a more intimate knowledge of Him, and should make a gracious use of what is thus discovered.

There cannot be a greater mistake than the miserable idea, which some have taken up, that religion leads to melancholy—that it is the death of comfort. The poorest and most afflicted Christian knows how great a mistake this is : and that, in his darkest hours, God has given him reason to set his seal to the truth of the text. What says St. Peter ? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to

his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The man that is the partaker of "a lively hope" is not the subject of melancholy; therefore the Apostle continues, "wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:" which leads me to consider,

II. THAT GOD FREQUENTLY BRINGS MAN INTO THE NIGHT OF AFFLICTION IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE HIS POWER TO LIFT HIM ABOVE IT, AND TO GIVE HIM OPPORTUNITY TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIM.

The skill of the mariner is best known in the storm. If God gives faith, I wonder not that he tries it. God, as the Maker, might demand to be glorified; and his authority as the Governor might exact it. But the Friend calls for it. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me:" I will give thee a song, and, thou shalt demonstrate that I am thy all-sufficient Friend.

"Where," says one, "does this man obtain his songs in the night? I have nothing but howlings, and misgivings; but this man has songs!" Read the 107th Psalm, and we shall find who it is that can turn mourning into joy. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

To bring us back to Him from whom we have wandered, is the design of God in all his dispensations, in all his ordinances, and appointments: and the grand design of Satan is to prevent this return; to bar and bolt the door of access; to occupy, to dazzle, to stupefy, to separate. Now, if this be the grand design of our

implacable enemy, then, let me ask, how salutary, how gracious is God, to determine that we should be led, however unwillingly, to meet the night, and the storm; the man should then ask himself, when he communes with his own heart--What says God to me? The night has its teaching: what is the lesson? He is presenting to me the secret chamber! and for this reason, that what I could not hear in the day, I might hear in the night.

I speak to the man who is at ease; to one who is in the possession of wealth and influence: do you ask, who is happier than you? The man that has "songs in the night!" The night will come to you; but are you prepared? What a deep depravity is perceived in fallen man, in that, even in the night of adversity, he is indisposed to say, "Where is God my maker?" Even the oppressed, though they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty, yet "none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?" At such a time, one would suppose they would naturally turn to their Maker, and Benefactor; and yet, it is nothing uncommon to be observed, that if you go into the abodes of misery and wretchedness--nay, even to the cells of those about to be executed, man appears sullen, when you come with no other proposal than the favor of God!

The night of affliction is a time that very much brings out the character. The child who is under a father's protecting wing, is in the habit of fleeing to it: in any danger or disquiet, he says, "I will go to my father!" Thus the Christian: he knows he has a kind and tender Father; and if any storm threatens him, he runs to God for shelter: "What time I am afraid," says David, "I will trust in thee." Who is there that does not know this time? There are special occasions of

fear, as in a time of persecution ; or when under violent assaults of the enemy of souls—suggestions, corruptions ; or when threatening providences hang over us. Sometimes our way before us seems difficult ; for the path of duty is not always the smoothest ; there may be great difficulties lying in it ; or, perhaps painful diseases may be threatening us : we may fear “ the night of death : ” a time of darkness and fear sometimes comes on the best men. There is nothing but faith which can eradicate and allay this fear. We should expect such seasons, and prepare for them by a firm trust in Him who, if he sends a night of sorrow, can also give us “ songs ” in it, and enable us to say with David—“ Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.” Psalm cxix. 54.

Such as are not thus taught of God, are loud in their complaints, when in trouble : they have no resource in trouble : the great question with them is—“ Can you tell me of any person of power that can help me ? ” If you endeavor to point out to them the true source of consolation and help, they are not disposed to listen ; they go on stating their troubles, over and over ; “ But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night ? ” Can there be a stronger proof of the apostasy of the heart of man from God than this looking everywhere but to God for help ? “ My people have committed two evils,” says God, “ they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” Jer. ii. 13.

Is it a time of trial—of night—with you ? It would be a most distressing sight to see you among such as “ compass themselves about with sparks, and lie down in sorrow ” and despair ; but if you are inquiring after relief, and if you wish to know from whence real com-

fort can alone come, pray to God your maker to bring you experimentally acquainted with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Look at Hagar in the wilderness : when she called upon the Lord, he showed her a well of water, and instructed her, and comforted her. We have no need to go up into heaven for comfort ; it is at hand for the man who is able to take Christ, and rest upon his promise. And, if I am not able so to do, this is the very thing I should pray for. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel ; there is no trial or difficulty but God can make a way to escape. I have talked to some people, who have said, they were afraid of losing their affliction, lest they should lose the consolation which had accompanied it. One reason for sending the affliction is, in order to lead you to the acknowledgment of God, in his power to comfort and support under it.

Although in this world our comfort and joy in the Lord is like a winter's sunbeam, yet from hence we can form an idea of what is laid up for us in heaven. A man can form but a poor imperfect idea of the sun from its faint watery rays in winter : yet, it is an idea that a blind man can never attain.



THE BURDEN OF DUMAH.

The Burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night ? Watchman, what of the night ? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night : if ye will inquire, inquire ye : return, come.—ISAIAH xxi. 11, 12. [1806.]

IN books of the most surpassing excellency which were ever written by the pen of human reason, there are observable certain marks of weakness, and blind-

ness, which show them to be indeed the works of man. Whereas, the most obscure parts of the book of God, if diligently studied, will yield light and instruction to the simple and sincere inquirer.

The prophecy before us is confessedly a very dark part of Scripture. There is no subsequent history of the predicted events to reflect light upon it; though it must not be doubted that the prophecy and its fulfilment coincided in every particular. Neither is it certain where the scene of the prophecy was laid. The most probable conjecture is, that by Dumah we are to understand Idumea, or Edom; especially as it is said, "He calleth to me out of Seir:" Seir being a mountain of Edom. But it would be wasting your time to enter into the various conjectures which have been started upon this point; and I feel it a matter of conscience not to attempt any thing merely critical, if it be an unprofitable inquiry. There is nothing more easy than for a preacher to produce a long string of conjectures from learned commentators; at the same time, there is nothing which less impresses his hearers than this; so that a part of the short time allotted to a discourse is thus spent to very little purpose. When we read, or hear the Scriptures, it is comparatively of little moment whether we know any thing *critically* about them. The great question is, what instruction and assistance do they yield?

Upon the present occasion, we shall consider what instruction is to be derived in the inquiry here made, and what is the watchman's reply. I shall proceed upon this plan, and consider,

I. THE INQUIRY MADE TO THE WATCHMAN: "*Watchman, what of the night?*"

I. You all well know, my dear hearers, that God has

not only made to mankind a revelation of his will—and this at sundry times, and in divers manners—but that he has also “set watchmen”—persons specially appointed to warn others, to assist them in their inquiries, to remind them of the truth which he has revealed, and the obligations which they are under to walk in it; and to direct them in the way thereof, lest their “feet stumble upon the dark mountains.” Thus he says, Isa. lxii. 6, 7, “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, and give him no rest till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” So again: Ezek. xxxiii. 7, “Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel.”

But God hath not only appointed watchmen to warn a slumbering world of its danger, but he has also laid upon them the strongest obligation to discharge the great duties of their important post; and that, under the New, as well as under the Old Testament dispensations. I repeat, they are under the most weighty obligation, the severest sanctions, to act faithfully in this matter; inasmuch as it is said, “I have set thee to be a watchman to the house of Israel; and thou shalt warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.”

But further, God has not only laid the watchman under the most weighty obligation to fulfil his duty; but the people to whom he speaks, whom he warns, and with whom he expostulates as to their danger, are placed under a weighty obligation also. “If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.” It is their duty,

as it is their privilege, to inquire, to listen, to return to God, and to return from the path of death; to come at the invitation of the watchman, and to enter into the way of life and safety.

The cry, in the text, seems to proceed from some pious Edomite, who had learned, as he might do from the eleventh and thirty-fourth chapters of the prophecy, that severe punishments were determined against Edom: the inquiry, therefore, was highly suitable and proper. It was the duty of the Edomite to consult the watchman; and it is pointed out to us as a sin of great enormity to neglect the watchman, and the message which God hath sent by him. "I have not sent thee," says the Lord to Ezekiel, "to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel: but the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant, harder than stone, have I made thy forehead; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks." I say, therefore, that to reject the watchman who is sent of God, and the message he brings, is one of the highest provocations that can be offered to the Most High.

To illustrate this in the plainest way. Suppose you sent your servant to a person with a particular message, and no attention was paid either to him or your message—could a greater affront, I ask, be offered to you? I say, therefore, again, that when there is rejection or neglect of the watchman's message, no greater affront can possibly be offered to the Almighty. This was the flagrant offence which caused our Lord to mourn over Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,

thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee ; how often would I," even by my ministers, "have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matt. xxxiii. 37.

We have seen that the inquiries of the pious Edomite probably related to the night of affliction which then darkened the land of Idumea. He seems to ask the watchman, who was set to give notice, how far this night of affliction was advanced. "Watchman, what of the night?" *q. d.* When will it be over? What is the time? When will the darkness be passed? How much of the vial of calamity remains to be poured out? "Watchman, what of the night?" Tell us what you can for our encouragement, for our support, for our consolation and direction, with respect to the night of affliction through which we are passing. The inquiry is also importunate, like that of persons in great anxiety and perplexity; it is repeated, "Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?" Speak quickly: we are anxious and impatient to know: keep us not a moment in suspense! Your answer may be of the utmost possible consequence!

But I imagine I hear some of you saying, All this may be evident enough with respect to Idumea, or Dumah, at that time; but what have *we* to do with it? How does it apply to *us*? and how can it, in any way, be profitable to us? I answer the inquiry by proposing another: What is the character of man in every age? Is he not a sinner? Is not the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men? and does guilty man want no counsel as to the way of escape? does he want none to point him to a refuge? Again: Is he not also an ignorant creature? Does he not want instruction? Does

he not need to be directed in his way? And has not God sent watchmen for this purpose, to give him directions in his perplexity? Is he not also a needy and helpless creature? Has he not ten thousand wants? And is it of no consequence at all, whether he direct his steps through a trackless wilderness, or through a peopled and fruitful country, where the roads are good, and the direction posts both exact and numerous? And do you ask, after this, "What have we to do with the Edomite's inquiry?" What! did you, then, never feel in your own heart an anxiety to inquire of one who you thought might instruct you, What of the night of perplexity, which at this time darkens my path? I know not which way to turn;—I know not what step to take! Have you, then, never passed through the night of temptation? Have you never wanted a friend to assist you in that night? Did you never wish to speak to any one concerning your ignorance, when you have been in some critical situation? When unbelief has visited your heart, and hung like a heavy weight upon you, so that you have been tempted, perhaps, to call in question every truth that you had formerly believed; and, when every prop on which you leaned seemed to be failing under you; did you never feel the necessity of asking—What of the night of adversity, or dark dispensation, through which I have to wander? My friends call upon me, and seem to stare me in the face—they are amazed at the strangeness of my circumstances; but they have no consolation to offer; they have no deliverance to give. What, then, can I do, but pour out my heart before God, and wait, until he sends me help from his sanctuary, and compasseth me about with songs of deliverance!

Again, did you never say—"Watchman, what of the night" of danger that is coming upon me? I am

assailed by a mortal distemper; the shadows of death and the grave are gathering around me: How shall I pass the dark valley? who will point me to the secure path? that in the presence of the king of terrors, I may say with David, "I fear no evil." My dear hearers, experience tells man that the night through which he has to pass is sometimes so dark—the dispensation is so exceedingly afflictive and perplexing, that as the Psalmist expresses it, he is at his wit's end! And, now, in such a state as this, how natural is it, how rational is it, for a man to look about for a counsellor! how rational, where information might be obtained, to say with the Edomite in the text—"Watchman, what of the night?" How long will it be before the sun rises? before some light is afforded? some deliverance sent?

The state of a sinful world is, comparatively, a state of *night*;—and if a man has sobriety and consideration, will he be anxiously inquiring—always inquiring—about trifles, about froth and nonsense? "I cannot," as one expresses it, "but smile in pity to see a man, even an old man, hastening into eternity—into an eternity of happiness or misery—yet, unresolved in the great point; having no ground for the sole of his foot"—having no arm to lean upon: yet this man can appear trembling with anxiety—anxiety about what? about the way of acceptance and pardon? about the night which is at hand, "when no man can work?" about how he shall meet God? No such thing! It is the last thing you hear of! His anxiety is about the place where he shall make the next good bargain; his anxiety is to know something about the political state of things; his anxiety is, how he shall obtain a picture, or some such trifle! and you shall see him trembling in an auction-room, at the fate of a

splendid toy ; and, going away, tottering with age and infirmity, carrying the bauble in his hand !

Brethren, it is a most affecting case, when a man is totally indisposed to serious inquiry ! surely, it is a sign that he is sleeping the sleep of death ! and better is it that a man, thus spiritually asleep, should be disturbed and agitated by ten thousand dreams, if peradventure, the alarm shall rouse him from his slumbers, and cause him to ask, with an earnestness similar to that of the inquirer in the text—“ Watchman, what of the night ?” Let us now consider,

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WATCHMAN'S REPLY :
“ The morning cometh, and also the night : if ye will inquire, inquire ye : return, come.”

Some, as I before hinted, may take “ the burden of Dumah ” to be quite a local affair ; and I will admit, that something was spoken with a special reference to the nation inhabiting Idumea. But, I ask, if a man has only the turn of mind belonging to a mere philosopher, does he not consider that the general state of man in all ages, and in all nations, is precisely the same ? Does he not consider that the spirit of the fact extends to every part of the globe, and throughout all generations of men ? Is not the All-seeing Revealer of wisdom the same ? Is not human nature the same ? And do not its perplexities and its darkness call on every age for the same answers to the same inquiries ?

In the first place, it may be said to every man upon the face of the earth, as a truth of the last importance—“ The morning cometh, and also the night.” And, secondly, it may be said to every man, that this state of things imposes a special obligation upon him. Let

us, for a few minutes, consider each of these particulars.

1st. It is a truth of the last importance, that *there cometh not the morning only, but also the night*. There is an appointed vicissitude, a perpetual change; the scenes of providence are continually shifting; its seasons continually changing; every thing revolves. You will not be in the same situation to-morrow that you are in to-day; and, it is possible, that, before the next day comes, you may be in another world! There is a strange infatuation, of which no thinking man can be insensible. We see our friends and neighbors die around us; and we seem to sit down as if we had no concern at all in the affair; as though we “had made a covenant with death;” as though we had got a dispensation from the grave. Thus the poet says,

“All men think all men mortal but themselves.”*

But we should consider that “the morning cometh, and also the night.” Many of us have passed our morning; we have had our noon; some of us have advanced far into the afternoon; we perceive the shades of evening beginning to appear, and are sure the night will quickly follow. For this night, it behooves each of us diligently to prepare; for,

2ndly. *Special obligations belong to such a state of vicissitude*. “The morning cometh,” says the watchman, “and also the night;” therefore, “if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.”

Inquiry, upon a multitude of topics, is sheer impertinence, while men neglect to inquire concerning the great business of eternity. A large measure of the guilt of the world rests upon this very point—they will

* Young’s Night Thoughts.

not inquire. Many cannot but know that they are ignorant upon the great topics of Christianity; but they are too proud, or too careless, or too much occupied, to ask any questions respecting them. And, of those who do inquire, how few inquire aright! "They come unto thee," says the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel, "as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. They listen to the voice, to the eloquence of the preacher—if he has eloquence—but they do not "inquire;" they pay no sort of regard to the matter: the tinsel dazzles them; but as to the gold, they value it not at all; they ask not after it.

Therefore, says the watchman, "If ye will inquire," if you mean any thing by coming; if you are not a mere trifler in the business—a man carried away by taste or fancy—then, "inquire ye:" you are under a special obligation; therefore, inquire *humbly*—as one feeling his ignorance, and wishing to be taught; inquire *earnestly*—as one interested in an affair of infinite importance; inquire *scripturally*—taking the word of God for your rule; inquire *repeatedly*—come again and again; for the necessity for such inquiries continues: "*Return, come;*" come, and inquire, as long as there are watchmen to answer; for a night is quickly coming upon the world in which they will be sought in vain. Again, if ye will inquire, inquire ye, and "return." "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."

And here let me observe, that it does not become us

to say what the Judge of all the earth will do with respect to those who know nothing of his ways—and particularly the heathen world. When a case of this kind is brought before us, it is sufficient to say, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” We are always wrong when we propose to take the Judge’s chair. But if a man has an express call from the word of God, and has the truth of that word set before him, from time to time—if he has become informed concerning the mind and will of God—I think we are warranted to say of such a man—if he do not return, if he slights the message, and the messenger—if he lives and dies as men of this world generally do live and die—that he will be beaten, not with “few,” but with “many stripes;” that it will be more tolerable for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that man! Therefore, let me leave this word solemnly impressed upon your consciences: “If ye will inquire, inquire ye, and *return* :” for he that inquires, and does not “return” and prosecute his inquiries, must be compared to the “foolish man which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.” But he that inquires, and returns—he who heareth the word of God and doeth it—“may be likened to the wise man which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.”

But, further, the man who knows that there is not only a “morning,” but also a “night,” which is coming on, is under a special obligation not only to “inquire,” not only to “return,” but to “come.” Here is the arm of divine power held out: let him come for the requi-

site help on this great occasion : here is an invitation of special encouragement : let him embrace the opportunity offered. My dear hearers, I desire you will mark this ; that because of the unbelief of our hearts—because of the despair into which temptation may throw us—the tenderness of invitation is here mingled with the authority of command. Does the desponding penitent cry out, *Wherewithal shall I return unto the Lord? Where can I obtain strength? How shall I get the spirit of religion? How shall I acquire a taste for the things which hitherto I have not at all relished?* The reply is in the text : Not only inquire for the path of light, and return from that of darkness, but also seek the necessary helps : come for grace and strength to enable you to go forward : *inquire, return, come*. You are not only to learn that it is your duty to repent, and that repentance is indispensable to pardon ; but, you must know likewise, that God has exalted his Son Jesus Christ “to give repentance” as well as “remission of sins.” You are not merely to learn, that faith is necessary to salvation, but you must know also, “that faith is the gift of God.” For, let it be recollected, that God never commanded his creatures to go forward without pointing out the way, and strengthening them in it. Thus, he commanded the children of Israel to “go forward :” but they said to Moses, “Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?” Wherefore? Because God will make a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters! So here, he says, “return ;” and in order to return, “come” for help ; “come” for grace and strength ; “come” for pardon, and peace, and victory, through the Lord Jesus Christ. So the prophet Hosea invites : “Come, and let us return unto the Lord ; for he hath torn, and he will heal us ; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning:" that is, the gracious plan of the Lord, as to his people, is progressive, like the morning; there is first the early dawn: there is the gradual increase of light; there is the full and clear day; and, at length, the splendor of the meridian sun: thus, are "the goings forth of the Lord prepared as the morning." "Come now," saith the Lord by the prophet Isaiah, "and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." So, if any be weary, and bowed down under the weight of guilt, Jesus saith, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

You see, then, that the watchman's reply fully meets the case: it consists, not only in intimating to man his condition;—not only, in putting him upon inquiry—not only, in showing him the necessity for a return—but it points out to him also the way of effecting it: how he shall be able to return and come by faith to the Physician, who will heal all his backslidings. Come, then, to the watchman; to the ordinances; to the helps; to the means of grace.

In conclusion: "Let us all learn from the subject, that *the whole of Revelation points out to man his inevitable change, and the preparation which he should make to meet it.*" "The morning cometh, and also the night: If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come." This is the message of every age; and therefore the apostle says, in language less obscure than that of the prophet, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let

us put on the armor of light." Under the Gospel dispensation, every inquiry that can be made has been satisfactorily answered. The watchmen in Zion have pointed out so clearly and distinctly the way of salvation, through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, and by the operation of his Spirit, "that he may run that readeth it." Hear what one of these watchmen says, in the fifth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." He hath sent us as watchmen, to make this proclamation—"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. . . . Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us:" we are watchmen, and, "we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

A great deal of time and labor has been spent by watchmen, merely such by office, on matters of comparatively little moment. But the true Watchman must "cry aloud, and spare not," whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear: he must declare the truth plainly and broadly: he must proclaim that "the morning cometh, and also the night;" that it is a night "in which no man can work:" and the less disposed a man is to hear of death, hell, and judgment, the more he ought to hear of them, that his conscience may be alarmed. What madness and infatuation is it for such a man—a man under a sentence of death—to be calling for amusements to keep up his spirits! to be asking for toys when he is going to execution! when he is passing through the night of trial and of thick

darkness ;—when Satan is all activity, deluding, enslaving, and destroying ; and, whilst eternity is opening before him ! I say, what madness and infatuation is it for men, under wrath and condemnation, to trifle in this manner !

My dear hearers, it is my duty to tell you that there is much to do ! that you have a great journey to perform ; and that to hesitate about setting out, is to trifle with your souls ! This journey must be performed in the day : for, “ if any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world ; but if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.” We are now enjoying the “ morning :” special light is afforded us : whilst other places are wrapped in the darkness of idolatry, the light of life shines upon us. Ours is the morning of truth ; of opportunity ; of privilege. But we should recollect, that every morning is succeeded by night ; the brightest light, by darkness. Come, then, now, “ while it is called to-day ;” come to God, through Christ. Remember, that the same Holy Spirit that brought the message, and who sent the watchman to deliver it, must apply it to our hearts, must impress and seal it there—or we shall never “ come” in answer to the watchman’s call. When St. Paul, on a certain occasion, preached the most important truths, he added, “ I would to God, that all who hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am.” What, then, cannot an inspired Apostle *make* them so ? Cannot he effect the change he desires to see ? No ; he cannot give life : he cannot give the “ hearing ear” nor “ the understanding heart :” but God can do all this. And I therefore beseech him to grant his Holy Spirit to all of you who hear me this day, that you may rightly understand the watchman’s reply ; that you may “ inquire,” with seriousness,

for the way to Zion; that you may “return,” with determined steps, from the paths of ruin; and “come” to Jesus, as the ever-watchful Shepherd and Bishop of your souls!—which, may God of his infinite mercy grant, for Christ’s sake!



RACHEL'S PILLAR.

And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel’s grave unto this day.—GEN. xxxv. 16—21. [1806.]

THE wisest on earth cannot calculate on the next moment. There is but One on whose word of promise we can safely depend.

Jacob having, at God’s command, returned to Beth-el, and built there an altar, thought to sit down quietly; but death entering his family, taught him otherwise, and instructed him that he must not place too much account either in places, or ordinances, but in the God of Ordinances. El-beth-el means the God of Beth-el. He had no sooner built his altar than we read, “But Deborah, Rebecca’s nurse, died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el, under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth;” that is, the oak of weeping. A faithful servant is a valuable gift of God, and not to be obtained in any other way; not to be neglected when infirm, and past serving.

After Jacob had returned out of Padan-aram, God appeared unto him again, and blessed him. "And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name." To obey God, and to be found in his way, is a ground to expect his blessing. God reminds him of his name Jacob—a supplanter, and the changing of it to Israel, a prince prevailing with God. We are by nature Jacobs; but by grace, Israels. We stand in need of fresh confirmation of past encouragements. Such are the promises. What is the benefit of repeatedly frequenting ordinances, but to afford fresh confirmation of past encouragements? God had before changed his name to Israel: see chap. xxxii. 28. But there he reminds him that as he had prevailed over enemies before, so he must do it now; in another manner, but in reality. "And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where God talked with him; even a pillar of stone."

Jacob's favors had been many: but now his sorrows were about to arise: for sorrow and joy tread close on the heels of each other. Observe, how the day of prosperity and adversity are set over against each other—as in a rainy day, the clouds are gathered by the shining of the sun. Man lives in a land of bitterness, where trouble springs up, on every side, to damp our joys; and if, for a moment, the clouds are blown aside, expect their return. Do you ask, where you are to look for most clouds? I answer—where your sky appears the brightest; where your expectations are the highest. Our sharpest sorrows arise out of our sweetest comforts. How dear was Rachel to Jacob; the delight of his eyes! So great was his love, that the seven years which he served for her seemed but "a few days." See chap. xxix. 20.

Thus it was also with Rachel: she said, "Give me

children, or else I die." And in obtaining what she esteemed her highest comfort—what she would have *at any rate*—she discovered the hidden root of her sharpest sorrow. God gave her children, and she gave to her second child the name of sorrow. "And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni;" *i. e.* the son of my sorrow. Take care of desiring any thing, *at any rate*.

Our comforts are mixed with pain, because sin is come into the world. We see its early mischief; Gen. iii. 24. Human nature is prone to idolatry. It is a very hard thing to love the creature, and not love it too much: even our lawful comforts may be unlawfully enjoyed. Would you hasten the removal of a favorite object? Over-value it; love it inordinately; and God, if he loves your soul, will remove it. Would you have your children taken away? Entomb your hearts in them; think of them with endless anxiety—and they shall either become thorns in your sides, or they shall be taken away. The children of our vain desires are *Ben onis*.

My dear hearers, I speak not merely from this passage of Scripture, but from observation in life, and from experience in my ministry, when I say—Whatever you would have removed, or fade in your hand while you hold it—which amounts to the same thing—only over-value it, and it is gone! An old writer observes, "Our strongest affections are our strongest afflictions."

Let us learn to moderate our wishes—to put the creature in its proper place. The annexing to man what ought to be annexed to God only, is idolatry. All the good we receive from the creature, comes from God. If he bids them give us comfort, they shall: but

we are apt to put the creature out of its proper place. And if we do not give God the praise, and look through them to him, we shall be made to feel that they can do nothing for us. God's plan is to teach us to depend only upon himself. Earthly attachments are dangerous: they often give occasion for repentance: the sweetest of them often bring tears from our eyes. God sometimes makes our idol remonstrate with us—Why do you look to me? I can only make you weep: I cannot help you; I am but a perishing stream: go to the *Fountain*: the heart you have given me, you should give entirely to God.

We should not only be ashamed of pursuing with endless solicitude what God has not given us, but we should not even desire it. It is by going into the sanctuary that we detect the idolatry and deceitfulness of our own hearts.

We should know how to meet bereaving providences, keeping our eye upon God. Let us also consider the nature of man as described in Scripture: "Surely the people is grass: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth." See Isa. xl. 6. The prophet was not merely to *declare* this truth, but "the voice said, *Cry*;" *i. e.* tell the people this truth in the most expressive manner: *q. d.* tell man when he looks into his garden, and into his field, he may there see his own picture: his garden, or his field, may look gay and pleasing in summer, but there is a winter coming on; and even before that, the scythe may pass over the tallest flowers, and they shall wither in an hour. This is not a subject that is curious or doubtful; we may speak with authority upon it. The fact is, we are very apt to trifle with important truths like these, till God comes, with some bereaving providence, and seals truth upon our minds. He sends his word first, and then he sends his providence to seal

and stamp truth upon our hearts. God does not send affliction that man may sink into sullen despair under it—or rush into dissipation, to banish from his mind the thoughts of it; but he sends it to make him know that God himself is the comforter of his people. A Christian should not only know his resource, but be in the habit of turning to it at a moment's notice.

There is nothing that a man meets in his journey through life, but the Bible teaches him how to meet it—how to act in it—and how to get good from it. The history of Jacob is particularly instructive to one who has a family. God had promised to bless Jacob, to be his God; but he did not promise he should have no trouble or sorrow: he had promised to be his portion, but not that he should not have cause for many fears. God is always with his people, wherever they are: and he says to every one of us, as he did to Jacob, “I am God Almighty;” *i. e.* I am All-sufficient; your name is weakness; my name is Power; your name is necessity; my name is Help.

“And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave.” Just before, Jacob had set up a pillar of *mercy*; now he sets up a pillar of *mortality*. There are few monuments, besides these two, that are worth our notice. Pillars of mercy and pillars of mortality, are the most remarkable events of human life. How many pillars of mercy have we had to set up in the past year! And as to pillars of mortality, we cannot pass a month without having occasion to set them up for one or another whom we know. When I look around this chapel, I see the places of those who used to attend here twenty or thirty years ago, and who are gone from this place to their graves!

While we set up our pillars of mortality, let us take care that we do not sit down by them, in melancholy

and sadness. Israel set up his pillar, but Israel journeyed on: he had other duties to attend to; he had his family left, though Rachel was gone. "And Israel journeyed on, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar."

Let us constantly meditate upon the pillar of mercy, while we have every day to set it up: and let us give full weight to the pillar of mortality. And let us also journey on, doing the duty of life, both as it regards God and our fellow-creatures: we have work enough to do, and but little time in which to do it. Oh, that we may be all found doing the work of him that sent us in the day, before that "night of death cometh, wherein no man can work!"

Death's antidote is the door of life ever open: and over it is written, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." John xi. 25, 26.



THE CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATING DEATH.

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.—2 TIM. iv. 6. [1807.]

EVERY true Christian is a martyr: the word martyr signifies a witness. St. Paul was such, both living and dying. He spoke these words in allusion to the death he was about to suffer: but the text indicates to us that the mind of a true Christian is prepared for every event. Death is a common topic, and we are apt to speak of it without consideration. Let us endeavor to

obtain something of St. Paul's state of mind, while we

I. CONSIDER, THAT IT IS THE PART OF A WISE MAN TO STAND READY FOR HIS DEPARTURE: *i. e.* to be prepared for death.

II. INQUIRE, WHEREIN THIS READINESS FOR DEPARTURE CONSISTS.

I. CONSIDER THAT IT IS THE PART OF A WISE MAN TO STAND READY, because, 1st, our departure is *an inevitable thing*:—"It is appointed unto all men once to die:" our life is but as an hand's breadth: "Man in his best estate is altogether vanity." There are some declarations of Scripture which we can only receive by faith: but the subject of the text is a fact of every day's observation; and that it is often a most piercing and heart-rending fact, is a truth which no thinking man can deny.

We should consider our departure as a humiliating event. Not only must we be taken from our relatives, friends, and possessions,—but the body—now so much the object of thought and attention, must soon become mere lifeless clay—be laid low, and mingle with its primitive dust. A wise man, while he reflects upon the death of others, will take a prospective view of his own; he will endeavor to realize his own corpse: as it will be a spectacle to others after his departure, so he will regard it now.

2ndly. Because it is also *an infinitely momentous event*. Some look at it with indifference, as a thing of course: but the wise man sees he is going to an eternal state—to an awful tribunal. He sees a kingdom of glory preparing for him: he sees also an alternative, a place of eternal punishment.

"Yes," says one, "death is coming on; every one

must die!" If a brute could speak, it would only speak thus. An enlightened man finds he is going into an eternal and unchangeable state: the question therefore is, To what place is the departed gone? This is a most important and solemn inquiry. "Man," says Job, "giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" This is one of the grand subjects our Saviour dwelt on. Christ spake more on the subject of the eternal world than any who went before him. Now, says the enlightened man, I learn from my Divine Master, that when a rich man dies he not only leaves his pomp and state behind him, but that if he departs like Dives, he lifts up his eyes in hell, being in torments! How infinitely momentous therefore, and how important is it, to be prepared and fitted for a future state! How should we work out our salvation with fear and trembling! The man that neglects this is like a madman! For, should he not reflect, that the change which takes place in his departure will be an eternal one? that the tribunal, to which he must be brought, will pronounce an irreversible sentence? that the most important of all alternatives is suspended upon it—eternal happiness, or eternal misery? But I proceed to consider,

II. WHEREIN THIS READINESS FOR OUR DEPARTURE CONSISTS.

Let us consider it, 1st, *negatively*. This readiness for departure certainly does not consist in a man's *being weary of life*, and therefore wishing to die. If this were readiness for death, then every poor wretch who commits suicide, might be accounted ready to die; not considering that all the miseries and anxieties of life are better than the alternative of rushing unprepared into an endless eternity!

Nor, 2ndly, does it consist in *a thoughtless acquies-*

cence with Providence; saying, with a cold, careless acquiescence in that which cannot be avoided—"Why, every-body must die:" "We must all die:"—language thoughtlessly used, without any seriousness or sensibility of mind. I have been astonished to hear some intelligent, though unconverted men, talk of death as though it were nothing more than the laying themselves down in their beds to sleep! They seemed not to be at all aware that they had an account to render up; and that God has said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God!" Psalm ix. 17.

Nor, 3rdly, is *a disposition to change to another scene of things—a vague desire to enter into another place of existence*—the state of mind required. If a beggar were suddenly to be made a king, how mad would it be not to prepare for so great a change of circumstances! Nor is the idea which some have, that when they come to die, they shall be made ready for it, enough. Nor is it enough to be found living among them that *are* ready. Do not build upon profession,—like the man without the wedding garment: his conscience told him he was wrong: "he was speechless."

Young persons, who have godly parents, I now particularly address myself to you! Yours is an inestimable privilege: but you must beware of thinking that because your parents are ready for their departure, you yourselves are ready to follow them: that because, as a family, you have been united together in Time, you will therefore, as a matter of course, be united together in Eternity. The place where we shall dwell hereafter will be determined, not by our relation to our fellow-creatures, but by our relation to God. Therefore,

2ndly. Let us consider *positively* wherein this readiness for our departure does consist.

The Scripture not only gives us a true account of the "change," the great event which must take place with regard to all, but it also clearly describes the proper frame of mind, the position in which a man should be found waiting for his departure. This is a state of mind the reverse of indifference, carelessness, or presumption: it is rather that of him who says, I will act as one who has every thing at stake!—I have great interests to secure! To be "ready to depart," we must have been awakened to a sense of our guilt and danger; and been led to see that we need to be redeemed. We must have fled for refuge to Christ, and committed our souls, by faith and love, into the hands of this Saviour, as St. Paul did. We find him saying, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." *q. d.* I have committed to him my soul to be redeemed—my body to be raised—my character to be justified: I have committed to him all I have, and all I am; and now, I have nothing to do but "to depart." There is but one way of travelling to heaven: every Christian goes the way which St. Paul did: and if we have been united to Christ, by faith, we may come this day to the table of the Lord, to commemorate the great atonement wherein we place all our hopes; trusting only in his sacrifice, made once for all. Being ready for death, is positively receiving the whole counsel of God: not only receiving the atonement, but being renewed by the Holy Ghost; having the mind that was in Christ; having the spirit and temper of heaven; being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. The two verses which follow the text comprehend the whole

of this. St. Paul says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

However enthusiasts or hypocrites may bring disgrace on religious assurance, yet the Scriptures say there is such a thing; and they show this not only by precept, but example. They show the earnestness of heart, in seeking spiritual blessings which leads to this. The Scriptures mark the earnestness of a true character. See it exemplified, not only in St. Paul, but in Zaccheus, the jailer of Philippi, and Lydia. On the other hand, the Scriptures teach us the mistake of the foolish virgins, saying, "Lord, open to us!" to whom, with all their profession, the Lord says, "I know you not." But there is a state of assured faith, which is the privilege of every true believer. He may say—I am ready to depart; God has revealed to me the scheme of redemption, and I have closed in with it. Therefore, "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?" And I can therefore commit every thing to him; for he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." But without this earnestness of heart, there can be no true readiness for our departure.

I shall conclude by addressing myself, First, *to man, as he is sinking into the grave*: Secondly, *to man, as he is taught to rise above it*.

1st. Every man may adopt the language of one part of the text—and say, "The time of my departure is at hand." But how insensible, how ignorant of the consequences, are most men! How disregarding of the way and means of safety! I have been shocked to

hear the ignorance of persons on their dying beds, saying, I have made my peace with God: when, alas! they have had no idea what that peace means, nor any knowledge of the *Peace-maker*! But what has struck me more is, that some of those persons have been my hearers for a great number of years; and I ask myself—How can this be? I certainly do not make known the whole counsel of God!—or I do not urge it on the heart and conscience as I ought! Surely, I am idle!—I have sometimes been rendered very uneasy on this account: but, at the same time, I have¹ recollected that others, who certainly *did* make known the whole counsel of God, had the same thing to lament. Did not Christ preach the Gospel aright? Did he not declare the whole counsel of God to sinners? And yet he wept over Jerusalem: “Oh that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!” See also Mark iii. 5. St. Paul certainly preached the Gospel: and yet he speaks of it as “a savor of death unto death,” as well as “a savor of life unto life.” Man is the same inconsiderate creature still. It must, therefore, be the alone work of the Spirit of God. He alone can give life to the dry bones. See Ezek. xxxvii.

Vanity is stamped on every thing here: nevertheless, earthly good is commonly regarded by its possessor—as the enthusiast regards his dream—as if it were something solid; till experience has convinced him of his error. “I have no comfort”—said a great man who had built himself a splendid mansion, and laid out his grounds—“because I meet death in every walk: I may soon be removed, and I know not who may follow me.”

We must have victory over death: but what is this victory? Surely ignorance is no victory: careless

indifference is no victory! Victory is taking away a man's fears—his distresses—his temptations: it is being supported under, or carried through them, and in the end, made more than a conqueror through him who loved us. This victory is given: it must be received: we glorify God by receiving the word of promise. The word of Christ, the work of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ effect this victory: then, there will be praise: there will be devotedness. Where there is victory, it will be in exercise; in health, in sickness, in life, and in death! Turn to the alone method of victory, Job xxxiii. 24, "I have found a ransom." Oh, pray to the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your understanding, that you may know both your disease, and also your remedy!

2ndly. I would address *such as are rising above the grave.*

The man who sees an inundation sweeping every thing away, is led to ask—Where must I stand? He naturally looks out for the highest object. Such a standing is proposed to us in the friendship of God. When any one makes a friend of a great character, he is said to be "a made man." But what is all this? Man is vain, and turning to dust! look at the favorites of princes, Wolsey, and others! But if I am warranted to depend on the friendship of God, and to believe that "all the promises are yea, and amen, in Christ Jesus,"—that the price of my redemption is paid,—my privilege is this, that "death is gain:" my present losses, under Providence, are gain. I may be shut up in a dungeon; but the union, and communion, which belongs to this friendship, cannot be cut off. I can call, and he shall answer me;—and that, with an earthquake! as in the case of Paul and Silas. And if this is my portion, then I may say, with the prophet Hab-

akkuk, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; yet, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."—One firm friend is enough: a covenant God, in Christ Jesus, is that friend. Here is a remedy for your dying state—"Because I live, ye shall live also;" I live as your responsible friend: I ever live to make intercession: I will provide a pillow for your dying head: you shall be enabled to rest it on the pillow of Omnipotence!

Come, then, this day to the supper of your Lord and Master, confessing that you are not worthy to gather up the crumbs under his table; and yet, rejoicing, that there is a way of redemption—a narrow path—but safe. Come to honor a crucified Saviour, by accepting the pledge granted; and in order that you may be strengthened and established by receiving the sacred elements of bread and wine. Come, that having received spiritual life, you may receive it more abundantly; and that when called hence, you may be enabled to adopt the words of the text, "For I am now ready to be offered:"—and though "the time of my departure is at hand," I go where I shall no longer walk by faith, but have a clear vision—an uninterrupted enjoyment of God! where I shall no longer need means and ordinances, and hold communion with God in the Church below, but join the Church of the Redeemed above, who see his face, and sing his praise for evermore!

MORTALITY SWALLOWED UP OF LIFE.

Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints.—PSALM
cxvi. 15. [1807.]

WE are creatures travelling so fast to death, that every day tells us of some friend gone: at the same time, we are creatures so responsible, that every one, small and great, must stand before God to give account. Death is a vast event: we find Job calling it a “change.” In the case of the righteous, it is called entering into peace: Isa. lvii. 1.—To them death is “gain:” Phil. i. 21.—Not only their lives, but their death is “precious in the sight of the Lord.”

But of what importance is the death of a saint in the sight of the world? Is it not as the death of an ascetic? A minister of Christ must not speak with regard to the sentiments of the world, either in this case, or in any other. Every thing has a littleness in it till it is connected in our minds with God. The beggar Lazarus might not be much thought of, either in life or death; but we learn from Scripture, that he was one of God’s saints; for, when he died, he was “carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” To such a man as this, we may say, Be of good cheer, thou art a King’s son! There is a dignity in his person: he belongs to “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.”—1 Peter ii. 9. He may die in obscurity, in darkness, but dying “in the Lord,” he shall be safe and happy forever. In answer, therefore, to the question—What is the death of a saint in the sight of the world?—a minister of Christ, as instructed by the word of God, will answer by saying only, What it is in God’s sight. He will say, There is another member of Christ “taken

from the evil to come." "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." It is the servant of God, who, having finished the work he had to do, is called to receive that blessed sentence—"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—Matt. xxv. 34.

I shall endeavor to show,

I. THAT THE DEATH OF THE SAINTS DOES NOT TAKE PLACE BUT BY THE LORD'S SPECIAL APPOINTMENT:

II. THAT WHEN IT DOES TAKE PLACE, IT IS SPECIALLY DEAR TO HIM.

The "Saints?" Who are they? Certainly not all who may call themselves so: otherwise, hypocrites would come under that name. The word saint signifies a holy, or godly person; one that is so by profession, covenant, and conversation. Though, in the world's vocabulary, the word "saint" is a term of reproach, it is in reality an honorable title, and signifies one that is set apart for God—one, that while he lives *in* the world, lives *above* it. Psalm xvi. 3; Heb. vi. 10.

It is also applied to those blessed spirits who are permitted by God to partake of everlasting glory and blessedness. Rev. xviii. 24.—It is sometimes applied to the holy angels: Deut. xxxiii. 2.—But, in the text, it means those who have received mercy: they are the same whom our Lord calls "blessed," Matt. v. 1—12. They are precious; they are separated by divine grace, and "called to be saints." Such are precious in their example, as lights in the world: Matt. v. 14; in their usefulness; in their person, and interests: "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye:" Zech. ii. 8.—This respects their lives; but, in their

death, there appears to be no difference. Many characters shine like meteors while they live: such a one was Jehu: "Come and see my zeal for the Lord!"—But, when you come to the death of such characters, there is something so degrading: death revels in the "last end" of the ungodly: it seems to mock, and say, Where are you now? But not so, the death of the saints; *that* cannot take place but by the Lord's special appointment; and, when it does take place, it is specially dear to him.

The death of the saints is precious in the sight of the Lord, as it is *timely*, and *in season*: God has ordered the time in wisdom, and in mercy.

What! may some exclaim, "*timely*" and "*seasonable*," when, perhaps, the saint dies in the midst of usefulness, and when the happiest prospects are presenting themselves! Can you call this "seasonable?"

Brethren! It is not for us to know the times and the seasons. Our whole life, when compared to eternity, is but a moment. But, with God, there is no disorder: all things are appointed. If a parent should send for a child from school long before his usual time; what is this? If, to fix it in a situation to advantage, though before the expected time, can you wonder? It is gracious, as regards the subject removed; and as regards ourselves, it may convince us how little we can build upon creature comforts: the best is but a loan. What do you say to Abel being taken, and Cain spared? You may be assured that Abel was blessed, and God was determined to plant him in the Garden above, for which he had prepared him. Such providences may also say to us, "Be ye also ready:" ye, especially, who have had many warnings: old age may be warned, when youth is snatched away.

The death of the saints is specially dear to the Lord;

for they are his “jewels;” Mal. iii. 17; therefore, they are taken care of, and put into a place of security. They are his choice wheat: therefore they are seasonably gathered into his garner. When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” It is said to them—before experiencing blights—“Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord:” there shall be an end of conflict, an end of sin, an end of sorrow; they sleep in Jesus; and precious in the sight of the Bridegroom, is the sight of the Bride.

The saints are honorable in their departure: “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable:” Isa. xliii. 4. Jacob was in a post of honor when he exclaimed, “I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!” He was a dying witness for God, when he gave this testimony of his faith: and it will be a token of our preparation for death, if we can speak the same language; as many other saints have done. Men, who have never considered what is the high privilege of a saint, in being able to say with St. Paul, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” can never understand the blessedness of those that die in the Lord; nor that joyful assurance which is an earnest of their inheritance. Such honor belongeth unto the saints: the world can neither give, nor promise, such things. Heb. xi. 13—16.

The death of the saints is advantageous to them, in bringing them to a place, and point, to which the eye of their faith has ever been directed! “They shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.” Rev. xxii. 4. St. John was commanded to write, by a voice from heaven, saying, “Blessed”—Who are

blessed? the great, the honorable, the rich? No! "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth!"—They have now exchanged faith for sight, and understand the whole history of the matter: God has taken them in wisdom as well as mercy: taken them from the evil to come. God has seen fit to remove them from temptation and toil: the Son, that is come of age, is introduced to his inheritance. And God removes the fear of death; so that they expire, saying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Now, Christ's prayer is fulfilled:—"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; to behold my glory." John xvii. 24.—Now, they enter into his courts: "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." Rev. vii. 13—17. Now, they see the fulfilment of all the promises; now, they see the face of God: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God," (Matt. v. 8,) "and his name shall be on their foreheads." God has made a distinction, a real difference in them here below: so it is said, (Ezek. ix. 4,) "Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for the abominations that are done in the midst thereof:" and Rev. vii. 3, the angel was commanded, "Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." But hereafter, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." Dan. xii. 3. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." Rev. iii. 12. To under-

stand fully the meaning of these promises, we must wait for their fulfilment: but we may say in anticipation, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness."

There is a great mistake which is often made. People are very anxious to know how their friends depart: *i. e.* they are very anxious about a mere circumstance: now, instead of this, we should be anxious to know how they lived. Tell me not how a man died, but how he lived. If we have fought the Lord's battles—if we have run with patience the race set before us—we may be very easy about the mere circumstances of death. Saint Paul said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory that fadeth not away." If we can say thus, we may be very easy about dying hours, and leave them to God. If clothed with the garments of salvation, we need not be anxious as to the time or manner of our summons; but say with David, in the twenty-third Psalm, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me:" which was wonderfully experienced by the Christian brother* whose loss we have so much cause to lament. You will all allow that he lived in the Lord, and I am well convinced that he died in the Lord. We must all die; but neither preacher, nor hearer, has this truth sufficiently impressed upon his mind: but if we are of those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb, we shall indeed be blessed, whether called sooner or later to pass through the valley of death.

My dear hearers, let us consider what a privilege it

* The Hon. and Rev. W. B. Cadogan.

is to be—what the world scorns—a Saint! The point is not, whether we die in pain and misery, or more quietly: it is not, whether we die in joy or sorrow, in poverty or affluence: these are mere circumstances: the grand question is—What is our state before God? Many of the saints have had great conflicts in their dying hours: our blessed Saviour expired under agony, and after suffering the hiding of his Father's face:—but to die, commending his soul to God, as Christ did, is what every Christian should desire.

There is one question which may be put to the ancient and modern heathen:—"Can you tell me how to meet death?" What can you say to the purpose on this subject? Whatever does not meet such a case as this, is mockery:—it is a lie! To an awakened man, who has not received God's remedy, death is the most dreadful evil!—But how precious is the Gospel, when it puts death into the rich inventory of a Christian! "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. How should we contend, not for the "letter," but for the "spirit" of the Gospel, that can make even death a blessing to us!

What a miserable mistake does the world make in saying that melancholy is the effect of Gospel truth! If death were only to happen to the saints, there would be some color for such a sentiment. But "death reigneth from Adam to Moses." Man is a *sinner*, and therefore a *sufferer*, whether he believes the Gospel or not.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints:" *here is solid rock*. We should commit the article of death to him: it is his affair more than it is ours: too many judge of death by their *senses*: a

weak believer, seeing others fear, is apt to say, "What if *my* faith should fail, when I come to die!" I repeat it, leave this article of death to Him to whom it belongs: He has said, *it is precious in his sight*. Get more acquainted with him who has conquered death, and every other enemy of his people. Death is only a servant whom the Lord will send for every one of us. If you are seeking Gospel privileges, confess they are *realities*; and assert that you have found them so. To him that testifieth, "Surely I come quickly," we should be ready to echo back, with the Church, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

[Preached at Long-Acre Chapel, Wednesday, Jan. 25, after the death of the Hon. and Rev. W. B. Cadogan, who died Jan. 18, 1797, aged 46.]

THE LORD'S DELIGHT IN HIS PEOPLE.

Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I
have loved thee.—ISA. xliii. 4. [1795.]

THOUGH the Church has often been distressed, yet she has ever had for her support precious promises. . . . The words of the text lead to the following Proposition, namely,

THE LORD WILL ADORN THE SOUL THAT HE LOVES: hence we may discover who are the chosen people of God.

There are some truths in the Scriptures that stand on their own foundation,—that stand on the veracity of the Speaker. Other truths of Scripture may be illustrated, proved, supported: namely, such as describe man as mortal, &c.; but, with respect to such

passages as that in the text, the Word is to be the rule and touchstone. The enemy has at all times a most wonderful skill in raising a cloud in a Christian's mind : but, let it be remembered, God saith, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love : " and "since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable."

If a man ask, How can one be more precious than his neighbor? the answer is, God has said it. The Prophet Ezekiel describes, chapter xvi., under the similitude of a wretched infant, loathed and cast out, the natural state of Jerusalem ; and verse 6, God's astonishing grace and mercy to her : "I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live." And, from the 8th to the 15th verse, God is stating, by the Prophet, how this wretched infant was taken into covenant, and afterwards adorned. "*I clothed thee with brodered work ; I decked thee also with ornaments ;*" I brought thee into the state in which thou now art, and made thee "honorable : " I acted towards thee a part far beyond that of the good Samaritan. Luke x. 30.

It is not to be supposed that the true Israelite is not of the same vile stock as others. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But God, by the operation of his grace, has called them, and chosen them, and they become precious in his sight, even his "jewels," Mal. iii. 17.—his "vineyard," Isa. v. Observe, it is not the Preacher, but the Lord, who says they are precious. Our Saviour says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." John xv. 16. God's people are precious in their birth : see Jer. i. 5 ; Gal. i. 15 ; Hosea xii. 3 ; Psa. lxxi. 6 ; Isa. xivi. 3. They are precious in their life : see 1 Pet. ii. 9 ; Psa. lxxii. 14 ; Lam. iv. 2 : and they are precious in their death : Psa. cxvi. 15 ; Rev. xiv. 13.

When the Lord takes a sinner out of a sinful world, he will adorn that soul: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable." He makes all such honorable, both by imputed and imparted righteousness. All men are in reality what they are in the sight of God. There is a grand distinction marked in the Scripture between the honor that cometh from God, and that which the world calls honorable. That God does adorn his saints,—such as have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the Gospel,—may be seen by every one that is an observer. Did you ever see a poor, foolish, thoughtless, wicked youth, following the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,—fitting himself for destruction,—deaf, as the deaf adder, to all that friends could say, and rushing on to ruin, as the horse rushes into the battle;—have you ever seen such an one, when enlightened by the Spirit of God, to become quite another character—a changed man? What do we see in such a case? We behold the blessed effects spoken of in the text: we behold a sinner called and chosen by the grace and mercy of God: a prodigal brought back to his Father: and then the Father calling for the best robe and putting it on him: putting a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. Now, though much of this change may be seen, for you may see some of the effects,—yet you can see but a part of what is done: you cannot see the heart: there is infinitely more than you can see: there is communion with God through Jesus Christ; following the High Priest within the veil;—there is, even now, a crown of glory preparing for his head; and, whether we see it or not, we do well to believe God when he speaks, as in the text, and declares that his people are "precious," "honorable," and "loved." And the cause of all lies in this: I have adopted thee—

I have anointed thee—I have made thee a conqueror—I have made thee an heir—“This people have I formed for myself.” A transaction has passed between God and the soul, and a garment has been thrown over, that has produced a greater change of state than when the mantle of Elijah was thrown over Elisha. Ephraim has been taught to smite upon his thigh, and say, “Turn thou me, and so shall I be turned:” or to say, like the woman in the Gospel, “If I may but touch the hem of his garment I shall be made whole.” Now, being justified by faith, and living by faith, he walks on new ground, and stands in the position of an adopted child, whom the Lord will beautify with salvation: for “such honor have all his saints.”

But some may ask, Are this people held in honor after all? First, you must observe in whose sight they are honorable: not in the sight of the world, but in God's sight: they are also held in honor by good men: but if you ask me what the world thinks, I would ask you again, What is there in the world's opinion that can touch the case? Will it depreciate a fine prospect, or a fine painting, or any specimen of beauty or art, or a fine piece of music,—that the blind, the idiot, the man that has no taste, or no ear, can discern nothing in them? Yet the world stands in such position in regard to all spiritual objects. See 1 John iii. 1. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” It saw nothing in the glory of Christ: it called for Barabbas the robber instead. But whether the world acknowledge us or not, God says, “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee.”

If there be one grace that characterizes a true child

of God more than another, it is his low view of himself, even after God has adorned him : when he contemplates the glory of Him who filleth the heaven of heavens, he feels himself but vanity and dust before God ; and if it were not for the “ Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness,” his view of himself as a *sinner* would be far more humiliating than even the sense of his meanness and insignificance as a creature. The reason that some persons think so much of themselves is, because they know so little of themselves. We should fall low, and say with Jacob, “ I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant ;” and, with St. Paul, “ I am less than the least of all saints.” But what then ? Does it lessen the grace wherein we stand ? Our hope is, that whatever sin has made us, the grace of God will recover us. Let us, then, seek to become *partakers* of this grace. The way that God usually takes to form a man for himself is by first convincing him that he has ruined himself, and that his help is only in Christ Jesus. He has said, he will cast out none that come unto him : and “ he will beautify the meek with salvation.”

The work of sanctification is a gradual work. A Christian is not formed at once, but by a course of means, of which affliction is one. When a statuary begins to work an image out of a block of stone, or marble, it is so rough and uncouth, it is impossible to know what figure he designs to make ; but, as he goes on, the likeness comes out. This appears in the life of Job : “ I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee :” by the process of affliction, he had learnt both to know himself and God ; and thus he became adorned with humility, and filled with adoration.

Inference.—Is it the Lord’s design to adorn his people

with the beauties of holiness? Then let us say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation: of whom shall I be afraid?" If I am precious in his sight, let the world scorn me: it is the Lord's design to honor me; that is enough; let him do it in his own time and way. I may have to pass through deep waters—deep disease—sharp trials; yet God says, "Fear not, for I am with thee." If a man be not an antinomian or a hypocrite, but if he be walking with Christ, then let him take comfort from this subject. God has said, "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise." But not by ostentation. How does a great building praise the architect? By evidencing his skill. So does the Christian: and in order to this, how watchful, how holy, how circumspect, should be his walk and conversation, in order to glorify his Father who is in heaven!

There are some people that resemble a scaffolding in the building up of this spiritual house; they are hired servants, employed only to carry on the work; and when the house is finished, they are taken down, and laid by. Such are men with great and splendid gifts, but little grace; who learn the language, but who are strangers to the spirit of the Gospel.

In conclusion: If such as are precious in the Lord's sight are honorable, let me call upon you to adore the goodness of our God for making such poor sinners precious in his sight; and bringing them, in his good time, to glory. I call upon those who have no such hope heartily to seek it, in the words of the Psalmist, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people: oh, visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance." Psa. cvi. 4, 5.

THE BABEL-BUILDERS.

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.—Gen. xi. 1—9. [1807.]

THERE have been many curious remarks made upon this part of Scripture history. Archbishop Tenison thinks that the Tower of Babel was designed for the worship of the Sun, as the drier up of the flood: and we have, in ancient history, many records concerning its remains: but I have always considered that curious conjectures upon religious subjects, especially in sermons, are like the flowers which grow in corn-fields, pleasant to the eye of the beholder, but ruinous to the possessor of the field. I have sometimes found, when I have begun to converse with people upon matters of the last importance to their eternal welfare, that they have wanted to turn aside to some curious question, by which the grand design has been destroyed: it is a snare to amuse with critical points, while subjects of the highest moment demand attention.

I propose, therefore, to consider only two things in this passage of Scripture,

I. THE PRIDE OF MAN.

II. THE POWER OF GOD.

I. We see, in this history, AN EXHIBITION OF HUMAN PRIDE AND PRESUMPTION. The project was an earthly one: "Go to"—here! here! let us be as the reptiles; the earth is our portion; and we have no eye to any thing beyond the earth. What a picture is this of man, in every age! What a poor crawling projector of a little clay tenement! He projects something which is to satisfy his little tiny soul, while the great things of God, and eternity, are quite forgotten!

Then, he is not only making himself a reptile, crawling upon the earth, and looking upon that as his portion—but, you may remark this also in man—there is a self-sufficiency: "Go to, let us build a city"—let us erect a tower, and carry it to so great a height "that the top thereof may reach unto heaven." Not that they projected so ridiculous a scheme as to carry this building literally to heaven; for certainly if they had formed such a plan, they would not have pitched upon a plain, but a mountain for their project. But the meaning is—let it be so grand, so sublime, so exalted, that others may take notice of it, and that the top of it may seem to reach to heaven!

Then here is ambition, which is a part of the pride of this creature, crawling upon the earth: "Let us make us a name;" not content with the name of "pilgrims and strangers upon earth;"—not considering that they were fallen, guilty creatures, that must look to God for "a name better than that of sons and of daughters"—No; but, let us make ourselves a name.

Depend upon it, my dear hearers, that great projects

for this world discover at once the character of the projector; he is of the earth, earthly; he knows not himself; he knows not his God. Great projects for a dying world, show the vanity of the projector. He mistakes utterly the way to build: his very foundation is bad:

“He builds too low who builds beneath the skies.”*

The great poet, Milton, very finely represents the fallen spirits when they were roused out of their lethargy, and waiting the advance of their arch-leader, as very cunning, very busy, very ingenious, very philosophical;—but without one spark of real virtue, charity, or repentance! Oh, how like to the picture of man is this! and how unlike to that man who ceased to be a child, who put away childish things, and became a man—an enlightened man—a man of God! How unlike to those of whom we read an account in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews! “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob.” He did not say, “Go to, go to, let us build;” but he dwelt in tents: he looked indeed for a city, and a city that hath foundations: but a city “whose builder and maker is God.” “These all died in faith,” says the Apostle, “not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.” No surer

* Young's Night Thoughts.

mark is there of a man's having received true wisdom than that he is willing to wait God's time, and walk in God's way, and satisfy himself with a REVERSION; *i. e.* the receiving of something that at present he can only behold by faith. But these Babel-builders were, like the fallen spirits, very busy, ingenious creatures, forgetting their place, as sinful, guilty worms; forgetting their character, as undone perishing creatures, who yet have a hope and prospect set before them in the word of God; forgetting God's name, that he is a jealous God, who will cast contempt upon their proud projects; and forgetting how very short a time they have in which to work out their salvation. In the midst of all this forgetfulness, their pride would build a city, a tower, to make them a name, to distinguish them from other people; and, at length, their very tower buries them, as it were, in its ruins! And has the name of BABEL, *i. e.* confusion, to this day.

But perhaps we have dwelt too long on these men, and have forgotten ourselves. Are there no Babel-builders now before me? Are there none here, who forget the true city, the true tower, the true foundation? and who are crying incessantly—Let us build something that shall be for our comfort. Are there none here, who know that they live in a forgetfulness of God's word? who know that their whole conduct runs counter to his counsel? Are there none here, who forget their character as dying creatures, and what God has spoken to them upon the subject; and whose whole conduct is one continued doing and undoing? You bring, for instance, your children to church; you do right: you tell them that what they hear is the truth, and that they should regard it: but, remember, that by your conduct at home you undo all the week what they hear on the Sunday. Do not

your sentiments run counter to the sentiments delivered to them from the word of truth? and can you think that they will prosper? that they will be enlightened? Do you ever consider that if by your conduct and conversation you undo what they are taught from the word of God, your houses are schools of Atheism? You approve of what is said from the pulpit; but you never ask—What can we do for our children in connection with the word? I ask another question—“What will ye do in the end thereof?” I see the Judge sitting upon his great white throne, and all nations assembled before him; I hear conscience speaking out, and calling you to witness that you have had the truth, as it is in Jesus, brought home to your consciences; and your duty to yourself and families enforced—plainly enforced: What will ye do in the end thereof? He is the only wise man that prepares for futurity. Then, are you not Babel-builders, saying, “Go to, go to, let us build, let us make a city?” Moreover, you have a stronger assurance and certainty than these Babel-builders had; for God has plainly told you what you are, and what you are to expect; he has set before you redemption in Christ Jesus, in parables and precepts; he has told you how foolish that man was who pulled down his barns and built larger, and said to his soul, “Soul, take thine ease!” He was a Babel-builder! God has shown you the character of a man who was satisfied with purple and fine linen, and sumptuous fare;—another Babel-builder! He has shown you the history of the Jews from that time in which they departed from God, down to the present: here are men going and selling themselves to a tyrant, saying what he bids them, and denying the truth of God’s word! What is this, but telling us that every Babel will, by and by, prove a confusion to its builder! But

it is time to turn our attention to another consideration set forth in this history, namely,

II. THE POWER OF GOD.

We have God's mind upon these projects. God has wise reasons for suffering an infatuation to arise and mislead; we may be, and often are, astonished to see to what a length an infatuation may run: to what a height a project that enters the mind of a set of Babel-builders may be carried! "Let us carry it," say they, "up to heaven!" Let us make us a name by it, and set up a monument! We are astonished, I repeat, to see to what a length it may run; but we see only in part, and know but in part: while "a thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years." We see only a very few years, and therefore we look with astonishment. But I think we may see from the history before us, and from the history of the present times also, the necessity of the continual interference of the moral government and power of God: we may see, that when wickedness combines with wickedness to support by policy a mad project, if God does not interfere—if God does not say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther!" it is impossible to say what the consequences would be. The world would become an Aceldama, a field of blood. Men stand astonished at that which they see daily before their eyes, and ask their neighbors—What are we to think of this? How far will this man go with his projects? his ambition is unbounded! But nothing will be effected that way. We stand, like children, gazing at a house on fire, and ask, How far will this run? It will burn down the whole neighborhood! Perhaps it will; but your gazing will not put it out! There is a reference which should be made to God, when a Babel-

builder is projecting the ruin of all around him : it should remind us of the absolute necessity of prayer, and the only possible resource which it presents. We are put upon looking to God, who can confound all these devices. We should imitate the disciples when in a storm at sea : their prospect was tremendous ; and what could they do ? Nothing at all : but they remembered that their Master was in the ship : they awoke him, and cry, “ Lord ! help us ! ” see our extremity ! “ and he arose and rebuked the wind and the sea ; and there was a great calm.” *Our extremity is God’s opportunity.* With regard to the present state of things, as they stand in England,* we are infatuated if we do not remember that God is our help and strength in time of trouble : we seem reduced to apply to God upon this occasion : we seem reminded to act as Daniel acted, and to pray as he did, “ O, our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake ! O, my God, incline thine ear, and hear : open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name : for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies.”

In the history before us, there is something striking in the manner of God’s interfering upon this occasion ; for in the midst of judgment we find him remembering mercy. He might easily not only have thrown down the tower, but also crushed the builders. Instead of this, he scatters them over the face of the earth. They hoped to be united together by this building : God orders it to be the means of their dispersion : they would set up their name by it ; he made the project a reproach ; they would fain distinguish themselves by

* Preached in the year 1807.

it; he would cause it to expose them, and gave it the name of Babel, or confusion, to this day.

My dear hearers, let us remember, that God has a variety of ways of confounding Babel-builders. We often prescribe and say, It must be this way: the man must be destroyed—the tyrant must die; such and such a method must be pursued: our deliverance must arise from such a quarter, or from such a plan! But we know nothing of the matter! we effectually mistake when we conjecture. God has a variety of ways of confounding Babel-builders; and we effectually mistake when we attempt to point out the way he will take. But let us remember that, sooner or later, he will arise and show that his design shall take place. And if you ask me what this design is, I have only to turn to the second Psalm, where you may read it. “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying; “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” All the while that this insolent language is going forward in the heart of man—“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.” As if he had said, Ye poor, silly, foolish, helpless children, put away your childish things! I shall speak to you presently in my wrath, and vex you in my sore displeasure: for I have, and will, set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Christ shall be glorified, exalted: the kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers may take counsel together: but I will blast their designs: they are but a set of Babel-builders; and I will write confusion upon all their undertakings.”

Oh, it is a blessed thing indeed, when God enables a

man, from his heart, to embark with him!—when he calls to a special intercourse with himself! “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast!”

I think it is worthy of remark, that as the confusion of tongues scattered the proud Babel-builders, so when God did undertake this work of setting his king upon his holy hill of Zion, the gift of tongues gathered together the humble: he could send a confusion of tongues to destroy the proud projects of Babel, and he could, and did impart a variety of tongues to send his word over the face of the earth. “They went,” it is said in the Acts, “everywhere preaching the word.” But, who were benefited by it? “Not many wise—not many mighty—not many noble:” it was foolishness to the Greek, and a stumbling-block to the Jew; but to every humble soul, it was the wisdom of God, and the power of God. And to this day it remains the same; the gate of life is still strait; the way is still narrow; sense must still be denied; and if our projects are to purpose, we are working with the help of God. It is as Christ has said—“If any man will come after me, and hate not his father and his mother, yea, his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” But, says he again, if you think this too much—if you are not willing to pay the price, you will fail. “Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.” So it may be said of some in regard to religion—This man began, but was not willing to make a complete resignation of his soul and

body, life and character. "Blessed," therefore, "are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" they have no disposition to kick at the doctrine, or to make a bargain with God upon their own terms. To them is the Gospel addressed, and they will receive it.

I trust that God has enabled many of you to be his witnesses in this respect. You have seen the folly of your former projects—of wanting to build some Babel or other. For it is not merely among the rich; the poorest man upon earth has his "Babylon of straw:"

"Slaves have their little Babylon of straw ;*

as the poet says.* If God has shown you your mistake, and told you plainly that you cannot succeed by merely giving up that which is false, merely by discarding your Babels—that it is not sufficient to say you have been wrong, and you have discovered the cheat and falsehood which Satan endeavored to make you act upon—but that it is necessary to build somewhere; and that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, even Jesus Christ;" if God has shown you that it is not enough to discover the mistake of the rich, the ambitious, the learned, or the visionary, but has taught you to build aright, and instructed you that you must build upon Christ; then, standing there, you stand upon the foundation of God; you stand where God has bid you stand; you take him at his word, that it is "a sure foundation," the foundation which God has laid in Zion; and that he hath not only sent his Spirit to make it known, but to write it upon your heart: for, "he shall take of mine," said Christ, "and shall show it unto you." Now, this is no Babel:

* Young's Night Thoughts.

this is God's voice in his word ; this is the teaching of God's Spirit ; this is the building that shall stand ; the building which the wise man erected "upon a rock." And soon shall many an ambitious monarch—many a celebrated projector that has kept the world awake for a time—soon shall that man say, Would to God that I had been wise in time ! and had acknowledged that God was wiser than I ! and that I had received his counsel as a little child, and suffered him to lead me as a shepherd leadeth his flock ! Would to God that I had cast down my proud imaginations, and brought every thought into captivity to Christ ! that so, when he shall appear, I might "be like him, and not be ashamed before him at his coming !"

To the aged believer let me say : You, I trust, are upon another elevation : you are ascending Pisgah's top, and endeavoring to take a view of "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." You are looking for that city described by St. John : "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. . . . 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 the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it. (Rev. xxi. 10—24.)

MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.—JOHN i. 22, 23. [1805.]

THE Sanhedrim, or great council at Jerusalem, to whom it belonged to judge who were true prophets, sent messengers to John the Baptist to ask him, saying, Who art thou? Art thou Elias? He saith, "I am not;" *i. e.* not Elias who was now dead; not Elias the Tishbite; nor yet "that prophet" which Moses spake of—Deut. xviii. 15. But he tells them plainly, he was the predicted forerunner of the Lord Christ: and he refers to Isaiah's prophecy concerning him, Isa. xl. 3. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." St. John was the only one among the prophets who was expressly foretold, except the Messiah. Isaiah prophesied of him 700 years, and Malachi near 400, before his birth. And though he disclaims being "that prophet," he was declared by our Lord to be "more than a prophet"—probably in this respect, that he was the only one who pointed out the Messiah as actually come. I propose,

I. TO SET BEFORE YOU SOME GENERRL CONSIDERATIONS WITH REFERENCE TO JOHN'S CHARACTER AND MINISTRY.

II. TO LOOK AT IT AS IT WAS PREPARATORY TO THE WORK OF CHRIST.

III. TO CONSIDER IT AS IT WAS ADAPTED TO ALL CLASSES OF HEARERS.

I. LET ME OFFER SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS WITH REFERENCE TO JOHN'S CHARACTER AND MINISTRY.

St John was a most extraordinary character ; even his birth was extraordinary ; and it was said of him, as was said of no other, " He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." He lived the most blameless, holy, and mortified life, and reprobated vice wherever he saw it. Witness his rebuke of Herod, which occasioned him to die a martyr. But he who has lived up to his character, though he may be cut off, as we express it, in the midst of his usefulness, yet, depend upon it, he has accomplished his work. While he lived, he pointed to " the Lamb of God," and declared the excellency of Christ's person and ministry above his own ; and that he was not worthy to carry his shoes, or to perform the least office of service for him.

The more holy any man is, the more sensible he is of his unholiness. Christ gave testimony concerning John, " Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist : " " He was a burning and a shining light." Yet when this holy prophet came to speak of his divine Master, he feels himself nothing before him ; but says, " He it is, who coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to unloose." See, again, his humility when our Lord came to be baptized of him : " I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me ? " As though he had said, Thou art purity : I am pollution : Thou art the Son of God ; I am the son of Adam. Our Lord was baptized, as he was before circumcized, that he might by his own baptism sanctify this ordinance to his church ; as well as that he might fulfil the right-

eousness of the ceremonial law, which required the washing of the priests in water when they entered upon their office ; as appears from Exod. xxix. 4.

Our Lord never reproved any one for thinking too highly of him. John always testified of Christ that he was “the Son of God :” “Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above, is above all.” “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” John iii. 36. He declares that Christ should not baptize with water, as he did, but “with the Holy Ghost, and with fire ;” *i. e.* purifying their hearts, and consuming their corruptions. Let us look at John the Baptist’s ministry,

II. AS IT WAS PREPARATORY TO THE WORK OF CHRIST.

John sets out preaching “repentance :” “Repent ;” change your mind ; endeavor to take a new view of things ; you are all wrong ! Look into the world, and see what there is in it of God ! John felt, and saw, that in the wilderness there was no love, no fear of God ; for savage life is not more disposed to godliness than polite life ; and *vice versâ*. Yet he lifted up his voice ; he knew the sound of his Master’s feet was behind him. “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance ;” but Christ shall so animate your hearts, that like Elisha, when the mantle was thrown over him, you will desire to follow.

Among the endless disputes about baptism, we should recollect, that in whatever form it is administered, it means but one thing. Water is the grand purifier ; baptism with water means, as our Church Catechism

very properly expresses it, "an outward sign of inward spiritual grace." Water was the sign of this purification under the law: see Num. viii. 7. John washed the Jews, to show the necessity of inward purification notwithstanding their outward profession. "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." There must be inward purity and faith.

There is one characteristic of true Christianity that makes it differ from all other systems of religion: namely, that it consists not in Word, but in Power: that it is not a Form, but a Substance. The Jews, though they had true religion among them, yet were so degenerated as to fall into superstition and formality. The time was come, however, when "the axe was to be laid to the root of the tree." John's whole life, and death, showed what he meant: this is a great thing in religion. He showed, both to the Pharisee and Sadducee, the uselessness of mere forms: he pointed them to "the Lamb of God," as suited to their character, and to every other character. I come, as though he should say, preaching the necessity of preparing for *ONE* that comes after me, on whom my hopes are placed, "who is preferred before me; whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to bear." *I* only administer the sign; but he shall give you the thing signified: it shall operate like fire: the Holy Ghost shall enlighten, warm, and purify your hearts. The promise of Christ's Spirit is our grand encouragement to set up Christ's Gospel in the world, or in our hearts; and this promise runs through both Testaments. See Ezek. xxxvii. and Mal. iii. There is nothing wanting to our salvation but an humble, contrite, willing spirit.

III. CONSIDER THE MINISTRY OF THE BAPTIST, AS IT WAS ADAPTED TO DIFFERENT CHARACTERS.

The first thing that is required of a minister, in

making straight the way of the Lord, is to bear a plain testimony of Christ. "There standeth one among you whom ye know not. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. . . . And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God. . . . And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, *Behold the Lamb of God.*"

Now observe the tendency of such a ministry to a certain class of people with whom John had to do, and with whom we shall have to do, as long as we live in the world: we may consider them as composed of *such as are careless about every religion, and those who are setting up something else instead of Christ.*

To the *careless*—the whole expression of the Baptist's life is as if he had said, I am a candidate for eternity: I look upon this world as passing away: I am looking to the atonement; to "the Lamb of God," as my only hope—as "taking away the sin of the world." But to the Pharisee, he would say—What is your hope? If you are turning your back upon this great atonement, you are the most forlorn of men! But, if ye are not willing to "behold the Lamb of God" as your GREAT REMEDY, then behold the AXE of his vengeance, prepared to cut down and destroy you! You will be condemned not only by sins of commission, but sins of omission: "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit"—as well as that which bringeth forth evil fruit—"is hewn down and cast into the fire."

A modern Sadducee is gratified exceedingly if you will meet him with reasoning, giving him an opportunity to cavil and dispute. But what did the Baptist do in this case? He comes at once to the heart and conscience: "the axe is laid to the root of the tree:" he comes to the motive which keeps him back, namely,

that he is carnal. There is no end of talking and arguing with sceptical, bad men. The only means to do them any good is to come directly to their consciences; to tell them they are wicked. The same to the Pharisee. See what John says to both Pharisee and Sadducee, Matt. iii. 7—12. "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." Glory not in this, that you are the only visible church God has upon earth; for God is able, out of the obdurate Gentile world, to raise up a people to himself, and to cast you out. If ye are not born of the Spirit, it will avail nothing to be born of Abraham "according to the flesh."

It was enough for John that he spake the truth. Nor let us suppose that he would keep back any of the counsel of God. He would not only address the careless, the Pharisee, and the Sadducee; but he would meet the penitent also: he would say to the contrite, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." He would preach to them by his own example: *q. d.* God is my *end*: Christ is my *way*: and the Holy Spirit is my *guide*. This was to prepare a people for the Lord.

The Gospel is not addressed to man's opinion; it is addressed to faith: "Wilt thou be made whole?" If not, then you are not the friend of God; then you are not genuine in your religion. When the messengers came to John and said, "Who art thou?" John gave the answer: but we do not find that he gave satisfaction; for a thing is received according to the nature of the recipient: the sun that softens the wax hardens the clay: the truth is the same, whether sown in "stony ground," or whether the seed is sown on "good ground;" whether preached by a poor illiterate man, or by John the Baptist. An unconverted, unhumiliated heart, will

receive it from neither. But let us pray for a teachable spirit: and let us remember who it is that says, "Learn of me:" while looking to the Lamb of God, we are safe. This is the great design of the ministers of Christ, to direct the eyes of a lost world to a crucified Saviour: to behold him, to accept him, and to submit to him.



CHRIST, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.—1 JOHN ii. 8.
[1806.]

WE commemorate this day the first Advent of our Lord: but how few consider the nature and manner of his second coming! "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." There is no finer image in the creation, than the rising sun after a dark and stormy night. Thus the Prophet, after adverting to God's judgments on the wicked, breaks out with this splendid image: "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings."

But at the appearance of this "true light," who is not ready, like Adam, to hide himself in any thicket? Yet how can we do without this light which comes like the rising sun, dispelling the darkness of error, the mists of superstition, and the clouds of ignorance!

The Apostle, in the verse preceding the text, was inculcating love. "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye

had from the beginning." The love of God, and our neighbor, was an old commandment, always taught. But he says, ver. 8, "Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you." How is this? The command is not new in substance; but brought forward by a new and strong example in the Gospel; "because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." The day on which we meet, makes me consider this truth more in the abstract: I shall endeavor, therefore,

I. TO OPEN AND CONFIRM THE PROPOSITION, *the darkness is past*: and also to show that THE ADVENT OF CHRIST IS THE SHINING AND TRUE LIGHT, IN THIS DARK WORLD.

I shall then proceed,

II. TO APPLY THIS TRUTH TO OUR OWN HEARTS.

I. I SHALL ENDEAVOR TO OPEN AND CONFIRM THE PROPOSITION. Sin and ignorance are in Scripture called darkness. Sin begins, is carried on, and ends in darkness. This is so evident, that no proof is wanting. Man, without divine light, is found so dark and ignorant, that he not only knows nothing of the power, but he knows nothing even of the plan of the Gospel. Not to speak of heathens, what do you meet, in this Christian land, but darkness? what in your own heart—what in your families, but darkness that may be felt?

It signifies little to say of the heathen world, that it had its Plato, its Seneca, its Socrates. What is this but to say, that there were two or three twinkling stars in a dark night! That night must needs be dark that has only here and there a little twinkling star to show!

In regard to the Jewish dispensation, there was something like moonlight: there was a comparative illumination. Still the Mosaical institutions were

dark ; only shadows of “good things to come.” The prophecies were dark : St. Peter says, “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.” Even the views of the disciples were comparatively dark. Though Isaiah had spoken so plainly of Christ’s death, yet when our Lord talked of going to Jerusalem to suffer, Peter exclaimed, “That be far from thee !” To say nothing of those who, like Saul of Tarsus, oppose, let us turn to such as have sat under the sound of the Gospel for years—having the light shining upon them. I repeat, that many are not only ignorant of the *power*, but even of the *plan* of the Gospel ; they are ignorant of the way in which a sinner is to be saved ! The light shineth, but men move on in darkness, as their element : they love darkness : they shun the rays of light.

Human learning, if destitute of the knowledge of God, is dark. Whatever an academy may say of it, or those most renowned for it, an angel would say of such a man, There goes a poor blind creature, groping his way to hell ! There are the false lights of philosophy ; and the false lights of the Pharisee ; and the false lights of sense, opposing themselves to faith : these are all in opposition to the true light.

In the midst of all this darkness, we find the prophet Isaiah thus addressing the Church in reference to the advent of Christ : “Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” Be enlightened ; for thy light cometh. When Jesus Christ came into the world, the Sun of Righteousness arose over the nations with healing in his wings : so that all former light appeared, comparatively, as shade. I include all the former dispensations, which were only predictive and prefigurative of the bright and sun-

like dispensation of the Gospel. Therefore St. John says, "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

It may be asked, In what way does this light shine in this world of sin and darkness? I answer, God's fulfilling his word, and being present in his Church, makes his Church to become the light of the world. Christ's light shines in his word, written by the Spirit of the living God on the heart and conscience. I might mention many ways in which the shining of this light appears; but I shall collect them under two heads.

The Advent of Christ is the shining and true light, 1st, *as it shines on the heart of man*: and 2ndly, *as it shines on all surrounding objects*.

1st. "The true light now shineth" *on the heart of man*. St. Paul shows, that notwithstanding a man may have knowledge, or wisdom, or science, (to which he particularly refers in the first chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians,) yet, if he have not the light which illuminates the heart, he is "in darkness even until now." "For God," says he, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 4. Every wicked man, every unregenerate man, whatever light he may boast of, is walking in darkness: and has nothing before him but eternal darkness and despair.

I know from experience, (and many young ministers have been stumbled at this,) that after all endeavors and efforts to work on men's consciences, they remain as dark and stupid as ever: either from the prevalence of self-righteousness, or from being carried away by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Notwithstanding the clearest exhibitions of divine truth, men remain locked up, as it were, in a

dungeon, into which not a single ray of the sun can enter ! which shows the difference between only hearing of Christ, and believing in him.

At the same time, we observe in other cases such an efficacy, that we cannot help seeing that "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" hath shined into the hearts of some of our hearers, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." So that we may say with the Apostle, "For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?" "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Now, this is one of the instances of the shining light appearing in the hearts of men. But where it does so, it is a moral miracle : it is more than the giving sight to blind Bartimeus. To bring men "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God;" to give them a taste for the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore—this is a miracle of Divine grace ! There must be the eye, as well as the object to look on : the eyes of the understanding must be opened. Where it is so, the light becomes influential ; the light of the sun enables a man to walk abroad, and be doing.

2ndly. Let us contemplate "the true light" *as it shines on all surrounding objects.*

When "the true light" shines on the heart, every thing wears a different appearance. We form a different notion and estimate of things according to the different aspects under which we contemplate them. Some poor paltry things appear brilliant by candle-light, which will not bear examination by the light of day. When the true light shines on objects, we are enabled to see them as they really are. The world ap-

pears as it really is when the true light shines upon it, and discovers its true character.

A great literary character may carry a taper, and walk in its feeble light, and be greatly applauded as one of the brightest of those illuminati who are supposed to have shed such a flood of light upon the nations in modern times. But, alas! such do not consider that "the lamp of the wicked shall be put out!" And all, undoubtedly, are of this character, who hold up their ignis fatuus in opposition to that true light of the Gospel which now shineth! These are not the men to discover the truth of God, pleased as they are with the fancied brightness of human reason. But, while the veil is upon the heart of man, whether he be Jew or Gentile, the veil is upon every thing.

But the shining of the true light on objects shows them as they really are. Take an instance or two. The woman came into the Pharisee's house, and washed our Lord's feet with tears, wiping them with the hairs of her head. The Pharisee, who had bidden him, said within himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." The true light shone upon the transaction: "she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Woman, "thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

So again, "when Jesus sat over against the treasury, he beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much." A poor widow casts in her two mites. What says "the true light?" "Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all."

The disciples were astonished at the buildings of the temple, "how it was adorned with goodly stones and

gifts." Christ shows them that these things were utterly unworthy of their regard: "As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in the which there shall not be one stone left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." As though he had said, Turn your eyes from these temporary things to the precious corner-stone, laid in Zion! "Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God."

Again: "Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a publican, and the other a Pharisee." What a discovery did "the true light" make as to their spirit! "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other!"

"The true light now shineth," and will flatter no man. "Who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." He shows the true character. Perhaps you pity that beggar who lies at the rich man's gate full of sores: but look, through the shining of "the true light," at the other poor creature who sits at his sumptuous board "clothed in purple and fine linen," and who is to go where he will not have a drop of water to cool his tongue! Mark how "the true light" explores things, and reveals them in their true character! and then you will no longer "call the proud happy." It will detect every thing that is base and fictitious.

II. LET US APPLY THIS TRUTH TO OUR OWN HEARTS.

In doing this, let us notice, 1st, *the obligations we are under, as favored with this shining light.* This subject calls upon the man of the world to consider his obligations to seek the true light while it shines, and to reflect what the neglect of it will lead him to. The condemnation of the wicked proceeds upon this very principle: "Light is come into the world, but

men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

What is likely to be the present punishment of such as reject this light? "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." His heart is given up, and hardened: after his conscience has been, in a measure, awakened to see the truth, the evil spirit returns again, and finds the house "empty, swept, and garnished." But will this keep the evil spirit out? "Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." Luke xi. 26. I have seen instances of this: these pretendedly pure and pharisaical characters are among the worst enemies to "the true light." I have observed in those who hear the Gospel without feeling it, greater repugnance to the truth, and more disposition to oppose it, than even in the reprobate who disgraces his family and neighborhood by his vices. I can only say to such, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. v. 14.

I remark, 2ndly, that *an obligation is laid on the Church of Christ as regards the treatment of those whose eyes are not as yet opened to behold the true light.* We should show great compassion to such: we should avoid every thing that looks like saying, "Stand by, I am holier than thou!" Do you consider who made you to differ? who taught you? That man is a blind Pharisee who treats with harshness such as do not see "the true light!" Consider the rebuke given to the Apostles when they wanted to call down fire from heaven upon those who did not receive them: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." What should we have thought of Bartimeus, if, after our

Lord mercifully restored his sight, he had begun to reproach the first blind man he met, because he did not remove his own blindness? Rather, let us pray for those who remain spiritually blind, and direct them to the Almighty Physician of souls. Let us pray for our servants, our children, our friends, and relatives; and take heed that we cast no stumbling-blocks in their way by any inconsistency of conduct.

If light is received, we shall see its effects. See how it appeared in the character of Simeon, and Zaccheus! If a man seeks God, he has light to direct his feet: he says, Here I follow: this is my direction: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Here is a light to cheer and influence my heart: leave me but this light—this Sun of Righteousness, and I ask no more! I can wait in patience for him who says, "Behold, I come quickly; let no man take thy crown." You that know the benefit of Christ's first coming, look for the glory of his second coming, when he shall gather the wheat into his garner.

3rdly. There may be some present, *who have but a glimmering ray of light*. I have read of a man who, from exploring a cavern too far, was shut in by robbers. But the man saw at a distance a ray of light, and followed it, till it led to his deliverance. So, in the Gospel: a man may have only a ray of light; let him follow it: it is a token for good. A man may set out with doubt and faint hope: but let him pursue and follow on, and light will increase. "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." No science gives full satisfaction at first. So in religion: our rule is this: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." Here is hope for the despairing; life for the dying; pardon for the guilty. As darkness represents sin and ignorance, so light is

used in Scripture to represent whatever is good, and brings man to God. From the Advent of Christ, we derive a brighter evidence to all important truth—a more encouraging aspect to every promise; and a new and animating motive to every duty.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come.—
HAG. ii. 17. [1799.]

THE Bible is a book which not only points out duty, but it is a fountain of encouragements. It strengthens the feeble hands, in order that what is done may be done with vigor and energy.

I. CONSIDER WHAT IS HERE PROMISED: “*The desire of all nations shall come.*”

In the predictions concerning the Advent of our Lord, He is called “the desire of all nations,” because it was in him that all the promises were centered: so that there is not a holy man, in or out of eternity, but he has fixed his eye on Christ.

It is further predicted that there should be a preparation for Christ’s coming; “I will shake all nations.” Men may call it disturbance, or calamity; but this is our belief, that God is in this: “I will shake all nations.” There is also a prediction of the consequences that should take place when the desire of all nations should come, see ver. 9: “In this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

II. CONSIDER WHAT HAPPENED PREVIOUS TO OUR LORD’S ADVENT.

The temple was built: and before Christ came, a shaking took place, more especially among the nations to whom Christ was sent. The Roman eagle fixed upon the carcass; for the sceptre had departed from Judah. The great design of prophecy is to make it appear that there is not a thing can take place from the beginning to the end of time, but that God has declared it. Prophecy is a standing miracle.

The Advent of Christ ever was the grand object of the enlightened man in every age of the world. Ask your hearts, What is the reason of all the disappointments you meet with in the world? What has been your desire? When we have found out our object, we have found out our character.

III. I now proceed to draw A FEW INFERENCES FROM THIS SUBJECT.

1st. *We need not be alarmed because disturbances may be appointed to introduce peace.* Before the Prince of Peace came, there was a shaking among the nations.

Suppose a man lay asleep with his house on fire: would you let him sleep? would you not rather say, His very life depends on his being disturbed! When our Lord came, he found the world asleep in security and stupidity. If a minister does not disturb you, he will do you no good. The conversion of a sinner often begins with perturbation of mind: the jailer was going to put an end to his life. There is a "strong man armed," who will endeavor to keep his goods in peace; and he will get his ministers to cry peace, when there is no peace.

Various messengers have been sent to reform the world: the deluge—war—pestilence—famine: but all have failed. The law was given: but St. Paul tells

us that, "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Rom. viii. 3. The law could condemn the world, but not reform it. What, then, can mere morality do? This great work can only be effected by that Righteous Branch which should come forth out of the stem of Jesse; and who should "execute judgment and righteousness in the land."

2ndly. *When God promises, our hopes should be raised to the highest expectation.* God seems to say to every believer, If from within and without, you have ever so much cause for despondency—yet, do not limit ME! Every promise shall be fulfilled in its season.

The first rising beams of the Sun of Righteousness were seen in Paradise, in the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. But he arose to shine brighter when he came and dispelled the shadows and types of the Jewish economy. And his actual warmth and influence was especially felt, when he sent forth his apostles to spread abroad his Gospel throughout the world. It is by these glorious beams that the sad are cheered, and the mourners are comforted.

3rdly. I remark, that *it is God's design to correct the false taste, the pride, the ambition, and corruption of the human heart.*

God has called us to meet this gracious Messiah—the desire of all nations, now actually come—not in a splendid court, but in a manger; in the wilderness; at Gethsemane; before the High Priest, when they spat in his face, and buffeted and smote him! We are called to meet him at the cross, and at the sepulchre! Thus God corrects the false taste of fallen man.

One of God's methods of correcting our false taste

is, by thwarting and mortifying it. Thus it was in regard to the Jews: they were looking, not for a spiritual, but for a temporal kingdom: therefore they interpreted all the promises concerning their future Messiah according to their carnal taste. Even the disciples were so filled with the idea of a temporal kingdom, that Peter could not endure to hear our Lord speak of his crucifixion. Mark viii. 32.

4th. Since God hath sent his Son, and held him up as a light to a dark world, *the grand concern of a sinner should be how he shall get an interest in this Saviour, and so be pardoned and accepted of God.* There is no way of acceptance but through this Saviour. "He hath magnified the law and made it honorable." "Through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins." Men do not appear much interested in this when it is preached to them: the reason is, they do not think much of sin; sin lies lightly on their consciences: they put their worldly concerns in the first place: they are not concerned for God's honor and glory, and the regard he must have to the order of all his works.

When we take a view of the vast preparation made to accomplish man's salvation, the sinner's grand concern—how he shall stand justified before God—strongly appears. There is but one evil in the world, and that is sin. The goodness of God obliges him to root it out: and therefore the sinner should tremble. Whether we consider an ungodly man in life, death, or through eternity, there are no words to describe his case! What he has not thought of now, shall be the subject of his thoughts throughout eternity! He has perished through neglecting and despising his remedy: "Light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light."

Every one who attempts to speak upon the great

mystery of God becoming man, must feel a difficulty: for who can speak upon such a subject without degrading it? “Which things the angels desire to look into.” 1 Peter i. 12. But as believers, we have one common privilege—that of joining with saints and angels in admiring and adoring what we cannot comprehend.

THE WISE MEN OF THE EAST.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him.—MATT. ii. 1, 2.
[1791.]

WE are not told precisely who these wise men were, or from what country they came: but probably they were Persian priests, and philosophers. Nor are we told the particulars of this star. We see it referred to Numbers xxiv. 27. It was doubtless some extraordinary light. The wise men were enabled to understand its message, and to follow it: and, in so doing, they are our instructors.

I. WE LEARN, FROM THE CONDUCT OF THE WISE MEN, THAT TRUE WISDOM WILL BE FOUND INQUIRING AFTER, AND ADORING, “GOD MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH:” AND OFFERING HIM THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFTS.

These men did not consider whether they should be despised, but came to Jerusalem, and inquired, “Where is he that is born king of the Jews?” It is the characteristic of true wisdom to inquire seriously: not like Pilate, to ask “what is truth?” without waiting for an

answer. It will inquire scripturally: not like an enthusiast. It will inquire rationally, using such means as God has appointed. It will make an expensive inquiry: the wise men had travelled far from their home: they were found inquiring even in the seat of the scorner. Such an expensive inquiry will show how far a man will go when he is in earnest.

True wisdom will be found to adore, as well as inquire. Take a view of the scene that presented itself to these wise men. They find the King of the Jews, whom they came to worship, "lying in a manger;" not allowed a house, but found in a stable! They might have said, What! are we come this long expensive journey to see one so lightly set by? and that, even by his own people? Have we brought our rich gifts to offer to one so poor and mean? Can this be indeed the king of the Jews?

Let us remember, it is peculiar to faith to look through the names of things to the reality. Our Lord had laid aside his glory, and condescended to veil himself. But it is the proper character and privilege of the believer to be able to see his God through ten thousand veils. We must be ever looking through the screen: we must, like the wise men, acknowledge Christ our king in the midst of a scoffing people; and offer him our best gifts.

II. WE LEARN, THAT THIS WISDOM WILL BE DESPISED BY THE WORLD.

We cannot expect too little from the world respecting Christ. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" 1 Cor. i. 20. The very inquiry disturbs them. "When Herod heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with

him." Nay, if the inquiry after Jesus be serious, it disturbs even the Church; so low may a church be fallen! Many, that make a profession, are heathens in heart. Persecution is not only found with the crowd, but has even priests in its train. What shall we say when, even in this day, pastors may be found who are opening their Bible, and preaching to overthrow him that was born King of the Jews! Such is the carnal heart! Christ comes to his own; but if the heart be carnal, his own will not receive him!

The Jews, probably, would ask the wise men, with scorn, Why they should come to worship one *born*; as if they had not the Supreme Being to worship? Such inquiries are still made. Is not an honest heart enough? Are not moral virtues sufficient? But in vain are such scoffing inquiries addressed to the man in earnest: "We have seen his star in the East; and are come to worship him."

Thus we discover different characters. Herod discovered his character by his cruelty towards the innocents, as well as by his folly in attempting to overthrow the design of God. The wise men showed their character by following an infallible guide, though only by a glimmering light. Good old Simeon exhibited his character, by patiently waiting for a promise which he knew was firmer than heaven and earth. Let us manifest ours; let us come and worship Christ, and offer him our best gifts.

III. WE LEARN THAT GOD WILL HONOR WHAT THE WORLD DESPISES, AND DESPISE WHAT THE WORLD HONORS.

Blessed is the man who, like these magi, follows the light in a dark place. A taper, if followed steadily, will lead to great treasure, though hid in a dark cavern.

Take care of being speculative Christians ; mere moral astronomers ; who may have seen this star through the Scripture telescope—who can, perhaps, give a good account of it—have observed the appearance, as a phenomenon ; but have never yet followed it. Such a man could preach upon it ; but, has he yielded his heart to Christ ? He may bear a high reputation in the world : but what if truth must say, “One thing thou lackest !” The main point is forgotten in your calculation, namely, that “I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” But you must be brought as a witness : the Gospel is “a savor of death unto death.” The true light, “the day-spring from on high,” hath visited us as well as the Jews.

Let all who are following the blessed Star be encouraged to go on. If it does not seem to shine so bright upon you as upon some others, follow the light you have ; and it will increase. Redeem the time : “walk circumspectly ; not as fools, but as wise.” Many things may rise like a cloud between you and Christ : but offer your best gifts : and do so in the face of the world. Venture to confess Christ before bad men.

Some may be asking, How shall I properly receive this Saviour who has come in such love to my soul ? I answer, Meet this truth, of “God manifested in the flesh,” with attention, admiration, and reverence : meet it with unlimited confidence. It says to us, God is above us ; we cannot see him by the light of nature : by the law, he is against us ; but, by the Gospel, God is for us. Let us receive this truth with a holy resolution to enter into it. This confidence is called faith.

How blind and wretched are they who have never been taught of God ! What is it to be a king, like Herod, or like Pharaoh ? to be rich, like Dives, faring sumptuously every day, and clad in purple and fine

linen? Do you want to know the character of a worldly-wise man? He has never seen or worshipped the Son of God. 2 Cor. iv. 3. How will the wise men in the text rise in judgment against some who are running hither and thither after every vanity, while they are turning their backs on Christ!

Let me say to Christians:—However the world may treat our faith, hope, and love; and ask, What do you mean by leaving all for Christ? let us set our face like a flint, fall down before the Son of God, and offer him our best gifts—our time, our talents, our labors of love—thankful that he will receive them. We have but little time: let us pray to God that it may be improved! Let us call upon our children, and our servants, whose souls are under our care, to follow the true Light that hath shined into this dark world.

CHARACTER OF SIMEON.

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.—LUKE ii. 25. [1806.]

WHEN Christ came, but few were found waiting for him; “He came to his own, and his own received him not.” So it will be also at his second coming: for “when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on earth?” But if there are now only few comparatively waiting for the coming of Christ, then let it be the concern of each of us to be found numbered among those few.

From the example of Simeon I shall take occasion to describe,

I. THE CHARACTER OF A TRUE ISRAELITE.

II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF SUCH A CHARACTER.

I. The CHARACTER of a true Christian is, that he is both just and devout: he is an honest, upright man; a righteous and just man, as to his doings—but not so that he should glory before God; for this did not Abraham. A true Israelite is not only just and upright, he is more; he is devout; he is a spiritual worshipper. There never was an instance of a good man thinking lightly of the house of God, or the worship of God.

Simeon was a true believer, a patient waiter for the promised Messiah. It is one part of the character of the true Israelite, that when he perceives the value of Christ, he stands waiting for him patiently, and expectantly. There must be a certain disposition in our minds before we can receive Christ; but let a man know his character as a sinner, and he will receive him as the Author, the Procurer, the Dispenser of all consolation.

“The consolation of Israel” was a name very common among the Jews, as applied to their expected Messiah. But when he came, they would not receive him; nor could they perceive consolation in any thing he preached: they said in their hearts,—Give us a kingdom: give us honor: and we will acknowledge thee as a consolation. It was to the mourners in Zion that Christ was appointed to be a consolation. Isa. lxi. 2, 3.

But Simeon not only believed the promise of Christ, and waited patiently for him, but he waited for him as “the consolation of Israel;” hereby confessing that he could find consolation nowhere else. It was as though this holy man had said, What have I to do with the noise and bustle, the commerce and the politics of Jerusalem? I am waiting for the consolation of Israel!

which included all that he thought worth possessing. In "the consolation of Israel" all benefits for time and eternity are concentrated; life, health, light, security, support, peace, happiness, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption!" In all these respects, Simeon felt that Christ was his consolation. He was a man of prayer, who walked with God, and whose grand transactions lay with him. He was waiting at wisdom's gates; attending God's house and ordinances; and every one who has spiritual union to Christ, is willing thus to wait for him.

Whenever the Spirit of the Lord leads a man to his Holy Temple, the grand discovery that he will make to him there is, Christ as his salvation. The glory of the Lamb of God is only seen by an eye of faith.

God never raises expectations to mock us. If, therefore, we want the consolations of God, we must be found in the way of them. He that seeks shall find. The merchant is in earnest about getting money; and therefore he is in earnest about the way and means to get it. Consider,

II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF A TRUE ISRAELITE.

He is one who has found "the chief good," the "one thing needful." And, having found this, he can find nothing else in the world, comparatively, worth living for. He is one, who rejoices in the hope of the glory of God. Such a man God will own: such a man shall have the witness in himself. Others may say, "Who will show me any good?" but he will say, I have found it! It is the privilege of a Christian, and of him only, to rest satisfied with what he has found.

It is the Christian only that really despises the world: others may pretend to do it: but he has the secret; for the taper is only put out by the rising of the sun. When

Simeon beheld the Lord's Christ, took him up in his arms and embraced him, he could say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Whenever we have obtained what Simeon waited for, and rejoiced in, we can welcome death; and not till then. Then, we are prepared for every event, in time and in eternity. Simeon could, without hesitation, call himself the servant of God; and he knew that, whenever he might depart, he should be with his Master.

We must distinguish between hearing and knowing, the truth, as a theory or speculation, and seeing it as the salvation of God—"the eyes of our understanding being enlightened." I may deliver the truth from the pulpit, and you may clearly understand it, and carry away the theory of it in your heads; and your hearts still remain unaffected by it. If you ask me, in regard to any individual case, Why is this? I reply, I cannot tell: I cannot account for it; yet such is the fact. I have frequently felt astonishment in observing men who seemed to possess the clearest knowledge of the Christian religion, as a system, and who were capable of speaking upon its doctrines in the fullest and most accurate manner, who yet, after all, were living "in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity." Thus Balaam displayed singular gifts, knowledge and sagacity; and yet, where shall we find so distinguished a reprobate?

We must, therefore, set it down as a momentous truth, that light in the understanding, and life in the heart, are two very different things. Let each one before me inquire whether, like Simeon, he has taken Christ into his arms by faith and love, and embraced him as "the consolation of Israel?"

Let us remember, that God's consolation must be sought in God's way; and, in his way, it shall be obtained. A speculatist, or a hypocrite, may come to the house of God for consolation, but will always return disappointed. But let not the humble seeker be discouraged on that account. Upon our first setting out in religion, we are apt to think we shall receive our comforts in our own way; forgetting that God appoints times and seasons; and that our business is to wait for him. What a life of expectation was Abraham's! How did he hope against hope! and through what deep waters did he pass! Yet "he staggered not at the promise through unbelief."

Who among us would raise an expectation that we did not mean to fulfil? and God forbid that we should put less confidence in him that we should place in one another! and yet so far as unbelief prevails, we do this. Heb. vi. 16—19; and Rom. viii. 32.

I feel much for young people. They are constantly looking for happiness: their hearts continually cry, "Give, give." They must have an object; and they will be continually changing one object for another, till "the consolation of Israel" becomes their consolation. May none of the children here present, nor any other person who have not this consolation, rest till they have obtained possession of it!

It is the duty of a Christian to stand to his post, and not to wish to depart before he is called. His work being done, he will say with Simeon, "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace:" the toil is over, and I have been satisfied with the toil, so long as I have been able to do any thing for God. Let me depart in peace: I have nothing now to settle with God, or with conscience, or with men: let me now walk away, as a servant that has done his work. Simeon knew, that while

he received in Christ the best gift of God, he received every thing in that gift. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

THE SONG OF ZACHARIAS.

Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.
—LUKE i. 78, 79. [1997.]

NOTHING affords a finer sight in the creation than the rising sun. But while the brute beholds it, as well as man, the brute cannot admire it; because it cannot rationally contemplate it. But what comparison is there between this created splendor, and the rising beams of the Sun of Righteousness? Yet most men behold his glorious rays with indifference; perhaps think of the subject for a moment, and then dismiss it altogether from their minds. When it pleases God to enable any one spiritually to comprehend this magnificent object, he then sees that it not only brings "glory to God in the highest," but "peace on earth, and good will to men." Such a spiritual view drew forth the song of Zacharias, when, filled with the Holy Ghost, he prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people . . . through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us." And who was this of whom he spoke? He was "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." Heb. i. 3.

This subject addresses itself to three classes of mankind :—

I. To the man, THAT IS DESTITUTE OF SPIRITUAL TASTE TO CONTEMPLATE THIS OBJECT.

II. To the man, WHO CONSIDERS IT ONLY A SECONDARY OBJECT OF ATTENTION.

III. To the man, WHO IS POSSESSED OF ITS SAVING LIGHT.

I. To the man, WHO IS DESTITUTE OF SPIRITUAL TASTE. He may be a heathen: the good news may never have reached his ear: or, he may be an infidel living in a Christian country; or, he may be a man drowned in the cares of this world, so that he cannot look up: he sitteth in darkness and in the shadow of death. But suppose, while thus without light, he should reflect: what must be such a man's reflection? I can conceive him saying: Here I am, an atom of an atom world; born to-day, and dead to-morrow! "O, Lord, hast thou made all men for nought?" I see no ground for permanence, or for hope.—The light has arisen, if this man could see it: but I am supposing that he does not. There is light, but he cannot perceive it. But because he sits in darkness, is he to conclude that there is no "day-spring?" that there is no "Sun of Righteousness?" "The true light now shineth," though he cannot see it. A man may be starved, with abundance of provisions near him, if he is sitting in the dark, and cannot see them. So Hagar, not seeing the well of water in the wilderness of Beer-sheba, expected that her child would perish from thirst, till the Lord opened her eyes to behold it. See Herod, and his men of war, mocking the Creator and Sovereign of the universe, as if he had been a feeble mortal like themselves; and that, because they had no eyes

to discern his divine character. Hear Pilate asking the Supreme Teacher, "What is Truth?" but yet indifferent to the subject of his own inquiry, and not deigning to wait for an answer. Light was come into the world, but "men loved darkness rather than light." Judas saw the light, though he betrayed it. In all these there was a carnal heart: "the light shined in darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not." What a loss must all such persons sustain! They will not come to the light: nay, they even deny its existence, and treat with contempt those who seeing it, and rejoicing in it themselves, would bring others to behold it, that they might rejoice in it also!

But this is not the worst. The man that sits in darkness is not merely a loser, but there are strong *delusions*—the sorceries in this world, the god of this world. And what is there to oppose these? He has no antidote in the blood of the Covenant, as the quieter of conscience—as offering hope; he has no comfort in the truth that Christ is able "to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God through him," and "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think:"—but such a man, while taking his course in the dark, becomes ensnared. If we saw a traveller in the night, ignorant of his way, and unconscious of danger, we should pity him: but not so much as if we saw him drawn and enticed into the way of murderers, and that by one pretending to set him in the right road. Yet such is the case of the man "led captive by the devil at his will." Satan holds up a fatal screen between him and "the day-spring from on high," and then leads him away into the paths of ruin! Let none persuade you that this is merely figurative. It is a simple matter of fact.—I address now,

II. The man, WHO CONSIDERS THE SUBJECT ONLY AS A SECONDARY CONCERN.

He is a mere speculatist in religion. A man of this sort is educated in his creed; he has considered Christianity as to its authenticity, as to its benefit to mankind; he will even declare that a spirit of infidelity is a state of madness. He will, like Herod, do "many things;" he says, Christianity is a blessing to the world, and that there is no other hope: but, what is the result of all this? Does he embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life? Is he really awakened to his danger as a lost sinner? Does he "strive to enter in at the strait gate?" Does he "flee for refuge to the hope set before him?" Does he repent? Does he pray? Does he depend upon the righteousness of Christ? or rather, does not conscience bear a testimony to the reverse of all this?

This man is under the dominion of some sin—some ruling passion. It is not the worst thing about him that he is without light; but he essentially resembles his carnal neighbors, by being the victim of some fatal error, which prevents him from receiving any benefit from the Sun of Righteousness. He has taken up truth only partially. The man who beholds "the day-spring from on high," has received truth practically; and if the truth be not thus received, it deserves no better name than that of a mere notion: he does not come to the light as such. He does not sincerely desire holiness. No man in Christendom can be a neutral character: "He that is not with us," says Christ, "is against us:" and St. John affirms, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth upon him." We are all naturally

“children of wrath;” but if it has pleased God to shine into our hearts, then we shall be anxious to obtain effectual deliverance from the prince of darkness. It is characteristic of a Christian that he is constantly anxious to get more and more into the light; and to escape from “the bondage of corruption.”

If infidels and atheists do not come to church, are there not many of the second class, here described, who do? and yet who do not come to the light. Let not any imagine that infidels and atheists are the only men who do not come to the light. The mere speculator, the rationalist, the priest-ridden Papist, and the proud self-righteous Pharisee, must all, in this respect, be classed with infidels and atheists. The light that mere reason emits is a spark which the world soon quenches. But the light of “the day-spring from on high” shines brighter and brighter amidst surrounding darkness! I proceed to address myself,

III. TO THE MAN WHO IS POSSESSED OF THE SAVING LIGHT OF LIFE.

As this man is clearly opposed in his character to the first class described, so, he may be plainly distinguished from the second class, whose religion consists in a mere notion. But to receive the truth practically—to “lay hold of eternal life”—implies that a man is not only convinced of the truth, but that he is alive to his lost estate, and that he clearly discerns his remedy: that he is one of those blessed persons that “know the joyful sound.” Psa. lxxxix. 15. That, like the wise men who saw the star, and followed it, so he, seeing that “the day-spring from on high hath visited us,” rejoices in the light, and experiences the truth of what our Saviour said, “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” The light.

that is in such a man “shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

In conclusion, I would address *the humble inquirer, who is “walking in darkness, and hath no light.”* The Bible makes a wide distinction between sitting in darkness and walking in darkness. A man in the former state, is an insensible hardened felon: the latter, so far as mere nature goes, may be a man of a tender conscience; a man pressed down by affliction; or a man seeking, in the midst of darkness, for the right way. Such a man must be regarded as a prisoner; but he is “a prisoner of hope.” Jeremiah might be shut up in a dungeon; but the dungeon could not keep out the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. The day-spring from on high shone upon him, even there. The direction to such will be found, Isa. l. 11, “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” The light of the Gospel, when it shines into the heart, brings with it its own evidence. It is also progressive, and continually increasing. It is “as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.”

Let us all remember, that the light which shines so gloriously, shines but for a time. There is a time of visitation and opportunity: we know not how long it may last. A Christian is taught to seek this light, to receive it, and to walk according to it. Does any one ask, How shall I know whether the day-spring from on high hath visited my soul? The question is, Are you enlightened by it? There have been no greater instances of darkness than among those who have boasted of being illuminated from above. If it be God’s light,

it brings you to the feet of Jesus Christ, praying for more light: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." It is a blessed influence when a man comes under the sound of the Gospel, and receives this light into his soul. Are you such recipients of the true light? Then own your friend. There are some who see more than they are willing to profess, like the parents of the blind man, John ix. 22. It is God's marvellous light that takes a poor benighted creature and shows him a prospect into eternity; and therefore not to glorify him by an open confession, is a great sin. Take heed how the devil persuade you to trifle with your opinions: rather cry, "Search me, O God," and prove me in every dark corner of my heart; and "lead me in the way everlasting."

To those asleep in sin, I would say, Awake, ye who are so careless about being lighted to heaven!



THE NATIVITY.

And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.—LUKE ii. 7. [1799.]

INASMUCH as it is the chief design of Satan to hide the grand object we commemorate this day—so it is our duty and privilege to be more inquisitive into what the Apostle calls "the whole counsel of God."

Revelation is not addressed to our reason, or opinion, but to the obedience of faith. It would have been unworthy the Almighty to have said to poor ignorant worms, What do you think of my scheme of salvation?

Instead of this, he speaks worthy of himself—"Thus saith the Lord."

I. LET US CONTEMPLATE THIS STUPENDOUS MATTER OF FACT DECLARED IN THE TEXT.

II. LET US MAKE A FEW GENERAL INFERENCES FROM IT.

And let us do this with the Bible in our hand; for we are never safe but as we take the Bible for our guide.

I. LET US CONTEMPLATE THIS STUPENDOUS MATTER OF FACT DECLARED IN THE TEXT. This fact was declared to our first parents immediately after the fall: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." It was declared to Abraham: "In thee, and in thy seed, shall all nations of the earth be blessed." It was declared to Moses: "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me; him shall ye hear." He shall not only be a Prophet, but a Priest and a King, to whom they should bow down; and though he shall stoop so low as to lie in a manger, yet, that none might be stumbled at that, it was said, He shall be called "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace:" and, "the Lord our Righteousness." He it is of whom St. John speaks: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth!" It was not man made God, but God made man. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Phil. ii. 6. Hereafter he shall appear in his glory; and "then shall the King say to those on his right hand, Come ye blessed: but to those on his left, Go ye cursed."

Some one may be ready to exclaim—What! are you

speaking about "the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes" all this time? What! was the "Wonderful Counsellor," the "mighty God," nursed in a manger? Brethren, this, as I said before, is not a subject set before us for reasoning, but for the obedience of faith. He came to be poor; to be despised and rejected of men: his abasement was as much predicted as his coming. It was predicted that he should be born at Bethlehem—that he should be laid in a manger: this was "he that should come;" and had he come as the Jews expected, he had not been the Saviour predicted. Whatever the Roman emperor meant by making a decree that all the world should be taxed, God overruled it to bring about his own design, according to what the prophets had foretold. The angels did not announce him to the Sanhedrim, or to Herod, but to shepherds watching over their flocks by night; and because the angels had not such poor low views as man has, no sooner had they declared Christ, and where he should be found, than they cried out, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to man." From this stupendous matter of fact I proceed,

II. TO DRAW A FEW INFERENCES.

1st. When we see the Son of God thus abased—thus humbling himself to become a helpless infant, lying in a manger, and then dying on the cross—Does not this follow, *That nothing is important but what is eternal?* The Son of God laid by his glory to save us from eternal woe. He came to teach us to look at the things unseen: to learn the worth of the soul that he came to die for: he came to teach us that all that man has out of Jesus Christ is fleshly and failing: but "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through

death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

2ndly. It appears *that sin is the great and only positive evil*. Christ would have fellowship with us in every thing but sin : he would condescend to the weakness of infancy ; he would hunger, he would thirst, he would be weary, he would taste of grief, but he would have no communion with sin.

3rdly. We should also learn from the coming of the Son of God, and from his whole course on earth, *what a difficult work salvation was*. We talk of the forgiveness of sins as if it were a very easy thing. But who is this that lies abased ? Who is this that goes about in poverty, sufferings, hunger, thirst, and weariness ? What ! Is the removal of sin so easy, when Christ came with so hard a task to perform in order to take it away ? What can all this mean, if it was not absolutely necessary ?

There is no evidence so satisfactory and safe as matter of fact. Here is a *fact* ; and what does it prove ? It proves that when God would save sinners he could not save himself. Abel brought a lamb and offered him in faith : Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord. He seems to stand at the head of a class of persons who keep to such and such a mode of worship, because they think it the most rational. But let us bring into captivity every thought and imagination to the obedience of Christ.

But, 4thly, do we not learn from this fact *that poverty in itself is not disgraceful* ? Our Lord was poorer than any other Jew. Few but have some shed to call their own : our Lord went to the stable and the manger. If any man is so poor as to be carried to a work-house, let him consider that our Lord was carried to a stable. Christ came to exhibit the truth, that meanness

and poverty, if connected with holiness, are honorable. And he has declared that there is a day coming when he will gather all that are his, however mean, and despised by the world, as his jewels. Mal. iii. 17. The rich are also here instructed : they should see in a poor man the image of our Saviour ; and learn to sympathize with the poor, and relieve them.

5thly. If Christ so stooped, so labored for us, *how should we learn from this fact and example to labor for him, and to serve him !* What will the idle, the ambitious, the delicate, say at the day of judgment ? Should we not, like the apostle, be ready to lay down our lives for his sake ? The travail of Christ's soul began as soon as he came upon earth : from the first, "he bore the contradiction of sinners ;" his holy soul was grieved at sin : and especially this was seen in his last agony. And shall not we be willing to bear reproach for his sake ? to give up all for him ? The best offering we can make is a crucified lust, a contrite heart, an adoring love ! Let us say with the apostle, "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Is any one asking, How shall I properly meet and receive this Saviour who is come in such love to my soul ? I answer, Meet this truth with attention and reverence. Follow the ark, but do not look into it presumptuously : receive this truth with unlimited confidence, and with holy resolution to abide by it. "None stirreth up himself," saith the prophet, to take hold on thee. Let us look at our past lives, and see what have been the chief impediments to our receiving Christ into our hearts ; we are all the children of a fallen head ; and till we are renewed, and united by faith to the Second Adam, there is neither help nor hope. There-

fore let us pray that God the Spirit may take of the things of Christ and show them unto us.

Some are led by this subject to inquire into the origin of evil. There is no answer to this but in the first chapter of Genesis, where we read that sin entered, and there also we read the remedy. If a man discovers a fire in his house, he does not stand to inquire how it took fire; but his great concern is how to put it out. It was the business of man in the deluge to get into the Ark. God sends his ministers to declare the remedy, and we are commanded to receive it. Beware of stumbling at this "stumbling-stone!"

But let none despair: Christ did not undertake what he could not perform. Let us plead his own remedy. This is a matter of such grand importance, than one would think a man could not go home and return to his worldly matters, and think no more about it. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" People suppose religion to be a mere matter of opinion: God says it is a matter of the heart. "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

Lastly, *Let us behold and admire the astonishing grace, that God should give his Son.* Let us take the benefit of this mystery, and adore the wonderful mercy displayed. You, who have felt your ruin, come to this Almighty Saviour. Sit at his feet, as Mary did; and cast down every proud reasoning. All our hopes for time and eternity depend on how we receive God's plan of redemption by Christ. Every blessing comes to us through him. Our backwardness to accept of this free salvation may detect the pride of our hearts: we are not sufficiently convinced of our lost estate. Christ is to us what the city of refuge was to the manslayer: the manslayer knew he was safe when his feet

were on the first step of the city of refuge. We should receive this mercy with joy. The angels said to the shepherds, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The man who has this joy will say, The joy of the Lord is my strength!

We are called to embrace these truths as our only comfort here, and our everlasting security. In Christ, there is a sufficient righteousness to justify all who are the children of Abraham by faith. "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. Isa. xlv. 24.

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.

And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.—LUKE ii. 34, 35. [1806.]

ST. LUKE records many circumstances not mentioned by the other Evangelists; among which is this account of Simeon, a just and devout man, who was waiting for the consolation of Israel. When Joseph and Mary brought in the child Jesus to present him to the Lord, according to the law respecting the first-born, Simeon, by direction of the Holy Spirit, came at the same moment into the temple, embraced the infant Saviour in his arms, and bore an honorable testimony to him as the true Messiah.

In discoursing upon this subject, I shall endeavor,

I. TO CONFIRM THE WORDS OF THE TEXT.

II. TO IMPROVE THEM.

I. TO CONFIRM THE WORDS OF THE TEXT. Behold this Child, as the “precious Corner-stone,” placed here with this very design, “for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.” Not as the instrument, but as he would prove the occasion. Jesus Christ was set for the fall of many, not as the end of his appointment; on the contrary, it was an effect directly opposite to that end; but inasmuch as his coming into the world would prove to many an occasion of falling.

We may here regard two things: 1st, the fact, as manifested in ancient times; and 2ndly, as obvious also in modern times.

1st. Christ, “the chief Corner-stone,” proved the occasion of the fall of many *in ancient times*. He was indeed “the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world:” but “the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” He was to them “for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence,”—words directly prophesied of by Isaiah. “Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” This text must be an everlasting riddle, an enigma, if we do not see, that Christ not only was, but is still, “a stone of stumbling.” He became a stumbling-block to the Jew by the simplicity of his appearance; and foolishness to the Greek by the character of his doctrine. But was he not, in truth, “the power

of God, and the wisdom of God" to every one that believeth?

But, 2ndly, *let us come to modern times*; what is the fact now? I do not send you to China or Barbary; we will look at home, where "the true light now shineth;" where the Gospel is brought to our doors. Christ is come; his birth is commemorated; and how? A day is indeed publicly set apart; but how is it kept—and that, by a people calling themselves Christians? In revellings and banquetings, in gluttony and drunkenness; with a scornful disregard of the event they propose to celebrate! Is this the fact? Is not then the text applicable to modern times? Is not Christ made an occasion of falling to all such persons?

But Christ was also to be "for a sign which shall be spoken against." We preach Christ, as the light of the world: but with many, and perhaps with some here, such preaching is called "the cant of a sect:" they find that the preaching of Christ disturbs them; they wish to live in carnal ease. But woe to them that sew pillows to all arm-holes! woe to them who save the souls alive that should not live, by lying to the people who hear their lies! Ezek. xiii. 17—23. One will say, "I do not deny the coming of Christ, but why say so much about it?" "I do not like the doctrine," says another: "it is a sort of mysticism." Then this Scripture applies to you, this day: the thoughts of your hearts are revealed: the preaching of Christ is to you "a stumbling-stone!" Christ is for you "a sign which shall be spoken against." "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts xiii. 41. Some say, "I do not understand how Christ can be the life of the soul: I do not know what you mean by being grafted

into Christ the True Vine : and as to the doctrine of the atonement, I think it a doctrine of licentiousness : then, I may throw the reins on my lusts, and live as I like." Indeed ! what, then, becomes of the doctrine of sanctification ? of holiness in heart and life ? of good works, as the fruits of faith ? But these objections are as old as St. Paul's time : there were some which said then, "Let us do evil, that good may come ;" but of such it is added, "whose damnation is just."

The doctrine of justification by faith is fully set forth by St. Paul : listen to his own words. "It is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith ? God forbid : yea, we establish the law." Rom. iii. 30, 31. Again, "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin ? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." Gal. ii. 17, 18. To bring forth fruit unto God, requires a living faith : but these objectors know nothing of Christ's character, or of the real designs of his coming, though living in one of the most enlightened parts of Christendom.

But the text speaks of Christ, not only as set for "the fall of many," and "for a sign which shall be spoken against," but also, as set for "the rising again of many in Israel."

I am of opinion, with a very able biblical critic, that two distinct descriptions of persons are here spoken of. Those who "fall," are those who stumble at "the stumbling-stone" above referred to in Isaiah viii. 14. Those spoken of as "rising again," are such as obtain a spiritual resurrection from a death in trespasses and sins. To such as receive the Gospel, it is "a savor of

life unto life;" while "to those who stumble at the word being disobedient" it becomes "a savor of death unto death."

We are told in the twenty-eighth chapter of the Acts, that "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him." They came to inquire "concerning this sect," . . . "everywhere spoken against;" but by means of whose preaching there should be a resurrection of many in Israel. "The rising again," or resurrection, is so termed in consideration of our state by nature: for, as the poet says,

"Plung'd in a gulf of dark despair,
We wretched sinners lay;
Without one cheerful beam of hope,
Or spark of glimmering day."

But by the preaching of the Gospel we become "prisoners of hope:" "for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Christ "came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Now, was not this a resurrection? Let us consider this fact, namely, that Christ was set for "the rising again" of many in Israel, in relation both to ancient and modern times.

Here is Simeon, a just and devout man, waiting with patience for Christ's coming, as "the consolation of Israel:" he is raised even into the spirit of pro-

phesy; “the Holy Ghost was upon him,” and enabled him to speak things above himself: he arrives at a holy contempt of life, and says, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

Anna, a prophetess, who “served God with fastings and prayers night and day,” coming in at the instant when Christ was presented in the temple, “gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem:” *i. e.* she made an open profession of her faith concerning this child; and, as a prophetess, instructed others concerning him.

Though Nathanael, under his first prejudices, asks “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” yet, when he comes to Christ, and is convinced of his omniscience, he exclaims, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel:” *i. e.* the King of Israel whom we have been long waiting for.

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, though at first approaching Christ timidly by night, yet afterwards he owns him publicly, by doing honor to the body of Jesus, together with Joseph of Arimathea. So in the case of the centurion, he owned Christ’s divine power: “Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.” How did Christ’s disciples bear testimony to their divine Master! “Lord! to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” And after his ascension, how did Christ appear for “the rising again” of Saul the persecutor; Lydia a seller of purple; and the jailer of Philippi! All these had their hearts opened to receive Christ; and were raised from a death of sin unto a life of righteousness. They all seem to say, “This is the stone set at nought by the builders, but

marvellous in our eyes." How were the noble army of martyrs raised up to a holy courage in suffering!

Nor do we want witness in modern times that Christ is "set for the rising again of many." I believe that the Gospel is nowhere faithfully preached, but this "sign" accompanies it. It is made "to prosper in the thing whereto it is sent." The blind may lead the blind for a century; but when the light of truth appears, the scene is changed. I speak of facts. In this place, a person who was ninety years of age, experienced the great and essential change of spiritual regeneration: he was enabled to take hold of Christ by faith; "I need," said he, "that 'fountain opened for sin and uncleanness'—'that wedding-garment' to clothe me; I need his support to lead me; his shield, to defend me!" He then confessed that Christ had become his life, his portion, and his joy! This was his dying testimony. I have seen proofs of this fact in many, who could say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth:" and with Paul, "I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." Are not these facts proving the truth of the text? Mary, the mother of Jesus, had them fulfilled not only when she was raised up in strong affection for the promised Seed, but when she sank in grief at his cross. Then truly "a sword pierced through her soul:" for he was to be a suffering Jesus; and she, from the nearness of her relation, and the strength of her affection, should suffer also, at his crucifixion, more than any other of his relatives. Many understand these words as a prediction of her martyrdom, and some of the ancients say that it had its accomplishment literally in that fact.—I now proceed,

II. TO IMPROVE THE SUBJECT,

Christ is to this day a TOUCHSTONE of many hearts ; “that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” We behold the Formalist, the Socinian, the Trifler—all saying, “Not this man, but Barabbas !” The Christian will show what he is by his taste, his manners, his companions ; but above all, by his open confession of Christ. When Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” it was said to him, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

Brethren ! I have shown you Christ as “set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel ;” I now direct your eye to him as a TOUCHSTONE OF CHARACTER ! The subject is instructive : hear what the Lord says by the Prophet Malachi : “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me ; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in : behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap.” The subject is therefore searching : let us not flatter ourselves, and generalize it, till it has no meaning at all.

What then is meant by these words—“That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed ?” I fear, that many would find Christ set up for their fall, if the thoughts of their hearts were revealed ! I remember trying, when I was a wicked, thoughtless young man, to find objections against religious books, when given to me. My thoughts were known by the answers I then gave. But God’s counsel will stand, whatever

may be our objections. Christ was not only rejected by the Jews, but he is scorned by many, even in professedly Christian countries; where thousands reveal what their thoughts are, by speaking against him in all that respects his true dignity, and the nature and ends of his mission. Thus, Christ is a touchstone of the human heart: his doctrine detects, and makes manifest its wickedness; and, under the influence of his Spirit, restores it to holiness and to God.

Brethren! your thoughts will be revealed by answering this question, How do you receive Christ? Christ is come here—to this neighborhood; how do you receive him? Do you say, like Simeon, “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation?” The consideration of this prophecy is a serious call to our hearts: it says, “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” Remember, where a dispensation of grace is not improved, it will soon be removed. Prov. i. 24—32.

Let me say to Christians:—Every step in the ways of God brings fresh evidence that they are ways of pleasantness and peace. Every step we take from the table of the Lord to-day to the table of his kingdom above, we shall be more and more certain of the truth of the Gospel. “If any man,” says Christ, “hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Rev. iii. 20.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.—GAL. iv. 4. [1806.]

AFTER the planting of the Church in Galatia, certain judaizing teachers crept in, and introduced a sad mixture of doctrine, which was, properly speaking, neither Law nor Gospel. This was the ground of St. Paul's controversy with the Galatians; wherein he labors to instruct them concerning the nature of the old and new dispensation. He says, verse 3, "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

This passage points out the peculiar scheme of redemption,

I. AS IT RESPECTS GOD.

II. AS IT RESPECTS US.

I. AS IT RESPECTS GOD: Christ came in the fulness of the time before appointed of God. This event was decreed and foretold to our first parents at the fall. It was declared by the prophets; and at length, the exact time was pointed out by Daniel the prophet. Therefore, says the Apostle, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." It was the testimony of even heathen writers, that at this time a great personage was to be expected.

An extraordinary scene was now about to com-

mence: a period in which mercy was to be signally displayed. God sent forth his Son, his eternally pre-existing Son. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But God also promised that he should be "made of a woman," "manifested in the flesh," or in the likeness of sinful flesh—in that very nature that had sinned, and which he was to redeem; or else, how had the promise in paradise been fulfilled? "Made under the law:" that is, under the curse, sentence, and penalty of the law; that he might be a surety or bondsman for us.

Many do not consider this: that in God's making his Son to become subject to the curse and fulfilment of the law, he came to answer all its demands, and "to fulfil all righteousness;" to deliver us from the condemnation of it: so that it is now only a "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." In man's exigency, as a condemned sinner, what could a moral philosopher have done, with his highest proposals? What could a judaizing teacher have done, with his "days and months and times and years?" What could any one have done in this great affair of man, but Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Mediator of the new and everlasting covenant; our Elder Brother, the chief inheritor of the kingdom? with whom, if we indeed be children of God, we are fellow-heirs. Here the purpose of God is set forth, that he might show the riches of his grace. Here, in the fullness of the time, we see the purpose and end, eternal life; "that we might receive the adoption of sons." "Now he who hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of his Spirit."

What an amazing scheme! What a wonder of love and grace! What are the puny projects of men, supposing they succeed in them? What are the highest schemes of the philosopher, or the politician, compared

with this? God sent forth his Son: he said, "All things are ready, come unto the marriage." "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." 1 Tim. iii. 16.

II. THE PECULIAR SCHEME OF REDEMPTION, AS IT RESPECTS US: or, the benefits which are offered for our reception and enjoyment, as specified in the text, "That we should receive the adoption of sons."

For "verily he took not on him," or as the Greek reads, he took not hold of, "the nature of angels, but he took hold of the seed of Abraham." He suffered angels to fall, and to continue in the misery they had brought upon themselves: but he pitied man in his fall; and he offers this day to take hold of us, and to adopt us into his family, that we may receive the adoption of sons. The allusion is to an ancient custom among the Romans, which was the taking up a poor child, or even beggar, adopting him into a family of distinction, and placing him in all respects on the footing of a son and heir.

This may illustrate the grace of God, in his adoption of us to the privileges of sons. Adoption is more than pardon. A man may forgive a servant who has committed a fault, and be entirely reconciled to him, without putting him upon a level with his son.

Adoption is more than being justified, or acquitted: a judge may justify and acquit the prisoner at the bar, and yet not take him into his family.

Adoption is more than to be redeemed: a man may pay the ransom of a slave whom he sees under the scourge of the oppressor, and say, You are at liberty! and yet show him no further kindness.

To be adopted, is to be placed in a state superior to that which Adam lost when innocent in the garden:

yea, it is more than angels now are ; they are “ministering spirits”—high in office and dignity, “sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation:” but they are never mentioned as pardoned, or redeemed, by the Prince of Heaven, much less adopted as sons.

Adoption is taking man, who was a rebel, and converting that very rebel, and making him a priest and a king unto God forever! It gives him not only the right and title of citizenship, but entitles him to the privileges of a son. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father:” *i. e.* the spirit of adoption ; he has given you a heavenly taste and enjoyment—a princely spirit—a large mind—a kingly mind. But further still, he has given a filial mind. “Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son ; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ,” verse 7. Or, as the Apostle says, in the eighth chapter to the Romans, “If children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

Man has fallen so very low, that a few beggarly elements will suffice him. Whereas, God has proposed far more elevated prospects to him. I suppose this was the argument in St. Paul’s controversy with the Galatian Church : “Why turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage ?” You have too low ideas.

Words are too poor to convey what is meant by the expression, “the adoption of sons.” It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him. It is astonishing how low the ideas of even real Christians are as to the

great things of salvation. They seem to have no conception of the sublimity and dignity of their relation to God : of the value of their inheritance, and of the greatness of their privileges.

What remains, but that we should bring this doctrine of the incarnation of Christ home to our own hearts? For, unless it enters further than the understanding only, it is a mere speculation ; and will do no more good than the knowledge of any other science. If it only amounts to talk, we cannot give a better name to it than religious cant ! Let us receive it as it is, the “one thing needful,” the “better part,” or the soul will receive no benefit. It was said of some of old, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips ; but their heart is far from me.” I contend for reality, that shall end in eternal salvation. For what was the treasure hid in the field ? Not for men to talk about, but dig for it. My desire for you, my dear hearers, is that you should have more than the form of religion—more than a mere Galatian mistake : it is my earnest desire and prayer that you should have the adoption of children ; that you should earnestly seek it of God, and continue praying for it until you have it. None of us think rightly or sufficiently of its importance. You that are real believers, read this text again : “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Now receive it as a privilege, and as God’s free gift. What a privilege and liberty that we should receive this adoption ! In all those who are brought into this high and heavenly relation, there will be found feelings and dispositions of mind suited to it : there will be the spirit of adoption ; a filial mind, a taste for the dignity conferred. God not only gives the privileges

of children, but the spirit of children, and enables them to call him Father.

Again, what a ground is this for a minister to come forth and preach the Gospel! A minister of God should not so much denounce the terrors of the law, as he should point out the love and mercy of the Gospel, through a crucified Saviour. This is what subdues the enmity of a sinner's heart against God; while the constantly denouncing the terrors of the law only nourishes that enmity.

What a ground of encouragement is here for parents to teach their children the way to heaven, and to bring them early to the ordinances of grace, and plant them in the house of the Lord! How should children seek to become members of Christ's Church, and seek to join themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant! How may servants rejoice in the privilege of becoming servants to Christ, and being made the Lord's freemen!

Finally, What ground is here laid for a Christian's entire reliance on his God! and that under every fear, loss, bereavement, temptation, the world's scorn or hatred! What a ground has he for reliance and confidence under every fear and distress! "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

What! may a Christian say, Is all this true? Pardoned! redeemed! justified! adopted! made an heir! Then, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. ii. 14, 15.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil, &c.—*MATT.* iv. 1—10. [1798.]

MAN's days are few, and full of sorrow; yet, upon these short and sorrowful days depends our eternal happiness or misery. It behoves us, therefore, to make the most of every moment. This is more especially necessary because, if we are idle, our adversary is not so, but as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

The enemy lays those temptations in our way which are most suited to our situation, state of mind, and circumstances. Thus he went to our Lord. The seasons for Satan's attacks are the times of distress, when the heart is softened and less able to make resistance; when it is more inclined to listen to the tempter; and when the Christian is more apt to doubt of his relationship to Christ: hence hard thoughts of God are apt to creep in. We learn from Christ's being tempted, that temptation is common to human nature, and not an evil in itself. The highest favors do not exempt us from temptation. God has prepared us for spiritual assaults: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass;" and "as thy day is so shall thy strength be."

Temptation is also peculiar to high employments. The devil puts our Lord first upon questioning his Sonship, ver. 3, "If thou be the Son of God;" and then upon proving it; "Command that these stones be made bread." No wonder that he often puts the Christian upon doubting his relation to Christ: and if he can get us to parley with him, he will soon be putting us

upon needless proof. Take heed that Satan does not put you upon any unwarantable or unnecessary proofs whereby to try your state.

Our Lord had fasted forty days and forty nights, and “was afterward an hungred.” The most suitable temptation therefore was, “Command that these stones be made bread.” Beware of the first approaches of temptation, especially in times of trial and distress. However easy the method proposed may appear, or however pleasing the bait, let us take care that we stand on Scripture foundation.

To the man in poverty, Satan suggests a thousand schemes of getting money which would be easier than honest industry, and patient waiting upon God: the gaming table; the lottery, &c. No calamity should lead us to seek relief out of the path of duty. God is all-sufficient in times of adversity as well as in times of prosperity. The only antidote for the devices of the enemy on all occasions is, “It is written.” This should teach us the absolute necessity and advantage of being thoroughly conversant with the Scriptures. We must take a scriptural view of God’s power to help in every time of need, not an enthusiastic view, expecting some miraculous evidences. God is a God of order: a God of means.

Ver. 4. “But he answered and said, It is written.” The same answer must be urged to every temptation: our immediate reply must be, like our great Master, “It is written.” Our Lord refers to Deut. viii. 3, “Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live.” Bread is the staff of life: it nourishes our natural bodies: but it only nourishes as it is accompanied by the Divine blessing. It is less the bread, than the Giver of the bread who supports us; therefore when-

ever we eat, we should look for a blessing on our food. This duty is most disgracefully neglected in these days of degeneracy and impiety; and even when it is not wholly neglected, the Divine blessing is implored in so careless a manner, as looks more like an insult on the Deity than an act of reverence.

But man has not only a natural body, he has also a rational soul,—and for this God has made provision: Prov. ix. 1–6,—1 Tim. iv. 8,—John iv. 35. “I am the bread of life.” One who is on a sick and dying bed knows the value of this “bread of life.” The word of God when it comes home with power to a man’s heart, will lay a foundation for his delight throughout eternity. Let us learn, from our Lord, to use this word as a check to every temptation. One of the worst features in the Romish Church is, that they hide the key of knowledge. Should any one try to persuade you that the Bible is above your comprehension, and that it was only designed for the learned, believe it not. Examine, and read the word of God for yourself: it is most emphatically “the book of knowledge:” all other writings in comparison are nothing. Search the Scriptures: pray over them: take them for your rule.

Ver. 5. “Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the Temple.” Satan will be busy, even in the holy city—even in the Temple. The pinnacle is the most dangerous place; for the greater the height, the greater is the believer’s call for watchfulness, because the greater would be his fall. Beware of a desire to climb. A young Christian is very desirous of a high station, and wants to be mounting: but, take heed, that, in climbing, Satan does not give you a lift. He is perhaps as desirous of your reaching the pinnacle as you are yourself, in order that he may cast you down.

We can bear very little exaltation in our present corrupt state : the head is never more apt to turn giddy, than when we are raised on a pinnacle. Let it be your request to be kept on humble ground.

Ver. 6, 7. "Cast thyself down," &c.—Had Satan been able to cast down our blessed Saviour, he had been only the sufferer ; for we are expressly told, "the Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." If Satan can prevail on the believer to coincide with the temptation, he succeeds in his malice ; but if we resist, we are safe ; for resisted temptations are rather afflictions than sins : these will not separate from communion with Christ ; for he sympathizes with the tempted.

"He shall give his angels charge concerning thee : and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Satan will often put the greatest truths into the mouths of his emissaries, to pervert truth. He would have Scriptures quoted partially : he here quotes a passage from the 91st Psalm, but perverts the sense : "Cast thyself down," at any rate, "for he shall give his angels charge concerning thee." Take great heed when Scripture is quoted by the mouth of bad men. It is no better than the worst blasphemy : yet do not esteem the Scripture is less on that account : the antidote to this poison is "the sword of the Spirit." Christ says, "It is written again."

Ver. 8. "Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain," &c. Mark here the succession of Satan's attacks. The wilderness had not succeeded, nor the pinnacle of the temple ; but this mountain produced the most enchanting prospects, the most extensive view. There was also a craft added, to show the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of

them. Satan, in his temptations, points at objects in their fairest aspect; spreads every thing likely to dazzle; and conceals every thing likely to counteract. You see the flower; but where are the thorns—the punishments? where are the shades of the picture? Ah! it is by hiding the remorse, the aching heart, that he succeeds! It is his art to present temptation through the eye—the ear—by the medium of the senses; it is by “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye,” that the heart is drawn aside from God. Who can walk along his journey for one week, and not know this? These scenes follow us to the closet, and distract our devotion.

Satan, in his temptations, employs a hurry and rapidity; he presents a rapid view; he will not leave time for the principles to be called up, but takes us off our guard. St. Luke says, “He shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.” Earthly things will not bear inspection. Let us learn to esteem all worldly things at a low rate, and to withdraw from them. Let us contrast the pageantry and the cheat of the world, with eternal realities; till we become impressed, and, like the Apostle, glory only in the cross of Christ.

Ver. 9. Observe the proffer of the Enemy, “All these will I give thee.” Mark the proud assumption of sovereign power over the kingdoms of the world, which he did not possess! Man’s pride is not to be compared to Satan’s. And then the deceitful promise—“I will give thee.” Mark also the force of the temptation, implied in the idea—You are left abandoned: It was indeed promised that the heathen should be given thee for an inheritance: but you are now deserted of God. I will give thee these kingdoms. Horrid blasphemy! arrogant assumption! absurd preten-

sion! to suppose that the supreme Governor had given up to Satan his own prerogative! Learn hence that the glory and power of the world seemed to be given up to Satan, in order to teach us how low an estimate we should make of them. Luther said, "The whole empire was but as a crust to throw to a dog." If God allows his enemy to go up and down in the world, how deep should be our suspicion of the world! Satan does seem to govern; for all that God bestows on us, whether riches or honors, he poisons, perverts, and endeavors to make use of to seduce us. He is called in Scripture, "the god of this world." "The prince of the power of the air." Satan's devices may be known by the nature of his promises: God's design is to fit us for the other world; Satan offers *this*. He says to the worldling—to the merchant—Ah! you are not happy now! but look onward, "I will give thee." To the scholar he says, Look on to fame, to reputation! He is for enlisting man in his own service, and for making him an idolater; thus transferring the heart from God to himself. The promises of Satan are always future: he solicits to future repose on earth—future glory in the world. But his promises are uniformly more than he can perform. Can any deluded creature say that Satan has performed his promise? He never can perform his promise: he is a liar: his object is to flatter that he may destroy: his design is to conceal the hook, while he offers the bait. But supposing he could, and would perform all—how little is that all! I am a dying creature: I must hasten to judgment! If I climb the mountain, I must descend again every step I have attained—less prepared for judgment than before:—then what is all this worth? What does it do? Does it include pardon? Does it calm my passions? No; it cherishes them; it excludes my sight of the cross. If

I yield to one temptation, my feelings are gone; my spiritual view cannot be recovered; my heart is left wretched; "the salt has lost its savor." If a man feels the pressure of the world when struggling against its stream, how shall the temptation be resisted if his mind be wholly occupied with it?

Learn to bring Satan's promises to the word of God, that you may see their fallacy. Where does the Bible promise riches, glory, ease in this world to a Christian? No! the Scriptures lead to the cross of the Saviour. The present season of tranquillity is dangerous to the Church. Satan spreads a picture before the eyes of youth: the parent has been engrossed with the world; and the child learns to talk highly of distinction and wealth. We are called at this time to peculiar caution. What is it that carries away the seed sown in the heart of the young?—the world! What cools their growing piety?—the world! The marks and boundaries between the Church and the world are almost effaced: men are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God:" the temptations of the world are peculiarly destructive of the life of God in the soul.

Ver. 10. "If thou wilt fall down and worship me."—Satan will use his utmost skill to beguile and allure; but if he cannot do this, he will sometimes seem to stride across the path, and dispute the road with us;—he will inject blasphemous thoughts. The darkest temptations of Satan are sometimes introduced, as it were, incidentally: only "fall down and worship me"—a momentary homage, implying no consequences. So he says to us, "Just do this;" "Only do that;" "Is it not a little one?" Will not a little gap open the flood-gates? Under this plausible language lurks a homage to Satan. There will be a double force, if

the temptation be in a time of prosperity, when the heart is fascinated with the world's glory and glitter. But whatever disguise Satan employs in the early beginning, he generally shows himself before the temptation is over. His design is the honoring himself, and the dishonoring God: to transfer the heart from God to the creature. He knows that if we will but allow a conjunction between the two, he has gained his point: his device is to divorce the heart from God, and to keep up the separation. The smallest of Satan's temptations is made with the dark hope of obtaining further concessions; his design with our first parents was to draw them from their allegiance to God, and make them believe his lies, which was in fact saying—Let me share the homage which a jealous God claims as his prerogative. Do you ask, What harm is there in this or that? Inquire what are its effects? does it draw your heart from God, and unfit it for prayer? That is harm enough.

In order to resist successfully, we must take every step looking for grace and help; and renouncing all self-dependence, say only, "Get thee hence, Satan!" Our Saviour does not appear the less abhorrent of this temptation because of the fascinating scene in which it was presented. He does not even condescend to notice the glory of the world presented to him: he still wields the authority of Scripture, an authority more high, more conclusive, and more mighty than any argument. With the spontaneous energy of a holy mind, he resists the temptation: "Get thee hence: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," ver. 10. Our Lord here introduces the lawful sovereign: he does not argue as a philosopher, but says, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God;"—not a traitor. The service of God

lies in the relation we stand in to God. Deut. ii. 13—x. 20; Joshua xxiv. 14—18. In order to resist temptation, we should be well grounded in our supreme duty to God. Man was made to honor God: he is the priest of the creatures, made capable of loving and serving God. In the fall, the very essence of the transgression, as well as the misery of man, was the turning from God to set up his own will, and to do his own pleasure. In redemption, God again ascends the throne of the heart.

Let the young Christian prepare for temptation; for it will assuredly come. Watch, therefore, and pray. Do not, with our first parents, parley with temptation: it is our duty not to listen to Satan's proposals—not to argue, or debate, or hesitate: safety lies in flight: like the Saviour, we should resist his suggestions with abhorrence. In faithfully resisting, you have a right to ten thousand promises. The Christian does not attempt to resist temptation in his own strength. His watchfulness lies in observing its approach, and telling God of it by prayer. Like a sentinel, who gives notice of the approach of danger to the commanding officer, let us watch against the occasions of sin. An occasion exactly fitted, is more than half a temptation. It is Satan's cunning to draw a man within the reach of an occasion. Gilpin says, "Satan succeeds more, in his evil designs, through subtlety than force." The latter stirs up an opposition; it alarms to caution. Where force should but gain its thousands, subtlety will gain its tens of thousands.

Satan inquires into a man's state, whether regenerate or not—into his constitution, disposition, place, calling, age; and his next care is, to provide suitable temptations. He retains still the character of a serpent, and will use his utmost skill.

There are not only common times of danger, but there are also critical times; such as was Peter's. Satan's point, at all times, is to make a Christian quit his ground and his place: and when he has done this, one thing more remains to complete his plan; namely, to get the man to be self-confident and headstrong.

Beware of running into danger: you are only safe in the narrow way. Christ was led up of the Spirit, into the wilderness: He had a special call. We must take heed not to go on Satan's ground of ourselves: but if we are suffered to be brought into temptation, let us say with Jacob, "I am in the way thou biddest me go." However crafty and violent the tempter, he can do no more than make the assault; but he cannot carry his point, without our consent: he is held by a chain. Temptation puts nothing in the mind, but only draws out the evils that are latent in our hearts.

Take care of whatever would endanger you; such as *bad company*, where the Enemy lies in ambush;—*fear*, which says, "There is a lion in the way;"—*unbelief*, which cries, "You will not hold out;"—*sloth*, which complains, "There is too much required." All these are Satan's emissaries.

Our safest way is, to stand prepared for the attacks of the Enemy: we should know he is coming on: and we should consider how it has been with such men as David, Peter, and others, when Satan has come in like a flood. We cannot be too cautious: past experience will tell us what weak creatures we are: a secure state is itself a temptation. Satan never more succeeds, than when he endeavors to persuade men he has no existence—that there is no "roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour." If he can persuade men to be at ease, he is almost sure of his prey. One of the endeavors of an able general, in time of war, is,

to make the enemy believe he is doing nothing: he would surprise the town unprepared.

Lastly. If we have not a high place, let us seek a hiding-place. Satan has furnished us with a valuable piece of instruction in the affairs of Job, chap. i.—that he could not touch him without God's permission: "Hast thou not made a hedge about him?" Dreadful as this Enemy is, he can go no further than he is permitted: therefore, let us not be driven from our post because of danger. Christ liveth; and therefore we shall live also. Fear not, if you have secured a friend in him that is mighty. Put each day, and all its concerns, into his hand; in him alone you are secure. He is the most safe, who can take every thing to Christ, and say, "Lord, consider my danger! Thou knowest where my faith will fail." The greatest advancement in the divine life is that perfect confidence in God described in the Canticles, "I sat down under his shadow, with great delight."



CHRIST'S LAST PRAYER FOR HIS DISCIPLES.

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.—JOHN xvii. 25, 26. [1804.]

CRITICS have marked in this chapter what may be appropriate to the particular case of the disciples, and what may be appropriate to the Church at large. But this will not interfere with our inquiry; for the 20th verse clearly shows, and proves, that the blessings here

spoken of belong to every believer to the end of the world. Our Lord says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."

Having premised this, let us consider more particularly the import of the text. Our Lord says, ver. 11, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are:" *q. d.* I am now speaking of the covenant blessings which thou hast provided in me, as the Head: "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee:" the world continue in blindness and hardness of heart: and though the Sun of Righteousness hath arisen with healing in his wings, yet they love darkness, rather than light: but, O righteous Father, "I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it:" *i. e.* I will more fully declare it, on my ascension; and, on the day of Pentecost, the whole truth, the end of all the dispensations, shall be seen to be this: That the love wherewith thou hast loved me the Head, may be communicated to them the members.—I shall proceed to consider, from these words,

I. THE BLINDNESS IN THE MINDS OF THE UNREGENERATE WORLD.

II. THE CONTRAST WHICH THIS PRESENTS TO THE ILLUMINATION OF THE TRUE CHURCH.

I. THE BLINDNESS OF THE UNREGENERATE WORLD.
 "The world hath not known thee." Then what has the world known? Not known God! Not known him with whom it has to do! Not known its Saviour—its best Friend! What then does it know, to pur-

pose? If you inquire of the world, it will not only tell you, that the present age in particular is the most illuminated of any; but it will tell you of its wonderful discoveries in science, its great knowledge in politics, its progress in the arts, &c. Some will profess to tell you what progress religion has made in the world; and they will go on to say more, as knowing what progress it will make: the world is so illuminated—so comprehensive!

Now, with all this knowledge, discovery, and instruction, I read the text: “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee!” Not known thee! and yet so wise? With all its little discoveries, cannot it discern the things belonging to its peace? Then, it is but telling me of the bustle and industry of ants—of the ingenuity and politics of bees! All this is trifling to him who wants a shelter. Moreover, we can tell them, that even the heathen excelled in these acquirements: and yet, what is said of the heathen? Ask the Bible, the true book of revelation: “When they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened,” Rom. i. 21. It is plainly declared that man by nature is like the wild ass’s colt, till the Holy Spirit shines into his heart. Let us consider for ourselves. If we give full evidence that we know not God as our Father and our Friend—if we know not Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and are not united to him by faith—what is all our knowledge worth? No one is more pitiable than the celebrated wretch who is only this world’s votary!

But, perhaps, it will be asked, May not men be guided by their private opinion? Must all think with the preacher? If you turn to the ninth chapter of the Prophet Jeremiah, you will find there is but one opinion.

“Thus saith the Lord”—not the preacher—but, “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this”—not in arts and sciences, and progress in learning; but, if there is any thing to glory in—“let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth ME!” To the same purpose are the words of our Saviour: “This is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

“The world hath not known thee:” however some may have been brought up in an orthodox creed, and been instructed in Christian doctrines, yet if they have no practical knowledge, no saving knowledge of the truths they hold,—if they do not know that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world,—whatever they may know besides, they know nothing to purpose; they are spiritually blind: for Christ has declared, “Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me.” Let us now,

II. CONTRAST THIS WITH THE ILLUMINATION AND PRIVILEGES OF THE TRUE CHURCH: “*These have known that thou hast sent me.*”

1st. Consider *their illumination*. It is a mark set on the elect, that they have “heard and learned of the Father.” Whatever minister has been made use of, whatever book may have awakened their minds—God has taught them. They have been taught to honor the Son even as they honor the Father. “These have known that thou hast sent ME.” When the question was asked, “Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?” the heart of Peter was ready to answer, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal

life." As though he had said, Do we know that we ever felt the life and warmth of the sun?—that we were ever nourished by food?—so, in this, we know by the benefit derived: we know that thou art the "SENT of God." "These have known that thou hast sent me."

2nd. Consider *their privileges*: to know and to trust in Christ the Lord, is a special privilege. To such it is said, "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "I will send the Comforter, and he shall teach you all things." "All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." Now, therefore, consider the expectation that I have raised: "I have declared, and I will declare." Nothing shall separate my disciples from my love; though I am going away, I will still be their Sun and Shield. When I am gone from them into heaven, I will speak to their heart, I will meet their case; and when they go through the valley and shadow of death, they shall fear no evil, for I will be with them: I will intercede for them as their great High Priest. I will pray the Father that the love wherewith he has loved me may be in them, and I in them. Christ prays for his people's sanctification; "Sanctify them through thy truth;" ver. 17. And he prays, ver. 24, for their glorification: "That they may behold my glory." He pleads in a way of demand; *q. d.* I have paid the debt. He pleads agreeably to the will of the Father: "Those whom thou hast given me." Christ's intercession should encourage us to come boldly to the throne of grace.

See the privileges of God's people, as described by St. Paul, in the fifth chapter to the Romans: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and

rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed;”—not ashamed!—why so? “Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” As though St. Paul should say, I cannot lose my treasure—my portion; for Christ, in his last prayer, has said, “that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.” Christ has loved his people with “an everlasting love.” “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”

Again, our Saviour speaks of the privilege of union to himself: “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me;” ver. 23. For a further explanation of this, see the fifteenth chapter of this Gospel, where our Saviour says, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

With this view of the subject, let us compare the state of the world with the state of the Church, and you will then see what it is to be of the world, and what it is to be of the Church. I call your mind to the fact—not to the decision of a blind world, but to the fact. What was the commission given to St. Paul? “I send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;” Acts xxvi. 17, 18. They will not indeed acknowledge their blindness; they will boast of great discernment, and say, “We see.” But their real state is thus stated: “I will send thee to open their eyes.” Hence we may learn the blindness of the world, as

contrasted with the illumination and privileges of the true Church.

Now, if these two states exist, and if every man be found in one of them, surely it becomes you and me to ask ourselves, What am I doing? Some one may say, "I cannot think I have this illumination, for I do not know any thing of this union, and of the mind that was in Christ; I am going on just as the rest of the world do." But I would ask, then, another question: Do you propose to go on living and dying in such a state? Do you not see, if you have read through this chapter, that there is marked in it a clear distinction of character? insomuch that our Lord says in one part of his prayer, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me:" *q. d.* These are my sheep; they are preparing for glory, and glory is preparing for them. Should you say, "If this is the case, I must be one of them for whom Christ does not pray." Your present state and character may naturally lead you to this conclusion; but, should a man acquiesce in this? If he suspects this, and consequently fears to die, should he not begin to work out his salvation with fear and trembling? Does not Christ say, "Ye will not," not, ye cannot "come unto me that ye might have life?" Conscience tells you there is no excuse; for God warns before he summons to judgment.

But there is another class of persons whose language would be this: "I see the vast importance of the subject; but, in fact, I am endeavoring to blend the world and religion together; to mix and make both compatible: so that one day I seem to be following the world, and another to be of the Church. I would endeavor to have both." But have you never read, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and

despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon:" *i. e.* ye cannot be in the spirit of the world and in the spirit of the Church. The hot and cold strive to mingle opposite sentiments that are totally incompatible. Often have I seen a man on his dying bed bemoaning his attempt to do this! You must, indeed, perform the duties of your family and station, and be courteous to all; but, as to entering into the spirit of the world, and yet thinking to belong to the true Church, Christ says it cannot be done! "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." What cross do you take up? What confession have you to make before men? It is evident that if a man is trying to blend things that are incompatible, he knows not God. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." What says the Apostle? "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" but does he stop there?—"by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." If you say, "This is the work of the Holy Spirit," most assuredly it is, but what follows from this? That we are called to pray for his influences.

What an unspeakable privilege does the text afford to a true believer! Christ prays "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Therefore, if we are one with Christ and the Father, though the world knoweth us not, even as it knew him not, yet God has given us to know him, if he has declared his name unto us, not only outwardly in the preaching of the Gospel, but inwardly and practically. Then being united to Christ as living branches in the true Vine, we shall be bringing forth those fruits of faith which are through Jesus Christ unto the glory

and praise of God. It is this union which alone can make us fruitful ; and till this takes place, we are only as cumberers of the ground : but when it is experienced, we then reap the benefit of this prayer of our blessed Saviour : “ That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” By virtue of this, the people of God have communion with him, and with one another ; which would be more complete and refreshing were it not greatly hindered by our fallen nature. Christ ascended as our Head. St. Paul prays : “ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God ;” Eph. iii. 14—19. A great part of the family is already gone to heaven ; and though they have had many misgivings while on earth, yet by the blood of the Lamb they overcame, and have entered into that rest which never more can be disturbed. We may here mark that God’s people while on earth are dear to him ; he watches over them with an eye of tenderness ; and it is his pleasure not only to take care of them here, but to have them with him where he is, to share as well as behold his glory. It is this that shows the value of redemption, and the worth of the soul. He is “ not ashamed to call them brethren ;” so, after his ascension, he says, “ Go tell my brethren that I go before them into Galilee.” He is

the only-begotten Son of God, and the rest are adopted in him, and for his sake.

I can imagine a man possessed of every worldly good: and what then? Then you would see before you a poor, pitiable creature, in comparison of him for whom Christ thus prays: for "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" But if I am united to Christ, and have the love of God shed abroad in my heart, I have more than I could ask or think; for no man could have thought it possible that God should have so regarded sinners. Therefore the Apostle might very properly say, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not;" 1 John iii. 1.

But does a believer, after this, murmur, because things are not all that he could wish as to temporal concerns? Is he found peevish, or unthankful, while such blessings are conferred upon him? Is he found covetous? Is he found inordinate? Is he found overreaching and dishonorable in his dealings? Is he found proud, or worldly-minded, after this? "Tell it not in Gath, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph." Rather, let us imitate the martyr, who when he was solicited to go against his conscience, made no other answer than this—"I am a Christian." "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

I speak to Christians: you are sent into a blind, dark world, lying in the Wicked One. Learn to walk through it as Christ walked. You are sent into the world. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world;" ver. 18.

You are sent into the world, but you are not to be of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. He could say, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world:" as if he had said, O righteous Father, I am indeed unknown to the world because thou art unknown, and nothing is now before me in the world but the contradiction of sinners; but thou hast given me to stand as the living Head to thy mystical body the Church; and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. And every believer may say after him, Thou hast sent *me* into the world; enable me to finish the work thou hast appointed me to do, and to glorify thee upon earth: and though I am going through this world like a pilgrim, unknown and unnoticed, support me when I am ready to sink; guide me and keep me from going astray; intercede for me to the Father; and bring me to thy eternal rest, where I may forever behold thy glory.



JESUS WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET.

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end, &c.—JOHN xiii. 1—11. [Uncertain.]

OUR great comfort and encouragement is this—that our blessed Saviour is unchangeable. He does not love his children to-day, and not love them to-morrow; but he continues to love them. He has a cordial love

for his own that are in the world. The twelve were representatives of all God's spiritual seed.

Ver. 2. "And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him"—the devil having, as it seems, taken full possession of the, before, evil heart of Judas: (for the sin of Judas is, in this parenthesis, traced to its original: it was a sin which bore the devil's image and superscription.) Judas fell into the snare. The devil aimed also at Peter, and wished to sift him as wheat, but Peter was saved by Christ's intercession for him. Christ would fortify the disciples against the most dangerous assaults of the devil by a singular lesson of humility.

Ver. 3. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands," that the administration of the kingdom of God among men, in all the branches of it, was committed to him; "and that he was come from God, and went to God." He came from God as "the sent of God," as commissioned with an embassy of mercy to lost man; and he "went to God" to be glorified with the same glory which he had before the world was, and also to be an agent for us in heaven. Knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of the world, and return to the glory which he left—because Judas having now resolved to betray him, the time of his departure could not be far off—he would show by an astonishing act of condescension and affection, that he did not intend to cast them all off for the faults of one among them.

Vers. 4, 5. "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments;" (he laid aside his loose and upper garments;) "and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel

wherewith he was girded." In those hot countries, where they wore sandals, it was necessary and refreshing that the feet should often be washed; and it was considered a token of respect, and attention, and kindness, to perform this office. In our country an imitation of such an act would be superstitious and absurd. Christ performed this as a representative of his whole undertaking: he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; he had laid aside his robes of light, and girded himself with our nature, and took upon him the form of a servant: he poured out his soul unto death, and thereby prepared a laver to wash us from our sins. He would herein signify the spiritual washing and cleansing of the soul from the pollutions of sin. This was also a part of his voluntary abasement for our sakes.

Ver. 6. "Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Here we see the honest but forward spirit of Peter, opposing the conduct of his Master, which he could not comprehend. His surprise is evident, however we understand the expression. He might mean, Lord, dost *thou* wash my feet? Thou, who art my Lord and Master, whom I know and believe to be the Son of God;—shalt thou so humble thyself for *me*, "a sinful man?"—or, Lord, dost thou wash my *feet*? the meanest office to which thou couldst descend! shalt thou so debase thyself as to wash my *feet*? He ought to have wondered in silence; as knowing it was his Lord and Master.

Ver. 7. "Jesus answered," with the most astonishing forbearance and pity for his ignorance and blindness—"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." The implicit obedience which Christ required was attended with a reason, implying that

there was something very important in this sign, which he should hereafter understand. Surely this ought at once to have silenced Peter, since his Master promised that he should know hereafter! He ought not to have inquired at first; and after this answer, he ought much more to have held his peace. But, the very picture of human nature, he still persists in his ignorance, and says,

Ver. 8. "Thou shalt never wash my feet." The refusal was peremptory; it is in the original, Thou shalt never wash my feet; no, never! It was the language of a fixed resolution. Peter had a real love and respect for his Master, and here was a show of humility and modesty. But this show of humility was a real contradiction to the will of his Lord. Thus many are beguiled of their reward by "a voluntary humility," Col. ii. 18, 19,—such a self-denial as Christ neither appoints nor accepts. Peter was, in fact, making himself wiser than his Master. Still forbearing with him, "Jesus answered him," ver. 8, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Thou dost in effect renounce thy allegiance. If thou dost not comply with thy Master's will, thou shalt not be owned as his disciple. Our Lord further declares to him the necessity of spiritual washing: *q. d.* If I wash not thy soul from the pollution of sin, thou hast no part with me, no interest in me, no communion with me. All those whom Christ owns, he justifies and sanctifies; and both are included in his washing of them.

Ver. 9. "Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Peter finding what the sad consequences would be of not submitting to his Lord's will, is now for dictating and directing how much Christ shall do for him. This is a picture of the natural heart, ever in extremes. Yet we

see in him the honest man. When the mistake of his understanding was rectified, the corrupt resolution of his will was soon altered. Any thing but to be cut off from Christ."

Ver. 10. "Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." We may learn from this, that being disciples of Christ, and having received justification, we need not go a second time to be justified; but only that in our daily walk and intercourse with the world we contract defilement; and hence need constantly to be washed in the "fountain set open for sin and uncleanness." The allusion is to the practice, frequent in those hot countries, of using the bath. He that is washed all over in the bath, when he returns to his house, needeth not save to wash his feet; his hands and head having been washed, and he having only soiled his feet in returning home. It is the comfort and privilege of such as are in a justified state, that they are washed by Christ, and are therefore clean every whit. The heart may be swept and garnished, and yet still remain the devil's palace; but if it be washed, it belongs to Christ, and he will own it. Where is the Christian who does not need the cleansing blood of Christ in his every act?

Ver. 10. 11. "And ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean." Though Judas appeared like the rest of the apostles, and made the same outward profession, yet the all-seeing eye of Christ could pierce through the deepest disguise, and find out the heart of a hypocrite even in one of his disciples. And shall we wonder—we may be grieved—but shall we wonder that, in religious societies, there should be some members who are insincere; when even in so small a num-

ber as twelve, and those chosen apostles, there was so great a hypocrite, so base a deceiver, as Judas? Shall we censure the whole body for the sake of a part? Christ loves his Church, though there are hypocrites in it. He loved his disciples, though there was a Judas among them; and he knew it.

Oh, let us all look well to it, and examine our own hearts, that we be not ourselves of the sad number of unsound professors! Christ pronounces his disciples clean "through the word he had spoken unto them." But he excepts Judas. "Ye are clean, but not all." They were all baptized, even Judas, and yet not all clean: many have the sign, who have not the thing signified.

But let us now be more particular: we cannot come to our own case if we deal only in generals: we must come to the detail.

1st. We have here *a lesson on the duty of contentment and submission*. Who is there among us but may trace out, in a thousand instances, the spirit of Peter? Prone to inquire, even of wisdom itself, Why dost thou this? I do not now address myself to Arians or Socinians; but to the merely moral man, to the self-righteous man, who trusts in his uprightness, who appeals to the fairness of his reputation in the world. What is it that makes you unwilling to confess yourself a miserable sinner, and to come to the blood of Christ, but the pride and conceit of your own hearts? Naaman had a worse leprosy than that of the body. He had the pride of which I am speaking, and said, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" And had not the Lord been long-suffering, and touched his heart, he would never have been healed of either one or the other. We must be washed by Christ, one and all.

There is the water, and the blood, which came out of his side; the blood to take away our guilt, and the water, or the influences of the Spirit, to sanctify and make us holy. Let us examine our own hearts, and we shall discover much of the spirit of Peter; much of the pride of Naaman. Have we not a propensity to ask, Lord, why doest thou thus? Poor ignorant shortsighted worms as we are, if there is any thing which our shallow understandings cannot comprehend, we are stumbled at it, and are for searching out the mystery. Instead of saying, with submission, It is the Lord who has done it; or, It is the Lord who has said it; and therefore I will not dare to inquire:—for though I know not yet, I shall know hereafter; if necessary, in this world; but if not, in the next;—instead of thus knowing our proper place, our quarrel is apt to be with the mode in which the Lord shall dispense his blessings. Every time we feel discontent, murmurings, and repinings, we in effect say, Lord, why doest thou thus? When passing through deep afflictions, if we cannot fully see the Lord's design in sending them, we say, Lord, why doest thou this? Whereas, we ought to rest assured that the Lord has done it, and therefore it must be right. This should make us resigned under trials. Why is it that we so often see the servant desiring to be in the place of the master, and the master aspiring to the place of his superiors; and so on, from one rank to another;—but because each is saying, Lord, I should have been better, or happier, if thou hadst left me to choose for myself! If you are dissatisfied with your condition or occupation in life, your want of affluence or ease, and are longing and reaching after more riches, more honors, and murmuring because you have not all your wish, examine yourself closely: is not this finding fault with what the Lord

has done for you? and fancying you could have done better for yourself? Seek, and pray, for true resignation and submission to the Lord's will; and for a full assurance that whatever the Lord does is right: yea, infinitely wise and good.

2ndly. We have here a *lesson of humility and love*. The Lord of glory is taking upon him the meanest offices, and doing that for his disciples which they perhaps would not do for each other. And shall we, his poor abject creatures, think any thing too much beneath us, that we can do for the humblest follower of this blessed Saviour! Let us be ashamed of our pride and haughtiness, and endeavor to imitate our patient humble Redeemer. It was in the immediate foresight of his departure that our Lord washed his disciples' feet. To wash one another's feet, is to stoop to the meanest offices of love for the real good and benefit of our fellow-Christians.

Lastly, *it behoves us strictly to examine our own hearts, and to find out their sinful propensities*. Mark what our Saviour says, "Ye are clean, but not all." Judas, as I before remarked, bore a resemblance to the rest of the Apostles, and was included in the number of the twelve. Probably, he from carelessness might not suspect himself as being capable of the great wickedness he was about to commit, until the temptation increased upon him. The devil darts in his suggestions, and mingles them, undiscerned, with a man's own thoughts. It behoves us, therefore, to examine ourselves strictly, to mortify our evil propensities, and seek to be washed from them. It is not our meeting among Christians—it is not our being accounted one of them—it is not our professing to be one, that will avail any thing—unless we have been washed in the blood of Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit. Though

we may hug ourselves in the arts of hypocrisy, and escape the eye of our fellow-mortals, yet nothing is too deep for the piercing eye of God; the eye of Christ can separate between the precious and the vile, the clean and the unclean. "Jesus knew who it was that should betray him."

Let us constantly watch against every thing that is defiling. We must cleanse our way by taking heed unto God's word. The priests, when they were consecrated, were washed with water: yet whenever they went in to minister, they must wash their hands and feet with water, on pain of death. *Exod. xxx. 19, 20.* The provision made for our cleansing should not make us presumptuous, but more cautious. "How should we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" *Rom. vi. 2.*

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.—*MATT. xxvi. 39.* [1807.]

WE are now entering the season in which we contemplate the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. In reference to this solemn season, I have found a defect in my own mind, and perhaps some of my hearers may have been conscious of the same—namely, the considering it as a season for the mere recital of these astonishing transactions, instead of one for deeply meditating on the grand lessons brought before us for our instruction.

"Then cometh Jesus," says the Evangelist in the

verses preceding the text, "with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Let us, in considering these words, fix our attention on two things:

I. THE OBLATION, OR SACRIFICE, THAT CHRIST MADE.

II. THE EXEMPLARY MODE OF HIS PREPARING FOR IT.

I. THE OBLATION, OR SACRIFICE, THAT CHRIST MADE.

The expression, "Let this cup pass from me," is idiomatic. The cup is, in this sense, an emblem of suffering; in allusion to the cup given to a malefactor, to enable him to sustain the agonies he must undergo. Thus the Lord addresses Jerusalem, by the Prophet Isaiah, "Behold, I have taken out of thy hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again; but I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee." The dispensation of our Saviour's sufferings was called a cup, as it was a "cup of trembling," and a cup of bitterness, such as no mere man could be able to taste: a cup in which were united the deepest afflictions: in which there met all the woes which otherwise would have fallen on sinners. "Who his own self," says the Apostle, "bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." 1 Pet. ii. 24. There was a translation of sin and wrath from us to Christ. "For

he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21. It was exacted, and he became answerable. Our Lord's death and sufferings were very different from those of the martyrs. They suffered mainly in their bodies, but he in his soul. Any affection of the body is comparatively nothing to mental suffering. "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" An affection on the mind and heart will bow a man down. The martyrs had the presence of God with them, and were enabled to rejoice even in the flames; but Christ was to experience the hidings of his Father's face; he was to experience the displeasure of his Father, as standing in our place. The sufferings of his soul began as soon as he came upon earth. From the first he bore the contradiction of sinners, and his holy soul was grieved at sin. If holy men who were yet imperfect, like Lot, David, and others, were grieved at sin, how much more must Christ, the spotless Lamb, "holy and undefiled!" But now, in his last agony, he was to take the cup of wrath, and drink it to the dregs. The prophet asks, "Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me." His disciples forsook him, and the Father hid his face from him. Therefore we need not wonder that our Saviour should say, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

But these things were absolutely necessary, both for the fulfilment of prophecy, and from the nature of things.

1st. *For the fulfilment of Scripture.* Christ's sufferings were predicted and shadowed forth by the whole Levitical economy, and the priesthood in connection with it; for the law was only "a shadow of good things to come." No blood but the blood of Christ could atone for sin: "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared for me." The Prophet Isaiah particularly describes the passion of Christ, and the benefits which should result from it: "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." The fruit of the travail of Christ's soul was, that he should bear our sins and griefs; that through him we should have pardon and peace; that he might be to us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" it was, that the mourners might be comforted; the weak strengthened; that we should have life for evermore; and that all should flow to us through the bleeding veins of Jesus Christ.

We consider of time as past, present, and to come. But when the counsel of peace was made between the Father, Son, and Spirit, it was as one eternal now. When Christ's soul was made "an offering for sin," he knew every anxious thought, and saw every sore conflict, which his purchased people should pass through. He bore "our griefs and carried our sorrows." If you are pining under losses and trials, think of him who was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Think of the sympathy he still affords you, and the blessings he has purchased for you. The value of every thing is best known by the price of it. All the contentment which the world could afford would not be worth one drop of Christ's blood! Yet he did not

think it too much to lay down his life for immortal souls. It was for such that "it pleased God the Father to bruise him;" and what it was thus to bruise the Lamb of God, we can have little conception of! The Lord did not spare him, but delivered him up for us all. Rom. viii. 32. It was the result of his eternal counsel: "He hath poured out his soul unto death" as the appointed means of our redemption and salvation. Thus David, speaking in the language of prophecy, in reference to the oblation of Christ, says, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." Psalm xxii. 14. The Prophet Daniel had it revealed to him that after threescore and two weeks the Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself. The death of Christ was plainly intimated by Zechariah, chap. xiii. "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." Whenever we think of the sufferings of Christ, we must remember that they were as an oblation: we must see in them Christ bearing our sins, as foretold and appointed. So St. Paul speaks: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." 1 Cor. xv. 3.

2ndly. But Christ's sufferings were not only necessary as a fulfilment of Scripture, they were so *from the nature of things*. There can be no doubt, after what has been said, that the whole plan of redemption is laid open in these sufferings. They declare the righteousness of God; "that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 26. If any say, I do not understand how the innocent should suffer

for the guilty, I answer, The plan of God is declared from Genesis to Revelations, that Christ should take the cup of sufferings, and drink it to the dregs, that he should be made a sin-offering for us. If we cannot receive God's declaration, we must take the consequences: we can receive it only by faith.

You will see, brethren, that if this is the plan and scheme of redemption, it was not possible that the cup should pass, that Christ should not drink it. When he took upon him the work of Redeemer, his holy human nature shrunk from the bitter cup: he "fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:" *i. e.* if it be possible connected with the work I have undertaken. But a holy and righteous government demanded that he should drink it to the dregs: therefore our Saviour added, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." While the whole is a covenant of grace to us, yet it is a covenant of works to Christ—a bitter draught to him. Therefore no wonder he should say, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me:" but it was impossible, because by his soul being made "an offering for sin," salvation was established to sinners.

"Fools make a mock at sin:" the reason is, because they are fools. But God's work cannot be thus overturned: for, as the poet says,

"Die he, or justice must."

It was necessary that God should show his mercy in harmony with his other attributes. It was necessary that he should exhibit his wisdom; that Christ should appear not only "the power of God," but "the wisdom of God." It was necessary to show that sin was so horrible a thing, that nothing less than the death of the Son of God could make expiation for it. It also sets

forth how full and free is the grace of Christ; that all may come and take this salvation, these waters of life, freely. To understand this plan of salvation is so essential, that it is no wonder St. Paul should say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

My dear hearers, I shall soon give in my account;* and I must therefore tell you, that unless you come to God in this way, to receive every thing through Christ, and on account of his sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, you know nothing of religion.

Let us ask ourselves—Are we satisfied with God's plan? with God's people—with his ministers—with his Gospel—with his precepts? God the Father was satisfied—Christ was satisfied: are we satisfied? If we are, it will show itself by our gratitude and thankfulness. We shall remember, as often as we sit down to our meals, that every morsel of bread we break was purchased for us by the sufferings of the Redeemer's soul. Let us proceed to consider,

II. THE EXEMPLARY MODE IN WHICH CHRIST PREPARED FOR HIS SUFFERINGS.

"He fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Here is a very striking example for us whenever we have any thing great to transact. "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." For I have a great work carrying on in the discharge of my priesthood. I am giving myself as a sin-offering! The whole weight of his people's sins, remember, was

* This Sermon was preached about a year before the actual close of Mr. Cecil's ministry.

about to be laid upon Christ. It was in these "days of his flesh" when he "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." Heb. v. 7. These prayers were offered up as a sacerdotal offering: they were an expiatory act. In the other intercessions of our Saviour there was tranquillity, but in the garden and on the cross, during the hidings of his Father's face, they were unutterable. When the mother of Zebedee's children said, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on thy left in thy kingdom, Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"—Now, says our Lord, I have a cup appointed of my Father: I have accepted it; for if my people cannot be saved without my drinking it, I will take it: I have prayed that if it were possible it might pass away from me: but it is not possible; therefore I shall drink it. If there is no other way of salvation for man, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Here is a blessed example set before us!

There is no greater proof of advancement in holiness than when a man possesses a humble, broken, and contrite spirit; ready to bear injuries with meekness. Though our Lord was without sin, yet he bore the contradiction of sinners, and proved, by every act, that he was meek and lowly in heart. When Peter only whispered concerning his sufferings, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee:" our Saviour rejected the insinuation with displeasure, because Peter did not properly weigh the satisfaction to be made by the cross. Peter again was rebuked by his Master when he drew his sword, and struck a servant of the

high priest, and smote off his ear. "Then said Jesus, Put up again thy sword into its place." Man not only is blind, and needs continually correcting, but he is wrong in his spirit. "Put up thy sword!" Go and bear my cross, but do not oppose it. The weapons I appoint "are not carnal, but mighty through God." I could destroy these enemies: but I am going to lay down my life. How otherwise could my Father's will, in sending his Son as a sacrifice, be accomplished? how is his holiness to be set forth? how is the law to be magnified? how can his wisdom be displayed? If I drink not this cup, how are all the prophecies to be fulfilled? how are all the types to be explained? how are my own declarations to be verified? "Put up thy sword!" I will drink this cup, that the sword of justice may be put up into its scabbard: how else shall the song of the redeemed be sung? Rev. v. 9—13. Christianity is the only religion in which the founder made his own death essential. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

"If any man," says Christ, "will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Christ teaches us, by his example, submission to the will of God in the great work of travelling from this world to the next. Though God had one Son without sin, he has no son without suffering. Christ himself was "made perfect through sufferings." They are much mistaken who think that religion will never put them to any cost. Christianity is a mighty scheme, and whoever is about to enter into it, must sit down and count the cost. Every idol must be given up. The man whose religion permits him to retain any idol, has not the religion of the Gospel. We can never know how much religion there is in any profession, till

it is called into exercise. Sufferings manifest, as well as form, a character.

From the subject we have been considering, let us learn three things:—

1st. *To beware of the Socinian error.* This is entirely opposite to the scheme of redemption. If a man is professing Christianity, and not adorning his profession, he is a hypocrite. But Christianity is much more than a moral reformation. It thus might be brought as low as the doctrines of a Seneca at once. Christianity is the religion of a sinner. We are come “to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” The “city of refuge” was but a picture of the refuge provided by God for sinners pursued by the sword of the divine justice. Why were the Israelites directed to look at the “brazen serpent?” God appointed these ordinances to set forth Christ. He has said, “neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” We have to do with a jealous God: he appointed these ordinances of old, and promised his blessing on them: and the Apostle, in showing Christ as the true antitype of all the Old Testament institutions, says—“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.” 1 John v. 6. We must be introduced by One who can plead his own merits. We must drink into the spirit of that woman who said, “If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.” If I want a man to act, I must point out to him an evangelical system to build upon.

There are many truths of Christianity which we must think of with holy reverence, rather than endeavor to pry into, or explain. Spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned; nor can the wisest man, in his

natural state, understand them. The true believer will not allow himself to indulge in reasonings and disputings upon those mysteries in his religion which he cannot fathom. It is sufficient for him to know, in all difficult points—"The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it;" and, that not one word he hath spoken can fall to the ground. We are taught that our Saviour was both God and man; that he had all parts of our human nature except sin. Though innocent, he was tempted and tried. None ever suffered like him. "He fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." We can never have any adequate idea of this prayer of our Lord's. He alone knew the bitterness of that cup he was about to drink, even to the dregs. If there had been any other means possible whereby we might have been saved, but by his death and sufferings, he never had left his Father's kingdom to die for us upon the accursed tree. No other sacrifice could take away sin.

2ndly. *Let us learn to examine the cup of suffering by the light of the cross; and see how we are to receive it from our Lord and Master.* And it is here the Christian understands what others do not. Go and listen to the way in which people talk of the cup of suffering—both the ignorant vulgar, and the learned vulgar; hear them talk!—How ill I am used! How much better I have deserved. And then, the conclusion is, that suffering is the grand evil. I trust, we are better taught. What is trouble? What is pain? What is death? The generality of people seem to have no knowledge of what sin is. Yet, that is the grand evil. Sin has new names given to it. To be profane, is to be "polite;" to be proud, is to have "a proper spirit." Both the grave and the gay make light of sin, and call it "infirmity." To know what sin is, we must

see Jesus taking the cup of suffering and drinking it to the dregs. The sufferings of Christ should lead us to contemplate the dreadful nature of sin, and to fear lest, by indulging it, we should crucify to ourselves the Son of God afresh. The storms of pride, sensuality, covetousness and idleness, require no slight skill in fighting against them; and we shall never fight against them so well, as when we behold the cross of Christ. He has, of his infinite mercy, given us another cup, even "the cup of salvation:" let us take it, "calling upon the name of the Lord."

Are you called to drink of the cup of temptation and desertion? Learn of Christ how to bear it. Our Saviour in his sufferings might justly say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He had never grieved his Father: he was holy and undefiled. But when such poor sinful worms as we are, fall under the hidings of our Father's face, we have no need to ask, Why is this? Our sinful, ungrateful, unfaithful, wandering hearts may answer why. Under ten thousand accusations of conscience, and slighted favors, the question might rather be, Why has he not so forsaken thee as to leave thee without hope? Why has he not withdrawn his providential care, and the supplies of his grace? The only answer is, Because "his mercy endureth forever." When we want the faith of assurance, let us live by the faith of adherence. Christ says, "Learn of me." I took the cup that my Father gave me to drink, that I might, by so doing, sweeten every cup that can be put into the hand of my real disciples, and make every burden light.

Look at the meekness with which Christ reproves his sleeping disciples: "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the

flesh is weak." The weak believer may be ready to say, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." Let such remember, that the battle is not theirs, but God's. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?" Not the Christian soldier, for he is left to purchase neither arms nor armor: all is provided for him; and he has nothing to do but to follow his great Captain.

3rdly. We may learn, that *if Christ felt the need of prayer to prepare him for suffering, how much more must we need it!* Our trials may not be removed, but by prayer we may be comforted, strengthened, and supported under them; so as to be able to say, The Lord ordereth all things well. While it is our duty and privilege, in every time of need, to make our requests known unto God, we must also remember that he has more ways of answering our prayers than one. Let us be content with the answer which he gives, though it should seem contrary to our wishes. Christ has given every believer a plea: let him use it sincerely, earnestly, perseveringly. Hereafter, we shall see that the cup of suffering was our greatest blessing; and admire the pains God hath taken with our froward hearts.

"Give me," said a great mathematician,* "but a place where to fix my fulcrum, and I will move the world. We have a resting-place, while standing on the rock Christ, from whence we may calmly look at heaven and hell, and meet eternity without a fear. Let us be careful to secure a friend in our suffering Saviour. A time is coming, when the doctrine of a crucified Saviour will be more precious to us than thousands of gold and silver. A time is coming, when he who has neglected the salvation of his soul for the

* Archimedes.—ED.

riches, honors, and pleasures of this world, would gladly sell all to purchase an interest in Christ, and his salvation. This subject is the only string which an enlightened mind can find to harp upon; and it is the wisdom of all such never to depart from it.



THE GRAND OBJECT OF FAITH.

And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man!—JOHN xix. 5. [1796.]

WHEN we are shown by St. John, Revelations v. 6—14, “a Lamb as it had been slain,” we are at the same time told of his glorious dignity. When we see this “Man of Sorrows” standing before Pilate, loaded with disgrace and shame, and dumb “as a sheep before her shearers,” we should at the same time remember that we behold the Man who is God’s equal. “Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.” Zech. xiii. 7. It is certain that our Lord considered himself in that point of view, when he stood before Pilate, and said, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.” And the apostle, speaking of Christ, saith, “Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” And it is remarkable that our Lord’s accusation rested upon his claim of being the Son of God, ver. 7. Whenever, therefore, we consider this “Man of Sorrows,” and see how he was “despised and rejected of men,” let us remember that how low soever he stooped, his name is “Emmanuel, God with us:” the Lord Jehovah, in whom is our righteousness and strength.

The infinite dignity of Him who came down from heaven to suffer and to die for man, stamps infinite dignity on all those things that respect Christianity. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God manifested in the flesh." Some may be almost staggered at the view of the God of heaven and earth standing before Pilate as a poor captive, the scorn of the very rabble. Such cavillers must come back to the declaration, "Great is the mystery:" which implies something hidden from our apprehension. But when we consider this Victim as the sinner's Ransom, Isa. liii. 8; Acts xx. 28, we see revealed how "God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Who will pretend to say what are the claims of infinite justice? It is one thing to think of sin as it appears in the eyes of men, and another to contemplate it as it appears in the eyes of a holy God. How is this load of guilt to be taken off? Only through the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ: remission of sin is only through his name. The whole Bible points out that "without shedding of blood, there is no remission." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Isa. xlv. 22. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John i. 7.

To behold God incarnate, as a "Man of Sorrows," and dying as a malefactor, is indeed a strange thing, a stupendous mystery! nor less stupendous mercy!

"A truth so strange, 'twere bold to think it true,
If not far bolder still, to disbelieve!"*

Every thing that respects God and his government must be strange to such a short-sighted creature as

* Young's Night Thoughts—"Christian Triumph."—ED.

man. Should we not rather inquire, like Moses, and say, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight!" An obligation is laid upon us to contemplate the abasement of Christ, and the benefits which result to us from this great event.

But how ought we to behold this "Man of Sorrows?" We should behold him, with *faith, love, and gratitude*. We should behold him with serious attention; fix on him the eye of the mind; see the drops of blood—the thorns—the meek anguish of the atoning Saviour! But especially with the eye of faith; as the SENT of God; as the True Physician; as a Remedy of infinite cost. God puts contempt on all other remedies proposed by man, but sets his seal to his own. To all who receive it, it becomes the power of God unto salvation. We are called to embrace these truths as our only comfort, as well as our everlasting security.

Again; we should behold him, *as our righteousness and strength*. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." To the plague of the heart, the Lamb of God is the remedy. We should behold him, while we may, as a SAVIOUR: we cannot look at him, as such, when life's opportunity is over. We should now plead the merit of his blood.

Again; we should behold him as the *Judge of the world*; and ourselves before his judgment seat, having no hope but by being in favor with him who is appointed to be our judge: for, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." Rev. i. 7.

What is a spiritual man? One whose ear is awakened to hear what God says, whose conscience is tender, whose eyes are open to behold a crucified Saviour, whose heart is open to receive him; and who, instead

of fleeing from God, like Adam, is enabled to seek him in the way he has appointed.

The grand peculiarity of Revelation is Redemption: the whole of Scripture consists in calling the attention of a lost world to behold a Vicarious Sacrifice. This was the subject of the types. God said to Moses, "I will meet with the children of Israel." As though he had said, We have been awfully separated!—but it must be in my appointed way. "Thou shalt offer upon the altar two lambs of the first year, day by day, continually . . . This shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord . . . and there will I meet with the children of Israel." See Heb. x., which shows that Christ is the substance of all the types. We are God's witnesses of his grace and favor; not to Jews only, but also to Gentiles.

Is sin a separating thing between the sinner and God? Faith lays its hand on the head of the "scape-goat:" it pleads the Great Sacrifice of God's own appointing: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This excites love: "We love him because he first loved us." This is the doctrine by which a Christian overcometh the world. "These are they," says St. John, "who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb:" *i. e.* they are conquerors! What is the world's hero in comparison with the silent, constant, unfainting Christian, whose eye is fixed on Christ, and who by faith is overcoming the world? He is the true hero! The whole world is one grand impertinence to him who has beheld Jesus Christ by the eye of faith.

I exhort all seriously to consider the greatness of their responsibility in sitting under the sound of the

Gospel, and what will be their condemnation if they reject it. "This is the condemnation," *i. e.* this is emphatically the condemnation—"that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." It will be a most painful task indeed, to spend eternity in recollecting that you perished with this great atonement and sacrifice before your eyes! This will be the "worm that never dieth." I shall be a witness against you: I shall be a witness that Christ was held forth to you as the Great Foundation Stone on which you might build for eternity. Think seriously of your responsibility. If Christ should prove to you only "a stone of stumbling," remember he has been set before you as God's appointed Remedy. I call upon you to be reconciled to God! Consider what must be the guilt of neglecting so great salvation! Beware of stumbling at this "stumbling-stone;" at this mystery! Rather, let us adore the grace, that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son:" let us take the benefit of this mystery; and adore the wonderful mercy displayed to lost man. You, who have felt your ruin, come and behold him lifted up for you, as the "brazen serpent" in the wilderness; and fix on him the eye of faith!

If any are under sorrow, guilt, temptation, fear of death—"Behold the Man!" If weary in the race you run—if desirous to obtain the mind that was in Christ—still, "behold the Man!" Temptations will assault: but you are ever to be looking to this great object of faith. "In the midst of the throne there stood a Lamb as it had been slain"—stood, to be admired by heaven and earth, and as the Remedy appointed, and approved of God:

"For us he lived, for us he died."

To all who have been praying for ability to meditate with profit on this great subject, the text affords encouragement and direction—"Behold the Man!" "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed," *i. e.* transformed, by looking, and in looking, "into the same image, from glory to glory."

THE CROSS.

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.—LUKE XIV. 27. [1803.]

AT this season of the year, our Church calls its members particularly to attend to the passion of our Lord. It seems to say, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The sentiment of our Lord as expressed in the text, and the sentiment of this world, is so opposed, that even the disciples "understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying."

Brethren! If this appointed cross is our appointed remedy, let us not wish to receive the doctrine in a sophisticated manner. What will it avail to take parts only? therefore take it up cordially. Christ's cross truly enriches and distinguishes the true disciple.

"There went," we are told, "great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. . And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, can-

not be my disciple." This does not mean literally to hate ; but it is a manner of speaking peculiar to the Scriptures, when one thing is to be held in subordination to another. It is, therefore, as though our Saviour had said, You may follow me because of the loaves and fishes, or through curiosity,—but I will tell you how a man must be my disciple. He must enter into the constitution of my kingdom : he must enter into the spirit and design of it ; a man must deny himself. Self has usurped dominion over us : it has dethroned God : we seek our own pleasure, and pursue our own object. But if we would be Christ's disciples, this idol must be brought down ; we must mortify the deeds of the body : whatever our crosses are, they must be taken up. There must be a cordial reception of the doctrine of the cross : a conformity to Christ's death ; and therefore, saith our Saviour in the text, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." To be true disciples of Christ, we must be willing to do, or suffer, whatever is his will. We are engaged in a service that will often cost dear to flesh and blood : but the Christian is a soldier, and he must fight. He never tempts danger ; but when called to meet it in the way of duty, he never shrinks from it : but counts it his honor to suffer in the cause of God.

There are some things that may be considered as not included in the sense of these words. Our Lord does not call for a "voluntary humility : " for this may be found where there is no circumcision of heart. Such things may be found in the history of the Heathens and Brahmins : such was the religion of the Pharisees, and such are the contrivances of the Church of Rome. Things may have a splendid appearance : but if the root and principle be examined, they may be found false. So also, any unscriptural austerity, any

thing concerning which it may be said, "Who hath required this at your hands?" must not be called that self-denial, and taking up of the cross, to which the text refers. For this is "will-worship." "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." Religion has crosses enough of its own to carry; there is no occasion to invent one. Superstitious appendages make religion appear unamiable, to say the least.

To enter into the spirit of the text, requires a gracious nature, inclined to fulfil the will of God. It is a gracious determination against corruptions. Taking up the cross, is bearing the yoke of Christ. It is living in the world as Christ lived; and as preserved by the grace of Him, "who left us an example, that we should follow his steps." See St. Paul's view of the subject: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." It is the Spirit of the Lord producing a new creature; enlightening the understanding to see what the world is; and also what the flesh would be, if unmortified; enabling the soul to soar above the world; and drawing up the affections to fix on things above.

Oh, when that day comes that will prove every man's work by fire, how much profession will be burnt up, which now makes a very fair show! How few are there, comparatively, who are disposed to take up that cross to which Peter objected at first, but which afterwards he so cordially took up! "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." 1 Peter iv. 1.

By the expression, "take up his cross," is meant the appointed dispensation, or trial, that lies in a Christian's way to the kingdom of Christ, whatever it is. The Christian will find he has a daily cross to take up. He must not say, Hitherto will I go, and no farther; but he must count the cost; he must draw the sword, and throw away the scabbard, if he would be Christ's disciple. Now, if a man will not come to this point,—if he will "save his life," *i. e.* if he will enjoy it in the way the world expects, saying, Tell me not of the cross, of persecutions, of giving up present things, for I have said to my soul, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" take thy fill of earthly delights; make the most of this life:—such a man cannot be Christ's disciple. He may be the disciple of some celebrated preacher; he may be the disciple of some favorite religion; but a man will not forsake all, till there has been the holy breath, spoken of in Ezekiel xxxvii. 9.

See the young man in the Gospel: he felt that too much was demanded of him. He had not principle to come up to the demand. But when a man is taught by the Holy Spirit, he will not think any thing too much. Like the apostle, he will count all things but dung and dross in comparison of Christ. And the actually being brought to this, in heart and spirit, is the distinguishing point between one class of professors and another.

Certain false characters will object, and say, Where are such self-denying persons as these to be found? But God has never left himself without witness. His grace is sufficient to enable us to do what is required. Does not the Bible say, that Enoch walked with God? that Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went? that Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter? Will any one object, and say, But

these were very peculiar characters! rather say, They were a part of a “peculiar people, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood.” See Heb. xi. We shall find martyrs also, living martyrs; retiring Christians, who shut their doors about them, and, in private prayer, hold communion with their Father in heaven. One reason why human nature does not love prayer, is because it requires a man to enter into his chamber, and shut his door about him: there is no splendor in it. Men cannot see what he is doing.

With respect to the dispensation of trial lying before a real Christian, which if he would be Christ’s disciple he must take up, it partly results from the nature of things, and it is partly a dispensation from God, for wise ends.

1st. *It partly results from the nature of things.* For if a Christian is to pass through the world, which “lieth in wickedness,” will it not necessarily result, that he must meet with trials? Will there not be persecutions—snares? Will he not be interrupted, and vexed, with its follies? And will he not be called upon to cast down imaginations which, in the world, go under the name of wisdom? And besides all this, there is the body of sin and death, called, “the flesh.” How have the mighty been harassed by this enemy! Witness David and Paul; see Rom. vii. And further, the Christian has to combat the roaring lion, who will often “transform himself into an angel of light.” But the trial, whatever Satan may intend, proves a means of purifying the Christian. There is no indulgence granted to any man, to excuse him from taking it up. The true disciple does not stand to inquire what sort of cross it is, or if he can lay it aside; but he says, I must take it up. The language of a true disciple is, “Let us go, that we may die with him:” or like that of St.

Paul, "That I may know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

Trouble does not arise out of the dust. It is, 2ndly, *a dispensation from God for wise ends*; which is a further reason why we should take it up, and bear it patiently. How did Christ bear his cross? He said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." He drank the bitter cup, even to the dregs, when he laid down his life for us; and left us an example how to bear suffering. What did Abel do, under the persecutions of Cain? What was the conduct of Noah, amidst the scoffs of an ungodly generation? Who were they, that wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, of whom the world was not worthy? Why truly, all these, seeing they were compassed about with trials and difficulties, took up their cross, and bore it patiently. Thus they were added to the great cloud of witnesses, who laid aside every weight, looking unto Jesus, and having "respect to the recompence of reward."

The Christian is also called to take up the yoke of his station; the cross of his dispensation. There are those who spurn at bearing any cross: who despise the idea of having the spirit of a little child; and of saying, in the spirit of meekness, The yoke that my heavenly Father puts upon me, shall I not bear it? Is it not the Lord's yoke? If it bear hard, yet it is for my good: if it bear hard upon my corrupt nature, it is a proof it comes from Christ; that it is the true medicine; that it is the way in which God circumcises the foreskin of my heart. If it makes me nothing, that is the design of the trial. I am to be willing to endure my cross, as Christ did his.

It is a common remark, how easily we imitate the characters we admire! It is an evidence that we belong to Christ, when we tread in his steps. Thus, if it pleases God to make us pass through pain and difficulty,—if we are in circumstances, where it is impossible we can do any thing more than patiently to bear and weather suffering, yielding to what we have to undergo in a submissive spirit,—this is being his disciples, and following him, by taking up our cross. Temptation may lead even a Christian to be angry; but Christ, in his example and precepts, teaches us to be patient.

It is a good touchstone for a man to try his own heart by, whether he likes all parts of the Bible: whether he wishes any part altered. There must be something amiss if we do not like to take the whole. Some people, in order to get rid of difficulties, will set aside many parts of Scripture. This truth is repeated by three evangelists, because it should not be set aside. Still, though it is thus recorded, the empty, degraded, heart of man will grasp the world, till a Divine breath has been breathed into it. A sincere Christian will say, I entirely approve the rule; but, at the same time, I condemn myself; for I have been trembling lest I should have been deceiving myself; I feel how disposed I am to shun the cross.

Are you a soldier, really fighting the battles within, as well as without? Then you have much to do, but nothing to fear. Christ looks at the principle: there must be that: but “he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” If a soldier were hearty in his desire to fight, would his general cast him off when prevented by sickness? Thanks be to God, He is not a hard master. Aim at the greatest things in Christ’s strength, and you shall obtain more than you expect. When the battle is the hottest, look up to your

great Captain. Be not discouraged at what flesh and blood may suggest, but say, "In God I have put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." Psa. lvi. 4.

If a man is willing to take up his cross—if he is ready to set lightly by, and consider as secondary, the things of this life rather than deny Christ, or give up one truth of the Gospel, he shall be Christ's disciple. If he gives up the present for the eternal, he will lay out his talent to the best interest. God demands nothing of a Christian but with a design to give him something better. "He shall receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." For, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." While a man seems to give up, and lose every thing, for a moment, for Christ's sake, he gains heaven and eternity in the end. What is the present life? It is but a dream! Shall I attempt to balance it against that which is to come? If any man is threatened with persecution for Christ's sake, let him remember, that Christ will not suffer any one to be a loser for his sake. The husbandman is not throwing his grain away, when he casts it into the ground, and it seems to die. He shall have it again with interest. If a man loses his life, says Christ, "for my sake, he shall find it:" he shall find a life worth a thousand, in the benefits of my salvation, and eternal life. No man has such true ambition as a Christian: no man puts out his property to such good interest. Yet no man will adopt the sentiment of the text, but he in whose heart the Spirit of God dwells.

If this is the case, do you not see how those persons are deceived who say, It is enough to have a sound creed! It is a sad fallacy to suppose that Christianity

consists in merely having right and clear views of truth. Whereas, it appeals to the heart, to the principle. A dead man may have a perfect form, but he has lost the animating principle of life. Some men will hear the truth, acknowledge the truth, and say, Hail, Master! and yet remain under the influence of sin and Satan.

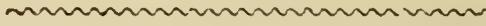
Some take up the subject doctrinally: and say, "Being justified by faith," we have nothing more to do. But, is there nothing to do in order to evidence this faith? What! can the text mean, Christ has borne the cross for me; and therefore I need not take up my cross!—I believe there is more dishonesty in this, than such persons are apt to believe. It seems impossible that a man can read through the Scriptures, and not see that while a Christian has the cross for his object, he has the sceptre for his government. He is to bring forth fruit. Many volumes have been written upon casuistry; but the best casuist is an upright heart. It is the existence of evil lusts and passions that make men call for casuists. There cannot be too much honor put on the doctrine of faith in Christ: but remember, it is Christ himself who has said in the text, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple:" and a religion short of this is not the religion of Christ. Let us call no man master, while the Master himself has thus plainly spoken.

A wise apocryphal writer says, "My son, if thou wilt serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation." St. Peter expresses the same idea in other words: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." I would therefore say to young Christians, Be prepared; for there will be an attack.

I do not say that you should be discouraged, but prepared: for I can tell you, and experience has proved it, that the yoke of Christ is easy. A supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ is promised to the true disciple; and Christ enables him to find his yoke far more easy than Satan's. With Christ's yoke, we may sleep securely. The consolations of God are not small; and when we come to die, death will be gain.

To elder Christians let me say: You need not that I should insist on the truth of this declaration. You have an evidence in your own breast. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ." Consider, if there is no cross there will be no crown: therefore, take it up cheerfully. You are coming, this day, to the table of the Lord, that you may receive strength to go through your work in the week. A martyr, who was solicited to act unworthily, simply replied, "I am a Christian; I am a Christian!"—That is enough. Men may object against your principles; for how widely do the maxims of Christ differ from the maxims of the world! and, in proportion as we are Christ's disciples, we shall observe the one, and condemn the other. But consider the sanction given to the doctrine of the cross by Christ himself! How can you expect to meet the objections of a blind world? Much less, can you meet their taste. God, himself, when he came down and assumed our nature, could not please the world; nor will the Church, if she grows like him. The Christian's business is to please his Master. Look at the woman with the box of ointment: her heart was sound and entire; but she gave offence. Our Lord took up her case and said, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto

you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Mark xiv. 6—9.



VICTORY ACHIEVED BY CHRIST'S DEATH.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.—ISA. liii. 12. [1807.]

THERE can be no doubt among Christians as to the application of this Scripture to Christ. We see in him "a Man of Sorrows," and yet one who has obtained the greatest victory and conquest. Respecting this point, we are not likely to say, "I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" If there is any difficulty in the text, let us remember that we must never attempt to reason about Divine truths. There may be important reasons that we are not able to comprehend. We must bow to truth: but truth will never bow to us.

I shall take up the subject as it appears in its different aspects.

1st. Let us consider the death of Christ *as to its appointment of God*. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." Now if we are in a right state of mind, we shall only ask this—Has God appointed that Christ should become a sacrifice for us, or not? If he has spoken, that is enough.

In the beginning God appointed sacrifices: that was enough. He appointed Noah to build an ark: that was enough. He commanded Moses to set up a serpent of brass upon a pole, and by Moses he preached

to the Israelites, concerning the way they were to be healed by looking at the brazen serpent: that was enough. Because it was God's ordinance, it became efficient for the purpose. Thus it was said to Naaman, "Go, and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean:" this was the appointment of God; and it was enough. There may be infinite reasons for things, which we neither know nor can comprehend.

2ndly. Let us look at the subject, *with regard to the identity of God's proposal of salvation*. This was not an incidental thing, but it was promised in paradise when man fell. The same dispensation of recovery was made there, as I have to preach to you to-day. All the sacrifices and ceremonies under the law set forth the very same plan. We have to-day, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, a picture of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

3rdly. We have *the express declaration of God to this truth, made by his own mouth, by his word, and by his ministers*. "Behold," says Christ, "we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death; and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again." Mark x. 33, 34.

Peter rejected the idea of this, till the Spirit came and taught him its necessity: after which he received the doctrine, and preached it boldly. How did St. Paul triumph in the cross of Christ as the power of God, and the wisdom of God!

4thly. We learn *the absolute necessity of a sinner's acceptance of this truth, in order that he may be saved*.

Men must receive it, or perish. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Therefore said Christ, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature ;" and leave the event with me. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16. We see therefore the necessity there is for accepting the Gospel. Man's eternal salvation is at stake on this alternative.

5thly. We may notice *the actual seal that God hath set to his own truth concerning the way of salvation.* It is in this way only, namely, by faith in a crucified Saviour, that God divides the spoil with the strong. He promises to the Messiah, "he shall see his seed ; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied : by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many ; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." When should these things take place ? When he "poured out his soul unto death ; and was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

6thly. Consider *the allusion here made to the strong dividing the spoil.* Compare this with Luke xi. 21, 22. Our Saviour had been casting out devils : "But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation ; and a house divided against itself, falleth : and if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand ? When a

strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." Is there need of argument to show that Satan is leading thousands of souls captive at his will; great men, learned men; sometimes even such as are called men of virtue? What a state of captivity do we see! what blindness! Men are tied and bound by one chain or another! A man cannot look into his own breast—if he be an enlightened man—without crying out, "Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" St. Matthew gives our Saviour's words thus: "Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house."

History, as well as Scripture, proves that, much as man prides himself on being a rational creature, he is nevertheless a captive. So St. Paul speaks to Timothy: "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil who are taken captive by him at his will." What are the blandishments of the world, pleasure, wealth, fame, but so many fetters by which man is bound, as with chains of iron?

It is no uncommon thing to hear the captive boast of his freedom. "We were never in bondage to any man," said the Jews. But our Lord replied, "He that committeth sin is the servant of sin." Every man is a slave till Christ has set him free, by setting up his kingdom in his heart. What has man ever invented, with all his wisdom, that can emancipate the slave of sin?

Christ delivers his people by price, and by power. "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." And when the price was paid, and he became a ransom for many, he spake as it might be expected he would speak—"It is finished." He then manifested his power: he burst the bonds of death, and rose triumphant over the grave.

Man is such a captive that not only Satan enslaves him, but also the corruptions of his own heart keep him tied and bound, as with chains. He stands in a state of thralldom. Even life, fond as men are of it, yet from its perils, and dangers, and snares, it keeps a man under a sense of slavery. The fear of death holds him captive. Heb. ii. 15.

The god of this world must be cast out from his usurped dominion. He has made the sinner's heart like that of leviathan, spoken of in the book of Job: "His heart is as firm as a stone." While the case remains thus, nothing can be done for him. Wherever Satan reigns and rules, there is his kingdom. A man may talk of freedom, while he is a slave: but a man's talking of riches will not make him rich. I repeat, Wherever Satan reigns and rules, there is his kingdom. Let us abide by this. Let us take care we do not stop at the name, the mere shadow and form of Christianity, instead of the substance. A principle must be fixed within; and then it will show itself in the fruits of righteousness.

Take the case of your own children. Can you help them when they are children of Belial; when Satan rules in their hearts, and leads them captive; while they are wandering like the prodigal, and desiring to be fed with husks? You can do nothing for them till they have a disposition to return to a right and teachable spirit. The case is the same with your own souls.

You must return to God: you must throw off Satan's yoke: you must come to Christ and submit to his sceptre: you must acknowledge his power to deliver you from your bondage to sin and Satan; and from the condemnation of the law. Rom. viii. 1.

The miserable subterfuges of philosophers and poets show that there was no release, or relief, till One came from above. He that redeemed man can alone deliver him. He can set him free from the power of Satan, the power of sin, and the power of death. Man needs One to bring him back to his Father: he needs One to make reconciliation. And he that feels not his need of such a Deliverer, is "dead in trespasses and sins." To him that does feel it, and asks after the Deliverer, the Bible points him out. "He shall divide the spoil with the strong." "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." The disorder of human nature is much worse than we suppose, and the Remedy is much greater.

You would be glad to hear of the mighty spoiler, who is now conquering in the world, being convinced of his sins. But he is fast bound. You will say, Is the case then altogether desperate? By no means—while the text remains a truth, that Christ shall "divide the spoil with the strong," whoever is enabled, by faith, to take hold of the righteousness of Christ, shall be too strong for the world, the flesh, and the devil. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Here we see the actual effects of Christ's death:

Men have been puzzled, even from the earliest ages of Christianity, to account for the effects which have taken place under its influence. But they are produced by that mighty power of God who raised up Christ from the dead, and not through any minister's

persuasion: not from following a sect; not from the thunder and earthquake of legal threatenings, but the "still small voice" of the Gospel. This is far from being the doctrine of the New Testament only: the whole Bible speaks the same. See the voice of prophecy, Isa. lxi. 1. The Gospel is the voice of Christ to the thirsty, the needy, the captive; saying, "Come to me:" "Learn of me!" There is the mighty Spirit, who takes possession of the heart; the promise of Christ to his Church. And thus the spoil is divided.

Let us conclude by bringing this matter home to our own hearts; for every doctrine has its corresponding duties: every privilege has its corresponding effect.

1st. We see every thing turns on this point—*That God gave his Son for us, who hath poured out his soul unto death.* Now, says Christ, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." You must come in the same self-denying way which I have set before you as an example. But nature rages at this: we abhor the vale of tears: Golgotha shocks us: a crucified Saviour always was a stumbling-block. Still, the cup is held out for us to drink.

2ndly. *Let us remember our privileges.* It is not by might nor by power, but by quietness and confidence that is to be our strength. Thus we shall be enabled to do the whole will of God. "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." The real witness to this truth is the man of faith and love. As to Antinomians and hypocrites, the difference is as great as between brass and gold! The exertion of human power pleases our vanity: but to be nothing,—to be assured that whatever is the measure of the stature to which any Christian attains, it is furnished out of the fulness of Christ,—this was what St. Paul

knew, and felt, when he said, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." 1 Cor. ii. 23, 24. That is, we preach the whole priestly and kingly work of Christ. Every fatal error is an error of the heart. "We will not have this man to reign over us."

Let us this day approach the table of the Lord, praying that every imagination may be cast down which opposes itself to the rule of Christ in our hearts, and every thought be brought into obedience to his death; receiving the doctrine of the cross with the simplicity of faith, and looking to Christ as the precious Cornerstone, on which we may safely build for eternity. That this may be your happy case, and mine, God of his infinite mercy grant, for Christ's sake!



MARY AT THE SEPULCHRE.

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre.—JOHN XX. 11. [1807.]

God has not only given us doctrines and precepts in his Word, but, in condescension to our weakness, has illustrated these doctrines, and exemplified these precepts, by facts. For instance, we read of "faith which worketh by love," but in the history before us we may see the thing exemplified. I need no picture of Mary Magdalene, or any other saint; I want no aid to my conceptions from any thing studied by an artist; the life is before me: I see the principle itself, actually and visibly in exercise. We have heard a sol-

itary character well worthy our consideration. She had much forgiven, and our Lord declares she loved much; we find her keeping close to Jesus, seeming to say with Ruth—"Where thou goest, I will go." Let us look further into this subject, and endeavor to draw instruction from it.

I shall from this passage, discourse only on one proposition; and, afterwards, make two remarks on that proposition. The proposition is, that GOD WILL PUT SINGULAR HONOR UPON SOLITARY FAITH.

Mary Magdalene not only attended constantly on our Lord's teaching, but she also ministered to him of her substance. She followed him to the cross: she watched him there; and, as St. Luke informs us, returned after his crucifixion and burial, and prepared spices and ointments, intending to embalm the body of Jesus. She waited through the Sabbath, no doubt with her heart full; and, early, while it was yet dark, on the first day of the week, she rose and directed her steps to his grave: proving the truth of those words, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Men need not tell us what it is to love; their conduct will demonstrate it. Such was the strength of Mary's affection, that it bore her above all fear. The sepulchres of the Jews were generally situated at some distance from the city. Regardless, however, of the danger to which she exposed herself, she went determinedly forth, before it was light—to a place particularly gloomy; to a sepulchre guarded by Roman soldiers—that she might find, in the place of the dead, the body of her Lord. Finding the stone taken away from the sepulchre, and the body of Jesus not there, she ran to tell his disciples; "and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." The

disciples come, and examine the sepulchre, and one of them is convinced of the fact of our Lord's resurrection; ver. 8. Peter seems at first to have doubted: "for as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home." Moved by stronger affection, Mary remains behind—fixed, as it were, to the spot where He whom her soul loved had lain. "Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre." As though she had said, He whom my soul loveth is crucified; I cannot go from the place where they laid him. The disciples may go home, and seek comfort and relief from their sorrow; but, as for me, the very grave of my Lord is dear to me: and since I know not where they have laid him, here would I stand weeping, regardless of all besides. Little indeed did she think how near her beloved Master was! So near, that Jesus saith unto her, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master."

This is a fine and exquisitely drawn picture of the feelings and frame of Mary's mind. And I am now to show that SINGULAR HONOR IS RESERVED FOR SOLITARY FAITH.

Observe, when Mary came to the sepulchre, the stone that had closed the mouth of it was "taken away." Thus, there was one impediment removed, in order to her entering. My dear hearers, learn hence, not to hesitate because of difficulties: when God sets before you the way of life, let nothing discourage or daunt you.

Go on ; depend upon it, he will go before you, and make your way plain. The stone you see standing in the way, shall be removed. God is equally powerful to overthrow or to remove obstacles. "He openeth and no man shutteth : and shutteth and no man openeth." I can do nothing, said Balaam, to the King of the Moabites ; you sent for me to curse this people, but God hath blessed them. He has opened the way, and I cannot close it up. "The shout of a king is among them : " they must prosper, and "I cannot reverse it."

The first impediment being removed, "she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." Thus was Mary honored in being the first to convey to the disciples the fact of our Lord's resurrection. The gracious heart may mistake the appearance of things ; for so did Mary. Forgetting the prophecy which said that Jesus should rise on the third day, and missing him from the place where he had been laid, she runs and says, "They have taken away the Lord !" But, though "weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning."

Honor was again put upon Mary by the salutation of the angelic messengers. While remaining alone, weeping, (after the disciples were gone away,) "she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain." For "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ?"—Afterwards, as we learn from the 14th verse, she was further honored by having the first sight of, and inter-

view with, our Lord himself, after his resurrection. Saint Mark also informs us that, "when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene." What his ear, and his eye, alone had seen and heard, he would have recorded to the end of the world. Thus she is exhibited to us as a memorial of the peculiar loving-kindness of God: and happy are they who, possessing her simple faith, and fervent love, are enjoying special manifestations, and conspicuous marks, of the Divine favor! For, what are all the splendid exhibitions which the world presents to our attention? What are its monuments compared with this? What are all the grand sights, either of ingenuity or beauty, after which people so eagerly run? Show me such a sight as Mary standing, weeping, at the sepulchre! Such a monument as this of humility, patience, love, and faith, set up in the Christian Church, infinitely surpasses, in real grandeur, and worth, all the most splendid monuments of worldly greatness and distinction.

You see then, my dear hearers, that God will put singular honor upon solitary faith—upon retiring humility—upon sincere and simple manifestations of love to the Saviour, flowing from a penitent and believing heart. Therefore let man put his trust in God, however deserted and desolate he may be; yea, though he be left alone "as a sparrow upon the house-top," yet let him not give way to dejection; let him cast his burden upon the Lord. Let him leave God to open his way: let him make his difficulties his arguments for casting his care upon him; and he may depend upon it, that he who has promised to be with his people when passing through the waters, and through the fire, will perform what he has promised, although for a time he may seem to turn his face away. If he delay his appearing,

the disciple must still believingly stand and wait. Mary, though she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre, saw not her Lord; but though now disappointed, she shall see him. Her solitary faith shall be thus honored; she shall have the first personal manifestation after his resurrection; she shall be the first witness of this most important and illustrious fact, as well as the first messenger of it to his disciples; and she shall stand as a monument to all succeeding generations of the blessedness of those who put their trust in the Lord.

The two remarks which I shall make upon this proposition, thus opened, are these: we should learn from the passage before us,

1. *The nature of Divine grace in its operation on the heart.*

2. *That God usually matures, and, in a sense, perfects his work in his people by means of a variety of trials, unto the appointed triumphs of faith.*

1. *Let us learn the nature of Divine grace, or the holy influence from above on the human heart.* This Divine and holy influence not only enlightens the understanding, so that a person, who is the subject of it, learns to set the highest value upon those things which once appeared to him to possess no value at all: but it so draws the will and affections, yea, the whole heart of a man, that he seems ready to say with the Apostle, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;" I am prepared to suffer the loss of all things, and to account them as dross that I may win Christ. Such a determined bent of the will and affections, an heart thus immovably fixed upon distant objects, brought nigh by faith, and which a man feels he has a real perception and enjoyment of—all this is properly and peculiarly the work

of Divine grace. Nature never did and never will produce any thing like it: it is something which is above nature; it is a holy, heavenly, and powerfully operative, though a mysterious, principle.

Does any one present ask, How can God work upon my spirit? I would ask such an one in return, What is spirit? Do you know, or have you any idea what spirit is? But, indeed, all metaphysical and philosophical questions on such subjects are mere impertinence. Did not our Lord, when discoursing on the nature of regeneration, show that though we cannot comprehend the nature or philosophy of it, still it is the effect of a great and mighty agency? You cannot, as our Lord said, understand concerning the winds, "whence they come and whither they go;" but you can see their effects, in the destruction of buildings, in the uprooting of trees, in the calamities of shipwrecks; so, in relation to our present subject, we are not to inquire into the hidden mysteries, and causes, and modes of the Divine operations; but we are to attend to the palpable facts and results which are, from time to time, presented to us. Here is a poor woman, once under the power of Satan, bodily as well as spiritually,—yet under the influence of Divine grace, you behold her passing through the darkness, and defying all the dangers of the way, in search of a scorned and crucified Saviour; bringing with her spices to anoint his body, in order to manifest, to the utmost of her power, her attachment to him whom, though crucified and scorned, her soul loved. This power of Divine grace is seen not only in Mary Magdalene, but in all who are made partakers of her spirit. You will find it, through a gloomy night, notwithstanding all difficulties and hazards, bringing its best gifts to Christ, and setting the highest value on the smallest tokens of his favor. Divine grace will always

delight in the place of the Saviour's presence ; his foot has trod there : that is enough. It will much rather avoid spectators than court them. Its most glorious conflicts shine brightest when no eye is upon it but that of God ; its sweetest smile is in solitude ; yea, and when wrapped in the gloom of affliction, it can sing the song of joy. Amidst bereavements, and under desertion, it will say, O Lord, thou seest and thou knowest how solitary, how desolate, how disconsolate my heart is ; and how incapable I am of comfort. I would fain try if there be any possibility of finding "Him whom my soul loveth ;" I would look and look again, and wait, till it shall please the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort to give me, if it were only a spark of light and comfort, some signal of his favor, some token of his love ; which, how small soever, shall satisfy me more, unspeakably more, than the increase of the worlding's corn and wine shall satisfy him.

No doubt those excellent characters who in times of persecution laid down their lives for the Gospel's sake, proceeded upon this very principle. It was Divine grace in exercise ; the spirit of patience, the spirit of hope, essentially the same spirit and principle of faith which influenced Mary when she sought the body of her Lord, and waited at the sepulchre while it was yet dark. Could deserts and prisons speak, they would bear testimony to those whose language was, "Tell me where I may find Him whom my soul loveth." When banished, when shut up in noxious and dark dungeons, they pined away their lives,—now scoffed at, and now tormented,—they were supported by the same gracious influence in the soul ; nothing could separate them from communion with their Lord : nothing short of this could yield them effectual succor and consolation.

Now this is Divine grace in operation; this is God working in the soul; this is the exercise of a principle implanted there by himself. The possession of this marks the saint; it is the operation of God the Holy Spirit. This is the vital, the real part of religion; without this there is no habitual intercourse kept up with heaven. See 1 John i. 3. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Whatever be the conviction of the conscience, or the light of the understanding, without this principle, a man's heart is on the earth; the world is his portion: and what must be the end of such a man?

It is, no doubt, much more easy to discourse upon this subject than to go and enter into the practice and experience of it, than to maintain an intercourse with God by secret prayer, to exercise submission in trials and conflicts, to take up the cross daily and to carry it, and, by faith and patience, to be a follower of them who through faith and patience now inherit the promises. I repeat, it is unspeakably more easy to speak upon the subject than to proceed experimentally and practically in this matter. Nevertheless, I am bound to declare, whether I refer to you, my dear hearers, or to myself, that this Divine principle, this experimental and practical course of holiness, this heavenly intercourse, must be yours and mine, or we shall finally lose the crown. A fair profession may secure the reputation for religion, but it is this personal experience and exercise of it that can, alone, maintain its life; nor can these do it without the constant influence of the Spirit of life; which must be earnestly sought, and carefully cherished in the heart. Without this real essential principle of heavenly life, this principle of grace in the soul, it may be asked, what is our religion but a mere form? Let me beseech you ever to re-

member, that it is God himself who first kindles and raises the flame of vital piety in the believer's breast, and it is God that maintains the celestial fire on the altar of the penitent heart. It is God who will meet the exercise of this principle of grace and faith with his blessing, and put honor upon it, because it is a Divine principle, which, as I have already shown, will flourish in the simple mind in solitude and in desertion. It will surmount the most formidable obstacles, and overcome the most powerful enemies that may obstruct its progress.

Be not discouraged, then, because many and great impediments lie in your path. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might: commit your way unto him, and he will make your way perfect. Seek your Saviour, and your Saviour shall prepare your path before you. Thus did Mary, and she found her strength perfected in weakness; her Lord made her to triumph over every trial and difficulty. He put honor upon her solitary faith; and he has crowned her not only with temporal but with everlasting honor also.

I cannot but think that God had a peculiar design in ordaining the record of facts of this kind in the Scripture. It is in the weakness and feebleness of human nature that God often manifests his power. Who is it that we find first at the sepulchre? Is it the sanguine Peter? the affectionate John and his brother James, the sons of thunder? No! it was a solitary woman! St. Mark, indeed, records another Mary who accompanied her; but St. John seems to look upon Mary Magdalene as so much the leader, that he scarcely thinks it necessary to mention the other. Satan made an attack on the weaker sex, and succeeded fatally. Christ seems to have determined to magnify his strength and grace in their weakness: and has, per-

haps, therefore presented us (not only in the Bible, but in the history of his Church), with examples of women who by faith “received their dead raised to life again;” and of others who were “tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.” Grace then is most distinguished, when nature comes least to its aid.

Nor is it improper to allude to facts of our own day. Instances might be brought forward in which God has enabled the weaker sex to stand up with holy resolution, and as living martyrs to glorify his strength in their weakness. Let us admire this grace. Let women particularly notice it, and remember that if they have the Lord for their helper, they need not fear any thing. If he offers himself to them as their strength, comforter, and salvation, and tells them that *his strength is made perfect in weakness*, let them not only earnestly seek, but confidently expect it. Let them rely upon it in extremities; and they shall assuredly find, as Mary did here, that God will honor their simple and solitary faith with singular support. It was his good pleasure that this gracious woman should take these painful steps to the sepulchre, that she might be led, through fears, to triumph; which leads me to remark,

2. *That God usually matures, and, in a sense, perfects his work in his people, by means of a variety of trials unto the appointed triumphs of faith; or, in other words, it is the way of the Lord, in the operations of his grace, to proceed from obscurity to certainty, in leading his people through trials unto triumphs.*

And here let me here observe, that we are not unlike, in this respect, to the king of old who desired to learn geometry; but who, disliking the tedious process

necessary in order to be a geometrician, requested to be put into possession of the science by a shorter and less difficult method. But he was told, there was no royal way to geometry. So, I know of no royal way to religion: we must pass through the process.

“The way the Holy Prophets went,”

is the way which we must tread. Martyrdom, indeed, may not be our lot; but tribulations and trials certainly await us. They are the ordained means for our purification. We cannot enter into heaven without passing through the furnace which is necessary to refine us from our dross. Affliction is this furnace. But let me say to the tried and afflicted disciple, Fear not, for when thou art tried, thou shalt “come forth as gold.” The heart of a godly man may mistake appearances while the Lord is thus working, “sitting as the purifier of silver.” He may cry out, during the process, as Jacob did of old, “All these things are against me!” when, perhaps, every circumstance may be in his favor; for it is certainly true that “all things work together for good to them that love God.”

Thus it was with her of whom we have been speaking. Mark this pious woman: her faith was strong; her love was great; so that she could not leave the tomb where her Lord had lain; and where she mourned his absence, saying. “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” But did she do well thus to lament? was there any real cause for grief? No, verily! What if he had not risen according to his promise? What if the third day had passed over, and the body of Jesus had still been found in the sepulchre? Then, indeed, she might have mourned, and all the disciples might have mourned with her; and have said, What a sad disappointment

is this ! It was her great mercy that her Lord was not there ; for if Christ had not risen, her faith had been in vain, and our preaching had been vain also. Still, she could but write bitter things against herself : “ They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him ! ” and I can only now stand at his grave and weep ; and look, and weep again ! Thus also may it be with a godly man. He may stand weeping, and may think his case remediless, that all things are “ against him. ” But this, as we have seen already, is the appointed process. God is carrying on his work all this while, having given the promise that the morning shall succeed the night—that the stone shall be rolled away, and that the light shall rise unexpectedly, to the surprise and joy of his soul.

Conceive of a traveller, who has labored through a dark and dangerous way—regarding himself as surrounded by barrenness and desolation—thinking that nothing but what was dreary and distressing was before him. But, as soon as the day breaks, and the sun has risen upon the earth, and shines forth—instead of being in the miserable state which his fears had imagined, he beholds, with astonishment and transport, the prospect unfolding on all sides : splendid mansions, and the riches of a varied and fertile scenery presenting before him all its beauty and magnificence. There is something very like this in the progress of a work of grace upon the heart, where the night is succeeded by the morning ; heaviness, and depression, by revival, joy, and exultation.

Ah ! ye who, instead of sitting, like Mary Magdalene, at the Redeemer’s sepulchre, weeping, and waiting for him—showing that her heart was there, though the body of her Lord was not—ye who, instead of meditating on such a subject as this, or giving vent to feelings

at all resembling those which were excited in the breast of this woman by her love for her Lord—will run after every foolish silly *gewgaw* that Satan holds up to entice you withal ;—ye, who are captivated by the tinsel of dress, or the pride of rank and family—and who are wasting that invaluable time, of which you will soon have to render a solemn account, in “hearing,” like the Athenians, “some new thing ;” or in seeing some new personage, or in telling some new matter, as to what this or that individual has done, or what he is going to do ;—ye, who are deceiving yourselves on the brink of eternity, seeking happiness where it cannot be found—the living among the dead ;—I ask, What grounds have ye to expect that God will bring the morning after the night ; that he will send consolation and joy into your hearts, which have departed from the fountain of purity and bliss to seek satisfaction in the vain conversation, dissipating amusements, and corrupting pleasures of the world ? I am authorized by the word of God, and it is my bounden duty to declare, that “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” I am authorized to say—“Woe to the wicked ! it shall be ill with him : for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” Yet the same authority commands me to say to the righteous, “It shall be well with him.” God is watching over his affairs : he directs his steps : he goes before him ; he is preparing his way : he is leading him through present trials to future triumphs. He may now be “sowing in tears,” but he shall “reap in joy.”

The simple and sincere inquirer may, indeed, resemble Mary too much in one part of her pursuit : he may mistake, and seek for the living among the dead ; but his mistake shall not be fatal. His soul may be in

prison, as was David's ; but, like David, he is a " prisoner of hope." Let him, then, lift up his head ; he has placed himself in the Lord's hands : he is waiting till the Lord shall come to wipe away all tears from his eyes ; and who, instead of suffering any more darkness to overtake him, shall be his everlasting light and his glory.

Let me observe, in conclusion, that although we, by faith, visit the sepulchre of our Lord, we need not long continue to wait there. He is not there, but is risen. By the same faith let us follow him to heaven. And if we are scorned and scoffed at by the world, because we have resolved to follow Christ—because we look to him as our life, and hope, and comfort—let us remember that he was scoffed at and scorned before us. Behold him standing before Pilate ! See him before Herod and his men of war ! Behold him set at nought and spit upon, made a spectacle to angels and to men ; and talk no more of the contempt you may meet with in passing through this world to heaven. If we are at any time depressed, instead of lingering at the sepulchre, and weeping there, let us behold him now risen, standing at the right hand of the Majesty on high, making intercession for us. There he appears as our Advocate and Friend, and appoints and orders all things, even the most severe and, almost, overwhelming trials, for our good. Therefore, " Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ; who, for the joy that was set before him," instead of shrinking from suffering, " endured the cross, despising the shame." He wrought out his way through trial, and difficulty, and blood ; that he might be, in all respects, a fit High Priest for such poor miserable sinners as we are : and that he might be able to say, at last, to all his true followers,

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” That this may be the happy case of every one of you, may God of his infinite mercy grant for Christ’s sake!



CHRIST APPEARING TO MARY MAGDALENE.

Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.—JOHN XX. 16, 17. [1793.]

WHILE discoursing lately on the subject of our Lord’s resurrection—a fact foretold by prophecy and confirmed by a cloud of witnesses—we have seen that special honor had been conferred upon Mary Magdalene by being made one of the first messengers to carry to the disciples the news of this joyful event. We have seen this gracious woman standing weeping at the sepulchre, inconsolable at the loss of her Lord and Saviour; let us now consider her joyful meeting with her Divine Master. While she was speaking, as she supposed, with the gardener, saying, “Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away, Jesus saith unto her,” with such an expression as convinced her who he was, “Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not.” Here may seem some obscurity. Why say this to her in the warmth of her affection? It could not be that he objected to render sensible evidences to Mary that his body was really raised, for this he granted, not long

after, in order to meet the unreasonable demand of unbelieving Thomas:—"Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing." It could not, therefore, be that our Saviour was averse to grant Mary sensible evidences of his resurrection: but it is as if he had said, Mary, in so critical a moment as this, touch me not: you are now surprised with an appearance which you little expected: your heart overflows with affection and gratitude, and you would fain detain me: but give not way to anxiety: think not to embrace, and hold me, as if I could stay here: your regards must be more spiritual; I must go on in my Father's business till it is finished: I am not yet ascended, or, I do not yet ascend. I shall not go yet; I have more to do: and therefore, do not seek to hold me, as if you were afraid to lose me again immediately; but go, and take a joyful message to my disciples; tell them, I ascend unto my Father, and their Father; to my Father by nature, and to their Father by adoption.

I. Consider THE READINESS THAT IS HERE SET FORTH IN CHRIST TO MEET THEM THAT DESIRE TO MEET HIM—the nearness of Christ to the humble and inquiring heart. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him."

Mary's anxiety was the result of that love which Christ had implanted in her heart. The soul that truly loves Christ, cannot be satisfied with any thing short of him: so, nothing could satisfy Mary but finding her Lord, whom she was seeking. "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" Though the Lord is nigh unto them that seek him, he is yet often hidden from them by appearances: he is behind some providential dispensa-

tion; or behind some friend. But he will soon show himself, and teach us, as he did Mary, that they who wait for him shall not wait in vain. Though the clouds obstruct the sun, it shall soon break forth again. Christ is ever ready to meet his people. See him meeting his disciples at sea, when they were toiling in rowing: see him meeting Daniel, when he was mourning, fasting, and praying near the river Hiddekel: see him meeting John in the isle of Patmos: nay, he is so nigh, as to be present where only "two or three are gathered together in his name." Like this gracious woman, they shall receive more than they expect: Mary only desired the dead body of her Lord; but, lo! the Saviour presented himself alive! to the astonishment and joy of her heart.

II. Consider THE DIRECTION CHRIST GIVES TO SUCH AS SEEK HIM.

The spirit and substance of this direction is given in many parts of Scripture; and it seems to be this: Do not seek Christ any more after the flesh; do not live by sense but by faith: look from earth to heaven: "Touch me not;" *i. e.* do not fix your attention on my body. Mary seems to say, when she found him to be her Lord, whom she took for the gardener, It is enough. But Christ says, "Touch me not,"—there is something better than my bodily presence: look to Christ risen from the dead: look at his ascension and intercession; go, and tell my brethren that I am a risen and glorified Saviour.

The method which the Enemy takes is exactly the reverse of this. He endeavors to fix our eye on something present: he takes pains to draw our attention from heaven down to earth: he bids us look at the world, which he varnishes over with the fairest colors:

he is ever bringing the mind off from spirituality, and presenting to the idolatrous heart gaudy trappings: he prepares gewgaws, and then says, Look here! Look there! but he never says, Look up. The world is an idolater. Like the Israelites, it says, "Come and let us make ourselves gods to go before us," gods that we can see. We are apt to be astonished at *them*, but forget that we are disposed to act in the same way. It is the sensual heart, the gross element, which is ever leading us to live by sight. But, let us remember, that if this is nature, it is opposite to grace; for this calls us to live by faith, and tells us that this is not our rest. The religion of Christ is to call us off from the things of earth to something higher, something nobler; to fix our eyes upon a risen Saviour, and to let our hopes rest on rising with him. Our disposition is to linger: we would be like Lot's wife: Hasten me not: let me stop and taste of the fruit of the land! If we see something to strike our little minds, we are ready to say, with the disciples when they beheld the Temple, "See what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" But Christ turns away their eyes, and seems to say, You are looking upon dust: "There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." So he says to us, I show you "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." In the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy, God explains to us the meaning of his dealings: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him," *i. e.* he would have us soar as an eagle, above the earth.

III. Consider THE ENDEARING RELATION IN WHICH

CHRIST PRESENTS HIMSELF TO US, AFTER HIS RESURRECTION: "*Go to my brethren.*"

We see here the relation in which our Lord stands to the gracious heart. He was now no longer the "Man of Sorrows," he was "the King of Glory." But he seems to say—I do not forget my relationship: I think of my brethren: they are still weeping, as if I had forgotten them—as if they had lost their only friend. "Go to my brethren," tell them, we have one Father, one spirit: for "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit:" tell them, that I still remember them: that I shall intercede for them, that they may be kept through my name; "that they all may be one." John xvii. 21. Tell them, that I am their elder brother, born for adversity; able to meet all their wants and necessities: that I am risen for them: that I ascend for them, "unto my Father and their Father:" tell them, that I am risen a great conqueror over death, having led captivity captive; and that they shall be made conquerors too: that I have prepared a place for them. Tell them, that this relationship is so permanent, so comforting, that I am not ashamed to call them brethren: that I am flesh of their flesh, and bone of their bone.

Christ calls all that fear and love him his brethren: he says, "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it." If, then, you are conscious of being believers in Christ, take it for granted that he does not forget it, whoever does. Though you can only stand, weeping, before an empty sepulchre, yet, it is your privilege to know, that though such "weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning." It is your privilege to make use of this

assurance; it is your honor, and your duty to make known the Saviour's love to others.

While we have a blessed expectation of meeting Christ, and seeing him in glory, it is our comfort also to know, that we shall meet again, in his presence, all those friends and relatives in Christ who have gone before us. Let us be animated by this consideration to be "followers of them who through faith and patience now inherit the promises." Let us follow their steps as they followed Christ. And while we have such a Brother in the heavenly courts, who will not forget us, let us not forget our brethren on earth. Let it be our aim to do them, as members of the same family, all the good we can. While it is our high privilege to build upon this relationship between Christ and his people, let us be encouraged to bring every difficulty, every peculiarity of our case to him, "who ever liveth to make intercession for us;" and who has said, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."



CHRIST APPEARING TO HIS DISCIPLES AFTER HIS RESURRECTION.

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.—JOHN XX. 19, 20. [Uncertain.]

THE death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ form the true foundation of the peace and joy of a sin-

ner. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." Behold, *I* lay in Zion this stone: it is a sure foundation.

When our Lord appeared to the disciples at even, and showed his hands, his feet, and his side, he seemed to do more than offer proofs. Here was a sentiment. Here was a doctrine. It was as though he had said, Behold, my hands, my feet, my side—the signs of my sufferings are the signals of your peace.

This peace, and joy of heart, can be obtained only in that way in which God has promised to communicate it. The scene described in the text presents to us a picture of Christianity—a picture of the true Church in the midst of a wicked world. It is surrounded by enemies, but Jesus is in the midst of it, saying, "Peace be unto you."

We must add to our faith virtue. A mere historical faith will profit us nothing. The incredulity subsequently displayed by Thomas may have been the consequence of his absence on this occasion; ver. 24. Faith is produced, and invigorated, by frequenting the places where the Lord promises his presence, and where his disciples meet. The promises of God are not only to the diligent seeker, but to the patient waiter. They who forsake the assembling of themselves together in the name of Christ, are not entitled to expect his visits. The promises are to those who pray, and watch, and labor. The husbandman ploughs, and sows, and weeds his land; and watches every favorable opportunity for promoting the object which he has in view. He cannot indeed command the warmth of the sun, and the refreshing showers: but having done his part, he waits with patience, hope, and confidence, until his fields are covered with the harvest. In like

manner, we should employ the means of grace—watch, pray, and wait. We may then look forward to the assured hope of glory. “Faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God.” Rom. x. 17.

Incredulity, as to Divine truth, has its root in pride, and self-sufficiency. It presumes to understand every thing that is proposed to it. The incredulous man calls for demonstration. He has no idea of honoring a Divine testimony. He would have things made out as plain as that “two and two make four.” The true believer receives the truths of the Bible as he receives the kingdom of heaven—with the simplicity of a child.

In examining the records of our Lord’s discourses, we may remark this peculiarity, We never find him reproving any of his followers as placing too much confidence in him: but, on the contrary, we find him rebuking men for distrusting his power, and discrediting his declarations. Unbelief annihilates the whole of the record God has given of his Son. But though to them who believe not, the record may appear null and void, its authority remains still unimpaired; its provisions are beneficent; and all its denunciations will be eventually fulfilled. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar: because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” 1 John v. 10.

COMMUNION WITH AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR.

Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory : receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.—
 1 PETER, i. 8, 9. [Uncertain.]

THIS text expresses the state of mind which every one should pray for, who proposes to approach the table of the Lord, and hold communion with Christ in the elements of bread and wine. Take away Christ out of the world, and there is no hope for sinners : nothing left for the sons of men but vanity and vexation here, and misery hereafter.

I propose to consider,

I. THE COMMUNION WHICH A CHRISTIAN HAS WITH AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR.

II. THE SATISFACTION, AMOUNTING TO JOY, WHICH BELONGS TO THIS STATE OF COMMUNION.

III. THE LEGITIMATE EXPECTATION OF TRUE FAITH CONNECTED WITH IT ;—THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL.

I. THE COMMUNION WHICH A CHRISTIAN HAS WITH AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR. This is by faith : “ *Whom having not seen, ye love.*” There is probably nothing that will really convey love, but a sense of love : it must be reciprocal. There is a love, stronger than death, which Christ has to his Church. The subjects of it, instead of having any claim to such love, are represented as “ poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked.” But the Spirit of God has taken of the things of Christ, and showed them savingly to them ; and given them a sense of the obligations which they owe to such a Friend.

The vision of faith differs from the vision of glory : it is the eye of the new creature fixing on invisible realities. Wherever this revelation has been made, our Lord declares, that "flesh and blood has not revealed it" to us ; if we have any fellowship by faith with Jesus Christ, it is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. Many saw Christ in the flesh, who loved him not : The Jews saw him, who cried out, "Let him be crucified!" While his very murderers, under the sermon preached by Peter, and sent home by the Holy Spirit to their hearts, received the word gladly, were baptized in the name of Christ, and became joyful members of the true Church.

Beauty, and propriety, are said to be the cause of love : we must have some interest in that which we love. Faith enables the believer to behold both these in the person of Christ. His character appears beautiful, and his person precious ; and by taking hold of the promise, we become interested in him. The language of all such is, "Whom having not seen, we love." Every true convert is a "partaker of Christ," Heb. iii. 14 : he sees, that his being bruised, spit upon, nailed to a tree, were so many expressions of his love ; and this fills him with "joy unspeakable and full of glory : " it was this sense of the love of Christ, which made the primitive Christians willing to lay down their lives for his sake : and though some may say, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved ?" at least we see this beauty in him, that his love was "stronger than death"—that it caused him to bear our sins and sorrows, and to free us from eternal death. "We love him, because he first loved us." The whole humiliation and passion of Christ was one continual expression of his love to sinners : and when this is made known to the heart, it has a constraining influence. "The love of Christ constraineth us," saith the Apostle, "because

we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." Thus begins a new song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain:" we do not stand to argue about his cross, but we take it up joyfully.

Let us examine ourselves, whether we know any thing of this love; whether we have seen the Lord Jesus by the eye of faith. Can we appeal, like Peter, and say, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee?" Have we ever cried to him, like Bartimeus, to open our blind eyes? Do we feel that his love is shed abroad in our hearts? If it is, it will always be accompanied by love to human nature: you will become serviceable to your fellow-creatures; you will feel concern for their souls, and desirous to recommend Christ to them.

We must not, however, despise "the day of small things." Satan is apt to disturb our minds with this temptation, that if we cannot speak of Christ as Peter and Paul did, our love is so small, that it is worth nothing. No wonder, if we come behind them! but God says, that "he will not quench the smoking flax." Sensible things press upon us so strongly, that we are obliged to combat them with Scripture truths—with invincible weapons. We must give up living by sense: we must take Christ at his word, rest in his providence, and remember, that if we have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, it is so great a thing, that we shall have to thank God for it to all eternity. It was by faith and patience that our fathers inherited the promises—by faith, they overcame the world:—therefore, instead of repining, let us cry, "Lord, increase my faith:" let us go to Christ, and speak in his ear, "Lord, shed abroad thy love in my heart!" Nothing but a simple faith can bring us to this; or enable us to have that communion with Christ spoken of in the text: but in proportion as we can take him as our portion, we shall

find an inward satisfaction, "a joy unspeakable;" which is the thing we have next to consider, namely,

II. THE SATISFACTION, AMOUNTING EVEN TO JOY, WHICH BELONGS TO A BELIEVER.

The Christian feels this evidence, that flesh and blood hath not revealed to him what he experiences of joy; but that it is shed abroad in his heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. Joy is the flower, not the root, which is faith. The Apostle calls it a "joy unspeakable, and full of glory." There is something incomparably beautiful in this expression, as it cannot be applied to any thing else. The highest joys we experience here, are soon expressed, and overstated. Whenever we think of any earthly object we can seldom say, as the Queen of Sheba, "The half was not told me!" When our expectation has been raised to the highest pitch, does not experience testify that, instead of inexpressible joy, disappointment is generally the result? With all that anxiety, with all that expense, and labor, which men are at, to overtake joy, they cannot attain it: such pursuers live in a tumult: but true joy is a serious, calm thing. Men call for more, and more, of earth; but more does not satisfy them. On the other hand, what a rest, what a satisfaction to say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his!" This is "full of glory!" It is the privilege of a real Christian. Though he has not yet entered into his rest, but is only a traveller, and therefore has not attained his full salvation, yet it is his privilege to have some foretastes of the glory laid up for him. The Apostle says, while in the midst of trials and persecutions, "I take pleasure" in them: Why is this? "That the power of Christ may rest upon me." Now, if a man by taking hold of the arm of God by faith, is thus enabled to

rejoice under trials and difficulties, with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory," it speaks the Christian's privilege. How must St. Paul have felt this, when Christ spoke to his heart, telling him he was "a chosen vessel!" When the soul is enabled to believe not only of Christ, but in Christ—to rely entirely—to expect every thing from him—then there is experienced a "joy unspeakable:" a joy of expectation: a joy of security: a joy "full of glory."

Men often believe a great deal *concerning* Christ, and then wonder that they have not the joy of a believer. It is rational that the soul that has found the treasure should have joy. But to be a Christian, implies that a man has taken Christ's yoke upon him;—that he has made a resignation of his heart to Christ; and counts his service perfect freedom: that he relies on his word; and believes, that though heaven and earth shall pass away, yet Christ's words shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. That such a man should have joy, is rational. For, if I believe that Christ has laid down his life for me, and that by his blood I am cleansed from all sin—that I have a share in his love—that he is able to put all my enemies under my feet—that he has promised sin shall not have dominion over me—that by his grace I shall be made more than a conqueror over the world, the flesh, and the devil;—shall I not rejoice in all this? And beyond all this, there is the joy of expectation; waiting, with "the assurance of hope," for an incorruptible crown that fadeth not away.

Notwithstanding that these things are so, there is, however, a sad prejudice, especially among young people, who think that religion is a dull and melancholy thing:—But are "joy unspeakable," and melancholy, synonymous terms? Is being a Christian, the becom-

ing a gloomy character? No doubt, it implies being a mortified, self-denying character. Do not think that religion will take away your joy: it proposes to give you the true joy: it is an incitement to action: it is an exorcist. What is meant by "full of glory," but to see a poor sinner trusting and glorying in his God, casting away other dependences, and glorying in him only? This is a foretaste of that glory to which he is hastening! Though every pilgrim who has such a road to travel, and a body so full of infirmities, must have his sad moments—yet, he has a joy unspeakable, through all. Be not, therefore, deceived: you are invited to be happy. Take up religion, not as a mere notion; but as something solid, and valuable. Are you a man who can calculate profit and loss? Would to God you were! Then, you would say—There is but one important concern—the salvation of my immortal soul! What is the project of the greatest earthly projector, though it should be to add kingdom to kingdom? If he has not considered, and taken into account, his eternal interest, he is a poor purblind man—a poor driveller—and does not seek solid joy! What has he for hereafter? Which leads me to consider,

III. THE LEGITIMATE EXPECTATION OF TRUE FAITH:
"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

What is salvation? Many are ready to reply, "It is deliverance from evil." It is more! It signifies not only the being delivered from all evil, but the being introduced into all good. It is being delivered from temptation, from Satan, from hell. But salvation does not stop here; it introduces us to "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away:" to a blessed society. The Church below is but a faint

emblem of the Church above; yet of that St. Paul says, "But ye are come unto Mount Sion." Heb. xii. *Come to Mount Sion!* Why, many of them were poor weeping Christians! but they were come to the communion of saints. Some were on one side of the river, and some on the other. But "who are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?"—"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple?" They have now crossed the river. The glory of God, and the redemption of the soul, are united: this is the end of our faith—even "the salvation of the soul." We preach not any peculiarity that belongs to a sect or party:—our design is too grand, too broad; we preach SALVATION!

We should ponder much on the love of God to sinners in so meeting their case; in making use of various means to point out to a poor lost sinner, in a disordered world, where he may find a compassionate and all-sufficient Friend; and how he may, by faith, hold communion with God, through a Mediator. At the day of judgment, every man's eternal state will depend on the answer to this question, "What are the evidences of your love to Christ?" For, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha;" or, accursed when the Lord comes. The robber, or the murderer, is convinced he is wrong: but he that does not love Christ is not always convinced he is wrong. It is the work of the Spirit to glorify Christ; to take of the things of Christ and to show them unto us. But if we have not seen enough of the things of Christ to make us love him, we have not the Spirit of Christ, and so are "none of his." The apostle says,

“The love of Christ constraineth us.” You may as well suppose a well-constituted watch without a main-spring, as a Christian without love to Christ.

In conclusion, if you profess to enter seriously into religion, remember it implies calmness and solidity, not a rapturous flight. The privilege of a Divine friendship is rather a gracious frame of mind, than a transitory rapture. Repeated acts form a habit. A believer frequently going to his God and Saviour, thereby forms a habit of holy and intimate communion; in like manner as a child has the habit of clinging to his parent, in all danger and alarm. Such a habit had Enoch: his was not a momentary, rapturous, hold on God; but he walked with him. The love of Christ is the main spring of all Christian obedience: it is the great antidote against temptation. The serious joy which results from this, is a strong spring of action; it recommends religion; it will bear us up in trouble; it will enable us, like the apostle, to glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us: and it is the best evidence of faith.” Matt. xxv. 31—40.

I would say to believers—However advanced, we need continually to receive out of Christ’s fulness. It was an old disciple who said, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious—ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” And another old disciple thus exhorts us:—“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” How watchful, how holy, how consistent should be our walk

and conversation, in order that we may not be ashamed before him at his coming!—Let us come now to the holy sacrament, seeking a closer union and communion with Christ, as our Head: praying, that our faith may be increased, our love confirmed and strengthened, and that we may have a joyful hope of sitting down with our adorable Lord and Master, in his kingdom and glory.

CHRIST'S TRIUMPHANT ASCENSION.

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.--PSALM lxxviii. 18. [1803.]

It was many years after this Psalm was written that the prophecy contained in it was fulfilled. But it is common in the language of prophecy to speak of things certain as if they were past.—In the Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul, addressing the Church of believers as quickened together with Christ, says, “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” not, he shall raise, and will make us sit; denoting not only the dependency which our resurrection and glorification has upon Christ's, but also the undoubted certainty that they shall come to pass; Christ's resurrection and glorification being a pledge of ours. After our blessed Lord had accomplished his work on earth, he ascended into heaven. He went up in a public capacity, as our Forerunner; as One who is still transacting and carrying on our interests in heaven.

“Thou hast led captivity captive.” The Psalmist

evidently makes an allusion to the triumphant entry of a conqueror, who leads the vanquished as a trophy of his success and victory; he refers to the dragging of the captives at the chariot wheels. Christ having quite broken the power of sin and Satan before he ascended up, led every spiritual enemy in triumph, as spoiled and overcome. The apostle refers to this psalm, Eph. iv.: "To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." Not only miraculous gifts, as at the day of Pentecost—but better gifts also than these: gifts of repentance, pardon, holiness, and peace. If any man has true repentance, if he is pardoned, justified, and sanctified, if he has peace in his conscience, these are gifts purchased by Christ.

"Thou hast received gifts for *men*:" verily he took not hold of the nature of angels, but he took hold of the seed of Abraham. "Gifts *for men*;" so that they may properly be set before men; before every man; every creature. Therefore Christ's ministers may say to all, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

"Yea, for the rebellious also:" not only for all men generally, and individually, but also as respects their state and character; "for the rebellious also," that every mouth may be stopped. "Whosoever will," may reap the benefit of these gifts; even those who had forfeited them. Some allusion may here be made to the Gentiles, who were "enemies in their minds by wicked works:" Col. i. 21; but every man is by nature a rebel: the whole species is up in arms: not one is exempt.

Some may ask, Is this according to the Scripture rule—"If ye will walk contrary unto me, then I will walk contrary unto you?" Observe, it is not meant

for them that will continue to put the offers of the Gospel far from them, and so finally perish. But it refers to them that by nature are as far from God as others, to whom these gifts are offered, that they may seek to the Prince of Peace, who never casts out any that come to him. The apostle says to Titus, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts, and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." If these gifts were not for rebels, we none of us could hope to receive them; but they are meant for such as repent and return to God, though even "the rebellious." For them, these gifts are received; to them, they are given. But for what end? that they may remain rebellious? No; but that they might lay down their arms; that their enmity might be slain; and that they might return to their allegiance. Christ came to a rebellious world, not to condemn it, but that through him it might be saved.

"That the Lord God might dwell among them:" this is the grand end proposed by the Gospel. Sin has caused an awful separation between man and his Maker; and to bring them together again was the design of Christ's coming. He would set up a Church in a rebellious world, in which he would dwell by his word and ordinances, as of old in the sanctuary. He would raise a spiritual, abiding, eternal temple: he would set up his throne that Christ might dwell in the hearts of those that had been rebellious, and so he would make them living temples to his praise. There are those who shall bring their testimony at the great day, that grace has not only been promised, but freely imparted.

This is not a doctrine of the New Testament only. The Lord said to Moses, "I will set my tabernacle

among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." Lev. xxvi. 11, 12. "My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Ezek. xxxvii. 27. And in recognition of this privilege to the Jewish Church, St. Paul reminds the Gentile converts of what had formerly been their condition: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision in the flesh made with hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Eph. ii. 11, 12. Now the promise is not for Jews only, but for all men: Christ has opened the gates of heaven to all believers. He rose from the dead, and ascended up into heaven as the common Head and representative of his Church and people: and the design of all this is, "that the Lord God might dwell among them;" that there might be union and communion with him: communications of grace and holiness, of pardon and peace, to all the fallen children of men.

This was the prophecy: now observe the fulfilment. Our Lord having given his disciples the fullest evidence of his resurrection, "led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Luke xxiv. 36—51. In Acts i. 9—11, it is said, "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly towards heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white

apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." We see our Lord invested with full power, and sending down the Holy Ghost according to his promise. We see him ascended to his Father and our Father. Not to sit as an indifferent spectator of men; but to bring the dead to life; to conduct the affairs of his Church. When he left his disciples to go into heaven, he gave a gracious parting word and promise: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." As though he had said, I am going away, but you have nothing to fear from men or devils: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." And the apostles went forth, and began to testify to the resurrection and ascension of their Lord: and though they were imprisoned for so doing, the Lord opened the prison doors, and said, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." Being again brought before the council, Peter and the other apostles answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." God hath sent us forth, giving us gifts; so that by our ministry the rebellious are brought over, and victories are obtained by the exalted Redeemer over death and hell; and through him we also are made more than conquerors. We are commissioned to go forth and speak of the glory of our exalted King, and to testify that he is a Saviour and

benefactor to his willing people; but "a consuming fire" to all those that persist in rebellion against him. "He that believes, shall be saved; he that believes not, shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16.

I would now speak by way of APPLICATION to men of an undecided mind, to the mere speculatist in religion. And I would say, as was said to the apostles, Ye men of Galilee, "why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" Why do ye stand as mere gazers on that which God sets before you in his Son? Ye do not gaze on other things so, as men without feeling or interest, and who reflect not beyond the present moment. You say, Oh that I had this, or that! Oh that I could procure or purchase so and so! By the ascension of Jesus, God hath set before you the inestimable gift of his Spirit, compared to "living water:" and woe be to that man who continues to slight and reject it! He has set before you "gifts." But, what! shall a man catch at all the foolish toys and trifles which the world presents, and say, Oh that I had this, or that! when he is passing away from every thing? and shall he continue ignorant respecting the excellency of the Gospel, and indifferent to the offer of eternal life in Christ? After such offers, and such provision, how guilty must that man be who continues to slight God's "unspeakable gift!" Oh what a proof is this of the fall of man! But I must tell you, that while you are deliberating, you stand on extremely dangerous ground. "This night," it may be said, "thy soul is required of thee!" and if not this night, while you are deliberating Satan is busy; some temptation may come and carry you away, and your mind may be so blinded and infatuated, that you will have no disposition to attend to the things belonging to your peace! How many have I seen sitting under the sound of the Gospel, whom the vani-

ties of this world have rendered deaf to every important reality, till something too strong to resist has led them away captive, tied and bound by the chains of their sins! Consider, seriously, the danger of standing idly on Satan's ground, while Christ stands knocking at the door of your hearts! Those that are real witnesses of the truth, know most assuredly that religion is not a mere speculation: it is not a mere abstract proposition. It is a motive: it is a principle: it is a possession!

To serious inquirers, let me say, The glorious Sun of Righteousness ascended into heaven, not to illuminate Judea alone, where he dwelt, but, like the sun in the firmament, to shed his beams all over the earth. The light is here: it is come to us! Do you desire to be enlightened by it? Do you desire to accept the "gifts" received for you? The folly of man is, that he goes on without reflecting what God has done for him. Do you ask how these benefits are to be received? Look at the twenty-first chapter of the book of Numbers. On account of the people's murmuring, "the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee: pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived." How did they receive this healing? Did they pay any thing for it? Yet look at the effects: here was life and cure! God said, This is

my appointment—my constitution of mercy: and they were obedient: they looked, and were healed. “So,” says our Lord, “must the Son of Man be lifted up:” and so must he be received: not that men should reason, but obey. There is benefit in that to which God has annexed benefit; therefore if God has appointed a new and living way, and if he tells me it is in this way that he saves sinners,—why, then, if I really desire deliverance, I shall take it in God’s way: I shall pray,—Oh, give me a new heart to bring forth fruit, by being united to the True Vine! If you ask further, How shall I get this faith? I answer, Regard the text: “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” Observe, this is the condemnation, not that men cannot give themselves faith, but—that they will not come unto Christ that they might have life. Therefore if a man have ears to hear, let him apply this subject to himself, and say, I need these gifts, I hear they are to be freely bestowed, I have only to make application for them.

Let me say to *Christians*,—Consider the end proposed by all our means and privileges. Why did Christ go through all the work of redemption? It was that the Lord God might dwell amongst us; that we may return to our Father’s house, for we have all been prodigals. It was that we might be a peculiar people, a chosen generation. What is all this for, that is spoken of in the text? is it that we should have poor formal notions, or join a party? What is all this for, that is represented under the metaphor of a battle, a victory, a triumph? It is, that we may be like Enoch; it is, that we may forsake our evil ways, and follow God, like Abraham, however expensive the trial; it is, that

we may be like the disciples going to Emmaus : *there* was no speculation—“ Did not our hearts burn within us ? ” It is, that, like Mary, if we cannot find our Master, we should look after him : her heart was there ; and therefore she could not leave the place till she learnt something of him : this is heart work.

It was a most glorious design that, when Satan had caused a separation, God should again find out a way to unite himself to us, and us to him. “ That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” The Christian should consider that he is called with a high and holy calling : he ought to be a public blessing, like Aaron. We should not give up hope that God would appear for this nation, at this time, as at other times ; but then we should remember, that it is his blessing which must do this : and for this, and and every other mercy, “ He will be inquired of.” Read the Psalm from whence the text is taken : “ Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered,” “ He that is our God is the God of Salvation ; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.”

Whenever you hear of victories gained by mere human beings, it is over externals,—as towns, men, &c. ; but the world, the flesh, and the devil, vanquish the very conqueror himself. The Christian soldier fights under a Captain who has “ overcome the world ; ” and what Christ has done as our head and representative, we may be said to do in him. Christ had finished transgression and made an end of sin, when he ascended leading captivity captive : and he now says, Open the prison doors ; let the captive go free : “ sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law but under grace.” “ He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Therefore, “ set your affections on

things above ;” there is a “path of life ;” there is a departure, through death, to life ; and “when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Col. iii. 4.

THE KING OF ZION.

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make
thine enemies thy footstool.—PSALM cx. 1. [Uncertain.]

THE Lord Jesus is so infinitely high, and man has fallen down so very low, that he is apt to be led away by his senses ; and then he talks of his knowledge : hence, he is apt to stumble at the great things of God.

For instance ; man hears of “a Babe lying in a manger ;” “a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief :” of “One crucified :” and, like the Jew of old, trusting in his senses, and looking at such an Object, he finds herein a stumbling-block ; and he asks—Where is all the glory ? All this is for want of considering that to know the truths of God we must come to the word of God ; and there we shall see “heights and depths.” “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

I. CONSIDER THE INAUGURATION OF CHRIST, AS THE KING OF ZION.

II. HIS ENEMIES ; “*Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*”

III. THE GENERAL CONQUEST HERE SPOKEN OF, when the Lord sets his Son on the throne of his kingdom.

I. Take notice of this PLACING OF THE KING OF ZION ON HIS THRONE. Our Lord himself quoted this text,

and it is continually referred to in the New Testament. It is Christ, the anointed Son, to whom God the Father shall say, in the grand constitution of Redemption, "Sit Thou at my right hand:" govern—subdue; do what no potentate on earth can do—govern, and rule over the heart; for "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Thy converts shall cover the earth like dew-drops, "in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning." Intercede for these—their Priest, to bless them in my name; for "the Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedec."

But, are there none that will set their faces against this Governor? What is to be done concerning them? because "he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath." So Balaam prophesied: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab," or, smite through the princes of Moab. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." "I have set my King," my Anointed, "upon my holy hill of Zion:" and he shall overthrow all opposition, either by his grace or arm. Lucifer may object; and the heathen rage; the rulers may take counsel together,—as they did, and as they have often done; saying, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us:" but "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure."

If this is the determination of God, well may the exhortation follow, "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord

with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." *q. d.* Your attempting to fight against the King of heaven is so foolish, so hopeless in the result, that "Bessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Under this government and kingdom, Jesus Christ (whose ascension into heaven we at this season commemorate) is seeking to bring man. He is seeking to recall man to his duty as a wanderer from God: he is teaching him to know himself, and to know his God; that he may lead him to unite himself to his almighty Sovereign in a covenant relation. "For the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." It is a very extraordinary fact—but nevertheless true—that there never was any scheme, any attempt made by philosophers, any attempt made by legislators, in which a man should be brought back to his God, his neighbor, and himself! This is the darkness being past: Sit, and rule, as if God had said, that there may be light! Rule, and take possession of the heart: rule, in destroying the enemies that resist thy power: rule, and make the regenerate complete! "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it,

and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this."

Yet, from the beginning, God has spoken of them that stand out, as opposers: "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool;" which leads me to consider,

II. WHO ARE THESE ENEMIES? What is their general character?

I shall pass by an account of the enemies of the Lord at large, to fix on one particular class; our Lord says, "He that is not with me, is against me." Luke xi. 23.

It appears that all are enemies by nature. "For we ourselves also," says the Apostle, "were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Titus iii. 3—6. If we consider this statement, we shall see, that it is evident all mankind may be divided into two classes, namely, those who are with Christ, and those who are not with him; either such as become loyal subjects, or those who are standing out in rebellion.

Having laid this foundation, we may easily consider who are enemies. There may be various forms under which a thing appears, while the essence of the thing is the same; the materials may be alike, and yet they

may be worked up into a variety of forms. Sin breaks out into a thousand different appearances; yet it is always the same evil. Some of the enemies of which I speak come in a very different way from such as advance sword in hand: there are the careless, who stare when you speak of "the King of glory." An animal feeding on a mountain would turn his eyes up towards the sun without any intellect—without any knowledge of the properties of the sun. But these are very different from others, who are yet of the same rank:—there is the formalist; he has great order and propriety, but a proud heart, a stiff neck: there is the learned enemy; he will argue, and sow tares; he will come and doubt if Christ is really God, though he can read the text, and many other such conclusive scriptures; he will tamper and trifle with the most important doctrines; he will deny the atonement; and if you talk of the Holy Ghost, he is ready to say, with those of old, "I know not if there be any Holy Ghost." Another enemy, is the superstitious devotee. In another class, see Saul, the Pharisee: he was too wise to turn his back on all religion, and too needy.

But the time would fail me to show the vast variety of enemies: I will mention but one more character—the fraudulent and hypocritical professor; and probably there is none worse. For a man to come like Judas Iscariot, and attach himself to religion, and say, "Hail, Master!" can there be such an enemy as this? "Many walk," says the Apostle, "of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Phil. iii. 18.

Whether men think to succeed by mere morality, or by cold orthodoxy, they will be equally "found wanting." "If," says the Apostle, "any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema maran-atha;" *q. d.*

If he does not, in heart, pay a due homage to Christ, let him be accursed ; and, if an angel from heaven were to preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. We can easily conceive if a traitor were to hold up his hand from the bar and were to talk of his goodness, we should say—What is this to the case ? You are guilty of trying to dethrone the King!—And so it may be said to every one who is not submitting to the rule of Christ in his heart, and who is found standing out against his being exalted in the earth.

Let us consider,

III. THE GENERAL CONQUEST HERE SPOKEN OF.

If there is certainty of this—which cannot be doubted—for, says the Apostle, “He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet,”—then, blessed are all such as are made willing in the day of his power ! Those that stand out, “he shall strike through.” Our Saviour has shown this in a parable. “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return : and he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.”—And what is the result of this rebellion?—“But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me !” Luke xix. 11—27.

But we cannot pay too much regard to the peculiar manner in which Christ obtains this victory,—“Behold my servant, whom I uphold ; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth ; I have put my Spirit upon him : he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the

street." He is not ostentatious. As if God had said—Your kings and nobles go forth with noise, but the King I have placed at my right hand shall work through his grand design with grace, truth, and meekness. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness."—His life on earth may be that of "a man of sorrows;" humility, submission, suffering, and death; but he shall send his Spirit, who shall bring in numerous subjects to his kingdom; his arrows shall be sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, whereby the people shall fall under thee;—"Thou hast the dew of thy youth." And he shall come again with glory. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him:" he shall come as the "ALPHA and OMEGA, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." It is remarkable, that St. John, when about to describe his glorious vision of the Son of God, begins, "I, John;" as if he had said, It is *I* who had seen my Master and Lord in the days of his humiliation, when "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth."—Yet, I John, when I saw him, as ascended, in his Divine glory, fell at his feet, as dead; until "he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last." So different did he appear; and so beyond all conceptions of human thought!

Our Lord Christ shall work through this grand design as the sun brings on the seasons. God works through the season, and brings on the success, with silent but irresistible force. It was prophesied of Christ, "Even

he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne;" Zech. vi. 13. He shall undertake a work that is glorious in itself beyond all comparison. In a calm, holy, but silent progression, he formed the world: in a calm, holy progression, he redeemed the world: in the same manner he carries on his work by his word and ministers; and "other foundation can no man lay:" and when the whole design is fully accomplished, Christ will be seen as a mighty Conqueror; for it is the peculiar and determined design of God to glorify his Son Jesus. "And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer." Though the conquering is different from the conquest, yet not less effectual. It stretches out arms of mercy to those who are still enemies: it says, Oh, come, and kiss the Son: come, and enter into the design of God: come, and do homage to your rightful Sovereign! But, if not—you have heard of the victory.

But if you ask, who among you are the particular persons to whom I speak as enemies—I answer, I cannot tell: I speak the word of God, and I would do it simply. You have had set before you THE INAUGURATION OF CHRIST, AS THE KING OF ZION; you have heard who are HIS ENEMIES; and the certainty of HIS CONQUEST over them all. Here is enough in this blessed book to instruct you, so that "he who runs may read," as to this question. For it is as certain as that Christ has not yet returned, that he will return to call his citizens to account. The word is past; and "he that believeth not is condemned already." It is no matter what set of unbelievers we stand among; whether we are classed with the gay, or with mere hypocrites: the

question is, Are we enemies? Brethren! judge ye yourselves! But it is not enough to say what you think on this subject: take the standard: you may think this, and I may think that, and another contrary to both: but take the balances of the sanctuary, and judge ye yourselves!

Do you come, like "the wise men," and follow the star, and find the King of glory in his abasement? Do you say with Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation?" Do you say with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life?" and with the Apostle Paul, "I count all things but dung and dross for Christ?"—this I esteem my highest honor, and joy, namely, to "be found in him?" Like John, do you repose on his bosom? With Thomas, do you say, "Let us go, that we may die with him?" With Stephen, are you willing to set your face against a corrupt world—nay, against a corrupt Church—even though the leaders may be men of consequence? Are you willing to be a solitary witness to the truth, if you can be no other? and are you ready to lay down your life for it, as the martyrs did?

If, instead of all this, you find it the reverse with yourselves, then why need you stand to consider if you are enemies? Why do you not rather consider, if there be not a root of enmity? I say this, that you may know yourselves. This is certain, that till you are made willing that Christ should reign over you, all I have been saying must be displeasing to you. You do not like it; I know you do not like it. But, oh, contend not with the Strong! harden not your heart! for He that has set his King upon his holy hill of Zion, will assuredly make every enemy to become his footstool.

To such as have become subject to Christ, I would say, Be not alarmed, or moved, by the state of the world, while Christ is coming to take possession of his kingdom. There may appear confusion, and there may be storms. But remember what Cæsar said to the pilot when sailing during the storm, "Be not alarmed, for thou dost carry Cæsar and his fortunes!" This was an empty boast; for there was but one King that could walk the waves, and who could say, Fear not, you unite yourself to power, to wisdom, to love, to victory! You are accounted as those that are "kings and priests," and who shall reign with Christ. If we belong to him, we shall partake in his conquests: every believer, the weakest, shall "reign with him." In a stormy night, what a comfort is it to know that I may lay my head on the bosom of Omnipotence—to know that nothing is wanted but a full confidence in him! Having taken hold of his hand, without whom not even a sparrow falleth to the ground, I may cast every care upon him. Let this be the believer's aim, in all things to magnify the arm of his power.



CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church.—EPHES. i. 22. [1803.]

THERE is a kind of religion which may serve a man in ease and security, but it will not do in sickness and trouble: a man will then want something that is vital and interior. St. Paul is here speaking to a Church in deep waters, and calling upon it to look to its Head,

who was above the waters. Let us consider Christ, as he is,—

I. A HEAD OF REPRESENTATION.

II. A HEAD OF DIRECTION.

III. A HEAD OF INFLUENCE.

I. CHRIST IS A HEAD OF REPRESENTATION. We are taught this perpetually in the Scriptures. See Hebrews iii. 1: “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of your profession, Christ Jesus:” and again, chap. iv. 14,—“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession:” and chap. viii. 1,—“We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” But Christ is not only our representative in the character of a great High Priest, but he has ascended as a king and conqueror, leading captivity captive. Now this, brethren, forms a CONSTITUTION: Christ was given by the Father to be the Church’s head. We are not to teach God, but to learn of him; and he has told us, that Christ is “made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” “Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.” Christ is the Church’s head by way of eminency, authority, and oneness of nature between him and his Church: therefore he says, “Because I live ye shall live also:” and upon this ground he prayeth, “That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that

they also may be one in us." There is a strict, intimate, and close union betwixt him and his Church, as betwixt head and members : a union mystical, spiritual, supernatural and indissoluble. He is a head of dominion and authority to the whole creation ; but to his Church in particular he is,

II. A HEAD OF DIRECTION.

As the head directs the members, so, while our Lord was upon earth, he was continually discovering to his disciples the nature of the world, and the nature of his kingdom—pointing out, as a director, their course : "If ye love me, keep my commandments : " "I will not leave you comfortless" or orphans : you shall never want a friend, a guide, a director ; for I am with you, as such, even to the end. When he came from heaven—when he was crucified—when he arose and ascended,—in all these things he was acting as Head of his mystical body, the Church ; and he has, in his Church's name, taken possession of heaven, as a purchased inheritance for her. God "gave him" to be head over all things to his Church. When his disciple John was banished to the isle of Patmos, he still showed, though there was but one disciple there, that he was God over all : "I am he that liveth, and was dead ;" and if I have but one disciple in Patmos, I will be there also, to comfort, and support, and uphold him. If you have no friend upon earth, yet take comfort in this, that Christ is exalted—that we are his body, and he is our Head. There is implied in this metaphor,

III. THAT CHRIST IS A HEAD OF INFLUENCE. As the head gives nourishment to the body, so there is a communication of influences from Christ to all his members. As Head of his Church, he is the fountain of life and

influence: and if there are any fruits of righteousness—if any good works—if any virtue or praise—all is derived from him. Christ says, “I am the vine; ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” We are poor and needy; we cannot think a good thought of ourselves; yet, as our Divine Head is ascended, we endeavor to “seek those things that are above,” and we believe that we ourselves shall ascend into glory also. He has said, “Thy dead men shall live: together with my dead body shall they arise:” *q. d.* I will quicken thy dead: I am a Head of vital influence. “I live,” says the Apostle, “yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” I live by faith, I derive influence; and if I am enabled to do any thing for my Master’s glory, it is because “the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.”

Let us now consider, what is the PRACTICAL USE of this subject: for to settle a doctrine only, and there leave it, is not sufficient. The success and efficacy of the word preached depends upon a particular application of it to every man’s conscience.

In the first place, WE ARE TO FORM A DISTINCT IDEA OF THIS PRIVILEGE OF BEING UNITED TO CHRIST,—as a Head of representation, direction, and influence.

And here we are to recollect, that God speaks to us the reverse from what a metaphysician or philosopher would do: he does not teach us by abstract theorems. He tells us he is a father; that “like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him.” And as a child runs to its parent upon every occasion, so may we go to God, as our Father in Christ Jesus. Christ tells us that he is the vine, and we are the branches: he the head, we the body. With respect to a complication of interests, as

well as a communication of influences, that he is as the husband to the wife ; they stand and fall, live and die, together : that his God is our God ; and his Father our Father.

Now, if I am taught to form this view of the Church's privilege, is it not of vast importance that I be joined to it ? Is it not the very picture of heaven ? Is not Christianity a high calling ? Let them put Joseph into the prison—Daniel into the den of lions—Paul and Silas into the dungeon—Christ is with them ! Is there a Christian now in trouble or temptation ?—you cannot separate him from Christ his Head ! If he wants to speak to his Divine Master—if he wants to pray—it is his privilege to look up, like Stephen, to heaven, and see Christ at the right hand of God,—praying for him even when he cannot pray for himself. The promise is, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.” The billows may rise, and toss themselves proudly, but the Christian's HEAD is above the waters : “The Lord sitteth above the waterfloods.” I repeat, we are taught to form a distinct idea of this privilege. Every man may learn from this what is the grand object or interest—the *summum bonum*.*

If a man thinks at all, he will say to himself,—Who am I ? and whither am I going ? And if he sees—as indeed he cannot help seeing—that he is a poor disordered creature, in a disordered world, and that he must have somewhere to set the sole of his foot,—what is his inquiry ? Surely, it is this :—can I rest upon any thing that will bear me up ? any thing that I can call SUBSTANCE ? Where is there such a thing ? where is there such a hope ? The text furnishes an answer :

* Among the heathen philosophers there were 280 opinions as to what this was.—ED.

God hath exalted his Son Jesus, “and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to his Church!” “I am Alpha and Omega :” rest there :—take care how you rest elsewhere !

What, then, is the right prayer of a creature so needy, so dependent? The Collect of this day will furnish one :—

“O God the King of glory, who hast exalted thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto thy kingdom in heaven ; we beseech thee, leave us not comfortless ; but send to us thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.”*

Secondly, LET US CONTEMPLATE THE GRAND OBJECT SET BEFORE US IN THE GOSPEL. At this time, as a nation, we have much to fear : for aught we know, the destroyer may be on his way.† Who knows what a holy jealous God may do to scourge such a nation as this ! I do not know any thing which shocks me so much as when I hear men talking of our “fleets and armies !” Does not every one know how little fleets and armies can do if God has written destruction upon them ? What, then, is our safety ? What will preserve us from ruin ? What is our hope ? That Christ is the Head of his Church ! That He who stopped a proud persecutor, and said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?” can arrest the progress of our enemies. So then, when proud billows rise, and proud speeches are made, we may remember there is One who sitteth at the right hand of God, who is King of the Church as well as Head ; and who rules and gov-

* Collect for the Sunday after Ascension-day.

† When threatened with invasion by Napoleon Bonaparte.

erns all things. Then, like the Prophet Habakkuk, we may say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Thirdly, From this subject, WE MAY FORM AN ESTIMATE OF OUR OWN CHARACTER. For, notwithstanding our attendance on public ordinances, we have need to ask ourselves,—Am I living in ignorance of this Divine Head? Am I living without communion and fellowship with a risen Saviour? Am I ready to join the scoffer when I hear of deriving influence from him? For, whatever I know, if I know not this, I am living without Christ; without any vital union to him: and if so, in vain will it be to say, Lord, "we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not, whence ye are." Such professors are described, in the Epistle to the Colossians, as "not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." "Holding the Head" is holding the life; for without him we can do nothing.

On the other hand,—Am I convinced that I am a poor lost sinner, and that there is no health in me? and, in consequence of this, do I desire to be united to the living Head? It is true that I may be brought down very low, and that in an hour of temptation my heart may sink; yet what though I come down—down—down—as low as ever poor mortal was,—yet if I can look up to my living Head, if I can look up and regard that head that was once pierced with thorns, but is now exalted,—then, I may recollect that I have a sympathizing friend; and I can say with the Apostle, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, work-

eth for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. iv. 17.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO HEZEKIAH.

Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.

ISA. xxxviii. 1.

[1804.]

So great is the stupidity and infatuation in man—such is his intoxication—such his carnality of heart, that he is disposed to go on minding the foolish trifling things of the moment, and forgetting the great and important things of eternity. He acts as if he were never to die. Little insignificant things are magnified—made of importance—allowed to lie near his heart—while the one thing needful—the greatest and most interesting concern, is pushed into a corner—to be thought of at a more convenient season! There is therefore need of such an admonition as this.

There is sometimes a vain boasting in religion: but however people may talk when they do not consider, I will venture to assert that there is not a thinking man upon earth, whom such a message as this which was brought to Hezekiah, would not alarm. He has talked about dying—he has thought of it if he is really a thinking man, and has made some preparation for it: but, when it comes, and the prophet says, Set thine house in order—set about the great work—prepare to die! there is not a thinking man upon earth, whom that message would not alarm. What, then, must be the case with the unprepared and impenitent, who have never thought or inquired respecting the foundation on which a sinner must stand; nor regarded the subject

when set before them? and yet, it must be said to them—it must shortly be said to each of them—Thou art but a dead man!

In this admonition there is implied, 1st, *Set thy temporal affairs in order*: thou art a king; put every thing in a proper posture for removal; thou hast had special privileges, and must give an account of them; for “thou shalt die, and not live.” It is an ornament to a Christian in his profession, that he is a man of order, and a pattern to others as respects his temporal matters. Thus, in regard to his family, he will look around and say,—I have endeavored to do my duty to each; I have done what I could for them.

But, 2nd, and more especially, it implies,—“Set thine house in order” *in respect to thy spiritual affairs*,—in regard to the things which concern salvation: so that when God comes, thou mayest be ready to give in thy account. For, are we not stewards, who must give account of our stewardship? Are we not soldiers, who have to fight before receiving a crown? Have we not a “course” to finish before receiving a prize?

If we consider what death is—the passing from a changeable state into an eternal and fixed one—it will appear the most awful consideration in the world! Therefore, “Set thine house in order:” put thy temporal and spiritual affairs in such a posture, as becomes a dying man who must shortly appear before God.

3rd. But there seems to be something further: “Set thine house in order,” *for thou art specially warned*. Another may be dying, and not know it; but thou art dying under an express declaration of its approach. It is God’s plan in his moral government, that a humbling dispensation should follow a prosperous one. The best of us need admonition, and to be called up to reflection. We are acting as if we were not to die at

all.—The world does not know what dying is: “The man is gone!” they say; such a one “has put an end to his existence!” This is an atheistical way of talking. Is there an end of the man? was there an end of Dives? was there an end of Lazarus?

While God employs ministers—poor sinners to stand up and speak to others—earthen vessels, in which he is pleased to put his treasure, and to convey it; yet, it is not uncommon for God to become a preacher expressly *himself*; as if he should say to a man—You have heard from Sunday to Sunday what is said from the pulpit, and have listened in a formal and careless manner; but I will make you feel that I AM HERE: I will make you feel the truths preached: I will shake thy frame: I will open the grave before thine eyes: I will bring it sensibly before thee: I will take one, or two, or three out of thy family: I will make thee feel that thou art thyself within sight of the pit: I will place thee as among the dead: I will make thee contemplate the eternal world as at hand: I will say to thee, “Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.”

Did you ever know any thing of this? Did you ever know what it was to look death in the face? If you have, I will ask you another question—What was your view of the world at that time? What was your view of those fond imaginations that have taken hold of your heart in times past? What, then, did you think of religion? What, then, did you think of the Lord of life? What, then, did you think of a foundation to set the soul of your foot upon? What, then, of Christ? What, then, of his atoning blood, shed upon the cross to purchase pardon—to reconcile thee to God—and to make death gain? And let me ask you, now that you are restored to life and health—Are these things different to what they were then? Does the coldness that is

come upon conscience since you have got over your sickness, and have been mixing with the world, take from the reality of these things? If they appeared so important in contemplation, what must they appear in vision in another world! You see, therefore, that it is a most important message to be brought to a man's conscience—"Set thine house in order;" especially since it must be said to every one—Thou art but a dead man;—if not to-day, thou shalt be to-morrow.

4. The great wisdom of man, therefore, is to know *how to set his house in order*; *i. e.* to put his heart, and affairs, into such a posture, as that whenever death comes, he may be ready and prepared;—however he may be alarmed at the moment—yet that he may be ready to meet it without fear of consequences.

If you will set out this next year as a truly wise and rational creature, begin with considering your state as a dying sinner. And though you may not all at once be able to enter into the comfort, and encouragement, and privileges of the Gospel—yet, set about religion; think of your eternal affairs; consider that death may be at hand. Setting your house in order, will not make death come the sooner, but the safer. Begin with your state: consider that death will strip you of every thing like disguise or pretence: begin with your own heart; and begin with God. Putting off the matter will only harden your conscience. Begin, I say, with your heart; carry it to God, and beg of him to cleanse the thoughts of your heart by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, and enable you to prepare for death and eternity.

The great business in coming to the house of God is not to hear the speculations of a preacher upon some particular passage of Scripture, and to learn what may

be said upon it: but to bring the matter home to our conscience, as it concerns ourselves.

In making an application of this discourse, we are to ask ourselves—Is this an important affair? Is this every man's concern? There can be no doubt of it: this is every man's matter; for every man will soon be called upon to set his house in order, because he shall die, and not live: and though we are not kings, yet we have a grand concern in the salvation of our souls.

Where are those that yesterday attracted the eyes of all around them? Where are they now? Where are the mighty actors that kept the world awake? Where are many that worshipped with us in this house in the year that has just passed? They are now in their silent graves: and we may be placed in ours in less space of time. Are our friends gone, and are we following them, having no certainty that we shall continue another day before we do follow them, and have we not a special warning? Have we not been warned again and again that we are as the grass—that our life is but an hand's breadth—that we are dust? Another year is now cut off from our life: what so properly claims our attention as setting our affairs, for both worlds, in order? We have a vast concern, whether we be rich or poor: for as a good writer* very properly observes, "My death will be no more regarded by the world than that of a worm or a fly; but is of infinite consequence to me."

While I am, therefore, with a feeble voice calling you to recollection, I would say *to the young*—Do not feel secure of life because you are young. God may call you away before your father or your mother; for small and great will stand before his judgment seat. You

* Adam's Private Thoughts.

are old enough to consider the great truths of the Gospel; old enough to know that you are sinners, and that you need a Saviour. Your conscience will declare in the day of judgment that God continually spoke to you in his word, and called you to repent, and prepare to meet him; and you will be able to urge no excuse why you should not have sought his favor, and obtained pardon of your sins.

To the *sanguine, and busy*, I would say—To what end is all your turmoil and energy in the things of this life only? Have you never considered that, in a very few years, others will be dividing your substance, and smiling at your anxiety and toil? And while they are enjoying the fruits of your labor, where will you be? What will have become of your poor soul, for which you made no provision? Death is advancing with rapid progress: how often do we see the strong and vigorous snatched away, leaving behind them the trembling, the sick, and the aged! This is a certain truth, that if you die without any preparation—without setting at least your eternal affairs in order—you will have no better prospect than the rich man who died, and was buried; and “in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments!”

The subject is peculiarly addressed *to the aged*:—to those who, in the course of nature, cannot remain long upon earth. Do you still stand trembling on the brink of eternity, and yet have not begun to set your house in order? This is one of the most melancholy spectacles that can be presented to a thinking mind! There is no way of passing the king of terrors safely, but through faith in Him who conquered death, and gave his children the privilege of singing, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” In the passage before us, we learn our remedy in all cases,

however desperate. We are taught how to turn our faces to the wall, and say :—Thou art indeed but a dead man, whom none of thy fellow-creatures can help : still, O my soul, thou canst look to Him who is “the resurrection and the life :” thou canst fly to Christ, and plead with him, and weep sore for all thy past sins. Instead of imitating Adam, in seeking to hide himself in a thicket for shelter, thou canst come to God, embracing the great remedy he has provided in the Gospel. Oh, it is an awful thing indeed to sit for years under the sound of the Gospel, and yet never to learn what is the great remedy it holds forth !

Satan comes in, to be the counsellor of that man who will not take God's counsel. It is a melancholy thing, says he, to talk of dying, and setting thy house in order : therefore, choose something cheerful and entertaining : get into company, and drown thought : have recourse to amusements : death will not come yet : keep up your spirits : take an opiate : it will be time enough to repent upon a death-bed !

Let me caution you to distinguish the method which Hezekiah took (and which is left for our example) from what I call a death-bed repentance. His was not a death-bed repentance ; nothing like it ! Hezekiah was like a child whose father had sent him a threatening message : he had not now to find out who his father was, and the way to him : he had not now to begin the great work of salvation : but he was to have recourse to a Friend whom he knew he had ; who would be one still ; to whom he could commit his all ; and to whom he could appeal, as to an heart-searching God, before whom he had walked. He did not bring this as his title why the Lord should be merciful to him, but as an evidence that he had really loved and served that God to whom he could now fly in the day of trouble.

1st. This history teaches us, that *when the Lord strikes our only method is to turn to him*: it teaches us, that there is no way of flying from the rod of a father but to the bosom of a father: it teaches us that it is a blessed dispensation and rod that drives us to God. The Lord is a refuge in the most desperate cases: and here it is that the Christian feels his ground to differ from that of a worldly man. For what remedy has the world in this case—"Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live?" What could the world have said to Hezekiah? What could all the kings of the earth have done in this case? What way or resource has nature in such a case as this? The utmost that wealth, power, interest, art, or science could possibly say, would be—"We can do nothing!—nothing at all! thou art but a dead man, and we cannot give life."

2ndly. This history teaches us *our true remedy in all cases*: we have to study the habit of a child: we must arise and go to our Father, turn to him who smiteth, and plead with him. We are not to put off this to a death-bed, and say—then, I will turn to God. It must be done now, or not at all. If we have not formed this habit before, we cannot then turn to God as Hezekiah did, knowing that he was running to a father and a friend with whom he was acquainted. King Asa knew better what to do with an army than with a disease: in his sickness he was tempted to lean upon the physicians. His fault was not the making use of physicians, but the leaning upon them. God allows us to express our wants—to use means—and to put him upon acting for us: this is the right way.

3rdly. *Let us stand encouraged by the success which attended the prayer of Hezekiah*, and which appears in all those cases which the Scripture brings forward;

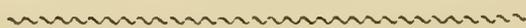
whereby we are taught that "the Lord is nigh unto them that call upon him:" but mark! "to them that call upon him in truth:" there are some of whom it is said—"Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer." Prov. i. 28. Hezekiah could say, "Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee:" I hear thy voice; I tremble before thee: it is true, I am but as a dead man; but remember, I beseech thee, that I am thy child; that I am walking before thee, and with thee; "and Hezekiah wept sore." Here was a tenderness of spirit—a contrite heart, to which the Lord has said he is nigh: and we might be sure that the Lord would answer him either in *kind* or in *kindness*. Here was also sincerity, which is no small thing in religion; you cannot think too much of it, if you do not make a title of it, and put it in the place of Jesus Christ and his righteousness. There are some who are ignorant, to this hour, of the scheme of redemption; which treats with man as a sinner; which shows that there is no remission of sin without shedding of blood; that no blood can redeem the soul but the blood of Him who was at once God and man, who purchased the Church by his own blood. Hezekiah did not bring sincerity as a *title*, but as an *evidence*: *q. d.* I appeal to my Father, that I am his child; I appeal to my Master, that I have been one of his servants.

It is no small attainment to walk before God with uprightness; to be simple-minded, and single-eyed. Sincerity, I repeat, is most valuable, if you do not make a *title* of it: for what is religion without it! It is a proper evidence of character. I have known persons who could tell long experiences, talk of extraordinary raptures and manifestations, make high pretensions: but I have had no comfort at all in hearing them, but far more pain than if they had talked the

wildest nonsense : because, of all things in the world, there is nothing so distressing, or shocking, as a prostitution of religion. There has been evidently one thing lacking—SINCERITY:—simplicity—singleness of heart—a good character—consistency—honesty ; and if these be wanting, away with all religious talk and mere cant!—a profane swearer is not more offensive than such a man, nor more hurtful to Christianity. I have known others who could say but little—perhaps not very clearly discerning the things which they have spoken of—who spoke very humbly : I have seen them mean much, in their conduct, spirit, and transactions : and to such I would hold out the strongest encouragements. I would say to them—How depressed and distressed soever you may be—though, as it were, under a sentence of death—yet can you, like Hezekiah, turn your eyes to Jesus Christ the King of Glory ? Can you say, as he said, “ Lord, I am oppressed ; undertake for me ! ”—put underneath me thy everlasting arms : let me be clothed in thy righteousness, and accepted in thy sight ! Let such, in the midst of all the dark prospects which may seem to surround, and almost to overwhelm them, causing them to conclude with Hezekiah—“ I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul ; ”—let them read on : “ O Lord, by these things men live : ” What ! By humbling dispensations ? by depression ? by being broken to pieces ? by being, as it were, torn asunder, and having all their worldly hopes cut off ? “ O Lord, by these things men live : and in all these things is the life of my spirit : ” observe—“ the life of my *spirit* : ” God means to build the soul by frequently breaking to pieces the body : God means to build up the man in his spiritual state, by breaking his animal one to pieces. “ So wilt thou recover me, and make me to live : ” by which it appears, that Hezekiah

got something more than a deliverance from death : he had the stroke sanctified : he was made to live in a superior and better way.

Instructed, therefore, by your painful dispensations, set out in the year upon which we are about to enter by praying that God would sanctify every stroke of his rod, and cause every affliction to prove a remedy for greater evils than temporal death : so shall you end the year with thanksgiving. That you may thus prosper in soul and body, may God of his infinite mercy grant, for Christ's sake !



THE DEATH-BED OF BEN-HADAD.

And Elisha came to Damascus ; and Ben-hadad the king of Syria was sick ; and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither. And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and inquire of the Lord by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease ?—2 KINGS, viii. 7, 8. [1797.]

THE history of fallen man, as set forth in the Scripture, is found like Ezekiel's roll, "written within and without, lamentations, and mourning, and woe." God has established a sure connection between sin and sorrow. The only alleviation in this case is, "The day-star from on high hath visited us."

While considering this history, we shall see, both in the message sent by Ben-hadad, and in the character of Hazael as depicted by the prophet Elisha, something of what is in man, and what God knows him to be. It is well for us, that he only knoweth our hearts who can bear with them.

I propose first, to make some remarks on the death-

bed of Ben-hadad ; and afterwards to call your attention to the exceeding deceitfulness of the heart, and the nature of temptation, as illustrated in Hazael. Let us notice,

I. THE DEATH-BED OF BEN-HADAD.

“Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and inquire of the Lord by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease ?” There is no more affecting sight upon the face of the earth, than the death-bed of an unconverted sinner ! A man standing upon the shore of eternity—within one step of it—without the least knowledge of what he has to step upon when he enters it ! Death is to be found in every house ; but how few are found prepared for it !—This man made no inquiry of the Prophet till he could make no use of the answer given. Sinners, when they come to die, are like drowning men catching at twigs. Such is the folly of putting off inquiry as to where they shall find ground on which to set the sole of their foot, till they come to die !

“Go, meet the man of God, and inquire :” but for what ?—Where I shall find pardon ? Where I shall find a better righteousness than my own ? No such thing ! “Go, and inquire, whether I shall recover of this disease !” just as though he should inquire something of a fortune-teller. Such is the picture of this man !

But let us apply this to our own case : you, and I, shall soon come to our last extremity. Many who live a life of indifference to religion will at last send for a Minister, hoping he will say something that may quiet their consciences. You, that are putting off religion to a dying hour, may think to turn to God when you are unable to turn in your beds. But this is absolute

madness. "Now, is the accepted time ; now, is the day of salvation." Your prayer should now be—O Lord, prepare me for that hour : help me to flee for refuge to the hope set before me : open mine eyes to the true light which now shineth ; let my path be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day ! "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you."

There are a set of poor unthinking creatures, who while they are in health laugh at religion, and those who profess it ; but the time will come when death will convince them of their folly and madness : and there are many who say with Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his ;" but we should take care to have truth on our side in time. If we learn the blessedness of true religion by living the life of the righteous, then we shall know what satisfaction it will afford when we come to die. There is not a poor wretch now in the bottomless pit but is convinced of truth : there is a time coming when every ungodly worldling will be convinced of truth : but that is not enough : we must receive the truth now : we must have that true wisdom which consists in knowing our opportunity, and the danger of neglecting it. He that would rise when the world is in ruins, must now seek an interest in him who is the Saviour of sinners. The danger of procrastination, and of our becoming hardened in sin, may be further impressed upon our minds when we consider,

II. THE EXCEEDING DECEITFULNESS OF THE HEART, AND THE NATURE OF TEMPTATION, AS ILLUSTRATED IN HAZAEL.

Read the verses following the text, to the 16th.

Here is a very striking picture. The man of God “settled his countenance steadfastly upon Hazael until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept.” Exalted to the spirit of prophecy, he saw all that was coming on. “And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel:” I see, and know, the lengths of wickedness to which thou shalt go. What is most remarkable in this passage is the surprise expressed by Hazael. “And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” Hazael, no doubt, spoke as he felt: he was satisfied in himself: but he did not know himself, nor the nature of temptation.

But has not the Scripture informed man of this? Has it not said, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?” Whenever we see sin overspreading the face of the earth, it is because “out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” Matt. xv. 19. See also James i. 13, 17. These facts should raise a strong suspicion in our minds, and show what we are capable of, if permitted to fall under temptation. One of our reformers, when he saw a man going to execution, said, “There goes John Bradford but for the grace of God!”

Much is implied in the prophet’s answer, “Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel:” *q. d.* there is an evil in thy heart which a new situation will bring into exercise. We do not know our own hearts. That is God’s prerogative. See Rev. ii. 23: “And all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and the heart.” A Saviour who could not search the heart would not be a fit Saviour for sinners: and they who know any thing of

themselves know that their greatest danger lies within. There are certain principles of evil in our nature of which, in the absence of temptation, we are little aware. The sea, when the wind is calm, may look very smooth : but only wait the influence of a rising gale, and all becomes ruffled : wave rises upon wave, till all is in a state of commotion ; and nothing is cast up but “mire and dirt.”

While a heathen could say, “Man, know thyself!” it is only God, speaking to the heart, that can make a man know himself. It may be said, Hazael was a bad man, and therefore not a rule for others. Hazael was a man left to himself : and he was only one, amongst an immense number of others, who prove that “the world lieth in wickedness ;” or, in the wicked one. Human nature is a bankrupt : human nature is a Hazael !

It is not only the man who is hardened by bad habits that will exemplify this. We see instances of it in God’s own people ; many of them eminent characters, whose crimes were aggravated by the time and circumstances in which they were committed ; even after they had been particularly favored, and employed by God. See Lot at Zoar. See David, the man after God’s own heart, and called to be a penman of the word of God : was David a man of bad habits ? Read the book of Psalms. He who had thirsted after God as the hart thirsteth after the water-brooks, and who had counted the words of his mouth to be more precious than silver and gold, had still so deceitful a heart that when a train of suitable temptations was laid, he was guilty of both adultery and murder ! So Solomon, after his fine dedication of the temple, how did he go astray after heathenish women, till he became guilty of idolatry ! Hezekiah was not a man of bad habits ;

yet he had something in his heart which he did not suspect. The Lord left him to himself; and then it came out: see 2 Kings xx.; instead of impressing the messengers sent to him with the greatness and glory of Israel's God, he fell under the temptation of vanity, and wished to impress them with the greatness of Israel's King. These examples are left to teach us the vanity of what men call their "good hearts." It is a miserable thing to hear people talking like the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are!"

If these evils are so deeply rooted, and so ready to discover themselves when occasion offers, how watchful should we be, and how prayerful that God would preserve us! If we understand human nature aright, we shall ascribe it to God that there is any peace, at home or abroad, for a single day! It is true that when we are not under temptation, we may feel abhorrence at certain acts. I am persuaded that the worst characters, if they had been forewarned, in early life, of the enormities they should commit, would have been shocked, and perhaps expressed themselves as Hazeal did.

Take for instance the case of Napoleon Bonaparte. If this man had been told at an early period of his life—You shall take such and such towns—commit such and such violations—he would have said, like Hazeal, "But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?"

This may point out to us the power and the progress of temptation; what is it for a man to say to himself, concerning any sin, "Is it not a little one?" I will stop here: I will just do this thing and no more! But a man can stop nowhere, if he does not stop at the beginning of sin and temptation.

From this subject I would admonish the young and

inexperienced, who have hitherto been only under the shelter of their parents' roof; and who, perhaps, scarcely know what temptation means. Do not refuse to listen to the admonitions of your parents: do not think them needless, and think that you can take care of yourselves. God hath declared that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and none but God knows what you may be capable of, if left to yourselves. Young man, remember Hazael! know thine own heart! but in order to know it, take the Bible to learn it by; and pray to the Holy Spirit to open your eyes, and then you will see the net and the baits of Satan; and you will see the nature of this world's success. God alone can keep you from evil. Hazael had, what the world calls, success and prosperity. He was elated at the thoughts of becoming a king, notwithstanding the horrid things that the prophet foretold he should do. His imagination was filled with this idea, I shall be a king! and if so, the sooner the better! Hitherto, he had not been in a situation to discover his own heart; but, now it begins to come out: he would break through every thing to be a king; instead of waiting, as he ought, the Lord's time. He then went home, told his master a lie, and after that, added to his lie the crime of murder!—Had Hazael been driven into obscurity, these evils might never have come forth. This should teach us to be thankful for that situation in which God has placed us; and not to give way to murmuring or discontent, or wish to have the placing of ourselves. Do any of you lead a life of pain? who can tell but there is something in your heart that needs to be kept down by it? Are you in narrow circumstances? you know not the danger of wealth, or the evils it might draw out of your heart. You will, by and by, come to see that if it had not been for that

affliction, or for that bereavement, or that loss in trade, there was some "root of bitterness" in your heart of which you were unconscious, but which might have proved your entire overthrow. Since we have a Guide, whose love is as great as his power, let us leave all to him, believing that he knows what is best. You would think it madness to find fault with the heavenly bodies over your heads; to say, or even to think, that you could have better disposed the planetary system: yet, it is quite as great madness and folly to be dissatisfied with your state and portion here. God knows our constitutions, and what is our besetting sin; and, like a general in an army, appoints to each of us our proper post. Our gracious Commander has respect to the peculiar character of every individual; and he will not lay upon us more than we are able to bear. If he call us to go through difficulties, he will also make a way of escape. The great thing for which we should seek, and pray, is, that whatever be our lot it may be a sanctified one.

I address the man of business: You may be successful in your schemes, and yet may need to be taught, that unless you are ingrafted on the true Vine, and are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, you can have no real happiness from your success. Nay, if you be a real Christian, and have felt the depravity of your heart, and have often prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God:" bring me to the foot of the cross: lead me in the narrow way!—yet, you must remember, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool,"—whether he be a Christian or not. We must not trust in ourselves, or others: we must not trust even in our ministers, who are only our messengers: but we must trust in the Lord, who will never disappoint. Jer. xvii. 5—7. David, and Peter, teach us that no man may trust in his

own heart, or good resolutions, or past experience. For want of this godly jealousy, some of the most exalted characters have departed from God by little and little, till they have given awful proofs of what man is when left to himself!

Let us prize the remedy which the Gospel provides. Christ has proposed a radical cure. Nature can make a puppet: false religion can paint the outside of the sepulchre, and leave the inside "full of dead men's bones:" any spiritual quack can present a sandy foundation; but, "thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." Isa. xxviii. 16.

1st. Hence we learn, in conclusion, *that false accounts, and groundless expectations, are among the principal agents of hell.*

Ben-hadad little thought that his servant, whom he trusted, would come back with a lie, and then murder him. (See ver. 10.) "Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto Ben-hadad, Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die:" *i. e.* there is not so much in the nature of the disease but what he might recover; but the Lord hath showed me that he shall not recover.

Now, mark the lying expectation, and the false account he took to the king, who asked him—"What said Elisha to thee? And he answered, He told me that thou shouldest surely recover." The king probably said to himself, Then, I will make myself easy; I shall recover! Thus he lost even the short space allowed him for repentance!

Brethren! those are the agents of hell, who rock others to sleep when in the most critical and dangerous state! Are not these facts seen every day? Are

not baits prepared—whether presented to the eye or the ear,—to turn away the mind from the “one thing needful?”—to keep out of sight the true foundation? Young people, you know not how Satan will set any thing before your eyes to keep God out of your minds. If a man discovers the bait, so as to be aware of it, and escape it, it is a great privilege! Bless God that the true light shines, and shows you plainly a narrow way, and a broad road: it tells you, that one leads to life eternal, and the other to destruction, “where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” These are both set before us by “the true light” that “now shineth.”

2ndly. We may see from the case before us, that *when once a corrupt heart is fully set, and instigated to do evil, it is capable of any wickedness.*

“When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Dr. Johnson speaks of the danger of cherishing one wrong desire in the heart. What a conflagration may a single spark occasion! Therefore Solomon cautions us to shun the path of the wicked: “Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.” Look at the man of whom we have just been speaking, who set out from nothing, and who is now become the troubler of Europe—if God does not put a stop to his mad projects, where will they end?

Natural causes are a merely secondary consideration: he knows but little of history, and much less of God, who places confidence in natural causes. The poor have not the perplexities of the rich: they know little what serpents lurk in the path of the rich: what temptations, what entanglements, what incentives to ambition, and the lusts of present things! And frequently, some bad passion, or propensity being irritated,

the man rushes on with mad impetuosity, and knows no bound.

“Keep,” therefore, “thine heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” With how much caution do we watch that no spark falls which might endanger our houses! We take every precaution to secure ourselves, with bolts and bars, against robbers! in these things we act rationally. Let us be influenced by rational considerations in regard to spiritual things: let us watch against evil, and take every means to hold fast to God. “Simon, Simon,” said our Lord, “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not:”—such is the power of the enemy, he will lead you on to any thing!

Let us consider, and pray, with one heart, that we may receive the truth, and be kept from evil. God says of his Church, “I drew them with the cords of a man:” *i. e.* not only by spiritual influences, but by rational considerations; by such cords as men draw with; or, are drawn with. Let us have the wisdom to know our opportunity, and the danger of neglecting it. Let us watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation.

A man is sometimes overtaken by a temptation before he is aware. He says, like Hazael, “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” We are often least afraid, when most in danger: the armor may be ready, but it is not put on. Happy is it for us, that there is One who watches over us, like a parent; who sees where the child is likely to fall, when he does not expect it. God, by his warnings, calls upon us to watch; and by his promises, encourages us to pray.

I speak to Christians: If you live ever so long—have ever so great experience—yet not a day, not an

hour is there, when you do not need to watch against temptation. I call on you to *expect* temptation: perhaps in such a form as you have not hitherto experienced. If you expect it, you will be less surprised by it when it comes: treat it wisely; but go not into the way of it. Come boldly to the throne of grace for strength to meet it: if you cannot come with that firmness and constancy which you could wish, yet come as you can; saying with the woman of Canaan, "Lord, help me:" I can only hope for power and victory through thy grace.—I do not hesitate to say, that they who live without a sense of the danger and power of temptation, and thence are not led to watch and pray against it, have no ground for thinking themselves Christians. The sense of need, and of God as our only helper, is a criterion of a real Christian.

LIFE, THE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY.

Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.—JOHN xi. 9, 10. [1805.]

WE are now entering on a new year: and as man is drawn by the cords of a man, that is, not only by spiritual influences, but by rational considerations, let us seriously consider our state and condition before God, and pray with one heart, that we may enter upon this year in newness of spirit. And may the influences of the Holy Spirit rest upon us!

"Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Now, if a man walks in the day, if he does his appointed work

in it, then fresh advances will be attended with fresh prosperity. But if a man trifles in those twelve hours—if he suffers the light to pass, and his work is not done, and the night overtake him, “when no man can work”—then he loses his opportunity, and must take all consequences.

Notice the particular occasion on which these words were spoken. The disciples, upon hearing that our Lord proposed to go again into Judea, said unto him, “Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world:” as though he had said, Is not the period of my work as much determined as the duration of the natural day? Is it not fixed by my Father’s will? During this period the light of my day shines: and while it continues, “I must work the works of Him that sent me.” “For if any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not:” he can then see the impediments, difficulties, and dangers of his path. “But if a man walk in the night,”—if the dilatory traveller puts off his journey till the evening, he is overtaken by the night; and being unable to discern his path, “he stumbleth.”

I shall call your attention,

I. TO THE WISDOM OF KNOWING OUR OPPORTUNITY:
“*Are there not twelve hours in the day?*”

II. TO THE DANGER OF NEGLECTING IT: “*The night cometh,*” when men can neither walk nor work.

I. THE WISDOM OF KNOWING OUR OPPORTUNITY. This principally depends upon our walking and working while it is light. The light is with us as long as we have the word of God. A heathen has no light; he has nothing but superstition. But, says the Psalm-

ist, "Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lamp unto my path." More especially is the light with us, when we have that word faithfully preached; when it is opened and urged upon our consciences by faithful ministers. Our opportunity is also great when we see signal instances of the power and grace of God in others. The man out of whom the devils were cast, besought Jesus that he might be with him. But our Saviour answered, "Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee." Wherever real grace reaches the heart, and a man is enabled, by his living and walking according to it, to demonstrate the reality of religion—there is a great light.

Our opportunity is still greater, if we have found this grace reach our own hearts. If a man sits down and considers how gracious the Lord is; how merciful the proclamation of grace and pardon to the guilty; if he sees that there is no impediment to his accepting the proposal: such a man shall know whither he goeth: he walketh while the sun is up: his sin and guilt shall be rolled upon another: in his affliction he shall find a cordial for every wound: and he shall be able to take hold of the cold hand of death, and say, Though worms destroy this body, yet there shall be sunshine in the church-yard: he shall be able to say, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?"—Let us further consider,

II. THE DANGER OF NEGLECTING OUR OPPORTUNITY.

"The children of this world," says our Lord, "are wiser in their generation than the children of light." When a man from the top of a hill sees a fine prospect, he says to himself—True, this is very fine now, but it would be horrible to remain here till midnight; there-

fore I must get housed before night comes. How do merchants, and other men of business, calculate the value of the day? They all ask, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" and they take care to improve them, so as best to promote their worldly interests. But why cannot men see the importance of their opportunity in spiritual things? A child, who had well improved one year, might be considered to have lived long: while the sinner, being an hundred years old, but who had not lived long enough to find out his opportunity, or to begin his day's work, must be accounted a mere child in understanding.

There is a great mistake which men are apt to make. They confound darkness with death and the grave. Wherefore they put off all thoughts of eternal things, as gloomy subjects, to be attended to by and by. To-morrow, and to-morrow, is the fool's maxim. But there is no such necessary connection: for death and the grave may be illuminated by the light of life. Job could look at death, and say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God." But let a man ask himself, Do I not now walk in darkness? Am I not so hindered by an incessant attention to my occupation, as to be perplexed, and blinded, to every thing besides? "I must work while it is day," says Christ. What says the sinner? Does he not say, I have a great deal besides to do! I have married a wife; I have a farm, and oxen to attend to!

Let us remember, that whether we improve the day or not, it goes on; our opportunity is passing away. The day is a picture of life; consisting of a morning, noon, and evening. We put off what we should do in the morning till noon; and what at noon, till the evening; and so on. Another great portion of our life is

gone in the past year: Oh what a picture does it present! How many that were here this day twelve months have gone into eternity! Our sand is running apace. "Woe unto us! for the day goeth away," saith the prophet! Should we not send up a prayer that we may be enabled to work while it is day?

The men of the world are like children playing with toys. They do not like to be bid to put them down. But the moment a spark of true light shines into their hearts, they wake as out of a dream, and say, What! have I never thought—

"That awful day will surely come,
Th' appointed hour makes haste,
When I must stand before my Judge,
And pass the solemn test."

The foolish go on carelessly hearing these things till the night actually comes. But though conscience is stupid through the day, it is very common to see such an one awake up at night, and then his language is, I have lived a rebel, and I must die without hope! It is not sufficient then to cry, "Lord, Lord!" for though God can display the glory of his grace in saving a sinner at the eleventh hour; yet this is not meant for us to ground presumption upon. This would be to sin that grace might abound.

If man lingers and loses his opportunity, no wonder if Satan in the meantime is busy. He will be overtaken by the twilight of doubt, so that the very light that is in him will become darkness: he will be under the jaundice of prejudice: he will become the victim of some idle tradition: if a man by any mode says, I will not see—the Lord says, you *shall* not see! there is added a judicial blindness! When a man regards truth as a fable, he shall be led away by some delu-

sion. There is no darkness like judicial darkness! "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." He shall not be so much as uneasy: but the time is coming when it shall be said, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness!"

And while this darkness is advancing through its various stages, what is the careless sinner about? He is going on in sin, in vain amusements, in the eager pursuit of trifles. He does not know what he is about: he is all wrong. What a danger is there, if we walk after the twelve hours are expired! "The night cometh when no man can work:" and "if a man walk in the night he stumbleth." See Prov. i. 24. Let me say, therefore, to every careless sinner, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Take heed lest it be said, You have had a warning this year, but you shall never have another!

If the importance of opportunity, and the danger of approaching darkness, should quicken the traveller—then let me seriously address myself to young persons. You are entering upon another year, and are pleased with its opening prospects. You say, perhaps, My health is good, my day is bright; and you presume it will never be night. But remember, there are only twelve hours in the day. And, after believing a thousand lies, you will find old age stealing upon you. While you are young. I call upon you to regard "the day-spring from on high"—to behold "the Sun of righteousness;" then, whatever occurs, you will be able to say with David, "God hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire." I call upon you, while in the prime of life, to own this. Judge of things by this light; for it is the only true light.

St. Paul so estimated it, that he counted all things but dung and dross in comparison. Lean not to your own understanding: call things as God calls them; and then you will be right. Waste not your time in sleep; be like the ant, which layeth up her food in summer; waste not your time in speculation: what would you think of a captive shut up in his dungeon with only one inch of candle, and instead of using the light to read his Bible, in order to know what to do to be saved, was found reading a novel till the very moment when he was called to execution? Take care of the *ignis fatuus*, a fire which, as in nature so in morals, arises from a bog. In the twelfth chapter of St. John you see a consequence: "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." The wise men, when they saw the star, not only rejoiced at it, but followed it; and it brought them to the place where the young Child lay. If you are led by true wisdom, it always leads to Jesus.

Remember, through this new year, that "before honor is humility." Set out, casting your care upon God. I recommend you to improve birthdays—special events in providence—death of relatives, friends, and neighbors; as well as New Years' days. Each has a voice in the ears of a wise man; and cries, "Walk in the light, lest darkness come upon you."

Finally, the text admonishes ministers: it tells us that if we have any hope of looking Christ in the face with comfort, it must be by working while it is day. If our object be to please the world, it will make work for repentance. We must set our faces like a flint, if we would give up our account with joy. Let us consider the view which Christ had of his work, and the

shortness of time ; which should be a powerful argument with us also to attend to our work.



PRAYER FOR DIVINE GUIDANCE.

For thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.—PSALM xxxi. 3. [1795.]

THERE is a disposition in the heart of a true Christian, that whether it be called faith, or hope, or love, it leads to reclining the heart upon One that has made a proposal, and is willing to save ; and this disposition is habitual. It is strongly exemplified throughout the Book of Psalms.

There is an old proverb, that when God means to destroy a man, he suffers him to be infatuated ; that is, he leaves him to himself. On the other hand, it may be said, when God means to save a man, he teaches him that he can of himself do nothing, and leads him to adopt the language of the text : “ Lead me, and guide me.” I shall consider,

I. THE PETITION ITSELF.

II. THE METHODS BY WHICH GOD LEADS THOSE WHO PRAY TO HIM.

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT THUS TO PRAY.

I. THE PETITION ITSELF. If a man sincerely means what he says when he makes this petition, “ For thy name's sake lead me and guide me,” it is evident, 1st, That *he feels his need of being led* ; and that he has a sincere desire, like Abraham and David, to be led in any way that God pleases. It implies, also, that he has full trust in the ability of his Leader. A Christian

knows that there can be no sea so deep, no prison so dark, no case so intricate, but that God is able to make a way of escape. Many persons speak of the wisdom of God, while their conduct implies that they think themselves the wisest. The Christian not only speaks of God's wisdom, but he gives himself up to his guidance.

The petition implies, 2ndly, *A persuasion of the willingness of God to lead.* If I find one able, I must also find one willing, to help such a perverse, straying creature, as I find myself to be. I believe God will do it for his own honor and word's sake : he will be faithful to his oath. The believer will say, God has promised to lead me, and it is impossible for God to lie : he cannot mock the soul that calls upon him for help : therefore I will cry, "For thy name's sake lead me, and guide me : " help me to walk in thy paths. I am a poor, weak, tempted creature ; undertake for me ; lead me, as a wandering sheep, back to thy fold : lead me in the paths of righteousness : teach me, as to the grandest question, how I, a guilty sinner, may obtain pardon, and peace with God.

3rdly. *This petition implies faith :* lead me, "for thy name's sake." I cannot ask it for my own sake, for I have been presumptuous and refractory ; yet I can plead thy character, thy name. My name is folly, weakness, ingratitude : thy name is wisdom, power, mercy : if I can plead nothing else, I can plead thy name. And if God shall get honor by saving me for his name's sake, that is all my desire. Therefore I will pray, Lead me humbly, as one not worthy to gather up the crumbs under thy table ; but also as one who is taught to ask great things. Lead me practically, as a member of society ; so that my religion may not seem to be all notion : lead me, as one that has a part in

life to fulfil; as being related to a family. Our duties are not all of one sort: they are various and connected. Lead me safely, through the danger that surrounds me, as a traveller going through devious paths: lead me securely, as one often tempted out of the right path, and led astray: lead me, as the parent leads, who not only directs the path, but who takes hold of the child's hand. Lead me, in a dying hour, through the valley of death: shine on me, and hold me up: "Let not the water-flood drown me." Lead me evangelically: teach me to sit at the feet of Jesus as an humble, patient, learner; not disputing, nor questioning, nor leaning to my own understanding, but looking to thee. Lead me, in any way that may seem best to thee, on any ground, by any means.

A proud, philosophical mind never put up such a prayer as this, which implies a sense of need, a desire to be led in God's way, and a consciousness that God is both willing, and able, thus to lead so unworthy a creature as man. We may put up such a prayer as this, moment by moment. Let us consider,

II. WHAT ARE THE METHODS BY WHICH GOD THUS LEADS THOSE WHO PRAY TO HIM?

God leads them, 1st, *by his providence*. Some may have long heard the Gospel to little purpose: they go on carelessly: then God sends them a severe loss; he takes away the desire of their eyes with a stroke: he says, If you will not hear, I will make you feel. And it is a blessed affliction that does this. Nothing would do for the prodigal till he began to be "in want;" and even then, he tried to weather it; he tried to fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.

2ndly, God leads *by his word*. A man is in affliction, and is shut up in his chamber; and at length he

is induced to take his Bible, which has been before neglected. This is in reality a providential leading, to draw him to the teaching of the word. The sick man being cut off from all resources, is disposed to read the book of God; and he therein finds a light—a lamp to his feet. Another accidentally passes the church-door, and wanders in: his attention is arrested, and he is led to ask himself, What am I doing? where am I going? The Lord is present by his Spirit, and seals the word preached, and thus the Lord is leading him providentially to his word, and by his word: that word which is able to furnish him with instruction; that word which is everywhere perfect; which can be trusted. It may lead contrary to nature, but it leads safely: therefore it is said, “Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls.” This leads to the friendship of God, which is the only rest for the children of God, as the ark was the only rest for the dove. It is one of Satan’s devices to make us think lightly of the word and ordinances of God, as though they were void and useless; but no one who reads the Scriptures, and observes the promises, but will find, that it is God’s plan to bless us in the use of means; and in none more than in the diligent study of his word. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.”

But though God makes use of his written word, and of his word preached, yet neither of them will do alone: there must be added, 3rdly, *the teaching and leading of his Spirit*, applying the word to the conscience. There may be conviction; there may be outward improvement, and reformation; but till the Holy Spirit comes disturbing effectually “the unclean spirit,” he will only make a temporary departure; “walking through dry

places, seeking rest and finding none." The house may appear "swept and garnished:" people may admire the change; but, unless Christ comes in, as a priest over his own house, and the Holy Spirit takes up his dwelling there, Satan will return again, and bring with him "seven other spirits more wicked than himself," who shall enter in and dwell there, and "the last state of that man shall be worse than the first." Let us, therefore, pray,—Oh write thy word on my heart; put energy and efficacy into it: enable me to get help in any way, by any hint; Oh make a divine impression on my heart! In the day of judgment, no one shall ever look up and say, I sought thee, I prayed to thee to teach me; and thou didst not hear!

A practical renunciation of self is a lesson that God will teach all his children. How was Moses silenced—Jonah—Peter! How was St. Paul taught to say, "When I am weak, then am I strong!"

A young beginner in Christianity may say what he will do: but an old Christian will say what Christ will do; his mind will be growing up unto him in all things; and he will know that his safety lies in keeping close to the footsteps of Christ. Sometimes God lets a poor vain conceited creature alone for a time: he seems to say to him, You think you can guide yourself: try, now, what you can do. Such a one was Naaman; he objected to the remedy; he objected to the manner of applying it; and therefore he went away in a rage. In order to humble him, a servant, a little maid, must be his teacher. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." This was the lesson which God taught Peter; and if he is thus teaching you, enter into his design, see what he is about. God teaches us that we must be reduced to his obedience; come over to his plan; turn from broken cisterns that can hold no water; and pray

with David, "For thy name's sake lead me and guide me." The being enabled to begin this new year with putting up such a prayer, is a token for good.

III. CONSIDER THE ENCOURAGEMENT THUS TO PRAY.

There is scarcely any thing so positively asserted, as that he that seeks shall find : he that asks for guidance shall be led. "The meek will he guide in judgment ; the meek will he teach his way." Whatever may have been our folly, ignorance, or mistakes, let them only teach us to distrust ourselves ; and let us learn, in future, where our true strength lies. We must hang upon a strong arm : we must plead the promise, "I will guide thee with mine eye." God remonstrates with his people ; "Oh that thou hadst hearkened unto me ! then had thy peace been as a river !" If you are tempted to despair of help—if Satan tells you it is too late—remember, it is an enemy who tells you so. It is our privilege to lift up our heads with hope, and to behold a Father and a compassionate Saviour : to see light above when we can see none below : to see order above, when our affairs are all in disorder and confusion around. (See verses 4 and 5 of this psalm.) Learn to imitate the child in the dark : the more it is alarmed, the closer it clings to the hand of its parent. What a rock is this to set the sole of our foot upon !

This psalm has a special relation to Christ, when he lay under the indignation of a holy God, and said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Let us take him as our example : let us turn, as "prisoners of hope," to this stronghold : so shall we be enabled to weather all the storms of time and eternity. There is no way of walking sincerely but in this way : there is no way of avoiding the bye-paths, nor even the snares that are spread in the right paths, but in this way.

Let us hang upon an Almighty arm, and we shall be borne up.

We should embrace every opportunity of acknowledging our Great Leader. Wherever others look, let us say, with Jehoshaphat, "Our eyes are upon thee." Let us look back through the past year, and see how many mistakes we have made, and yet how we have been mercifully delivered. Let us be encouraged to pass through the present year with the same Guide and Helper. Let us look to Him to rule our rulers, and lead our leaders. Let each of us say, I will put my soul, my affairs, my enemies into thy hands: only, do thou, "for thy name's sake, lead me and guide me."

If God is gathering one after another,—if bright and glorious stars are taken away*—if friends, if ministers are removed, say with the poetess,

"Thou dost but take the dying lamp away,
To bless me with thine own unclouded day."

Oh put thyself into the place, and then take what thou wilt: thou canst answer all my necessities: mine eyes are upon thee!

If we have faith thus to act, we shall not only acknowledge our Guide, but glorify him; and he will enable us to say with the Psalmist, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Instead of having lost my Guide, he will be there, to lead me through the dark valley to an inheritance that fadeth not away; and enable me, like Stephen, to look up steadfastly into heaven, and see the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And soon shall we be entering into a state where the sun and moon shall no

* This refers to the death of Mr. Romaine, as appears in Mrs. Cecil's notes of the Sermon.

more withdraw their shining : for the Lord shall be our everlasting light, and prayer shall be exchanged for praise ! That this may be your happy case, and mine, may God of his infinite mercy grant, for Christ's sake !

CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth.—Acts ix. 12. [1791.]

THE account of St. Paul's conversion is short. The chapter begins with informing us that "Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven : and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?"

It is scarcely possible to conceive what a mighty change—what a moral revolution—took place in Saul's mind after this spiritual illumination of his understanding, and conversion of his heart. The very first words which he utters are all emphatical. "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord,—what—wilt thou—havē me—to do ?" Much of the substance of true religion is contained in these words ; which express a desire to be instructed of God.

Wherever this teachable spirit is divinely imparted, the Lord will always answer the inquiry. "And the

Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

The use I shall make of this history is to call your attention--

I. TO THE POWER OF CHRIST;

II. TO THE GRACE OF CHRIST;

III. TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CHRIST, in his kingdom of providence.

I. THE POWER OF CHRIST. "Though," saith the apostle, "he was crucified in weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God." He has ascended into heaven, but his most glorious miracles are still wrought on earth: and one of them is now before us. A persecutor is now become a man of prayer; and this is a much greater miracle than the raising of a dead body. If you hesitate for a moment in regarding this as a moral miracle, consider only what else but Divine power could have effected this? What could argument have done? Could you have given him eyes to see, and the hearing ear? Brethren, the grandest of all miracles is the resurrection of a dead soul! "I pray thee, send him to my father's house," says Dives: for if one went from the dead, they might receive a shock; they might have thoughts of repenting in future. But the question is, would they have experienced any change of heart? Who can change the heart but He that made it? The conversion of a spirit is a Divine operation. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost:" the seat of this change is in the heart, and will. Men may contend for certain doctrines without any real religion. And with respect to the necessity of such a change of heart, our Saviour says, "Except ye be converted, and become as little

children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Here is exemplified the power of Christ. We must distinguish this from a mere shock given to the mind, and also from a mere change of creed. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” A man may join a sect: but God would have him forsake the idols of his heart; which he cannot do until he has experienced a change of heart. Conversion may be distinguished in the idea from regeneration, but can never be separated from it, any more than a traveller disposed to go in a certain road, and one actually going in it. John iii. 9, 10.

We must learn from this, that if we would have any thing effectually done in our hearts, we must beg of Christ to exercise his power, and renew them by the effectual operation of his Spirit. Let us next consider,

II. THE GRACE OF CHRIST.

It is very encouraging when we compare the doctrine of the word with the history of the Church. “Howbeit,” says St. Paul, “for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” Now, let us consider this grace of Christ, as set forth and displayed in the case of St. Paul: “Behold, he prayeth.”

Depend upon it, that when there is a gracious influence, a man will begin to pray in a new manner: he will pray with the heart. And God, in his providence, will bring about events, so that a man may be arrested in his course: and the mode in which this arrest shall take place, may be very mortifying and disappointing, as it may quite give another turn to his intended course. And this change of circumstances will lead to

prayer. It is in this way men are taught to pray. Isa. xxvi. 16. "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee: they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." A man in his religious profession must be thus arrested, and made to pray in earnest. Such a spirit of prayer is promised, Zech. xii. 10. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications:" I will work this mighty miracle.

There is no question but St. Paul had frequently prayed before, and yet it is here mentioned as a new thing. This will always be an evidence to a man's own soul, that he has tasted that the Lord is gracious; he will cry for help, for recovery, for life: and he will be taught, more and more, his need of grace: the Spirit shall take of the things of Christ and show them unto him. This is the work of God: and we may easily suppose what sort of prayer such a man, in such circumstances, would put up!

Nor let us forget that the cause, the true source of all this, was the grace of Christ. If any man for a moment should doubt whether this is a fair account of the case, let him take St. Paul's own account of the matter: "By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain." What is the meaning of the word grace, in this verse, but free favor; pure sovereign mercy? He means to say, The Lord by his free favor having made me what I am, has imparted his influence, by which I labor more than all: "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." So that it is first a free favor of selection, and secondly, an influential effect imparted. St. Paul's own testimony is, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." But I obtained mercy, and I stand forth "as a pattern to

them which should hereafter believe to life everlasting." Instead of disputing about grace, he cries out, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" No effect can rise higher than its cause. We preach not merely the notions, but the power and spirit of religion; namely, the union of the branch to the vine; that power which puts a man upon being a living martyr. Nature can fight no battles; can win no victories: but grace can. But while grace does all this, it lays the sinner low. "No flesh shall glory in his presence." Even St. Paul, a star of the first magnitude, shall not open his mouth to boast; but he shall declare, to all ages, that he obtained mercy "for this cause," that the grace of Christ might be magnified in his conversion. "That in me first," says he, that is, in me emphatically, principally, the grace of our Lord might appear to be exceedingly abundant.

Now, in the mighty operation of this grace, we see the greatest miracle performed. To call Saul the persecutor "from darkness to light," was a greater miracle than to call Lazarus from his grave: and it is by this grace that the same thing is still effected. A man cannot say, I am what I ought to be: yet he may say, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." If I can only offer a poor distracted prayer, yet it is by grace that I can offer any. This participation of Divine grace makes a most important distinction of character. It is this that forms a union between Christians. All the rest is a cabal. Notion is not enough: there must be fruit: the apostle did not merely say that he had obtained mercy; but he proved, by his whole course, that he was essentially different from what he was before his conversion. But the text leads me to speak,

III. OF THE GOVERNMENT, OR PROVIDENCE OF CHRIST.

He knows all our wants, and the way to meet them. Here we find an extraordinary character arrested in his course, struck blind ; to all intents, a prisoner. He thinks over the miraculous occurrence : he prays, he waits in darkness : he knows not what is the process which Christ designs : he is without food three days ; for probably his mind was too much agitated to allow him to eat or drink. But Christ, who watched over him, knew all this ; and therefore he employs a certain disciple, named Ananias ; to whom said the Lord in a vision, “ Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one Saul, of Tarsus ; for, behold, he prayeth.” I see him prostrate before me, praying for the instruction I am about to give him.

My dear hearers, we cannot get on but as we lift up our hearts to God for his help : we must pray, Lord, this day—this hour—this moment—afford me aid ! Whenever God teaches a man to pray, he always answers his prayer, by raising up suitable helps. While Saul was praying, God was working : *q. d.* He shall not pray, and I not hear : the proud Pharisee is become the praying penitent.

Saul’s mind was now prepared for Divine teaching. God had showed him, in a vision, a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Ananias was afraid, and said, “ Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem.” Ananias here showed his frailty : we never do so well as when we do as we are bid.

But the Lord, having begun the work, would go through with it. “ The Lord said unto him, Go thy

way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Mark here how the Lord makes his providence concur with his designs of mercy. A good man may doubt about another good man: he may be backward to receive him as a Christian brother; but when the Lord works, he makes every thing concur with his designs: he knows where to find us helps, and he knows how to send them; and he has promised to send them. How did he send Peter to Cornelius; removing all his scruples! Well therefore may a Christian say with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

The text leads us to consider the kingdom of Christ set up in the world. For in the conversion of eminent opposers, there is a light set up to demonstrate to all what good old Simeon declared, when he embraced the infant Saviour in his arms: "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Here, as if Christ had said, Here is my glory! not in the glory of earthly courts, and the childish show of worldly pomp: here is my glory, "Behold, he prayeth!" Here is a pattern: here is an act of almighty power; Behold it! Yea, he will soon preach the Gospel, and love me more zealously than before he persecuted me!

But whence had this torch such power and splendor? He shall tell us himself. "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." This is the glory of Christ! this is the encouragement of the Church! She is sure of acceptance in the beloved! "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee." Isa. xliii. 4.

Let me therefore call upon every young person that may feel a religious impression, to cherish and to nourish it; and endeavor to pray. If you have been enabled to say, Lord help me! cherish such a serious desire. Depend upon it, the man that prays shall prosper, for time and eternity. You cannot be too much impressed with how little a man can do for himself. We depend upon God for the hour, the day, for every thing; all is in the hand of Christ. The first symptom of your prosperity will be, that you look up to Christ. A spiritual sigh is a blessed token from God: beware of those things that have a tendency to put out this fire.

And remember, he breaketh not the bruised reed. Perhaps you, like St. Paul, are in darkness; and no Ananias appears to succor or comfort you. It is because the time is not yet come. But the time is come when you may pray. Ananias did not come before Saul prayed; for it was said to him of Saul, "Behold, he prayeth." Prayer comes before good things; and it is a token of them. Do not despair; Christ is able, and willing to perform the same miracles still; and the same are continually taking place. Let us therefore seek this evidence of conversion in our own case, and then we shall experience all its blessed effects. St. Paul was soon taught to glory in the reproach of Christ, and to acknowledge him in the midst of a scoffing world; and this will be the case with all who are really taught of God.

A Christian will ever be a paradox to the world; because, while he renounces all things, he gains the most. Whatever St. Paul did after his conversion, this was ever his motto: "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." This is walking with God.

“I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.”

THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.—HAB. ii. 1—3. [1805.]

NOTHING so much degrades a rational man as a want of reflection. There are many who pass through life without ever asking, What am I? where am I? and whither am I going?—In the text we have an example of a conduct every way contrary to this. No man would be destitute of instruction if he had only this book of the Prophet Habakkuk. It contains much of the intercourse between a gracious God and a gracious soul. The prophet lived in times very like ours. See the first chapter, where he complains to God of the violence done by the abuse of the sword among his own people, and the hardships thereby incurred by others;—God answers him, vers. 6 to 12, showing what will be the result of his abused patience and long-suffering: so that the desolations of Israel would become a spectacle to the world; and would be typical of the destruction to be brought upon all the despisers of Christ and his Gospel. St. Paul, in Acts xiii. 41, alludes to these threatened judgments, brought upon the land of Judah by the Chaldeans. In the 12th verse we have the prophet's answer, wherein he draws com-

fort to his own mind from the perfections of God, and his hatred of sin; his covenant in relation to his Church, and his righteous providence. In the text, the prophet expresses his resolution. He seems to say, Now what is the proper position for me, as a rational creature, to stand in? "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower:" I will hearken to what God shall say unto me; and I will consider also "what I shall answer when I am reprov'd." Observe the readiness in God to answer: "And the Lord answered me and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." It is "for an appointed time," and you shall find that all things are ordered in truth and faithfulness, though you must wait: "because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

There are two things especially which we may learn from this passage:—

- I. THE MIND OF THE PROPHET, AS OUR EXAMPLE.
- II. THE MIND OF GOD, AS OUR ENCOURAGEMENT.

I. THE MIND OF THE PROPHET AS OUR EXAMPLE. He seems to say, This is more God's affair than mine. Therefore, I will stand and watch his pleasure: therefore, I will put myself in a position of attention; I will use the means to obtain his favor, even though he should shut me up in this tower; I will look up to this Omnipotent Being. I will listen to what he shall say in providence, without; and what he shall say within, to my heart and conscience. And I will consider how I shall reply, according to the real state of the case: "I will stand upon my watch." I will say, that I am a sinner, waiting for an act of grace. There is no such thing with him as a lost case. I will stand singly, and solitarily. Here is a plain example of a public spirit. While God's judgments are coming on the na-

tion, he has a holy transaction, in regard to them, going on with God. Let us notice,

II. THE MIND OF GOD, AS OUR ENCOURAGEMENT.

No sooner had the prophet made this resolution, than God gave a speedy answer. As if he had said, "Them that honor me, I will honor." I will give you a special direction. "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables." It is truth; and truth will not bow to man; it is man's wisdom to wait patiently for God. I must teach you patience: but, depend upon it, you shall not wait in vain. And while it appears that they who wait for God shall not be ashamed, tell also him whose soul is lifted up, that he is not upright: he is all wrong: "but the just shall live by his faith;" by faith he shall be enabled to wait: by faith and patience he shall conquer every thing; both as it concerns this world and the next. Though the vision is yet for an appointed time, "at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie; it will surely come, it will not tarry."

1st. In improving this text, I shall consider it *as it bears a public aspect*. It shows that a man may be a true believer and yet not lose sight of the things around him, though his affections are "on things above." Habakkuk seems to say, I see the state of public affairs, and will treat with God on the subject. He is found at his post, and in the path of duty: he does not lose his hope: on the contrary, he says, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." He resolves that nothing shall drive him from the path of duty: because, though things at present appear disastrous, "the vision is yet for an appointed time," therefore he will endeavor to

discover what part he has to act in the day of trial; and then he will leave all to God.

2ndly. The text has *a private aspect*; and we may receive strong comfort from it. It teaches the believer not to take his eye off from God as his reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. The world within us, *i. e.* the world in our hearts, affects us much more than any thing exterior. The prophet teaches us, in this respect, that it is a blessed occasion which sends us to the watch-tower; (for sometimes our duties with men make us forget our duties with regard to God;) and that those who wait upon God, may expect an answer from him. It is a blessed distress that sends us to God.

When God tells us his mind, and his designs, he means to exercise our faith. Every worldly man is carried away by his passions; but the believer is taught to wait God's time and will. Such shall hear a word behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left:" they shall have a Guide, and a Protector. Our wisdom is to acknowledge that God is wiser than we are; and this will form the best ground for our faith and patience; we must regard the wisdom of God as to time; and the faithfulness of God in regard to the fulfilment of what he has said; and the power of God to fulfil his largest promises. Every other ground of expectation everlastingly disappoints us: but we may always stand upon this.

3rdly. The text presents *a broad and general aspect*. "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." No one shall be able to say he could not see it. This is the ground of our authority, as ministers, that every thing necessary to our salvation is written plainly upon tables. It is not necessary, as many think, that critical points should be

explained before we can take a step. Has any one thought with seriousness and earnestness, Who will not acknowledge that this plain revelation is preferable, for a dying creature, to all things else? and that all things else are in comparison molehills and nought? Who will doubt, that a calm, sober Christian, does not possess more than all the world can offer?

Therefore, with respect to this *general aspect*, Where do you stand? Where is your watch-tower? In order to stand in the day of judgment, the just must live by faith. You have a warrant to say, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower," and I will wait to hear what the Lord God shall say unto me. A word, or a desire, shall not be disregarded.

Our situation as sinners, like that of the threatened Jews, is very awful. Whether we are old or young, rich or poor, in health or sickness, there is nothing substantial in what we possess here below: the duration of that which we call our "something" is so very precarious; and death will so soon close the scene with us all. The Gospel may be compared to a vision, "for an appointed time." There is "a day of visitation" in which we must know and embrace the things which belong to our peace: the Gospel offers us comfort and support under all trials, as well as deliverance from all our enemies; and we have the full assurance that, at the end of this vision, God's people shall inherit the promises.

Some may say, If every thing is thus fixed, and appointed, what is the use of praying? I answer, It is God's appointed way and means of our obtaining spiritual blessings. Daniel, when he understood, by books, the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem;—yet set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer

and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. The Lord had said by Jeremiah, chap. xiv. "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Our greatest need of faith and patience is when we are not assisted by the external senses, but are told to expect that which we can see no signs of.



THE SAFE COVERT.

Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself, as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.—ISA. xxvi. 20. [1795.]

Nothing seems more unbecoming a minister of the Gospel, nothing seems less his duty, than to turn a day appointed for fasting, prayer, and humiliation, into a day of political disputation. We are called to regard the arm of the Lord lifted up, God stretching out his hand against profaneness, superstition, and atheism, and shaking the nations in his anger. There is no one who does not allow the present times to be portentous, alarming, and eventful. God seems about to punish; man is a mere instrument: whatever scourges are sent, God is to be seen and confessed as the Author, and we must address ourselves to him as the FIRST CAUSE. Let us endeavor to sit at the feet of our Saviour, and see all things in God, and God in all things: for God hath not ceased to act, and to direct whatever is going on in the world. Let us, therefore, attend to the ex-

hortation and invitation of the text. There is a position in which to meet God, as humble penitents bowing before him. I propose,

I. TO CONSIDER THE SENSE OF THE TEXT ;

II. TO MAKE AN APPLICATION OF IT TO THREE CLASSES OF PERSONS.

I. THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEXT is like that of a father addressing his children, and calling them, when in danger, to a place of refuge. "Come, my people," or, my sons, my purchased ones, separated out of the world by the love of the Father, quickened, made alive to God, you, who have God made visible to your hearts, endearing him to you :—"Come," seek a hiding-place before the storm ; seek retirement, to pour out your hearts before God, as you cannot before any friend : go to your chamber, as you are taught to go there : go, and treat with God, for yourselves and for the nation : go, and "hide yourself as it were for a little moment ;" God has promised to hide thee under his wings, and to keep thee as the apple of his eye.

It costs something to be a Christian ; but he has his privileges : one of which is, to be allowed, like Moses, to get into the cleft of the rock while the Lord passes by. "He that believeth shall not make haste." A Christian has always an answer to every thing that threatens :—"A man shall be as an hiding-place." Isa. xxxii. 2. If you have religion only as a name, no wonder if you have not the comfort of it. A Christian, like Noah, has an ARK ; and he has nothing to do with the floods.

"Hide thyself as it were for a little moment." "Our light affliction," says the Apostle, "which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Prayer and humiliation are God's

appointed means of meeting trouble: and wonders have been wrought by them.

“Until the indignation be overpast: for, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.” Behold! come, and look! Consider, what God is about to do!

Whatever judgments are abroad in the earth, the people of God may enter into their chamber, and shut their door, resting secure in the friendship of Him who has promised to be a sun and a shield, and to give grace and glory: this is to dwell in Goshen; to have “a covert from the storm,” Isa. xxxii. There is nothing too great to be accomplished by an almighty arm.

Humiliation becomes a sinner at all times. When we turn over the public and private leaf of our history, we have no need of the cabinet to tell us that “to us belongeth confusion of face.” Every one, both ministers and people, must individually smite upon his breast and acknowledge, “We have sinned and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly in departing from thy judgments.”

The true believer is an enlightened philosopher. He looks through the instrument, and sees the sword in the hand of God. “His anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.” In order to meet divine judgments, there must be national reformation. We avow, by our meeting together this day, that national humiliation becomes us, and that the Lord alone can deliver. “Cursed is man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.” Every national sin is a national sword. There are national evils which have not been sufficiently marked. One of these is, pride. We give vice the names of virtue; and talk of “a becoming pride;” “a noble pride.” But God hates pride,

and stands determined to resist it. "A haughty spirit goes before a fall." Another national evil is profaneness, and sitting in the seat of the scorner. Are not our ears shocked by profane swearing? and our eyes by Sunday newspapers? Is not the Sabbath desecrated to secular purposes?

There never was a national institution or appointment which certain men in the nation have not scorned and abused. But let those who hear men talk proudly, remember the case of Rabshakeh, Isa. xxxvi. And let them learn of Hezekiah to commit the affair to God, who will set his mark upon every fasting, praying soul. A Christian, in observing this day, looks farther than to the appointment of the prime minister: for he sees that "though weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning."

II. BY WAY OF APPLICATION OF THIS SUBJECT, let me address three classes of persons, who will meet this invitation in three different ways.

The first class is awfully described, in verses 10 and 11 of the chapter of the text. "*Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.*" These are practical Atheists. But can presumption prove a shelter? The scorner has no hiding-place. Where can the sinner run when he has turned his back on God? What other proposal remains? What other expectation can there be? "In that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of

Hosts." Isa. xxii. 12—14. "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." Acts xiii. 41. The day is coming when, if you had a thousand worlds, you would give them all for a "hiding-place."

The second class includes those *who are disposed to pay some regard to religion*: they will observe a day of fasting and prayer like the present; and as far as the mere outward acknowledgment goes, they may be accepted, as were the people of Nineveh; yet, as to their real character before God, they are formalists. Their character is described, Isaiah lviii. "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness." If there is one sin that calls louder than another for God's judgments, it is a dead, lifeless religion; the form of godliness without the power. The prophet Isaiah was commanded to lift up his voice like a trumpet, to cry aloud against such formality, and to show the people their sin. Such a form is indeed better than contempt of all religion: yet it may be said to a person of this class, "One thing thou lackest," namely, the power of religion. Such worshippers have never prostrated themselves as sinners before God, or sought the influences of his Holy Spirit. I would say to them, A time is coming, when you will need the power of religion. You will shortly have more formidable enemies to meet than those which would attack your country: you must wade through deeper waters—the waters of death. There is a holy God whom you must meet: there is another, and a grander peace which you must seek—a peace with God—a refuge for Eternity! But there is a limited time, in which it must be done. The text says, there is only a "a little moment" before your worst enemies will come on: only a little moment before the Judge will come, and say, "Depart, ye cursed!"

Oh! ye who never knew the meaning of a broken heart, who never loathed yourselves as sinners, remember the barren fig-tree: "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground!" Look at the state of the Continent! Have you not seen churches, and kings' courts, and armies overturned? The Son of man comes in awful providences to remind us of his coming to judgment. Whatever confidence some may put in chariots and horses, he only that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Thirdly, I would address those *who rightly regard this day*: who recognize the hand of the Lord lifted up, and whose language is described, verse 13: "O Lord, our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." You will acknowledge that a public fast is a good sign; often, a forerunner of a thanksgiving day. It is acknowledging God in what is going on in the world. You hear the threatenings, and are warned: you are exhorted to "enter into your chambers," and while there, recollect the weight you have added to the sins of the nation. The sins of this third class are different from those of the former two: you have access to God, like Aaron, Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, which others have not, and have also consolations which others have not. Take advantage of this day of public humiliation; humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, that he may lift you up.

"Shut thy doors about thee," and if it be possible, shut the door of thy heart against worldly cares, that thou mayest not be unfit for the work of humiliation and indignation against sin: treat with God, as one disposed to help—disposed to hide thee in the hollow of his hand: "Come, my people;" I invite you, I allow you, to state your case: come and plead with me, as

Abraham and Moses ; stand, as Aaron, between the living and the dead ; stand in the gap : humble yourselves and plead as Daniel and Nehemiah. See what has been effected by a single intercessor ! It will be but for a little moment and all this work of humiliation for sin will be over, and you will have accomplished, as an hireling, your day.

“Shut thy doors about thee” means much : it means, not only shut out nonsense, but business ; not only the company abroad, but the company at home. It means, Let thy poor soul have a little rest and refreshment, and God have opportunity to speak to thee in a still small voice—or he will speak in thunder. Let us be found among those who mourn for the abominations which are committed, and let us still exercise faith in God. This is being TRUE PATRIOTS.

There is not any thing which shocks me more than to hear men talk about fleets and armies : as if our help could lie in them. Does not every one know how little fleets and armies can do without God ? There may be written on them, Destruction ! “I am Alpha and Omega :” let us rest there, without caring how little we rest elsewhere. God is a jealous God, who has sent this scourge. Have we not translated the atheistical books of the Continent ? Have we not made idols of its vices ? Has not our taste been corrupted ? Let us see if confusion of face does not belong to us. Our nation has been a highly favored one ; the Gospel has long continued among us. But how have our privileges been abused ! how have we followed our own devices ! What a spirit of “Belial” has infested all ranks ! a yokeless spirit, even among children ! When we look over our public and private sins, we have reason to smite upon our breasts and say, God be merciful to us sinners ! Let us, however,

commit the matter to God, as Hezekiah did : let us put our hand into the hand of Omnipotence, and let us wait, in patience, prayer, and humiliation, till he shall send us an answer of peace. The faithfulness of Christ is the security of his people in every difficulty.

Lastly, “ When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance :” but do not trifle with God ; appear not unto men to fast, but unto God ; and he will accept the aim and intention of thy heart. “ Anoint thine head,” *i. e.* let it be a spiritual business with God. This is what he has promised to reward openly.

SOLEMN ADMONITION.

Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee: lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.—JER. vi. 8. [1808.]

I SCARCELY need say, that the design of our meeting together this day is, to humble ourselves before God, to confess our transgressions, and seek mercy at his hand ; imploring the Divine blessing on our endeavors while we are combating with numerous and revengeful enemies. Nothing can be more becoming than our meeting on such an occasion, as children of an offended parent, to hear his voice ; remembering that his mind changeth not ; and that what he said to Jerusalem, under similar circumstances, he now speaks to every one of us ; “ O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem : for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction. I have likened the daughter of Zion

to a comely and delicate woman. The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch their tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place. Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out. Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces. For thus hath the Lord of Hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited: she is wholly oppressed in the midst of her. As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds." Jer. vi. 1—7.

Now we are to consider what the mind of God was towards this city; and he tells us in the words of the text, "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited."

From these words, I shall consider two things:

I. THE BENEFIT OF INSTRUCTION IN NATIONAL DANGER;

II. THE DESTRUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS INSTRUCTION BEING SENT IN VAIN.

I. THE BENEFIT OF INSTRUCTION IN NATIONAL DANGER. It would be wasting your time to say that this is a season of national danger. Who does not know the ascendancy of our enemies? their surprising and almost unaccountable success? Who has not marked the strange revolt of our allies? Who does not feel the declension of our trade? Who does not stand aghast at the consequences of such a progress of events? I say, Who does not know these things? But with respect to this last I must say, Who does

know?—Who can conceive the consequences of our being given over as a prey to their teeth, as many nations on the Continent have been? And yet, I confess, I see something worse than all this. I think every man that knows the mind of God and his dealings with men, must consider the insensibility of the people, and the proud, haughty, and unbending spirit of the nation, as worse than all that has been done on the Continent. The spirit of voluptuousness, the impudence of infidelity, the unsuitable temper and spirit of a people under such circumstances! There is something like it in the sixth chapter of the Prophecy of Amos. “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountains of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border? Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.”—A careless people, living insensible; a hardened people, that think nothing of the state of the times, and that add to their other crimes that monstrous ingratitude, to say nothing else, that when favored with the special benefit of having the Gospel of Christ proclaimed among them, they pay attention to almost any thing rather than to it. Now a father despairs of a son that is not teachable, that has no ear to hear instruction;

but yet, because he is a Father, therefore he calls in the text—"Be instructed," that is, be instructed of thy need of instruction. Men will spend their money or their labor for almost any thing else; but as to instruction, as to gaining knowledge of God, of his word, or of themselves--nothing is so nauseous, nothing so unpleasant. Be sensible of thy need of instruction, pay attention when it is sent to thee; and not only hear, but receive what you hear, lay it to heart, remember that God speaks to thee, accept it whether he send it by this or that person; be ready to say, as we may suppose the Ethiopian eunuch did to Philip--You seem to be but a poor man, and travelling through a desert; but if you know any thing that I know not, come up into the chariot and teach me--instruct me. "Be thou instructed"--not only hear it, attend to it, and lay it to heart; but act upon it, dread the rejection of it; acknowledge the grace that sends it thee. While a man takes pains to instruct his friend or his son, there is a proof of his affection. Acknowledge therefore the grace that sends the instruction. While God has drawn his sword, he seems to say--Yet endeavor to use the means that shall put it back in the scabbard; prize the grace that shows the consequences of rejecting it: consider, that in rejecting it, my soul will depart from thee.

Thus speaks the Lord to every one of us this day; he says to you, and he says to me--"Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem!" This leads us to consider,

II. THE DESTRUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH INSTRUCTION BEING REFUSED.

"Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhab-

ited." If you are not instructed, my soul will depart from thee, and I shall make thee desolate.

This expression, "Lest my soul depart from thee," does not mean the loss of God's special influence. Our Church very properly instructs us to pray with respect to this—"Take not thy Holy Spirit from us"—but this is not the design of the expression here: it reads, as you will see in the margin, "Lest my soul be loosened or disjointed from thee." If a man has been the support of his friend, what will be the consequence of his forsaking him? If a mother goes into the street, and leads her infant by its hand, what will be the consequence of her letting go that hand? Perhaps it is trampled under foot,—it is destroyed. Now such an idea is conveyed in these words, "Be instructed therefore," for there is a separation between us, and the consequence of that is, that you will be left desolate. As if God had said—I have been your protector, I have supported you, I have said to your inveterate enemies, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further." But if God be separate, disjointed from the soul, if "my soul depart from thee," lay to heart the consequences: for if I depart, I depart as your protector, I depart as your best and Almighty Friend, I become an enemy, I shall make thee desolate!

Perhaps you will say to me—"Are not these figurative expressions? Are we to understand them in a literal sense?" Now I ask in reply, Did such a thing ever happen? These were words directed to Jerusalem. Did such a thing as is here predicted ever actually happen to Jerusalem? Did you ever read Josephus's account of the destruction of Jerusalem?—He who was an eye-witness and a party concerned, bears a testimony of the fact of the extreme misery of it, and of the exceeding great profligacy of the people, as if

they would set God at defiance. All this really happened: for though it seemed to be bulwarked, and provisions laid up in it for many years, yet its time was come; and God seemed to say—"I will now fulfil my declaration, for Jerusalem will not receive instruction, therefore I will make it desolate: I will make it a land not to be inhabited; I will send the multitude away, either by the destruction of their own hand, or by their enemies leading them captive, and selling them for slaves."

I speak of facts;—you no doubt stand aghast at the progress of a tyrant in his conquests, and you seem to think that if we were not surrounded by the ocean, there would be no possibility of standing against his attempts in this country. You conjecture, but scarcely feel able to conjecture, upon the consequences, if that were to befall you. But, my dear hearers, I wish you to consider more seriously, the consequences of God's departing from you: "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee." It is an infinitely more dreadful thing for God to depart from us, than for a tyrant to take possession of us. Consider the awful consequences of God's giving us up, and departing from us, and no longer being a wall of fire round about us to defend us from our enemies. "I will," says God on another occasion, "return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early." They shall know the truth of my declaration—"Woe unto them when I depart from them!" Suppose the sun were to withdraw—what a horrible darkness would you see at noon! "God is our sun and our shield," while he stays; but, if "his soul depart from us," if he leave us to ourselves, if we can no longer cry to him as our Patron and Friend that has so long protected this coun-

try, woe unto us. Woe unto us if he depart from us! A man may attempt to brave consequences, and go forth as Samson went out, trusting in his own strength; and in confidence of a supernatural ability, he may say with Samson, "I will go forth and shake myself as at other times:" but what will follow? He said it, indeed, "but he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." Look at Samson, the man that had borne away the gates of Gaza, and slain a thousand men with a jawbone, and whose name was "terror." But look again at Samson, when the Lord departs from him; he gives him up to the infatuation of a base woman, and then makes him grind in a prison-house, the basest of slaves. "The Lord was departed from him."

Turn your eyes to such a city as Nineveh: an immense, and powerful city. She humbled herself indeed upon one occasion, was instructed in such a degree as to obtain a reprieve; but nobody now knows where Nineveh stood; the very foundations are quite destroyed.

Look at Babylon, the proudest city in the world. The Lord precisely foretold the destruction of this place, and the consequences of his departure: and now the shepherds cannot find a place to build a booth in it; a traveller dares not come near it. It gloried in its vast strength; but when the Lord's time was come, in the midst of its gayety and profligacy, it was brought down to the dust. So you may say with respect to Jerusalem, and the seven churches of Asia, from whom the Lord hath, as he declared he would, "taken away the candlestick." He has long done this, and they stand as a monument of what it is for the Lord to depart.

And so with all our resources, and the proud speeches that men make, and the capacity they seem to find in

us to defend ourselves in all cases. But I would ask such a man a single question, "What if God means to humble us? What if God say, "I will make thee desolate, a land not inhabited, my soul shall depart from thee," what then? Will you be so foolish, so monstrously absurd and unbelieving, as to talk of ships, or men, or counsellors, or resources of any kind? Hath any one ever hardened himself against God and prospered? Can you tell me the page of history where any such case occurred?

I can tell you many where pride has gone before destruction, and "a haughty spirit before a fall," but I defy you to bring me a single instance of a case where God has sent his armies against a proud and wicked city, and that city hath not fallen according as he hath appointed.

If God means to humble us—and he hath appointed this Scripture to warn us—if God means to humble us—what is to prevent? Shall a foolish, unthinking, unmeaning man run through his enumeration of our commerce, wealth, power, and so on? Pride may answer like pride, but God only can point to the real, the only means of deliverance, which he does in the text, "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem."

I have endeavored to point out the benefit of instruction in national danger, and the consequences of rejecting that instruction. Now, as we are told in the chapter out of which the text is taken, and in the verse before the text, that in Jerusalem there were a desperate set of men, so there are in Britain, men whose faces are made harder than a flint. They would treat you, and they would treat me, as a set of foolish thoughtless, infatuated men, to suppose that any thing can be done by religion, or by receiving religious instruction—men that will not hear God speak. When he

does speak, they will not hear him ; they will not attend to his speaking either by his providence or by his word. You may be so unhappy as to dwell with such, and you find you can only pity them and pray for them ; for you see plainly that men in that spirit are actually setting God at defiance, and seem to say—their very looks accompanying their speeches—“ Tush, thou, God, wilt not require it.” As they probably are not here, I shall not speak to such. But there are two sorts of men to be found in the Church upon almost all occasions, to whom I shall endeavor to drop a word.

1st. *To the man who rests in the mere external observance of a public fast.* Such a man needs to attend to the text, on this account—that he is not yet wholly instructed. There seems to be one thing very remarkable in Christ’s ministry : He was ever drawing people from the letter, the mere form of godliness, and directing their attention to the spirit and power of things. As for instance, “ When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance :” they make strange figures of themselves, and put on a great appearance of humiliation : but they do it “ that they may appear unto men to fast.” “ But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face,” that it may not be a mere external thing, but that thou mayest humble thyself in secret before thy Father which seeth in secret, “ and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward the openly.” Such a man, therefore, as I speak of, is not fully instructed. He is resting on the mere external observance of a public fast ; and yet I think it ought to be said that, as far as he goes, he is to be commended, for he is paying a public homage to God. And it would be well if we all recollected, upon general occasions as well as this, that it is no small thing for a man to pay public homage to God.* So far from

it being a small thing, it seems to have saved Nineveh upon a particular occasion. I consider that the fast of Nineveh consisted very much in external observation. They do not seem to have had any means of spiritual instruction, or of being prepared to meet God "in spirit and in truth" upon the occasion. And yet, notwithstanding the peevishness of the prophet, God pleaded their cause.

Certainly, whatever was the case of Nineveh, there was nothing more than an external observance in the fast of Ahab. "Ahab humbled himself, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly;" and God says of Ahab, "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? I will not execute mine indignation in his time."

Yet you must remember, from this circumstance, that Nineveh, and much more Ahab, needed instruction; therefore, to "people who draw near to God with their lips, while their hearts are far from him," I would say in the words of the text, "Be thou instructed, lest my soul depart from thee, and I make thee desolate."

Be instructed in the particular which you have been hearing this morning; in which, while a man rested in his external observation, thanking God that he was not like other men, the Lord points us to the character of the publican, the broken-hearted spirit that he would accept. I call upon such, therefore, to pray for a renewed mind upon this occasion; that God would humble their spirits, and enable them, in private as well as in public, to appear before God as sinners, and to remember that he is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Endeavor, therefore, to seek the face of God this day, when you are gone from the church, and beg of him the best of his gifts—a humble and contrite heart.

But, 2ndly, there is another class of men to whom I

would speak a word. I ought to suppose, that *many in this congregation are desirous of instruction*. When they hear the Lord in this passage say, "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem," they are ready to put up a prayer, at the same time, 'O God, instruct me according to thy word; see what is wrong in me, enable me to see it, and to be humbled for it; enable me to see what I have contributed to the weight of the guilt of the nation.' If such a one should say, 'What is my particular duty, things being as they are, considering the state of the times, and considering that God in his providence has called me this day to humble myself before him, that I may be ready to meet all circumstances which he may think proper to bring upon this nation? What should I do?'—I should advise and counsel you to imitate the children of Israel upon the occasion mentioned in the ninth of Exodus: "Tomorrow," says God, "will I bring a very grievous hail upon the land of Egypt, such as hath not been since the foundation of it until now. Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, the hail shall come upon them, and they shall die. He that feared the word of the Lord made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses," and of them there was not one dead. These were wise men, they foresaw the evil and hid themselves. Now he is a wise man, in this day, who shall put himself in position, and while he meets the event, stands upon a rock that is higher than he; that has found a shelter, and gets under it. "Come, my people," saith the Lord—it is the Lord's advice to you—"come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." Get into position. The Lord

cometh at a time that you think not of—"as a thief in the night:"—stand ready to meet him, "with your loins girded, and your lights burning." "Come thou, and all thy family, into the ark."

The Christian is a public-spirited man, and ought not to think merely of himself. Does a national concern press this day? let us all imitate Jehoshaphat—"Behold," says he, "O God, how they requite us, to come to cast us out of our possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee."—Weak and ignorant as we are, we would "take hold of thy strength."

Let us imitate this. Let us think of others—of the nation at large. If we know not what to do, let our eye be so much the more directed to God, who does know what to do. If the trouble and danger is very threatening, let us remember one more passage: in the ninth chapter of the prophecy of Ezekiel. "I saw," says the prophet, "six men come from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's ink-horn by his side: and they went in, and stood by the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen, which had the writer's ink-horn by his side; and the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not

your eye spare, neither have ye pity : slay utterly old and young, but come not near any man upon whom is the mark.”

Now we should seek, brethren, whatever consequences may follow, to be among them that have God’s mark—his mark of favor, and protection, and approbation ; to be among those that he has appointed to be his jewels in the great day of account ; whom he has promised to guide by his counsel, and afterward to receive to glory.

At the same time, while thus careful to meet consequences, we should not forget that we are here to thank him that in the midst of judgment he has remembered mercy to this land :—that while other nations lie prostrate, while their very names and their bounds seem to be forgotten, we stand here a monument of the grace and the goodness of God. God grant that we may still stand as a monument of mercy and grace, and that we may stand here and forever for Christ’s sake !”

[Preached Feb. 17th. On the 2d of March following, Mr. Cecil had that seizure of paralysis which closed his public ministry.]



RECTITUDE OF THE DIVINE ADMINISTRATION.

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?—GEN. xviii. 25.

[1805.]

IN this passage we have the example of Abraham interceding for Sodom. The general proposition contained in this text is—**THAT THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ARE ALWAYS RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS.** However ignorance may misconstrue, and impatience question, there are but two things needful for the full illustration of this

truth;—namely, time and trust. “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” The argument is the same as that of the Apostle, Rom. iii. 5, 6.

I shall observe,

I. THAT IT IS THE HIGH PRIVILEGE OF A TRUE BELIEVER TO PLACE UNLIMITED CONFIDENCE IN THE CONSIDERATION OF HIS JUDGE, UNDER ALL BEREAVING PROVIDENCES.

II. THAT IT GIVES GOOD EVIDENCE OF A MAN’S HAVING BEEN TAUGHT OF GOD, WHEN HE HAS A PRACTICAL AND READY APPLICATION OF THIS CONFIDENCE UPON ALL OCCASIONS.

I. IT IS THE HIGH PRIVILEGE OF A BELIEVER TO PLACE UNLIMITED CONFIDENCE IN GOD UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. It is easy to say this; but it is of vast importance to practise it. In awful providences—such as have lately hung over us—to consider that the reins of government are still in God’s hands; that he, as the Judge of all the earth, will do what is right—and that though the present scourge of Europe,* like another Sennacherib, may be suffered to go forth and madly resolve to do whatever his ambition points out; yet, that God sitteth above the water-floods, and remaineth a King forever,”—saying to the proud menacer of the nations—“Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further;”—this shows a right position of mind. Now, do we believe this? or do his threatenings shake our confidence?

Ist. A practical application of this consideration has a tendency *to compose the mind under bereaving circumstances*. It was Abraham’s privilege to be able to place an unlimited confidence in the commands of God. We see this principle manifesting itself in his prompt and resigned obedience when commanded to offer up

* Napoleon Bonaparte.

his son Isaac ; and this exercise of faith reconciled him to the bereavement. Now, under all trials and bereaving providences, to have this sentiment ever at hand—“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?” and with Job to say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord ;”—such a practical adoption of this proposition tends to quiet the mind, and lead it to rest in the character of God. What must have been the anguish of Aaron when, in one day, he lost both his sons, Nadab and Abihu ! Yet, he “held his peace ;” fully persuaded, that the Judge of all the earth must do right. So, under the same conviction, Eli exclaimed, when informed of the judgments which should befall his house, “It is the Lord ; let him do what seemeth him good.”

2ndly. This practical application of the text tends to quiet the mind *with regard to the mysterious doctrines of divine revelation*. I open my Bible, and see mysterious doctrines as to the eternal decrees : the text settles them. I read the doctrine of the eternal punishments of the wicked. In the lively exercise of a believer’s privilege, I say, in reference to this awful and astonishing fact—“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?” If he has annexed such a punishment to sin, I am taught to “flee from the wrath to come.” I am out of my place if I question. How can I expect to understand infinite perfection ? So with respect to the justification of a sinner. Instead of asking how the innocent should suffer for the guilty, it is my privilege to believe : and to say, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?” It is absolute rebellion to cavil. The same may be said, if we ask, how prayer can be efficacious. What can a finite creature know of an infinite nature, or of an infinite government ? It is enough for us to know that prayer

is pleasing to God—that he acts upon it; and will a proud cavilling spirit help us out of the difficulty? We may say what Eliphaz said to Job—“Are the consolations of God small with thee? What is man that he should be clean? and he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous?” Faith, in the highest degree, does not make void the necessity of practical religion: no man was a more devotional character or had more of practical religion than Abraham. The wicked speak either scoffingly or ignorantly of God; as if all was mercy and there was no justice. Let no man deceive himself with vain words: if he live after the flesh he shall die.

II. IT GIVES GOOD EVIDENCE OF A MAN'S BEING DIVINELY TAUGHT, TO HAVE A READY APPLICATION OF THIS TRUTH UPON ALL OCCASIONS.

This is the proper exercise of faith. It was said of an eminent philosopher,* that the first lesson he taught his pupils was *silence*. Another philosopher, when a pupil was brought to him that he might learn to speak, demanded a double price; and when the reason of this demand was asked, he replied, “Because I must first teach him silence, and then teach him to speak.” Thus, one of the first lessons which God teaches his children is, to be silent. “Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant: that thou mayest remember thy ways and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.” Ezekiel xvi. 60—63. Thou shalt open thy mouth no more to

* Pythagoras.—ED.

boast, censure, or complain. Here was a practical use of the proposition in the text.

To teach this more effectually is one of the ends of afflictive dispensations. What a distinguished example was Ignatius of patience and resignation to the divine will: in the midst of suffering saying with St. Paul, "None of these things move me!" It was said of Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambray, that when he heard of the death of his favorite pupil, the Duke of Burgundy (with whom all his earthly prospects seemed to die), he calmly observed, "There are all my hopes cut off! but if the turning of a straw would bring him to life again, I would not do it."

I could not help being struck at the reply lately made by one of my hearers. When tidings were suddenly and unexpectedly brought him that a great part of his fortune was cut off, he immediately answered, "It is the Lord: I have not a word to say!" Such a ready application of the truth which we have been considering, glorifies God: it acknowledges his perfections: it manifests a broken and a contrite spirit: it is following the example of our blessed Master, "who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." But flesh and blood can reveal this to no man: it is the special operation of the Holy Spirit. Philosophy may produce stubbornness; but nothing, except grace, can, or ever will, enable us to adopt the language of the text. Abraham was a great man: but see how he humbled himself before God: "Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes."

I proceed to offer two or three remarks upon the subject under consideration.

1st. We may perceive, *how the text reconciles two seemingly opposite principles—the decree of God, and the saint's interposition by prayer.* Here is a man, lying like clay in the hands of the potter, and yet, at the same time, in the strongest act of importunate prayer. Abraham is here in all the energy of intercession, entreating for the city of Sodom. Hence we learn, that the application of this principle, while it subjugates our understanding, does not hinder our activity: our acquiescence is not to set aside exertion: it indicates faith, but not slothfulness; trust, but not presumption.

2ndly. We learn, *what is the privilege of prayer:* it exalts man to hold intercourse with the Majesty in the heavens, and gives him a feeling of happiness and dignity in harmony with the immortal principle within him. If we ask, how can the government of Providence admit any thing like human interposition by prayer? we may learn from the text, that a divine administration is so ordered, as to admit of a poor particle of dust and ashes, coming and taking hold of the hand of Omnipotence, and urging a suit before him which shall be successful.

To reconcile providence with prayer, the Bible gives instances of both the practice of prayer, and its efficacy. Such passages as these are left to instruct the humble intercessor, that prayer is not only pleasing to God, but often signally successful. Therefore it is said, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." Isa. xxvi. 20. Zeph. ii. 3, "It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." When Sodom was destroyed,

Lot and his family were preserved. And when Jerusalem was destroyed, with unheard of calamities, the Christians had notice, and escaped. In the worst of times God has a remnant: "Except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Isa. i. 9. St. Paul quotes this passage in the ninth chapter to the Romans. So in Isa. vi. 13, when speaking of the general obstinacy of the people, and the consequent desolations, the prophet says, "But in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and it shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." Our Saviour said to his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth." But let them take care they do not lose their savor. Oh! how worthless is a profession, if the salt have lost its savor!

In the case of Abraham's intercession, how wonderful was it that he should attempt to gain one concession after another, till he had brought it to this—"Peradventure, ten shall be found there: and God said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake!" Thus singularly successful was Abraham's prayer!—So, we find Jacob saying—"I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Peter was shut up in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church to God for him; and to put honor upon this prayer, we find an angel was sent, to show that such prayer was not only pleasing to God, but successful. What a singular instance has God vouchsafed to us in answering our prayers for the king's recovery to health!* And surely we ought not to forget the prayers that have been put up for victory over the armies of France: and to mark the success of

* George III., his recovery from a second attack of illness.

our armies in the late victory!* The effect of such interpositions in our behalf, should bring us before God in the spirit of humility and thankfulness. "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Isa. ii. 10, 11.

Chillingworth says, "The Bible is the religion of Protestants." We may also say, the Bible is the philosophy of Christians: but of this the mere philosophers of this world know nothing.

3rdly. We should learn *to stand like Abraham, pleading for sinners*: we should fear nothing but sin: then shall we have nothing else to fear. "Sanctify the Lord God of Hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, and he shall be for a sanctuary." Isa. viii. 13. It is useful for us to think often of the evil of sin. We are in danger, while living in corrupt times, of losing our abhorrence of it. Let us consider sin as the procuring cause of war: for though we may look to the second causes—the lusts and policy of men—yet sin is the procuring cause: "They chose new gods: then was war in the gates." Judges v. 8. See also the case of Asa, 2 Chron. xvi. 9, compared with the last verse of the preceding chapter. Why was there no more war? Because the Lord was worshipped; piety was in the land, and the high places were taken away. And why was there afterwards war? "Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God." So after David's sin in the matter of Bathsheba, notwithstanding the Lord had put away his sin, yet God declared, "Now

* Nelson's victory off Trafalgar, October 21, 1805.

therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house."

4thly. Let us consider *the exceeding importance of prayer, both public and private*. Blessed be God, it is not said to us as to the prophet of old—"Pray not for this people!" All may join in this duty, both young and old. Let us follow Abraham's course; and while interceding for ourselves and others, let us acknowledge that the Judge of all the earth shall do right; and that "though clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Psalm xcvi. 2.



THE PENITENT'S RESOLVE.

Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.—HOSEA vi. 1.

[1795.]

THERE seems no truth more clearly revealed than this, That if a man takes himself out of God's hands, he will not know what to do with himself. The whole of this prophecy shows that sin will bring ruin: and it shows the sinner's only resource under its misery; namely, that God has set bounds to that ruin by providing a remedy; and it teaches, that there can be no healing without an application of this remedy; that it is only in returning to God we can find recovery. Whence we may derive the following proposition: namely,

IT IS THE COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF A PENI-

TENT SINNER, THAT GOD WHO HAS WOUNDED, CAN AND WILL HEAL, UPON HIS RETURNING AND REPENTING.

I said, a penitent sinner : for there is no comfort to the impenitent sinner : Scripture brings out the whole truth. Who, then, is the penitent sinner ?

The true penitent is one who has entered into the chambers of his heart, and finds there cause to cry out with the prodigal—"I am no more worthy to be called thy son !" The language of a penitent is found in the fourteenth chapter of this prophecy : "Asshur shall not save us ; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods ; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." The penitent has a moral sensibility ; an illuminated heart ; he sees God in his own world : and while others, under affliction, are complaining and vexing themselves,—looking no further than at what is before them,—which is the temptation of all that complain about the creature,—the true penitent turns his eye to Him that smites ; and says, As to creatures, they are but the rod ; if I am chastised, and humbled, there is a voice in the correction ; it says, "Return unto the Lord ; for he hath torn and he will heal : " Men and things are only instruments : they are thy sword. There is a fine instance of this in the case of David and Shimei : "Let him curse : for the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David : " he speaks of God as if he saw him only ! So in the case of Job ; he says nothing about the Sabeans and Chaldeans ; but only "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." Observe the language of the prophet ; "torn," "smitten ; " he hath smitten,—as he said he would :—Psalm lxxxix. 30, 32. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." "If ye

will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me: then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins." Lev. xxvi. 27, 28.

One of the most grievous things which an enlightened eye can behold is, to see people contending with second causes, instead of seeing in every thing God's hand. In their afflictions they sometimes look to their minister to speak a word of comfort to them: but a minister can do nothing till they return to God. What can a minister do for a man who is resisting and opposing the very means used for his benefit? A medicine may be very powerful,—a surgeon may cut deep,—but if there be a mortification in the part, the means will fail. In the cases of men spiritually, there is often unsoundness at the bottom: as it is said, Psalm lxxviii. "Their heart was not right with him." This unsoundness of heart is the case with multitudes; and it is at the bottom of all the cavils of infidels.

One of the first symptoms of the heart being right with God, will be found in the language of the text: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord:" He has smitten; we have deserved it; there is nothing else to be done: "My wound is incurable," but not with God: He can bid me stretch out my withered arm. Another symptom will be, when the penitent can act upon a command, and can come and accept offered mercy, and say,—I would stretch forth my arm; I wait for power to be communicated; I lie sick of the palsy; but I bring my withered heart to him that is the Incarnate God; who alone can lift me above the ruins of sin and Satan, and heal all my diseases.

See the language of a penitent heart, Psalm xxxix. 8—13. "Make me not the reproach of the foolish—deliver me from all my transgressions." So, also,

Lam. iii. 27—32. “He putteth his mouth in the dust ; if so be there may be hope.” David also says : “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” If, in affliction, a man has a proud, contradictory spirit, self-excusing, and disputing, it is a sign that the heart is false : but if he has learned to put his mouth in the dust, this contrition is the way to solid peace and satisfaction. “He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profiteth me not ; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.” If the Scripture pulls down the pride of human nature, it also points out the remedy—“Let us turn unto the Lord.”

But how is it that the enlightened mind returns to God ? Not by “the letter,” which “killeth,” but by “the spirit,” which “giveth life.” He will not look, as a felon, to the “Act of Parliament” that condemns him ; but he will look to the Gospel. Affliction is a summons from God, for us to come and treat with him in secret. Certain it is, that Christ is our life, and that his Spirit alone can revive us, and cause us to grow. So in regard to the resurrection ; if we are delivered from the grave, if not only from the grave, but from hell, it is only through the mediation of Christ, and through the aid of the Spirit. How hard soever the sinner’s heart may be, “dead in trespasses and sins,”—however withered, it shall revive and live at the command of Christ ; for “with the word of a king there is power.” There is nothing too great for this King to give ; no case too bad for this great Physician to cure. The Lord says, “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help !” He says to the penitent, “Take with you words ;”—declare that you no longer trust in your own power to help yourself,—“Take with you words, and turn to the Lord : say unto him, Take

away all iniquity, and receive us graciously :”—and what do we hear God replying to this? “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel.”

In conclusion: I may, perhaps, be speaking to some that have been “torn” and “smitten,” in their circumstances or families; and they have a feeling and consciousness that they have “sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind.” To such I would drop a word or two of general remark on the subject: and,

1st. *Beware of losing the benefit of the dispensation you are called to pass through.* Do not lose it by *despair*. Every dispensation has its particular lesson, which we should be careful not to lose, either by fainting and desponding under it, or by being inattentive to it. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” This is far better than if you had been left to your idols: God might have said, “Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.”

2ndly. *Beware of losing the benefit of your dispensation by forgetfulness of the sentiments and feelings which you have, under present sorrows;* for this we are all apt to do. It is astonishing what views, feelings, and sympathies, a man sometimes has under an affliction: yet they soon vanish. Affliction is the school of wisdom; and we should carefully record the instructions we have in it. “Set thee up way-marks.”

3rdly. *Beware also of impatience, and fretfulness, in walking through the rough and thorny path before you.* We can only improve a dispensation as we walk with God in it. We must live and walk as in his sight, to know his mind. There is also a season, a proper opportunity, for relief. “After two days he will revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall

live in his sight." The Lord would not keep the furnace heated so long, if there was not a good reason—"a needs be." Beware of hasty conclusions, as if God did not know what he was about, not considering that your present trials are a part of that course of purification which is to prepare you for a house above,—a part of that blessed economy which is to purify your dross. Be not like to those to whom it was said,—Why should ye be stricken any more? "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God; that he may exalt you in due time." "If thou return unto the Almighty, thou shalt be built up."

4thly. Let us learn, that *a return to God is the first step towards relief and deliverance*. Take care how you say in the darkest circumstances, There is no hope! There is no hope in any carnal expedients that Satan or your own evil hearts can suggest: none but God can help: your fellow-creatures may consider your case desperate; there are a thousand cases in which man can do nothing! But if God takes up your cause, "is any thing too hard for the Lord?"

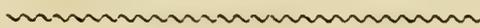
If we are impoverished and beggared, smarting and groaning under our wounds, yet if, at the same time, we feel a true brokenness of spirit, let us remember Him who "was wounded for our transgressions;" and let us take refuge in his rich mercy. Hear what he says to his backsliding Israel: "In a little 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." Isa. liv. 8.

5thly. We may observe, from this subject, that *the knowledge of true religion is progressive*,—there is an advancing in the work. In the third verse we read, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord; his going forth is prepared as the morning;"—

there is first a little dawn, then the sun is just seen above the horizon; but it looks brighter still in the meridian splendor! "He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." There is "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." We are all children, only of different growth: and we must sit as children at the feet of Christ, and he will teach us by degrees, as we are able to bear. We must seek him by prayer: there is nothing done in religion without prayer. When a man has been taught in the school of Christ, and learned something of the evil of his own heart, and experienced the power of sovereign grace, he becomes an extensive blessing to all around him. Religion is a social good: it concerns us all; and it is an honor to be a leader in such a cause, and to stand as a witness of its benefits. If Satan has his leaders, spreading mischief on every side, it is an honor to be one of the first to say, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord." God will put honor upon such: See Abraham, standing between the living and the dead! such a man is a public blessing. So in regard to the Church: if a man wishes to bring plausible objections, he may find them in every Church; but if a man say, as a member of the Church, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord," he is a public blessing. The same may be said as to a family; any one, even a child, may set a family in a blaze: a wasp is a very small insect, but it can inflict great pain by its sting. It is an easy thing to find cause of blame,—“It is this, and it is that!” but what is to heal? The holy resolution in the text—“Come, and let us return unto the Lord:” “It is the Lord that maketh men to be of one mind in an house.” God will put singular honor upon that person in a family who, in the midst of trials and disorders, will call the rest of the house together, and

say, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he has smitten, and he will bind us up." God will set a mark upon him, as he did upon Caleb: "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." Num. xiv. 24. Man is the helper of man; and God has often blessed the solitary faith of one man, far beyond expectation, in his endeavor to maintain his honor and service.

Let us, then, in every trouble,—whether temporal or spiritual,—remember where our true help lies. Let us turn to Him who has revealed himself to us as "the God of all comfort." Let us put our whole trust in Him who has said, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." Exod. xv. 26.



ENCOURAGEMENT TO SEEK AFTER GOD.

And I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engageth his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord.—JER. xxx. 21. [1796.]

THESE words are understood, by some, to apply to Christ as Governor and Mediator: but they will also hold good with respect to the Church. A thousand texts might be brought forward to show that this is the mind of God with respect to every man whom he inclines to do this; *i. e.* to engage his heart to approach unto God.

From these words, I shall call your attention to the following propositions:

I. THAT IT IS MAN'S GRAND PRIVILEGE THAT HE CAN APPROACH UNTO GOD.

II. THAT HE HAS FROM SCRIPTURE A SPECIAL WARRANT TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD.

III. THAT GOD ENGAGES FOR THE SUCCESS OF THAT MAN WHO THUS SEEKS TO APPROACH UNTO HIM.

I. IT IS MAN'S GRAND PRIVILEGE THAT HE CAN APPROACH UNTO GOD. We often hear it made a subject of conversation, afterwards, when persons have been admitted to intercourse with the great and noble. But how few speak of the great privilege of drawing nigh to God! for the carnality of man's nature disposes him, like Adam, to fly from God. He is afraid to approach God; he feels his unsuitableness: he can better understand what was said to Moses, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground," than this. The idea of drawing near to God, of having a new and consecrated way of approach to God, seems something strange. There is no need to try and convince a man of the great privilege of being introduced to some great personage. Only give him an opportunity of this kind, and he will tell every-body of the honor conferred upon him. But when we tell men that God offers them his favor, and the light of his countenance, they only turn a deaf ear to it. The truth is, we all labor in the fire till the Son of God opens the deaf ears, and gives sight to the blind eyes. This is conversion; this is regeneration. The coming to God by faith, is a sinner's taking hold of his word; which is the immediate operation of his Holy Spirit.

II. MAN HAS FROM SCRIPTURE A SPECIAL WARRANT TO DO THIS.

"I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach

unto me." This generally takes place after a long course of affliction and humiliation. "Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased I have done these things unto thee." Verse 15. It is a blessed effect of chastisement when it leads a man to say, I will engage my heart to seek unto God: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." It is the heart the Lord inquires after. The man was before "like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke:" but God now sees a disposition to return. There is a refining process going on. The promises which sick men make in their own strength, are all forgotten in returning health. Let the rebel be turned off from the stocks, and he will show himself worse than before. But when God puts a man under a process of recovery, it shall prove effectual. "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord." Verse 17. Thus it was with David; he was taught to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted!" So Hezekiah: "By these things men live." There is a refining process. The medicine may put to pain, but if it effects a cure, if it teaches us what sin is, if it leads to dependence on God—then it is God saying, "I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me." I will send affliction, and conviction; and I will pour out my Spirit: there shall be "a spirit of grace and supplication."

Ask yourself, What has affliction done for me? Did I engage my heart to seek God in it? Where are the effects? What has become of my impressions under trouble? God has sent his word first, and then he has sent his providence to seal and stamp it. This is not to lead man to sink into sullen despair, or plunge into dissipation to make him forget affliction; but that he

should be taught, effectually, that his whole help and deliverance is to be found in God; that he should be brought nigh to God: which leads me to consider the encouragement afforded, namely,

III. THAT GOD ENGAGES FOR THE SUCCESS OF THAT MAN WHO HEARTILY SEEKS TO APPROACH UNTO HIM.

“For who is this that engageth his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord.” Who is this? This is a new and a strange character in the world! Who is this? Is there such a man, who seriously engages his heart—who prays earnestly—who proposes determinately that the Lord shall be his portion? God says, I will undertake for his success! So when king Josiah, having found the book of the law, rent his clothes from a fear of the Divine wrath, and sent to inquire of Huldah the prophetess, she returned answer to the messengers, “As for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard: Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord.” 2 Chron. xxxiv. 26, 27. You see, therefore, brethren, that if a man in that day, or in any other day, be disposed to return to God in true humiliation of heart, God engages for his success: “He shall approach unto me, saith the Lord.”

There is a most unaccountable disposition in fallen man to hide himself from himself; but he cannot hide himself from God. If he will not prepare his heart to seek God, he shall be given up to strong delusions. If

he will be deceived, he shall be deceived. But, on the other hand, if a man has faith, only as a grain of mustard seed, let him be encouraged. God has promised, "I will cause him to draw near:" I will cause the dew to descend upon this single grain: I will nourish and cherish it: I will cause the sun to shine upon it: I will water it with the rain of heaven.

By way of improving this subject, I would address myself,

1st. *To young people.* I know, from the word of God, what is the first object of man. It is not that to which your heart and mine attaches itself by nature. It is no perishing thing; it is not a thing of a moment—something that will bring repentance on a death-bed; but here it is in the text,—“I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me:” I will put into his heart a taste for divine things; a disposition to seek after them; I will teach him. That is good for a man which is good for his soul; and that which is not good for his soul shall be torn from him, with bitterness. When did the prodigal begin to prosper? when he said, “Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me?” when he took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living? No! “When he came to himself.” When he said, “I will arise and go unto my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!” Prosperity will begin with you from that moment in which you begin to engage your heart to approach unto God.

2ndly. Let me say *to those in affliction*,—One cannot but pity and sympathize with such. But if, by affliction, they are taught the true nature of their privileges, they will be ready to say with Luther, “Lord, cut, strike, burn; if I may but live!” or, with St. Paul, “If

by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead." If, therefore, by your affliction, the Lord make your soul to live, if he cure a worse disease in your heart than any other, *i. e.* the world in your heart; if you are thus enabled, in any degree, to walk with God in the fire, then he will walk with you in the fire. Leave the gold to the Refiner. If he says, "I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me," that is enough.

3rdly. *Is any one resolutely determined, like Caleb and Joshua, to seek and serve God? Let him mark the high authority on which he proceeds; and let him take encouragement from the only safe quarter.* "He shall approach unto me, SAITH THE LORD." Lay it up in your mind, that it is not a hard thing to please God. Do not think that religion is an impracticable thing. It is not so. God is very gracious. He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." I cast out none that come unto me.

4thly. *But are there those who will set all God's proposals and promises at defiance? To such he says,* "Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it." Verses 23, 24. It is an awful thing when men only find out God by his judgments. An unbeliever is a candidate for nothing. He has no proposal, no object, no ground for the sole of his foot. What is quality and rank? What is human science—though a thing far more sublime than rank or quality—to a man that is without understanding? and

surely he is without spiritual understanding that rejects the Gospel.

The Bible gives the greatest encouragement to all who seek God, and walk in his ways. "The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them." He shall know and understand them: he shall not only set out, but have strength to go on. He shall have provision all the way: he shall come safely to the end: and if he meet with enemies, they shall not make him afraid. It is truth alone that will stand the test of time and experiment. God does not leave a Christian to doubt if there be "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. xi. 6.



THE STRAIT GATE.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.—MATT. vii. 13. [1802.]

THERE are many desultory inquirers after Christianity, but not many seriously disposed to hear a scriptural account of it. It is a great point to be willing to submit to the standard, with no desire to lower it.

If we would be Christ's disciples indeed, we must not ask the world what it thinks of Christ, and his word, but we must sit at his feet, and hear him say, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." In discoursing on these words, I shall,

- I. EXPLAIN THE TERMS.
- II. ANSWER A FEW OBJECTIONS.

III. STATE THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT.

I. Let us endeavor to understand the text. Man is a traveller: he must travel; it is not put to his choice, he must go on. Here are presented two roads. The Scripture knows of no third path. It divides all characters into two classes, namely, the righteous and the wicked; and these are described as travelling in two distinct paths. The latter are described as entering in at the wide gate, and walking in the broad way: because this way will admit all sorts of characters—all names; it will accommodate corrupt nature in all sorts of forms; it will admit of any incumbrance, any notions; it will admit of those swollen with pride, the sensualist, the formalist, and the hypocrite. It will conform itself to the mode and fashion of the times. You may walk in this road with reputation, whether you are a Deist, an Atheist, or a Socinian. “For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.”

But there is another way spoken of here. “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way; which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” The true way is never such as flesh and blood will like. It is a strait way, marked out; and it has its boundaries. It is a self-denying way, an afflictive way, and a despised way. A way hedged in by the holy law of God; a way of appointment, through Christ. This way will make no allowance for taste or education. It will not accommodate itself to the fashion of the times. It has no regard to what is called “respectable religion.” It is the way of the new birth, the way of regeneration. It counts all things loss for Christ. A Christian, while walking in this way, reasons down the reports of sense; for it is a way of faith.

In old times, the world was populous as it is now. But the wickedness of it was so great that "the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth." But a godly man was warned to prepare an ark. "The Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark ; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." Do not debate about it ; do not philosophize ; leave the management of the world to me ; but enter thou into the ark ; and if there be but eight persons within, be thankful that there are eight saved."

Christ says to us, " I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." No man can go to heaven who is not determined to go in this way ; " All that ever came before me, are thieves and robbers : but the sheep did not hear them." They that would enter in at the strait gate, must both stoop, and strip. But many cannot receive this saying. I propose therefore,

II. TO ANSWER SOME OBJECTIONS.

Why, says one, if this is the case, if you will be thus rigid, and take up the text literally, you will exceedingly narrow the path, and exclude many good sort of people. I answer, Should we attempt to widen that path which Christ has declared to be narrow ? Are we to give our opinion, or to reason after our Lord's express declaration ? What should be the conduct of a messenger ? Is he to alter or change his message, or to deliver it ? Is he to accommodate it to corrupt nature ? God forbid, that we should try to render the way more strait ; but God forbid, that we should endeavor to widen what he has made narrow !

Again, it is objected, that if we represent religion as so difficult, people will be deterred from it. But every

such objection is answered by the verses which precede the text: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!"—The battle is not ours, but the Lord's. No man ever sought scripturally, the way of salvation, who did not find it. Ten thousand witnesses shall rise up against that sluggard who says, "There is a lion in the way!"

Another objection made by the unrenewed heart is, that to walk in this narrow way implies being singular;—that its motto is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." I allow this objection: for it is a real one. But who is it that makes it? The worldling—the sensualist—the "lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God;" not those who love Christ: not those, who follow "the footsteps of the flock!"

When we speak of singularity, we do not mean fanatically singular. That is not what Christ has commanded. But if we would contend for real religion, we must contend for determined singularity, as far as Christ has commanded it. It is he who has said, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." And if few, they must be singular. Those who wish to walk in this road, must "mark the footsteps of the flock" every step of the way. They will find this the way in which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob walked. They shall find, as they proceed, the approbation of the Judge.

There is one more objection which is frequently brought: namely, that our Lord says, Luke xiii. 24, "Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Here seems to be an alarming objection. But, now mark the Scripture: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." It is one thing to "strive" to enter in, in a scriptural way; and another thing to "seek to enter in" by a way of our own invention. St. Paul says, speaking of the Jews, Rom. ix. 31, "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." They sought; but they did not seek in God's way. They would seek to enter in; but not by Christ, the door. They seek, but not according to the New Covenant. They seek, in their own strength.

If we ask persons in this great commercial city, why such and such a man does not succeed in the object he is pursuing, they will answer, Because he does not take the right means. We should use much prayer and caution that we enter not into bye-paths; which may be known by their appearing more easy and smooth, when perhaps the right path is painful and rough. Let us endeavor now more fully to

III. STATE THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT.

And here, I would observe, what has often struck me in regard to my own life—How little the Bible is believed by those who profess to believe it! A man, for instance, comes constantly to church, he hears the minister read, in the lesson for the day, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." This being a part of the lesson for the day, all is right; no one objects. But let a man

go from the church into any general company, and let him not use, perhaps, the words of the text, but express the sense of it—let him express a fear that the generality are walking in the broad way that leadeth to destruction—and what is the language of the company? They are shocked at “so uncharitable an opinion!” They say, “What a monstrous sentiment!” “How illiberal!” “What a narrow-minded man!” And yet, what has that man said, but what has just been read in the Bible?

It is a sad thing for a man not to learn the truth till, like Dives, he learns it in hell!—a sad thing not to know the pride of our own hearts till, like Herod, we are “eaten of worms!”—“Thus saith the Lord of Hosts; Consider your ways. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of Hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.” Hag. i. 1—9. Beware of supineness, and negligence. These sins are as dangerous as unbelief.

Suppose two men were in bed, and were told that the house was on fire. One does not believe the report: the other is indisposed to stir, and says, There is no danger yet! Both must perish.—But how solemnly soever our Lord has warned a careless world, he says to every seeker after God, The door of life is still open. And though narrow and strait, he invites them to walk in it. Many are walking therein, and going on their way rejoicing. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having

our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised." Heb. x. 19—22. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." Rev. iii. 8.

If the narrow way has its difficulties, it has also its consolations. It is a short way, and Christ is walking with us in it, and affording us counsel and support as we go on. "The temple of God is holy, which temple are ye." 1 Cor. iii. 17. Every Christian is such a sacred shrine.

That which implies conflict, implies also the necessity of being firm to our point. We must "strive" to enter in at the strait gate. We must enter into it depending on the grace and strength promised; and making our undertaking a matter of earnest prayer. We must endeavor to obtain help after help; and take step after step, as we shall be assisted. We should beware of the contagion with which we are surrounded. Contagion robs us of our strength, and of our judgment.

The very life and spirit of every discourse and every ordinance is the application of it to the conscience.

THE DIVINE COMFORTER PROMISED.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.—JOHN xiv. 16—18. [1803.]

IN taking up passages of Scripture like this, it is of great importance for us to consider under what circumstances, and to whom, such words were spoken. Our Saviour had been speaking many comfortable words, previous to those of the text. “Let not your heart be troubled:” though it may be sad, at my departure, yet let it not be agitated and disturbed like a troubled sea: let it not be afraid, like those who are without hope, who have no anchor. Whose heart soever is troubled, let it not be yours. “Ye believe in God, believe also in me,” that I am the promised Messiah,—“God manifest in the flesh;” that I am the faithful and true witness. I am your Mediator and Forerunner. “In my Father’s house are many mansions:” there is a place of rest for you. “It is expedient for you that I go away.” Do not be alarmed because I leave you to walk by faith. I go, upon your business; I go, to prepare a place for you: and when I have prepared a place for you, and prepared you for it, “I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” In the mean time, let your heart take fast hold on God. Believe that I am King of kings, and Lord of lords; that I am unchangeable, “the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.” There shall not an hair of your head perish. Believe

that I am going within the vail, as your great High Priest, and that I bear you on my breast. I will intercede for you; and “if ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.” “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever. . . . I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”

Now, to whom are these comfortable words spoken? Let not the carnal man take up these words, as addressed to him. On the contrary, let him be troubled, and exceedingly alarmed;—for he is not acquainted with his Judge. These words were spoken to Christ’s true disciples; and if we are such, they are equally spoken to us. There is comfort provided for those who are authorized to receive it; that is, all who believe in Christ. As long as Christ is in heaven to intercede for his Church, it shall never want support or consolation.

I. I shall consider WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THIS PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE;

II. I shall endeavor TO DRAW A FEW INFERENCES FROM IT. And in further meditating upon this subject, let us seek to behold it by the help of the Holy Spirit.

I. WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THIS SCRIPTURE: “*I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.*” He shall give you, not a quality, but a person; not a comfort, but a Comforter. One that shall be a consolation; that shall make his abode with you, and not be only a transient visitor. The very best of earthly comforts is but momentary: it is fleeing away. But the Divine Comforter shall abide with the believer, and support him, even on a dying-bed. And when others faint with thirst, he says, “I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.”

“Even the Spirit of truth ;” the Spirit that shall reveal truth to the heart, and that shall seal and stamp it thereon ; that shall implant in the heart the real belief and love of it ; “he will guide you into all truth.” And he shall remain with you forever.

“Ye know him ; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” The believer may not be able to give a philosophical account of this divine influence ; but he has an inward witness : he feels under an impression. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” He knows it as certainly as he knows that there is sap in a tree, without which the branches would wither and die. He is conscious of a quickening influence sent down by the Holy Spirit, by which he lives, and daily gains stature. We should consider not only external evidence, but internal evidence. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

This privilege of the Spirit’s indwelling does not descend from father to son : it is an act of sovereign grace. Some totally deny the doctrine. Some claim the privilege, who have no part nor lot in the matter. But the believer knows the Holy Spirit as a most noble witness—as a discerning witness—a holy witness. He bears witness not by instantaneous impulses, or wild enthusiastic impressions, but by his dwelling in the children of God : “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” He is also discernible by his operation : “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins ;” he is known by his illuminating the understanding—subduing the will—captivating the affections—conquering the power of sin, so that it shall not reign over a believer—and by enabling him to maintain a continual conflict against it. The Spirit also leads to the blood

of Christ, and by the word of Christ: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." This is therefore the work of a real Character; a Glorious Person; a living breath; and they that live, live by him.

"Whom the world cannot receive." They who will not receive this truth must live in a state of error; if the world loves darkness rather than light, it is because its deeds are evil. And it is no wonder that it should oppose the Spirit of truth which testifies against it. The world is buried in sense.

The gift of the Spirit is that peculiar favor which God has prepared for his people. "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Rev. ii. 17. The comforts and consolations which God imparts to his people cannot be described, or shown. They are only known to him who receiveth them.

Every blessing of the Gospel is proposed to the weary and helpless. A believer is never bowing his knees in prayer to God, but Christ is interceding for him at the same time.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." Christ makes intercession for us in our ordinary affairs of life; in our difficulties and troubles; and, more especially, that we may have strength in the day of temptation, that our faith fail not. Luke xxii. 32. He stands rebuking our adversaries, and defending our cause. We should recollect that we have no safety but in Christ, and that our persevering in the good way, and holding out to the end, is alone through his intercession for us. Therefore it is, that the smoking flax is not quenched; that the spark is kept

alive in the midst of the ocean; and that, in his own good time, he will bring us to the mansions he has prepared for us.

“I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you.” Ever since the fall, man has been a poor, needy, distressed creature. The margin reads, “I will not leave you orphans.” Consider the state of an orphan; how exposed, how destitute, how forlorn! No guide, no anxious eye to watch over it, no kind hand to protect from evil! no education, no one to instil right principles! no one to provide for it, and to support it, in weakness! Our Lord has said to his people, This shall not be your case: I will not leave you orphans. I will send you another Comforter in my place. I have bought you with a price: I will take care of you. Do not be cast down by my going away. I will see you again. You shall hear my risen voice; and after that I am ascended to my Father, I will visit you by my Spirit: I will meet you in my ordinances, and, at the resurrection, you shall see me with my glorified body. “I will not leave you comfortless.” “I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Observe, our Lord does not propose to his disciples an exemption from trouble; but that their heads shall be kept above it, and they shall have a resource in it. He does not propose that his soldiers should not go to battle, but he intends they should look to him as their Captain. The strong report of the senses will sometimes raise a storm; the suddenness of a trial may surprise and upset the mind; but it is our privilege to look to Jesus, and we shall then be enabled to walk upon the waves. There are many things liable to disturb the peace of a man, a mere letter, a message, &c., but while we can look to Christ, though the storm may

come, we shall be kept from sinking. The waters shall be shallow, or deep, according as our faith is strong or weak. There is no peace like that which faith brings. We may meet with rough roads: but it is said, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass: and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." We may be in temptation; but Christ sits as a Refiner. He says, "I will not leave you comfortless." I will write you upon the tablet of my heart; and mine eye shall be over you for good.

The greatest potentate could not make such a promise as this. Comfort is God's prerogative to bestow. The creature can furnish none but as God puts it into it. A prince may say, When I am dead, my son shall have my vast estates, and my empire: but he cannot say, "I will not leave you comfortless." He may educate him, and leave him great possessions, but if his eyes are not spiritually opened, if God say, You shall have no teaching from me, if he remain blind and stupid in regard to the things which concern his everlasting interest, then he will be left comfortless: he will be a beggar indeed, in the midst of all his wealth! Oh that we did but contemplate every day the privilege of being true believers! Our language should be, Let me be any thing but an orphan! any thing but left "comfortless!"

II. LET US DRAW A FEW INFERENCES FROM THIS SUBJECT.

1st. If the Christian has a Comforter, such a tender and loving Saviour ever present, then *the meanest Christian, in his lowest state, has a prospect which the highest pinnacle of this world could not afford.* "The world seeth me no more; but ye see me." In every true Christian, there is a Divine illumination, which

enables him to see a Divine object by a Divine light. There is a prop under a believer, that lifts him higher than this world's highest pinnacle! For has the world's highest pinnacle any provision for death? Has it any such thing for its votaries? The believer sees the Sun of Righteousness: he sees this Divine object by a Divine light. The Sun of Righteousness, like the natural sun, can only be seen by its own light. The bodily eyes of the disciples were not different from those of others; yet our Lord says, "The world seeth me no more; but ye see me." Can the world ever present to you such an Object as this? Go to the rich man, to the philosopher, to the man of pleasure, and ask them to show you what will lift up your head in a dying hour? Can they tell you of a comforting, sanctifying, healing Spirit? of a Saviour who will come unto you?

But do you ask, Shall I never be disappointed in these things? What is my security? Our Saviour has said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." As surely as I have life, and "am the resurrection and the life," so surely will I give, unto mine own, eternal life; and that, for evermore. The disciples might naturally be depressed by the thought that their Master was about to lay down his life: but he corrects this feeling in them, and seems to say, If I am about to die, it is that you may live a life of justification, and sanctification, and glorification. As sure as I am your Divine Head of influence, so surely I am the lifter up of your heads.

2ndly. If Christ said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter," then, *all our comforts are derived from our union with Christ.* This union is not spoken of incidentally in Scripture, but it is made prominent, and essential. It is compared to

the union between a vine and its branches. Christ is the root, and we derive sap and nourishment from him. This union is a legitimate source of joy to the believer. "These things," says Christ, "have I spoken unto you that your joy may be full." John xv. 11. Men often make laborious and expensive attempts to obtain a little earthly joy; but I need not say what disappointment follows all such attempts: but here, as from a fountain, you may obtain certain, constant, overflowing, and ever-flowing joy. It is "a spring of water, whose waters fail not." If this is our appointed rest, the ground upon which God comforts us, let not Satan deceive us by leading us to look to any other ground. To know Christ as the way to the Father, and to receive the gift of his Spirit, is the substance of the Bible. Some may be left to their choice, and remain orphans. What a mercy, if God will not suffer us to be orphans, or comfortless, but has engaged our hearts to choose 'the better part!'

| 3rdly. May not every Christian say, *If such are my privileges, then I will build upon this Rock, and leave all consequences?* This has nothing to do with a perhaps, or peradventure: but it is, that "the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Really beholding Christ, implies fleeing to him for refuge—calling daily upon him—taking his counsel—trusting his word, and growing up unto him in all things. We can only hold communion with Christ, and walk with him by a living faith. We cannot look upon mankind, nor at our own hearts, without seeing and feeling their total disorder and confusion. But when men presumptuously scoff, and ask, What is this Spirit? and "Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?" 1 Kings xxii. 24; we are not careful to answer

them, much less are we dismayed because a wicked world will scorn and scoff. It is enough for us to stand upon a foundation which is sure and steadfast, and that "cannot be moved." We would say to all, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve;" but as for us, we will serve the Lord our God: we will build on no other than the Rock of ages. We may lose our property, our friends, our beloved ministers—nay, even our lives. But we may safely give up all, if we enjoy the grace and favor of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us put up this prayer: Holy Ghost, the Comforter, lead me and guide me! that walking with Jesus now, by faith, I may be with him where he is, and not be left an orphan! "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John xiv. 23.



THE MISSION OF THE HOLY GHOST.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.—JOHN xvi. 12, 13. [1796.]

EVERY part of our Lord's farewell discourse to his disciples is infinitely important to all that would know how to walk "as looking not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen, and eternal." It is melancholy to consider how few enter into the spirit and meaning of this subject.

If we compare this promise of our Saviour with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and with the effects which followed, we shall need no other commentary.

Let us consider,

I. THE NECESSITY OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

II. WHAT IS MORE PARTICULARLY PROMISED IN THE TEXT WITH RESPECT TO THE HOLY SPIRIT'S MISSION.

III. WHAT IS OBSERVABLE IN THE GUIDANCE OF THE SPIRIT.

I. THE NECESSITY OF HIS WORK. In entering upon this subject, we may remark, that what men commend greatly, often falls far short of their account of it in the reality: but when God commends any thing to our notice, we may rest satisfied that it is important. The gift of the Holy Spirit was a subject of special promise.

The Holy Spirit is not spoken of merely as a quality or operation, but as an agent, a person: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." He was sent to help man under his weakness; to guide him in his blindness and ignorance; to assist his heart and renew it; to influence his will; to quicken him, as "dead in trespasses and sins." Experience proves that unless there be such a special work wrought upon the mind, people will hear the Gospel all their lives in vain. There is a necessity for the Spirit's influence to render the work of Christ effectual.

It is of importance to mark what are the consequences of living without these influences. Show me a Church, a family, or an individual that slight this doctrine, and I will show you them dead, totally dead, as to any real godliness. Any man who looks into his Bible may see that, without this divine influence, the Ethiopian can as soon change his skin, and the leopard his spots, as those who are in the habits of evil can

learn to do well. I do not say that a man may not raise a sect; that he may not turn from one form of religion to another: I am speaking of a very different thing; I am speaking of being a Christian,—

“A Christian is the highest style of man.”

A Christian is one who has given his heart to God, and who glories in nothing but Christ.”

II. Let us consider, WHAT IS MORE PARTICULARLY PROMISED WITH RESPECT TO THE HOLY SPIRIT'S MISSION. “*He will guide you into all truth.*”

This is an expression used to imply “the whole counsel of God;” the truth as it is in Jesus. So that when a poor sinner would ask the way to heaven, that which fully answers to this question may well be called, “truth;” truth as distinguished from error; “all truth,” not a part only; truth in its proportion,—the whole harmony of truth; truth in all its integrity; truth formed into a medicine: for truth is the medicine of the mind; it is God's remedy for a guilty conscience, a depraved heart. But as, in regard to the body, a medicine taken in part only might injure rather than cure,—so in regard to truth, if a man takes a part only, nothing can be more injurious. It is no wonder, then, if heresy or enthusiasm be introduced. Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life.” This is that medicine of the tree of life, “whose leaves were for the healing of the nations.” It is the office of the Holy Spirit to make a saving application of truth to the mind; under the Spirit's teaching you shall know truth experimentally: you shall be savingly acquainted with its virtue and efficacy. The knowledge which the Holy Spirit gives is always vital and practical.

“He will guide you into all truth:” like the pillar

and the cloud, which was not only a shelter, and a type of Christ, but a medium of communication. See Exodus xiv. 24. So, the Spirit of truth shall lead his people by the word,—by special providences,—and by a peculiar teaching, or breathing. The Apostle declares, that the Old Testament had nothing but what was excelled by the New. “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth;” into the truth of the Gospel, as distinguished from worldly elements: “all truth,” in opposition to the practice of those who pay a partial regard to truth: who would divide it, and set up one truth against another.

III. Let us inquire WHAT THERE IS OBSERVABLE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT’S GUIDANCE,—in his mission to a lost world.

His operation is observable not only in providence, and in his word brought home to our ears—but, by his *preparing the heart, by his making the ground good upon which the seed is to be cast: by showing the sinner that he needs help.* He teaches men, as the prodigal was taught who *would* leave his father’s house;—his springs were all dried up—his props were all cut away—he was made to feel “in want:” then he came to himself, and said, “I will arise and go to my Father.” This was a preparation of heart: then, he saw the suitableness of his Father’s house. So, the Holy Spirit guides to the means of grace—the Sabbath,—the sacrament: things are made to appear interesting which before were deemed irksome. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to give a spiritual taste, a savor and relish for the things of Christ. Till a person has this taste, he knows very little of the power of religion. The Spirit leads a man to read the word of God in a manner he never did before: he may have studied the

Scriptures with much learning ; but unless a man has an enlightened understanding, so as to be able to make a true application of the truth, he may remain blind and ignorant in the midst of light. The Holy Spirit prepares the heart to receive the truth concerning a Saviour. "He shall glorify me." Verse 14. He will show the sinner the blind and miserable state of his heart, and the miserable state of the world,—lying in the wicked one : and he will show the work of the Son of God,—that he came "to destroy the works of the devil"—he will make this work appear glorious in the sinner's eyes. Till a man has his eyes thus opened, to see Christ as a Saviour and great Physician, he gives no proof of his having been led into all truth. Suppose a felon, both diseased and lying in chains ; and suppose a pardon to be proclaimed to him ; but what is he to do about his disease ? Tell him, he may enjoy his liberty :—Enjoy his liberty ! what, while dying under a mortal distemper ! He must first obtain a cure. The sinner is both a captive, and also sick of a mortal disease ; he must be made whole of the disease of sin ; and he must have the blood of Christ applied to his conscience, that he may receive pardon and justification in the sight of God : he needs the work of the Spirit, to give a new direction to his will and affections. The Holy Spirit is to soften the heart ; to make a powerful application of truth ; to elevate the heart to grasp at the things promised ; confirming the mind ; strengthening, sanctifying, and comforting, till the man shall be enabled to say with the spouse, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight." And, therefore, it is the whole truth concerning salvation, which a sinner wants. I apprehend that most of us have observed the havoc which has been made in the Church, by taking up a part of the truth only.

In the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is to be observed, that he guides *variously*. Sometimes, by “a still small voice,” saying in the conscience, “Why will ye die?” Look unto the cross, and behold salvation! Thus the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, to attend unto the things spoken by Paul. Sometimes, he will alarm with the thunders of Mount Sinai; crying in a man’s ears,—“Flee from the wrath to come!”

The Spirit teaches *gradually*: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” What was there in Christianity, that Christ had not taught his disciples? Nothing essential: but there were some additional truths not revealed by him; such as the state of the Christian Church as to the spread it was likely to make; the opposition and sufferings which his disciples would be likely to meet with; the rejection of the Jews, the destruction of their state and polity; and the calling of the Gentiles, which was a truth very offensive to the Jews. These, no doubt, were among the “many things” which they could not bear, owing to the remaining weakness of their faith, the carnality of their views, and their Jewish prejudices. They were looking for a temporal kingdom.

In order to distinguish the guidance of the Holy Spirit from the enthusiastic operation of our own minds, we may remark further, that in guiding his people into the whole truth, the Spirit leads *scripturally*. “I have had a dream,” says one. No matter; it is not worth hearing. “I have had a revelation,” says another. How do you know this? It may be a mere delusion. On the other hand, if I am led scripturally,—if I am led to rely more on the word of God, and less on the word of man,—if I am enabled to see the vileness of sin, and am thereby led to exalt Christ;—then, let men call me an enthusiast, if they like,—

the point is not what men think, but what I am in the sight of God. It is enough for me that he has promised, if I follow him, that one day I shall lift up my head with joy.

Again, observe in the Holy Spirit's guidance, he leads *effectually*. If the truth sown in your hearts be but as a grain of mustard seed,—how small soever,—it shall be defended, watered ; and though perhaps, like St. Paul, a man may have been at first a persecutor, yet, like him, afterwards he shall be found praying for others. And, says the apostle, you shall know what is my way of proceeding,—it is, “striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.” Col. i. 29.

Two general propositions may be deduced from the text.

1. THERE ARE MANY THINGS CONNECTED WITH TRUE RELIGION WHICH MANY REAL CHRISTIANS CANNOT BEAR TO HEAR IN A CERTAIN STAGE OF THEIR PROFESSION.

I am not here speaking of carnal apprehensions—of the gross prejudices of a worldly mind, or of those who altogether reject Christianity, but, of real Christians. “I have yet many things to say unto you,” my disciples, “but ye cannot bear them now.” There are many things which true Christians cannot bear in a certain stage of their experience. For instance, if I go and preach to a congregation who had scarcely been taught the first rudiments of the Gospel, and instead of preaching upon the first elements—the general truths of the Gospel—I should preach only the peculiar truths, then I transgress our Lord's rule. Many who are really gracious in heart, are ignorant of the nature of the change—that it is the bringing of a captive into

liberty, implanting a holy and heavenly taste. We are here taught not to despise the day of small things.

If you ask, Why cannot such persons bear the whole truth at once? I answer, Sometimes it is, that they give way to carnal reasonings: they want to know the reason of things which cannot be explained. Sometimes it is from the love of ease and reputation, which forms a great barrier to taking in the whole counsel of God. "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." No man likes to be torn up by the roots. There are not many who can say, like St. Paul, "One thing I do." It is a miracle of grace where a man can at once enter into the true spirit of Christianity. Our Lord told his disciples, plainly, that he should be delivered into the hands of men: "but they understood not this saying, and they feared to ask him;" because they had a false association, a corrupt taste, and desired a temporal kingdom. So, when Jesus began to show unto his disciples "how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things," "Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Yet, after the day of Pentecost, how did he and all the disciples understand and enter into the whole design of Christ's crucifixion! So, after St. Paul had planted the church of Corinth, he saw their minds carried away by the strange notions of men, and unable to bear the whole truth. He remonstrates, "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men? I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. One saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos." No man till he is taught by the Holy Spirit can say, "What things were gain to me I counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." It is the office of the Holy Spirit to turn us from an admiration of

eloquence, worldly splendor, and earthly greatness, to the simplicity of Christ, and the power of his Cross; which leads me to the second proposition, namely, that—

2. IT IS THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO REMOVE THOSE PREJUDICES WHICH PREVENT PERSONS FROM BEARING THE WHOLE TRUTH AT ONCE; AND AFTERWARDS TO BRING THE WHOLE TRUTH WITH POWER TO THEIR MINDS. “*Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.*”

To be led into the truth, is more than barely to know the truth. St. Augustine tells us, that when his mother labored day and night to bring her son over to the truth from the errors he had imbibed, it had this effect upon his mind, that though he could not break the chains and fetters of his sins, yet he was convinced she was right, and therefore he prayed, “O Lord, make me a good man, but not now.” To be led into the truth is to be led into the love of it: to have a spiritual taste; “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious:” it is to know it in its power; to be assured of it; so that a man shall be able to say, when objections are brought by unbelievers—“God has spoken, and that is enough.” It is to walk in the path of the just, “which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” Some may ask, Why, since the promise is so positive, are so few led into the truth? One reason is, that they have not because they ask not. We must secure this benefit by fervent prayer. “If a son ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!” We must ask at the foot of the Cross, as those

who have no more power to act without the Holy Spirit's help, than the prophet had over the dry bones to give them life. It must be the Divine breath. Christians feel much pain in seeing friends so little affected with truth. But Paul may plant, and Apollos water; it is God alone who can give the increase. This Spirit alone can open the heart of Lydia, and the heart of the jailer. But we are not laboring in vain, though God alone can work effectually. He often moves men by rational considerations: as, "What a fool and a madman am I while despising God and his ministers!" Thus discovering truth by means of the preached word, he embraces it, and acknowledges it before men; he cries to his former companions, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

I would add a few reflections upon this subject: and

1st. *A word of caution to teachers, parents, and guardians.* Truth should be proposed according to the capacity of the hearer. Learn of Christ in this text: "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Truth may be enforced so as to blind and perplex the pupil. See how our Lord taught the woman of Samaria; John iv. St. Paul also sets us a pattern: "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able;" 1 Cor. iii. 2. The Spirit shall guide you into all truth: *i. e.* patiently, tenderly, gradually, but effectually.

2ndly. *I would give a hint to such as are learning, especially to the young.* Though there is needed more than your teacher to teach you, yet this is your appointed means of instruction, and you must not lean to your own understanding, or despise your teacher, or you

will discourage him. Take care that you have not the prejudices that I have been speaking of. Read the account of Philip and the eunuch, and mark the docility with which he received the lesson given him.

3rdly. *The subject affords encouragement to all who desire truth and knowledge.* The same Holy Spirit is promised to the Church in all ages. In the Old Testament David prays, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." And what was necessary to David is necessary to every believer to the end of the world. Persons seem not practically to adopt this truth, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Did not our Lord himself teach? And yet, after all, how little was his doctrine understood! His disciples ask, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" *i. e.* the kingdom they were thinking of. But "when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."

4thly. *Take heed of curiosity.* This is opposed to our giving God credit for what he says. If curiosity would ask with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" how is it that the Spirit acts upon our minds? the answer is, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit;" John iii. 8. Here is a mighty agent, producing a mighty effect: and we have only to believe and to adore,—not to reason. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it!"—is all we want.

5thly. Would you gain the promised benefit? *Honor the means of grace.* Come to them not only by prayer, saying, "Oh, send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles:" but be diligent also in

searching the Scriptures, and walk in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

6thly. *How great is the depravity of those who refuse such a Teacher!* “O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?” One of the characters of this kind came to these church doors when they were repairing, and said to me, “You know that religion is all a farce!” He afterwards sent for me, being on a sick-bed, with a mortification in his mouth; and, in the utmost anguish, he spoke to me by his countenance, though he could not with his mouth, and said that religion was no farce! Know, therefore, O ye sons of men, the value of true godliness. To those who despise, God says, “I also will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh.” Prov. i. 26.

Finally, *let us all be willing pupils of the Holy Spirit, and sit at the feet of this great Teacher.* Let us cleave with simplicity to our gracious Friend and Helper. In so doing, we shall have nothing to fear. Let us endeavor to submit to our dispensation, though it may be a humbling one. Wherever the Holy Spirit leads, we may safely follow. “Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart.” If the way, and the means he makes use of, suit not with our carnal taste, yet if they produce the designed end, if they produce the right fruit, let us be thankful, and bless God for it. Let us come, as poor benighted sinners, to the light of life.

BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT.

For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.—1 COR. xii. 13. [1806.]

THE Church of God is in the Scripture compared to a garden, in which the ministers of the Gospel are represented as the laborers, and the success of their labors as depending entirely on Divine influences. The Holy Ghost breathing upon the garden of the Church promotes its growth. Sol. Song, iv. 16. Whether it be the union of the Church, or its growth and prosperity, the apostle directs our attention to the same Spirit, as the true source of the blessing: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

The apostle shows, in the verses preceding the text, that while the Holy Ghost divides Spiritual gifts severally as he will, by his own power, and according to his own pleasure, yet that they are distributed, not for private honor and advantage, but for the edification of the body, the Church. Christ and his Church make but one body, as Head and members. All the members are baptized into the same body, and are made to drink into the same Spirit. The outward rite is of Divine institution, significant of the new birth, and called therefore "the washing of regeneration," Titus iii. 5; but it is by the Spirit, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, that we are made members of Christ's body. All who have the Spirit of Christ, whether Jew or

Gentile, bond or free, are the members of Christ, and none else. I shall consider,

I. THE UNION OF THE TRUE CHURCH.

II. THE IMPORTANT INFERENCES WHICH WE MAY DRAW FROM THE SUBJECT

I. THE UNION OF THE TRUE CHURCH. Prior to any distinctions in it, the Catholic and Apostolic Church had always a union of privilege, and a union of heart. They are united in knowledge, and they are not less united in heart; and this is the work of the Holy Ghost. They have *a union of privilege*. St. Paul says, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that Spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." 1 Cor. x. 1—4. We are not now to look for signs and wonders, but the Spirit's influences in the heart of every believer. All real Christians unite in belief of the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, that he is one of the persons of the Triune Jehovah: they also unite in belief of the work of the Spirit; namely, his illuminating, regenerating, and sanctifying influences; his succoring and consoling operations. But it is not a mere belief of these things, as important articles of the Christian faith, which constitutes the privilege of true believers; it is the Spirit's special influences on the heart. Therefore, I would say, they have a union of privilege,

1st. *From a common impression of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts.* "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were

sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Eph. i. 13, 14. The heart being softened, receives the holy impression: as the wax, when warm, receives the impression of a seal; and retains it afterwards. What a poor creature, then, is a merely orthodox Christian!

2ndly. Christians have a union of privilege by *the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit in their hearts*. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John xiv. 16, 17. "In whom ye also are build-ed together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. ii. 22. This is the common privilege into which the Church is baptized: for this Christ prayed, John xvii. 17. Into this privilege the eunuch entered when he had been instructed by Philip. "The eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." Acts viii. 36, 37. Philip might be ready to ask, "Can these dry bones live?" How was it that this man received the truth with such affection? It was, because they were both made to drink into one Spirit.

But, moreover, the union of the true Church is *a union of heart*. This also is the free gift of God, that they are thus "made to drink into one Spirit." The Church is composed of a body of true believers, and not connected with any particular sect. They are united in heart; they have the same tastes, affections, and dispositions. Yet the apostle blames them for the dissensions which took place among them. "Now this I

say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.”—“For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” Such will be the case while the Enemy is permitted to sow tares among the wheat; and while there is much weakness and prejudice. But still, notwithstanding all this, read the text. There must be real union of heart in all true believers: “For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” Thus, at the Lord’s table we all partake of one cup. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” This is a picture of the union which the children of God have with one another. See an instance of this union. Behold Saul exceedingly mad against the saints, persecuting them “even to strange cities:” and behold the jailer of Philippi, thrusting the apostles into the inner prison, after making their feet fast in the stocks!—But, St. Paul is preaching Christ to the jailer: and presently the jailer is bringing the apostles into his house and setting meat before them, rejoicing, and believing in God with all his house! Thus fulfilling that prophecy, “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid!” This was, because they were both made “to drink into the same Spirit.” Let us consider,

II. THE IMPORTANT INFERENCES WHICH WE MAY DRAW FROM THIS SUBJECT.

1st. *If the Spiritual Church be distinguished by a*

union of privilege and a union of heart, it becomes us to examine ourselves by this criterion. Do I desire to know and feel this privilege, by faith in Christ Jesus? Do I seek to enter into that glorious “assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven?” Have I this union of heart with true Christians? Coincidence of ideas, or union of heart, is of so remarkable a nature, that if two persons of different nations should meet in a country foreign to both, this union of heart and sentiment would soon discover itself. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and David, were they all to appear again in the world together, they would be found united in heart, not only with one another, but with all real Christians. For all true believers have been made to drink into the same Spirit.

2ndly. We may infer from what has been said, that *if we have not drunk into the Spirit, we are not true members of the Church of Christ.* The strong man armed still keepeth his palace, and his goods are in peace. The apostle says, in the eighth chapter to the Romans, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be.” Therefore by this we may discover our state and character. The Spirit dwelling in us must be the evidence of our having drunk into the Spirit: for it is mutual. “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” 1 John iv. 16.

3rdly. If members of the true Church feel a union of heart as well as of privilege, *bless God if any of you have begun to enter into this bond of union;* and be encouraged if the fire of divine grace is beginning to kindle in your hearts, even though you may not have gifts. For “if children,”—here is the great turning point!—“if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint

heirs with Christ.” “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God :” though the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not ; yet angels will rejoice over us, and good men will rejoice over us to do us good.

4thly. *Cultivate the fruits of the Spirit.* Drink into it more and more. Let me again remind you of “the cup of blessing” to be put into your hand at the table of the Lord to-day : “Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ?” whereby you may partake of those privileges, and profess yourselves under those obligations, which result from the death and sacrifice of Christ. God has appointed certain ordinances in order to maintaining the life of our souls : but without the grace of God we can do nothing acceptably. Let us therefore implore a Divine influence, in order to our performing a spiritual act, as well as an act of obedience to our Master’s express command.

THE PRAYER OF MOSES.

And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight ? is it not in that thou goest with us ? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.—Exod. xxxiii. 15, 16. [1803.]

It is most natural, and rational, that a poor creature like man, whose time is hasting away like a shadow, should mark the periods of his life ; that he should say, Another year is gone ! and what has been its history ? —It is most natural and rational that he should reflect

on past mercies, temporal and spiritual, and the many providential escapes, with the means of grace afforded. It is natural, and rational, that he should look forward, in a new year, to the same God who has hitherto helped, in hope and reliance. And surely we cannot remember, without humiliation, the poor improvement we have made of past mercies; the evils within; the casting down in ourselves, and the help that has been graciously bestowed. What cause for both humiliation and gratitude is here! It is useful also to mark the periods of our life, in order that we may make use of them as stimulants to set forward with fresh resolutions, for the future. For there is no man who has not felt, if he has endeavored to call up his mind to a sense of duty, that he must repeat his endeavor day after day. And if he has gained any ground, it is natural that he should come forth pleading what he has received, as a pledge of future favors. In entering upon a new year, he will be ready to say with Moses, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."

The patience of Moses had been almost worn out by the refractory conduct of the people, and their idolatry: on account of which God had said to Moses, "Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt . . . for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people: lest I consume thee in the way." It was on this occasion that the words of the text were spoken. I shall consider,

I. THE PARTICULAR OBJECT OF THIS PETITION.

II. THE INDISPENSABLE NECESSITY FOR URGING THIS REQUEST.

I. THE OBJECT OF THE PETITION. By the presence of God we are to understand his favor, his patronage,

the light of his countenance. Moses desired to have such a visible sign that the Lord was with these people, that it might be seen that the shout of a king was among them. Moses had experienced much of this in Egypt: he had proved that the Lord was with them when he divided the sea, and in all the wonders wrought before Pharaoh. Laban, in like manner, saw that God was with Jacob. The visible tokens of God's presence were displayed at Jericho: and in the case of Sennacherib, God had only to send his angel, and "a hundred and four score and five thousand of the Assyrians were all dead corpses!" In all these cases there was a token of divine patronage afforded; giving them victory; pointing out their way. So, he guided them by a pillar of cloud and of fire; gave them water out of the rock; sent them down manna from heaven. All this was a sign of his presence. So Moses, in the text, says—If God will not thus go before us, suffer us not to go up hence.

And was it remarkable that this should strike the minds of the Israelites, when Balaam, a false prophet, could exclaim, "The Lord their God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them:" therefore I can do nothing? "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?"

You see, therefore, brethren, that when Moses pleaded for the presence of God, it was nothing more than the act of a good man who is not satisfied with general favors, but seeks for particular help in a particular case. So Jacob, when about to meet his brother Esau, how did he plead God's former mercies! "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not

worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau." Our best prayers are formed upon God's promises. We are very dependant creatures, and hang upon the Lord not only for the peace of the present moment, but for the next, and the next. The Lord knows our need: and "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." We are warranted to look to the Lord, and depend upon him, in time of special trial. Let us now consider,

II. THE INDESPENSABLE NECESSITY FOR GOD'S PRESENCE WITH US.

Why was Moses so urgent upon this point?—I apprehend that this was, 1st, *The result of knowledge*; as much as if he had said, with the Psalmist, "Power belongeth unto God." The rashness of fools destroys them in this case: they think they can do without it. Pharaoh said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my hand shall be satisfied with them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters." A man that is taught of God, knows that nothing will stand him in the stead of God's favorable presence in an undertaking. Tell him that the king is for him, or the minister—that he has the popular favor, but God is *not* for him:—Oh, then, says he, It will not do! my projects will be blasted! "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." Psalm xx. 7.

Moses had a prospect of a vast and arduous under-

taking: he was to conduct a people that had already fallen into idolatry, and who upon every occasion were prone to rebellion. He knew that he had mighty enemies to encounter: he knew his own weakness: but, says he, "Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." *q. d.* If God be with me, I can undertake any thing;—I can go forward anywhere;—I can cast my weak, feeble, disordered cogitations entirely upon him: I can be hid in the hollow of his hand: but, "if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."

2ndly. Moses no doubt urged this request from *his sense of the danger of error*. This creeps even into the Church; there are woful errors even here; the Church is not perfect yet. See the men of Ai, chasing the Israelites, because there was among them an accursed thing, Josh. vii.—The poor distressed Israelites, when smitten before the Philistines, said, "Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." They thought the mere symbol of God's presence enough, and therefore they sent for the Ark, 1 Sam. iv. 3; but yet "Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent; and there was a very great slaughter: and the Ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain."

Too many in this day, make the same mistake: they say, We have still all the forms and signs: we have Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. But the question is, Is Christ in you? To live without religion is the bane of the world at large: and to present sacrifices with-

out Christ is the bane of the Church. Christ is the glory of every ordinance: whereas we are apt to transfer the excellence to some creature. Rev. xxi. 22. The Ark alone is not enough, without the God of the Ark. Therefore, we see why Moses said, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."

3rdly. Moses urged this request from *his desire of separation from other nations*. "Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." Now, this separation, for which Moses desires God's presence, has been sometimes seen in a fanatic. He *will* be singular: he wishes to be remarked for something: this is an abuse and counterfeit, not a holy separation.

There is another sort of character that thinks it "a hard saying," that he cannot be a Christian without being separated from the world. Such will therefore by no means submit to learn this holy, humble, separate mind of Christ. By a true believer, this will be fully received. Let us be separate from all nations in vanity, in lust of present things. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; . . . esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Heb. xi. 24.

You see, therefore, what kind of separation this was. What a sentiment is here! It is as though Moses had said, What is a court! What are all the treasures of Egypt! I desire to be one of the Church:—to have God's presence. If I cannot have this privilege without being despised of the world, then, I desire to be despised; tell me not what I shall lose in this world, but what I shall gain in the next.

4thly. A further reason which Moses might have for urging this request, was *his own personal security* in all events : *q. d.* Let thy presence go with me, for I know not what a day may bring forth. I know not whether the next act of this people may not make thine anger smoke. What then can be my own personal security in the midst of all this ?—"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm : " "Thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now, therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight."

I would now bring this subject home in a way of practical address to all.

There is a conscience in every man. But to whom do I speak ? 1st. *I speak to him whose conscience tells him that he does not act upon the principle of Moses.* I say, your conscience tells you that you never put up such a prayer as this. You do not say, on entering this new year, O Lord, thou hast preserved me through the past year, but I dare not go forward in this next, but as I am assured that thy presence will go with me !—If your conscience declares that you are not acting upon this plan, then I speak to you, and must tell you the truth, that you are going on in a state of practical Atheism. For what does it signify that you may approve of what you hear, if it has no influence on your heart and conduct ? If your thoughts are entirely engrossed in the things of time and sense : if, like the foolish builders, you say—"Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach to heaven : " this year, we will have a new plan, new schemes, that may succeed : and "let us make us a name."—This you may say : but what if God should

say, "This year thy soul shall be required of thee!" What if God should say to you as to the barren fig-tree, "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"—Has not this been exemplified in innumerable instances? What, if God should dash to pieces your schemes! or, what is worse still, if he should suffer them to succeed—saying, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone!" If, instead of darkening the prospect, he should let you succeed, but send leanness into your soul! Psalm cvi. 15.

My dear hearers, you seek happiness in vain, but as you seek it like Moses! Thank God, that there is provision made in Christ Jesus, and his Gospel, for this high privilege! He hath said to every soul of us, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. i. 18. I therefore pray God the Holy Spirit to help you this new year, especially in spiritual things.

2ndly. But I believe, and rejoice to consider, that there are those here who, like Moses, *have true illumination of heart*, and who do believe that wealth, and peace, and happiness are alone from God: who, if they are not engaged in undertakings like Moses, have yet a vast undertaking before them in the salvation of their souls; who consider the danger of error, and that even in the Church they may perish in ignorance and vanity, and go through all its services with hardness of heart, unless they have the Spirit and presence of God with them.

I speak then to such: to those who consider it their special privilege to have God with them: who, like Moses, consider it their personal security, and a special

means of separation from the world, and preservation from its errors. I say, therefore, such seasons as these are useful. It is most useful, when entering into a new year, to review the past. How instructive have been the political events of the past year ! but the most interesting thing is to take a review of our own lives. Returning seasons are useful in calling us up to reflection ; in leading us to seek fresh direction ; in exciting us to the correction of past errors ; and to form, in the strength of God, fresh resolutions, that we may rely more on God. Prayer, like that of Moses, is our best defence on all occasions.

There is not a man among us that can have any conception of what we may have to meet in a single day !* But in all contingencies, if we can but offer in faith the prayer of Moses—if we can say, If thou wilt but go with me, keep me, direct me, hide me in the secret of thy tabernacle ;—then, who is he that shall harm me ?

“ Ill tidings never can surprise
 His heart, that fix'd on God relies,
 Though waves and tempests roar around.
 Safe on the Rock he sits and sees
 The shipwreck of his enemies,
 And all their hope and glory drown'd.”

Now a wise man will be endeavoring to put up this prayer for himself, and his family, on entering this new year : and, as a benevolent man, anxious for the welfare of the nation, and of the Church, he will endeavor to be an intercessor for others. He will come to God as a God of Providence, a God of love, and a God of grace, and plead as Abraham. When the eye of a perplexed soul is turned to the right object, he may rest satisfied : for God is ever the hearer of prayer.

* 1803.—Expected invasion of Napoleon Bonaparte.—ED.

3rdly. We may make especial use of the text, *as we are dying creatures, passing on from time to eternity*. Death is driving his ploughshare over the earth, because sin has entered our world. And shall man be caught by a few splendid vanities, intended only to mock him, when he must be so soon hurried off the stage of life! Should not his first thoughts be directed to an Almighty Friend, who shall guide him through life, be with him in the valley and shadow of death, and afterwards receive him to glory? It was such a Friend that Moses sought when he said, "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." In catching sight of such a friend, Job lifts up his head and says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." With the prospect of such friendship and help, we may safely meet all the events of time and eternity.

THE BETTER PART.

Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from
her.—LUKE x. 42. [1802.]

THE world is a miserable judge of religion: they think it madness or melancholy; they tell you that there is no need for so much of it; forgetting that it is said, "Seek first the kingdom of God." To such as are desirous to honor Christ, and cleave to him, the text is full of encouragement: the Lord seeth not as man seeth: he looks at the heart. We have here,

- I. THE CHOICE OF MARY.
 - II. THE LORD'S APPROBATION OF HER CHOICE.
- I. MARY'S CHOICE. What was it that Mary chose?

She chose salvation by Jesus Christ: she was determined to gather up every word that fell from her Master's lips. When we are obedient to our heavenly calling, we may be said to "choose the good part." No good cometh naturally into the heart: Mary did not choose it of herself: it was the work of the Holy Spirit. While the Greeks counted these things foolishness, and the Jews were stumbled; and while the worldling cared for none of these things, see this woman catching the opportunity, sitting down, and seeming to say, O thou Light of the world, let me but sit at thy feet! and if Martha—though a godly woman, and my sister,—loses herself in the bustle and business of the day, yet, by the help of God, I will seize the occasion—the opportunity—for no other such may offer!

A Christian's object is the "one thing needful." The worldly man has ten thousand objects; his business—his pleasure—his credit—his fame; but a true Christian has but one object; every other is comparatively nothing to it. "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" A Christian knows the value of the good creatures of God, but he does not put them in the place of God. He is not inattentive to the duties of his station, but he will first observe the duty he owes to God; he will never substitute earthly things for heavenly. He knows that God can do without any of his creatures, but none of his creatures can do without him.

That may be called true illumination, which perceives the better part and pursues it; which perceives religion to be not merely a case of necessity, but a superior-good—the one thing needful—the better part: better than the wisdom of the Greek; better than what the rich fool proposed to himself in pulling down his barns to build greater; better than the state and splen-

dor of Dives, who was clothed in purple and fine linen : better than the poor unmeaning professor, who cries, " Lord, Lord ! " It appears from our Lord's words that Mary had a sense of security ; a conviction that what she had chosen should never be taken from her.

Religion, my dear hearers, is not only a spiritual, but a rational thing. What, asks the Christian, what is there besides, that shall not be taken away ? The Christian is the only man that cannot lose his riches : death cannot touch them. He is the only man who has any thing to set the sole of his foot upon.

Mary chose " the better part " with determination and decision. She esteemed the words of Christ as above all the maxims of mere morality. She also chose with certainty, as if she had said, As for me, I will go to the Source for wisdom. Let others consider what is the fashion—what is the thing highest in the world's estimation—I will sit at his feet ; I will give up my own opinion ; I will take the means to the end. " The Way, the Truth, and the Life, " is before me ; and every truth that falls from his lips is more precious than gold ; another such opportunity may never offer : therefore, I will not let it slip ! Let us now consider,

II. THE LORD'S APPROBATION OF MARY'S CHOICE.

What a mercy it is that Christ is our Judge ; and while he will speak for us, we need not be anxious to speak for ourselves ! Let us learn to leave our character in the hands of Christ. " Jesus said, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things : but one thing is needful : and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. " As if he had said, I must tell you, that no worldly care, no temporal concern, must be brought to bear upon this. This alone is THE GOOD THING, Jer. xxxiii. 14 ;

and, therefore, I will not bid thy sister leave her place : she has chosen the better part ; she has made a wise choice.

Though Martha was “careful about many things,” she was a good woman, and her care was about her Master. She was not like too many in the world, who neither think nor care about Christ. She was rejoiced to receive him, and no doubt was anxious to show her love for him by providing the best accommodation possible. But Mary saw the privilege she should have in hearing from our Saviour’s own mouth those blessed things that lay nearest her heart : as though she had said—Whatever be the consequence, I will not lose one gracious sentence that may drop from his lips.

No doubt, had the wise men of Jerusalem been asked, they would have taken the part of Martha : they would not have entered into the views of Mary. But, as if our Lord had said, You look to me as the light of the world : you regard my sentence as decisive : I will leave it upon record what true wisdom is :—It is to choose, like Mary, that one thing needful, that better part which shall never be taken away !

Death brings a strong proof of this truth : I have seen a young person on her death-bed, and the one thing that tormented her was, “I have,” said she, “chosen every part but ‘the better part!’ and now I am going—but, where?”—Oh! death will speak out! It will be heard!—I have felt this truth with tenfold power when I have been in dying circumstances. Our Lord said, “If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death:” John viii. 51. Our security is that we shall not taste “the second death.” “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” The world’s greatest joys have never equalled those which have been manifested by a dying Christian.

The world's consolations *then*--what are they! But there is "strong consolation for those who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them." Heb. vi. 18. God raised Christ from the dead that he might ratify all that he had said, and show his approval of it as a foundation for us to build upon. John vi. 63--69.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." If any should ask, "What is truth?" Christ has pronounced both what it is, and his approbation of those who make choice of it. A Christian is a volunteer; he chooses his portion; and he chooses wisely. Yet, remember, he is one who is made willing in the day of God's power. Our poor finite minds cannot comprehend how it can be choice, and yet of free grace: yet both are laid down in Scripture. As soon as choice is made, there is a blessing; and if you die before the choice is made, you had better never have been born: for there is a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched! Mark ix. 44.

Oh, let me not go from this pulpit to stand as a witness against any of you! to bear witness, that the Gospel was freely set before you, but ye would not receive it into your hearts!

While we may propose to make choice of the one thing needful, yet there is a danger in our taking up a part of religion, as if it were the whole. Thus, while some are sitting at Christ's feet, willing to hear his precepts, some are for doctrine only. Some choose Christ in his priestly office, some in his kingly. Brethren! "is Christ divided?" Every part of his work is essential to salvation! To-day, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is set before us. Now, there are some that seem to have heard every thing which Christ has said except one, "This do in remembrance of me."

But did not your Master expressly command you to distinguish yourselves as his disciples? and if you do not hear this, is it not a sign of error?



THE BETTER PART.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

You will remember that I took up this subject in the morning with reference to MARY'S CHOICE OF THE BETTER PART; but now I take it up in a more general way. If you read this little history again, it will help us to think of Christianity,

I. WITH REFERENCE TO ITS USUAL RESIDENCE.

II. IN REFERENCE TO THE PROPOSALS WHICH IT MAKES TO US.

I. ITS USUAL RESIDENCE.—Here is a conversation in a village, in a private house. It is true, Christianity has found its way into courts, into senates, and into the schools of the learned: for “wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:” there is something in Christianity that will penetrate, like the shining of the sun: but it is not usually found in these places; and this shows the poverty of the world's bravery—that every thing is found there but Christ. “This world was made for Cæsar:” but “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.” Isa. lvii. 15. As though God had said—There is an acquaintance between us; a transaction; and when the Gospel

comes into the meanest village, THERE AM I. How like a Father does God speak to us! "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers:" take shelter under the shadow of my wings! Wisdom cried in the city, but was better heard at "the well," and in "the garden."

For want of conversing with Christ, and our own hearts, there is a miserable, fruitless religion gone forth: the form without the power.

Ah! ye that go to public amusements for satisfaction, how can ye hear of Christ? Ye go into the very places where he is not! Consider (if I may so say) the *haunts* of Christianity!

II. LET US THINK OF CHRISTIANITY IN REFERENCE TO THE PROPOSALS THAT IT MAKES TO US.

There are "better" things offered, things absolutely good. Here lies the fault of many sermons, and many religious books—they treat of "many things:" but there is but "one thing" that is essentially necessary; and this must never be lost sight of.

Suppose the case of a traitor. You go to this man, under sentence of death: you talk to him of the excellence of sobriety, of integrity, of his duty to his neighbor, &c.; and that is all true, and important, and it should, no doubt, be stated. But there is one good thing he wants first of all—and that is, PARDON! One thing is in his heart: Tell me first, says he, if I shall have a pardon; and then I will hear all you have to say. Till Jesus, and his salvation, be taken hold of—till, like Mary, we come to know this "better part," and to feel its interior excellence, so as to embrace it for ourselves—we are "without hope, and without God in the world: and better were it for us if we had never

been born, than that we should die in such a state as this.

Christianity proposes to us something that can be retained. Nothing can be retained by man, who is crumbling every day into the dust, but what is retained in his mind—in his heart and conscience; and therefore a true believer is the only man who cannot be stripped of his treasure. This treasure has been first a gift from above: and our ability to retain it must be derived from a holy influence—by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. 2 Tim. i. 14. Our Lord speaks of a man that went into a field and found treasure. If you had all the treasures on earth, and did not know how to retain them, what would they profit you even in this life? Our object should be to secure something that we can retain beyond this life: therefore Christ teaches us that he is a wise man who, having found in a field the hidden treasure, “for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field.” Matt. xiii. 44. A thinking man, is one whom God teaches that there is no other ground on the face of the earth where he can set the sole of his foot, but the Gospel: and therefore, on the most rational principle, he says, with Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”

I proceed now to make a few general observations on this subject.

1st. *Christianity is here presented to us in its aim and expectation.*—There are few that seem to feel they have found any thing; yet they hope on: but they find their hopes like their dreams. The believer is a man of hope too; but with this difference—his expectations are founded on a rock, he knows in whom he has believed. A madman may be talking of his expectations: but a Christian has certain grounds for his

assurance: he knows, if he has afflictions, that they are preparing him for his blessed estate. The "good part" he has "chosen" shall "never be taken away."

2ndly. *We are also instructed as to the position of Christianity:* namely, the position in which Mary was found, sitting at her Master's feet. The Christian's place is to sit at the feet of Christ, and hear his word: he will never learn, or grow, so well as there. It is the first and safest place in the heavenly school. "Whosoever," says our Lord, "shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Mark x. 15. To come, as a little child, to the feet of Jesus—to determine as Mary did, to abide there—this is Christianity. The believer that is thus taught will not be content to hear, now and then, what the Lord has to say—just when opportunity may serve, and when no other concerns are in the way: he will be like the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." He will be, like Mary, sitting down at Christ's feet.

And, let me ask, where should ignorance be found? What should be the position of a guilty creature—of a sinner? Should it not be that of a person made sensible (as every enlightened man is) that he is all want and necessity?

And here, again, appears to be the fault of many preachers, and of many books—they seem to be teachers of their Teacher. They talk of man's rational powers, &c., as if they were determined to talk diametrically opposite to the Scriptures. The Scriptures speak to man as helpless, as poor, as ignorant: they put man in his proper position: they bid him cast down all imaginations: and the work of the Holy Spirit not only enlightens, but makes a man willing to

cast them down: so that he desires to sit at his Master's feet, and learn. If God has brought any of your hearts to this, I must congratulate you, and call you blessed.

3rdly. *This Scripture instructs us as to the justification which a Christian expects in following his Divine Master.*—I do not now refer to the doctrine of justification, but the justification which Christ will make of a Christian's CHOICE. "I judge not mine own self," says the Apostle, "for I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord." 1 Cor. iv. 4.

Men, when they hear these truths, or any of the leading doctrines of the Gospel, begin to tell you what they "think," and also what this and that man "thinks." But this is nothing to the purpose. What does it signify what the criminal thinks? the point is what the Judge says.

Let me suppose that these speculators were called together, and beheld the scene of this little historical anecdote. The crowd would look at the meanness of the house; the fastidious would complain of the style of things; the Jew would say, there was something new; the Greek would set it down as foolishness; the scornful would turn the whole into ridicule. Ah! well might the Apostle say, "Whom none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." 1 Cor. ii. 8. But let us remember, that one single word from him who is to be our Judge, who is to pronounce sentence, who will not say to the world, What think ye?—one word from Him, will be infinitely more important than the opinion of all the wisest men that ever lived; nay, of the highest angels! "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto

thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Matt. xvi. 17. When Christ comes to judgment, how little then will the scoffs and opinions of the world weigh !

"Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." Who is it that saith this? Even our Lord himself. Christ's word is the Christian's security. You may find trials, temptations, difficulties; you may hear people accusing you of not being careful enough after the things of this world; you may meet with scoffers: you may have persecutions, and troubles, from every quarter; but see that your eye is steadfastly fixed upon Christ as your Object: be found sitting in your place, at his feet, and taking his word for your security, and then you need fear nothing; you shall never be deprived of that "better part" which shall bring you everlasting peace and joy!



THE VIGOROUS NATURE OF TRUE GRACE.

Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.—Acts xix. 19, 20. [1805.]

"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: 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." Isa. lv. 10, 11. This promise is confirmed

in the text by an historical fact ; and even against the most powerful impediments. See the context : “ So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed ;” *i. e.* notwithstanding the opposition of the world around.

There seems to be an allusion to a seed or plant ; to a “ grain of mustard seed.” Matt. xiii. 3. A Christian is a plant planted by God’s own hand : true religion is a progressive thing. Here is,

I. THE PLANTATION OF GRACE.

II. THE UNTOWARDNESS OF THE SOIL IN WHICH IT WAS PLACED.

III. THE EVIDENCE OF ITS GROWTH.

I. THE PLANTATION OF GRACE. The sending of the Gospel is the fulfilment of the promise, “ The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” “ Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven ? that is, to bring Christ down from above : . . . the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart : that is the word of faith which we preach.” This is the setting up of the “ Ensign” spoken of in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah. We are as ambassadors : “ Behold,” said the angels, “ we bring you tidings of great joy.” God is stooping down to man, meeting his wants.

And, as to disputers of this world, God has appointed Christ “ for the healing of the nations.” Therefore the grace of the implantation of the Gospel is like the marriage of the king’s son : Matt. xxii. Men totally mistake, if they think there is nothing set forth but a plan of reform. No doubt there is this ; it is a part of religion ; but there is more ; there is the mercy granted to a felon. “ To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

II. THE UNTOWARDNESS OF THE SOIL IN WHICH IT IS PLANTED.

Yet, wherever it is preached, it brings forth some fruit. In the passage before us, we see the various enemies;—the idolaters,—verses 24 to 27. Yet, “so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” in that very place. Can there be any thing more discouraging than the contemplation of the politician, the pleasure-taker, the formalist? Can the followers of Diana be the followers of Christ? There is every thing in the Gospel opposed to the carnal heart; but there is “a two-edged sword” of the Gospel, that penetrates. Another set of enemies are hypocrites. See chap. v. 11. “And great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things;” *i. e.* when they saw the spirituality of the Gospel. “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”

Nothing more invalidates the truth of the Gospel, than the assumptions of false professors; but the Gospel, like a plant of great vigor, will grow almost among stones. Thus have I seen it to grow among hypocrites, formalists, and worldlings: I have seen men, in this case, laying hold of it, however untoward the surrounding soil. “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

III. THE EVIDENCE OF ITS GROWTH.

Mark what is said, verse 17. “And fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.” There is nothing but God’s putting his fear into our hearts that will make religion grow there: then it is that we begin to feel our need of the Gospel. There is also an evidence of reality, in that it is said, “The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.” “Every

man therefore," says Christ, "that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The song of the ransomed Church is, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

Here was an evidence, which arose from the sincerity of their confession. Now, with respect to the carnal professor, there is a lie; and though he may have right notions, there is no simplicity; something is concealed, as the love of gold and mammon. "Spare me this!" he cries. But instead of such hypocrisy, in the case before us, "many that believed came and confessed, and showed their deeds."

Again, they were willing to make a sacrifice: "Many of them also which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver," or about 1500*l.* of our money. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." When the leaven of the Gospel begins to work, there will be no need of a train of arguments to prove how inexpedient, how utterly unworthy it is for a Christian to turn aside after the vain amusements and trifling books used by the world: "Ephraim shall say, What have I any more to do with idols?" What have I to do with black arts, or dealing with a lie? Those who first trusted in Christ were willing to forsake all and follow him. The grace of the Gospel produces a new taste—it alters every thing about us;—our friends, our pursuits,—our books, &c.

Let us inquire how the matter stands with us. If you ask, How shall I know whether the word of God is growing and prevailing in my heart? I would not recommend you to take the opinion of any individual upon earth: but take the word of God: look at the text.

What do you see here? Here are evidences of the reality of its *growth*. It is too evident that men may sit under the means of the Gospel without experiencing the grace of the Gospel.

It is desirable to exercise gifts, and talents, and knowledge; but these are no evidence of things that accompany salvation; which consist in the magnifying of Christ; in breaking off besetting sins; in a sincere departing from evil, and a choosing of that which is right. The reason why there are so many unmeaning professors is, because the word of God does not grow and prevail in their hearts.

If any ask, What are those sacrifices which are like bringing the books and burning them? I answer, It is the renouncing whatever calls off the mind from the care of the soul; whatever leads us to rest short of God in Christ; whatever tends to flatter our vanity; whatever tends to lessen our sense of sin, as an infinite evil; and whatever tends to aggrandize the world, the flesh, and the devil, in our minds. If the word of God grows and prevails, you will resolve, with St. Paul, not to confer with flesh and blood. Aim, like these people, to magnify the name of the Lord Jesus. Do not despair because of the untoward soil. The world always was the same, and the grace of God is the same; there is the same promise of the Spirit, the same hope as to the end. Do not expect the world to understand your principles.

Have no recourse to arts: there are strange things apt to creep in, even into religious houses: bring out the books, and burn them! See 2 Chron. xxiii. 17. We must not use the arts of the world, because many talk of the greater good that may result from certain compliances with its manners, habits, and customs. See the account of Ahaz, 2 Chron. xxviii. 23. Do not ask

what the value of books is : ask, What is required by my profession of the Gospel? One sure Friend is enough : a Friend that has said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you."



THE BACKSLIDER INSTRUCTED AND ADMONISHED.

When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel ; but when he offended in Baal, he died.—HOSEA xiii. 1. [1806.]

IF we were to examine the symptoms of consumption as they appeared three or four hundred years ago, we should find them much the same as at the present time ; and the disease treated much in the same way. There is in this disease at all times a feverish excitement, leading to death. So in the Church, if we see a member of it become high-minded, and exalted ; if he lifts up himself and becomes self-confident, we have reason to fear a spiritual death is working under these symptoms. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." There is a necessity not only for calling the world to account, but even the Church itself, when it begins to be in a declining state. The vanity of a mere profession is set forth all through this prophecy ; and the man of a tender and sensitive conscience will find the prophet Hosea speaking as much to his case as if he had lived in the present day. I propose,

- I. TO EXPLAIN THE WORDS OF THE TEXT ;
- II. TO APPLY THEM.

I. Ephraim is but another name for Israel, *i. e.* the

Church of God,—which was, at this time, become proud and idolatrous; following their own vanities, and taking into their council flesh and blood. The prophet calls upon this Church to consider the difference of its present tone, and voice, from that which it had in better days: “When Ephraim spake trembling he exalted himself in Israel.”

When a Christian is said to “speak trembling,” it does not imply that he is a man of a dastardly spirit: one thing is often taken for another because there is some resemblance, though they are essentially different. This state of mind is not to exhibit the cowardice of the spies, who trembled to execute their commission, and brought up an evil report of the good land; it is not to belong to the “fearful and unbelieving,” who dread the cross in religion, and dare not do their duty. Nor is it to speak like Eli, who could only say, “Nay, my sons,” when he ought to have spoken with authority: nor is it to speak as Moses, when he said, “Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?” Num. xi. 13; he spake trembling, but he did not exalt himself. Neither are we to consider it as the language of one overwhelmed, as Isaiah, “Woe is me, for I am undone!” To speak “trembling” is not the effect of a mere constitutional timidity, which is often mistaken for meekness and humility: much less does it mean that sort of affected humility which leads a man to speak of himself in very abasing terms, while if another speak in the same way of him, his pride is offended, and he exhibits displeasure and resentment. We must look for something more than all this when we consider the text as indicating the loss of a contrite spirit in Ephraim; it was a decrease in grace: he had ceased to speak with holy fear.

What, then, are we to understand by these words—

“When Ephraim spake trembling?” They seem to refer to the state and feelings of a young, tender, simple-hearted, and prayerful believer, when, under a strong sense of his weakness, and of the evils of his own heart, he says, I need special direction; I cannot trust myself; “God be merciful to me a sinner!” “Turn thou me, and so shall I be turned.” Such a one is not for making a bargain to be saved upon his own terms, but says, “Lord, save me in any way! If I have not grace to pluck out a right eye, pull it out for me: if I cannot part with a right hand, cut it off for me: let me be saved, whatever it may cost: let me be taugh of God: and if I must have every proud opinion torn up by the roots, so let it be: the Lord grant that I may be cured: that I may be willing to suffer reproach, not only from the world, but from the Church if it be necessary to my healing: the Lord help me to suspect every thing that looks like mischief, and to watch on every side!

When a man is taught to speak in this way, God has already begun to exalt him. This is that language of a humble and contrite heart, which, under the Holy Spirit’s teaching, has obtained a sense of its natural depravity. Abraham spoke thus trembling, when he said, “Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.” It was the spirit of Peter,—not when he was self-confident and said, “Though all men should deny thee, yet will not I,”—but when he said, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee:” I dare not be confident, I can only appeal to thine all-searching eye! See the change wrought in Saul, the proud Pharisee, when he termed himself “the chief of sinners!” So Job, “Behold, I am vile.” So Jacob, when about to meet Esau, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast

showed unto thy servant." So Solomon, "I am but a little child; I know not how to go out, or come in." So Daniel, when he made supplication in sackcloth and ashes.

"When Ephraim spake trembling," *i. e.* when he was humbled for sin, he was "exalted." This does not mean that he was puffed up: but it signifies that he was actually exalted by God, prospered, and established. He grew up as a plant that had root, and that was watered. That was a remarkable hint which Samuel gave to Saul, "When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel?" When Jacob wandered as an exile, and was pursued by his brother Esau, and with humility and prayer wrestled with God for deliverance, he prevailed, and was also exalted: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with man, and hast prevailed." When David was cursed by Shimei, he spake trembling; *q. d.* I will bow to my dispensation: I understand it: "the Lord hath bid Shimei curse David:" and deliverance was then at hand. When Solomon said, "I am but a little child," he was in the road to become the wisest and greatest man upon the face of the earth. "Before honor is humility."

"But when he offended in Baal, he died." How he offended, see in verses 2, 3; also 2 Kings xvii. 16—18. See also his language at this very time, chap. xii. 8: "And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labors they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin." "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his Salvation." "The rich man's wealth is his strong city," but it is added, "and as an high wall in his own con-

ceit." Jeremiah describes this state of mind, chap. v. 27; "They are become great, and waxen rich: they are waxen fat, they shine: they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless;" they seem to say, Let us be consequential, and make ourselves of importance in the earth.

When the heart turns to any idol (and covetousness is idolatry), nothing can prevent a spiritual death. When Ephraim thus "offended in Baal, he died;" and no wonder; if God withdraws, we must die; and if we offend, God will withdraw. While Ephraim leaned upon God, he was supported by an Almighty Friend; but when he joined himself to idols, he was left alone, left to suffer the consequences of his backsliding. Nothing humbles a man more than being left to feel the consequences of his own sin. He who leaves "the fountain of living waters," and goes to "broken cisterns" for supplies, cannot wonder if he find no water in them. Such a backslider may maintain his outward profession, attend the sacrament as usual, but God sees that the inward and spiritual grace is wanting. He says, "Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness:" Hos. v. 12: as a moth-eaten garment which will not bear the least touch,—every thing may look the same; but there is a worm, producing rottenness. When a Christian gets rich in the world, he is very apt to become fearless of the consequences to his soul. There is perhaps a spiritual consumption begun; but the patient says, I feel no sickness. "They were filled," says God, "and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me: therefore will I be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them; I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will

rend the caul of their heart, and then will I devour them like a lion." Verses 7, 8. Sometimes God punishes an idolater with a sudden natural death; as in the case of Dathan and Abiram, Achan, &c.

It signifies nothing after what a man turns aside. It is absolute trifling for him to say, My idol is not of this form, or of the other. The question is, Have we forsaken the Lord? Have we turned aside? There are many methods of varnishing over sin: but how highly soever we may think to polish it, that does not alter its nature. Whatever may have been a man's former profession, if he has in any way turned aside after Baal, he must die. Even David, the man after God's own heart, "offended in Baal:" and if God had not been pleased to restore him, he must have died. So Solomon his son, when he offended in Baal, what a mean debased picture was the latter part of his life! And he was left to die under obscurity as to his real character.

Happy would it be if these sad instances of spiritual decay were only to be found in the history of the ancient Church. But who is there that cannot recollect persons who once ran well, so that wherever they came, society was the better for them,—there was an ointment, a goodly savor that communicated itself to all around—they "spake trembling"—till some moral sickness took hold of them, and they were turned aside after Baal? It signifies nothing what we have been: the finest flower will wither and die, if we take away from it the air and water.

If a man is upon the brink of ruin, he will give this, among other symptoms: He has ceased to speak with holy fear; his heart is stout; he gets heady and incautious; he has no longer a godly jealousy and holy circumspection. The more self-confident, the greater

the danger: "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

Different ages and dispensations make no sort of difference with respect to the grand leading points of true religion. Death will ensue in every Church as far as it leaves Christ, and sets up Baal. Whenever a Christian becomes self-sufficient, whenever he begins to admire what God hates, and to slight what he commands, he is an offender in Baal. But however apostates ought to tremble, let the backslider return, and lay hold of and embrace the provision God himself has made for such. See Jeremiah, chapters ii. and iii. To a false character, there is no promise.

From what has been said, let us endeavor to correct a false taste: which says, "Let us be as gods;" let us improve our condition: "Let us build a tower, and make us a name in the earth!" God will come and write "Babel," *i. e.* confusion, on the attempt. The Church of Rome has thus offended; and is it not a monument to this day? But let us bring the matter nearer home, and come to our own spirit. It should be our utmost care to watch against any plausible arguments for Baal. There is a thief in the house of that man who reposes himself in the lap of carnal security.

I tremble for our national safety when I hear people proudly placing their confidence in fleets and armies.* The presumptuous, stout-hearted, self-confident boaster, shall be arrested at last. However we flatter ourselves, and varnish over pride, which God hates, our sin will surely find us out. "A haughty spirit goes before a fall." If we are in the spirit of pride we are

* This sermon was preached in the year 1806, at which time Great Britain was engaged, with several other nations of Europe, in a war against France.—ED.

growing poor. All of us are more or less infected with this sin.

We should consider the warnings of God to his Church, which are given in Scripture, as the calls of mercy, and the gracious counsels of Jesus, our Master, to his disciples. The Prophet Hosea abounds with striking descriptions of the symptoms of spiritual declension. He shows us in what a variety of ways the heart may be turned aside, and decoyed from God. It is like the physician stating the symptoms to his patient, showing him where his danger lies; and who would bring about a cure, even at the cost of much pain.

It is a certain truth, that our idol, while it cannot save us, will sink us. We shall be impoverished by it. It will make us weak, like Samson; and though, like him, we may think to shake ourselves "as at other times"—to pray as before, and act as in better times—yet we shall find that our strength is departed; and if we use the same words, we shall have lost the power and unction of them. Let us watch against the paths of the destroyer, which sometimes look very pleasing to the eye; and the world may call them highly respectable.

Finally, learn that holy maxim, "When I am weak, then am I strong." A Christian is to rise, not as the oak, but as the ivy that winds round the oak; sensible that he is feeble and weak, and that his strength is in another. If the Christian is fruitful as the vine, he is yet tender and weak as the vine, and needs support. The Lord acts towards his children as a tender Father, bidding them beware of the flatterer. It is the Christian's wisdom, and privilege, to walk through his journey as a little child travels over a rough path, clinging to the arm of its parent. He will pray that he may

not stumble, either in his practice or profession. "When Ephraim spake trembling he was exalted:" he was, at that time, too strong for earth and hell. So, he that in renunciation of his own strength, has learnt to depend on Jesus Christ, shall be too strong for his enemies.

"A feeble saint shall win the day,
Though earth and hell obstruct the way."

SPIRITUAL REVIVAL.

Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?
Ps. lxxxv. 6. [1794.]

It is supposed that this psalm was written on account of some calamitous dispensation, some token of God's displeasure. The public interest lay near the Psalmist's heart, and his plea for present deliverance is based upon former favors shown to God's Israel. The dispensation under which we live, may lead us to apply the subject as it regards spiritual revivals, under seasons of spiritual decay; and, with this view, I would lay down the following proposition, namely,

THAT A SPIRITUAL REVIVAL WILL BE THE OBJECT AND PRAYER OF EVERY RENEWED MAN'S HEART, UNDER A SENSE OF A SPIRITUAL DECAY.

A true Christian, under a sense of spiritual decay, will not be turning to the creature for happiness, any more than to the chariot and horse for safety. He has known the value of spiritual health, laments the loss of it, and prays, "Wilt thou not revive us again?" A man may be sincere in his profession, and yet there

may be a decay: the holy fire may be almost extinguished; and in such a case we are directed where to look for the re-kindling of it. "All my fresh springs are in thee." Look at the state of a plant, in a garden, not duly watered; drooping, and languishing! This may remind us of our own resource. "I will," says God, "pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;" and this water is conveyed through the golden pipes of the ordinances; and, frequently, through affliction and trouble. God sends this gracious encouragement to his returning people: "I will be as the dew unto Israel They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine."

It is easy to put on the appearance of religion, it is easy to set up family worship, it is easy to understand doctrines; but the heart and core of religion, which is the life of God in the soul of man, may, after all, be wanting. To walk with God, like Enoch, is something more. The text seems to express some such request as this; May we not again taste of the well-spring of life? The fifteenth chapter of St. John, directs us what to pray for: "I am the Vine," says our Lord, "and ye are the branches. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Again, when Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, it is said, "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." So we see, the Holy Ghost is the immediate agent of spiritual life. The Prophet Ezekiel was asked, "Can these dry bones live?" and he replied, "O Lord God, thou knowest:" *q. d.* Thou art the great Agent of all life!

But it may be asked, How is the Christian made to revive and grow? If we were to examine the means, we might show largely how God alarms, awakens,

rouses. But whatever means it pleases him to make use of, they are only the channel by which the water is conveyed; wherever this is done, there will be motion: if there is life in the soul, there will be a holy wrestling with God. The language of such a heart will be, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." I dare not let thee go! If I can do nothing but mourn, I will mourn till thou comfort me. There will be also fear of sin, and indignation against it: St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "Behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear." There is a continual propensity in us to turn away from God. When there begins to be a revival, there will be a turning to God: then a man begins to find out idols he did not before observe, and sees what it is that steals his affections from God. Some say, "What harm is there in this and that?" If there is not any other harm than this, that it indisposes you to the means of grace, and that it separates from God, and that it leaves the heart dry and dead,—there is harm enough. People in general are apt to affix gross ideas to idolatry. If a man goes to China, he is astonished at the horrid and absurd things that are the object of their worship: he is not aware that his own idol is his cargo. But when God speaks to the heart and conscience, he must be heard: and he says to the merchant, to the miser, to the man of pleasure, and of business too, You are turning from the fountain of living waters to broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

If the Christian, under decays, is led to offer the prayer in the text, and if God hears his prayer, it may be expected that one of his first strokes will be at the idol upon which his heart is set, to get rid of that: God

will thus withdraw the deadly influence which causes him to wither, and lead him to say, "What have I any more to do with idols?" A true revival is a Divine operation, and will produce true fruit. There will be a heavenly taste—a hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Another sign of a revival of religion in the heart, is when, like Abraham, we not only follow God ourselves, but endeavor to command our household after us; when, like David, we are earnestly desirous to walk before them with a perfect heart. There will be a beneficial effect on society in the soul that is truly renewed: there will be no more need to explain that it is revived, than to say that a tree is laden with fruit: it will be seen and expressed in a thousand ways. For a man to talk of a revival because he has had some sudden impression, some extraordinary vision, who yet does not evince it by his life and conversation, is to prove himself deceived. The ground on which the Psalmist urges this revival is in order to obtain the end of all spiritual life, true joy and peace: "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee?"

It is a matter of experience, that when idolatry, unbelief, or sin of any kind, enters the soul, we find our hearts sink, and sensible objects soon draw off the mind from God; spiritual objects become strange and irksome; we try to feed upon husks, as we formerly did upon the bread of life: but if Christ has designs of mercy, if he seeks his lost sheep, our cry will be, "Oh that it were with me as heretofore! Oh that thou wouldst revive me again!" The restless, comfortless state of a backslider may distinguish him from an apostate. Joy is not essential to the existence of Christianity: a man may be united to Christ, and yet, through declension, infirmity, or heavy crosses, he may

hang down his head like a bulrush. It was a sad sign that something was the matter when the Lord came down to Adam, and called to him and said, "Adam! were art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid." Guilt had defiled his mind, and he became afraid of his best friend. If a man would have the flower of religion, which is spiritual joy, he must pray for the invigorating influences of the Holy Spirit. Else every thing withers in our hands, like the cropped flower. The branch cut off from Christ will wither under any ministry, or under any ordinances: no book, no ministry will be of use, without "an unction from the Holy One." But where there is a vital principle implanted in the heart, it will maintain a continual struggle against spiritual decays. Dr. Owen remarks, that "sometimes this struggle seems to exhaust all the grace a man possesses; so that, for the time, he can make no attainment or progress in spiritual things." Such a secret struggle is a more noble sight, before God and angles, than all that has ever been celebrated before men. The language of grace is, "My soul followeth hard after thee." The unbelieving king might say, "What should I wait for the Lord any longer?" 2 Kings vi. 33; but grace teaches a man to say, I must wait. This is one peculiarity of Christianity.

Every season has its duty: a man must not say, Because my mind is dead and dry, I must wait till I can pray with more fervor. The winter season has its work. A Christian should learn the necessity of abounding in duty, as well as of desiring holy comfort. Like Habakkuk, he should say, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower: and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd." In dry seasons we should

pray for spiritual showers. In a time of temporal drought, do we not pray for rain?—and is the water that comes upon the earth more worthy to be prayed for, than the heavenly dew—the Holy Spirit's influences? Satan will tell us, there is no danger of perishing for want of rain: that if we hold the truth, there is no danger of decay. But what will the form of godliness do without the power? Satan is always crying, "peace," by a dead profession and by a dead ministry. Let us, therefore, plead with God for reviving grace; and let us remember that the ordinances we have had to-day will not serve for to-morrow: we must have fresh supplies of the living Bread, or our souls will assuredly droop and wither.

While we pray for a spiritual revival, we should examine the causes of decay. What was the cause of Israel's fall before the men of Ai? A wedge of gold, and a Babylonish garment! Something may lie in the way of spiritual revival and deliverance. If, like Achan, we have secreted "the accursed thing," it must be searched out. Let us search the camp, and see if there is not something the matter. Say, with Job, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me," why things go back with me. If I have not grace to pluck out a right eye, Lord, pluck it out for me. A man may be mixing up the world and religion together, as though one with a decayed constitution should expect to be recovered by taking, alternately, medicine and poison! We should be honest to ourselves, and willing to abide the means of cure: the medicine may be bitter, but our language should be, At any rate—whatever it costs—let me be restored.

While acknowledging our deadness, and seeking a revival, we should pray with expectation and lively hope, cherishing honorable thoughts of God, and be-

believing that he will certainly fulfil his promise. "I will hear," says the Psalmist, "what God the Lord will say, for he will speak peace to his people and to his saints." See also what he says in Psalm lxxviii.: "Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance when it was weary."

The course of nature is the incessant administration of the Divine providence. So also in spiritual things, nothing but the influences of the Holy Ghost can revive, and restore, and give vigor to the principles of grace in the heart. Let us, then, seek these influences by believing, humble, persevering prayer. Oh, that we had faith to behold Christ standing with the keys of death and hell, ready not only to put a stop to the waterfloods of sin and wickedness, but also to "revive the heart of the contrite ones."

"That thy people may rejoice in thee." When the Christian prays to be revived, it is not in order that he may make a flaming profession of religion, and merely talk about its doctrines: no, it is that he may better serve and glorify God, who, in answer to his prayer, has revived him again. He seeks for joy, as a "fruit of the Spirit." He that says, religion is a dull and gloomy thing, is a stranger to it; for it is a scheme of unbounded joy and happiness. There is a defect in all other joy, in that it has an end: but the Christian's joy shall be heightening to all eternity.

HOLY JOY.

And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.—JOHN xvi. 22. [1806.]

A CHRISTIAN is the child of sorrow—the pupil of hope—and the heir of a heavenly kingdom. “These things,” said Christ, “have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” It is possible to disturb a believer’s quiet, when you cannot interrupt his peace and joy, which arise from the soul’s resting on the favor of God through Jesus Christ. The love of Christ in the heart is a satisfying treasure. It was the glory of the primitive ages, that though the world could torment Christians, it could not rob them of their joy. A believer has a prospect opened into eternity. “Your joy no man taketh from you.” I shall endeavor to set before you,

I. THE ORIGIN AND PROPERTIES OF THIS JOY.

II. THE POSSESSORS OF THIS JOY.

I. THE ORIGIN OF THIS JOY. This Divine joy is planted in the soul by the Holy Spirit. It is therefore an inward and spiritual joy. It is deep rooted in the heart. It is solid and well founded: it is abiding and lasting: it is a satisfying joy, and purifying in its effects. It is a joy that flourishes most in adversity: it is a communicative joy. A man has not tasted what religion is, if he does not seek to impart this joy to others. It is the joy of communion with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a humble joy, but it causes a man to triumph in Christ. Though this joy may be interrupted, yet the source and matter of it remain unchanged. Just as in nature, clouds may some-

times, for many days, interrupt the rays of the sun, but the order of creation continues the same. The sun still remains; and, when the clouds disperse, it will again appear in its splendor, and diffuse cheerfulness all around. So it is with the joy of a Christian. "In the world," says our Saviour, "ye shall have tribulation." You will be weary; your hearts may be often distressed; but "these things have I spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace." I have finished transgression, and made an end of sin. I have opened the prison doors to let the captive go free. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The Christian finds a cordial in every sorrow, from the covenant of grace, and from the comfort which Christ ever affords his believing people. It is the privilege of the true believer to retire from the trials and temptations of the world to the peace of Christ. He has always a warrant to do so. He is a legatee of Christ's bequest, "My peace I give unto you:" "My peace," *i. e.*, that peace I possess myself. I give the warrant, the grant; and I work it by my Spirit. Is there anything except what the Gospel offers that will sustain in every distress to which mankind is liable? Matt. vii. 24—27.

The joy of the world differs entirely from the Christian's joy. It is turbulent, fastidious, licentious, intemperate, and evanescent. It leaves a man poor and wretched. The voluptuary is the most miserable creature upon the earth. The plan of the worldling is momentary: misfortune and death put an end to his joy, and it is well if death is not anticipated by suicide. But when Christ affords us any grace or gift, it is both a present good and an earnest of future. Let us inquire,

II. WHO ARE THE POSSESSORS OF CHRISTIAN JOY.

One of the greatest mistakes a minister can com-

mit is to address his congregation indiscriminately, as though all its members were partakers of this joy. Shall it not be ill with the wicked? Their joy, vain as it is while it lasts, shall soon expire. "The lamp of the wicked shall be put out." Prov. xiii. 9. The Gospel, indeed, as being a message of invitation, is sent to all men as sinners; and a congregation may be collectively addressed under that general character. But for a minister to address his hearers as though they were all spiritual persons, when he knows the fact to be far otherwise, is to frustrate the design of the Gospel, and to delude men to their eternal ruin. The most useful part of a discourse is the application. But how is it possible to apply the subject to the conscience, unless the different characters of men are faithfully delineated, and the real believer carefully discriminated from all the classes of merely nominal Christians?

The Christian's joy is the joy of a sinner's deliverance. The man who opposes the truths of the Gospel has no more right to it than one who opposes a conqueror has to be benefited by his successes. It is they only whose hearts are towards God who are warranted to rejoice. "Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord." Psalm cv. 3. It is not here said, Let the heart of them rejoice who have *found* him: nor is the privilege limited to such as have full assurance. The man who sincerely and honestly seeks the Lord in his appointed way, has ground for this joy. Mark v. 28.

No man can have this joy who is not engrafted into Christ the true Vine. The fruit of this union is "love, joy, peace." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." God's remedy is his sending his Son and his Spirit. In any Church where the doctrines of the Gospel have become perverted, and the Spirit's teaching is despised, the only Saviour will be rejected,

and there is left no foundation for joy. A Christian's joy is the result of a discovery: when a man has found the pearl of great price, "he rejoiceth." When the Lord God, who knows the human heart, would speak comfort to it, he proposes one object, and one only, as the all-sufficient source of consolation: this is the Messiah. Zech. iii. 8.

The rich are apt to consign the Gospel to the poor, because they want comfort. But I will ask the rich man, did you never feel the heart-ache? Have you not at times felt that it would be difficult to find a poor man so wretched as yourself? It is enough to drive a rich man (if he be a thinking man) into absolute despair, to know that he must soon be torn away from all his fine things.

In this world the Christian's joy is but like a winter's sunbeam. Though he here sees the face of God by faith, it is but "through a glass darkly." But hereafter he shall have a clear vision, an uninterrupted enjoyment. "They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads." There will be a conformity and likeness to his character. "When I awake up after thy likeness," says David, "I shall be satisfied with it."

Did the world, with all its attractions, ever propose anything like this? Creatures will sometimes win our affections; but what are creatures, even the best of them? What are the finest strains of the finest music? they may be disturbed in a moment. What are the kindest offices of friends compared to the friendship, the condescending and tender affection, of our Lord and Saviour? What may we not hope for from such a friend? what security in such love? Here is a true source whence joy may spring!

What Christ has encouraged his Church to expect, his Church should look to receive. It is true our faith

can bring no merit, but it can bring a strong plea : “Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.” Let the Christian rest in this joy : let him take hold of the hand of this Almighty Saviour.—Pilgrim, go thy way ;

“The world is all before thee, where to choose
Thy place of rest, and Providence thy guide.”

Go thy way, but let thine eye be fixed on Christ : go thy way, leaning on the Beloved. Fear not : for “who shall separate us from the love of Christ ?” Rom. viii. 35—39. A weary traveller knows what it is to rest upon his staff ; but a Christian is called to lean on no staff, but upon God, the Rock of Ages.

Watch against those things which you know, from experience, have a tendency to disturb your peace and joy. You know better than I can tell you what these are. Ask your own consciences. You know what is carnal compliance, the following the world close at its heels. You know what are the sinful indulgences which poison your comforts at the very core. Watch against vain speculations : such things unavoidably disturb.

Finally, take every means to demonstrate that you have such a peace and joy ; that you have such a rest. In proportion as a man loves gold, he hates counterfeits. Manifest the reality of your joy. A believer should never be sad : we should encounter trouble by often looking to the consolation which Christ has left. “They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.” Heb. xi. 14.

HOLY JOY WITHDRAWN.

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.—PSALM li. 12. [1801.]

PEOPLE are apt to look at the crime of David, and there stop; but they do not mark what it brought upon him. . . . He that will meddle with sin, and go into the way of temptation, will fall by it. Sin will weaken the soul. When any one falls from God by the commission of some evil, he may perhaps hope to pass it over, and go on in his profession in the same way as he did before: but he will not be the same man: he will be like Samson shorn of his strength. See Judges xvi. There is nothing that Satan more labors at than to make a separation between God and the soul: he cares not by what means it is effected, so that it is effected. Holy joy is the death of sin. I propose to make some remarks upon this passage; and I observe,

I. THERE IS A STATE OF SATISFACTION OR SPIRITUAL JOY WHICH BELONGS TO A STATE OF SALVATION.

II. THE EXERCISE OF THIS JOY MAY BE LOST BY SIN.

III. IT IS GOD ALONE WHO CAN RESTORE THIS JOY OF SALVATION.

IV. A TRUE BELIEVER CAN HAVE NO REST TILL IT IS RESTORED.

I. THERE IS A JOY PECULIAR TO A STATE OF SALVATION. I say peculiar: consider the joy of a man just escaped from a shipwreck, from a fire, or from the hands of a murderer; yet this joy is only for a moment, because life is but a moment. When a man has found the pardon of sin, he has a joy which will last to eternity; it is substantial: holy joy is well founded: it is implanted by the Holy Spirit; it is purifying in its

nature. It is founded on the good pleasure of God in Christ Jesus; on his gracious disposition to enter into friendship with a fallen creature, and to lay a solid foundation for his joy. "Other foundation can no man lay:" he may build on this foundation "wood, hay, and stubble;" or "gold, silver, precious stones:" but if he stands on the Foundation, it will bear him up: it will be a ground of joy from the deliverance it brings. It is a joy of expectation: "we shall see him as he is." What a ground of joy is this, for a sinner that has no reason to expect anything but banishment! to know that there is a scheme of deliverance, pardon and peace: to know that God has ratified it—has declared he will hold communion with his redeemed people—and take them, at last, where he will wipe away all tears from their eyes! Compare this to the lying, deceitful joys of this world; and you will have some conception of its value. Most of the joys of this world have something in them like "the crackling of thorns under a pot:" it is a blaze for a moment: I know of none of these that will bear *turning round and round*: they will not bear examining. As I am enabled by faith to build upon the invincible realities of God's word, I have a calm, purifying, holy joy. The joys of this world are turbulent, licentious: they always leave their votary poor; he is so forlorn after all has expired! Nor will anything fill the heart till it approach and possess this joy. It is called the kingdom of God set up in the heart in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is a joy which flourishes most in a broken heart. It is an assimilating grace; it renders a man God-like. It is communicative: as to the things of the world, a man loves to have them to himself: but, let him taste this, and he desires that others should partake it with him.

“You are an enthusiast,” says one; “for you rejoice in things invisible;” and, pray, what are your visible things which afford satisfaction? It is only that which is invisible which is lasting. The Christian may now, if need be, have heaviness; but he has a ground of joy which is permanent: Christ says, “Your joy no man taketh from you:” he may take your goods—yea, even your life; but not your joy.

II. THE EXERCISE OF THIS JOY MAY BE LOST BY SIN.

God has connected things together: if a man talk of communion with God, and walk on in sin, he deceives himself: for sin must bring clouds on the mind of the strongest Christian. I exceedingly object to hear a man talking of enjoying the light of God’s countenance while he is partaking of any unlawful thing. For what is this joy of salvation, but sap from the tree of life arising in the soul? It is a ray of Divine light! What says the Apostle? “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” The joy, therefore, of the strongest Christian may be interrupted, suspended, by sin. I do not say, that it is lost by a single assault of Satan—by a temptation: but if it be in any measure yielded to, if sin has been committed, the soul suffers: it becomes in an unhealthy state. Leaning on past experiences will not do: the disease must be cured; but there is often so much pain in a sound cure, that it is no wonder people wish the disease to be treated lightly. There is no sound cure for the wounded conscience but unfeigned repentance and humiliation, and making fresh application “to the blood of sprinkling.” There is a sort of spiritual quackery that will propose an easier way; that will allow a man to repent and sin, and sin and repent, perpetually: but it will end in ruin.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” Romans vi. 1. David not only prays, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation,” but he says, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Which leads me to consider,

III. IT IS GOD ALONE WHO CAN RESTORE THIS JOY OF SALVATION.

God’s comforts are a free gift, as well as a cordial. As it is God who first gives spiritual joy, so it is he alone that can restore it when it has been interrupted by sin. Therefore David says, “He restoreth my soul;” and in another psalm, he prays, “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I:” it is not enough that I see it before me—that I am told there is safety on it—but, lead me to it! The joy of salvation is a pledge of something greater; and notwithstanding what experiences we may have had of it, we shall find, that we cannot recall them; and that no living creature can help in this case: we can only, like David, cry, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, O Lord!”

IV. IT IS THE CHARACTERISTIC OF A TRUE BELIEVER THAT HE HAS NO REST TILL THIS JOY IS RESTORED.

Like the dove that went forth of the ark, he will find no rest for the sole of his foot while wandering from God. It is, therefore, a dispensation of mercy not to let a man rest till he returns to God. David could comfort himself in God when he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains—when the people talked of stoning him. I had then, we may suppose him to say, one Friend and Comforter: but now I have lost

him! and what signifies telling me that I am a king? Till HE says, "Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven thee," I can have no joy nor comfort.

I think we may understand this from what we may have felt if we have grieved a beloved friend, and especially if we have been ungrateful. Now David knew well enough how ungrateful he had been: and therefore he prays that God would, as an act of Almighty grace, restore unto him the joy of his salvation: I feel, he says, what a bitter thing it is to depart from the living God: I am a poor forlorn wretch while this separation lasts! David desires this restoration to God's favor from the best motives, "Open thou my lips, and *my mouth shall shew forth thy praise,*" ver. 15.

IMPROVEMENT.—Since a man like David may thus fall, let us learn *what a horrible deceiver sin is*. It first blinds, and then infatuates and impoverishes. I would say to backsliders: take care of being prevented a return by unbelief. Are there no promises? no invitations?

If any here are not in the state of backsliders, then, *take care that you do not grieve the Holy Spirit*: the joy of salvation is a holy, delicate deposit. "Quench not the Spirit."

To such as know nothing of a state of spiritual desolation, I would say, *Is not this your unhappiness?* A beggar certainly is in no danger of being robbed: but it is because of his poverty. It is a miserable thing indeed to live without any spiritual intercourse with God. Have you a son, and does not that son care at all whether you smile or frown? Oh! say you, that pierces me to the heart! I have no hope! What, then, must God feel towards you? What sort of a son are you?

Some claim the privileges of a Christian, who have

no part or lot in the matter. Whatever rapturous expressions a man may make use of, inquire, *What is his walk?* If a Christian falls into sin, he loses his joy: his lips are closed: he feels himself, as it were, shut up in prison, and cries, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name." If a man talks of joy, let him ask, Is my rule the Scripture? Is the Holy Spirit my guide? Is Christ my way? and do I attend the ordinances as a means of grace? Can I say, sincerely "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I should not sin against thee?"

PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL ENLARGEMENT.

Open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.

PSALM li. 15.

[1801.]

OUR Church uses these words in her Liturgy. Observe

I. **WHAT IS MEANT BY THIS REQUEST.** It plainly implies that guilt will shut the mouth, as it did Adam's—as it did the man without a wedding garment: "Friend, how camest thou in hither? and he was speechless." It is probable he could talk to the guests very freely about the feast: but when the king came in to see the guests, he was dumb: he deceived men, but he seems to say, "I find I cannot deceive God!" This was the case with David when, upon a melancholy occasion, this psalm was penned: his lips had been closed by guilt; and therefore he here prays, "Open thou my lips," that I may praise thee as I used to do; let me come with holy boldness to "the blood of sprinkling," as I used to do. There is no man but knows, if

he comes to speak to his friend, and finds his face set against him, what it is to be struck dumb: on the other hand, if his friend smiles upon him, his tongue is loosed. We inquire,

II. HOW IS THIS TO BE OBTAINED ?

Liberty of heart, and liberty of speech, (I mean in an honest man, for a hypocrite can talk at all times, but an honest man cannot talk of religion if his conscience upbraids him,) true liberty of heart and speech, can only proceed from the work of the Holy Spirit; the Lord only can again open the mouth which has been closed by guilt, by the application of pardon to the heart of the sinner, teaching him to exalt the Saviour, and then enlarging his heart, and implanting in it a love of holiness, so that the lips shall show forth his praise. Mark,

III. THE EFFECT OF THE LIPS BEING THUS OPENED.

If the lips have been closed by guilt, as was the case with Zacharias, Luke i. 10, and with David, when the joy of God's salvation is restored, the mouth will soon declare it. "Come, all ye that fear God," says David, "and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul:" "I will run in the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Then it is like Spring season, when the sun comes and gives life to the earth. It is like a resurrection from the dead. However dead and stupid a man has been, not able to speak a word except like a parrot, yet, if the Lord opens his mouth, you need not tell him that it is his duty to praise God, he cannot help it; you need not tell him that the Sabbath should be observed, it is his feast day: it is the same as respects the sacrament.

Do you find nothing like an opening of your lips ?

or has guilt sealed and closed them? Take care not to conceal, much less extenuate your guilt, but bring the matter to Christ. Be not afraid to put the Lord Jesus upon working miracles now, as well as formerly: come to him. If, like David, you have to mourn over a wicked, treacherous heart, here is an example how you should act. Instead of despairing, remember, and endeavor to enter into, what St. John says: "These things write I unto you that ye sin not: but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:"—he does not lay the stress here; "if any man sin," there must be sorrow, and shame, and in the end, ruin!—but, if any man sin, "WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE:" let us, therefore, this day approach the table of the Lord, rejoicing in God our Saviour, and seeking the application of that atoning blood which cleanseth from all sin; and praying that he would put a new song of praise into our mouths; and sanctify us to himself, as "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

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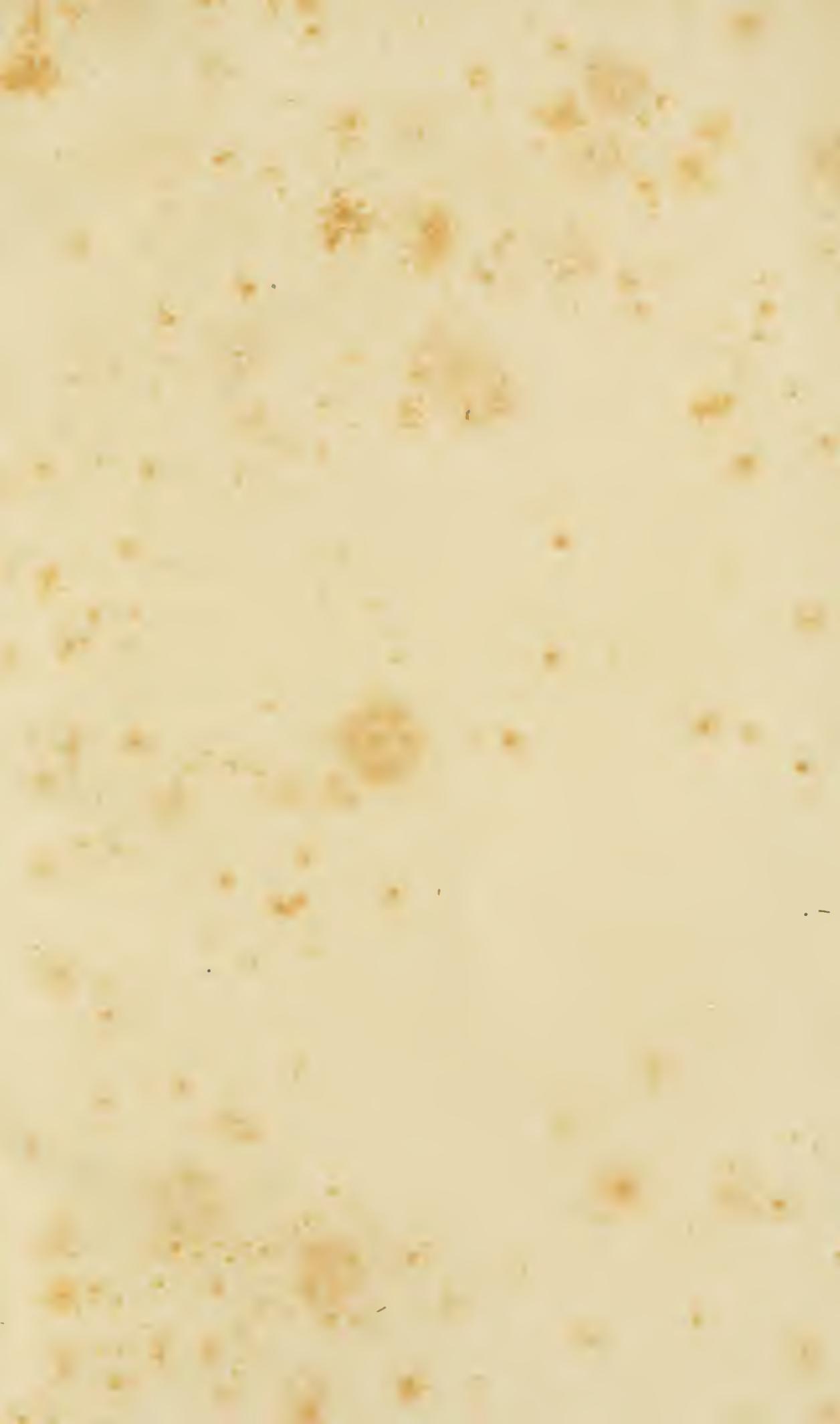
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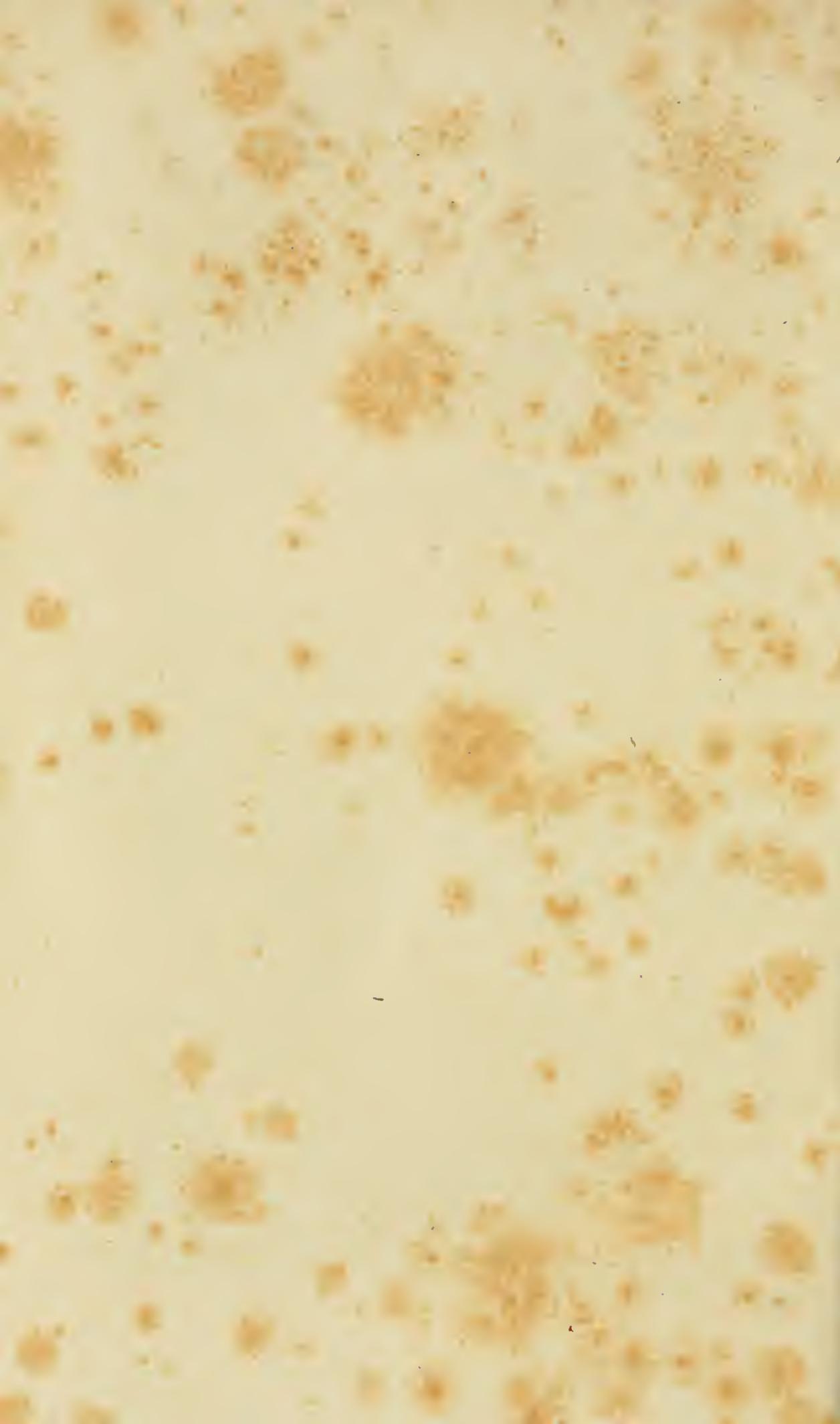
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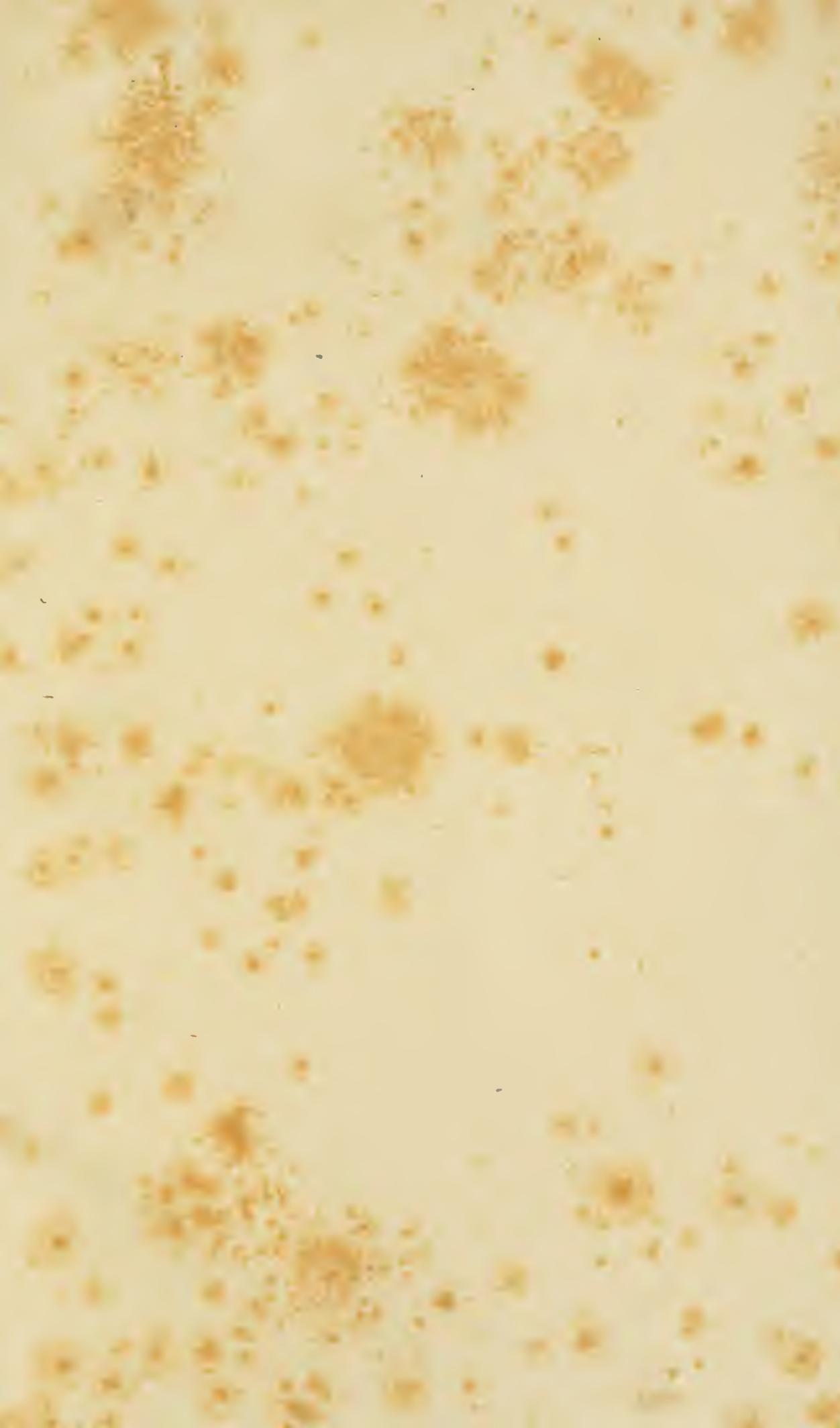
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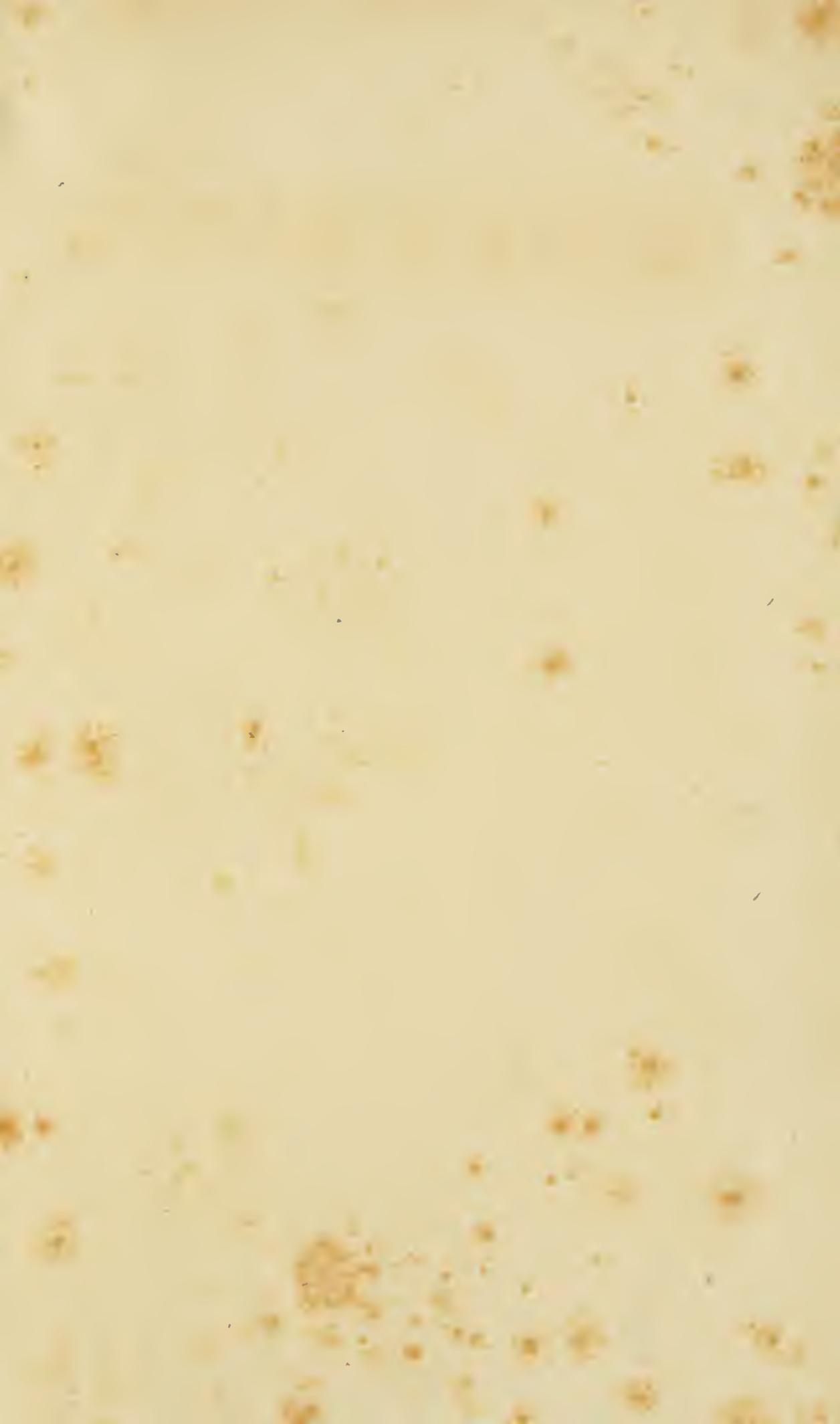
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