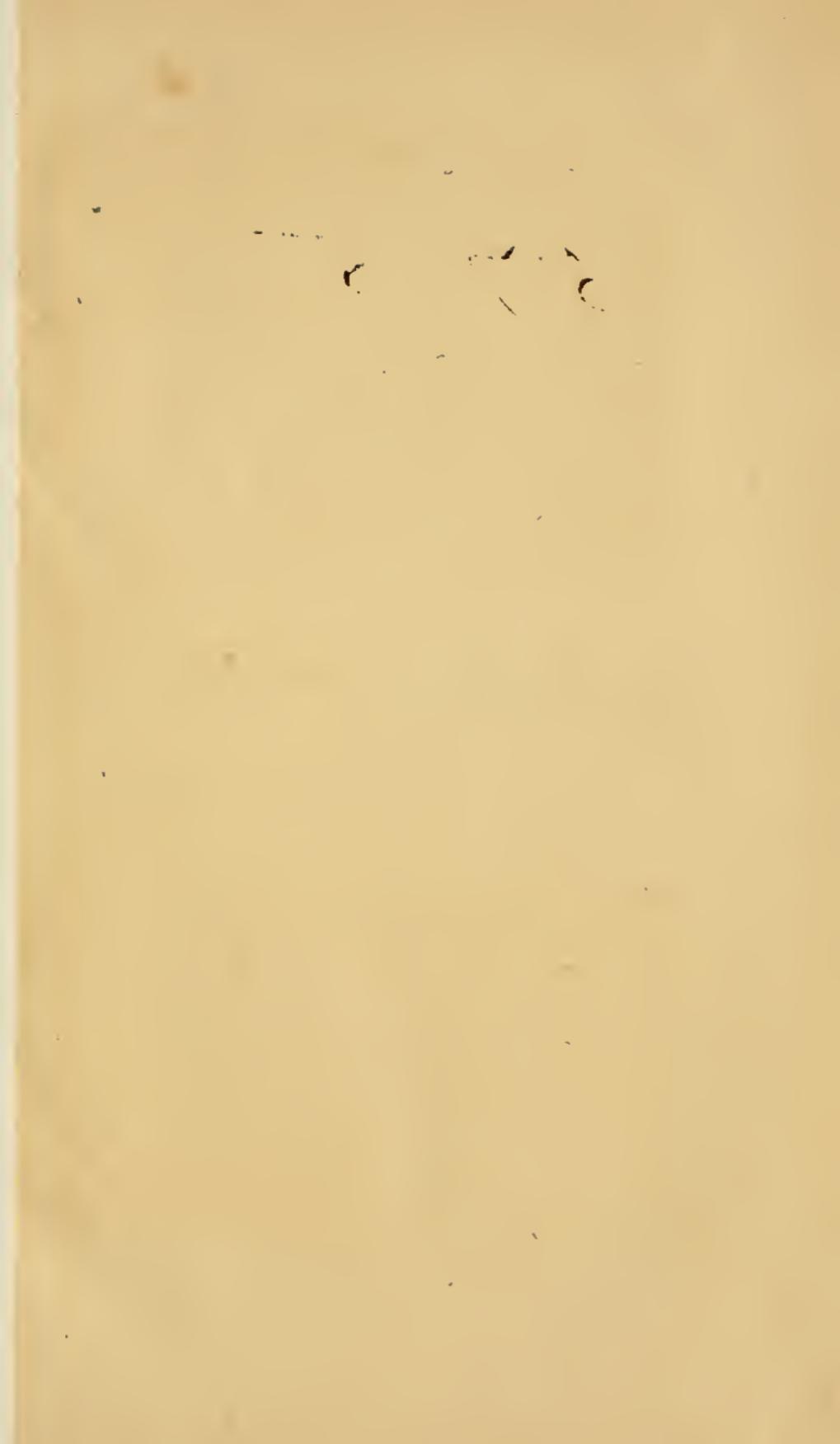




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McEwen, William, 1735-1762.

Select essays, doctrinal and practical : upon
variety of the most important and interesting
in divinity : including fourteen new essays .



S E L E C T E S S A Y S.

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فَاغْلِقْ
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الْمَرْدُورَ

SELECT
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DOCTRINAL & PRACTICAL,
UPON
A VARIETY OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND
INTERESTING SUBJECTS
IN DIVINITY.

INCLUDING
FOURTEEN NEW ESSAYS ON THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

BY THE LATE /
REV. WILLIAM M'EWEN,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, DUNDEE.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED
AN ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S LIFE.

THE EIGHTH EDITION.

EDINBURGH:
WAUGH AND INNES,
BOOKSELLERS TO HIS MAJESTY.

MDCCCXXXIV.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE additional Essays, on the DIVINE PERFECTIONS, are taken from Mr M'Ewen's manuscripts.— Some of them are copied with little alteration. With others of them greater freedom was used, as it became necessary to throw them into the form of Essays from the notes of sermons which he had preached on the subject. A few Essays are necessary to complete the series, which cannot be found; but those which are now presented to the Public, will, to those who are acquainted with Mr M'Ewen's style of writing, sufficiently indicate the Author, and will, it is presumed, do no discredit to his memory. The subjects are important; they are handled in a lively, evangelical and practical manner; and the frequent use of scriptural language and allusions will recommend them to the serious reader as well calculated at once to profit and to please.

EDINBURGH, Oct. 22, 1799.

TO HIS GRACE,
JOHN, EARL OF GLASGOW,

HIS MAJESTY'S HIGH COMMISSIONER TO THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

MY LORD,

WITHOUT any previous solicitation for acceptance, I have taken the liberty to prefix your Lordship's name to the following sheets.

Whether the dignity and importance of the subjects treated of in these sheets, are sufficient to apologize for this unexpected address, your Lordship will at once be able to determine.

The irresistible motive which induced me to make this intrusion, was the particular disadvantageous point of view in which the seceding ministers were exhibited before your Lordship, both in the last and in the preceding Assembly.

I assure myself, that your Lordship is too well acquainted with the civil and ecclesiastical policy of this free country, to be influenced by any representation of men or principles, that is in the least inconsistent with matters of fact. And that, when you fix your opinions of any religious body, you will equally abhor the power of prejudice, and the influence of faction.

That your Lordship may be enabled to form a just and proper estimate of the religious principles and temper of the associate ministers, in a state of secession from the established judicatories of the church of Scotland, permit me, with the most respectful humility, to

present your Lordship with the following specimen of the doctrines relative both to faith and practice, in which they daily instruct those of his Majesty's subjects who are under their pastoral inspection.

With regard to the loyalty and attachment of that numerous body to our most gracious Sovereign, and his illustrious house, I need not recal to your Lordship's remembrance, the public proof which they gave of their duty to the throne, when, in the year 1746, a bold and dangerous rebellion assaulted it. As there was not so much as a single individual of our communion, who swerved from his duty and allegiance at that memorable period: so I beg leave to assure your Lordship, that they still persist in the same sentiments of duty to the throne, and loyalty to the best of princes.

That your Lordship may ever be a steady pattern of piety, and that pure and undefiled religion may always aggrandize your high character, is a request in which my brethren join with,

MY LORD,

Your Grace's most humble, and

Most obedient servant,

JOHN PATISON.

BRISTO STREET,
Edin. May 23, 1767.

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A

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

AUTHOR'S LIFE AND CHARACTER.

THE REV. MR WILLIAM M'EWEN, the worthy author of the following Essays, was descended from pious and respectable parents in the town of Perth, who spared neither pains nor expence to give him a truly christian and liberal education. To this they were greatly encouraged, by the early attachment which he himself shewed, both to piety and learning.

His constitution of body was rather delicate and weakly ; though in common he was tolerably healthy : but his intellectual powers were sound and strong. He had a penetrating and comprehensive mind ; a fine perception ; and an elegant taste. These happy talents were attended with solidity of judgment, and a sense of the truly beautiful and sublime, peculiar to himself ; and still farther heightened, by an imagination and invention equally lively, and a memory uncommonly capacious and retentive.

To cultivate and improve these admirable natural endowments, he employed the most assiduous care, and unwearied industry. By his diligent study of the Roman and Greek classics ; of logic and philosophy ; of the best English poets and historians ; and, above all, the Scriptures of truth, in their originals, with the most judicious and evangelical books of our own and foreign divines ; he collected a large stock of the best ideas, and enriched with a variety of select knowledge, and suitable literature.

His studies in divinity were assisted for some years by the advice of the late celebrated Mr Ebenezer Erskine of Stirling ; and finished under the tuition of the Rev. Mr James Fisher of Glasgow.

He was in 1753 licensed to preach the gospel by the associate presbytery of Dunfermline ; and, in the beginning of the year 1754, he was ordained, by the same presbytery, minister of the associate congregation in the town of Dundee.

Having, in a solemn and public manner, devoted himself to the more immediate service of the blessed Jesus, in the ministration of his gospel, and had the charge of a particular flock committed to him ; he was earnestly desirous to have them grounded in the principles, and actuated by the true spirit of Christ's gospel. Entirely satisfied, that the scriptural plan of redemption, by the blood of Christ, is divinely calculated to draw men's affections from iniquity, and attach them to the blessed God ; to sweeten their tempers, and form them to true happiness : it was his daily endeavour, by the most easy and engaging methods of instruction, to fill their minds with the knowledge of these heavenly doctrines. He longed particularly to have a lively sense of God Almighty's goodness, manifested in freely offering pardon and peace to rebellious sinners in the gospel, impressed on their souls ; because, from this source, and the influences of the sanctifying Spirit, he was persuaded, that all the noble qualities, the amiable graces, and the important duties, which constitute the dignity or the happiness of our nature, could only be derived.

Far from addressing his hearers in that flattering and dangerous strain, which supposes the powers of the human mind to be as perfect as ever ; or but vitiated in a small degree ; or, that the soul of man is possessed of such principles of virtue, as need only to be roused into action ; he was solicitously concerned to have them thoroughly convinced, that they were ignorant, guilty, impotent creatures. That from such

convictions they might perceive their indispensable need of a Saviour: of a Saviour in all his mediatorial offices; as a prophet to instruct them, and, by his word and Spirit, make them wise unto salvation; as a priest to make an atonement and expiation for their sins, and make their persons acceptable to that awful Majesty, who dwelleth in light inaccessible; as a king to subdue their iniquities, to write his laws in their hearts, make them partakers of a divine nature, and enable them “to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” Tit. ii. 12.

In fine, the point he chiefly laboured, was, to beget in his people’s minds a deep and abiding sense, that God was their chiefest good; their only sufficient happiness and portion: that the blessed Jesus was the foundation of their pardon, acceptance, and salvation: that all their dependence, for acquiring the beauties of holiness, and tasting the consolations and pleasures of a religious life, was to be placed in the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; whose office is to take the things of Christ, and shew them to sinful men, John xvi. 14.: and to “give them to know the things that are freely given to them of God,” 1 Cor. ii. 12.

Our author’s talent of preaching was much admired. The propositions he insisted on were few; but always of very weighty and edifying import, and naturally resulting from the passage of sacred writ under immediate consideration. His explanations were clear and accurate; his proofs plain and decisive; his illustrations beautiful and entertaining; his applications close and searching. All the heads of the discourse remarkably distinct, yet connected in such regular order, and in such pleasing succession, as gave his instructions the greatest advantage: and every part contributed to the strength and beauty of the whole.

And indeed such was the depth of his thoughts; such the propriety of his words; and such the variety, force, and fire of his style; so remarkable was the

justness and solidity of his reasoning, and so judicious the change of his method ; that notwithstanding he invariably pursued the same end, yet proceeding by different paths, and varying his address, according as he meant to alarm, convince, or comfort ; he was so far from growing tedious, that he never failed to please as well as to improve his audience.

In imitation of the great apostle of the Gentiles, that most amiable and accomplished preacher, he was peculiarly careful to cultivate a spirit of zeal and devotion in all his discourses. Accordingly, he was fervent in spirit, as well as cogent in argument. When he argued, conviction flashed ; when he exhorted, pathos glowed. And by distributing to each of his audience a portion suitable to their several states, he endeavoured rightly to divide the word of truth.

The same zeal and fervour which influenced and animated his public addresses from the pulpit, appeared also in the discharge of the much-neglected duties of catechising ; teaching from house to house ; and visiting the sick ; as well as in the administration of the holy sacraments.

In the most unaffected devotion towards God, and in a diffusive love to all men ; in modesty, humility, and candour ; in a gravity of deportment, tempered with becoming cheerfulness ; in purity of manners, and integrity of conduct, Mr M'Ewen was a pattern to all around him. His hearers had abundant reason afforded them to believe that he lived above this solid world, even while he was in it : that he was no lover of filthy lucre ; no hunter of carnal pleasures ; but that his hopes, and all his views of happiness, were hid with Christ in God : that he directed all his aims to the glory of God ; and considered the honour of Jesus Christ as the final cause of his existence ; that he carried on no base and sinister design ; that he had no separate interest from the glory of his divine Master, and the welfare of his people ; but that the whole desire and delight of his soul, was to set

forward their salvation ; that by their being “made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” his exalted Lord might “see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.”

On the 29th of December 1761, he came from Dundee to Edinburgh ; and, on Sabbath following, preached (his last sermon) in Bristo meeting, from Isa. Ixiii. 4. “For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.” On the Monday evening, he was married at Dalkeith, to the oldest daughter of Mr John Wardlaw, late merchant of the same place. In this important period of his life, when a variety of temporary prospects ingross the attention of the most part of mankind, it was observed, that, in his social intercourse with his friends, he discovered a strong inclination to fix the conversation to that awful, yet delightful subject, the eternal world, into which all must soon enter. Like one established in the faith, he seemed daily to be “looking for, and hastening to the coming of the Lord Jesus.”

On Wednesday afternoon, attended by his friends, he went to Leith, in his way home to Dundee ; and that same night he was suddenly taken ill, owing, as is supposed, to the cold and wet he had suffered in his crossing the Frith the preceding week. His disorder soon issued in a violent fever, which rendered him unfit for any conversation, and on Wednesday night, the 13th of January 1762, put an end to all his labours, in the twenty-eighth year of his age, and seventh of his ministry. Cut down in the prime of life, and public usefulness, his death was universally lamented as a severe and afflicting loss to his friends, his congregation, and the church of God. His body was interred in the church-yard of Dalkeith.

In December 1758, he published a sermon delivered at the ordination of the Rev. Mr Alexander Dick in Aberdeen, entitled, “The great Matter and End of Gospel Preaching,” from 2 Cor. iv. 5. This dis-

course was reprinted in 1764, and has been much esteemed by the best judges, on account of the clear evangelical strain of doctrine, together with the nervous and pathetic manner of address, which runs through the whole of it. It has undergone five impressions.

In 1763, his meditations on the Types and Figures of the Old Testament were published in a neat volume 12mo. The favourable reception which this piece met with from the public, shews, in a much stronger light, the distinguishing excellency of it, than any thing else that could be advanced. Many editions of this work have been already sold, and the demand for it still continues.

With regard to the following sheets, they contain the substance of what the author originally composed and delivered in the pulpit, in the form of sermons. His heart, his time, his study, were entirely devoted to the duties of his profession. To contract the force and spirit of a subject into a small compass, and to exhibit it to the mind in one clear and easy view, was a study he was remarkably fond of. And though he prepared his discourses for the pulpit with great diligence and accuracy, he frequently employed a leisure moment in digesting them, after they had been preached, into the form of little essays.

From his collection of manuscripts in this kind, the following Essays were selected. Each of them was committed to paper at one sitting, without any design of publishing them; and none of them appear to have been written over again, or revised by the Author. It should not then be thought strange, if, in some things, they will not bear a critical examination with regard to the minutiae of graceful composition. More important matters engaged Mr M'Ewen's attention; nor was fame, as a writer, by any means his aim.

But it is hoped the reader who peruses them with the humble child-like spirit of a christian, and seeks

religious advantage in all he reads, will not lose his labour. He will find a just and lively representation of true Christianity, in a variety of its most important articles, and distinguishing peculiarities, enforced by a very warm and pathetic mode of expression, happily conspiring at once to enlighten the understanding, and persuade the heart. Apparent repetitions will doubtless sometimes occur; but this will be chiefly in those things which lie at the root of all vital religion, and evidently lay very near the Author's heart; which is very different from that thin starvling common-place work that flows from a barren head, or an unfeeling heart. As these Essays were the first effusion of thought, they ought to be considered rather as the production of the heart, than the head, which, it is hoped, will be no disagreeable recommendation of them to the sober christian. From a few cursory specimens, the reader could form no adequate idea of a work replete with such a vast variety of important subjects; and, therefore, I have only to add, that as no order has been observed in writing these sheets, I have not attempted to methodise their contents, or combine them into a regular series.

Thus far the original Editor of these Essays has given us an account of the life and character of the worthy Author; and to the first edition of them in two volumes, he also prefixed a Preface, containing a brief description of the Secession. The propriety that the publisher at that time saw, for prefixing such a long account of the rise and progress of the Secession, is suggested in the dedication, which was the disadvantageous point of view in which the seceding ministers were exhibited in two preceding General Assemblies at that time.

But as that long account has no immediate connection with the Essays themselves, we shall waive in-

serting the whole of it, referring the reader who wants to be satisfied in these matters, either to that preface, or rather to the "Rev. Mr Brown's Historical Account of the Secession," as much fuller; and content ourselves by inserting the following extract from the beginning of the preface, as sufficient to the present purpose.

"In regard the Secession has been described in an overture laid before the last General Assembly of the established church of Scotland, not only as a *schism*, that is remarkably on the growing hand, but as an *alarming evil*, of threatening aspect to the church, the interest of religion, and the peace of the country, it becomes in some measure necessary, for the vindication of our Author's character, who was a respectable minister of that communion, and for the due information of the public, that they may be enabled to judge for themselves, to subjoin a short narrative of that memorable event in Scotland, as well as a display of their sentiments, spirit, and fellowship as a body.

"The fundamental maxims of the reformation in Scotland were, the absolute perfection of the word of God, and the unrivalled headship of Christ over the church, which the Secession adopted as their basis and plan of procedure. In conjunction with these distinguishing articles, our reformers invariably affirmed, that the constitutional form, the privileges, and the administrations of the kingdom of Christ, are delineated in the sacred records; and that the appointments of Jesus are the only perfect and authoritative standard of all the ordinances, officers, and services, necessary to her establishment and edification.

"From principles so important and so evident, these champions for truth and holiness inferred every conclusion that formed their creed, and promoted the interests of religion. Soundness in the faith once delivered to the saints, a conversation becoming the gospel, and a steady attachment to the order and fellowship of the Christian church, became, at a very early

period, and in a comfortable degree, the living character of the reformed Presbyterian church of Scotland.

“Her faith and order, as the church of the living God, a pillar and ground of the truth, are largely exhibited in her standards; but, some few articles of the greatest consequence to throw light on her constitution and administrations, have a peculiar claim to our attention.

“She admitted, upon the clearest evidence from reason, and the most explicit declarations of scripture, that the catholic church, or kingdom of Christ, is either *visible* or *invisible*. She defined the *invisible* church, the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head.—She described the catholic *visible* church, a society made up of all such as, in all ages and places of the world, do profess the true religion, and of their children.—She believed, that, unto this catholic visible church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting the saints in this life, to the end of the world. She taught, that it is the bounden duty, and a most valuable privilege of believers, to enter into church fellowship, and perseveringly to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded.

“Her views of the nature, discipline, and government of the New Testament church, are summarily comprehended in the following aphorisms. The visible church is the kingdom of Christ, and not of this world: the King of Zion is her Lawgiver, Judge, and King: he has appointed a form and order of government for her edification in faith and holiness: this government is to be exercised by **ELDERS**, and by none but elders who only rule, and elders who also labour in the word and doctrine, acting conjunctly in different judicatories, subordinate to one another: church judicatories have no power to make laws to bind the conscience, but only to apply (as circumstances and occasions may require) the laws of Christ recorded in

his word: the church of Christ has an exclusive right to order all her affairs, independant of any foreign influence: it is equally improper for the civi magistrate, who is the ordinance of God in the government of the state, to be obliged implicitly to ratify the decisions of the church; and for the church either to employ her authority to gratify the worldly views of civil rulers, or to acknowledge the competency of their judgment of spiritual matters: her religious liberties being clearly conveyed, and unalienably secured, by the word, the promise, the oath, the blood of her glorious Head; it must be no less dishonouring to the wisdom, the authority, and goodness of the Lord Jesus, than injurious to his body, to innovate, to alter, or abridge her heavenly charter: the province, the authority, and just claims of the church and the state, are so essentially different, that they neither can be blended together, nor opposed to one another, without doing violence and injury to both: it is the duty of every Christian carefully to examine the scripture limits of these several jurisdictions, that we may acquire just apprehensions of the nature and extent of the powers which Christ hath conferred on his church, and of her exemption from the controul of the princes of this world: as every improper connection of the church with the kingdoms of this world, is inconsistent with the purity of divine institutions; so, wherever it takes place, Christians ought to cleave to the original model of her constitution and policy, drawn and recorded by the pencil of inspiration in the holy oracles: and when the saints walk according to this rule, without offence to God or men, contending against the corrupt majority of an established church, or even withdrawing from their communion; they acquit themselves as the sons of God, and the followers of Jesus.

“This is but a short sketch of the leading articles in her ecclesiastical constitution; and yet it is sufficient to shew, that, formed on this plan, standing fast in

these liberties, and conducting her administrations according to these principles, the reforming church of Scotland must have looked forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. A warm and regular zeal for the honour of truth, for the simplicity of divine worship, and for strictness and impartiality in the exercise of discipline, was stamped on the general tenor of her proceedings. The learning, piety, and diligence of her ministers, insured them the respect of the people. The solemnity of her administrations, joined with a visible air of seriousness and gravity through the nation, was the joy of her friends, and the terror of her enemies.

"To exhibit the grounds of our belief concerning the several heads of faith and practice, would exceed all reasonable bounds; it is foreign to my purpose: and, moreover, it is quite unnecessary, as they are fully and distinctly opened in a book published some years ago, by common consent, entitled, "The Assembly's Shorter Catechism Explained, by way of Question and Answer," in two volumes. As this book has undergone several large impressions, it must be in the hands of many; and we leave it to speak for itself.

"According to these principles, so we believe, so we walk, and so we teach: and, however some may choose to represent them as the fruit of ignorance, as friendly to licentiousness, as an erroneous enthusiastic system; we are not much concerned at their censure, "knowing of whom we have learned them." Instead of making unkind returns to the language of calumny, we will rather pray, "Father, forgive them, for it seems probable they know not what they do." We adore that providence which calls us from time to time to lay before the world the manner of our doctrine and conversation. Without the smallest diffidence about the goodness of our cause, we cheerfully submit to the public an explicit account of the reason of the hope that is in us. If our words be wrested,

in order to give some colour to an undeserved censure, we know who hath said, "Vengeance is mine," and can patiently wait his time of retribution. If we misconceive facts, or injure truth by adopting false principles, or drawing erroneous conclusions; it will be an office of friendship to use proper means to correct our mistakes, and give us better information.

"The striking difference between that genuine strictness in religion, which we teach and inculcate from the law of God, and the example of Christ; and that spurious strictness in religion, which is often mistaken for the other, not only by the world, but by the parties themselves, is most clearly opened, displayed, and enforced by our author, in a short description of the true notion of strictness. It is the substance of a sermon he preached some years before his death, on that subject, to his own people, and was composed, like the rest of the following Essays, without any view to the press; and, therefore, cannot be liable to any suspicion of having been adapted to the design of the present publication."*

It now remains to beg the reader's excuse for detaining him so long from a perusal of the more important and interesting contents of the following sheets; and, to express my ardent desire, that, blessed by a gracious providence, they may gain the haven of public acceptance, and import these valuable commodities,—pleasure which improves, and improvement which delights.

J. P.

Those who incline to see a more full view of the principles which the Seceders believe, profess, and practise, may consult the Rev. Mr Brown's Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Secession, P. 63—68. Edit. 4.

* See Essay on Religious Strictness.

ESSAYS.

ON THE GREAT EVIL OF SIN.

O SIN, thou only evil in which there is no good ; thou superfluity of naughtiness, thou quintessence of what is odious and execrable, whose nature is entirely opposite to that of God, and the reverse of his holy law ; who claimest the devil for thy fire ; while death, and hell, and misery, confess thee for their only parent ! how hast thou troubled all the creation ! upon what creatures hast thou not transmitted thy baleful influence !

Ye angels of darkness, once the angels of light, how are you fallen ! how changed ! how is your fine gold become dim ! What plucked you from your starry mansions, where you did walk with God, high in salvation, in the climes of bliss ! You were the angels that sinned ; therefore you could not keep your first and happy state, but were driven out from God, flung from eternal splendours to everlasting horrors. “The crown is fallen from your head ; woe unto us, for you have sinned.”

Ye sons of men, once were you blessed with innocence and peace, in the morning of your existence, when our grand-parents first lifted to the heavens their wondering eyes, and reposéd themselves in the blissful bowers of Paradise—that happy garden planted by the Lord, and fitted out for their reception. The understanding was bright as the light. The will

all pure and holy, reigned queen of the affections, and swayed them with a golden sceptre. The memory was faithful to his trust, being replenished only with good things. And, O how peaceful was the conscience! how serene! Nothing unholy was hatched in the heart, or uttered by the lips, or manifested by the actions. Disease had not invaded our body; death would not have dissolved our frame. We should have been strangers to the miseries of life, and to the dreary mansions of the grave. But sin, that cursed monster, sin hath quenched our intellectual light—hath enthralled the will to vile unruly passions—hath vitiated the memory, tenacious now of evil—hath banished true peace from the conscience. Some are harassed with direful apprehensions, and consumed away with fearful terrors. What multitudes are stretched on the bed of pain! It was sin which bade the head to ache,—fevers to revel through our veins,—convulsions shake the human frames, and agues agitate our bodies.

See there, in that house of mourning, the pale and ghastly corpse extended on the bed. Descend into thy silent grave, and view the putrefying flesh, and the mouldering bones. Ah! where are we! To what are we reduced! Is this that heaven-laboured form, which wore the divine resemblance! Yes! yes! “Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

But can we venture lower still in our meditations into those dismal regions, where God’s mercies are clean gone, and where he will be favourable no more? Hear how they shriek and roar; see how they toss in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone! Unhappy beings, what brought you to that place of torment? “We are filled with the fruit of our own ways, and are reaping the wages of sin.” Yes; it was sin which laid the foundation-stone of your prison,

and filled it with these inexhausted treasures of wrath and indignation.

Not in the rational creation only we discern the fatal evils of this accursed thing. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Once it died of a dropsy of waters, in the days of Noah ; and shortly will expire in a fever of flames, when "the heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Even now, the husbandman, conscious of the sickliness of nature, acts like physician to the earth. Sometimes he opens her veins with the plough, and covers with soil, as with a strengthening plaster ; sometimes lays her asleep, by suffering her to lie fallow for a time. Without these necessary precautions, she would refuse to yield her increase, and cleanness of teeth would be in all our borders.

It is a small thing for sin thus to affect the whole creation. The garden of Gethsemane knows, and Calvary can tell how sin hath affected even the great Creator. Bread of life, why wast thou hungry ? Fountain of life, why wast thou thirsty ? Why wast thou a man of sorrows, O thou Consolation of Israel ? Thou glory of the human race, wherefore wast thou a reproach of men, and despised of the people ? Thy visage was more marred than any man, and thy form than the sons of men. Sin nailed thee to the cross ; sin stabbed thee to the heart ; sin, like a thick impenetrable cloud, eclipsed thy Father's countenance to thy disconsolate soul ; sin laid thee in a grave, O thou Resurrection and the Life !

Who would have believed, that the enemy would have entered within the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, pulled angels from their thrones, and brought even God himself from his high habitation, from excellent glory, from ineffable joys, to poverty and reproach, to sorrow and tribulation, and to the most inglorious death !

O heavy burden ! under whose weight such multi-

tudes of creatures groan ; which made the mighty God, clothed with our flesh, to sweat great drops of blood ; though sinners walk lightly on beneath the mighty load. O dreadful plague ! O formidable sickness ! not to be chased away by a less costly medicine than the most precious blood of Christ, by whose stripes we are healed. O deadly poison ! even when presented in a golden cup, and sweet unto the taste, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder, and never fails to prove bitterness in the latter end. Nor can it be expelled by any other way than lifting up the Son of Man, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. O mighty debt, whose payment could impoverish him, whose is the silver and the gold ; who, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich ! O ugly stain ! O inveterate pollution ! not to be washed away by all the rivers that run into the sea. In vain we take unto us nitre, and much soap ; in vain we use our most vigorous endeavours to purge away our blot. Sooner might the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots. The only Fuller that is equal to this mighty work, is he who purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. The blood of the Lamb is the only purgatory that makes you whiter than the snow.

When, O when, shall I hate thee with a perfect hatred, thou worse than death ! When shall I be afraid of thee alone, and be ashamed of thee alone ! O thing exceeding sinful ! When shall I be delivered from thy abhorred dominion ! O when shall thy destructions have a perpetual end !

ON MAN'S EXTREME MISERY BY SIN.

WHO can refrain from tears, whose eye of reason hath snatched but a cursory glance of mankind's nu-

merous woes ? Who but he whose heart is made of stone, and is lost to every impression of benevolence ? As the dancing spark flies upward, so man is born unto trouble. Unhappy creatures, that kept not your primeval state ! Full early you revolted from your Creator, God, in whose smile alone your happiness might dwell. The sparkling crown of innocence is fallen from your head. Hence all these fatal evils of your race. Ah me ! what ghastly spectres are these ! See moon-struck madness replenishing the melancholy bedlam, and torturing despair, a terror to herself, and all around her. See there oppression with iron hands, and heart of steel ; poverty with her hollow eyes, her tattered garments, and sordid habitation ; and all the family of pain, who tear the pillow from beneath our head, while sleep affrighted, flies from our eye-lids. Shall I mention, in the next place, drudgery with her grievous looks, toiling at the oar, or stooping under the burden ? Alas ! with what laborious efforts do mortals spend their vitals, to gain a wretched sustenance for themselves, and their tender offspring, to be defended from the gnawings of hunger, and the power of chilling cold !

What creature is not armed against thee, O man ! who all espouse their Maker's quarrel ? There are, whom the angels of darkness harass with dreadful temptations, and still more dreadful possessions. The angels of light loathe and detest such polluted beings, and frequently have been the executioners of direful vengeance. I might relate the numerous ills to which we are exposed from the inhabitants of the air, the beasts of the earth, and even the fishes of the sea. How hateful to men the hostile race of scaly serpents, hissing adders, ravenous lions, prowling wolves, hideous and weeping crocodiles ! And even the puny race of locusts and caterpillars, have scourged guilty nations for their crimes.

How frequently have fire and water, these serviceable elements, made horrid insurrections, disastrous to

the human race? Populous cities, with gilded palaces, and lofty temples, have smoked in fiery ruins; and, in old time, the dwellings of sinful men were swept away by a watery inundation. In vain the shrieking wretches betook themselves for safety to the lofty battlements of houses, the tops of the highest trees, or even the summits of the aerial mountains. Hear how the earth groans under the burden of thy sins! Here she spreads a barren wilderness, an idle desert; there lifts a frightful ridge of rocks, whence in many places we look down with giddy horror. In some countries she belches fire and smoke from dreadful volcanoes, tremendous indeed to all who hear, but much more terrible to those who live in the neighbouring city, or in the villages of the circumjacent plain. Be it so, that these awful phenomena of nature, and others of like threatening aspect, bespeak not this our globe to be the habitation of an accursed race; what shall we say to useless choking weeds, and poisonous plants, of which she is a willing parent, whilst she refuses to produce the foodful grain, unless when much caressed and importuned? How frequently she disappoints our fond hopes, and baulks our expectations!

When she refuses to yield her increase, then it is we have cleanliness of teeth in all our borders, while pale famine walks abroad with her evil arrows. The staff of bread is broken, and feeble man totters, and falls, and dies.—At other times she expands her jaws, and swallows up alive vast multitudes of rational beings. Earthquake! men tremble when thou art but named! Who can think of thee without horror? O what dire consternation in that dreadful moment? Whither, ah! whither can they fly from the doleful calamity! Avert it, Heaven. Execute not thy threatened vengeance upon these guilty lands, and our proud metropolis. If thou hast a mind to punish us, O visit with some milder rod, some gentler minister of wrath.

Not the earth alone, on which we tread, but the air in which we live, and move, and have our being, proves deathful to our wretched race. Sometimes she summons her stormy winds, her roaring tempests, and bids them shake the walls of stone, and dash the wall-built vessel on the rock. Vain is the help of tough cables, and tenacious anchors. The mighty waters at once receive the valuable cargo, and the despairing mariners. How often is she infected with the wide-wasting pestilence ! Then death's shafts fly thick, and the hungry grave rejoices at the uncommon fare. Yet, ugly monster ! she never says, It is enough.—But, with no greater calamity can you be visited, ye sons of men, than those which claim your own species for their original. Fell are the monsters of the Lybian deserts ; but not to be compared with the abhorred productions of the human heart. Hence matchless killing envy, filthy slander ; hence persecution with torturing engines, war with her odious din, and bloody garments. How can you have peace among yourselves, when warring with your God ?

Nor is there any period of life wherein we are exempted from wo. Not even the smiling infant is secured against the most fatal disasters. The miseries of childhood are apparent. Affliction spares not the blooming youth, nor reverences the venerable old man. Even age itself, what is it ? An incurable distemper, always terminating in death. See how the countenance is shrivelled up with wrinkles, the shoulders stoop, the hands tremble, the strong men bow themselves, and they that look out of the windows are darkened !

Neither can any station or condition rescue from these incumbent miseries. The rich, the honourable, and they who swim in tides of pleasure, can bear witness. Why else would Ahab sicken for Naboth's vineyard, and Haman lay so sore to heart the refractory behaviour of Mordecai ? If treasured riches, if sensual delights, added even to knowledge and wis-

dom, could satisfy the heart, then might thou, Solomon, have enjoyed a heaven upon earth, nor complained of vanity and vexation, nor that he who increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow. Alas! even our greatest comforts prove killing; and far from issuing in contentment, we still complain even in large abundance of worldly delights.

What shall we say then to these things? Shall wretched mortals abandon themselves to sullen sorrow, and hopeless desperation? Shall the world be turned into a Bochim? Is it a place where his mercies are clean gone, and where he will be favourable no more? Are there not many footsteps of the divine benignity, even in this our earthly mansion? Doubtless there are; for he hath not left himself without a witness, that goodness is essential to his nature: he bids the earth teem with plenty, and the clouds to drop with vegetable fatness. There are pleasures of sight, of smell, of taste, peculiar to the various seasons of the revolving year. Many creatures are yet subservient to our interest, and all the elements are made to contribute for our welfare. Far be it from high-favoured man, to despise the riches of the Almighty's goodness. But, O ye everlasting joys, which the glorious gospel reveals! what thoughtful being would not be discontented with such a world as this, without the consideration of you! The distant prospect of life and immortality is able, and that alone, to reconcile the heart to the visible economy of God. Even great and sore affliction is deemed but light and vain, because it lasts but for a moment. Eternity apart, the miseries of life would swallow up the joys. But now, even these devourers are buried in the capacious womb of vast eternity.

Blessed be thy condescension, O patient Son of God, who disdained not to taste the bitter cup of grief; grief, not thy own, but ours. And blessed be that wisdom, to whose glorious contrivance we are indebted for the cup of consolation presented in the

gospel, which we may drink, and remember our misery no more.—By various ways the sons of men have tried to extricate themselves from the lamented consequents of their fall. Games and recreations, arts and sciences, yea, many false religions, have been invented for this end. Miserable comforters are they all ! Christianity, it is thine alone to chase our gloom of thought, and wipe away our tears ; while by thee we are directed to dart our thoughts beyond this transitory world, this inconsiderable speck of time, unto the eternal scene, which shall commence when the last trumpet shall be sounded ; we no more repine at the appearances of wo, nor think “our light affliction worthy to be compared with that glory that is to be revealed ; while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.”

ON THE INEVITABLE MISERY OF THE WICKED.

BUT there shall be no reward unto the evil man. No reward, did I say ? Nay, if God be just, then “he will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man that doth evil, without respect of persons.” To him belongeth vengeance. Though patience may delay, though clemency may mitigate, though mercy, grace and wisdom, may transfer the punishment to the person of a Surety ; yet still his wrath must be revealed against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men.

Doth not even nature herself teach us, that sin and punishment are most inviolably connected? For, even barbarians could infer, when they saw a viper fasten upon the hand of a person whom they knew not, after he had escaped a dismal shipwreck ; “Cer-

tainly this man was a murderer; for vengeance suffereth him not to live." How often are the wicked consumed with fearful terrors, when they can be under no apprehension of punishment from men? For they know that it is "the judgment of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death." Whence are we struck with trembling at any uncommon appearances of nature? If a storm of thunder and lightning torments the air? If the sun labours in an eclipse? If a glaring comet waves its banner over the nations?—Whence the terrors of apparitions? Whence the forebodings of misery after death? Whence the prevailing opinion, even among the ancient Jews, that death was to be the consequence of any extraordinary appearance of the Deity? Is it not because we are insolvent debtors, that we dread the face of our injured Creditor? Is it not because we are traitorous rebels, we abhor the presence of our offended Sovereign? Therefore, with Adam, we hide ourselves from the presence of the Lord. And with the widow of Zarephath, we are ready to think, that whatever is more than common, is a messenger of the Lord of hosts to slay us, and bring our sin to remembrance.

Oft-times the guilty conscience will create unto itself imaginary horrors, and sinners are in great fear, where no fear is, while they are apt to say, with Cain, "Every one that meeteth me, will slay me." What nation under heaven have not attested the truth of this, while they have appeased their gods with bloody expiatory sacrifices! And (horrid to relate!) their altars have reeked even with human gore: the fruit of the body has been given for the sin of the soul. Whether the dreadful custom may be derived from the mangled tradition of Abraham offering up Isaac; or, whether our adversary the devil would, by stirring them up to such abominations, insult over the guilt of their consciences, and blindness of their hearts, by aping the sacrifice of Christ, hereby intended to dis-

credit the glorious method of salvation ; one thing is certain, that mankind, degenerate as they were, did really judge, that an expiation was necessary to be made, and that "He will by no means clear the guilty."

And however much their foolish heart was darkened, as to the manner of propitiating the Deity ; yet certainly the necessity of it is one of the dictates of nature. For, could we suppose, that a sinning creature should escape the righteous judgment of God, and feel no effects of his displeasure ; how could it appear that he were a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ? Would there not be too much reason to say, "Every one that doth evil, is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them ? and where is the God of judgment ?" How could his lordship and dominion over the world be maintained, should he forbear to punish the violators of his law ? Is it possible he can be divested of his sovereign rule ? or that his creatures can throw off all moral dependence upon him that made them ? So it is impossible but the order of punishment must succeed, when the order of obedience is disturbed : and they who burst the bands of the law, must of necessity be bound in the cords of affliction. "Consider this, and be afraid, ye that forget God." While a method is not fallen upon to appease incensed justice, and separate sin from your souls ; if God be the righteous Judge of all the earth ; if God be the Lord of his creatures ; if God be blessed, (O tremble to think it !) you must be miserable. As the fire devours the chaff, as the flame consumes the stubble ; so must you perish at his presence.

But, let us hearken to the sacred oracles on this interesting subject. "Search ye out of the book of the Lord, and see that every disobedience receives a just recompence of reward." The flames of Sodom, the waters of Noah, the torments of hell, the sufferings of Christ, bear witness unto this. O sin, thou

hast kindled a fire that will burn to the bottom of the mountains ! “Behold, he will come with fire, and with his chariots, as a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebukes with flames of fire: for, by fire, and with his sword, will the Lord plead with all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many.” Nor can we reasonably blame the bowels of the Deity, because he taketh vengeance; for, according to Moses, it is a branch of his goodness, that he “will by no means clear the guilty.” According to Joshua, it is because he is a holy God that he will not “forgive our transgressions.” According to David, it is because the “righteous Lord loveth righteousness,” that he will rain upon the wicked “snares, fire, and brimstone, and a burning tempest;” the portion of their cup.

But, especially, had it been an indifferent thing with God to punish, or not to punish the guilty, who can persuade us, that he who “afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men,” would take such pleasure in bruising his only begotten Son, whom he loved? Was he without necessity exposed to such direful sufferings? Nay: for God hath set him forth to be the propitiation, to declare”—his love: True; but to declare also “his righteousness in the remission of sin, and that he may be just.”

Blessed be that matchless grace and wisdom, that has provided a lamb for a burnt sacrifice;—that has found a ransom;—that has opened a city of refuge;—that has reconciled mercy and truth, and righteousness with peace. O that the gracious Redeemer, without whose kindly interposition we had better been crushed in the very bud of being, might for ever live in our hearts, might for ever be esteemed above all other beloveds, might for ever be the reigning subject of our thoughts, both when we wake and when we sleep! “If we forget thee, O blessed Jesus, then let our right hand forget her cunning. If we do not remember thee, let our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth; if we prefer not thee above

our chief joy." O ! let us never drink that as water, which cost the effusion of thy blood ! Let us never have that sweet in our mouth, which tendered to thy lips the vinegar and gall ! Let us never rejoice in that which made thee exceeding sorrowful ! nor bless ourselves in that which subjected thee to the curse ! nor live in that for which thou died !

ON CHRIST'S DYING* IN THE STEAD OF SINNERS, TO MAKE FULL SATISFACTION FOR THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS.

THAT Christ died for his people, not merely for their good, but in their room and place, is a fundamental article of our holy religion, and a grand peculiarity of the gospel ; though regarded by many as only a speculative point, and by many traduced as a senseless absurdity, inconsistent with reason, and the perfections of the Deity. And here I must confess, that if we are not to attend to the sacred oracles as our rule ; if we are to be solely conducted in our researches by the light of nature and reason, our cause is lost. For though the doctrine itself is not contrary to sound reason, it is the mystery of his will, which is hid from the wise and prudent, and which would never have entered into our thoughts, if God had not been pleased to reveal it. Let us go to the law and testimony ; and, according to the observation of a very eminent divine, the death of Christ

* The death of Christ includes, not only his sufferings, but his obedience. The shedding of his precious blood, was at once the grand instance of his suffering, and the finishing act of his obedience. In this view it is considered, and thus it is interpreted, by his own ambassador ; who, speaking of his divine Master, says, " He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 8. *Hervey's Dialogues*, vol. ii. p. 47.

is exhibited in three capital views; as a price, a punishment, and as a sacrifice. And it will, from every one of these, appear, with the brightest evidence, that the death of Christ was a true and proper satisfaction in the room of his elect people.

Let us begin with it as a *price*. Now, what is a price? A price is a valuable compensation of one thing for another. A slave is redeemed from captivity, a debtor from prison, when some gracious redeemer procures their liberty, by giving some equivalent to the person by whom they are detained. We are debtors; we cannot pay unto God what we are owing.—We are captives, and we cannot hasten to be loosed. Jesus Christ is the merciful Redeemer, who pays the sum we were owing, and says to the prisoners, go forth. Will we not believe an apostle, when he tell us, “Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price?” Would you know what this price is? Another apostle will tell; “Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things as silver, and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” Now, though it be true, that there is a redemption by power mentioned in the scripture; yet, redemption by price is the only proper redemption; and we cannot reasonably doubt, but redemption by price is the meaning of the most remarkable texts of scripture, where Christ is characterized by this lovely denomination. What hath he obtained for us by his death? “Eternal redemption,” Heb. ix. 12. What have we through his blood? “Redemption and forgiveness of sins,” Eph. i. 7. What is Christ made unto us of God? “Sanctification and redemption,” 1 Cor. i. 30. What did they look for, that expected the coming of the Messias? “Redemption in Israel,” Luke ii. 28. Even Job could say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” chap. xix. 25. We sold ourselves for nought, and we are redeemed without money of our own. The redemption of the soul was too precious to be effected by our impoverished stock.—But we are not redeemed

without money to the Lord Jesus, “who gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity.” The ransom was paid down, the price beyond all price; a sum too large for the arithmetic of angels to compute.—Let the adversaries bring forth their strong reasons. If, say they, the death of Christ was a proper price, it was paid to the devil, whose captives we were. No; it was paid to God, whose captives we were; the devil was only his slave, jailor, and executioner. But, say they, if it was paid to God, it was paid by Christ to himself. And, where is the absurdity here? It is true, a man cannot satisfy himself as to a money-debt, by giving money to himself, that another owes him; yet as to a criminal debt, there is nothing to hinder a just judge, even among men, to satisfy his own law, by submitting to what it requires. Nor does this gospel-doctrine calumniate the Deity, as though he were a greedy tyrant, that will let no prisoners go, unless he can get great riches for their ransom. For our price did not enrich him, but only paved the way for our being released, to the honour of his justice.

Next, let us consider it as a *punishment*. A punishment is never inflicted by a just governor, except upon transgressors of the law; for, “to punish the just, is not good.” It is for the punishment of evildoers that magistrates are set up by God. Now, if the death of Christ was a punishment, it must unavoidably follow, that it was vicarious. Why wouldest thou, O heavenly Father, command the sword of justice to awake, and smite the Man that is thy fellow! Surely it was not for his own fault; for “he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” Even Pilate acquitted him, and Judas absolved him. Why then did the almighty Sovereign of heaven permit such an innocent person to be put to death? Why did not the thunders awake? Lo; here the mystery is unfolded: he died, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He was cut off, but not

for himself; for the transgression of my people was he smitten."—Let insolent cavillers object, that it degrades our Messiah, to regard him in the light of an executed felon; the lower the humiliation, the deeper is the love.

Lastly, That Christ died in the room and stead of his people, appears from its being called a *sacrifice*. Who knows not, that our Redeemer is often styled a High Priest? His human nature was the victim, his divine nature the altar, his body was the tabernacle. Who knows not, that the legal high priests did bear the sins of the people? and because they could not atone for the people, by laying down their own lives, they offered bullocks, goats, lambs, and sheep. Whatever absurd accounts our ancient and modern Socinians have invented of the meaning of sacrifices of expiation, most certainly the language of them was, 'O Lord, I have sinned; I deserve to die; but, I beseech thee, let thine anger fall on this my victim, or on that which is signified by it; and be merciful to me a sinner.'—Thus God was ceremonially appeased, sin was expiated, and the Israelite was forgiven.

THE UNION BETWIXT CHRIST & BELIEVERS.

THE suffering Redeemer had now resigned his breath, after he had implored the divine forgiveness to his bloody murderers, and with an amazing loud cry, commended his departing spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father, who shewed it the path of life. A scene it was, which nature trembled to behold. The sun called in his rays, and mourned in sackcloth. The temple rent her veil, to testify at once her indignation, and that the way into the holiest of all was now made manifest. And even the rocks, the flinty rocks, upbraided with the hardness of

their hearts, the unpitying tormentors of the Lord of glory ; Lo ! there he hangs a lifeless corpse ! A wealthy disciple obtains a warrant to perform the last kindly offices. The mangled body is wrapped in fine linen, and decently interred. In vain you seal the stone, and appoint a watch : still these remains are the body of Christ, and the peculiar care of heaven, which shall not see corruption. For the third day shall see him arising from the bed of death ; and what is now sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory.

So, just so, the elect, who are chosen in Christ from all everlasting, even while dead in trespasses and sins, and lying in the grave of the corrupt natural state, are regarded by God as the body to which he was federally united in the council of peace. Was it impossible for the fleshly part of the Redeemer to see putrefaction in the grave, and to remain under his gloomy power for ever ? Equally impossible it is that those should pine away in their iniquities, who are Christ's dead men ; whom he has loved with an everlasting love.

Within two days he will revive them, the third day he will raise them up, and they shall live in his sight. According to the gracious promise, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, they shall not always remain in the congregation of the dead. " For thus saith the Lord, thy dead men shall live, together with my body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust."

A federal union there is, in scripture-reckoning, between the Lord Jesus, and those who are predestinated unto life. An union which commences not only before they are born into the world of grace, but before they were born into the world of nature. Before they were born, did I say ? nay, it is an union ancient as eternity itself ; and grace was given them in Christ before the world began.. With him they were crucified ; with him they died ; with him they descended into the grave : when he arose from the

dead, they also did arise ; when he ascended on high they also ascended, and sat down with him in heavenly places. Yet still this blessed connection with the glorious Surety, is a secret reserved in the breast of God ; and they are by nature the children of wrath, even as others, until, in the day of conversion, they are actually united unto Christ by a mystical implantation.

In the worlds of nature and art, there are found many conjunctions ; and which of them is not summoned by the Spirit of God to shadow forth this supernatural one ? As the body is joined to the garments which it wears, to the head with which it is adorned, to the soul wherewith it is animated ; as the mother to the child conceived in the womb ; as the root to the branches ; as the foundation to the superstructure ; as the husband to the wife ; so is Christ unto believers. They have put him on as a garment ; they are knit together, they are nourished, they increase by him as a head, with the increase of God. He is their life ; it is not they that live, but Christ liveth in them. He is formed in their hearts. In him they are rooted as branches in the vine, built up as lively stones upon a living foundation. Great is the nearness of the husband and wife, when they are no more twain but one flesh ; but still more close is this connection ; for, he that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit.

Does any one of these similitudes convey but an imperfect idea of this mysterious unity ? let the remaining ones contribute their help to aid your apprehensions. But, after all, they fall infinitely short of the thing they are intended to adumbrate. And therefore the wisdom of God compares it to an union, by which indeed it is infinitely transcended. In behalf of his beloved people, he prays the Father, " That they may be one," saith he, " in us, as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee :" John xvii. 21.—It is true, they are not joined unto the Redeemer, by such an

essential conjunction as is betwixt the sacred persons of the Godhead ; nor by such a personal union as is between the eternal Son and his temporal humanity. It is not an union of persons in one nature, like the former ; nor of natures in one person, like the latter ; but an union of a multitude of persons, not merely unto the doctrine of Christ, not merely unto the grace of Christ, but the person of Christ, considered not as God only, not as man only, but as God-man.

They are indeed linked together by the bonds of government and subjection, and by the ties of strongest friendship : that is, of a political ; and this, of a moral kind. But shall we say, the mysterious expressions we mentioned above, denote no more but this ? Believers are joined to Christ by the bands of government and friendship. Does the Spirit of God then, wrap up the plainest things in the darkest phraseologies ? Is this to the honour of the Scriptures ? No ; that be far from the Spirit of wisdom and revelation ; the perfection of the sacred oracles. It is not the dark phrases, but the sublime and heavenly thing, of which the apostle of the Gentiles is discoursing, when he says, “ This is a great mystery ; I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Christ Jesus and believers are the parties ; the Spirit and faith are the bonds ; the law and the gospel are the instruments ; the sacraments of divine institution are the seals, in this mysterious coalition. Mysterious indeed, which shall not be thoroughly apprehended, but in the light of glory. For thus the promise runs : “ In that day shall ye know that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ; and I in you, and you in me.”

A mystery this, worthy to be contemplated of angels and archangels. Angels see, but saints experience it. It is one of the deep things of God, which the natural man receiveth not ; and even the spiritual man is unable to comprehend it. But shall it therefore be rejected as incredible, when it is only incomprehensi-

ble? Christians believe greater mysteries than this; and without all peradventure, the less is confirmed by the greater. And philosophers acknowledge the reality of unions, for which they cannot account.

But, O! thrice happy they who are thus joined unto the Lord; and found in Christ, not having their own righteousness! They are called by his name; they are partakers of his fulness; and in all their afflictions, he is afflicted. Though he resides in heavenly places, and they are sojourners on the earth, yet are they blessed in him with all spiritual blessings. You trample upon the toe, the head cries out, "why persecutest thou me?" But when you clothe his naked, and feed his hungry members, he deems you did it to himself. "I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; naked, and ye clothed me."

Let supercilious, puny mortals, regard with contempt, or cold indifference, the saints of the Most High; but, O! let my delights be with you, ye excellent of the earth. Christ is not ashamed to call you brethren; God is not ashamed to call himself your God. A more exalted honour this, than to wear an imperial crown, and fill the throne of the whole earth!—To you there is no condemnation, nor falling totally away. You are the members of Christ, therefore he knows your wants; you are the body of Christ, therefore he will supply them. Christ is your head, he will cleanse your defilements; Christ is your head, he will cure your diseases. What though you be in poverty? you are in Christ. What though you be in reproach? you are in Christ. Let death divide your souls and bodies; let the grave calcine your flesh and bones; let the four winds war for your dust; your vital union with Christ shall still remain. When you shall render up the ghost, you die in the Lord; and when you descend into the peaceful grave, your dust shall sleep in Jesus.—Can any force, can any fraud, find means to enter into the heaven of heavens; and pluck an eye, or tear a limb, from the glorified

humanity of the exalted Redeemer? And even in the days of his humiliation, the soldiers could not break his bones, because they saw he was already dead. For so it was foretold in ancient prophecy, "A bone of him shall not be broken." But ye are kept as the apple of his eye; and are the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

ON TRUSTING IN GOD.

HE that trusts in the Lord with all his heart, does not indeed expect, that God will do that for him which he has never promised; far less that he will be favourable unto him, in what is contrary to his revealed will. But, first, he sees that his matters are good and right; and then he commits the keeping of his soul unto the faithful Creator; who is a buckler to them alone that walk uprightly.

If he is called of God to any difficult duty, for which he finds himself unequal, he persuades himself, that God will command his strength, and work in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure; and out of weakness, he is made strong.

He will not indeed presume on the divine protection, when rushing headlong into dangers, evidently foreseen, without necessity; as though the Almighty were obliged to suspend for him the laws of nature, and be prodigal of his miraculous operations. For even the Son of God himself would not tempt his loving Father, by casting himself down from the pinnacle; though, as the bold impostor told him, the angels had in charge to keep him in all his ways. But let him hear the voice of God and conscience; "This is the way, walk ye in it;" though he should pass through fire and water, he laughs at fear; and is not greatly moved by the most ghastly appearances of danger. Though war should rise against him; and

death, with sable wings, should hover round his head ; yet will he fear no evil. For “ thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, O God ! whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.”

The perfections of the Godhead are the chambers of safety wherein he hides himself. That everlasting strength, for which nothing is too difficult ;—that matchless goodness, that extends itself even to the birds of the air, and lilies of the field ;—that perfect immutability, that excludes all variableness and shadow of turning ;—that inviolable veracity, by which it is impossible for God to lie ;—that exact omniscience, from which no want can be hid ;—that incomprehensible wisdom, which can make all things work together for his own glory, and our good ; the promises of the word, and all the experiences of the saints ; these are his sure foundations on which he builds his trust.

If he himself has found the eternal God his refuge, experience worketh hope. As he hath deliyered, and doth deliver, he trusts in God, that he will yet deliver. If he has recourse to his own experiences, and finds no light from that quarter, he searches out of the book of the Lord, and finds, that never were the righteous forsaken. If friends proved faithless, or unable to afford him any relief in the day of calamity, enemies shall befriend. Even Philistines and Chaldeans shall intreat him well in the evil day. Did all human relief fail, and vain was the help of man ? then God has made a friendly covenant for him with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea. Ravens shall feed him, bears shall avenge his quarrel, and monsters of the deep afford a safe retreat. Fishes have supplied his wants ; and dogs have proved physicians to his sores.—If the animal creation failed, the dead and lifeless creatures have come into his interests. The roaring waves divide to give him passage ; and for his sake the fierce element of fire forgets its burning power. If neither men, nor

beasts, nor elements, appeared to his aid ; numbers of mighty angels encamp around, and deliver him. But chiefly God has been a never-failing refuge, when neither friends,—nor foes,—nor beasts,—nor elements,—nor angels,—nor any other creature, have interposed for their safety. “Thou hast been a strength to the poor ; a strength to the needy in his distress ; a refuge from the storm ; a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones was as a storm against the wall.”

Whilst he, by this believing confidence, gives glory to God, a full reward is given by the God of Israel, under whose wings he trusts. No anxious cares about this world’s good things ; no dispiriting fears about its evil things ; shall be able to disturb his repose. He is careful for nothing that can befall his mortal body, his civil reputation, or his worldly accommodations. Having devolved all his cares upon the great JEHOVAH, commended to him his present and his future interests, he lies down, and his sleep is sweet unto him. His flesh shall rest in hope, even in the clay-cold bed of the grave. His righteousness is brought forth as the light. Surely the Lord will make perfect what concerneth him. “O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.”

ON TRUSTING IN CHRIST.

NOR is it less our duty to trust in thee, O almighty Saviour of sinners, who savest us, not by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, nor by horses, nor by horsemen, nor by might and power ; but by thy blood which thou shed, and by thy Spirit which thou pourest down. “Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” For he shall be enabled to discern all other grounds of trust to be but arms of flesh ;—but lies and vanities ;—but spiders’ webs ;—but per-

ishing gourds ;—but foundations that shall be overflown with a flood ; whilst he that puts his trust in the Lord, shall be safe, and shall inherit his holy mountain.

Though his distinguished privileges should be like those of Capernaum, that was exalted up into heaven, he confides not in the temple of the Lord, but in the Lord of the temple. Though he could boast an illustrious descent from the venerable Abraham ; or claim kindred, according to the flesh, with Jesus Christ himself ; he would not on that account think himself intitled to the divine regard.—Though he should find much worldly substance ; he “ will not say to gold, Thou art my hope ; nor to fine gold, Thou art my confidence ; as though the Almighty would esteem his riches, or as though they could be profitable in the day of his wrath.—Though he should equal Heman in the deepness of his exercise, and Paul in the abundance of revelation ; he would not reckon it expedient for him to glory.—Though, for the cause of Christ, he should even pour his blood ; yet by the blood of the Lamb would he overcome ; yet in the blood of the Lamb, and not his own, would he wash his robes, and make them white. Though his gifts should be eminent ; his knowledge clear and extensive :—though, in the sweetness of his natural temper, he should be like a Moses ; and a Paul, in the blamelessness of his life, touching the righteousness of the law :—though his profession were ever so strict, and his reputation ever so fair :—in a word, though he should shed many tears, pour many prayers, endure many hardships, make many vows, form many resolutions, and exert the most vigorous endeavours in working out his own salvation ; yet all these things he counts but loss and dung, that he may win Christ, and be found in him. Though the saving grace of God should be implanted in his heart, he is not strong in the grace that is in himself, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. His justifying merit is the alone ground of his confidence

for the pardon of his guilt ; his sanctifying Spirit, for vanquishing the power of his inbred corruption. All other confidence he rejects, because the Lord hath rejected them. No tempest shall be able to batter down his walls ; his foundation never shall be razed ; his confidence shall never be rooted out of his tabernacle, but shall have a great recompence of reward. O “blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh ; but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

ON IMITATING OF CHRIST.

THE imitator of Jesus Christ is one, who, being interested in him as his propitiation, cannot but choose to follow him as his pattern ; for he knows, that though it be not the only or principal end why the Son of God was manifested, it is, however, a very considerable part of his errand, in visiting these regions of mortality, to give us a fair transcript, and a living copy of all those graces and duties that are pleasing unto God, and that are commanded in the law. He reverences, indeed, the footsteps of the flock, and blesses God for the holy examples of living and dead saints, which are noble incentives to piety, and a devout conversation. But still he regards the holiest examples of living and dead saints, as but imperfect models of duty ; some of their actions being evidently sinful, and others of them doubtful and suspicious. Jesus Christ he considers as the only finished pattern of obedience, in whose presence Moses is not meek, Solomon is not wise, Job is not patient, David is not upright, Abraham is not strong in faith, Elijah

is not zealous, and Paul, the labouring apostle is not diligent. His fellow saints, and those who have gone before him, may indeed surpass him in what he actually attains unto, but not in what he aims at. He knows, that the finer the copy is, the fairer will be the learner's hand ; therefore he sets the Lord alway before him. To follow the steps of Christ alone, is far more eligible in his esteem, than to go in the way of the world, or follow the multitude to do evil. And how can it be otherwise, when he considers that the example of Christ is the example of his best friend, his glorious Head, his great Lord and Master, his leader and commander, the shepherd and bishop of his soul, the captain of his salvation, and the author of his high and heavenly calling ?

He reckons it a far more glorious and honourable attainment, to resemble his blessed Saviour in holiness, and obedience to the will of God, than though he could be like him in the power of working miracles—a power which has been, in some measure, imparted to the workers of iniquity.

These most invaluable books, the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, that contain the sacred memoirs of the life of Jesus, he prefers before all other biography. These venerable histories he peruses night and day ; not merely with the eye of a critic, that he may understand their sense, and discover their beauties, but, with the eye of a painter, who gazes at a fine picture, that he may imitate the artist's delicate designs, that he may go and do likewise.

In all places, companies, duties, and emergencies, he labours to consider with himself, How would my Lord and Saviour, were he in my place, acquit himself on this occasion ? Would he do this or that ? Would he allow it to be done ?

There are many actions of the man Christ Jesus , which were performed by him, as a human creature, in conformity to the moral law, which are to be imitated in the letter of them. If he obeyed his parents,

prayed to his God, forgave his enemies, paid tribute to Cæsar, despised no man for his poverty, esteemed no man for his wealth : if he pleased not himself, nor sought his own glory ; if he was heavenly in his discourse, cheerful in his obedience, unwearied in his application to his work, and mortified to the world in the whole tenor of his conversation ;—these are branches of his behaviour, in which the servant of Christ follows him in the most literal sense, though at a humble distance ; not as Asahel followed Abner, but as Peter followed his Master afar off. These duties are not only incumbent upon him, by the authority of the precept, but are sanctified unto him, are rendered sweet and easy, by the example of the Lord.

But there are other actions of Christ, in which he acted as God. He fasted forty days ; he judged the hearts of the Pharisees ; he took the ass of another man to ride upon, as if it had been his own ; he scourged the buyers and sellers out of the temple ; he foretold future events, and performed a great number of miracles. To imitate these, in the letter of them, the christian knows very well, is utterly impossible ; and to attempt it, absolutely unlawful. But though the matter of them is only proposed to his faith, the spirit of them, or the mind with which he did them, is also proposed to his imitation. His taking upon him the form of a servant, when he was in the form of God, and his giving himself a sacrifice unto God, of a sweet-smelling savour, though, for the matter of them, they are actions utterly incapable of imitation ; yet, even these high acts, in the true spirit of them, the christian will endeavour to transcribe, by a humble and condescending behaviour, and by walking in love, as Christ also loved him. As John the Baptist did go before the Messiah, in the spirit and power of Elias—though there was a great difference betwixt the individual actions of these two men—so he goes in the spirit and power of Christ, notwithstanding of

the huge distance that must always be between the Saviour and the saint.

He may, as his Lord and Master, be exposed to calumnies of every kind ; but at last his righteousness is brought forth as the light ; and even when he gains not the applause of the tongue, he wins the approbation of the heart. If any human thing could reclaim an ungodly sinner, it would be the conversation of him who imitates the life of Christ. Here, even the carnal man beholds the reality of religion brought home to his very senses, and the power of his lusts is assaulted with holy violence. As Christ is the visible image of the invisible God, so is this man the visible image of Christ, whom the world seeth no more, because “the heavens must contain him until the time of the restitution of all things.”

ON FAITH.

HAPPY the man who lives in mortal flesh, a life of faith upon the Son of God ! Though he dwells not in the gilded palace, he has the Most High for his habitation. Though his food be homely, he fares deliciously every day, upon the hidden manna. For, O that noble gift of God ! he in whose heart she dwells, is at once possessed of riches, and honours, and pleasures. Let others curiously dispute where she resides—in what faculty, in the understanding or the will, be it my exalted privilege to have her formed in my soul. The mountains may depart, the hills may be removed, the solid earth, with the surrounding heavens, may pass away ; but her foundations are everlasting. Sooner shall chaos come again, and God deny himself ; sooner shall the natural and the moral world be tossed into confusion, than that should fail by which she is supported. Great is that revenue of glory she brings unto her God, whether she trem-

bles at the threatening, or relies upon the promise, which he hath spoken in his holiness ; but most of all, when her main object, Christ, is before her eyes, as the Saviour from sin and wrath. When angels circle the throne of God with heavenly anthems, and yield the most unspotted obedience to the divine law, they glorify their Maker. But when by her, the guilty, self-condemned wretch, devolves upon the Lord, the burden of innumerable sins, and trusts for pardon of them all, this is glory to God in the highest. Though each obediential act is for the praise of God, and glorifies some one perfection of his nature, it is her's to render him the glory of them all.

As reason is superior to sense, so faith has the pre-eminence over reason. Be reason reverenced in matters that fall within her sphere ; but when she ventures into the deeps of God, the seas where faith has all the sovereignty ; when acting like herself, she lowers her sails. As sense would seem to tell us many things which reason contradicts, so faith will rectify the fond mistakes of reason : nor ought she to be dissatisfied. Faith only shuts the eye of reason, not picks it out. Nor these alone submit themselves before this noble grace ; even other her fellow-virtues do obeisance. Though, as a gracious quality, she stands upon a level with the rest, yet, as an instrument, she far excels in glory. She cannot boast, indeed, of her intrinsic worth, but of the post of honour which she fills by Heaven's appointment. She only is the general receiver of all the blessings of the gospel. By her we call Heaven's rich unfathomable mines our own. Because she humbleth herself, therefore hath God highly exalted her, and given her a name above every grace. Even charity herself is only greater in duration ; for she abideth when faith shall fail, as to its actings ; and die, like Moses, in the mount. Such is her humble nature, that even the jealous God, who will not give his glory to another, even he is found to give his glory unto her.

We are “ saved by faith ; we are justified by faith.” She faithfully returns the glory to her object. He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaid, because himself has said, “ Them that honour me I will honour.”

Though weak in herself, she is strong in the Lord. Her very weakness is her strength. She overcomes the devil, and the world, and the flesh. She binds up the arm of vengeance, and wields the arm of Omnipotence. The creature is not able to resist her, and the Creator will not. She says unto this mountain of difficulty, “ be thou removed, and cast into the sea.” She subdues kingdoms of lusts—quenches the violence of the fire of wrath—stops the mouth of the infernal lion, and escapes the edge of the sword of angry justice. When other graces quit the field, her own arm brings salvation. What shall I say more? “ If thou canst believe, all things are possible.”

Such is her strength. No wonder she is as bold as a lion, though timorous and distrustful of the creature. Confiding in the Lord, she is not afraid to venture into the holiest of all. She plays upon the hole of the asp, and thrusts her hand into the cockatrice’s den. “ O death where is thy sting?” she says with bold defiance. When presumptuous unbelievers are buried in the mighty waters, like the Egyptian host, she passes through the foaming waves triumphant. There is none like her in all the earth. Who is made without fear?

Though poor in herself, she makes many rich with the treasures of eternity. She is not afraid of the snow for her household ; for all her household are clothed in the scarlet robes of everlasting righteousness. Justly she is denominated, precious faith, when she interests us in precious promises, and applies unto the conscience precious blood.

There are, indeed, who think her blind and headlong ; yet is she a sharp-sighted grace. She comprehends the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.

Doctrines, which to the natural man are foolishness, and events that have no present existence, are realized by her. "She is the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for," though ever so remote in time or place. She is a kind of second sight, not merely to behold spectacles of horror, ghosts, and apparitions, but the King in his beauty, the land that is afar off, the things that are not seen, that are eternal.

It is true, her strength is to sit still, to look on, while the Lord himself doth wondrously. Like the lilies of the field, she toils not, neither does she spin. And certain bold blasphemers have talked of our most holy faith, as though she were no friend to works of righteousness. Impossible! absurd! for all good works, without exception, are her dear offspring, which issue from her pregnant womb. These are her children which praise her in the gates. And she may say in truth, with the apostle of the Gentiles, "I laboured more abundantly than all the other graces. Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: nay, we establish the law." The law as a covenant she makes not void: for she presents the perfect righteousness of Christ, which answers every legal charge. And though she strips the law, to all who have her, of the old covenant-form, she turns it to a rule of life, and supplies the believer with most effectual motives to all holy obedience. No work of God can be acceptably performed, till once you have believed. This is his prime command, and your most necessary duty. "For without faith it is impossible to please God," by any doing, or by any suffering. By faith Abraham offered up Isaac his first-born son; and by faith the children of Abraham put the knife unto the throat of their most favourite lusts.

But, ah! how few are there among the sons of men, who can lay claim to this invaluable grace! Though all her ways are pleasantness and peace, great is the opposition, by all the powers of corrupt nature,

unto this heavenly virtue. The bigotted Papist will rather undergo the drudgery of dismal superstition. The blinded Pagans will rather choose to imbrue their hands in the blood of their own offspring. The perverse Jews, descended from Abraham only according to the flesh, will rather yield their servile necks to the old galling yoke of antiquated ceremonies, than be at all induced to submit unto the righteousness of faith. They know not, nor will understand the nature of this exalted grace ; though, even in matters of this world, all know that trust is no uncommon thing. The husbandman, at the return of spring, is not afraid to sow in hope, when he commits the foodful grain into the furrows of the field : “For his God doth instruct him to discretion.” They who go down to the sea in ships repose such confidence in their floating vessels, as not to be afraid to trust themselves and all their worldly riches, unto the mercy of the boisterous waves. Why is it that so few will venture their eternal all, and their temporal felicity, unto the faithful word of promise ? The man who sows his grain in the furrow, is frequently disappointed of his hopes. And many a time the loaded vessel becomes a prey to the unpitying element of water. But, “he that believeth shall not be ashamed, world without end.”

ON FORGIVENESS OF SIN THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST'S DIVINE BLOOD.*

WHEN the guilt of innumerable evils stares me in the face, and angry conscience rouses from her slum-

* By the blood of Christ is frequently signified in scripture, the whole merit of his life and death, of his actions and sufferings, of his trials and graces : which satisfied God's justice, and magnified God's law ; which made propitiation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness.—*Hervey's Sermon on the Means of Safety.*

ber ; where shall I fly for refuge ? where shall I hide my head ? how lay the grizly spectres ? Ye favourite lusts, ye pleasing comforts, ye amusing recreations, in vain ye lend your aid. Let Cain, with his hands reeking in blood, betake himself to building cities ; let Saul attempt to find relief from his unquiet mind, in the charms of music, while David touched the pleasant harp ; let the drunkard seek for consolation in his flowing bowl and jolly companions ; the sullen ghosts refuse still to depart, when God calls, as in a solemn day, his terrors round about. Even vows and resolutions, prayers and tears, costly sacrifices, and solemn promises of future amendment, cannot recal the departed peace. Let Pagans, with horrid rites, seek reconciliation with their fancied gods, and peace unto their consciences ; let carnal Jews think to have matters adjusted by their ceremonial observances, being ignorant of the righteousness of God ; scourge yourselves to death, ye blinded Papists, and waste your carcases to ghastly skeletons, by withholding sleep from your eyes, and nourishment from your mouths ; travel to the remotest climes in weary pilgrimages ; it is all in vain. Fools that you are, to think you shall have peace by walking after the imagination of your own hearts. “The way of peace you have not known : there is no judgment in your goings.”

For, unto whom should we go but unto thee, O thou bleeding Saviour ! By thy blood hast thou made peace betwixt an offended Deity, and offending mortals. No cause of death was found in thee. For us thou drank the bitter cup. Far be it from us to substitute our pretended sincerity, our sorrowful repentance, or even the more noble grace of faith, in the room of thy satisfactory sufferings. O thou Prince of peace ! By thy seasonable interposition, his anger is turned away ; and now it is a righteous thing with God abundantly to pardon.

Happy, thrice happy, they, who come unto God by

him ; whose iniquity is pardoned, whose transgression is forgiven. Riches and honours, thrones, crowns, and sceptres, cannot greatly add unto their bliss ; pain and poverty, ignominy and reproach, cannot greatly diminish their happiness. It is true, O ye favourites of Heaven, the fact of sin cannot be taken away, the desert of sin cannot be removed ; yea, even its power and dominion shall not be totally destroyed in your present state of imperfection : however, there is no condemnation to you that are in Christ Jesus. No condemnation for your inherent corruption ; none for your actual transgressions ; none for your past, none for your future provocations. Chastised you may be with the rod of a Father, but not with the wounds of an enemy. "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth ?" What though your sins are many ? he multiplies to pardon. What though your afflictions are great ? there is no wrath in the portion of your cup. Though men should condemn you, God will not ; though devils accuse you, they shall not prevail. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth in judgment against thee, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord : and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

Fly, ye profane, who turn this grace of God into lasciviousness. Be awakened, ye presumptuous, who fondly dream your sins are pardoned, because ye have forgotten them, or because ye have felt some pangs of conviction, or because judgment is not speedily executed against your evil works. How can ye be pardoned, who have such slight thoughts of the God who bestows, the Saviour who procures it, the gospel which reveals it ? Ye that are ready to perish under the pressure of your iniquities, and ye that are of a heavy heart on account of your innumerable transgressions, here is a strong cordial, a refreshful draught from the wells of salvation. O drink, and remember your misery no more. "God was in Christ, recon-

ciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

Nor is it vain presumption in you to believe, that he in Christ is, at this present hour, pacified towards you for all that you have done. Though you have been wicked and unrighteous, though your sins have been of a crimson-dye, scarlet-coloured abominations; the blood of Jesus can wash out the deadly tincture, and make you white as finest wool, or virgin snow. Was it any difficulty for the Red Sea to cover with its waves the numerous host of Egypt, when Pharaoh, with his captains and common soldiers, chariots and horses, did sink unto the bottom as a stone? No more for the ocean of unbounded love to subdue all your iniquities; not the common soldiers only of ordinary provocations, but the most grizly and gigantic sins. In the presence of his exalted Majesty, your persons are but like the small dust of the balance; which is not considerable enough to sway the scale, and which the gentlest breath can blow away. Just as insignificant are your sins, in presence of his pardoning mercy.

Nor is it with a grudge and reluctance the liberal God bestows this perfect gift. Once he delighted in wrath, when it pleased him to bruise his beloved Son. That was his act, his strange act; his work, his strange work. Has he no pleasure in the death even of the guilty sinner, as himself declares; why then in the death, the cruel death, of the innocent Immanuel? The reason, the amazing reason is, because he delighted in mercy; in mercy to the human race. Therefore it pleased the Father to bruise him.

Glorify God for this mercy, ye pardoned ones. A distinguished blessing it is, which will not accent the song of angels, but of the redeemed from among the human race. Rejoice, not that your wealth is increased, that your circumstances are prosperous, but that your iniquity is pardoned. Fear the Lord and his goodness, and walk humbly with thy God.

Reject not the counsel of God against your own souls, you who have not yet fled for refuge unto this hope set before you, as you would not rob God of his glory, nor yourselves of peace. Will you neglect this great salvation? Will you say unto the Almighty, Depart from us; thy gifts be to thyself? Cursed shall ye be of the Lord, whose glory it is to pass over a transgression. The Lord Jesus Christ shall subscribe thy condemnation; and all the holy angels shout their applause. Amen, says the church militant; Amen, the church triumphant. "In returning and rest should you have been saved; in quietness and confidence should have been your rest: but you would not hear." Lo! there the men who made not the Lord their confidence; who robbed the Lord of his glory; and would not be beholden to him for the pardon of their iniquities. Behold the time of their visitation is come; and where shall they fly for help? If in this manner a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him? They would not take hold of his strength; they would not make peace; they would not consider any of his ways. See now the red right arm of vengeance takes hold of the glittering sword of justice. A sword; a sword is furbished with the oil of mercy, that was despised and affronted. See how he cleaves their reins asunder, and breaketh them with breach upon breach. Merciful Lord! it is a fearful thing to fall into thy hands; when thou art angry, the nations shall not be able to abide thy indignation. Make us wise unto salvation, to know the things that belong to our peace; and to fly to our strong-hold, while we are the prisoners of hope.

ON EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE FOR SIN.

LET us first begin with the thoughts of his heart, whose repentance is of the gospel-kind, and not to be

repented of. Of all evils, he is persuaded that sin is the greatest; and of all sinners, he is disposed to think that himself is the chiefest. He has obtained a view of that abominable thing, which before he condemned only in words; and sees it, in the gospel light, the heaviest of debts, the ugliest of stains, the weightiest of burdens, and the most deadly sting. Though no enormities of behaviour should tarnish his civil reputation among men, yet he sees that innumerable evils compass him about; that he is the man who has violated every precept of the law; the devil who has transgressed against a gracious God, by a thousand provoking iniquities. Having descended into his own breast, and contracted a more thorough acquaintance with the plagues of his own heart, he thinks less favourably of himself than he can possibly do of others, or they of him. He blesses and adores that sparing goodness that bore with him so long; nor filled him with the fruit of his own ways. Even his most holy duties, which some would call his righteousness, these he discerns to labour under so many imperfections, as to deserve the epithet of *filthy rags*. Nor are these self-abasing thoughts the mere remonstrances of natural conscience, which pass away like the morning cloud and early dew, or the dazzling flashes of the lightning, by which the benighted traveller is rather blinded than directed: far less must they be held the melancholy suggestions of wicked spirits, intending to exaggerate the guilt of his iniquities, and drive him to despair; but they are the fixed and sober sentiments of his soul, which the holy and blessed Spirit begets in his mind, when he strikes home the word of the law upon the conscience; but, chiefly, the persuasion of forgiveness which God operates on his heart with the most kindly influence. The knowledge of sin, which is by the law, may be productive of servile fear, and worldly sorrow; but it is the province of the gospel alone to paint it in such colours, as to make him ashamed, yea, even confound-

ed, because he does bear the reproach of his youth. O glorious grief! O noble pain! He is scorched with the beams of goodness; and waters with his tears, even the joyful pardon of his sins: not so much for the punishment they bring upon his own nature, as for the indignity done to the divine. He looks on thee, whom he has pierced, O bleeding Propitiation! and mourns, not so much for himself, as for thee; as the tender-hearted parent mourns, with unfeigned sorrow, when the eye-lids of an only son are closed in death, or the remains of a first-born are consigned over to the silent grave; or as the sorrowful Israelites, at Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo, wept for the good Josiah, when snatched away by an untimely death, in the sins of the people; and whilst he mourns, he tastes more true refreshment than worldly joy can give.

When such are the inmost sentiments of his soul; no wonder that out of the abundance of his heart, the most ample confessions of sin do flow from his tongue. Sometimes to men, whom he may have scandalized; but always to God, whom he has mainly offended. Far from covering his transgression, as Adam, he knows not where to find expressions black enough to set forth the extreme odiousness of his guilt. The powers of language fail him; and, with the most expressive silence, he lays his hand upon his mouth, his mouth in the dust, as being unable to declare either the vastness of the multitude of his iniquities, or the grievousness of their aggravation.

To the words of his mouth correspond the actions of his life; and the resolutions of his heart, now rent from sin, as well as for it; though once it was dear to him as the apple of his eye. Begone, deceitful lusts, he says: too long you have prevailed against me by your bewitching influence. Farewell, ye gilded snares, ye soul-destroyers, ye murderers of my God; dyed crimson with his blood. Welcome, thou glorious liberty, that frees me from the bondage of

corruption. Now, every the smallest degree of moral evil shows vile in his account ; he abstains from every appearance of it ; and carefully avoids the avenues of temptation. He does not merely relinquish one sin, that with the greater freedom he may indulge another, to which he is equally addicted. For sin, as such, is the object of his aversion. But chiefly, if any iniquity has prevailed against him more than another ; if any sin there be that easily besets him ; against this he levels his opposition, and cheerfully forgoes it. As the captive exile hastens to be loosed, and with a joyful heart forsakes his dungeon ; so he abandons, with unreluctant mind, what formerly he loved.

ON HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

HE that hungers and thirsts for righteousness, is a happy person ; who being convinced of the excellency, suitableness, and absolute necessity, both of a justifying righteousness before God, and an edifying righteousness before men, feels in his own heart, a sense of its want, and a desire of supply.

Though, in comparison of the wicked who are full of all unrighteousness, he is filled already with all goodness ; yet, when he compares his own attainments in religion, with the superior attainments of other saints, and especially with the just demands of the holy law, he looks upon himself as more brutish than any man ; and that he has not the knowledge of the holy. Once, indeed, before the commandment came, he was pure in his own eyes ; and as insensible of the universal pollution of his heart and life, as a beastly drunkard of his spots, though his face and garments are all besmeared with mire and clay. But when the fumes of liquor are dispelled, he awakes as out

of a sleep ; discerns himself to be a monster of pollution ; and his own clothes do abhor him. He now perceives that the former good opinion he had of himself, was owing to nothing else but gross inattention to the quality of his own heart, and impotence of thought. “ As when a hungry man dreameth, and behold, he eateth ; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty : or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh ; but he awaketh, and behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite.” “ Woes me,” he cries, “ I am undone : I am a man of unclean lips : and, wherewith shall I come before the Lord ?”

As hunger has reconciled men to the most incredible hardships ; and for a drink of water, kingdoms have been given away : (for hunger and thirst are vital appetites, which, if they are not supplied, will bring inevitable death) ; so is this spiritual and holy appetite supreme, prevalent, and triumphant over all other desires. What is gold to him that is perishing for hunger ? what is silver to him that is expiring for thirst ? And what are thy enjoyments, O vain world, to this hungry and thirsty creature ? The persecuted hart doth not more eagerly pant for the water-brook ; nor didst thou, O David, more ardently long for the water of the well of Bethlehem ; than the hungry and thirsty christian for his Saviour’s justifying righteousness, and sanctifying Spirit. He contents not himself with the hypocritical wish of Baalam, to die the death of the righteous ; nor with the lazy desires of the yawning sluggard, whose hands refuse to labour : but in the sweat of his brow, and exercise of christian diligence, does he eat his spiritual bread. Where the carcase is, there does he go, with willing steps, to the ordinances of Christ ; or rather to Christ himself in them, in whom all fulness dwells :

When it is his meat and drink to do the will of God ; how little he envies you of your dainties, that are the workers of iniquity ! His hungering and his thirsting is better than their feasting and carousing.

O blessed hunger! O desirable thirst! of which to die were a happiness to be envied. But he will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish. "Bread shall be given them, and water shall be sure." For thus saith the voice of inspiration, "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." But the wicked "shall wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied."

ON PURITY OF HEART.

PURITY of heart, is that holy disposition of the soul, whereby the christian, whose conscience is sprinkled with the clean water of Christ's atoning blood from the guilt of his iniquities, is inclined to hate and depart from the pollution of all sin in general, and in particular from the pollution of fleshly lusts.

First, Let us describe this holy disposition, as opposed to the predominant power of sin in general. The pure in heart is a person who cannot satisfy himself with a ceremonial purity, like that of the ancient Pharisees, which consisted only in "putting away the filth of the flesh;" nor with a federal purity, which lies in church-membership; nor with a civil purity, which is no more but a freedom from scandalous sins; and may be entirely owing to a virtuous education, and to restraining common grace. But the Holy Spirit of God has created in him a clean heart, and renewed a right spirit within him. He has seen the loathsome nature of that abominable thing which God's soul hates; of which the vomit of a dog, the poison of a serpent, and the putrefaction of a grave, are but faint emblems. He has seen, that all the faculties of his soul and body, all the periods of his life, and all his thoughts, his words, his actions, are so deeply stained with this moral contagion, that the pure eyes of God

cannot behold him : yea, he loathes himself in his own sight. He has seen, that this inbred corruption is so deeply ingrained in his nature, that all his own endeavours to wash out the deadly stain, would be as vain, as ineffectual, as to attempt, with common water, to wash out the scarlet dye, or the crimson tincture, from those garments that have thoroughly drunk in these vivid colours ; or, as if the Ethiopian should think, by this feeble means, to change his hue, or the leopard his spots. He has seen, that Jesus Christ, by his word, by his blood, and by his Spirit, is the only fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness. He that came by water and blood, has, by his word and Spirit, begotten in his heart a purifying faith, and a purifying hope ; and made him, as the King's daughter, all glorious within. It is true, he is not yet without all spots or wrinkles ; but only without the spots which are not the spots of God's children. As a fair day may have some clouds ; a fair face may have some freckles ; and a good field of corn may have some weeds : so the pure in heart may have some blemishes and imperfections. But as, by actual attainment, he is purged from the reigning pollution of sin ; so by ardent desire, and serious endeavours, he aspires after the perfection of pure and undefiled religion. He cannot boast that he has already attained it. Ah no ! But he wishes for it, he prays for it, and he labours after it.

But in a special manner, the pure in heart has in some good measure gained the mastery over those vile affections, and sensual indulgences of the flesh, of which it is a shame even to speak, and hardly safe even to reprove.—He remembers, that the pure eyes of God are always upon him ; that the pure Spirit of God inhabits the temple of his body ; that he is redeemed with the precious blood of a holy and undefiled Redeemer ; and that he is the expectant of an incorruptible, undefiled inheritance. He cleanses his

way, by taking heed thereto, according to the pure word of God.

He hates the thoughts of impurity. If they are darted into his mind, he disallows them, he groans under them, and suffers them not to lodge within him. He hates the words of impurity; the mire and dirt of filthiness, and foolish talking; which is as sure a token of an impure heart, as smoke rushing from the chimney is an indication of fire on the hearth. He hates the deeds of impurity: hates them, not only when perpetrated by others, but if himself has been formerly chargeable with them. He reflects not upon his past follies with gloriation, or with indifference and cold remorse; but with unfeigned sorrow and deep humiliation. He hates the occasions of impurity, and labours to avoid them. Conscious of the infirmity of his flesh, and the treachery of his heart, he endeavours to keep at a distance from the incentives to sensuality, makes a covenant with his eyes, and ventures not even to the utmost verge of his christian liberty.

His mind being first pure, is then peaceable; and he enjoys a holy serenity, which the impure sensualist can have no idea of. The doctrines of religion are plain and clear to his pure mind. He holds the mystery of faith in a pure conscience. His prayer being pure, is fervent and effectual. His hearing the word is profitable, because he lays aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness. All things are pure unto him, because he is pure himself; when to the defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure.—Would you know the sum of his happiness? You have it all declared in one word, by the teacher who came from God; to which nothing can be added, and after which we need say no more; “Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.”

ON HOLINESS, ITS NATURE, EXCELLENCE, AND NECESSITY.

O DIVINE holiness ! or, shall we call thee by the name of goodness, or righteousness, or uprightness ? with what praises shall we extol thee ! Thou art the brightest ornament of the universe ; more beautiful than the stars of light, or than the roses that strew the footsteps of the spring. The sun himself, can boast no glory in thy presence.

Thou art the darling attribute of the Deity ; the brightest pearl of JEHOVAH's crown. Without thee, an Ichabod were written on every other perfection.—Adieu to his wisdom ; farewell to his blessedness ; the absolute perfection of his nature is no more. Thou art that beauty of the Lord, which, above all, the saints of the Most High are desirous of beholding. In no perfection he more rejoices. By this he swears. With thee the angels swell their notes ; when, with covered feet, because of shame ; and faces vailed, because of reverence ; they surround his throne. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts," they cry ; "the whole earth is full of his glory. Omniscience is his piercing eye, omnipotence his powerful arm, and mercy is compared to his yearning bowels ; but holiness is like the face and visage of the Godhead.

Consult we the sacred oracles, what attribute is more conspicuous in every description of the Almighty !—Read we the volume of creation, he is holy in all his works : the volume of providence, he is righteous in all his ways, of mercy, and of judgment. Search and see, if there are not very distinguishing marks of the divine regard to holiness, in every providential way. "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him : but wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him." Witness, ye angels of darkness, and ye damned spirits, attest this truth : "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness ;" which God hath written

to your dreadful experience in fiery flames. O earth, wherefore dost thou groan, but because thou art the habitation of the ungodly ? And wherefore did the fiery deluge destroy your pleasant dwellings, ye cities of the plain ? Ye justified believers, whose iniquities are pardoned, whose transgression is forgiven, your Surety felt the effects of that hatred of sin which you should have experienced. Not all the vials of his vengeance poured on the heads of sinful men and angels, can half so loud proclaim the holiness of God, as the sufferings of the innocent and lovely Jesus ; who, therefore, is represented by an inspired writer, when testifying before-hand of the sufferings of Christ, to turn his meditation upon the holiness of him that inhabits the praises of Israel, when grappling with the dreadful vengeance due to our iniquities : “ My God, my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? why art thou so far from helping me ? ” Am I not the Son of thy love ? have I not done always the things that pleased thee ? why dost thou hide thy face ? why dost thou count me for an enemy, and deal with me as I were an egregious transgressor ? But what do I say ? I am the Surety of lost sinners, by my Father’s commission, by my own consent. My sufferings are just ; are necessary, from the holiness of thy nature ; and for this amazing transaction, thou shalt rejoice in the praises of Israel to all everlasting.

As every disobedience receives a just recompence of reward ; so his countenance doth behold the upright : he will bless the righteous, and compass them with his favour as with a shield.—O blessed Jesus, “ thou loved righteousness, and hated iniquity ; and God, even thy God, did for this cause anoint thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” And what are all the blessings of the followers of the Lamb, from the smallest crumb, to the ponderous crown of glory, but the reward of holiness ; the reward of grace to their implanted, of debt to their imputed, righteousness ? Yea, even in the place of pun-

ishment, where he will be favourable no more, the kind regards of God to goodness and morality will be demonstrated. Those who, though far from righteousness, were not so vicious as others, shall wear a lighter chain, than their fellows who have been guilty of more atrocious crimes.

Ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity? how long will ye turn this glory into shame? Lovely perfection, how much art thou despised in the world! How rarely to be found in the land of the living; whether we search for thee in city or in country, in the lofty palace, or in the humble cottage! How small the number of thy votaries! This man affects to be learned, that to be polite, and another to be witty; but few to be holy in all manner of conversation. Yet are thy pleasures pure, and without alloy. "Thy ways are pleasantness, and all thy paths are peace." How greatly they reproach thee, who draw thy picture in robes of melancholy, and looks of dark disquietude? Whether thou leadest thy favourites by the still waters of meditation, or bringest them to the house of prayer, or makest them lie down in the green pastures of ordinances; thy joys are joys indeed, which nothing earthly gives, or can destroy. Joys that will abide the test; nor flush the cheek of shame, nor render pale with guilt. Under thy kindly influence what pleasing exercise is afforded to every rational power! In those happy moments, the soul, and all that is within us, is stirred up to magnify and bless his holy name, and all our bones to say, "Who is like unto thee?" Nor can the countenance dissemble the heart-felt satisfaction. As the blaze of crackling thorns, differs from the light of the day, sent from the sun's bright orb; so differ worldly pleasures from divine. These leave behind no stings of fierce repentance; can greatly triumph over death, and ask the grave, "Where is thy victory?"

When thou withdrawest thy footsteps, the world is out of joint, and all its foundations are out of course.

Angels are turned into devils, and heaven is turned into hell. For the retrieving of thy injured honour, the Son of God came down from his exalted throne ; and, in the likeness of sinful flesh, stained the cross with his blood. For the advancement of thy interest, the word of God was written, and the exceeding great and precious promises are left unto us, that by these, being made partakers of the divine nature, we may cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. And that our souls may be adorned with thy glorious beauty, the Holy Ghost descends into our hearts.

By thee the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour ; and the beggar with whom thou dwellest, more honourable than the king upon the throne. When the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the inhabitants of the earth shall die, thou passest over into eternity; where God hath prepared for thee a glorious habitation. When time, and fair creation, are perhaps forgot, thou shalt beam forth in amiable effulgence, and become an eternal excellency.

ON PEACE OF CONSCIENCE.

THE happy soul, in whose heart this peace of God hath erected her throne, has firmly resolved, with Job, that holy sufferer, that his heart shall not reproach him, with any approven guile, so long as he lives. He goes not about to patch up a fatal peace betwixt his conscience and his lusts ; (a very common, dreadful mistake); but if iniquity be in his hand, he puts it far away. He loves the divine law with the most ardent affection ;—hearkens unto its commandments ;—walks according to its unerring rule ;—and walking in his uprightness, he enters into peace. Being pleasingly conscious of the integrity of his heart, he has this inward testimony of his rejoicing,

though he should hear the slanders of many. His conscience, like the wisdom that comes down from above, is first pure, then peaceable. For if even the imperfect morality of the Gentiles, was attended with much serenity and peace; much more shall righteousness and peace kiss each other in his renewed and spiritual mind, whose conscience is purged from dead works, to serve the living God.

But is his own defective righteousness the only rock on which he builds his peace? Then it were of all things the most precarious and uncertain. Alas! he cannot but be conscious, how small a claim he has to the character of innocence; and how he richly deserves, that the Almighty should write bitter things against him. His conscience is not seared as with a hot iron; but is endued with the most lively feeling of sin, and its desert. Full often he has the sentence of death in himself; and war arises against him. What does he, but betake himself unto that blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better, and more peaceful things, than that of Abel. When thus his heart is spoken to, in these most gentle accents, he knows that ravishing delight which an apostle styles "the answer of a good conscience." He beholds the crucified Redeemer, as making peace by the blood of his cross, when the chastisement of our peace was upon him. Blessed with this noble view, he sits down with great delight under the shadow of his righteousness imputed; the place where he makes his flocks to rest at noon. And, on the dove-like wings of faith, he flies far away, from the windy storm and tempest of an enraged conscience; and finds a quiet sanctuary, and safe retreat, in the clifts of the Rock of ages.

O happy man, whose heart is thus sprinkled from an evil conscience! From what a dreadful inmate is he delivered! infinitely worse than a contentious woman in a wide house. Whilst those miserable wretches, that are haunted by this most awful fury,

may fitly be compared, even in their jovial hours, and best estate, to those stately prisons, adorned in the front with all the decorations of the palace. You go in, and behold the abodes of misery, and the dismal dungeons of chained malefactors. He whose conscience thus speaks peace, has something within, that renders him superior to all adversity ; that charms all fear and sorrow. Even his cottage out-vies the palace. His coarse attire, outshines embroidered purple. An house full of sacrifices, where strife of conscience is, may not compare with his most homely food, though it should be no better than a dinner of green herbs. To him the sun shines with a more pleasing light, the birds sing with more melodious notes. Also he lies down, and his sleep shall be sweet. He is not afraid of terror by night ; of the pestilence, that walks in darkness ; or of destruction, that wasteth at noon-day. Though he, like good Josiah, should fall by the stroke of hostile sword, in the battle ; yet still his latter end is peace. Even the decisive hour of judgment, need not appal his heart ; because he shall be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.

ON JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST.

THIS excellent fruit of the Spirit may be viewed, either as that habitual cheerfulness of temper, which the sincere christian, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, studies to maintain upon all occasions ; or, it may be considered as importing in it, those ravishing sallies of pleasure and delight, which an apostle styles, “Joy unspeakable and full of glory ;” which are only indulged in some happy moments, and on special occasions. Let us begin with the first.

It is true, his heart is contrite ; and rivers of waters have been known to run down his eyes, in so much

that superficial spectators may take him for a man of sorrows ; a gloomy, melancholy creature. But could they look into his heart, they would find it full of the oil of gladness, even when his eyes are full of the tears of sorrow. The smile of God from without, of conscience from within, cannot fail to inspire him with such cheering tranquillity, as could not possibly result merely from the most excellent temperature of body, or the most easy circumstances of this world. He thankfully receives the gifts of providence ; tastes in them that the Lord is good : but chiefly he rejoices in the word of the truth of the gospel ; and that his name is written in heaven ; that God is his Father, Christ his Saviour, and heaven his inheritance. Be it so, that sometimes, through the agency of wicked and melancholy spirits without, and the too great prevalence of unbelief within, he gives too much way to a desponding frame ; he very well knows, that it is neither acceptable to God, glorifying to Christ, pleasing to the Spirit, honouring to the gospel, edifying to his neighbour, or beneficial to his own soul. Ask you the cordials that cheer his drooping spirits ? He meditates on God, and rejoices under the shadow of his wings. He reads his Bible, and finds it the joy of his heart. He mortifies every known sin. He pours out unto God the sorrows of his heart. His countenance is no more sad. For God is favourable unto him, and he will see his face with joy.

Such is the habitual serenity of mind he studies to maintain. Such are the means by which it is promoted. But in some blessed periods of his life ; some happy days which the Lord has made ; his joy, like a river swelled by impetuous rains, bursts all its banks, and carries all before it ; at once the joys, at once the sorrows of the world. When he obtains the most comfortable intimations of the divine favour ; of his interest in the Redeemer ; and of his title to the heavenly inheritance : O then, how his heart exults ! how his countenance looks cheerful ! how the voice

of melody is heard in his tabernacle ! Now every object is fit to fill his mind with highest rapture. Every perfection of the divine nature ; every purpose of his will ; every sentence of his word ; every operation of his hand ; every privilege of his covenant, whether in hand or hope, is a well of salvation, out of which he draws water with joy. The birds mend their notes, the sun his beams, the outgoings of the morning and evening are made more joyful. All sorrow is turned into joy before him. Every desert rejoices. Every wilderness blossoms as the rose. Every mountain of discouragement skips like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. Every cloud is stamped with a rainbow. Death loses his dart ; the grave lays aside her gloom ; and hell her chosen terrors.

Great is the joy of the bridegroom, when he is put in possession of his fair one ; of the mother, when her pangs are over, and a man-child is born into the world ; of the husbandman, when the labours of the year are finished, and his barns filled with plenty ; of the soldier, when a happy victory puts an end to the fatigues of a tedious campaign. But what is the joy of the bridegroom ? What is the joy of the child-bearing woman ? What is the joy of the harvest ? And what is the joy of them that find great spoil ? What are any, what are all these joys, to the joy of him that rejoices in the Lord, and is glad in the God of his salvation ? For who can tell what is included in the epithet of it given by a blessed apostle ? “Unspeakable, and full of glory.”—If such, O Lord, are the first fruits ; what must be the harvest of that light which is sown for the righteous, and gladness which is sown for the upright in heart ? If in this vale of tears, thy favourite ones so greatly rejoice ; who can conceive what is prepared for them, in that state when they shall come into thy beatific presence, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore ?

ON PLEASURE.

NOR is the christian's claim to pleasure less apparent. For, first, he only knows to taste the sweetness of his lawful comforts ; and to enjoy those satisfactions that are common to his neighbour and himself. Who is it that makes the best of the world ? The man of pleasure, who wallows in sensuality ? Alas ! he does not use the world, but abuses it. Fond as he seems, he but condemns his joys to death. His head is sick ; his heart is faint. Is it any wonder his flesh abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat ? Poor man ! he pines even in the midst of plenty. For though his nerves should be braced with strength, and health should wanton in his veins ; yet is his soul but sickly and consumptive. Hence weariness of time ; hence impatience of thought ; hence listless inability ; hence variable inconstancy, dark cares, and heaving sighs, fetched from the bottom of the heart. Though all surrounding objects should wear a face of pleasure, and seem fit to inspire every joy unto the heart ; it is all in vain. He desires to have, but he cannot obtain. He obtains, but his hopes are frustrated. Real enjoyment he is a stranger unto. For he tastes not that God is good, in his earthly delights ; and finds them but empty husks.—Not so he that enjoys God in his inferior enjoyments. To him the spring wears a more beauteous face, the sun shines with a more pleasing light, the tulip assumes a deeper dye, and the rose a more fragrant smell. I make no doubt but the poor beggar Lazarus in the parable, who lay at the gate of the proud and wealthy sinner, (whose name is buried in oblivion), might taste more exquisite delight, in his scanty crumbs, and in the healing tongues of the dogs, than the unpitying miser, in all his delicious fare.

But there are pleasures appropriated to the true christian ; joys which no stranger intermeddles with,

in the exercise of pure and undefiled religion ; which is not only a heightener of other delights, but is itself the greatest of any. Even as the sun imparts a brightness to every other object, and is himself the brightest of all. Whether he contemplates the delightful truths, and ravishing mysteries of the gospel ; the banquet of the mind, sweeter than all honey :— or practises spiritual duties towards his neighbour, or his God ; when he prays with fervent supplication, or praises with joyful lips, or hears in his lovely tabernacles what God the Lord will say, or relieves the indigent for his Redeemer's sake, and comforts the distressed :— or exercises christian graces ; be it faith, that is attended with joy unspeakable ; or love, that is its own reward, and the fulfilling of the law ; or hope, that anticipates the joys above, in blissful expectation, the surest anchor of the soul :— or mortifies fleshly lusts :— or resists temptations, triumphing over them with christian magnanimity :— or endures afflictions, with a becoming patience and cheerful resignation :— he tastes more solid pleasures than ever the sensualist could boast. Pleasures, that are true in their fruition, fully answering the most sanguine expectation. Pleasures, whose repetition does not cloy, and their continuance is not clogged with satiety. Pleasures, whose review fills not the cheek with blushing ; being honourable and glorious as the immortal soul, and pure as the joys of angels. Pleasures, whose consequences are not dangerous—to the body, by wasting its beauty, or preying on its health ;— to the reputation, by fixing upon it an indelible stain ;— to the estate, by making a shipwreck of it in the abhorred gulf of prodigality. Especially not dangerous to the soul, by darkening the mind, fattening the heart, searing the conscience, and exposing to eternal vengeance. Pleasures, whose duration is not short ; that can live in the winter of adversity, illuminate the valley of death, and pass into eternity.

He that is acquainted with them, may leave unto

the guilty adulterer his impure thoughts, his wanton looks, and his abominable works ; at which the midnight veils her face, and the morning blushes.—May leave unto the beastly drunkard his flowing bowl, his sparkling wine, his wo and sorrow, his babbling, his redness of eyes, his wounds without cause.—May leave unto the cursed swearer his bloody oaths; which neither gratify the sense, nor afford the least equivalent to countervail the damnation of the soul.—May leave to all the sons of sensuality, who count it pleasure to riot in the day time, their consumed flesh, their sunk reputation, their beggared fortune, their darkened understanding, their seared conscience. Sear'd, did I say ? See there that miserable wretch, extended on the bed of death, who lived in pleasure on the earth, and lulled his conscience asleep by a thousand opiates : but now, refreshed with her long slumber, she awakes ; and, as a giant refreshed with wine, she cries, she roars, she lifts up her voice like a trumpet. The astonished soul hears and trembles. While sin and sickness, a dreadful pair, join their forces, assaulting at once his body and his soul ; where, O where shall he flee for help ? He perceives his dreadful mistake, but cannot deliver his own soul. In all the agony of hopeless despair, he resigns his vital breath, and dies without wisdom.

If another of these brethren in iniquity remains, even to the last, a stranger to remorse ; yet poor is the alleviation of his misery, that he never lifts up his eyes, till he is in hell, being in torments. Ah, then ! what avails him those fleeting joys of sense, which, though of short continuance, must now be expiated with everlasting pain !

ON AFFLCTION AND CONSOLATION.

MANY are the afflictions of the righteous, and griefs on every side. Here how an eminent apostle cries,

“Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!” And another extraordinary saint, “I am the man that have seen affliction.” Into what deeps they are often plunged by sin, that worst of evils! Shall I speak of the sin that easily besets them; their predominant corruption, which can no more be vanquished, than the Israelites could drive out the Canaanites, dreadful with chariots of iron! What sighs it fetches from the bottom of their heart! Not to mention the trouble occasioned by scandalous outbreakings; which waste the conscience, and might be distressful even to an unrenewed mind, from which the saints themselves are not exempted; there are provocations, which others think of trifling nature, that wear a grisly aspect in the eyes of the tender-hearted christian. When manifestations are abused, opportunities neglected, admonitions despised, convictions stifled, mercies and judgments not improved, how do they walk mournfully before the Lord of hosts! It is true, the law cannot condemn them any more; yet still it can convince and reprove. When Moses was old, and stricken in years, his eye waxed not dim, his force was not abated. His law, though old, loses nothing of its severity. Sometimes they go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy of their salvation; and the Comforter that should relieve their souls is far away.

How frequently they are under the frowns of providence! and though nothing seems to befall them, but what is common unto men, the wormwood and the gall of their affliction is not obvious unto the eye of the world. Perhaps they are living too much under the power of some particular corruption; or some past iniquity is presented to them anew in all its horrid aggravations. Their flesh trembleth because of him, and they are afraid of his judgments. Comest thou peaceably, O Lord, in this thy visitation. “Art thou come to bring my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?” said the widow of Zarephath. “We

are verily guilty concerning our brother," said the distressed patriarchs. Nor is their adversary the devil for ordinary idle on such occasions of temptation. Intangled in the wilderness, like Israel; the devil, like Pharaoh, resolves to pursue them, and to revenge himself upon them.—But who can enumerate all their sorrows !

In such circumstances of distress, what healing hand shall pour the balm of peace ? To comfort the heart is more than to make a world, said the holy and tempted Luther. Consolation is a commodity of heaven, not to be imported but from the distant country of Immanuel. It is God alone, the God of peace, to whom almighty power belongeth, that can comfort the soul. He it is whom an inspired writer styles, "the God of all consolations," and "the God who comforteth them that are cast down." The Father is he who loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation. The Son is the consolation of Israel; the Prince of peace; and the true Noah, who comforts us concerning the work of our hands. For this end he became a man of sorrows, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him. But eminently the Holy Ghost is the Comforter, who, like the dove of Noah, flies with the olive branch of peace, to assure us the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone. Ministers are indeed the helpers of your joy ; but it is God who wipes off all tears from off all faces.

Whatsoever was written aforetime, was written for our instruction, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. For this the Old, and for this the New Testament was written, that, like two breasts of consolation, they might be sucked by the humble and contrite ones. But you are unable to lay hold upon a promise : lo ! there is an attribute of God, an office of Christ ; endeavour from thence to derive your consolation.

O ye heirs of the promise ! what strong consolation is allotted for you by your heavenly Father !

what divine peace, what unspeakable joy, what full assurance may you attain ! Even in your godly sorrow, you taste most sweet refreshment, while you can say of laughter, it is mad. Rivers of waters did run down the eyes of the sweet singer of Israel ; and the spirit of mourning is the spirit of consolation also. While here, you tread the vale of tears ; but with your rods, you have the hidden manna, which the world knoweth not of. Ye cannot, indeed, be assured of a perpetual triumph ; yet may your peace stand firm with God, while you have none from Satan, and in the world tribulation. But, O ye children of the King ! why should you be sad from day to day ? Will the King of heaven be pleased with you to sit in sack-cloth in his gate ? Is he an austere Master, who grudges at your welfare ? Your Head is now a man of joy, as once he was a man of sorrows ; and shall not ye rejoice with him, who are the body of Christ, and members in particular ? Grieve not the Holy Spirit by your dejected sorrow, who is the oil of gladness, and he who seals you to the day of redemption. Give not place to the devil, that melancholy spirit, who being himself condemned to feed on dust, sore envies you your hidden manna ; for we are not ignorant of his devices. What flaming christians might you be, who are now like the smoking flax ? What lofty cedars, who now only resemble the bruised reed, because you are not careful to serve the Lord with gladness ? for the joy of the Lord is your strength. “ Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous ; and again I say, rejoice.”

Ye afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, that walk in darkness, and have no light, consider how the husbandman, when he commits to the furrows of the field his grain, the hopes of the ensuing year ; he waiteth long, and hath great patience for it, till he receive the early and the latter rain. So, just so, “ light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.”

Some comfort themselves with their lusts ; some with their worldly possessions ; the more refined moralists, with their duties. But, O ye sons of men ! how long will ye love vanities ? How soon will your springs be dried up, that are not supplied from the Fountain of living waters ? As the flower of the grass, your comforts shall perish ; and as the gourd of Jonah shall they fade away, in the time of your greatest need. Especially ye who think to spin out of your bowels, a robe of righteousness to screen you from the angry vengeance of God, and pacify your consciences with duties of your own, but despise the everlasting righteousness of the Redeemer, know that your hope shall be like the spider's web. Whereas, the real christian, like the lilies of the field, he toils not, he spins not ; yet far outshines Solomon in all his glory ; far excels the busy legalist, when vested with his most pompous performances.

Woe to you, rich men, who trust in your hoarded heaps, for ye have received your consolation. All ye that rejoice in iniquity, let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Alas ! your flashy mirth will never bid you smile at death, nor turn your eye undaunted on the grave. And what will you do in the awful judgment, when God will laugh at your calamity, and the merciful Mediator afford you no relief ? " Because, when I called, ye refused ; and when I stretched out my hands, ye would not regard." Wherewith shall we comfort you, who are strangers to the consolation of Israel ? This is the children's bread, and dogs must not partake. A precious oil it is, no vessel but the contrite heart can hold. We will not put this new wine into old bottles, but into new bottles, that both may be preserved.

When others take up the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ, O heavenly word, be thou my consolation. And though weeping may endure for a night, yet with the rising day, my joy re-

turns—a joy the world gives not, nor takes away. When every pleasurable enjoyment besides, shall languish and expire, this passes over into eternity, greatly triumphant over death and the grave. No more shall the countenance be sad, nor the eye dim with tears, when the ransomed of the Lord shall obtain joy and gladness, and sighing and sorrowing shall flee away.

ON LOOKING AT THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT SEEN.

HE that looks at the things that are not seen, is a person who is endowed with a blessed and holy second sight, by which he is distinguished from other men, and sees, not mournful objects, as coffins and corpses, but such objects as are most cheering and delightful. The eyes of his understanding are enlightened by the Holy Ghost, to know the things that the natural man perceiveth not—the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Though the good and the bad things of this vain world are always pressing on his senses, he is not chiefly influenced by them, as though they were the principal things. For the things above, and the things that are eternal, he judges to be no less real, for their being invisible and distant; and unspeakably the most important of all other things. He firmly believes, frequently thinks of, highly esteems, ardently desires, earnestly expects, and diligently labours after the enjoyment of them. He bestows the cream of his thoughts in meditating upon them; and talks about them, not by constraint, when he is not able to avoid the discourse, but naturally, and with a ready mind.

Some have thought him incapable of paying a sufficient attention to the necessary affairs of the world, as though one could not be fervent in spirit, without being slothful in business. But this is a vile slander.

For, moderate industry is not a diversion from serious religion, but a singular help unto it: and the spiritual man, who holds the plough, or handles the axe, is, even in these common actions, more holy than the carnal man in his most solemn devotions.

He esteems a man much more because he is gracious, than because he is rich; and can never be induced to think, that proud sinners are happy, though they be elevated to the very summit of fortune. He would much rather choose to see his children deeply tinctured with the principles of true religion, than put in a condition to make a figure in this world. If he is in adversity, he derives not his comfort from earthly enjoyments, but eternal things. These are the hills to which he lifts his eyes, and from whence cometh his aid. If he is in prosperity, his earthly blessings are not the chief source of his joy and happiness; but in this he rejoices, that his name is written in heaven.

As he who ascends a high mountain, and from its top surveys the plains below, will think large fields but inconsiderable spots of land; so he who is set on these high places of eternity, and converses much with everlasting things, will regard, in a very diminutive light, the most important businesses of this transitory life. His mind acquires a sublime turn, and an elevated way of thinking, not to be easily taken with slight and trifling vanities.

By this blessed temper of mind, he is habitually disposed to perform spiritual duties; the frown is struck from the brow of death—his mind is strongly fortified against afflictions of every sort; and the edge of all temptations is most effectually blunted. Having obtained a view of that ineffably glorious prize of the high calling of God, he cannot possibly think any pains too great to reach it. For this he can instantly serve God day and night. For this he can both labour and suffer reproach, take joyfully the spoiling of his goods, and sometimes even resign his breath in

cruel flames. In vain does this present world spread her blandishments, and arm her face with frowns, to shake his steady purpose, who looks not at the things that are seen. What though the advantages of the world are present, and the advantages of religion are, in great measure, future ; yet this wise and enlightened soul is at no loss which he should prefer. For, an eternal advantage, that will certainly come, is far to be preferred to a present one, that is of a short duration. O faith ! it is thine to realize and render present, the things that are invisible to the corporeal eye, whether by reason of the nature of the things themselves, or by reason of their distance from us in time and place. By thee inspired, we can choose the sharpest afflictions, before the most poignant pleasures, and esteem the most grievous reproaches, greater riches than the peculiar treasure of most wealthy kings.

ON CHRISTIAN HOPE.

LET us attend first unto those glorious objects at which she throws a wishful eye. These are not the fading honours, the transitory pleasures, or the uncertain riches of this world ; but what infinitely excels them all, the things that are not seen, that are eternal. All that is contained in the vast mines of the promise, and in the bowels of the Redeemer's righteousness, which is like the great mountains ; all that is comprehended under that most emphatical word, *salvation* ; final perseverance in grace here, and everlasting joys hereafter, are the blessings she teaches the Christian to wait for. Though surrounded with formidable enemies, he is persuaded they shall not separate him from the love of Christ ; and checks every distrustful thought. "Hope thou in God, my soul," he says, "for I shall yet praise him." If he takes a solitary

walk in the church-yard, and views the silent graves, and mouldering bones ; and considering his latter end, recollects how soon even his bones shall be dry, and for his part he shall be cut off ; though headlong sense, and unenlightened reason, would suggest, that man lieth down, and awaketh not again ; though there is hope of a tree when it is cut down ; he sees with joyful heart, the prisoners of the earth emerging from their long confinement, and with joyful lips, he utters that most blissful expectation, “ thou wilt shew the path of life ; in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.”

Whilst he thus anticipates the joys above, his towering hopes are not supported by the sand. For God, and Christ, and every smiling promise, is his foundation. But chiefly, he is begotten again to this lively hope, by thy resurrection, blessed Jesus. Thou art the rock on which he casts this anchor. And shall I call the faithful promises of the word, the cables that secure it ! He shuns alike the abhorred gulf of despair, and the dangerous rock of presumption, infamous for shipwrecks. And by the gentle breathings of the heavenly wind, he is wafted at length into the fair havens of life and immortality.

What storms of adversity will he not defy, having this hope as an anchor of the soul ? What fight of afflictions can he not endure, defended by this impenetrable helmet ? whilst he poises the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, against his light and momentary sufferings ; against the spoiling of his goods, the better and enduring substance ? If, for the hope of Israel, he is bound in a chain, he glories in his fetters. Amid the ocean of eternal delights, sunk are the sorrows of the world ; as in a sea of honey, a drop of vinegar is swallowed up and lost.

Animated by this same grace, he stirs up himself in every duty ; and is not slothful in the business of his salvation. Whilst he hopes for thy salvation, O God ! he does thy commandments. The bringing in

of this best hope, strengthens his weak hands, and confirms his feeble knees.

How greatly he despairs to wallow in the puddle of sin ! The darts of temptation fall ineffectual to the ground. In danger he is courageous ; in sorrow he is moderate ; in duty he is diligent ; in tribulation he is patient ; and even in death he smiles.

ON THE VAIN HOPES OF THE HYPOCRITE.

O THE vain and presumptuous hopes of sinners ! You inherit the kingdom of heaven ! You ascend into the hill of the Lord ! You enter into the heavenly Canaan, and inherit his holy mountain ! Who are unrighteous—who are of an Egyptian nature, hankering after the onions and the garlic,—whose hands are not clean,—whose hearts are not pure,—who are alienated from the divine life,—who are drenched in sensuality,—who are estranged from the womb,—who say to the Almighty, depart from us,—whose carnal minds are enmity against God,—never formed for himself,—never made meet to be partakers of the undefiled inheritance,—never wrought for this self-same thing. Go seek a Mahometan paradise. Christianity affords you no ground of hope. These pure regions of blessedness will eternally exclude you from their blessed abodes. Ye grovelling sons of earth, who never deemed yourselves strangers and pilgrims here,—who embrace the dunghill of this world as your portion, how can the eternal Majesty but be ashamed to call himself your God ? How can his heart be towards you ? How can he make you cleave unto himself, as the girdle to the loins of a man ? Go reconcile light with darkness. Bid fire and water meet in mutual embraces. Then may righteousness and unrighteousness have fellowship together : then may Christ and

Belial agree. Then may evil dwell with God, and the foolish stand in his presence.

Make the absurd and impossible supposition, that the eternal Sovereign should reverse his high decree; should belie his faithful word, and rescind his threatening ; or, which is all one thing, should set open unto you the doors of paradise, and admit you into that place of blessedness, yet where could you fly from the guilt of your consciences ? where from the carnality of your heart !

Where from the guilt of your consciences ? If you ascend to heaven, lo ! it is there, as well as though you made your bed in hell. How couldst thou hold up thy ashamed countenance towards his awful face ? Would not his pure eyes flash confusion upon you, and strike you through with a dart, when you touched this mountain of his holiness ?

But though thy conscience, O wicked man, were supposed to be as secure then, as now it is, still happiness is far removed from thee ; for, who will reconcile thy carnal heart to the spirituality of heavenly joys ?

O ye delightful mansions of the blessed, how would your charms be lost on him, whose soul within him were full of sin, the abomination that maketh desolate !

What consolation could he find in the society of the heavenly inhabitants ? There are the holy angels ; there are the spirits of the just, escaped from a sinful and vain world ; there are the general assembly and church of the first-born. You never loved them here ; you despised and hated them, when their holiness was but imperfect ; you hated and despised them for the sake of their holiness. How can you take pleasure in their company, when they are perfectly like HIM ?

Nor would the employment of the redeemed conduce one whit more to thy happiness, O unsanctified soul ! How couldst thou dwell with ever new delight in the contemplation of that God who was not in all

thy thoughts?—of that Redeemer who was despised and rejected by thee?—of these awful mysteries, which were never revealed unto thee in their native sweetness and glory? How couldst thou join in the song of salvation, when the voice of melody was never heard in thy dwelling, and praise in thy lips was never comely?

Be merciful, O God, to miserable sinners! Rouse them from their slumber. Awaken them from their delirious dreams of happiness hereafter, without a present participation of thy divine nature. O gracious God, enlighten their eyes; convince them of their fond delusion, before thou vindicate thy own holiness and truth with fiery indignation. For “thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee; the foolish shall not stand in thy sight. Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou wilt destroy them that speak leasing. Thou, Lord, will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.”

THE CHARACTER OF A HYPOCRITE.

HE is a pretender to those good qualifications, of which he is really destitute, and a dissembler of those vices which he secretly practises. He is that in the church which a knave is in the state. The one is not fit for civil society, nor the other for christian communion. Were he to appear in his real colours, men would clap their hands at him, and hiss him out of his place. Therefore he paints his face, like Jezebel, with the varnish of goodly words, of sanctified looks, of actions seemingly benevolent and devout. He prays with great fluency of expression; you would think him an angel for fervency and rapture; but it is only in the presence of others; and though his words are flaming, his heart is ice. He gives alms indeed, but must always take witnesses upon it. He

is very punctual in going to church, where he seats himself in some remarkable corner, in order to attract all eyes upon himself. He seems to be all attention and composure : he lifts up his hands and eyes in a religious manner, or covers his face, or heaves a sigh, or sends forth a groan. O how mightily he is impressed with the sermon, if you believe his face ; while, in the meanwhile, he is indulging his lusts, and his heart going out after his covetousness !

When he fasts, he assumes a sorrowful air, and a disfigured face ; and is grieved for sin as much as the bulrush when it hangs the head. When he is in religious company, he talks of his experience, the plagues of his heart, and complains of the great decay of religion in the day. He is a most uncharitable censurer of others, while he practises far greater villanies himself.

All his religion, at least the greatest part of it, is left behind him in the temple, or in the street ; for he neither carries it to his family, nor to his closet. He is like the rainbow, whose glorious colours are reflected from a dark vapour, only when the sun shines. Notwithstanding his ostentation, he hates the light ; and refuses to come into it, except when his mask is on. He cannot endure a minister who rakes into his conscience, nor a christian friend who gives him faithful admonition. When he is reproved for any miscarriage, he says to the reprobate, it is none of your business, meddle with your own matters. Were it not for his eager desire of applause from men, and the roaring of his angry conscience, he would bid adieu to all the duties of religion, whether private or public.

His most admired and pompous services can find no acceptance with God ; and his most fervent devotions are no more regarded, than if they were the howlings of a dog. What is all his religion but like the kiss of Judas, or the bowing of the knee by the crucifiers of the Lord of glory ? He makes God an idol, and considers the creature like a deity, whom he

worships and serves more than the Creator : he is like a grave, which may be covered by a white sepulchral stone of polished marble, and engraven with some lying panegyric for an epitaph ; but within, a ghastly corpse presents itself to your eye, or noisome stench offends the nostril.

The longer you grow in his acquaintance, your respect for him will lessen, and at length, perhaps, will turn to a just hatred and aversion ; for he is sometimes discerned and despised by men, but always by God.

THE CHARACTER OF A SINCERE CHRISTIAN.

HE is one who needs not affect to appear in a character foreign to himself, nor to conceal that character which really agrees to him. He studies to approve himself to God, and does not value himself upon the applause of men. Fame and reputation is a thing he will not court, but will deserve it : he will not hunt after it, but it will follow him through the deepest shades : his real glory is not obvious to any eye, but the penetrating eye of God, who delights in him, approves him, and commends him : when he prays, he pours out his heart ; when he praises, he makes melody in his heart unto the Lord ; and his heart is bigger than his words : he is not an enemy to public religion ; but secret devotion is an essential part of his happiness. He not only mourns over those sins which himself has committed, as Ahab did ; but he laments for the sins of others, of which he is personally innocent ; like Christ, who wept over the sins of Jerusalem, though himself knew no sin. He indeed regards every the smallest precept of the law ; but when he tithes mint, anise, and cummin, he neglects not the weightier matters. He is not for dividing religion, like the pretended mother of the

child, who thereby evidenced that she had no interest in the babe. Though he has the remainder of sin in him, hypocrisy not excepted, he has not a heart and a heart, nor is he a monster with a double mind: his religion is not the fulsome compliments of a well-bred gentleman, who is your humble servant, glad of your welfare, and extremely sorry for your slightest inconvenience, but like the tender affection of an ingenuous friend.

As the beauty of Absalom surpassed the daubings of Jezebel, so does the holiness of the sincere christian excel the painting of the hypocrite. He is not like a smoky chimney with a marble frontispiece; nor like a rotten grave with a marble monument; but like a mountain replete with precious ore, while, perhaps, the surface is barren and unsightly. He does not want to bring down the word of God to his private inclinations; but is desirous of bringing his private inclinations to be judged by the law and the testimony. He is not ashamed to own that he was once in an error; nor afraid to know the worst about himself; but, on the contrary, it is the language of his heart, "what I know not, teach thou me."

Though he is far from ostentation on the one hand, and prudent enough not to blaze abroad his secret faults on the other, yet he loves to come into the light, and needs not be ashamed, though all the world were a sun. Though he should not, with Balaam, build seven altars, and offer up a bullock and a ram on every one; but, like Abraham, content himself with one altar, and a single victim; yet is his sacrifice accepted. His turtle-doves and young pigeons are no less grateful than thousands of rams. Silk and purple, and even goat's hair, for the service of the sanctuary, are not despised of the Lord, when his circumstances cannot afford precious stones and gold. His inward groans, his secret sighs, are a powerful rhetoric, effectual and fervent: he puts their tears in a bottle; and a cup of cold water given to a thirsty

disciple shall not lose its reward : his rejoicing is the testimony of his conscience when he hears the scorings of the people : death, with all his grisly features, cannot stare him out of countenance, and he needs not be afraid in the awful judgment ; though, like Josiah, he should die in battle, yet he comes to his grave in peace.

ON CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE.

THERE is a prudence which is so essential to the being of a christian, that it is but another name for that faith by which he lives. He that is wise unto salvation ; he that knows thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent ; he that is instructed in the kingdom of heaven, to understand the truths he should believe, the duties he should practise, and the happiness he should pursue ; he—he is a prudent man, though he should be neither a wise economist in matters of this world, a plodding statesman, nor a cunning artificer ; for his God doth instruct him to discretion ; and though a fool in his own and others' opinion, he errs not in the way of holiness.

But there is a prudence of a much narrower kind, which, if it be not essential, is highly ornamental to the christian in the whole tenor of his life. By this he does not so much avoid immoralities, as improprieties of behaviour, which, though they should not make him guilty in the eye of God, would, notwithstanding, render him contemptible among men. In him the wisdom of the serpent is happily married with the simplicity of the dove ; whilst he defends himself from the injuries of the world, without incurring the guilt of being himself injurious.

There is not perhaps any one description that comprehends more of his real character than this, that

"his heart discerns both time and judgment." It is a maxim worthy to drop from the pen of the wisest of all men, that "for every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven." This excellent precept he well understands, as knowing, that let an action be ever so good, if it is misplaced, and thrown out of its due order, it gathers an awkwardness, and exposes to contempt.

He knows when to be serious, and when to be cheerful ; when to be zealous, and when to be moderate ; when to be deliberate, and when to be hasty ; when to be singular, and when to be conformed; when to speak, and when to refrain from speaking ; when to reprove, and when to commend ; when to give, and when to withhold ; and never can, with a good grace, become the object of contempt and derision.

For, by this prudent timing of every word and action, he appears to every impartial spectator serious, but not dumpish ;—cheerful, yet not frothy ;—zealous, yet not fiery ;—moderate, but not lax ;—deliberate, but not lazy ;—active, but not rash ;—singular, but not nice ;—courteous, but not cringing ;—noble, but not proud ;—frugal, but not covetous ;—devout, but not superstitious ;—resigned, but not negligent ;—fixed, but not dogmatical ;—liberal, but not prodigal. He speaks, but he is not talkative. He keeps silence, but he is not sullen. He reproves, but he breaks not the head. He commends, but he puffs not up. His words are few, but they are as goads, and as nails fastened in a sure place. Sometimes indeed he may be betrayed into an improper action, when he trusts too much to his own understanding, or gives the reins to his unruly passions ; than which there are no greater adversaries to prudence of every kind. But he improves even by his blunders, whilst with shame he recollects them, and resolves against the like failures in time coming. He searches the scriptures, which can give even to the young man knowledge and discretion. He mortifies his lusts,

and moderates his passions. He maintains a life of communion with God. Therefore shall he guide his affairs with discretion unto the end: therefore shall he deal prudently; he shall be extolled, and be very high. Good men shall rejoice to see none occasion of stumbling in him: and they that desire occasion, shall be ashamed, because it is cut off. Go thou and do likewise.

ON CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE.

THE diligent christian is a person who looks upon time as the most invaluable of all treasures, and upon the salvation of his soul, as the most interesting business of life. He assigns not the dregs of his time to the exercises of devotion while the flower of it is dedicated unto the pursuit of worldly employments; but he serves God with the best he can afford. He does not say unto the duties of religion, as the partial christians of the apostle James said to the poor man in vile raiment, when he came into their assembly, "Stand ye there, or sit here, under my footstool;" while the duties of his civil calling are invited, with the man that wears the gold ring, and gay clothing, to sit in a good place. He seeks first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and other things can only claim a secondary care. Like Solomon, he first builds the house of God, and then his own house. As the shekel of the sanctuary was double to the common shekel; so in the matters of eternity, he doubles the diligence that he uses in the matters of time. Religion is not his bye-work, nor a matter of mere amusement, which he may, or may not attend unto, as he pleases. He knows that in all labour there is profit; and that neither the blessings of providence, nor grace, will fall into the mouth of the yawning sluggard.

Dost thou not see, O my soul! with what incessant toil the children of men acquire their worldly riches? what dangers they defy? what difficulties they surmount? with what laborious efforts they hew out to themselves broken cisterns, that can hold no water? They put forth their hand upon the rock, and overturn the very mountains. They are not afraid of killing damps, nor overflowing floods, that their eye may see every precious thing. And shall I not much more give diligence, to obtain the prize of my high calling, which cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, the precious onyx, or the sapphire? How is he filled with conscious shame at such a thought! that worldly vanities appear with more attractive charms in the eyes of worldly men, than the things above in his eyes; and should inspire them with greater ardour to obtain them!—But especially, when he considers the shame, the pain, the sorrow, and the unknown agonies of the Redeemer, to compass our salvation; he can no more regard it as a matter of indifference, that cost the Saviour so dear. Did he think my salvation worthy of so much blood? and shall I think it worthy of no more but a few languid endeavours, slothful wishes, lazy desires? He looks upon no time as incapable of religious improvement. Even the seasons of worldly avocations are sometimes blessed seasons of intercourse with Heaven. As the image of Cæsar was instamped upon the smallest coin, as well as the greatest; so the beauty of the Lord his God is stamped upon the minutest actions of life, and establishes every work of his hand.

Holiness, like a beautiful and shining varnish, spread over the colourings of a picture, imparts a heavenly lustre to his whole conversation. Instead of contriving excuses to blunt the edge of the precept, and still the clamours of his own conscience, when called to any necessary duty, he opens his mouth, and pants for God's commandments. He leaps upon the mountains, and skips over the hills of

difficulty. He esteems every day lost in which he has done nothing for the glory of God, the edification of his neighbour, or his own salvation. The time which is employed by others in vain jangling, and the canvassing of idle controversies, he bestows upon the mortifying of his earthly affections, and holding fellowship with God. When engaged in prayer or any holy duty, he puts a holy constraint upon the backward flesh ; he rallies his wandering thoughts, awakens his drowsy powers, and takes, as it were by violence, the kingdom of heaven. He considers no attainment of religion as fit to be rested in ; and, in the matters of salvation, he makes exception to the rule, “Be content with such things as you have.”

When old age shall clothe his head in snow, and furrow his face with wrinkles, the retrospect of his past life will not resemble a barren and unsightly desert, but a cultivated garden. He is a credit to the religion he professes ; and, in some good measure, by his edifying life, and confirming conversation, supplies the want of miracles. But though he works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, it is not by his own strength ; nor does he look upon his diligence, however great, as meritorious of eternal life ; for, as Christ hath wrought all his works for him ; so it is God that worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

ON SLOTHFULNESS ; OR, THE CHRISTIAN STIRRED UP TO DILIGENCE AND ACTIVITY.

OPEN thy drowsy eyes, thou yawning sluggard spring from thy lazy couch, on which thou turnest like the creaking door upon the hinges. Is eternity nothing ? Are heavenly joys of such a trifling nature ; are hellish torments so easy to be endured ; that faint endeavours, languid resolutions, empty de-

sires, are a sufficient method to lay hold upon the one, and to avoid the other?

See with what unwearyed diligence the children of this world prosecute their temporary interests. They rise up early, they sit up late, they eat the bread of sorrow. For what? To acquire either the necessaries, or the superfluities, of this present transitory life; whether their taste be riches, or honour, or pleasure. What hardships will the sea-faring man refuse to undergo, upon the howling waste of waters, animated with the prospect of heaping up silver as the dust? They are not deterred from their steady purpose, though you should represent unto them, in liveliest images, the chosen terrors of the great deep; though you should remind them of the roaring tempest, the treacherous rock, or latent quicksands, dreadful to ships, they are not discouraged. They despise the southern heat, and northern cold. They regard not the labours of the day, nor the watchings of the night.

Shall we mention, next, the incredible fatigues of the campaign, while the soldier pursues his way to fame and glory, through troops of hostile spears, regardless of the fierce countenances of the enemy, the flashing of the swords, and the thunder of the roaring engines, which spread desolation all before them?—With what amazing activity, with what intense application, are the intrigues of statesmen planned and executed; while they seek for glory, honour, and immortality! Alas! shall these be wiser in their generation, in matters of time, than the professed children of light in matters of eternity?

But dart your eyes down to the centre, to those accursed spirits who dwell in darkness, and are punished with an everlasting destruction; (for even an enemy may thus befriend us with instruction): with what vigilance they work in the children of disobedience! with what diligence they exert themselves in dishonouring of God, in destruction of men, while they traverse the earth in quest of mischief, as the

hungry lion paces the desert round and round, if haply he can find a beast of chace, whom he may devour !

Throw next your eyes towards these happy regions where angels reside, and where the spirits of the just made perfect eternally reap the fruits of their Redeemer's purchase. With alacrity they do his will ! Swift as the lightning's glimpse they run, they fly. Hear how they swell the note in the triumphant song of Moses and the Lamb ! How nimbly they touch the vocal strings ! Both day and night they persevere in their exalted exercise, while they serve him, with utmost ardour, in the temple of the skies.

But though the rational creation were dumb, the inanimate creation would cry out against the slothful christian. The golden sun rejoices as a strong man to run a race, and calls you to run the race that is set. The silver moon witnesses against you in the heavens, as she walks in brightness amidst the sparkling stars. All the rivers run into the sea, which constantly either ebbs or flows, but never stagnates in lazy slumbers, never fails to wash the shore with his returning tide.

The God whom we serve is the living God. Away then with deadness and formality. "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Creator of all the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary," in constantly upholding, by his all-powerful word, this universal frame of nature ? The reins of government, whether in the natural or moral world, he never drops from his hand ; but, by his powerful energy, directs their various motions, in such mysterious sort as his eternal wisdom did contrive. Shall man, that noble creature, the peculiar glory of whose nature is to wear the divine resemblance, to be the very image of his Maker, shall he so far degenerate from his all perfect pattern, as to give up himself to lazy torpor, and shameful inactivity ?

All beings in the circle of existence, from the

high Creator unto the meanest creature, with one harmonious voice, awake thee from thy slumber. Go to the ant, the little, the despicable, and yet laborious ant; consider her ways, O thou sluggard! her painful, prudent ways; consider of them, and be wise.

Ye have the prophets and the apostles of the Lord for your ensamples. The noble company of martyrs, and all the sanctified ones who have gone before you, who have finished their course, who have fought the good fight, who have kept the faith; and now, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. But a greater than any saint, or apostle, prophet, or martyr is here. For, consider the Apostle and High Priest of your profession, Christ Jesus; who not only inculcated by his doctrine an holy fervour and alacrity in matters of eternity, but exemplified it in his life. Arduous was his work, and difficult was his undertaking; yet he did not fail, nor was discouraged, till he could say, "It is finished." Had he been slothful, then wo had been to us, here and hereafter. He went about doing good in the days of his humiliation. He suffered no day to pass, in which he did not accomplish some part of the work which the Father gave him to do. Retired upon the solitary mountain, he prayed whole nights away. How fervently he addressed the throne of his Father! How pathetically he declared the name of God unto his brethren, while the listening crowds were lost in deep attention!

ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

O TIME, how short is thy continuance! how uncertain thy stay!

Indeed, if we compare thee with the transitory fashions of this world, thy face is full of wrinkles, and thou art the oldest of things; yet art thou but an infant in comparison of eternity past; yet art thou but

a moment in comparison of eternity to come. Not many thousand years ago, the voice of the Almighty gave thee birth, when he spake, and it was done ; he commanded, and it stood fast.—Yet a little while, the voice of the archangel, and the last trumpet's sound shall give thee death, and thou shalt be no more. But, O how scanty is the share we have even in thy short duration ! To us thou dwindlest down to three-score years and ten ; nor can we assure ourselves even of this little span.

While we, poor dreaming mortals, supinely yawn on our beds of sloth, forgetful of the difficult and necessary work of our salvation ; thou holdest on thy unrelenting career, swifter than the weaver's shuttle, the nimble arrow, or the eagle that hasteth to her prey.

None ever heard the tread of thy nimble feet, nor the sounding of thy wings. Though men have given thee a tongue, and thou speakest not once or twice, but twenty times in a day ; yet man perceiveth it not. We never remember, that the striking of the clock is the knell of our departed hours ; and we say, with the sluggard, “ Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.”

Could we recal thy steps, could we retrieve thy loss, perhaps our folly might admit some shadow of excuse. If our work might be accomplished with the slightest application ; and if we were not at all accountable for the improvement we make of this most precious talent, then might our shameful prodigality be a more pardonable error. But since all these hopes are the most foolish and chimerical which can possibly enter into human breasts, to what shall we ascribe our listless languor, but to the most desperate infatuation and stupidity ?

Happy the man who has a heart given him to use this price put in his hand to get wisdom ; and who is skilled in the holy merchandise of redeeming the

time! There are two maxims to which, in the course of his life, he steadfastly adheres.

The *first* is, That no space of time is to be left wholly blank and void, but every part of it ought to be filled up with doing good. He considers his time as an estate, or tract of ground, that ought to be diligently cultivated, or manured; and no parcel of it, though ever so barren, incapable of some improvement. He allows to the innocent demands of nature, for sleep and recreation, no more than is necessary to recruit its languishing powers. Every day he estimates as lost, which has not produced some action, that imports him as a rational and immortal creature, tending to promote either the glory of God, the good of his neighbour, or the salvation of his own soul. He does not content himself in being diligent merely in the business of his civil calling, but to his power he does good unto all men; if the ignorant are to be instructed;—if the unruly are to be warned;—if the weak are to be supported;—if the disconsolate are to be comforted; if the needy are to be relieved;—if innocence is to be vindicated from unjust aspersions;—if mistaken prejudices are to be removed;—and angry passions soothed. But chiefly acts of devotion, hearing or reading the word, pouring out his heart in prayer, to a reconciled God:—these are his favourite employments, and the portions of time employed in them, the golden spots of his existence. A day in his courts, he esteems as better than a thousand.

The *second* is, That no opportunity of time be suffered to slip. As “to every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven;” these opportunities he lays hold upon, as the calls of providence to do good, which will be quickly over and gone.—In a word, he is hasty in beginning, and vigorous in pursuing every good work, and every laudable enterprize, but chiefly the work of his salvation. Every day he considers as a new life. He

cares not so much how long time he lives in the world, as how well he employs it; as well knowing, that it is a prelude either to a joyful or a disconsolate eternity.

THE SUPERIOR AND DISTINGUISHING ADVANTAGES OF THE CHRISTIAN IN THIS LIFE.

IT is true, there are beasts which excel us in bulk of stature, in perfection of sense, in vigour of nerves, in swiftness of their motion. The inhabitants of air are accommodated with wings; of water, with fins.—What then? Are we not still the emperors of the world? Yes, we are. Reason asserts our superiority; and reduces the most fierce, the most unwieldy, the most untractable of the brutal kind, under our yoke. By reason we put bits in the horse's mouth, tame the elephant, conquer the lion. Birds and fishes are caught in their own elements, and served up to our tables. This heavenly gift maintains our glorious prerogative. We ascend where they dare not soar, and trace the paths of the stars. Nor are the goods of fortune, glory, learning, much unlike the qualifications of the irrational kind, when compared with the superior excellencies of true wisdom, goodness, and religion. Be it so; the Christian is not versant in mathematics, in history, in systems of philosophy; not a logician, not an orator. He never stormed a town, nor gained a victory. He has not what men call riches and honours. His clothes are not besmeared with gold. He plows not half a country with his oxen. He is not addressed with the high and sounding titles of your Lordship and your Grace. He lives remote from courts and palaces, and is not surrounded with a numerous train of servants. The circle of his acquaintance is small. He lives not in

the annals of time. He is not talked of among distant nations. But when he dies he is forgotten.— Yet let him not envy the great, the wealthy, the renowned ; for, if true riches, if glorious honours, if refined pleasures can make him blessed, he is a happy man. He is not learned ; but he is wise in what imports him most to know, as an immortal creature,—wise unto salvation. Behold his knowledge ! for as the twinkling stars of night are eclipsed by the glorious star of day, so is the wisdom of the world, by that which cometh from above. He is not powerful, but he hath taken the kingdom of heaven by violence, laid hold on eternal life, and subdued his earthly affections. Behold the wonders of his might ! he is not wealthy, but he is rich in faith, rich in hope ; contentment is his natural wealth ; he complains not of unsatisfied desires. Behold his riches ! he is not honourable, but God is his Father, Christ his brother, angels his servants, righteousness is his garment, holiness his ornament, the cross is his coat-of-arms, heaven is his inheritance, Christian is his style. Behold his dignity ! he is not renowned, but God commends him, angels applaud him. His glory is not bounded by the stars, nor ended by the conflagration. Behold his fame ! in bondage he is free, in poverty he is rich, in obscurity he is illustrious. Happy man ! enjoy thyself in the possession of true felicity ; while others hunt after the shadow, and weary themselves in vain.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF THE CHRISTIAN'S
PERSEVERANCE IN HIS HAPPY STATE.

“FEAR not, thou worm Jacob ; I will help thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the holy One of Israel.” O heavenly soul, who art redeemed not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the pre-

cious blood of Christ ; who are sanctified of God the Father ; whose faith, however weak, is yet unfeigned ; know, to thy unspeakable comfort, no more thou shalt become a child of wrath, or slave of sin. No ; sooner shall the mountains depart, being torn from their deep foundations ; and the perpetual hills shall sooner be removed : sooner shall the sun, the glorious parent of the day ; the moon, the silver regent of the night ; be extinguished in their habitation, and stars rush from the darkened sky.

Your adversaries are many ; your strength is small ; your fears are multiplied ; yet shall the principle of life, the habit of grace, the seed of God, remain. He whom you love, whom you fear, whom you serve ; is able, is willing, to keep you from falling. He who has begun the good work in you, will maintain, will increase, will accomplish the life of grace, the death of sin. Infeeble you may be, like a bruised reed, a smoking flax, a withered tree, whose fruits and leaves are nipped by surly winter ; but you shall not be destroyed. Rejoice not against them, ye enemies of their salvation ; triumph not over them, ye powers of darkness ; for though they fall, they shall arise again.

Question not his power. Thus saith the faithful and true Witness, "My Father is greater than all ; and none is able," whether by power or guile, "to pluck them out of my Father's hand," John x. 29. Is any thing too hard for the Lord, who spoke into existence this solid earth, and yonder glorious orbs ? who holds them in the hollow of his hand ? How many are the wonders he has done, both in the heights above, and deeps beneath ! But has he produced, and shall he be unable to preserve the vital principle, though like a living spark amidst an ocean of corruption ?

Doubt not his will, more than his power. It is the will of God, your sanctification. For, lo ! a Trinity of persons are in concert, as to produce, so to maintain thy grace.

If there be any immutability of thy purpose ; if any

stability of thy covenant ; if any veracity of thy promise, O eternal Father ! we shall not die, but live.—From the beginning hast thou chosen them to salvation ; and it is not possible they should be deceived, even by those impostors who do great signs and wonders, Matt. xxiv. 24. Once hast thou sworn by thy holiness ; thou wilt not lie unto the mystical David ; that he shall see his seed, and that they shall be established before thee. Thou will not retake thy gift to thine eternal Son ; for thou art not a man that thou shouldst repent. But in what smiling promises hast thou plighted thy veracity, and declared the perpetuity of thy counsel ? “I will be to them a God : I will give them one heart and one way, to fear me all the days of their life ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good ; and I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me for ever,” Jer. xxxii. 38. “For though the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, my loving kindness shall not depart from thee, and the covenant of my peace shall not be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee,” Isa. liv. 10.

And shouldst not thou, O blessed Jesus ! preserve with the most inviolable regard the gift of thy heavenly Father ? Too dear they cost thee, O suffering Son of God ! to suffer any, the least believer, to fall away, and perish. For them thou left the skies ; for them didst weep, and sweat great drops of blood, and groan, and die. And shall they not persevere unto the end ? Yes : if prayers, if intercessions can ought avail. “Holy Father, keep them through thine own name.” Thus he addressed the glorious throne, while yet a sojourner of earth. Nor is he now unmindful of his brethren in the realms on high ; for, while he breathed terrestrial air, he promised his drooping friends, “I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter, and he shall abide with you for ever.” See him surrounded with prostrate seraphim ! What

joy and gladness in his countenance ! What heaven in his eyes ! Mark how the keys of hell and death depend upon his girdle ! Fear not, my beloved people, "because I live, ye shall live also. I am he which liveth, and was dead ; and behold, I am alive for evermore ; and I have the keys of hell and death :" to lock the prison doors upon these ugly monsters. O blessed Redeemer ! if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God, our incensed Creator, by thy death ; much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved from falling away by thy life.

Nor dost thou, almighty Spirit, less insure our final perseverance ; who dwellest in our souls, and makest our bodies thy living temple ; who abidest in us a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life. Thou art the abiding unction, the incorruptible seed of God, the joyful earnest of the heavenly inheritance. By thee are we sealed unto the day of redemption : who shall dare to break up these living epistles, and deface the sacred characters of thy law, which thou hast written in our hearts !

ON ASSURANCE OF PRESENT AND FUTURE HAPPINESS.

THE assured christian is a rare and happy person, whose conscience bears him witness in the Holy Ghost, that his faith is unfeigned ; his love sincere ; his fear filial ; his repentance evangelical. And being pleasantly conscious of those prints of divine grace in his own heart, which are the fruits of past election, and the buds of future glory, firmly concludes, that he is in a state of favour with God, and an heir of the heavenly inheritance. He does not at all pretend unto extraordinary revelations ; but comparing the frame of his own soul with the characters of the children of God, he is persuaded, both from the outward declara-

tions of the word, and the inward testimony of the Spirit, that he dwelt upon the heart of a loving God from everlasting, and that every gracious promise shall be his inheritance at the last. For, by the mouth of these two witnesses, the Spirit and the word, he is established in the truth of this delightful persuasion. Therefore he knows, that it is no enthusiastic dream, or diabolical suggestion; but a sober certainty of waking bliss. It is true, indeed, he may not on all occasions be able to maintain such an exalted frame as this. Through temptation, desertion, the prevalence of corruption, he may walk in darkness, and have no light. But while he trusts in the name of the Lord, and stays himself on his God, the clouds are scattered, and his former assurance returns to him again with brighter evidence; as clear shining after the rain, or blooming health after a fit of sickness.

But, O the blissful serenity of his soul, when drinking in the cheerful rays of the Almighty's countenance! He is calm as the evening of the summer, and peaceful as the shades of the night. The sun puts on a better beam, and every creature rejoices around him. He eats his bread with joy, and drinks his wine with a merry heart. The lying vanities of the world are totally neglected. An empire, in his balance, weighs a grain. The darkest night of affliction is illuminated by the sparklings of this white stone. For he is persuaded that the afflictions of this present life, cannot disannul the everlasting love of God: as the law, which was four hundred years after, could not disannul the promise, before confirmed of God and Christ.—Sometimes he has devoured torments, and come with an appetite unto the flames. When the water-pots have been filled to the brim, the waters of affliction have been turned into the wine of consolation. He has played upon the hole of the asp, and put his hand into the den of the cockatrice. “O death,” he says, “where is thy sting?” There is none like him in all the earth, who is made without

fear. He is the chief of the ways of God ; the noblest work of the Almighty. With what alacrity he runs the way of God's commandments ! How sin is embittered to his soul ! How duties are sweetened ! Not all the terrors of Sinai ; the lightnings that flashed, the thunders that roared, when God came from Teman, and the holy One from Mount Paran, could have such powerful influence to mollify the heart, as one drop of this dew that descendeth upon the mountains of Zion. How he twines about a precept ! How he longs for a duty ! How he catches an opportunity ! And, fearful of offending, he works out his own salvation with fear and trembling. How can he live in sin, when he is dead unto it ? How can he walk in darkness, when he has fellowship with God ? How can he hanker after the husks of the swine, when feeding on the children's bread ? or desire the onions and the garlic of Egypt, when eating the hidden manna, and gathering the clusters of Canaan ?

Ye children of this world, whose little souls are captivated with low and perishable vanities ? what can you produce equal unto his glorious prerogative ? We may apply what was said in another case by Gideon ? "Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer ?"

ON DEATH.

O DEATH, how dismal thy appearance ! how grisly are thy features to those whose thoughts cannot overlook this present transitory scene of things ! who have not learned to expatriate in the unknown regions of eternity, and know not where they shall fix their everlasting abode ! How dost thou rend the man in twain, bursting the silver cord which knit the soul and body into one ! From what dost thou snatch us away ? To what regions dost thou convey us ? Through what

dark paths wilt thou conduct us from this world to the next?—These all conspire to heighten thy terror, and make thy gloom more dreadful.

Thou riftest the treasures of the anxious miser, and sulliest all the honours of the proud. At thy command the drunkard makes haste to finish his debauch, and the delicious epicure becomes the sweet repast of worms and reptiles. How wilt thou quench each burning lust in thy cold icy arms, O king of terrors! The man of letters forgets his favourite books, which now in vain adorn the shelves covered with dust. The sceptered hand now drops the reins of government. The stately rooms of the palace no more behold their honoured lord. “Thou changest our countenance, and sendest us away.” No more shall we behold our joyous home; our pleasing and affectionate relations; nor the cheerful face of the day; nor the delightful variations of the seasons. By thee, for aught we know, the stars are blown out as to us, the sun and moon are extinguished in their habitation.

And whither, O whither wilt thou carry us, when we renounce our correspondence with the sun? When our dull body drops into the grave, and rots away unseen, where wilt thou send our trembling souls? What sights shall we see? What sounds shall we hear? With whom shall we converse? Alas! it is a state of which we are ignorant; a world of spirits and disembodied beings, with whom we have no familiarity here.

How dark is the transition! how dreary is the path that leads us through thy deep and shady vale, O death! To whom have thy gates been opened? Who knows thy secret chambers? No mortal ere returned to tell us what thou art.

Yet must we tread the dismal road: nor are our steps to be recalled when fairly entered on it. No man hath power to retain the breath of his nostrils; neither hath he power in the day of wrath. How universal is thy dominion! how cruel is thy appetite,

which never says, It is enough ! Long hast thou spread desolation through the universe : not among beasts and plants alone, but also among man's imperial race, in every period of time. Void of compassion for the smiling infant, the blooming youth, the venerable sage, thou blindest them in undistinguished ruin. Thou regardest not the forces of strength, the charms of beauty, nor the golden bribes of riches. Thou pourest contempt upon princes, in whom we cannot therefore safely trust ; and upon all the sons of men, in whom there is no stay, because they are born to die.

“What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death ?” We need not search for thee in the plains of battle, in the rocks and billows of the ocean, nor on the loaded tables of luxury and intemperance. Numberless accidents, and ghastly bands of pale diseases, surround us in terrible array. But accidents apart, and pale diseases set aside, old age soon cuts the thread of life, and hastens thy approach. Threescore and ten, or fourscore revolving winters, may perhaps be numbered by us. Alas ! how soon is this period exhausted ! How exceeding diminutive it shews in reason’s eye ! and in the eye of him who is just now to render up the ghost ! As the shuttle sweeps over the loom in the twinkling of an eye ; as the post, who carrying some message of importance, is dispatched away, gains upon the road, and takes no time to view the adjacent country ; as the ship, which has the wind in her wings, skims over the watery plain ; and as the fleet eagle, who spies out his prey from on high, descends with headlong precipitation ; so flies our momentary duration.

Yet boast not of thy victories over the human race, thou unrelenting tyrant ! There are who can behold thee with a smile, and laugh at the shaking of thy spear. Jesus, the loving Saviour, received into his soul thy fatal sting, and wrought out all thy deadly venom. In vain you thought to hold him under

thy gloomy dominion ; for, “though he was dead, yet he is alive again, and liveth evermore.” He entered thy dreary gates, and tasted of thy bitter cup for every elect man. Why should we fear to taste thee, or tread thy dreary vale, when the Breaker is gone up before us ; who leads the blind in a way they know not, and in paths they have not known.

Repine at death ? Why should the mournful prisoner take in bad part the kindly office that unites his fetters, and overturns the walls of his dungeon ? Why should the child repine to burst the narrow confinement of the womb, and salute the rejoicing light of day ! Ought not the weary pilgrim to bless the day which returns him to his Father’s house ? and the espoused bride to rejoice in the hour when she is presented to her faithful Bridegroom, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ?

Though thy pains, O death ! were as terrible as a timorous imagination paints them, (which yet they cannot be, when the sensation is gone;) yet should we soon forget our miseries, by reason of those transporting scenes which shall straightway unfold unto our view.

How soundly shall our dust sleep in the peaceful grave, thy dark and solitary mansion ! where we shall not be pained with the gnawing of the worm, nor offended by the nauseous stench, nor wearied with the dismal solitude, nor frightened with the surrounding darkness. These are the terrors of the living, not the dead.

It is true, the pleasant enjoyments of time are ours no more : but neither are the sins nor the sorrows. We bid farewell to the streams, but we bathe in the fountain of felicity. We shall no more behold the ways of men, nor see the glory of the Lord in the land of the living ; yet shall we come to God, the Judge of all ; to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant ; and to the innumerable company of angels, and spirits of just men made perfect.

Whither canst thou carry us, O death ! from the presence of that God, whose loving-kindness is better than life ? When, with thy trident, thou shalt break the pitcher of this mortal frame, the deathless soul is not like water spilt upon the ground ; for the pitcher being broken at the fountain, it runs to its original, and can be gathered up again.

Hail, happy day ! that destroyest the last enemy, in which the sleeping bones shall hear the call, and reunite into a system ! How shall the reproach of the grave be wiped away, when that which was sown in dishonour, and shameful putrefaction, shall be raised in glory ? Then, O death ! we shall no more be subject to thy power, when we shall call eternal life and immortality our own. “ Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy ! for though I fall by thy hand, I shall rise again : and when I sit in darkness in the grave, even then the Lord will be a light unto me.”

ON THE RESURRECTION.

SHALL death always triumph over the human race, and hold these prisoners of the tomb in everlasting chains ? Will the Lord for ever despise the work of his hands, nor evermore repair these heaven-laboured frames of flesh ? Shall those holy hands, that were devoutly lifted up to heaven—those knees, that often were bended in humble supplication before the throne —those tongues that talked of his wonderful works, and uttered his praises—and all the other instruments of righteousness, for ever lie in rubbish ? Shall the expectation of the poor always fail ? Have the martyrs bled in vain, who were tortured, not accepting deliverance ? Faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it. It is the work of death to part the body from the soul ; and then the grave eats up our flesh, and even gnaws our bones. Yet shall your works

be destroyed, ye frightful monsters ; bone shall come to his bone, dust to his dust ; and every parted soul re-enter its ancient habitation.

If it is marvellous in your eyes, should it be marvellous in his eyes, whose understanding is infinite, whose power is not to be conceived ? Lift up your eyes on high : who hath created all these God-like luminaries, and marshals all their host ? Behold, he formed the eye, and bored the ear, and fashioned all your members. By whom is his arm shortened, that he is not able to restore his workmanship, when gone to dissolution ? We understand not the powers of angels ; we are struck with admiration at the curious arts, and witty inventions of puny mortals, and wonder how it is possible for them to give being to such elaborate productions. The art of the painter is deservedly amazing to those who are not formed by nature with such mysterious skill. How is the poor Indian amazed at the moving machines of watches and clocks, which are easily formed by European artists ! With what inimitable art the skilful musician swells his notes, and sweeps the vocal strings ! Are the ways of men above our shallow reach ! and shall the ways of God be fully understood, seeing they are higher than our ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth ?

When the mystery of God shall be finished, and the pregnant decree shall have travailed with her last birth, the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. Behold, consider, and admire : the man of sorrows who was crucified, dead, and buried, is the God who quickens the dead. Even those are made alive by him, who imbrued their hands in his blood—who pierced his hands and feet. “ To this end he both died, rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord of the quick and dead.”

O shrill-voiced trump of God, (whatever thou art) how shalt thou wound the rest of many generations ?

The king shall hear thee beneath the vaulted marble, and shall come forth without his crown ; and the peasant, who sleeps beneath the grassy turf, shall arise at thy command. Ocean shall hear and tremble in his deepest caverns, and render up his dead, which long did float upon his surface, and weltered to the winds, and at last were devoured by the finny inhabitants of the floods.

Populous assembly ! Not one amissing of past, present, and future generations. Neither can they die any more. For, O thou last enemy ! destructions are come to a perpetual end. Though you have razed cities, and their memorial is perished with them, now, in your turn, you shall be swallowed up in victory. How glad would the ungodly be to find thee, when pulled out like sheep for the slaughter ! They shall lift up, in that awful hour, a cry after thee, far more doleful than what was heard in Egypt, in the night fatal to their first-born. Gladly would they search for thee in the bottom of the ocean, or penetrate into the centre, through interposing rocks, to find thee. But thou shalt flee from them, and leave them to eat the fruit of their ways.

Think on this dismal tragedy, ye dead in trespasses and sins. Yet are ye the prisoners of hope. Christ is the resurrection and the life. Believe on him, and though ye be dead, then shall you live. Repent and be converted every one of you, that your sins may be blotted out, and not found when they shall be sought for, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Times of refreshing indeed, to all the followers of the Lamb ! Then shall his going forth be prepared as the morning, after a melancholy night of blackness, and darkness, and tempest ; or as the beauteous spring, when she comes after a surly winter, to strew the earth with flowers, and clothe the naked trees in green attire. " Awake, and sing," shall he say, " ye that dwell in dust ; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs ;

and the earth shall cast forth her dead, and shall no more cover her slain."

Then shall those who, perhaps, expired in mutual wounds, join hand in hand, and mutually partake in the Redeemer's purchase. Their Mephibosheths are not lame, nor Leahs tender-eyed, nor shall Timothy be any more subject to his often infirmities. For he shall change our vile body, and make it like that glorious one which he himself doth wear. Farewell to pining sickness. Adieu, ye ghastly band of pale diseases, distempers lingering and acute, hunger, thirst, and weariness. No more, O balmy sleep! shall we need thy welcome refreshment, when that which is "sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory."

Great is your gain, ye saints, when ye exchange time for eternity! Nor is it only gain to your undying soul, but even to your putrefying clay; which, with inconceivable improvement, shall be restored you again. Nor is it a doubtful event. Ye dead men of the Lord, together with his dead body shall you arise. For you he visited the gloomy mansion of the grave. Your Redeemer has warmed your clay-cold bed, and left a most delightful odour in the noisome sepulchre. He who brought Israel out of Egypt, and Jonah from the belly of the fish, and Daniel from the den of lions, will surely bring you from the grave: for the temples of the Holy Ghost will not always lie in rubbish, nor the members of the body of Christ for ever be forgotten in the pit of corruption. The Lord Jesus Christ, he is the head, the living head; and ye are the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. He is the first-fruits, and ye are the full harvest. He is the first-begotten from the dead, and ye, as the younger brethren, shall be begotten in your season. And with your clay, your characters shall rise, and your righteousness shall go forth as the light. For, by the resurrection from the dead, ye shall, like Christ, be declared the sons of God with power.

ON THE RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT.

THERE is a time, (who knows how near?) when, according to the tenor of the sacred oracles, the mystery of God shall be finished; the Lord himself shall descend with a shout; the dead shall be raised; the living shall be changed; the world shall be judged. Whatever great or dreadful has been achieved under the sun, falls infinitely short of the transactions of this awful day. Mercifully has our gracious God suppressed this day and hour in darkness, that we may never intermit our watch. O did we make this wise improvement of it!

Methinks the awful period is arrived. The drowsy world is lost in security, little dreaming of an extinguished sun, or falling stars. Some will be buying and selling in the market; some will be debauching in the tavern; some will be planting trees; some will be building houses; some will be marrying, and giving in marriage; when, lo! the dreadful sound of a trumpet, blown by a strong-lunged angel, (perhaps the same that was once heard on Sinai, waxing louder and louder) shall wound the ear of nature, proclaiming the approach of the Judge, that an end, an end is come, and the fashion of this world passeth away.

“Behold, he cometh with clouds!” innumerable angels attend his approach, and pour around his chariot. His radiant face eclipses the lustre of the sun. Beneath him, a great throne, white as the snow, and fiery as the flame. Is this he who was born in Bethlehem, and groaned in Calvary? whom ye insulted, O malicious Jews! bending your knees before him in solemn mockery? Say now, mistaken Caiaphas, whether did he or thou blaspheme?

Long had the prisoners of the grave slept in darkness; but now they awake out of their iron sleep,—they shake off the slumber of a thousand ages. Now monuments render back their dust; church-yards and

burial-grounds pant and heave. Even palaces will then be found to have been but upper chambers to a tomb. And the ocean itself will seem to have been paved with human skulls. Strange to behold ! the fragments of bodies will fly through the air, to obey the signal of the trumpet, and join their fellow-members, however distant. Ask not, ye profane, how can it be ? For who hath shortened his arm ? He who knit your bodies together at the first, can reunite your scattered dust, though the four winds were warring for it. Three days did the prophet Jonah suffer a living death in the belly of the fish ; but when the third morning gilded the mountains, and played upon the billows, the obedient monster returned his sacred guest untouched, on the safe shore. So, at the appointed season, the grave, at the command of God, shall cast forth her dead, and the earth shall no more cover her slain.

Mean time, the living shall undergo a change equivalent unto death, and this mortal shall put on immortality. This is a great mystery. Here let us leave it under a vail, and proceed to take a view of that most populous assembly, where Adam shall salute his youngest son. The billows are not so numerous that break upon the shore, nor the stars that glitter in the firmament. The edict of the Almighty King shall sweep an area for this vast congregation. Here all civil distinctions are buried. The mighty Cæsar stands upon a level with the meanest of the throng. No respect is paid to him that wore imperial purple. Here the great heroes of antiquity shall stand unmarked and unadored.

See there on the left hand of the Judge, that direful crowd, pale with horror and amazement ! How their eye-balls roll in wild affright ! What despair is in every gesture ! Most gladly would they bless the grave to cover them—the flames to wrap them—the rocks to hide them, or the seas to sweep them from the presence of him that sits upon the throne.

But mark on the right hand, that triumphant assembly, who face the thunders with dauntless magnanimity ! when the stars are falling, their thoughts are fixed ; when the earth is quaking, their hearts are unappalled. They view, with calm serenity, the yawning gulf, the glorious Judge ; and hail the happy morning of the resurrection. Are these the forms that mouldered in the dust ! What rosy youth smiles in their countenances ! Once did they lie among the pots of sin and misery ; but now they are made as a dove, whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. Not one sinner shall stand in this vast congregation of the righteous.

ON THE MISERY OF THE DAMNED.

CANST thou descend, O my soul ! with awful step, into the doleful regions of damnation ? Let thy heart meditate terror. The more shall thy fears be alarmed to fly from the wrath to come in this thy day of merciful visitation ; the more shall thy gratitude be awakened unto thy loving Saviour, who redeems thy life from destruction, and who says unto thee, "Fear not, I have the keys of hell and of death." But have the doors of the shadow of death been opened unto us ? Who can presume to give the geography of this dismal territory, or confidently say, in what place of this large universe eternal justice has ordained this doleful dungeon ? Whether it shall be in the centre of the earth, or in some blazing comet, or far beyond the limits of this lightsome world, where chaos and eternal darkness reign ; He only knows, before whom hell and destruction have no covering. No thoughts can reach, no words can paint the horrors of this dreary region, where the miserable inhabitants drink of the wrath of the Almighty, and know, by dreadful experience, what is the power of his anger.

Waving the metaphorical descriptions of darkness, worms, and fire ; there dwells the most restless and unsatisfied desire ; the most overwhelming shame ; the most horrible fear ; the most dismal sorrow ; the most tormenting envy ; the most unrelenting hardness of heart ; and the most racking despair.

They hunger, but there is no food to relieve their appetite ; they thirst, but there is no refreshing fountain, nor even a cooling drop. Should sensual appetites remain, they never can be gratified. As heathen poets sung of Tantalus, burning with thirst and hunger, gladly would he snatch at the delicious apples hanging over his head, or steal a cooling draught of water, that came up to his chin ; but no sooner did he make the fruitless attempt, than the apples fled from his grasp, and the waters from his taste. So shall they “snatch on the right hand and be hungry ; and they shall eat on the left, and shall not be satisfied ; they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm.”

How will the impropriety of their past conduct expose them to the bitter taunts of insulting devils, and to the painful upbraiding of their own hearts ! Fools that we were, for one morsel of meat to sell our heavenly birth-right, for such transitory delights ; for such little sips of polluted joys, to awaken these everlasting flames.

What fearfulness and trembling shall come upon them, when they behold the angry face of God clad with an everlasting frown ! Who can behold it, and not be sore amazed ! Even the Son of God did sweat great drops of blood when he beheld it. How then shall these feeble creatures endure it.

Lo ! heaven shuts its everlasting doors upon them, while their minds are haunted with the ghastly apparitions of their departed joys. How keen must be the sorrow ; how cutting the anguish of such a thought ; I have eternally lost the incomparable happiness of yonder blessed abodes. Where are ye now,

my pleasing comforts ! how have ye fled away as a vision of the night ?

Nor will it be a small part of their misery, to envy the prosperity of the righteous, when they shall seize their heavenly thrones, and tune their harps to strains of highest rapture. When “their horn shall be exalted with honour, the wicked shall see it and be grieved ; he shall gnash with the teeth, and melt away.”

O shocking to think ! they will eternally hate the Eternal Excellency, because they are hated of him. No more shall the divine Spirit excite the faintest motion in their minds towards God or holiness. The iron sinew of their stubborn will, will grow more hard by these fierce flames. They may indeed repent, but their repentance worketh death.

Here hope supports under the greatest pressures ; but there that anchor shall be broken. Here the sons of sorrow will sometimes sink in soft repose, the couch will ease their complaint, and kind officious friends will fall on various methods to blunt the edge of the sharpest pain. Even the tortured wretch, though dying hard and slow, may comfort himself with this, that his torments will shortly come to an end. But these can hope for no respite, nor period of their woes.

How would it stamp a bow in their cloud, to think there were an end ! but in vain, should they shed an ocean of tears, and stretch out their suppliant hands. Death will flee from them, consigning them over to flat despair. Have pity upon them, O ye their friends. Will no affectionate relation shed a compassionate tear ? Alas ! the father will not pity his children, and the mother will have no compassion on the son of her womb, for they sing Hallelujah, when the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever.

Surely “such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God.” O

my soul envy not their momentary happiness, ‘ come not into their secret, be not united unto their assembly.’ How much better is it for thee to strive to enter in at the strait gate, with these happy few that find it, than to go with the multitude in the broad way that leadeth unto destruction? Canst thou fly too fast from hell and damnation? canst thou be too careful to avoid those paths, which, though strewed with roses, lead down to the chambers of death? Whether is it better thy flesh should murmur, or thy soul should perish? O that knowing these terrors of the Lord, our whole life might be one constant flight from the wrath that is to come. How miserable are they who will not be persuaded of the reality of everlasting torments, by all the threatenings of the word, when it is declared by the faithful and true witness, ‘ If they will not believe Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one should arise from the dead !’

ON THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN.

GLORIOUS things are spoken of thee, O city of God! and of those happy beings who walk thy golden streets, and dwell in thy ivory palaces. They are all of them kings and priests unto God.

Hail, ye highly favoured of the Lord, ye nations of them that are saved! Now have ye received power over the nations of numerous corruptions, and rule them with a rod of iron. A crown, not of flowers which fade, not of gold which is also a corruptible thing, but of glory, of righteousness, of life, shall flourish on your heads. The throne of Christ himself receives you. Eternal shall be your triumph, ye happy victors, who have more than conquered. Therefore are ye arrayed in white robes, palms are in your hands, and songs of salvation are in your mouths.

The Lord is your inheritance, ye royal priesthood. By Jesus Christ your altar, shall you offer up the sacrifices of praise continually. You shall go no more out from the heavenly temple, as did the legal priests below; for he shall make you as the pillars of Jachin and Boaz in the temple of your God. In what flowery paths, by what living waters, shall the Lamb in the midst of the throne conduct you, ye flock of his pasture, for whom your good Shepherd did give his very life! Under what verdant shades shall you repose, where the sun shall not light on you, nor any heat! O happy rest from sin and sorrow, into which ye have entered, ye people of God! No more shall ye weary yourselves in the greatness of your way. Your understanding shall rest in the contemplation of truth; your wills in the fruition of good. Every wish is crowned, every desire is gratified by God himself, your exceeding great reward. Plentiful feasts to which ye are invited, where ye feed upon the hidden manna, and taste that the Lord is good. No more shall pale famine approach your blessed abodes, who are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. O blissful vision to which you are admitted; no more ye see through a glass darkly. Not the back parts only, but the face and similitude of the Lord shall ye behold. All ye beholding, with open face, this glory of the Lord, shall be satisfied and sanctified at once. With joy and in righteousness, shall ye see his face. But O thou exceeding great and eternal weight of glory! eye hath not seen thee, ear hath not heard thee, heart hath not conceived. What tongue, what pen of angels can describe thee? therefore, by such variety of metaphors art thou shadowed out in the book of God.

O heavenly Father, give me the light of the knowledge of thy glory! Irradiate my mind, O divine Spirit! that in thy light I may know what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

As delicious meat unto the taste; as fragrant per-

fume unto the smell ; as melodious accents to the ear ; as delightful colours to the eye : so is the knowledge of wisdom unto the soul. But, "where shall wisdom be found ? and where is the place of understanding?" In vain you search for it in these dull regions. Here, with laborious assiduity, we dig for her as for hid treasures. When found, by many a painful effort, how far from satisfactory ? Neither do we find that knowledge is productive of holiness in heart and life. How many, like that prodigious image which Daniel beheld in the visions of the night, have added feet of sordid clay to heads of purest gold ? But in that happy country, the night of intellectual darkness no more attends her dusky shade. The tree of knowledge is the tree of life in the celestial paradise. Then each mysterious doctrine in religion shines brighter than the light, and full day pours on all the paths of heaven. How are the channels of the deep waters discovered, through which the Almighty held his darksome way ?

Sin too is banished from those bright abodes : for the people that dwell there shall be all righteous. No more shall the body of sin, and power of indwelling corruptions, fetch the deep groan from the bottom of the heart. That root of bitterness which here-away was left, with bands of iron and brass, is quite extirpated. No more shall Jacob and Esau struggle in the womb of the sanctified ones ; nor the law in the members war against the law of the mind. It is true the militant graces shall resign when every enemy lies prostrate on the field ; victorious faith and hope now enter into rest ; but charity never faileth, —charity, which is the fulfilling of the law, shall burn in purest flames for ever and ever. Happy, thrice happy, they who have attained this holy perfection : your harps shall be always tuned, and your garments always white : now are ye eased of your greatest burden, and rescued from the hands of your deadliest foe : no more shall wandering thoughts annoy your heart, nor

idle words flow from your tongue ; while we, alas ! must sore complain of vanity, perverseness, and disorder in mind, will, and affection ?

Neither shall there be any more pain ; for sorrow shall be turned into joy. O ye that rejoice in God above all, and in Christ Jesus with joy unspeakable, though now you see him not, how shall you be comforted when you shall behold his face in righteousness, wearing sweet smiles ! Will it not be good for you to be with him who died for you ? with him where he is, that you may behold his glory ? Then shall you see those hands and feet that were pierced ; that side which was wounded ; that head which wore the thorny crown. Is this the man who groaned and died in Calvary for me ! who descended into the grave for me ! Yes ; this is the man, the God-man, Jesus, the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever. No flight of years shall dissolve the mysterious union of his humanity with the divine person of the eternal Son.

All their springs of consolation are derived from this fountain of living waters ; yet are there other considerations in which they shall rejoice, though with inferior delight. Then shall they come to you, ye innumerable company of angels ; nor be startled at familiar interviews with you, though disembodied creatures, as they were in their mortal state. Here you were the spectators of their conflicts, and the guardians of their virtue ; then shall ye be the associates of their bliss.

O comfortable society ! Then, too, shall we come to the general assembly and church of the first-born. Those who have lived in distant periods of the world shall meet in one congregation. The inhabitants of distant regions shall be there ; those who dwelt in Britain and Judea. O large communion ! which no distance of time, no length of sea or land shall confine ; no animosity shall corrupt, world without end. There our grand parents eat the tree of life, no flaming sword forbidding all access. The patriarchs shall

wander no more as pilgrims and strangers, having found the country they desired. There shall we see the venerable saint whose faith enabled him to obey, without reluctance, the most difficult precept that ever was given; and him whose invincible patience triumphed over the greatest load of calamities: there shall we see the prophets who foretold, and the apostles who published the power and coming of his Majesty; and all the goodly company, who loved not their lives unto the death, but rendered their lives, by cruel tortures, for the love of the truth. How frequently is that complaint of the prophet to be taken up in these regions of sorrows, “Woe is me! for I am as when they gather the summer fruits, and there is no cluster to eat; the good man is perished out the land!” But no sinner shall be there, no deceitful hypocrite in all the fair association.

Nor will they be insensible of joy from the glories of that delightful place where they shall dwell. O the novelty, the beauty, the grandeur of the heaven of heavens, the house not made with hands, the city that hath foundations, infinitely surpassing the temple of Solomon, and the city of David! Beautiful was the earthly paradise, and beautiful the earthly Canaan; yea, beautiful is this habitable earth, where many of the enemies to God reside. What then must be the heavenly Paradise, the heavenly Canaan, which God hath prepared for them that love him!

And, O with what fair bodies shall they be clothed who have put on immortality! “The inhabitant of that land shall not say, I am sick;” but their countenance shall smile with rosy celestial youth for evermore.

The hell they have avoided will accent their songs of salvation; and the world they have escaped will serve as a foil to their bliss. Thus it enhanced the miraculous deliverances of the Israelites, to see from the safe shore the wretched Egyptians tumbling in the ocean; and as the waste and howling wilderness

gave additional charms to the land that flowed with milk and honey.

Nor will you be inactive through long eternity : you rest not day nor night ; yet shall you be strangers to weariness and fatigue. To praise him shall be your element ; to teach the arches of your lofty palaces to resound with the name of him you loved, will be your delightful employment while ages roll away.

For, O eternity ! eternity ! it is thine to crown the joys above. Thou art the knot which bindest the bundle of life together. Without the thought of thee, dim sadness would not spare the faces of the blessed, their songs would be marred with dreadful discordance, and all the blissful bowers would lose their charms.

ON THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD IN HUMAN FLESH.

THE seventy weeks of Daniel were now elapsed, and they who looked for salvation in Israel were wrapt in silent expectation of the Messiah coming in the name of the Lord to save them. Long had the Gentile nations walked in their own ways, and the Jews practised the ceremonies of Moses ; but neither could the precepts of the philosopher retrieve the ruins of our fall, nor could the carnal ordinances of the law make them perfect who had recourse unto them, as touching the conscience ; for as yet the daily oblation had not ceased, nor the temple smoked in ruin, into which the Messenger of the covenant, according to the ancient prediction was suddenly to come. The sceptre of David was now sunk into the hatchet of a carpenter, and his tabernacle was fallen down. Tiberius swayed the sceptre of Rome ; Herod was king in Judea ; John the Baptist had lien six months in the womb, who was to be the harbinger of

his coming ; and a profound peace reigned over the world, as a presage of his birth, whose name is called, “the Prince of peace.” When the almighty King, who is ever mindful of his covenant, dispatches, from the blessed abodes, the angel Gabriel, (none of the least of the heavenly throng, and not now first employed in embassies of love to man), to salute the blessed virgin, the mother of our Lord ; the obedient angel flies, and punctually discharges his commission. But, O ye Papists, though he honours her as a saint, he worships her not as a goddess. A new thing indeed it was in the earth, that a virgin should conceive ; but by no means impossible unto the Holy Ghost to bring about by his over-shadowing power. If once a woman was formed out of the substance of a man, why should not that same divine power be fully able to produce a man out of the substance of a woman ? May we not humbly judge, that it came from Him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working, that for the general honour of our nature, the Saviour did spring from that feeble sex which was first in the transgression ? For, “as the woman is of the man, even so also the man is by the woman : but all things are of God.” O condescending Saviour, blessed, beyond all peradventure, was the womb that bare thee, and those paps that gave thee suck : nor is it easy to conceive how a sinful woman could be more highly honoured, than to carry thee in her womb, unless by having thee formed in her heart.

Here let us forego all idle speculations about what other methods were possible to God, by which to send forth his Son into our lower world, and let us rather be willing to discern the characters of wisdom that are evidently instamped upon this dispensation, such as it is ; for, had a body been prepared him of nothing, of the dust of the ground, or of some heavenly materials, he would not have been of the same flesh and blood with those he intended to redeem ; or had it been produced in the ordinary method of human gen-

eration, he would have been involved in the same guilt of Adam's original sin with the rest of mankind, whom he represented in the first broken covenant. As in the former case, his relation to us would have (for what appears) been too remote ; so in the latter, he would (in all appearance) have been too like us, not only in the qualities of our nature, but in the guilt of our persons. But now he is born of a woman, and therefore of our bone, and of our flesh ; and because his mother is a virgin, we easily understand how he is holy, undefiled, and separated from sinners. But here a difficulty arises to our thoughts ; for, if she is a virgin that shall be with child by the Holy Ghost, who shall preserve her character from the unjust aspersions of the world ? It is far more fitting that her holy child Jesus shall confirm the truth of his divine extraction, by the tenor of his deportment, when adult, than that she shall be the asserter of it. Therefore she is betrothed unto a husband, who is at once the witness and the guardian of her virginity.

But leaving the sacred embryo to be curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth by the fingers of the Almighty, let us next see in what manner the heavenly infant was ushered into the light. "For thou Bethlehem-Ephratah, though little among the thousands of Judah," according to the prophets, "shalt give birth to the Ruler of Israel." But though the blessed virgin can trace her genealogy from David and from Abraham, she is a resident of Nazareth, from whence no prophet was expected to arise. How then shall the prediction be accomplished ? The emperor of Rome issues a royal edict, that all his large dominion shall be taxed. He meant to fill his coffers with money ; but a greater Sovereign than he intended the fulfilling of his promises. While every man repairs to his city to be taxed, in obedience to the imperial mandate, Joseph his father, as was supposed, repairs among the rest to Bethlehem, the city of his family, being of the house and lineage of David.

And now he is arrived with Mary, his espoused wife; who being near the time of her delivery, had been directed by providence, or special instinct, to accompany her husband on this occasion. No costly palace receives our wearied travellers; a common inn is the place of his nativity,—perhaps a silent intimation, that he himself should be a common Saviour; nor even in the inn could a commodious apartment be spared to the Lord of heaven and earth. Ye men of Bethlehem, what a guest did you exclude! The coarse accommodation of the manger was all his mother could obtain for her tender infant. Lo! there *He* lies wrapt in swaddling clothes, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain: *He* is associated with the herds in the stall, whom all the angels adore! For this is *He*,—believe it ye children of men,—whose name is Immanuel, which by interpretation is, God with us! This is *He* who, from all everlasting, was the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, who rejoiced always before him, and was daily his delight! This is *He* who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but, for our salvation, he is clothed in flesh and blood, and now become a helpless feeble infant! O ye beautiful scenes of the creation, thou glorious sun, thou silver moon, and all ye glittering stars, in you the invisible things of God are clearly seen; but now ye are eclipsed by the more excellent glory,—God manifested in the flesh! Come hither, ye that thirst for curious knowledge, and lose yourself in thankful admiration; for the person of the eternal Word, by whom all things were made, is found in the likeness of man, is become as our brother, that sucked the breasts of our mother: not that he stripped himself of any divine perfection, or ceased to be what he was; but, by a most ineffable act of condescension and power, he has vailed the glory of his divinity, and become what he was not, by assuming a portion of our humanity to subsist in his own personality.

O mysterious infant, the glory of our race, who art not ashamed to call us *brethren*! Now, thou art fully able to give our ransom unto God, and the redemption of our souls, though precious, shall not cease for ever.

What charming melody is that breaking the silence of the night, and tasting strong of heaven? It is a multitude of the heavenly host praising God in strains of highest rapture. O shepherds! blessed were your ears to hear such early tidings of a Saviour born in the city of David. Though your heads were wet with dew, and your locks with the drops of the night; yet none of the princes of this world could boast of such an honour. But, lo! three eastern sages, conducted by a wonderous star, or glittering meteor, come from a far country to seek and worship the Princely Babe of Bethlehem. They are not scandalized at the inglorious figure the infant King did cast; but perceiving the rays of Deity, even through the vail of flesh, (such is the power of faith), they not only offer unto him costly presents, but address him with divine honours. A sad presage, ye children of the kingdom, that "many shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the south, and from the north, and shall sit down with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, in the kingdom of God, when you yourselves shall be cast out." In vain does the besotted tyrant of Judea think to reverse the high decrees of Heaven, by issuing out a bloody mandate to murder the tender innocents. While their infant-blood defiles the streets of Bethlehem, Egypt herself shall be a sanctuary to the young Prince of peace. Be comforted, ye mothers, whose lovely babes have perished in so good a cause, and received such an early crown. In a little time the cruel murderer shall feel the weight of so many just curses upon his guilty head; and the Messias shall reign in spite of his infuriate and feeble rage.

We cannot reasonably doubt, but the young Redeemer gave early proofs of his divine original. It

was, no doubt, a very pleasing employment to the highly-favoured parents, to rear up this tender plant by a thousand endearing offices ; to mark the first buddings of his genius more than mortal ; and to observe the blossoms of every heavenly grace that adorned his holy soul. But as it hath seemed good to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost to be very sparing in the history of his private life, after he called his Son out of Egypt, we must be content to remain in ignorance of what is not revealed. Yet, as a specimen of the rest, one remarkable occurrence is transmitted down to our knowledge concerning the holy child Jesus. He had numbered but twelve revolving years, when, accompanying his religious parents to the solemn festival of the passover, young as he was, he could maintain a dispute even with the doctors in the temple. His parents, not suspecting where he was, seek him with sorrowful hearts, and the third day restores him to their longing eyes. Wist ye not that he had the business of his heavenly Father to look after, and that he needs not your paternal care ! For, though his parents should both forsake him, the Lord will take him up.—Ye learned doctors, little thought you, that the amazing child, who talked with you to the great admiration of every beholder, was he, of whom the prophet says, “ To us a child is born, to us a Son is given : and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, and the mighty God.”

For the space of thirty years he lurked in obscurity in the contemptible village of Nazareth. Who would have suspected that the son of the carpenter was himself the everlasting Father, and the Creator of all the ends of the earth ? But now the time is come when he shews himself unto Israel. What venerable person is he, who, like the ancient Elias, wears a hairy garment ; and, in the villages of the wilderness, preaches the doctrine of repentance, talks of the kingdom of heaven being at hand, of the axe to the root, the fan to the wheat, and the chaff to the fire ? It is the fore-

runner of Christ, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” See how the multitudes flock after him to his baptism ! even Christ himself condescends to be baptized of him. The hoary Baptist wonders, that the Master should come to the servant, who was not worthy to perform the meanest office to such an exalted Dignitary. But “thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness.”—Once he was circumcised, to sanctify the church that then was, to honour the divine ordinances, and to testify that he was a debtor to do the whole law. And now he is baptized, to sanctify the church that is to be, and to confirm his faith, by this expressive sign, in the promise of his everlasting Father. For, though he needed not the washing of regeneration, (as we) ; yet, when he descended into the baptismal waters, it signified the large effusion of the Spirit upon his sacred humanity, to qualify him fully for his high and saving work. And may we not also think, that when he ascended from the consecrated stream into which he went down with willing steps, he was then assured, that in like manner he should lift up his head above the waters of adversity, and emerge victorious from under the billows of his Father’s wrath ? O Jordan, it was a strange thing that befel thee, when thy waters drove back their course at the presence of God, and when Elijah smote them with his mantle : but much more strange is this, that he who poured them into thy bed, and made the dry land, and the fountains of waters, is now washed in thy hallowed wave ; while from on high the heavens are opened, a voice is heard from the excellent glory, and the Holy Ghost, in the likeness of a dove, descends upon him.

Now, let us follow the illustrious Redeemer from the banks of Jordan unto the solitary wilderness, where Moses the giver, and Elias the restorer of the law, fasted forty days ; and where the ancient Israelites provoked him forty years. There, too, the great Fulfiller of the law, during the space of forty days, abstains

from food, being supported by a divine power, and fed with holy contemplation. But afterwards he feels the gnawing power of hunger ; to expiate the luxury of Adam in the garden of paradise, and to demonstrate the truth of his humanity. When, lo ! the subtle enemy is permitted to assault his virtue by sundry ensnaring artifices. But all his efforts are baffled by this Captain of our salvation.—Think it not strange, O humble soul, if this malicious spirit shall tempt, with restless importunity, even to the most atrocious crimes, and shall abuse even the sacred oracles to this vile purpose. He came unto the glorious Head, in all points tempted like as we are. But being resisted by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, he betakes himself to shameful flight.

Let us now proceed to trace the most interesting steps of our Redeemer's life, when he dwelt among us in our flesh. And shall we first listen unto him as a teacher come from God ! With what inimitable authority ! with what irresistible wisdom, impartial freedom, undaunted boldness, unwearied diligence, burning zeal ! with what homely plainness, condescending humility, tender compassion, amiable meekness, long-suffering patience, divine delight, did he preach righteousness in the great congregation ! How eloquent ! How pathetic ! How mighty in the Scriptures !—But who can enumerate all the wonderful works which, by his own power, and for the manifestation of his own glory, he effected ? The raging element of water he stills with a powerful word, and walks upon its rolling surges. Trees withered at his rebuke ; fishes have paid his tribute. How often did he give sight to the blind ; hearing to the deaf ; speech to the dumb ; strength to the weak ; health to the diseased ; purity to the defiled ? Even strong death could not retain his prisoners, when he gave the high command. Never were words so gracious as those he spake. Never were works so glorious as those he did.

Perhaps it might be enquired, In what palace he

dwell? what riches he possessed? what princes was he acquainted with? But though he calls the silver and the gold his own, if he pays tribute, a fish supplies him with money; if he rides, he must borrow an ass. He built the sky, and had not where to lay his head. He prepares the corn, and was fed at the table of others. O poverty! how dost thou expose to contempt even the greatest wisdom, and most solid virtue, in this degenerate world! But though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor; and by his poverty, we shall be enriched.

The faithless and perverse generation among whom he conversed, not content with rejecting his heavenly doctrines, blaspheming his miracles, and staining his moral character with the most odious imputations, arrived at that enormous pitch of wickedness, as on many occasions to thirst for his blood. Sometimes they take up stones to cast at him, as an abominable wretch, unworthy to breathe the vital air; and sometimes they lead him to the brow of an hill, with an impious intention to cast him down, though in the village where he was born, and though, a while before, they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.

Nor was the conclusion of the scene unlike its beginning. Even to the last we find him a man of sorrows. Is it nothing to you, O ye children of men? Much every way. For, by his bloody sweat you are purged, by his condemnation you are absolved, by his bonds you are loosed, by his death you are quickened, and by his stripes you are healed. Nor must we regard the last dismal sufferings of the Redeemer in the light of an affecting tragedy, but of an evangelical history.

Already he had made his triumphant, though lowly entrance into Jerusalem, riding upon an ass, amid the acclamations of the populace, in accomplishment of an ancient prediction. His eye had melted in tender compassion over the bloody city. He had eat the last

passover, and instituted the new solemnity of the supper. Many excellent discourses he had made to his sorrowful disciples ; and, by the significant ceremony of washing their feet, he strongly inculcated, how by love we should serve one another in all humility.—But as once we saw him in the wilderness, let us now attend him into that garden of Gethsemane, the scene of his dreadful agony, where he trode the wine-press alone, or rather was trodden in the wine-press of his Father's wrath ; where he was in all the mysteries of woe ; where he beheld the angry face of God ; and felt the sting of death, long sharpened (if we may use the expression) upon the stony tables of the law, infixed into his very soul. See how he lies all prostrate on the ground ; and pressed out of measure, with an invisible load, till large drops of blood issue from every opened pore ! What words were these, O Saviour, that dropped from thy lips in this sore and bloody conflict, when, in the most fervent manner, thou didst deprecate the bitter cup ? Was it the prospect of thy cruel death ? Was it the terror of thy crucifixion, that made thee to stand aghast, and to shrink back with shuddering horror ! O no ; thy martyrs have rejoiced even in the sternest tribulations, have bid defiance to all the variety of torture, and resolutely met the king of terrors in his most formidable armour. For they beheld the face of God clad with sweet smiles, while their afflictions did abound. But thine it was to know the power of God's anger ; according to his fear, so is his wrath. It was the burden of our guilt ; and it was the lively sense of the Almighty's indignation, that filled thee with such amazing anguish, and extorted from thy human nature confession of distress, in tears and groans, and prayers to him that was able to save thee from death.

But he survives the bloody sweat, being strengthened by an angel, and supported by his own divinity ; when, lo ! the perfidious traitor comes, and dares approach to salute with a treacherous kiss those lips

that knew no guile. For the wretched gain of thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave, when pushed by an ox that he died, (a goodly price that he was prized at by them!) did this miserable sinner betray his Lord and Master. O cursed lust of gold ! to what enormous crimes canst thou urge on the human mind !—But who are these he brings along with him ? Romans and Jews sent from the high priests. “ Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing, to plot against the Lord, and his Anointed ? ” Against whom do they come thus equipped with swords and staves ? —But what is this ? They go backward, and fall to the ground !—Understand, ye wicked, that he is able to slay you with the breath of his mouth, and cast you down beyond the possibility of arising. But his hour is now come.—Take him, and lead him away.—Let the disciples retire at the permission of their Lord.—And thou Peter put up thy sword : leave vengeance unto God.

The breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of the Lord, is taken in their pits. He is bound like a malefactor, who proclaims liberty to the captives. Easily could he act the Sainson, upon this occasion. But the justice of his Father forbids it ; and the cords of his own love, stronger than all fetters, hold him fast. Where do they lead him but to the high priest, as a lamb to the slaughter ?

In vain does the conscience of Pilate remonstrate the innocence of the Fannel. In vain does the wife of Pilate dissuade from sanguinary methods, and tell about her ominous dream the preceding night. The silly judge, intimidated by the threats, and dunned by the incessant clamour of the mob, delivers Jesus unto their will, and releases unto them the murderer whom they preferred.—What barbarous indignities were done unto him, both before and after he received his sentence, may justly raise our wonder, while they excite our detestation. Lo ! he is exceedingly filled with contempt, being forced to wear the ludicrous en-

signs of majesty ; his crown is a wreath of thorns ; his sceptre a reed ; the Judge of Israel is smitten with a rod reproachfully ; he hides not his face from shame and spitting ; they rest not here, for his back is prepared for the tearing scourge. In these circumstances of disgrace, he is denied by his own apostle who had the courage to follow him. O Peter, hear you not the witnesses accusing him falsely ? Is this your kindness to your friend ? Where is now your confident boasting ? But so it was foretold by Christ ; and for this let us pass the time of our sojourning here in fear.

Ah ! how have we made him to serve with our iniquities ! For panting, and spent with toil, and covered with blood and sweat, he bears the cross. " His visage is marred more than any man's, and his form than the sons of men." And now he is arrived at the appointed place for consummating this melancholy scene ; his garments are parted ; the assembly of the wicked inclose him round ; they pierce his hands and feet ; see how he hangs suspended on the racking cross, betwixt the heavens and the earth !

No fountain relieves his parching thirst ! No angel strengthens him from heaven ! No Peter draws a sword in his quarrel ! His inexpressible torments are not able to command one tear from the unpitying spectators, who shake the head at him in cruel scorn, wrest his words, and mock his prayers !—Even the sun withdraws his light ! O golden ruler of the day, didst thou fly the pain of thy Maker ? Or, was it incensed justice, that arrested thy beams from giving light unto the suffering Surety ? But more horrid was the darkness of his soul, when thou, O heavenly Father, withheld the pleasing beams of thy countenance. *Persecuted but not forsaken*, may be the motto of the suffering saint, but not of the suffering Saviour. Even in this hour and power of darkness, he casts not his confidence away ; but, having commended his mother to a beloved apostle, and his spirit unto his beloved Father, he bows the head, and

renders up the ghost. The earth quakes ; the dead arise ; the temple rends her veil ; then were ye spoiled, O principalities and powers ; then justice was satisfied, the law was magnified ; the mighty works which had employed the thoughts of God from all everlasting, and which shall be the subject of the most delightful contemplation to all the redeemed company, world without end, did then receive its consummation.

O that this dying love of God might dwell for ever in our thoughts ; constrain us to every duty, and deter us from every sin ! Must the Son of God expiate, with such direful sufferings, sin, not his own ? What then must they endure for their own sins, who refuse to learn, from this amazing example, the infinite evil of that abominable thing ?

Great was thy victory, O death, when even the Son of God slept in the chamber of the tomb, a prisoner of darkness ; a pale and ghastly corpse. But wo unto us, if the gospel history had left him in the silent grave. Then had the expectation of the poor perished ; then had his promise failed for ever ; then had we been still in our sins, unpurged, unpardoned.

But the third day beheld him emerging from the darksome grave. In vain they set a watch, and seal the stone. It is not possible he can be held. The wounds of his body are miraculously healed ; the separated spirit is reunited by a divine power, before he saw corruption ; and he arises as a man refreshed with sleep springs from his bed, when the morning shines with purple radiance. No more shall infirmity clog thy flesh ; or sorrow cloud thy brow, O risen Saviour. No more shall death reduce thee under his gloomy power. Thy warfare is accomplished, and thou hast received of the Lord's hand double for all our sins.

O earth, why didst thou quake ? and what disturbed your repose, ye sleeping bones ? It was at the presence of the God of Jacob, who lately was crucified in weakness ; but now he is raised in power. The earth casts forth her dead. Sleep on, ye remaining

prisoners of the dust ; a time, a time will come, when ye too shall awake and sing, and ascend to meet him in the air. Ye living saints, rejoice that death is swallowed up in victory. The grave, that hungry monster, catching the bait of his humanity, was not aware of the hook of his divinity, and swallowed its own destruction. Now, may we rest in full assurance, that all our debt is paid, when, by the order of the Creditor, the Surety is taken from prison and from judgment. For, lo ! a shining minister, whose countenance is as lightning and his raiment white as snow, descends to roll away the stone from the holy sepulchre ! For fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. No doubt he was fully able to have removed the stone, who had power to lay down his life, and had power to take it up again. For even the pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. But it was the will of the eternal Father, that these excellent and glorious creatures round his throne should put this token of respect upon their Lord and ours, even in his lowest humiliation. Hail happy day, on which a more glorious work was finished, than when he planted the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ! May that sweet day of sacred rest be the joy of our souls ! Then may we often join with God and angels, in remembering this most illustrious work, A FINISHED REDEMPTION !

The victory is complete; what remains but that the Victor shall triumph ? The atoning sacrifice is offered; what remains but that the High Priest shall enter within the vail ? Forty days he converses with his disciples, instructing them in the nature of his kingdom, by his heavenly discourses; and confirming them in the certainty of his resurrection, by his frequent appearances. Then does he lead them out as far as Bethany and the mount of Olives. By that way he once came to his ignominious cross; and by that way he returns to his glorious crown. And how did he em-

ploy the last parting moments, but in blessing his beloved apostles ; and assuring them of his being ever present with them in the discharge of their office, even when they should see him again no more ?

Could we have stood among that favoured few, who witnessed this glorious transaction, then would we have seen him slowly ascending from the earth ; not snatched as Elijah in a whirlwind ; till an obedient cloud receives him from the sight of the astonished gazers, who had already seen enough to satisfy their faith. "Be lifted up, ye everlasting doors of paradise, that the King of glory may come in." Listen to the triumphant shout wherewith the blessed assembly hailed his arrival. Observe the trophies of his victory ; the blunted sting of death, and the keys of hell and the grave. Great was the pomp, thou Sinai didst behold, when the Holy One descended on thy top, and out of his right hand went a fiery law ; but greater, doubtless, was the pomp, when he ascended on high, leading captivity captive, after he had magnified the law, and made it honourable.

Now, reign for ever, blessed Lord Jesus, upon thy heavenly throne. For ever shall a crown of glory encircle thy radiant head. No more shalt thou complain of a sorrowful soul, or a forsaking God. With what infinite satisfaction shalt thou for ever revolve thy past agonies, and see the travail of thy soul ! Obedient angels cast their crowns before thee. With thee shall the church militant swell their song even in this vale of tears. And unto thee shall the triumphant church ascribe eternal praise, saying, with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." To join the songs on high, may we also in thy due time be brought ! Amen.

ON CHRIST LAID IN THE GRAVE.

Is this the place? Is this the gloom? How dismal the situation! How ghastly the appearance! See there his face defiled with deadly paleness! His eyes closed in death! His body, covered with hideous wounds, and scars of ignominy, lies stiff and motionless, wrapped in a mournful shroud! O how unlike the place, the state from whence thou didst descend! And was it then for this thou left the skies? Is this that glorious person by whom the worlds were made? who hung the starry globes on high? gave rays unto the sun, and brightness to the moon? He thunders with the voice of his excellency; frightening the nations with the tremendous roar. Lo! silence broods around him deep as the night, or summer's noon-tide air. Ah! where is thy glory fled? Where are those bright ministers, who have in charge to be thy constant attendants, in all thy ways to keep thee? these who proclaimed thy birth; hymned thy arrival on this earth; and who, with kindly services, refreshed thy wearied virtue, in the day of thy temptation in the wilderness? Why have you abandoned your Lord in such disgrace? Why do you not brighten this dismal place with your celestial splendour, that it may look somewhat like the tomb of such a person? But, what are ye? Such a mysterious event the sun could not behold, had not the sovereign MIND, who rules on high, consented.—But why, O heavenly Father, would thou forsake the darling of thy bosom, who always did the things which pleased thee? as was by thee declared, when, from the opening cloud, thou sent the heavenly Dove, who rested on his head, when he ascended from the baptismal waters. The hoary Baptist marvelled; and every beholder was lost in admiration. A voice sounded from the excellent glory; a voice, which was afterwards repeated: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Forbear, vain mortal, to tax the divine procedure. You see the Surety, who just now paid the debt of mankind. You behold the slaughtered victim, the sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour. Though here the earthly part of his humanity is humbled for a time; yet shortly, very shortly, you may, with raptured eyes, behold him emerging from these darksome shades, much like the vigorous sun. But know, that thine iniquity did bring him to the dust of death, and plunged him in these depths of ignominy.

Ah ! cursed monster, sin, what hast thou done ? I formerly heard you cast the angels from their bright abodes, to coasts of dark destruction : and man was driven by thee from paradise, and all its flowery pleasures. By your means, the race of men were buried in a watery grave. You called for fire and brimstone, to lay in ashes the proud towers and tents of wickedness and lust, in Sodom's evil day. Thine is the pestilence. The bed of languishing is thine, and every sickness. You opened the pit of corruption, and furnished with deadly arrows, the inexhausted quiver of the king of terrors. Were not these achievements sufficient to glut thy rage ? With these, audacious monster, thou mightst have been content. How dared you attack the Son of God, and kill the Prince of Life ? But know for this, thou thyself shalt die. Thyself shalt be condemned. Lo ! in that grave I see thee laid ; and gradually shalt thou consume away, till even the hard and solid bones shall be reduced to dust, without a vestige remaining.

ON CHRIST RISING OUT OF THE GRAVE.

I WILL not anxiously enquire, who shall roll me away the stone, or waft me over the seas, to view the local spot where the dead Redeemer was laid a breathless corpse. This I leave to you, sons of delusion, who, destitute of true devotion, trudge many a need-

less step. But let me find the holy sepulchre in the field of meditation ; and on the feet of love, and with the eye of faith, let me approach and view the place where thou, O Lord, didst lie.

When he beheld the grave of Lazarus, he wept. Shall I not drop a tear, when, Oh ! it was mine iniquity that brought to the dust of death, and closed his eyes in cruel slumbers ? But, wherefore weep ? Why not rejoice also ? O death ! where is thy prisoner ? He is not here, but he is risen ; for the third morn beheld him despise the grave.

He rose, he rose ; he burst the bars of death ;
And with him all our triumph o'er the tomb.

What an agreeable perfume is exhaled from this delightful place ! Here is no noisome grave, for no sepulchral stench offends the nostril. The sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, hath left a most inviting odour, which restoreth my soul again.

But hath he left those garments, this linen, pure and white—emblem of his unspotted righteousness—to me and all his followers ? Like the divine Elijah, who left this mortal stage, nor felt the stroke of death—a privilege, which, for our sakes, was not indulged to a far greater than he. Lo ! there a napkin to wipe all tears from off all faces. Lo ! garments of salvation, and linen pure and white, are ready at your hand. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

My languid spirits revive. I feel a lively vigour diffuse itself over all my powers. What wonder that such quickening influence proceeds from thy sepulchre, Lord of life, when even a prophet's sleeping bones, touched into life a stiffened corpse ! So sacred story tells. Here let me come, and bring my lifeless heart, when deadness seizes my soul ; here let me enter ; here let me dwell.

My lusts be buried here ; for ever lie entombed my fears. O death ! where is thy sting ? Where is thy

victory, boasting grave ? I no more consider thee as a gloomy dungeon. Now thou art a quiet sanctuary—a downy bed—a lightsome mansion, and a peaceful haven, in order to receive the weary wanderer, long lost upon this troublous ocean of anxious cares and tribulations.

ON CHRIST COMPARED TO THE SUN.

SEE there the glorious ruler of the day, who rejoices as a strong man to run a race ! How universal is his influence ! How rapid, and how constant is his motion ! That heavenly lamp has blazed for multitudes of ages, in the blue vault of the firmament. Empires have arisen and decayed ; populous cities have been laid in ashes, without any trace now remaining of their ancient dignity and grandeur. All these revolutions have been beheld by this bright eye of the world, without any visible diminution, or material alteration. The self same sun now cheers us with his beams, that arose upon former generations ; and will administer the same consolation unto others, when we shall be laid in the dust. Whether shall we most admire the beauty or the usefulness of this resplendent luminary ? Not a more beauteous creature did ever drop from the creating hands of the Almighty. To this bright orb we are indebted for cheerful light, and genial warmth.

Without his powerful aid, we should for ever mourn under the frown of hideous darkness, and pine away under the piercing rage of winter. The rivers would be hardened into ice, and the mountains covered with eternal snow. Who could live in his cold ? Were it not for his beneficial influence, our eyes would not be charmed with the sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose ; our nostrils would not be saluted with the sweets of the garden ; our taste would not be regaled with

the fruits of the autumn, and golden treasures of the harvest. It is this which makes the melancholy desert to rejoice, the fields to smile, the little hills to sing. When he rejoices in his east, how do the cheerful birds hail his arrival ! And even the clouds of melancholy are dispelled from the human mind. Fair in himself, he beautifies all nature's works. He paints the flowers of the spring ; he clothes in sunny robes, the rose and the lily ; he tips with gold, the morning and the evening clouds ; and in the day of rain, the bright ethereal bow derives from him that inimitable brightness which charms the eye of gazing multitudes.

Fair looks the sun, and fair the morning ray ; but not to be compared with the beauty of the Lord, which above all things, the sanctified soul is desirous of beholding. O thou who wast dead and art alive again —who livest for ever—thou brightest Sun of Righteousness, that shined in the firmament of the church from the most early ages—that existed before the day-spring knew his place—and that wilt be unto thy people for an everlasting light ; who shall declare thy matchless beauty, thy dazzling splendour, thy universal influence ! When we essay to lift our weak and sickly eyes to thee, we are not able to take a steady view of the incomprehensible glory of thy mysterious person, for thou dwellest in the darkness of too much light. By thee is life and immortality brought to light ; and, were it not for thy directive ray, who should guide our feet in the way of peace ? We no more need to wander in uncertainty ; nor is the grave a frightful prospect unto dying mortals. In thy light, O let me walk ! and in thy light work out my own salvation. O warm my cold affections, and melt my frozen heart with thy all-powerful beam. Enkindle such a flame as many waters cannot quench. In vain, ye gospel ministers, ye stars in the firmament of the church ; in vain ye shade your feeble rays, when he, the Fountain of your day, refuses to arise. Ye twinkling sparks of worldly comforts, you cannot drive away

the night of melancholy from our dejected spirits ; but when he scatters his rays, and shews his face, O how the shadows fly away !

Then cheerfulness and joy return unto the soul, and the voice of melody is heard in the tabernacles of the righteous. "The flowers appear in the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come." But when he hides away his face, ah ! what withering of the soul ! Then, ye trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified, resign your blooming pride ; and your branches are not loaded, as usual, with the fruits of righteousness.

When clouds and darkness are round about us, in the dark day of tribulation and affliction, what direful gloom would overspread our souls, but that this kindly Sun of Righteousness stamps on our blackest clouds, a glorious brightness. It is the bow in the cloud, which makes our darkness smile.

Dreadful was that eclipse which thou didst labour under, O thou light of the world ! when offering up thyself through the eternal Spirit. From the hiding of the Father's face, from the frown of his angry countenance, wast thou shorn of thy rays. Arraigned before an earthly tribunal—condemned with injustice—wounded with ignominious scourges, and piercing thorns, and crucified with unutterable agony, I see thee descending into the grave. The rocks, the flinty rocks, had compassion upon thy piteous sufferings. Nor could the sun conceal his indignation ; for in that hour and power of darkness, he laid aside his bridegroom attire, and clothed himself in sackcloth. Red and bloody was thy setting, in the evening of thy mortal life ; but glorious was thy arising, in the morning of thy resurrection.

For us, not for thyself, thou wast eclipsed in such bloody sufferings, that we might not for ever dwell in the dark regions of the shadow of death. Shine thou for ever, blessed Jesus, in the firmament of the church, and in the firmament of my soul ! Who shall

pluck thee from thy sphere, or arrest thee in thy progress ? Not all the powers of hell, nor the united force of inward lusts, and strong corruptions. Arise upon the darkened nations with healing in thy wings ; and chase away ignorance and delusion, by the brightness of thy coming.

Blessed are those happy people, on whom thou spreadest thy cheerful light; who triumph in thy beams, and solace themselves under thy genial warmth. But, ah ! how many times thy rays are intercepted by the moon of a present world interposing itself betwixt thee and us ! How frequently the cares, how frequently the comforts of this life, lie too near in my heart, and shew big in my eye, and hide thy cheerful face from my soul ! How often have the clouds of prevailing iniquity and reiterated provocation, covered the face of my mind, and blotted out the day ! O scatter thy victorious rays abroad, and chase them from thy sky ! “ Blot out as a cloud my transgressions ; and as a thick cloud my sins,” by the rays of thy justifying righteousness, and sanctifying influences.

Bless the Lord, ye highly favoured, who bask in his rays, and walk in the light of his countenance. “ God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light : bind ye the sacrifice with cords unto the horns of the altar. For, through the tender mercies of God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us. Walk in the light while you have it ; and remember the days of darkness, you know not but they shall be many.”

O ye that slumber upon your beds, and waste your golden season of grace in indolent repose ! awake ; arise ; go forth ; and behold him coming forth of his chamber as a bridegroom. The darkness is past ; the shadows are fled ; the wild beasts have now retired to their dens ; the birds of paradise rejoice ; and the voice of gladness is heard in Immanuel’s land. Now is the time for the traveller to glory, to pursue his journey to the better country. Shortly the night cometh, wherein no man can work or walk—a night

that will not know the dawning of the day. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

ON CHRIST'S COMPARING HIMSELF TO THE ROSE OF SHARON, AND THE LILY OF THE VALLEYS.*

"LET another praise thee, and not thine own lips," is a maxim that includes not within its verge, him who is Immanuel, and infinitely exalted above the rank of mortals. In him self-commendation is both graceful and useful. O fairer than the sons of men! so transcendent is thy excellency, so exalted is thy dignity, thy perfection is so boundless, thy beauty so matchless, so unparalleled, so elevated to the highest degree, that words cannot express, thoughts cannot reach thy glory. Thou only knowest what fulness thou contains of grace and truth. No swelling pride, or over-valuation of thyself ere lodged, or could lodge in thy sacred breast. Thou only canst with safety, with modesty, with decency, commend thy worthy Self. O may I catch the flame thy words would enkindle, and the opening of thy lips would inspire in my soul!

Of all the flowers that imbibe the dew, and expand their leaves to the morning ray, the rose and the lily are the most goodly and delightful. These charming sisters are signalized, both for their beauty and their fragrance. Well may the lovely Jesus be resembled to these blooming ornaments of the garden.

View him in his person. The lily of his divinity is wedded to the rose of his humanity. In presence of his divinity, the full blown lily, when bathed in the evening or morning dew, can boast of no perfection. For even the sun is ashamed, and the moon

* Song ii. 1.

confounded, when he unveils his glorious brightness. In presence of his humanity, the sweet and blushing rose loses her lustre. Beauteous was his soul, and beauteous his body. As to the former, it was adorned with all the beauties of holiness ; and as to the latter, doubtless it shines with comely grace. Though in his days of deep humiliation, his face was furrowed with sadness, his visage marred more than any man's, and his form than the sons of men ; now joy brightens his countenance, and smiles for ever in his eyes.

View him in his mediation. As he is the representative of sinners unto God, he is the rose of Sharon, in his bloody satisfaction : the lily of the valleys, in his immaculate obedience. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel ? what unworthy cause hath defiled with blood thy majestic looks, and stained all thy raiment, O thou rose of Sharon ? "I have trodden the wine-press alone ; and of the people there was none with me." The sword of my Father's indignation hath awaked against me, the man who am his fellow. Therefore am I red in mine apparel, and my garments like one that treadeth out the wine-press. Canst thou spy any flaw, any the smallest deformity in the lily of the valleys ? no more in the obedience of the Son of God. Though he, by divine imputation, was made sin for us, and even, by human reputation, was an egregious transgressor ; yet was he holy, harmless, and undefiled. Undefiled in his nature, by inherent corruption, undefiled in his life by actual transgression.—View him in his mediation, as he is the representative of God unto sinners. In the clemency of his government, he is like the gentle lily ; in the severity of his administration, like the inflamed prickly rose. In the threatenings of his holy law, he is fiery as the rose ; in the promise of the gospel, he wears the lily's winning aspect. If we are not attracted by his smile, we shall be appalled by his frown, when he arms his angry countenance with terror.

How reviving, how exhilarating, the fragrance that is exhaled from this Plant of renown, which restoreth the soul again ! When we obtain a smell of this heaven-planted flower, the heart is glad, the tongue rejoices, the sun puts on a brighter beam, and every thing which we behold assumes a brighter aspect.

No roses could equal those of Sharon ; no lilies like the lilies of the valleys. What grows in an irriguous soil, such as the low grounds usually prove, by reason of the numerous rills which descend from the neighbouring mountains, must be of more exquisite kind, than the produce of the high and parched lands. In all things, blessed Jesus, thou must have the pre-eminence. If thou art a rose, thou art the rose of Sharon. If thou art a lily, thou art the lily of the valleys.

ON WALKING IN THE SPIRIT.

THE walker in the Spirit, is a person whose goodness and devotion comes not by fits and starts, and on some rare occasions, but is habitually prevalent in the tenor of his life. It is true, like the whole spiritual creation, he groans under the bondage of corruption ; yea, the more spiritual he is, the more carnal he sees himself to be ; like that most holy apostle, whose mournful complaints are yet sounding in our ears : "The law is spiritual, and the commandment holy, just, and good ; but I am carnal, and sold under sin." But a spiritual frame is his element, and with careful assiduity, he cherishes those good impressions that may be made upon his heart by the Holy Ghost, of which he judges by their conformity to the divine law. To the guidance and impulse of that holy invisible Agent, he endeavours to surrender himself in every action of his life. That he may not quench this holy fire, he crushes in the bud the rising

thoughts of sin ; dashes against the stones the infant temptations ; avoids the snares of evil company ; the practising of known sin ; the indulging of unlawful pleasures ; and anxious carking cares about the things of the earth. He is ever studying to picture out in his life some spiritual grace. Spiritual truths are the most savoury of all others unto his taste ; for the blessed Comforter, according to the promise of Christ, takes the things of Christ, shews them unto him, and leads him into all truth. These are the light of his eyes, the joy of his heart, more tasteful and delicious than honey from the comb. Spiritual blessings he esteems the most superlative and excellent ; he judges not after the flesh, setting an high estimate on those things that make the fairest shew in the eyes of natural men, who cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, but spiritual riches, honours, pleasures, spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus ; these are the better things for which he pants, and wherein he greatly rejoices. Spiritual thoughts are the native produce of his mind, arising from his heart as water from a living spring. As it is natural for the mother to think of her sucking child, for the merchant to think of his merchandise, for the scholar to think of that particular science he is best acquainted with, for them that are after the flesh, to mind the things of the flesh, so it is natural for the spiritual walker, to mind the things of the Spirit ; when he buys and sells, when he plows or sows, when he sits in the house, or travels on a journey, as well as when he prays in his closet, or repairs unto the place of the Holy. In every object he is disposed to see God, in every sound to hear him, to taste him in all that is sweet, to admire him in all that is great, to love him in all that is lovely, to reverence him in all that is dreadful. He perceives with David, the voice of God in the voice of a railing Shimei ; and discerns with Job, the hand of God in the hand of a plundering Chaldean. Every creature is unto him a Jacob's ladder, by which he

ascends unto heaven. Spiritual intentions reign in all his enterprises and actions, both civil and religious. Hence the most ordinary occurrences of life are sanctified, whether he eats or drinks ; while the very sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. Spiritual motives induce him to the hatred of sin, to the practice of duty, to the pursuit of good ; he abhors that which is evil, as well because it defiles, as because it destroys ; he performs what is commanded, because it is commanded, and not that he may be seen of men ; he asks temporal and spiritual blessings from above, not that he may consume them on his lusts, but that God may be glorified in all. Spiritual duties are his delightful recreation, he thinks not of them with reluctance, but anticipates in a joyful expectation, the stated opportunities of intercourse with heaven. It is not his body that leads the mind, so much as his mind that leads the body, to any holy exercise. When he falls upon his knees in prayer to God, he goes not from the devil, or from the world to God, but from God to God, because he is in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

ON A GODLY MAN.

THOUGH he esteems it idolatry to make images of God, yet, he himself is a picture of God, walking up and down in the earth ; and he reckons it his greatest duty and honour to be so. The glory of God is the end of all his actions, civil and religious ; and a tax which he pays unto him with the same conscience that he renders unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. The displeasure of all the world, when laid in the balance with the smallest frown of his Father in heaven, is lighter than a feather poised against a talent of gold. But if he lift upon him the light of his countenance, it is as impossible for him to be

miserable, as it would be for one to shiver with cold, who, in the warmest months of summer, should bask in the meridian sun. The sovereign authority of God stirs him up to all his duties ; without which they would not be proper obedience. The same high will of God reconciles him to every adverse dispensation ; saying, with the most honourable of all sufferers, “ The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it ? ” By all the streams of created goodness, he is led unto God, as the fountain from whence they arise. He sees God in every object, he regards him as his awful witness, so that he never can be alone, either in the solitary field, or secret chamber. Prayer is not his drudgery, but his element. He not only addresses the throne of grace, when he has some petition to lodge there, some interest to prosecute ; but when he has no other errand, if it is not to tell God how much he loves him ; how desirous he is of fellowship with him, and to see his power and glory in the sanctuary.

There is a mystery in the whole of his deportment, when acting like himself, which even the ungodly are forced to reverence. In vain shall they think to burst their bands, and cast away their cords, for in his hand is a sharp two-edged sword. He binds even princes with cords, and nobles with fetters of iron. He that sits in the chair of the scorner, shall be greatly confounded ; they shall be turned back, that say, Aha, aha !

He greatly triumphs over the little insults of his adversaries. Reproaches shall rebound as burs from the polished surface of a looking-glass, shall melt as snow-balls tossed against the sun, and shall pass away as the morning cloud, or as the early dew. He would not exchange his joy in the Holy Ghost, for the raptures of the scholar, the triumphs of the soldier, and the gratifications of the most sensual epicure. How wide the field wherein he forages for joy, even in tribulation !

Though withered is his vine, his harp unstrung, he is the richest of all merchants ; for, “godliness with contentment, is great gain.” Lay not wait, O wicked man, against his dwelling, spoil not his resting place ; “For, know the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself ; the Lord will hear him when he calls unto him.” Though he were laid in the lowest pits, in the darkness and deeps of hell, yet he could not be truly wretched, any more than a wicked man could be truly happy, were he admitted into the pure regions of life and immortality.

DELIGHT IN GOD,

Is a sweet frame of soul, whereby the real Christian finds all his afflictions to be lightened, all his comforts to be sweetened, all his sins to be embittered, and all his duties easy and delightful. It is the marrow of all his sacrifices, whilst those that want it, offer nothing unto God, save goodly words, which are only the outward part of the calves of the lips, resembling the hair and skin. It is the commandment, in the keeping of which he finds its own reward.

His mind is habitually filled with holy thoughts of God, whether he sits in the house, or walks in the field. He remembers him on his bed, and meditates on him in the night watches, and rejoices under the shadow of his wings. In those solitary moments, when the vile person meditates villainy, and his heart will work iniquity ; when the sensual sinner makes provision for the flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof ; when the miser betakes himself to his gold, and the ambitious to their schemes of honour, he naturally retires unto his God, and converses with those things above, where Christ sitteth at his right hand. And these thoughts arise in his heart as naturally as the

fruit-bearing tree putteth forth her blossoms, or the fountain sendeth forth her waters.

Religious duties are his element ; and he rejoices when it is said to him, “ Go up to the house of the Lord :” not that he may catch the applause of men ; not that he may only comply with his convictions, and stop the clamours of his conscience ; not that he may, in some instances, gratify his curiosity, and feed a ticklish fancy : but that he may go to God as his exceeding joy ; and see his power and glory in the sanctuary. Though the preacher of the word should charm his ear with the delicate cadency of his voice, and his eye with all the graces of motion ; if he hear not the voice of God, he is frustrated of his most valuable end. Instead of being, like him of Edom, detained before the Lord, or saying with the unholy Israelites, “ When will the Sabbath be over ? ” he binds his sacrifice to the horns of the altar, with no other cords than those of love, and counts the Sabbath a delight. As the Spirit of the living creatures was in thy wheels, Ezekiel, so is his heart in duties.

His worldly comforts he grasps not with too close an embrace, like those foolish animals, who hug their young to death : but mainly rejoicing in God, nor putting them in his room, he finds them strong and lively.

He cannot perish in his sorest affliction, because God’s law is his delight. Though the fig-tree should not blossom, and the fields should yield no meat, he has a never-failing refuge to betake himself unto. He rejoices in the Lord, and is glad in the God of his salvation. In the multitude of his thoughts within him, thy comforts, O Lord, delight his soul.

But, O how sin is embittered, when he tastes those ravishing pleasures that are at God’s right hand ! In what a contemptible light he regards the transient sips of joy, for which the children of sensuality forego their everlasting interests, when, like Adam, they sell a paradise for an apple ? For one morsel of meat

they renounce a birth-right, as Esau ; or taste, with Jonathan, but a little honey, and for it they must die. His pleasures, not being of the sensual kind, fill not his cheeks with blushing ; nor is heaviness the end of his mirth : he eats not only the food of angels, but the bread of God : the lines are fallen to him in pleasant places, and he has a goodly heritage : the greater an epicure, he is so much the more temperate : his pleasures neither darken his understanding, nor stupify his conscience, nor take away his heart : it is his alone to find honey without stings, and roses void of thorns. Take to yourselves, he says, your paradise of fools, and your impure delights ; serve your divers lusts and pleasures, all ye that are in the flesh ; but “ I delight to do thy will, O God ! thy law is in the midst of my heart.” Away with the weeping food of Egypt,—the onions and the garlic. Welcome thou heavenly manna ! Hail ye everlasting joys, which do not resemble the crackling of thorns under a pot, but that cheerful light of the sun that shineth more and more until the day be perfect ! It is your’s alone not to be blasted by sickness, or nipped by the winter of adversity ; and even in death you shall flourish like the palm-tree, and pass into eternity.

REVERENCE AND GODLY FEAR,

Is that grace whereby the real christian maintains upon his heart a constant lively sense of the infinite distance betwixt the infinite Creator and himself, a finite creature ; and from a principle of love to the glorious Jehovah, as the best and greatest of beings, he stands in awe to sin against him, by thinking, speaking, or doing, what were unworthy the perfections of his nature, and the relations he bears to him as his Creator and Redeemer.

He is peculiarly cautious, not to intrude with bold

curiosity into those sublime mysteries which he hath not seen, and which are only comprehensible to the divine understanding, nor to censure those dispensations which are unaccountable to his reason, when he makes darkness his pavilion.

If, in the sacred volume of inspiration, mysterious doctrines are revealed which far transcends his imperfect views, what he cannot comprehend he humbly admires, and betakes himself to the sanctuary of Paul, "O the height!" For he rightly judges, that to be ignorant of what is revealed, is not more shameful and inglorious, than curiously to pry into what God hath wrapped in darkness. He considers religion as bearing a resemblance to the beautiful fabric of the temple, in which there were not only commodious chambers, and a great variety of necessary apartments, but above the sacred roof, high towers and lofty battlements, which, though ornamental to the building, and grateful to the view of the spectator, would yet be dangerous to climb upon. He knows that it is an adversary who sets him on these pinnacles, where none can stand but he who builds the temple of the Lord and destroys the works of the devil. That lust of the mind which commonly goes under the name of curiosity, he endeavours to subdue, as well as any other unruly appetite.

If, in the course of providence, the Almighty's path is in the sea, and his footsteps in the deep waters, he is persuaded that he is fully able to justify his ways to men, and fears to snatch out of his hand the reins of government, or call before his tribunal the Judge of all the earth. If, therefore, he presumes to talk with him of his judgments, it is with the profoundest submission, and the most lowly reverence, rather confessing the darkness of his own mind, than challenging the divine procedure.

The holy and tremendous name of God he never takes up in his lips, but on some occasion worthy of it; he makes it not a needless expletive of his dis-

course, nor speaks of it with an air of indifference, but with a serious countenance, and humble heart, upon the most solemn occasions. When he addresses him in prayer, though he uses a holy filial boldness, yet is he singularly careful lest even this should degenerate into a vile commonness of spirit, and an unholy familiarity, altogether unbecoming creatures whose designation is but dust and ashes.

In the whole course and tenor of his life, the same holy principle makes him fearful of offending God, by doing what is forbidden in the law, or neglecting what is expressly commanded. In ordinances of divine worship, he keeps a steady eye to the sacred institutions of the word, and fears to add inventions of his own, as though he could improve upon the schemes of unerring and comprehensive wisdom. Presumptuous sinning, and presumptuous adding, are equally removed from him.

In times of temptation he preserves his integrity, because of the fear of God : in times of danger he is confident : when sinners in Zion are afraid, and fearfulness surprises the hypocrite, he fears indeed, but with that filial fear which is the daughter of faith, the sister of love, the mother of obedience, and the beginning of wisdom.

ON SELF-DENIAL.

THE christian who has learned to deny himself is indeed abundantly conscious of the exalted dignity of his nature, which, by his first creation, is but a little lower than the angels, and by his second, in Christ Jesus, is elevated much beyond them ; for, of which of the angels was it ever said at any time, “ We are the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones ? ” And again, “ Of him *are* ye in Christ Jesus.” Much he esteems that rational and immortal spirit within him, endowed with such noble powers :

much he reverences that curious fabric of flesh, builded for a temple of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, while he entertains the highest opinion of his own excellency, he most effectually promotes his own interest. But there is a self which he does not esteem,—a self which he does not gratify, that is, which he denies.

Self-estimation is the first thing to which his amiable character is opposed. He studies not to think of himself more highly than he ought, whether by fancying himself possessed of those endowments he really wants, or putting too high an estimate on those which he really has. As to the former, however much he prizes the noble faculty of reason; however much he regards the duties of morality; he trusts not to that as an infallible guide; nor to these as the grounds of his acceptance. His intellectual powers, he sees, are now impaired, that he cannot discern spiritual truths aright: he renounces his own reason: his moral abilities, he knows, are now enfeebled, that he cannot practise spiritual duties in a right manner: he renounces his own righteousness; those moral virtuous actions which some would so denominate, he sees to be but filthy rags; and if performed by the unregenerate, like the deaf ears of corn which grow upon the house-tops, wherewith the mower cannot fill his hand, nor he that binds sheaves his bosom. Neither does he put too high an estimate on these excellencies, real or supposed, which he is possessed of. His natural accomplishments; his civil distinctions; his religious privileges and attainments; all these he counts as loss and dung; or, shall we say he denies his natural, his civil, and his religious self? He thinks not too highly of himself. For his natural accomplishments, as the elegant proportions of his body, or the sprightliness of his mind,—all these he knows are the gifts of Heaven, and but of small account when compared with the more excellent qualities of pure and undefiled religion; nor for his civil distinctions,—these he knows are still more foreign

to him, being mere external adjuncts, and cannot add one cubit to his stature ; nor for his religious attainments,—he thinks it not expedient for him to glory, though he could come to visions and revelations of the Lord ; far less can he value himself, with the vaunting Israelites, on his church privileges, crying out, “The law, the law, the temple of the Lord ;” and “We have Abraham for our father.”

Let us now see how he stands affected to self-gratification. Those darling lusts which seemed as much a part of himself as his right hand, his right foot, or his right eye, he is taught to deny by the grace of God which bringeth salvation. Nor is he only willing to abridge himself of sinful pleasures, but upon occasion to forego his lawful comforts,—to part with his worldly riches, for they are not his main treasure,—with his worldly reputation, for it is not his chief honour. Even the religious and holy desires of the new creature, he may sometimes be called to moderate ; though his heart should sicken at the thought, yet must he consent to the deferring of his hopes. If Christ says, “Touch me not,” then must he be all submission. “Tarry here a while longer in your state of absence from the Lord ;” he acquiesces, though it were far better to depart. Pure are his pleasures, exalted are his honours, high are his revenues ; whilst, that he may please God, he pleaseth not himself : for, while he loses himself in God, he finds himself again to infinite advantage.

Thy glorious pattern, O self-denying Saviour, he principally regards, who, for our good and advantage, pleased not thyself ; who subjected to thy heavenly Father thy human will, in drinking the bitter cup. A far more illustrious example of self-denial than that of thy most eminent apostle, who pleased not himself, but all men in all things, not seeking his own profit, but the profit of many : what he only wished for, thou didst actually undergo, when thou wast accursed for thy brethren’s sake, according to the

flesh. It is thine, O humble Saviour, to cast this mighty idol, Self, down from her seat, and utterly abolish it in our souls. Thy heavenly doctrine, though far from flattering the lusts of men, yet it is not rigorous and severe, even when thou sayest, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself;" for what thou requirest of us thou workest also in us, and goest before us by thy own encouraging example. For this end thou laidest down thy life, "that they which live might not live unto themselves, but unto him that died for us."

ON HUMILITY.

HUMILITY consists in a low opinion of one's self, and in a contempt of vain-glory. He that shines with this noble grace is a person whose high imaginations have been cast down, not by the force of moral precepts, but by the mighty weapons of the christian warfare. Once he thought he was something, now he sees that he is nothing: once he was desirous that other men should think highly of him, and he loved to have the pre-eminence; but now he can, in some sincerity, say, with the royal Psalmist, "Mine heart is not haughty, neither are mine eyes lofty. I have behaved and quieted myself as a child weaned of his mother. My soul is even as a weaned child." Shall we describe him in relation to his neighbour, and to his God?

In relation to his neighbour, he thinks more meanly of himself than of others, or than others think of him; and he never abhors himself more than when he is most highly applauded. His Saviour was meek and lowly, when the multitudes were crying, Hosannah. If you reprove him, he esteems it not an insult but a kindness; and is not ashamed to own that he was in fault, or error. Talk to the praise of another before

him, and he is not disgusted, as though himself were rivalled and eclipsed. You tell him that some person of note has been left to fall, and be a scandal to religion ; is he puffed up on this account ? Nay ; he rather mourns, and adores the freedom of restraining grace towards himself. You inform of him some, who, instead of prasing him, revile and calumniate him : but he is before-hand with his reproachers ; for he has more ill things to lay to his own charge than these you mention ; which makes him as a deaf man, in whose mouth are no reproofs. His rest is no more wounded than a dead man's would be, by thrusting a spear into his side. The contempt of bad men does not deter him from, nor the applause of good men incite him to, the discharge of religious duties. He loves his neighbour, not in proportion to the regard his neighbour expresses to him, but in proportion to his real worth. If he talks at any time in a humble strain about himself, he is not laying snares for your applause. His humble acknowledgements are not empty words, like the *Dei gratia*, which the proudest kings will write upon their coin ; or like the pope's subscription to his haughty bulls, "A servant of the servants of God ;" but he speaks the genuine sentiments of his heart, and from the bottom of his very soul. If he is obliged at any time to vindicate his character from unjust aspersions, it is with the greatest reluctance ; and is afraid lest he be talking like a fool. If he compares himself with sinners, he is ready to think himself the chiefest of them ; if with saints, he apprehends that he is the least of them all. He sees some excellency about the meanest of his fellow-christians, in which himself is surpassed. His eyes are full of his own wants, and the perfections of other men.

In relation to God, how does he behave himself ! He thinks that the blessings he receives from God are above, and the afflictions which God lays upon him are beneath, his deserts. As to the former, he

cries, "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies." As to the latter, he acknowledges, "Thou hast punished me less than mine iniquity deserves." If he sins against God, he takes the blame to himself; but if he does any good, he gives God the praise. "I laboured; yet not I. Not unto us, not unto us; but unto thy name give glory."

Instructed by this noble grace, he willingly submits his proud reason to heavenly revelation; and refuses not to admit for true, those tremendous mysteries which far transcend his natural comprehension. But chiefly, being persuaded of the vast imperfection of his own righteousness, that his goodness extends not unto God; that he is but an unprofitable servant, and a great deal worse; he despairs of himself, flies to the mercy, and submits unto the righteousness of God, as the sole ground of his pardon and acceptance. He cannot dig, he cannot work for life; for he is a maimed beggar; but to beg he is not ashamed.

This is that distinguishing character of christian humility, to which the highest moralist can produce no claim; nor can ever expect to arrive at, by all the precepts of philosophy. O blessed is that man, who is endowed with this humble spirit! Humility, thou first of graces, thou leading ornament of every noble creature, without whom the most glorious accomplishments are eclipsed into disgrace; with whom the most ordinary and mean qualifications are heightened into glory! who should not love thy comely features? and what tongue should be silent in thy praises? Thou art the holy ornament of angels, who, in the awful presence of their Maker, cover their faces with their wings; and with their wings they cover their hands, when employed in services of love to man.

The saints in every age, have gloried in thee, as a most distinguishing ingredient in their character; and according to their eminency, has been their measure of humility. The high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, and will not give his glory to another, when

from his high and holy place he views men and their works, he turns away disdainful from the pompous palaces of mighty kings, the courts of popes and sultans, and throws a favourable glance towards the humble cottage of him in whose heart thou dwellest.

But above all, to recommend thy heavenly charms, the Son of God disdained not the form of a servant, the humble manger, the ignominious cross, the gloomy sepulchre. O let not man be proud, when God was so humble ! Begone from my heart, all self-elating thoughts ; hence, my ambitious desires. But come, holy humility, with all thy amiable train, and fix thy residence in my soul ; predominate in my affections. Holy Spirit, make all her enemies her footstool ; and teach me to despise myself, except on the account of my rational and immortal nature, to spurn under my feet all vain-glory, and to pursue the honour that cometh from God only.

ON MEEKNESS.

THE meek christian is one who has learned, at the school of Jesus Christ, to restrain unlawful anger, and to moderate lawful resentment. If he is endowed with what is commonly called a good natural temper, he exercises this good temper from christian motives ; such as, the pardoning love of God, the command of the law, the example of Jesus of Christ, who was meek and lowly. But though his natural temper should happen to be fiery and eager, he has found the virtue of that promise, “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb ; the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.” He is not angry but on just occasions ; and even when the occasion is just, his anger is kept under proper regulations.

First, He is careful never to be angry, but when

there is a cause. To be angry at irrational creatures, that are not capable of offending, or understanding their offence ; to be angry at his brother, because he reproves him, or because he outshines him in gifts or grace, he endeavours to avoid. But especially he trembles to be angry with God ; whether on account of the strictness of his precepts, or the sovereignty of his dispensations. Jonah, you did not well to be angry, when God spared Nineveh, that great city, in which were so many thousand infants, and also much cattle.

But be the cause ever so just, if it is only a personal injury by which he is provoked, he is not soon angry. No ; this is the mark of a fool. By deferring his anger, he often discovers, that there is no reason for it ; that no injury or affront was intended against him ; but perhaps his brother designed doing him a favour. He resembles not flax nor gun-powder, that mount in a blaze at touching the least spark of fire ; but he may be compared to green wood, that is not easily blown into a flame ; and to a flint, that emits no sparkles, unless it be often and violently struck. He is not much angry. He will be so far from indulging the mad sallies of passion for trivial offences, that though the provocation were great, and the resentment strong, he acts still like a reasonable creature ; and is not unfitted for the duties incumbent on him, whether social or religious. He is not long angry : he loves not that the sun should go down upon his wrath. He leaves it to heathens to be implacable. He believes that anger rests in the bosom of none but fools. He is swift to reconciliation ; and esteems it his real honour to pass over a transgression.

Do you ask, What are the evidences of this fruit of the Spirit ? First of all, it appears by his courteous and obliging behaviour to all, his enemies and persecutors not excepted. Even them he is ready to serve, if it lies in his power, by discharging towards them the duties of humanity. It appears by the gentle

strain of his discourse, which, like the waters of Siloah, goes softly.—When he is reviled, he reviles not again; but either by a soft answer turns away wrath; or, by a modest silence, and not answering again, he withdraws the fuel from the fire of strife. It appears by the sweetness of his looks, which are not sullen and morose, but mild and inviting. But chiefly it appears in the thoughts of his heart. The words, the looks, and the outward actions, are not infallible evidences of this heavenly temper. These may be no more but artificial meekness. Even the fell tribunal of the inquisition can talk in the meek style, and recommend to mercy her wretched victims with cruel mockery. But as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. He can think of his implacable enemy without wishing a curse unto him. He looks upon rancour harboured in the breast, as a more dreadful foe than any outward adversary possibly can be.

He is a profitable hearer of the word; for he receives it with meekness. His prayers are pure and prevalent; for he lifts up holy hands without wrath. His reproofs are successful; and let them be never so sharp, are well received, because the spirit of meekness anoints them like a precious oil. He is clad in a kind of armour that renders him invulnerable. He lies not at the mercy of every puny assailant, that would attack him with the sword of the tongue; because, like a deaf man, he hears not. He is a most acceptable friend, and a most victorious enemy; and his enemies, though like the devil for malice, are forced to reverence him. When he shews out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom, he is a bright image of Christ; a living representation of God; who is “slow to anger, of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.” He takes the most effectual method to promote even his temporal interest, ease, and reputation. He has the real enjoyment of himself; is a true inheritor of the earth. And God at last will beautify him with salvation.

ON THE MERCIFUL MAN.

MERCY is a disposition to feel the miseries of others, and to do what lies in our power to prevent and redress them. There is a natural mercy, consisting in a softness of temper, and an aversion at seeing, hearing, or even thinking of the distresses of our fellow-creatures. There is a moral mercy, when we pity the miserable from moral considerations. Both those may, no doubt, be found in unrenewed hearts, and were actually practised by many of the Gentiles that knew not God. A man who would shudder in every joint, to see a fellow-creature broke upon the wheel, or broiled on the fire; a man who would be far from thinking it a glorious spectacle, to look at a ditch full of the blood of slaughtered men, is not immediately a merciful man, in the full and scriptural sense. It is true, this humane and gentle temper, is far more amiable than savage barbarity. To be implacable and unmerciful, is a truly heathen character; and the habitations of cruelty should be found nowhere, but in the dark places of the earth. But there is a christian mercy, which is often enjoined as a weighty matter of the law, and an eminent grace of the gospel, and with which none are endowed but the elect of God, the holy and the beloved. Let us describe it from its springs, its objects, and its acts.

The merciful man is one that loves to shew mercy, not only on account of a soft, natural temper, self-interest, philosophical considerations; but from an unfeigned regard to the authority of God in his holy law, an earnest desire after conformity to his image; and especially from a serious sense of his pardoning mercy in Christ Jesus. How can he but forgive a few pence, who is himself forgiven in ten thousand talents? Has God, all gracious and merciful, opened his bowels of compassion to me, a wretched guilty creature; and shall I shut up my bowels of compas-

sion from my distressed brother? Shall I put on bowels of adamant and brass, who am a pensioner of the tender mercies of God? It is mercy that feeds me; it is mercy that clothes me; it is mercy that delivers my soul from the lowest hell, where I had been miserable beyond all expression. I have freely received mercy, and shall I not freely give? He is merciful to others, for God is merciful to him.

Do you ask the objects about which this heavenly temper is versant? It is the creature that is either actually under, or else capable of misery. A good man is merciful to his beast, and much more to his brother. Merciful to his beast, did we say? yea, to the beast of his mortal enemy. He would not suffer the ass of his most malignant foe, to die under his burden, but would, according to the divine law, assist the helpless animal. He could not even find in his heart, wantonly to destroy, or without necessity to torment, the most insignificant and despicable insect. Much more is he pitiful, and of tender mercy, towards those more noble beings of his own species. He weeps with them that weep. It is not the miseries of the body alone, for which he is melted into commiseration. A diseased leprous soul is, to his view, a far more deplorable object, than a distempered body. He pities the fatherless and the widow; but much more the Godless and the Christless. He beholds transgressors like thee, O David! and is grieved, because they keep not God's law.

Shall we come to the works of mercy? What are the sweet waters that issue from this fountain? The merciful man will not always have it in his power, actually to relieve the distressed; but he weeps for them, wishes for them, prays for them, and does for them according as he is able. If they are indigent, or in want of the necessities of life, hungry or naked, he puts them not off with good words, but gives them the things they have need of, or excites others to do it that are more wealthy. If they are insolvent, and

unable to pay their just debts, he will not imprison, where nothing can be had, nor take for a pledge the utensils by which they must earn their daily bread, or the garments in which they must sleep. If they are solitary, he will visit them ; if disconsolate, he will comfort them ; if ignorant, he will instruct them ; if doubtful, he will counsel them ; if aspersed and calumniated unjustly, he will vindicate their characters ; if oppressed, he will espouse their cause ; if weak, he will bear their infirmities ; if careless and secure, he will warn them, and with compassion pull them out of the fire ; if they have fallen, he will endeavour to recover them. His wounds are faithful. Blessed be his anger, for it is kind ; his wrath, for it is merciful. He remembers the blessed maxim of the apostle James, that “ he who converteth a soul from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.”

He is an image of God, who delights in mercy, and remembers it even in the midst of wrath. He is an image of Christ, whose whole life was one continued track of shewing mercy. His miracles were all of the merciful kind, but two. His death was a most eminent act of mercy. And still he is a merciful High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Commonly the merciful man obtains mercy from man, when he stands in need of it ; as they have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy. But whatever treatment they should receive from their fellow-creatures, they shall obtain mercy of the Lord in that day, which will come to all others cruel with wrath, and with fierce anger. Yet, after all, it is not according to his own mercy, which is but a work of righteousness that he has done ; but according to the mercy of God, he shall be saved. Having obtained mercy of the Lord, by which he was made merciful at first, he shall obtain mercy more and more.

ON TENDERNESS OF HEART.

THE tender-hearted christian is he from whom the hard and stony heart, which neither the hammer of judgment could break, nor the oil of mercy soften, is, in some good measure, taken away. His understanding is no more so unteachable, nor his affections so immoveable, as formerly. His will has laid aside her obstinacy, and his conscience her insensibility.

Shall we describe him first in relation to God? One reproof tendered in the sacred oracles, will enter more into his soul, than an hundred stripes into a fool. His heart stands in holy awe of the precepts, and trembles at the threatenings of the word of God. But, O how melting, how alluring are the great and precious promises! And all its heavenly doctrines drop as the rain, and distil as the dew; not when it falls upon a rock, from which it runs presently off again; but when it descends upon the parched ground, refreshing the thirsty earth, and making it as a watered garden, or a field which the Lord has blessed. As to the dispensations of divine Providence, he strives to know the language of them, and to comply with the design of the Almighty, both when he smiles and frowns. "Shew me," he cries, "why thou contendest with me." Unlike those hardened wretches, whom the weeping Jeremiah describes in that most doleful lamentation: "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; yea they have refused to return. His flesh trembles for fear of God; and he is afraid of his judgments." He sees when God's hand is lifted up; he turns at his reproof, and learns righteousness, when his judgments are in the earth. While the ungodly sinner despises the riches of his goodness, and after his hard and impenitent heart, treasures up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath; he is

led by the goodness of God, unto repentance, and every mercy pains him to the heart.

The influences of the holy and blessed Spirit, he cherishes in the most kindly manner. He is fearful to quench this holy fire, or fright away this heavenly dove, when he vouchsafes to alight upon his soul. He abhors their impiety, whose character it is, “ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.” As to the divine glory and honour, he is grieved with whatever he judges to encroach upon it; and cannot but choose to be uneasy and perplexed, when the interests of true religion are threatened with imminent danger. His heart, with Eli, trembles for the ark of God.

Shall we describe him next in relation to his neighbour, for whom he puts on bowels of mercy, and with whose miseries he cannot be unaffected? Is he not grieved for the poor? Does not his soul weep for him that is in trouble? But chiefly, he is touched with compassion for their deplorable condition, who go on in an evil course with prone career, whilst he sees them incurring the dreadful vengeance of the living and Almighty God. Rivers of waters run down his eyes, because they keep not his law.

And with relation to himself, the tender-hearted christian is careful to maintain the peace of his own conscience; to have that faithful monitor rightly informed; and with the strictest attention, to follow its impartial directions. When the consciences of some are seared, as with a hot iron, his may be resembled to the eye, that tenderest of organs, which even the smallest particle of dust will put into disorder. For, as to sin, by which alone the conscience is defiled, the tender christian is fearful to commit it, easy to be convinced, impatient to be purged.—Fearful to commit it. Though secrecy and pleasure should conspire to tempt him with interest and advantage! yet, under the influence of this tender frame, he baffles all temptation; and even abstains from those actions of which he is suspicious, being mindful of the apostolic

maxim, "He that doubteth, is condemned if he eat." He dares not come too near the borders of his christian liberty. He studies not only what is lawful, but what is expedient for him to do. Easy to be convinced, he does not add rebellion to his sin ; like them whose perverseness is as witchcraft, and their stubbornness is as idolatry.

He goes not about to cover his transgressions, as Adam, but takes with his iniquity, when it is said unto him, "thou art the man." A very look will melt his heart, and make him, like that fallen, but recovering apostle who denied his Lord, go forth, and weep bitterly. Even when he has not a monitor to warn him of his sin and danger, his own heart will smite him.

But when the tender christian is convinced, what does he ? Abandon himself to careless stupidity, and wallow in the mire ! No. While he keeps silence, his bones will wax old, through his roaring all the day. "Restore," he cries, "the joy of thy salvation : wash me from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." "For God maketh his heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth him."

ON GRATITUDE.

THE thankful christian is he who thinks highly of the benefits he receives from others, especially from God, and is disposed to make all the suitable returns that lie in his power, whether by word or deed. He no less abhors ingratitude towards his God, than towards his neighbour. And, in every condition, he writes himself a debtor to the Almighty. Him he regards as his principal benefactor ; him, as the fountain of his life, and joy, and comfort : the creatures as the conduit-pipes through which they are conveyed. If he is refreshed by the kindly visits of an agreeable

friend, it is God who comforts him. He sees his face as the face of God. If, by prudent counsel, he is prevented from carrying any unworthy projects into execution, such is the language of his heart, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me ; and blessed be thou, and blessed be thy advice, which kept me back.”

If the gifts of ministers have been edifying and refreshing to his soul, he adores him who put the treasure into these earthly vessels. Solomon must have a thousand ; but the keeper of the vineyard two hundred.

No mercy, however little, can be despised by him ; whilst he considers the greatness of the Giver, and the unworthiness of the receiver. He is so far from thinking himself entitled to the great and distinguishing favours of providence, that he confesses himself unworthy of the least of all his mercies, as having nothing due but wrath and indignation.

He does not bury the former loving-kindnesses of the Lord in the grave of a bad memory, as though the oldness of their date cancelled his obligations ; but every renewed mercy he regards as a new indenture. “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” he says, “forget not all his benefits.”

Is he in prosperity ? he rejoices ; for it is God who comforts him. Is he in adversity ? he rejoices ; for it is God who corrects him. Afflictions he considers as blessings in disguise, as mercies which God vouchsafes him even against his will. Is he punished for his sins ? he is thankful ; for God “punishes less than iniquity deserves.” Is he chastened for his profit ? he is thankful ; for it is that he “may not be condemned with the world.” Is he persecuted for righteousness’ sake ? he is thankful ; for “it is given him in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in his name, but also to suffer for his sake.”

To enhance divine favours the more, he sets a peculiar mark on the endearing circumstances that at-

tend them. Such a mercy was bestowed when I was going on frowardly in the way of my own heart, and might rather have expected tribulation and anguish. Such a blessing was conferred when I was reduced to the greatest extremity, and in the utmost article of danger. For this I solicited the throne of grace, and he heard me out of his holy temple. With that he prevented my supplication; and before I called, he did answer.

Such are the sentiments wherewith his heart is touched, for all those good and perfect gifts that come down from above. But chiefly for spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; for thine unspeakable gift, O God; and that mercy which is from everlasting to everlasting.

What thanks can he render unto God for all the joy wherewith he rejoices on this behalf? Too big for the heart, it overflows into the tongue, and extends itself into the life and conversation. He does not thank God, like the proud Pharisee, with a design to praise himself; nor, like the flattering hypocrite, by way of compliment and form. When he gives God goodly words, he rests not in mere verbal honour; but whilst he offers praise, he orders his conversation aright, and pays his vows to the Most High. Has his liberal God any command for his wealth and substance? it is at his service. For his name, credit, and reputation? it is ready at hand. For his wit and learning? it shall not be wanting. Yea, neither counts he his life dear unto him, if called for at his hand. Gratitude will teach his eye to weep for the dishonours that are done to his bountiful Benefactor; his hand to open in charitable distributions; his feet to run in the way of his commandments. Gratitude for the mercies of God will enable him to present his body a living sacrifice, which is his reasonable service, holy and acceptable unto God.

ON RESIGNATION.

BE it so ; the providential ways of God do not perfectly harmonize with his weak views, nor suit his private inclinations ; if any harsh thought of God should arise in his heart, prompting him to utter words unadvisedly with his tongue, the resigned christian will check the rising thought, and keep the door of his lips with that reproof of the apostle, " Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God ? " And as he trembles to arraign the Judge of all the earth, for what he has already done ; so he dreads to prescribe, with an unholy boldness, what is further proper for him to do, who is the Governor among the nations.

If the favours of providence are distributed in a manner that is, to outward appearance, not altogether so advantageous to the cause of holiness and truth ; when the wicked are great in power, diffusing their verdant pride like the green bay-tree ; he ceases from anger, and forsakes wrath, and frets not himself in any wise to do evil. He rests on the Lord, and waits patiently for him. He lets God alone to be the Governor of the world. " For, who hath instructed the Spirit of the Lord ? and who hath been his counsellor ? " If the subjects of earthly princes submit unto their ordinances, and acquiesce in their administrations, even though strangers to the arcana of their government ; much more he judges it incumbent on him not to presume to censure the mysterious administrations of the blessed and only Potentate, all whose ways are judgment.

Or, if the more distinguishing favours of divine grace and mercy are dispensed in an absolute and sovereign way ; while some are sharers of them, and others equally deserving are passed by ; he dares not, with certain bold blasphemers, traduce the almighty King, as though he were acting the part of a cruel and arbitrary tyrant. For, he considers, that he may

do what he will with his own.—As some high tower, though finished according to the nicest rules of architecture ; yet, to the spectator's eye, who views it in the plain below, may seem crooked, and as threatening a hideous fall, merely through a deception of the sight : so, if the high decrees of the holy One should seem, at any time, partial and unequal, he imputes it to the weakness of his sight, and not at all to the nature of the decrees themselves. “Even so, Father,” he says, “for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

Perhaps he is touched in some tender point ; his afflictions are singular. He is visited with a distress that scarcely happens in an age, to which it is hard to find a precedent, or a parallel. Yet, even in such a case, will the resigned christian say, “It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good,” 1 Sam. iii. 18. Though he be called to quit his earthly possessions for the sake of truth, and to forego some worldly comfort that he most passionately loved ; goes he away sorrowful, like him that had great possessions ? Nay, but like the afflicted, though patient Job, he says, “Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him ? and, who shall say unto him, What doest thou ?” And with faithful Abraham, when about to offer up his beloved Isaac, he rises early in the morning, to keep the word of the Lord.—But we must not at all forget thy most exemplary resignation, O persecuted King of Israel, when flying before an unnatural son, from thy royal palace and city. But, “if he shall say, I have no delight in thee ; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him,” 2 Sam. xv. 26. Though even his days are shortened, and his purposes are broken off, he considers that his times are wholly in the hand of God ; in obedience to the will of God he falls asleep ; and, like Moses, dies at the commandment of the Lord. His soul is not taken from him, but he yields it into the hand of God, as the Father of it, that he may shew it the path of life.

If the answer of his prayers flies not upon the wings of the wind, he does not presently commence a suit against the hearer of prayer. For, still he casts not away this confidence, that "if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." Heareth us in the time himself knows to be most proper, and in what manner shall be most conducive to his glory and our good.

In all his enterprises, he leaves the event in the hand of God. The common phrases, "If the Lord will," and "If God permit," are not mere words of form and custom, when proceeding out of his mouth, but they are expressive of his heart. As being persuaded that his dominion is absolute; "for he is higher than the highest;" that his purpose is immutable; for "he is the rock of ages;" that his power is irresistible; for "unto him every knee shall bow." He is persuaded of the title God has to him; greater than that of parents to their children, of princes to their subjects, or even of the potter to his clay. How can he but be all submission?

But chiefly his resignation is inspired by the knowledge he has of the tenderness of that care which he exercises over him, because he is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. When he reflects what a good Being sits at the helm of affairs, let them that can, be miserable, he cannot possibly be so. As the bee puts not forth its sting in the hive, when stored with honey, gathered from a thousand flowers; no more can he put forth any sting of fretful murmurs, when he tastes that the Lord is good. He trusts in him, and he is blessed.

ON PATIENCE.

THE patient christian is he who bears up, in a becoming manner, under the painful sense of evil pre-

sent, and tedious expectation of absent good. It is true, he is not proof against the inroads of sorrow, and feelings of uneasiness ; he pretends not to the insensibility of the blustering Stoic, as though his texture varied from that of other mortals. His heart is not made of stone, his flesh of brass, nor his bones of iron. Confession of distress may be extorted from him ; but his great soul despairs to be overcome by the greatest severity of trouble, so as to utter with his mouth any impious complaining thought, or hasten with his feet to a sinful deliverance. Sometimes he has been known to glory in tribulation ; to take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities ; and count it all joy, if he fell into divers temptations.

If he cannot attain to this triumphant gloriation, when patience has her perfect work, he studies to maintain a cheerfulness of temper, and a calm serenity of spirit. But, if he cannot be cheerful, he is silent. The sovereign will of God is the resistless argument he uses with his own heart, whilst he considers the various ills of life, not as the births of blind and fatal necessity, but as the appointments of eternal wisdom, both in their weight and number. He is justly persuaded, that if consulting angels had contrived his best and properst affliction, and chose it to his hand, they could not have half so well adjusted what concerns him. He trembles to reply against the God whom all the elements and powers of nature serve ; who gives no account of his matters ; all whose dispensations are the result of excellent wisdom, contrivance, and design. Every bitter cup he considers as brewed in heaven, and as presented by a Father's hand. "The men which are thy hand, O Lord," is the stile he gives to the instruments of his affliction, and "the man which is thy sword." He balances the desert of his iniquities with the grievousness of his trials ; and bears the indignation of the Lord, for that he hath sinned against him. He considers the benefit of the rod, and sees it blossoming,

like Aaron's, and yielding the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

If the Captain of his salvation assigns for him a post of danger, like a good soldier he does not repine, but rather deems it a very singular honour. The louder shall be his applause, when he returns victorious from the battle. Whilst with his eye of faith he commands the vast unbounded prospect of eternity, the longest period of time dwindles into a point : and why should that be much regarded by him, which is but for a moment ? No evil befals him, but he sees it is common unto men.

The prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, and those of whom the world was not worthy, he has for his examples of suffering affliction and of patience. But chiefly he regards thy sufferings, blessed Jesus ; the sorrows of thy life ; the agonies of thy death ; thy bleeding cross ; the anguish of thy deserted soul ; and he remembers his own misery no more.

The Scriptures are his grand dispensary, where he finds balsamic truths and healing doctrines. A text of Paul is more powerful to support his fainting soul, than a sentence from Seneca ; a thought of Solomon, than a paragraph of Epictetus. Of all conquerors, he is the greatest ; for even when conquered, he overcomes. His greatest enemies prove most friendly, and plait for him a crown of glory.

Sickness is better to him than health ; loss than gain ; death than life. While the vessels of clay crack in fire ; he, like a vessel of gold in the furnace, makes no din, but comes out more refined. Patience, thou art thine own reward. Great is thy present peace. Eternal is thy future glory.

ON FORTITUDE.

O FORTITUDE, thou noble grace ; not earthly is thy original. The desperado knows thee not ; nor the

blustering gallant, who, for a glut of fell revenge, or the false name *honour*, dares risk his life in the detested duel. Christianity alone inspires thee: God and angels applaud thee. While cowardice falls into the dangers she would avoid, and loses the life she intended to save: it is thine to make more than a conqueror in whatsoever event. Seated on thy triumphant chariot, thou draggest, at thy glowing wheels; both shame and fear; a dreadful pair. Humility, with prudence, manage thy reins; and glory stands behind thee. By thee the hero is led into the glorious field; and whilst by thee inspired, and love to his dear country, his ears drink in the dreadful thunders of the war with a peculiar pleasure, and his eyes behold the dismal scenes of terror and amazement, nor turn away abhorrent. By thee the still more glorious martyr rejoices in sternest tribulations. So strange is thy enchanting power, galling fetters are turned into delightful ornaments; illuminated is the gloomy dungeon; prisons are palaces and delectable orchards; and furious flames, fit to torment with keenest anguish, are beds of roses, soft and perfumed, as burning martyrs have declared. By thee the King of martyrs, who witnessed a good confession, was taught to endure the racking cross, and to despise the shame. Whilst by thee, the joy which he now possesses was set before him, and the almighty Father as his helper, he set his face like a flint, and made his heart as an adamant. Great is thy present glory. Eternal is thy future reward.

Is then the bloody field, the scaffold, or the stake, the only theatres for holy fortitude? Perhaps the cause of your country, and the cause of your Redeemer, may never call you to expose and cast away your life. But go, and bravely dare to be singular in a declining age; though hissing crowds should point at you as you go along, and men of fashion should despise you. Reverence the Sabbath. Reverence the name of the Lord. Bow the knee; and let the voice

of praise be heard in your dwelling. Reprove the bold blasphemer. Confess your faults, when it is for the glory of God ; knowing that it is better to have a wound, a blot in your reputation, than your conscience. And before you will endeavour to retrieve your situation in the world by dishonest baseness, open the door to honest poverty. Be it the leading maxim of thy life, that nothing is greatly shameful, but sin ; nor greatly fearful, but the displeasure of your Maker. In a present life you shall have peace of conscience ; and, in the world to come, receive an incorruptible crown.

ON CONTENTMENT.

THE Christian who rejoices in this excellent grace, is one who would not indeed be satisfied with ALL this world affords, as his eternal portion ; yet can he say, even of its smallest share, "It is enough." Whether he views himself as a member of the great society of the universe, or of the civil society to which he particularly belongs, he is pleased with the station which providence has allotted for him. He looks not with envy on those above him, and repels not only outward murmurings against the disposer of his lot, but inward repinings.

If the middle state of life be that which falls to him, where he is equally removed from the pomp of wealth, and the indigence of poverty, he considers it as by far the more eligible condition, like him who prayed, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." For, as the panes of glass in our windows, by their hardness and solidity, bid a defiance to the stormy blast, yet, by their transparency, admit the cheerful beams of the sun ; so does this middle state of life defend him from the injuries of the world, and at the same time, it excludes not the divine favour, nor darkens the light of

his countenance ; whilst the wealthy are exposed to peculiar temptations, and the poor are not without their manifest inconveniences, and even solicitations unto iniquity.

But, if poverty and want be his associates, whether entailed upon him by his birth, or introduced by the hand of accident or calamity, he can cheerfully welcome these unjoyous guests, and find them very tolerable companions. As the soldiers had no power to break the bones of his Redeemer, "when they saw that he was already dead," so poverty, with her attendant train of miseries, is unable to break his bones, and wound his rest, when he is crucified to the world. He knows, though he could call the world his own, God never put therein such heavenly virtue, as to inspire contentment ; reserving this as his own great prerogative.

Why should he be rendered miserable, by the want of that, whose presence would not make him happy ? If he has not all the advantages of riches and affluence, neither is he harassed with the anxious cares, and dismal fears, and other sore temptations, to which those in high life are necessarily subject. If he shines not in the glitter of plenty, how many darts of agony will he escape ! So, thunders strike tall trees, and lofty mountains, while humbler shrubs and lonely vales remain untouched.

This world he regards as an inn, where the shortness of his stay reconciles him to the indifference of his accommodation ; and, as a theatre, where it matters not whether he act the part of a king or a peasant, but how well he acquits himself in the character he assumes. He is not always poring on the dark side of his lot, and reflecting how many are happier than himself ; but oftentimes turns his thoughts upon the favourable ingredients of his condition, and recollects how many have been, and are, this precious moment, more miserable than he.

If a valuable friend, or a beloved relative, is torn

from his bleeding bosom, by the relentless hand of death, he remembers how many still survive. He never can persuade himself that he is poor, whilst possessed of so much natural wealth as a man, and so much heavenly treasure as a Christian. The glorious canopy of heaven he considers as the roof of his earthly mansion, far more majestic than that of the most magnificent palace, though adorned with glittering silver, and resplendent gold. The green earth is the carpet on which he treads. When the crystal well supplies him with drink, he can forego the flowing bowl. The golden sun, the sparkling stars, and the smiling flowers that strew the earth, shew more glorious in his eye, than gems and diamonds ; and, indeed are as truly possessed by him, as these are of their owners. Health of body, soundness of mind, (blessings which, for their commonness, are but too generally forgot), excite the most grateful emotions in his heart. But especially as a Christian, O how his riches rise ! how his treasures are replenished ! God himself is the portion of his cup, and the word of God the charter for his inheritance.

How can he be envious at the prosperity of the wicked, when the unknown merits of Immanuel are all his own ? Though he has but little, he knows it is the earnest of infinitely more, and every table that is spread for him in the wilderness, was purchased by his Redeemer's blood, before it was procured by his labour. It is not indeed a little of God will satisfy him ; nor will he be pleased with a small share in the treasures of eternity. These best gifts he most earnestly covets. But as to temporal acquisitions, he esteems it " better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud."

By moderating his desires, he has found out the noble secret of turning every thing to gold, and finds a compendious way of obtaining whatever he will. He is a true Benjamite, who can use the left hand as well as the right, and manage both fortunes to advan-

tage : and the liveliest image of the blessed God ; for, like Solomon's good man, he ranges not abroad for happiness, being "satisfied from himself."

ON CONTEMPT OF THE WORLD.

BUT, what shall we say of him who despises the world, and its fashions that pass away ? Shall we say that he is lazy and indolent in his lawful calling, neglecting to provide for his own ? No ; for we find, that even the Son of God himself, in the days of his obscurity, handled the tools of the carpenter. Or that his lawful comforts are tasteless and insipid to him ? How then should he be duly thankful to his all-gracious Benefactor ? he neither admires the foolish action of him who threw his money into the sea, nor the discontented practice of those, whether of the Pagan, Jewish, or Christian denomination ; who, being weary of the world, condemned themselves to a civil death, or voluntary banishment from the cheerful haunts of men, retiring to the lonely cell, or solitary desert. He knows there is nothing better than for a man to rejoice in his labour ; even in his worldly portion he enjoys his God, and reaps the love of his dying Redeemer.

But such is the acquaintance he has with the glory of heaven, the dignity of his own soul, the vain and hurtful nature of the world ; that he highly disdains to set his affections on the things of the earth, either in whole or in part, as though they could be the main springs of his felicity.

Is he placed in humble circumstances, having no large quantity of earthly goods at his command ? He discerns, in this providence, the kindly affection of a tender parent, removing from the reach of a beloved child, what might prove hurtful and pernicious ; whilst those for whom he has no such tender regard,

are permitted to fall upon it ; and, to their unspeakable prejudice, to fill their bellies with his hidden treasure. He envies not, but rather pities the men of superior rank, whose wishes are not crowned by the abundance of their riches ; but their sorrows are multiplied, and new fuel is added to their lusts, and many of them, alas ! have their portion in this life. As for those that set the world in their hearts, (by far too fine a frame for such a wretched pebble), all whose days are sorrow, and their labour grief ; he can no more esteem them truly rich, than we would think the man happy, whose entrails should be tortured with a precious diamond, fit to shine in the crown of the most exalted monarch.

If he is rich in this world, he is neither too joyful in having, too solicitous in keeping, too anxious in increasing, nor too sorrowful in losing these corruptible things. He rejoices more in the promises of the bible, than in the gold of his coffers. As the seamen are careful not to admit into their vessel the waters of the ocean, by any the smallest cranny, as well aware how quickly they would descend to the bottom ; so he is fearful to admit this world into his affections, lest he be drowned in perdition. He is fully persuaded, that he is as much an idolater, who offers the affections of his heart to the unrighteous mammon, and says unto fine gold, " thou art my confidence ;" as that he is an idolater who uncovers the head, kisses the hand, or bows the knee to an idol, or honours the vanities of the Gentiles with sacrifices and incense. Too eagerly to grasp what is his own, he equally abhors, as violently to snatch at what is the property of his neighbour. Whilst the niggardly wretch wants what he has, as well as what he has not, and his good is not in his hand, he enjoys the gifts of providence, by moderately using them to the glory of his Creator, and the good of his fellow creature. He steers the middle course between the sordid miser, who lays up his talent in a napkin, and the prodigal waster,

who consumes upon his lusts, what was given him for more noble ends. He thankfully receives, but does not anxiously pursue the goods of fortune, nor abandon himself to unmanly grief, when they make unto themselves wings, and fly away. The world is dead to him. What though you bury it out of his sight ? He reverences himself, and highly despairs to place his happiness in what was only designed for his temporary accommodation. Mindful of his high original, he suffers not this servant to bear rule ; which were to submit to a slavery, of all others the most inglorious. Whilst he converses much with things eternal and unseen, he acquires a high disdain of the temporal things that are seen. As he who deals much in pieces of gold, thinks little of copper money ; the good of the heavenly country is before him, even the better and enduring substance ; and like the venerable patriarch, he regards not his stuff of wordly enjoyments, if he is called to forego them. He rejoices more that his friends are holy, than that they are wealthy ; and is more anxious to instil into the minds of his children, sentiments of devotion, than to bring them acquainted with the art of making their fortune, and growing considerable in the world. He uses the world as a flower, which preserves its beauty and verdure the longer the less you handle it. When the busy worldling at once throws up his interest in the comforts of time, and pleasures of eternity, this heaven-born soul has the true relish of life ; and, at the same time, can rejoice in all the treasures of eternity as his own proper mercies. Happy soul ! he has provided for himself bags that wax not old, and durable riches, which no rust can corrupt, no thief can steal ; of which no storm, no conflagration, can bereave him.

ON THE PURSUIT OF REAL RICHES.

CAN he be poor that is an heir of God, whose every perfection is more glorious, than the mountains of prey? Who can call the unsearchable riches of Christ his own, and is interested in the Pearl of great price? Whose is that saving grace, more precious than gold tried in the fire? that heavenly wisdom that cannot be valued for jewels of fine gold? Who can rejoice in the divine word, more than they that find great spoil, and take it for his heritage for ever? Who is rich in good works, which are profitable unto men? Who can turn even reproaches into greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt? Of whom it may be said, “Though he is not the lord of this village—though that spot of ground is not ploughed by his oxen, that all things are his?” Who, viewing the spacious garden of his wealthy neighbour, is transported by his thoughts to the celestial paradise; and beholding his magnificent palace, can meditate of the house not made with hands? Who can lift his eyes to that blue vault of heaven, adorned with sparkling stars, and considers it as the pavement of his heavenly mansion? Who can consider his scanty share of worldly good things, as the purchase of his Redeemer; and a little that he hath, as better than the riches of many wicked? He has little; but it is the earnest of much. It is not his portion; but it is sanctified by the word and prayer. He has little; but the blessing of the Lord maketh rich. He has little; but he lays it up in heaven, and lends it to a good Creditor, even unto the Lord, who will render it again with usury.

No; he cannot be poor. For he is possessed of the true riches, in comparison of which, how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!

But he is poor, who, though he fill his house with silver and gold, high fed on the lap of fortune, is yet in straits, even in the fulness of his sufficiency. Care,

like a greedy vulture, sits preying on his heart. He knows no other riches, but such as may be acquired with injustice, used with indiscretion, and possessed without happiness.

Alas ! these corruptible things cannot redeem the soul from death ; nor deliver from the incumbent miseries of life. Will the head-ache be less perceived, that the temples are surrounded with a crown ? Will the fever be in the least abated, if the sick person is laid on a bed of state ? Far less will the resentful conscience be bribed with gold and silver to intermit its wrath. See how they make unto themselves wings, and fly away ! How often has he solicited the cold hand of charity to-day, who yesterday washed his steps in butter, and lived on the finest of the wheat ? Where is the man whose glory ever descended into the grave ?

O ye children of men, whose foreheads meet the skies ; whose souls are rational and immortal ; are these the precious acquisitions for which ye stoop ignobly down, and dig into the bowels of the earth ? Is it thus ye pant after the dust of the earth, and think no pains too great, no dangers too considerable, to deter you from the fantastic chase ?

O did we know the things that are freely given us of God ; did we know what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints ; how would we trample under our feet these lying vanities ! Are these thy boasted offers, O vain world ? are these a portion for my soul ? Can these enable me to live up to my native dignity ? Begone, ye vain pretenders. Welcome, ye durable riches ; ye safe enjoyments, that puff not up with haughty pride, nor are enemies to my peace, but are evidences of the divine love, and profit in the day of death. Let me call you mine, and I shall not know the approach of poverty.

ON AN INGENUOUS AND FREE SPIRIT.

HE greatly despises the admired things of the world as low and vulgar. He can behold the gilded chariots, the magnificent palaces, and splendid equipages of the great, without a covetous eye.—Conscious of his native dignity as a man, and spiritual as a christian, he rather scorns, than fears to sin. His motto is, Reverence thyself; and from a principle of holy pride, he departs from iniquity, though shame and misery were not its inseparable attendants. The goodness of God has the most powerful influence upon him to lead him to repentance; but he detests the hellish sophistry of those who say, “Let us sin, because grace abounds.” He asks not, “What can the Almighty do for me? What profit shall I have, if I keep his ordinances?” He serves a loving Father, who spares him as a man spareth his son; not for the love of wages, but for the wages of love. He is touched with a generous concern for the glory of God, as well as his own salvation; and for the good of his fellow-creatures, as well as his own interests. He does not say of this duty, it is absolutely necessary? may I be saved, though I neglect it? Nor of that, What damage shall I sustain? Will it infringe my reputation? Will it encroach on my estate? But, is it the commandment of the Lord? The reverence he has for God is not that fear which hath torment; but that fear which is attended by love. He is more grieved by far for the displeasure done to God by his sin, than for any punishment which he may have reason to expect. If you eclipse the countenance of the Almighty, who is his sun and shield; in vain shall the twinkling stars of worldly comforts scatter their feeble beams. He weepeth sore as in the night, because the Comforter that should relieve his soul is far away. He is not always contriving how he may serve God at the cheapest rate; but is rather at a loss

what he shall render to the Lord for all his undeserved mercies. This was thy princely spirit, O royal prophet, "Shall I offer to the Lord that which cost me nothing?" His liberal soul deviseth liberal things. He despairs to be the servant of men ; to see things with others eyes; to couch down under the burden of human imposition : but he searches the scriptures daily, to see if these things be so, that are told him by learned and holy men ; and rejects or receives accordingly. He is willing to receive evil, as well as good, from the hand of the Lord ; and makes not a grave of any affliction, to bury the memory of former mercies. He can blush for those sins that are kept close from the eye of the world ; and mourn even for a long past and pardoned transgression. When God says unto him, "Seek ye my face;" he does not postpone this work till he is laid on the bed of languishing, resolving to allot those dregs of time to the service of the Almighty, which he cannot make a better of ; but he remembers his Creator before the arrival of the evil day.

Does he sit himself in the presence of God ? he behaves as though the eye of men were upon him. Does he converse with man ? he sets the Lord always before him. He is not so sordidly attached to the vain pleasures and enjoyments of the world, but he can, with the joy of the believing patriarch, obey the commandment of the Lord, and go forth, not knowing whither he goes.

ON SINCERITY AND TRUTH.

A LOVELY character indeed ! The person who is really possessed of it, is a man who does not think one way, and speak another ; or speak one way, and act another ; but he thinks as he speaks, and speaks as he does. In all his words, in all his actions, he pays

the most inviolable regard to truth ; more than to his own reputation ; yea, more than to his very life. Truth he esteems as the most precious of all things here below :—the bond of civil society, without which public communities were nothing else but companies of robbers and banditti :—an eminent part of the illustrious image of God ; and a very orient pearl in the crown of JEHOVAH ; who, that he might not stain the truth of his threatening, in acquitting the guilty, did stain the cross with the blood of his only begotten Son. For this end camest thou into the world, O gracious Redeemer ! to bear witness to the truth ; and to confirm all the divine promises, which are yea and amen in thee.

How can the inhabitant of Zion allow himself, for any puny interest, to encroach upon these sacred rights of truth ; for the asserting of which the Most High has exerted himself in such an amazing manner ? How can he suffer himself to turn aside into the crooked paths of falsehood and dissimulation ? whether in judgment or commerce, or in ordinary discourse ? For so should he forfeit all pretensions of belonging to that people, whose Lord is the God of truth :—of possessing that Spirit, whose fruit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth :—of being interested in that Redeemer, whose name is the way and the truth :—and of being entitled to that inheritance, which is the land of uprightness where nothing enters that loveth or maketh a lie.

If he is called to act the part of a witness in civil judicatures, he would not so much as declare what he knows is a falsehood, though the disguising of the truth, in the least instance, would tend ever so much to his advantage. Far less can he be guilty of that heaven-daring wickedness they are guilty of, who call the all-seeing Majesty of heaven to testify against them, if it is not as they say, even when they are conscious that the contrary is the truth. O abhorred wretches ! is it thus you pour contempt on eternal

Sovereignty? thus you insult his omniscience? thus you bid defiance to his Almighty vengeance? Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words; and you shall know that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands.

In matters of commerce, he lays it down as his leading maxim, that honesty is the best policy. He never can think it an advantageous bargain, that derogates from the peace of his conscience, whilst it puts money into his coffers. He not only abhors the grosser methods of dishonest gain; such as, the false balance, the bag of deceitful weights, but the more genteel, or less shameful artifices of fraud and circumvention. Such are these, which Solomon touches at, with the most beautiful simplicity: "It is naught, it is naught, sayeth the buyer; but when he is gone away, then he boasteth."

Nor is this godly sincerity less apparent in all his social interviews, or friendly communications. If he tells any story for true, to divert the company where he is, he takes care it be really a matter of fact; as rightly judging, that nothing can render a man more silly and ridiculous in the eyes of a rational beholder, than to coin absolute fictions, or dress up matters of fact by strange additions, in the garb of novelty, and all for no other end, but to keep the company in good humour, and gain their admiration. If he loses an argument about any doubtful point, sincerity forbids him to give out, that he is fully clear, when, perhaps, he is really in the dark; and that he sees no force at all in his neighbour's argument, though, perhaps, it amounts to a resistless demonstration. If he gives a character of any absent party, he is careful to avoid all hyperbolical descriptions, whether they tend to diminish or to exalt the worthiness of the person spoke of. If he makes a promise, though about a trivial matter, he thinks himself obliged to fulfil it. And lastly, in passing of compliments, his courtesy does not interfere with his veracity; pretending the greatest

warmth of kindness and affection, when perhaps, his esteem is very low, and his affection very cold. His love is without dissimulation.

ON TEMPERANCE.

"BEAR and forbear," is a precept which may include under it, if not the whole, yet a very great part of moral duty. The first part of the maxim relates to the afflictions, the latter part refers to the pleasures of life. Are you in adversity? do things happen to you, not as you could wish? Bear them in a becoming manner, and let patience have her perfect work. Are you in prosperity? do the pleasures of life lie within your grasp? Moderate your desires by temperance, and forbear every unlawful gratification. If you want temperance to use discreetly the pleasurable good things which you enjoy, they are turned into real evils, as afflictions are turned into good by the exercise of patience.

Temperance is the power and command which a man has over himself, in moderating those appetites which are common to us with the beasts. Gluttony, drunkenness, and lust, are the opposite vices. The two first are opposed to sobriety, and the last to chastity.

It is a melancholy matter that ever intemperance should be deemed a necessary article in the character of a gentleman. Why should it not be regarded in the same light as treachery or lying, seeing it is equally condemned by the light of nature itself? Be it so: this ugly hag has the appearance of good-humour, and has many votaries among your gallant spirits: to be intemperate is the most horrid ingratitude in its own nature, and argues a littleness of soul, and narrow way of thinking, extremely contemptible. Was it for this, O ye sons of intemperance! your

bountiful Creator endowed you with his own resemblance ; gave you that comely grace and dignity of aspect by which your bodies are distinguished from the brutes ? Was it for this he spreads your table with unsparing liberality, and gives you all things necessary to support your lives, and comfort your hearts ? That human nature which is by you defiled with filthy lusts, your Creator deigned to assume, when he took upon him the form of a servant. In this same human nature the Holy Spirit deigns to dwell ; and the time is fast approaching when many parcels of it shall be raised in glory, and clothed with immortality. But what is this to you who seem to disclaim your humanity ; and while you affect to be artificial brutes, are worse than the natural ones ! Such knowledge is too wonderful for you ; such motives too celestial to have influence upon your sensual minds ; yet shall the truly wise be influenced from such considerations to cleanse their way.

As to the pleasures which are supposed to attend upon sensuality of every sort, when coolly viewed, they will appear infinitely deficient. He who is perpetually feasted with a cheerful conscience, is an epicure of a right kind. The pleasures of temperance are by far superior to those of her rival, perhaps in real poignancy : but sure I am, if fleshly satisfactions have any thing to recommend them on their own account, the attending evils swallow up the imaginary pleasure ; as Pharaoh's lean kine eat up the fat and well-favoured ones.

As a physician, I could advise you against intemperate courses. Temperance is natural physic, whereas intemperance is artificial distress. Are you not beset round about with fatal distempers ? Is not old age soon to wrinkle your face, and death to toss his dart ? Why invite these unjoyous guests ? They will come soon enough of their own accord. O if you could but think what an ugly set you give unto your features ! Lo ! there is a looking glass, drunkard,

which Solomon holds unto your face. "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contention? who hath babblings? who hath wounds without cause? They that tarry long at the wine." When the glutton is murdered by his own mud; and when the flesh of the adulterer is consumed,—then shall he mourn. O Britain! Britain! though famine, pestilence, and war should never visit you again; yet this is a destruction that wasteth at noon-day.

As your lawyer, I might tell you how this vice drains your worldly substance; is a fire that wasteth to destruction; and will bring you to a morsel of bread.

As a philosopher, I might put you in mind, that it makes you less than a man, darkens the understanding, takes away the heart, metamorphoses you into a beast.

But especially as a divine, I must tell you, that for these things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. We are taught by our holy religion to consider the lusts of intemperance, as the procuring cause of temporal judgments,—of eternal death. What cast Adam out of paradise? Intemperance. What brought the flood on the old world? Intemperance. What kindled Sodom's flames, and laid in ashes the cities of the plain? Intemperance. Intemperance brought on national judgments upon the Jews, and exposes to everlasting burnings. It is related by an eminent author in his travels, that in some places of Germany they executed capital offenders in a very extraordinary manner. There was an engine shaped like a handsome lady, which the criminal saluted, and afterwards retired. He returns again to salute the fatal machine; the figure opens its hands, and cuts him through the heart. "Knowest thou not that the dead are there? that her guests are in the deeps of hell? None that go in unto her return again; neither take they hold of the paths of life."

THE HARMONY OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES;
OR, THE COUNCIL OF PEACE.

As yet there were no mountains covered with verdure, nor valleys clad with yellow plenty. The trees had not yet reared their lofty heads; there was no sun yet lighted up to spread the cheerful day; no firmament glowing with lively sapphires; but the eternal mind alone existed;—himself was his own happiness; beholding from his exalted prospect (from which all future things are present), the numerous events which providence would bring forth, he spied the human race all grovelling in the dust, and utterly unable to recover themselves from a ruinous fall; he saw them in their great progenitor, in the very morning of the world, involved in one common ruin, by the artful insinuation of a subtle apostate; he saw the mischief and spite of his implacable adversary, and resolved to redeem the lapsed race in such a method, as should redound to the glory of his perfections, and the never-ending confusion of the malicious impostor.

He is revealed to have called a solemn council, (for we must speak after the manner of men concerning him), in order to concert the grand design. Holiness and wisdom were present, with all their sister attributes; but chiefly, justice and mercy met together;—graces, which, like the sun and moon, are rarely seen together among the sons of men.

And first, stern Justice rose with an awful countenance,—justice, whose province is to see the rights of heaven; for sooner would she tear the earth from her deep foundations, and blend it with the heavens in undistinguished ruin, than suffer any, the least infringement of the fundamental laws of God: she seemed to be altogether averse from the merciful design: she pleads, that guilty man is no more the proper object of mercy, than the angels that sinned. Have they not violat-

ed thy holy laws, O righteous Father ! See what confusion and disorder sin has introduced into thy fair creation ! How the beautiful subordination of all things to one another, and to thee, the great Creator and Governor, is disturbed ! and, therefore, die he must, or blot me out from thy nature, discard me from thy court, let me be no more the supporter of thy throne.

Holiness and faithfulness did back the speech of justice. For my lustre is stained, said holiness, by sin ; and my honour is pledged, said faithfulness, that the deserved punishment shall be inflicted ; witness the threatening of the law.

But a smiling attribute, in which the Almighty has a peculiar delight, next interposed. Her bowels were moved for us. With looks of gentlest aspect she held forth the olive branch of peace, and dropt these precious words, " Shall mankind perish, thy youngest son, thy latest born ? shall the avenging enemy always blaspheme thy name, and deem himself the conqueror ? O spare thy helpless tribe, befooled out of life and happiness ! O stay thy aim of vengeance ! Thou hast glorified these, my sister attributes already, in thy works ! I see the beauteous creation emerging out of nothing, to the glory of thy power and wisdom ! Holiness and Justice have triumphed in punishing the sinning angels. Shall no ray of my glory shine forth in any of thy works ? Here is a proper season, O let me now be glorified ! It is true, O divine Holiness ! you have been stained by sin ; nor is it less true you are engaged to inflict the awful vengeance, O divine Veracity ! Righteous are thy demands, O spotless Justice ! But is there no surety who may be substituted in the room of offending mortals ? Who is able ? Who is willing ? to underly the threatened vengeance ? Hast thou no expedient, O eternal Wisdom ! to answer the pleas of Holiness and Justice ? Canst thou not devise how

Faithfulness shall be verified, and Mercy be displayed?"

Eternal Wisdom then proposed for the surety, the second person of trinal-unity. It is true, we cannot find one equal to the mighty task among the angels, or the human race ; but, let the Son of God become man ; let him do ; let him die ; let him rise again. The malicious adversary shall behold, with keen despair, all his designs blasted ; God will be highly glorified ; and even the gracious Redeemer will be highly exalted ; while mankind will be honourably saved, by a righteousness of infinite worth and everlasting duration. O glorious device !

The gracious overture found universal acceptance,—the Son of God consented,—Mercy rejoiced,—Justice sheathed her sword,—Faithfulness laid her hand on her mouth,—and Holiness shone out in bright effulgence.

ON STEDFASTNESS.

As the plant never can thrive which is always removed by the gardener from one spot to another ; neither can the christian abound in the work of the Lord, who is not stedfast and immovable. But where shall stedfastness be found ? In the jangling schools, among the wise men, the scribes, the disputers of the world ? Alas ! none have been more unlearned, more unstable, more pernicious wresters of the scripture to their own destruction, than the persons of this denomination ; far less can the obstinate bigot lay any just claim to this character : so call him who is eagerly attached to the peculiarities of his party, without being able himself to render a reason for his persuasion, or willing to undergo an impartial enquiry.

But the established christian is a person who has heard and learned of the Father ; who knows the power of

divine truth on his heart and conscience. Long, perhaps, he wandered in uncertainty, had not where to lay his head, or fix the sole of his foot; but when he found these old paths, these good ways, he found his rest. Alighting, like the dove of Noah, on the true ark, "This is my rest," he says, "and here I will abide." He is no more like the chaff, which, when separated from the grain, becomes the sport of winds; but, rooted in Christ Jesus, he flourishes as the palm-tree, and grows as the cedar in Lebanon: his religious opinions are not now like travellers in an inn, that lodge but for a night, nor his holy resolutions like the morning cloud and early dew that passeth away; but that which he heard from the beginning abides in him, and with full purpose of heart he cleaves unto the Lord: he holds fast the profession of his faith without wavering; and by a patient continuance in well-doing, seeks for glory, honour, and immortality. Is he assaulted by the winds of vain doctrine, and strong temptations? The strength of his persuasion, and the firmness of his resolution, are so far from being overcome, that, on the contrary, they acquire a more unshaken stability; as the tree that is well rooted, clings closer to the soil by being tossed in a tempest.

He peruses the holy scriptures, and finds God's word as a hammer to fasten him, as a nail in a sure place: he purifies his heart from every vile affection, and holds the mystery of faith in a pure conscience: he prays without ceasing, and finds his heart united to fear God's name continually: he sets before his eyes the stedfastness of his Redeemer, who, in the cause of his salvation, did set his face like a flint, and knew that he should not be ashamed,—and the examples of those christians who endured unto the end, and held fast the beginning of their confidence: he would not submit the truth of the doctrine certainly believed by him, even to the judgment of an angel from heaven: in the christian race, he runs not as

uncertainly ; and, in the christian warfare, fights not as beating the air.

While the soul that is unstable as water becomes a ready prey to every temptation, and never can excel in holiness or comfort, the established christian is a lively image of the living God, who is stedfast for ever, and with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. He is a disciple of Christ indeed ; for he continues in his word, an ornament to the religion which he professes, and a bestower of gladness to the heart of every faithful minister, who can say, with the holy apostle, “ Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.” But, O that blessed serenity of his mind, now settled into a pleasing tranquillity, as milk into a sweet cream, when allowed to stand still !

Go on, O happy soul ! resist the devil, stedfast in the faith. Thy prayers are powerful ; thy reward is certain ; and, at the last, you are presented holy and unblameable before him, if ye continue grounded and settled in faith, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.

ON ZEAL.

THE zealous christian is one, who, from a tender regard to the honour of his God and Redeemer, burns with a holy anger against all doctrinal corruptions of his truth, and practical violations of his law, and does what in him lies for advancing his glory among men, and for transmitting to latest posterity, pure and uncorrupted, the holy religion wherein he has been taught. In times of abounding iniquity, he waxes not cold, but glows the more intensely, as the piercing rage of winter imparts new vigour to the element of fire. Though he very well knows the Almighty needs not his feeble help, being fully able to

defend his own cause, and vindicate his injured rights ; yet, like thee, O venerable Elijah ! he is jealous for the Lord of hosts, when the children of Israel had thrown down his altars ; and fears the bitter curse of Meroz, should he not come forth to the help of the Lord,—to the help of the Lord against the mighty : for he remembers how, in the cause of his salvation, his gracious Redeemer was clad with zeal as with a cloak ; he put on vengeance, and it covered him.

He does not, like the scrupulous Pharisee, confine his whole regard to the lesser matters of the law ; while those of greater moment are forgot ; but still he highly values every the smallest truth, and had rather that heaven and earth should pass away, than one jot of his word should perish. Many things which some account of as small punctilioes, and trifling circumstantialis, he finds, upon a nearer inspection, to be worthy of contending for, as being more nearly related to the whole system, and present state of religion, than is generally imagined. Even those laws, whereby the government of Christian societies is adjusted, he considers as necessary as the bark is to the tree, or the hedge to the vineyard.

It is not a blind and headstrong passion that influences him, when he dissents from the way of the multitude, like them who had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, but being able to render a reason to every man that asketh. He may be compared to the bush that burned ; it was sharp indeed, and prickly, but in the midst of light. Or, as the legal priests burned incense, and lighted the lamps together in the ancient tabernacle, so ought this holy flame never to be awakened, but when the lamp of knowledge is also lighted up.

Let Saul, in his zeal for the Israelites, imbrue his hands in the blood of the Gibeonites ; let another of that name waste and persecute the church, being exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers ; let bloody papists think they are doing God good service,

when they consign over to the flames pretended heretics ; blow up parliaments ; massacre whole nations of men ; and make the streets of populous cities to swim with human gore ; he has not so learned Christ. If any such wrathful emotions arise in his heart, as would excite him to call for fire from heaven, even against the most atrocious sinner ; he recollects the needful caution of the meek and lowly Jesus, “Ye know not what manner of spirits ye are of.” Mercy and compassion is the oil that feeds this flame, which many waters cannot quench. If it consumes any, it is not the persons of other men, but himself.

He affects not the zealous character for a cloak of covetousness, like the crafty Demetrius of Ephesus ; nor for a mark of ambition, like Jehu, the proud and furious captain ; nor that he may, with greater secrecy, wreak his resentment on those he hates, as if this heavenly grace could prove a sanctuary to malice and revenge. It is not the persons of the sinners he abhors ; but the sins of the persons. And against these he fights, not so much by bitter invectives, and noisy exclamations, as silent tears, and secret prayers. He sees transgressors, and is grieved much for the certain miseries they procure to themselves ; more, for the dishonour they reflect upon their Maker. His generous godly sorrow is not confined to his own personal iniquities ; his heart can bleed for a world that lies in wickedness, but still his zeal begins at home, like charity. He entertains no more favouring thoughts of an evil way, though his most beloved friends should be the abettors of it. But chiefly, he keeps his own heart with all diligence, and carefully suppresses those vices in his own soul, against which he declares in other men. He remembers, that as the snuffers in the temple were pure gold, so they who would be advocates for pure and undefiled religion, ought to be pure themselves. And he fears to fall within the

verge of that most cutting challenge, "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"

Though far from the indifference of a Gallio, in the matters of his God, yet will he never speak wickedly for him, nor have recourse to pious fraud for the promoting of his interest. As the stars in their courses fought against Sisera, so he, when striving against sin, is careful in this holy war, to keep his rank, and never to step aside from that station that is allotted for him by his prudent General.

Such is the constant frame, and such the habitual temper of his soul, not resembling a transitory flash of lightening, but a standing pillar of fire. Sometimes, indeed, he incurs the censures of men, as though he were righteous overmuch, and of a gloomy nature; but God and conscience acquit him from the charge. In times of fearful judgments, and dangerous apostacy, he is ordinarily preserved, being marked with the seal of the living God on the forehead.

ON RELIGIOUS STRICTNESS.

THE strict Christian is a person who places not his religion in a rigid censuring of others, nor in an eager attachment to the customs or opinions of a particular party; but is influenced in the whole of his conduct by an inflexible regard to the divine law, as the only rule of his life; and by a careful attention to the example of Jesus Christ, as the great pattern of his obedience. He reckons it not sufficient to distinguish himself from the many that walk in the broad way, by entertaining better notions, and more exalted sentiments than they; but his life is orthodox as his faith, and his conversation as his tongue.

He is afraid to engage in whatsoever course of action, without being first at all due pains to satisfy his conscience, that it is well pleasing unto God, or at

least, not prohibited in the law. But when he discerns the stamp of God's authority on any precept ; though the world should countermand, he knows his own Master, and obeys God rather than man.

It is true, he abhors those foolish and cruel macerations of the body, which some superstitious bigots have mistaken for true mortification ; for he knows, that his body, being a temple of the Holy Ghost, deserves to be honoured, by keeping it in repair ; and being the servant of his soul, should be mercifully used, as the good man is merciful to his very beast. But at the same time, he takes care not to pamper the flesh too much, and make provision for its lusts, under the specious pretence of using his Christian liberty. For, though he stands fast in this liberty, and will not be brought into bondage by any, he chooses not to be walking always upon its utmost verge or border.

Some things that are in themselves lawful, he judges not expedient, on account of the attending circumstances, and he abstains from them accordingly. The regard he bears to the law of his God, is uniform, equal, and consistent. He is no less conscientious in performing relative duties, than in practising those that are immediately religious. He abhors their impiety who make the divine commands to clash, and break the one table of the law against the other ; who, under pretence of devotion, forget natural affection, as if one should devote unto sacred uses what is necessary for supporting the life of his nearest relations, and say, " It is a gift by whatsoever thou might have been profited by me."

Though he is strict in observing every the least commandment, it is not that he may indulge himself in neglecting the weightier matters of the law, but rather to demonstrate unto all beholders, that if the authority of the great Lawgiver is to be so much respected, even in the smallest things, much more in

those weighty and important matters, that are the very soul of religion.

He equally detests the spurious strictness of the Pharisee, which was only partial and hypocritical, and the profane looseness of the multitude, who walk at random, and seem to think, that it is scarce possible to go wrong in the way that leadeth unto life.

He neither shuns nor courts the approbation of the world, and studies rather not to deserve, than to avoid their reproaches. His heart being reconciled unto the spirituality and holiness of the law, his liberty and freedom is not in the least impaired, by the strict rules he has imposed upon himself. He walks at liberty, because he seeks thy precepts, O God.

Some there are, who esteem him to be no better than a nice and precise fool, and an affecter of singularity. But he endeavours, by joining to his strictness, a sweet and obliging behaviour, to confute this calumny : and oftentimes he increases, like his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in favour with God and man. He looks upon all his strictness as too little, and coming not only exceeding short of what is required in the law, but of what others have arrived at ; and he renounces it all in point of trust and confidence. It is not his own strictness, but his Saviour's atonement on which he builds his hopes of a happy eternity.

Go on, O happy soul ! though thy companions should be few in the narrow way that leadeth unto everlasting life. In a little thou shalt no more complain of being solitary ; for thou shalt come to the innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, where the strictest christian shall receive the most glorious crown. For their shame, they shall be advanced to double honour ; and for confusion, they shall rejoice in their eternal portion.

It now remains to beg the reader's excuse, for detaining him so long from a perusal of the more im-

portant and interesting contents of the following sheets;* and to express my ardent desire, that blessed by a gracious Providence, they may gain the haven of public acceptance, and import these most valuable commodities—pleasure which improves, and improvement which delights.

ON THE RELIGIOUS WORSHIPPER.

FIRST of all, he is careful that the worship he performs be of divine institution, and suited to the genius of the gospel. He is not so much taken with gaudy ornaments, and glittering ceremonies, in any set of religious observances, as with the stamp of heaven's appointment. Though the commandments of men should be ever so plausible and dazzling to the eye, he can despise them as weak and beggarly elements, as worldly rudiments, as carnal ordinances.

But though his worship should, as to form, boast of ever so much purity, he knows where there is a spiritual worship, there may be a carnal heart. The soul of his devotion lies, neither in the reverence of bodily demeanour, nor in the exercise of shining gifts; but in the fixing of his mind, and the exciting his grace into act, by the influence of the Holy Ghost.

The bended knee bespeaks the humiliation of his soul; the exalted voice indicates the fervency of his mind; the elevated hand betokens the lifting up of his affections. The request of his lips is the same thing with the desire of his heart. If his lips are burning, his heart is also fervent.

Duties he considers as the means of communion with God; but he endeavours never to rest in them as his end. He neither worships God with a view to

* This Essay concluded the preface in the first edition.

gain the applause of men, by shewing his fine parts ; to appease a resentful conscience, by some faint compliances with its impartial dictates ; to work out a righteousness whereby he might be justified before him ; or, to encourage himself in the indulgence of his lusts, because he has peace-offerings with him, or because he has paid his vows. But his flesh and heart crieth out for the living God.

The influences of the divine Spirit ; these are the winds that blow upon his garden, and make the spicy odours of every divine grace to flow forth. These are the gales which urge him forward in every act of worship, without whose kindly aid he might ply the oar of natural endeavours in vain. But the Spirit helpeth his infirmities with groanings that cannot be uttered. Without his divine succours, what were he, but as the mighty Samson, when shorn of his sacred locks, he became as another man ? Therefore, is he tenderly solicitous to cherish every motion of this benign agent, and to avoid whatsoever course of action might quench this heavenly fire, by which his sacrifices are inflamed.

It is true, he may, through the workings of inbred corruption, and the influence of wicked spirits, be pestered with the intrusion of vain thoughts, even in his most solemn devotions. But if these hellish birds will alight upon, and pick his sacrifices, he will, as Abraham, drive them away. And though he should not be able to acquit himself with much clearness of thought, and elegancy of expression, yet he finds a gracious acceptance with God, who understands the stammering tongue of his beloved children ; and is more moved with their unutterable groans, than with the accurate addresses of the gifted professor ; from whom, as being destitute of divine grace, shall be taken away even that which he seemed to have. The angel of the covenant ascends in the smoke of all his offerings. Though he covets earnestly the best gifts, yet God has shewed unto him a more excellent way.

ON HEARING THE WORD.

ASK you, why faith should come by hearing ? Why it should be the ministration of the Spirit ? Why he should fall on them that hear the word ? Why saints should be comforted, and sinners converted, by the foolishness of preaching ? The same gracious appointment by which the clouds of heaven drop down fatness from above, at the return of spring, hath ordained that his doctrine shall drop as the rain, and his speech distil as the dew. Suffice it for us to know, that "of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." He who teaches the tender babe to hanker after the mother's breast, and renders the milk more nourishing, when sucked from that living fountain, than when presented in a cup ; also instructs the infant Christian to desire, as a new born babe, the sincere milk of the word, and makes him grow thereby. Let us rather attend to the character of him who is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word.

First of all, he looks not on this divine ordinance as a mere amusement, or as an expedient to pass away a little time. He repairs not to the place of the holy, merely to see, and be seen—that his curiosity may be gratified with the novelty of the matter—that his ears may be tickled with the melody of the voice—that his passions may be touched by the elegancy of the address—that his mouth may be filled with some matter of discourse—that an angry conscience may be pacified—or that an empty name may be maintained : but that his graces may be quickened—his lusts may be mortified—his temptations resisted—his doubts resolved—his discouragements dispelled—his understanding may be stored with truths—his will with holy resolutions—his affections with heavenly emotions. In short, that he may hear what God the Lord will say ; and that he may profess the depend-

ence he has on him for the knowledge of his will, and instruction in the way of life.

For though he is only to hear the voice of a man of like passions with himself, he considers him as the mouth of the living God speaking unto him from heaven. Thou art going to hear, O my soul, not the word spoken by an angel from the blessed abodes, whose tongue is tipped with heavenly eloquence; not the word of a king, wherewith there is power commanding deep respect from all that hear; but the voice of him who is terrible to the kings of the earth, and angels bend before him with lowly reverence. Instead of diminishing his respect to the heavenly message, because delivered by a mortal tongue, it fires his gratitude to the condescending Deity, who once spake to the Jews in the likeness of sinful flesh, when the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and now he speaks unto us by flesh, having received gifts for men, that his terror may not make us afraid.

How can he but be all intention, when so great is the majesty of the Speaker?—so vast the importance of the thing spoken? No vain speculation, no idle tale, no cunningly devised fables, but truths which angels pry into, and wherein he is most deeply interested; even that word which God has magnified above all his name.

Having, by fervent prayer, and serious meditation, composed his wandering thoughts, allayed his passions, and hushed his worldly cares, he receives, with meekness, the ingrafted word. To the hearing of the ear, he joins the hearing of faith. Wisdom enters into his heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto his soul. If the reproofs of the word are applicable unto himself, he does not apply them to his neighbour, nor hate him that reproveth in the gate. He adores that goodness that ceaseth not to be a reprobate, but that makes the word to be quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. He obeys the voice, and receives

correction. If the thunders of Sinai sound their trumpet, his belly trembles, and rottenness enters into his bones. Knowing these terrors of the Lord, he is persuaded to fly from the wrath to come. Blessed soul ! he is not offended with the strictness of the precepts ; he turns not from the holy commandment, though it should encroach upon his lusts or worldly interests, and cost him a right hand, or a right eye. He esteems no commandment little, on which the authority of the great God is enstamped ; or difficult, when it comes from him who gives power to the faint. But chiefly, he mixes faith with all those great and precious promises, which in Christ are Yea and Amen, and by which he is made a partaker of the divine nature. These, he knows, it is his duty to believe, as well as to reverence the reproofs, to obey the precepts, or tremble at the threatenings.

What shall we say more ? what he hears, he understands ; what he understands, he remembers ; what he remembers, he loves ; what he loves, he believes ; and what he believes, he practises. His life is a continual sermon. And not being a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, he shall be blessed in his deed.

ON MEDITATION.

IT is the intense fixing of the thought on some heavenly subject, till either the mind is informed, or the heart affected. It may be compared to the bruising of sweet spices, which makes them spread abroad their odour ; or to the chewing of our natural food, which makes it fit for being digested into nourishment.

Happy is that soul, who, being renewed in the spirit of his mind, can retire into himself, from the hurry of the world, and from the storm of passion, to converse with God, and Christ, and things above ; and

find that solitude is sometimes the best society : who, with his holy thoughts, can cheer the darkness of the night, and soothe the labours of the day. While he is musing, the fire of holy love burns, vanity disappears, and holiness advances.

Ask you the themes on which he dwells ? Neither on things that are too high for him, nor things unprofitable and vain. Instead of weaving spider's webs, or hatching cockatrice eggs, like the vile person, who will meditate villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, his eyes will prevent the night-watches, to meditate on thy statutes, O God. When he remembers thee upon his bed, and meditates on thee in the night-watches, he will rejoice under the shadow of thy wings ; his soul will follow hard after thee, and thy right hand shall sustain him. His meditation of thee shall be sweet, both when the morning shines, and the evening draws her curtain over the world. How great shall be his peace ! How great his safety ! And how unspeakable his joy.

Or, shall thy person, and thy meditation, O exalted Redeemer ! what thou art, what thou hast, and what thou hast done or suffered, employ his thoughts ! When his heart shall endite a good matter concerning thee, his soul shall be filled with marrow and fatness. He shall meditate the agonies of thy cross, and mourn for thee whom he has pierced ; the glories of thy present state, and rejoice in thy highness. Thou wilt send thy Holy Spirit to take thy own things, and shew them unto him, that he need not betake himself to Antichristian aids, of bringing thy dying love to his remembrance. Though crucifixes and pictures should not meet his eye at every turning of the street, yet will he naturally think of thee, the Author of his life, and centre of his happiness.

Oftentimes he will take a trip into the world of spirits, and come back all immortal. His thoughts will range in the eternal regions, and contemplate the happiness of the heavenly state, which he will com-

pare with the restless agonies of unquenchable fire ; and beholding this glory of the Lord, he will acquire a blessed meetness for, and longing after its enjoyment,—will think but lightly of its transitory affliction,—will be roused into an holy ardour to be a follower of them who inherit the promises,—will commiserate their mistaken smiles, who take up the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. His faith will be strengthened, his hope invigorated, and though his outward man should perish, yet, for this cause, he will not faint.

At other times he will indulge the thought of death,—will consider his latter end,—will familiarize unto his thoughts the dismal solemnities of his dying-bed, and say of the grave, “It is mine house.”

Shall I mention, in the next place, how he will regard the doings of the Lord, and consider the operations of his hand ; that he may know what the Most High is calling for, in a way of duty, by every merciful interposition of providence, and by every frowning dispensation ; and that, like a man of wisdom, he may hear his voice, and see his name.

But we must not at all forget, how he communes with his heart, how his spirit makes diligent search, how he considers himself, lest he be tempted ; and what is that sin which easily besets him. For thus he guards the avenues of temptation, because he knows what is the plague of his heart. What shall we say more of him ? In the divine law, “he meditates day and night ; and shall be like a tree planted by the river of water, that bringeth forth fruit in his season. His leaf also shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.”

ON SINGING OF PRAISE.

WHERE can grave, sweet melody be applied, with such propriety, as to the sacred subjects of religion ?

By this, devotion is invigorated, joy is heightened into rapture, divine truths are better impressed upon the heart, and fixed into the memory. Distempered passions are allayed, and heavenly affections are inspired. Even as the hand of the Lord was upon the prophet when he called for a minstrel, and the evil spirit departed from the king of Israel, while David touched, with his skilful hand, the sweet resounding harp. From the most early ages, and from the most remote places of the world, have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous.

To this heavenly mirth the christian is inspired, not by the fumes of wine, wherein is excess; but being filled with the Spirit, he speaks to himself in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in his heart unto the Lord. He makes the voice of his praise to be heard, not only in the public assembly, but in his private dwelling.

Though there are peculiar seasons of this duty, when it is more remarkably incumbent; yet he sees abundant reason to bless the Lord at all times, and to have his praise continually flowing from his lips. Even in the night of his distress, oftentimes he has a song, when all joy would seem to be darkened, when his harp would seem to be turned into mourning, and his organ into the voice of them that weep. Thus Paul, with Silas, sung at the dead hour of midnight, though their backs were coloured with ignominious scourges, and their feet made fast in the stocks.

Though he despises not the melody of the voice, yet, by itself alone, he accounts it no more but bodily exercise, that profits little. Therefore, he uses it only in a subserviency to his devotion, and rests not in it as his ultimate end. What he chiefly attends unto, is, that he may sing praises with understanding and with grace.

His praising is his reasonable service. And though the subject sung should not exactly suit his own case; though it should be—some dreadful imprecation,

uttered by the spirit of prophecy,—some high attainment to which he is not arrived,—some deep distress which himself is unacquainted with ; yet, by ejaculatory prayers and serious meditation, he can digest even these seemingly foreign subjects into the nourishment of his soul, and sing of them to the praise and glory of God.

As far as in him lies, he wants to have those affections set a-working, and those graces educed into exercise, that are naturally required by the theme of which he sings : be they holy joy, fervent love, burning gratitude, reverential fear, or godly sorrow. But chiefly the grace of faith must never fail to be acted, in this as in other parts of worship. Christ is the chief musician, to whom his songs are inscribed. Christ is his altar, by which he offers up his sacrifice of praise continually.

And here can I forget to celebrate the fulness and variety of that little Bible, composed by the Hebrew king and prophet ? What attribute of God does he not describe in lofty numbers ? What work suffers he to pass uncelebrated or unsung ? What moral duty, what christian grace, is not here emphatically recommended ? What possible case is not here painted ? To what distemper of the soul may we not find here a sovereign remedy ? Here the secure may find what is proper for their awakening, the disconsolate for reviving, the doubting for directing, the feeble for supporting, to make them be as David.

What mortal pen can equal the sublimity of his thoughts, the liveliness of his metaphors, the majesty of his descriptions ? Which of his psalms may not say, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made ?” When he displays the glory of the God of Israel, thousands of mighty angels stand before him ; “God is in the midst of them, as in mount Sinai.” Now he flies on the wings of the wind, and rides on flaming cherubims. His lightnings lighten the world. The earth trembles at his approach. The mountains melt as the snow

that covers them. The foundations of the world are discovered. The floods drive back their tides. The mountains skip like rams.

Now he sets him on a throne, of which justice and judgment are the foundation; and mercy, accompanied with truth, go before his face. Now he describes the fierceness of his anger; and rains down snares, fire, brimstone, and an horrible tempest. Darting his eye through distant ages, he brings down the Son of God to dwell in clay; a body is prepared for him. The Jews are filled with rage against the Lord's Anointed. He hears his melancholy groans. Sees his heart melting like wax in the midst of his bowels. But he leaves not his soul in hell. Messias lives, ascends on high, and leads captivity captive. Rejoice, ye worlds of blessedness. Be lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.

ON PRAYER.

LET prayer, the most honourable, the most pleasurable, and the most beneficial of all exercises, be next our theme. In this we converse with the Eternal Mind, and contract a blessed familiarity with that all-glorious Being, whose favour is better than life, whose frown is worse than death. By this we taste more exquisite delights, than all the pleasures of sin can boast, than all the vanities of the world can bestow. By this every mercy is sanctified, every affliction is alleviated, every holy disposition is invigorated, every corrupt affection is weakened, and every temptation is resisted.

Now, prayer, in the most general and abstracted notion of that word, may be described, The speech of the rational creature unto God, whether conceived in the heart, or uttered by the mouth; whereby we either celebrate his amiable perfections, confess our own de-

fects, implore his divine power for the mercies we want, or thank him for the blessings we have received.

But let us more particularly attend unto his character, of whom it may be said, “Behold he prayeth.” And, first of all, detesting their abominable idolatries, who direct their religious addresses, either to these imaginary beings that never, perhaps, did so much as exist; or those beings which have indeed a real existence, but no divinity, seeing they are all the creatures of God, and many of them the works of men’s hands. God, and God alone, is the object of his adoration; who only can hear, who only can judge, who only can answer the prayers that are made; for his knowledge is infallible, for his equity is inflexible, for his power is irresistible. “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.” Nor shall any rotten distinction, devised by the antichristian church, ever induce me to entertain a favourable thought of that palpable violation of thy law, who hast expressly commanded in thy word, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou fear.”

But how shall he, whose character is a miserable sinner, dare to approach that tremendous Majesty, in whose presence the foolish shall not stand, who hears not sinners, who abhors the workers of iniquity?—The mediation of Jesus Christ is the sole, is the happy solution of this knot. To his care he directs all his petitions. His name he mentions in faith and in righteousness; and finds a gracious acceptance. If, as we are informed in history, the king Admetus was reconciled to Themistocles, when the latter taking the young prince in his arms presented him to the father; shall not much more a gracious God shew favour, complacency, and love unto sinners, who, though unworthy in themselves, yet bring the dearly beloved Son of God in the arms of their faith, saying, “See, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed?” By him the humble suppliant draws

near to God, of whom it is said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

As in the sacred story the angel of Manoah ascended in the smoke of his offering; so Christ ascends in the incense of all his prayers, and brings them near the throne of his heavenly Father. By him he has access with confidence. Towards him he bends his eye in all his supplications; even as the ancient Jews never did pray, but with their faces towards the holy temple at Jerusalem, though at the greatest distance from them.

The word of God is the only rule by which he regulates his devotions, both as to the time, the place, the matter, the manner. By this he is taught, that as no time is unfit, so no place is improper for this honourable duty. Though there are stated times of public and private devotion, which he cheerfully observes, and though it is the joy of his soul to join with his fellow-worshippers in places that are appointed for the assembling of the church; yet he never can think, that prayers which are made in canonical hours, or consecrated places, are of greater efficacy on that account. The labours of the day he begins with prayer, he mixes with prayer, he finishes with prayer. He is more anxious to get a praying heart, than to find a place; for, he remembers how Jeremiah could pray in the dungeon, Daniel in the den of lions, Jonah in the belly of the fish, Hezekiah upon his bed, Nehemiah in the king's presence, Peter on the house-top, Paul on the shore, and Christ in the garden.—He considers that Christ is an omnipresent temple; and therefore lifts up holy hands in every place.

By the same unerring rule he is directed to have a special care, that the matter of his addresses be agreeable to the divine nature and will. The bodily gesture he uses, is free from irreverence on the one hand, and from superstition on the other. Bowing, kneeling, bodily prostration, elevation of the hands and eyes, uncovering of the head, are the outward ex-

pressions of his inward reverence. But ludicrous and antic ceremonies, Pharisaical disguisings of the face, he avoids, as tending to beget a contempt of religion in the minds of spectators, instead of imprinting a reverence. The words of his mouth are neither too low and familiar on the one hand, nor too high and affected on the other; far less are they unintelligible, and pronounced in an unknown tongue. For, as the priests offered incense when the lamps were lighted, so, when he prays in the Spirit, he prays with the understanding also. The words which the Holy Ghost teaches, he prefers before all others. He uses not vain repetitions, as though much speaking were the thing that recommends him to the Almighty. A multitude of words, he knows very well, is not that importunity which availeth much in the fervent prayer of the righteous. For, though the gesture of the body should be ever so decent, and the words of the mouth ever so well chosen, he knows very well, that still one thing is lacking, and indeed the principal thing, the disposition of the heart, which, if it is not right with God, the most lowly gestures, and the most elegant expressions, are but a smoke in his nostrils, and a fire that burneth all the day.

ON MOURNING OR FASTING.

LAUGH, ye profane, and prove your misery by your smiles. What though games and revelry should snatch your hours away, and your whole life should seem but one continued festivity? Miserable creatures! while you dance on the brink of a tremendous precipice, in a moment you descend into the grave, and drop into that place, where all joy is darkened, and horror reigns in everlasting triumph. Commend me to that awful joy that dwells with him that is poor and of a contrite spirit.

A person of this holy temper is not a stranger to natural cheerfulness, far less to spiritual joy. But he endeavours to repress that vain and frothy mirth, which, instead of doing good as a medicine, will eat as doth a canker. He waters with his tears, even the pardon of his sins, and cannot think on the transgressions of his past life, without real emotions of grief. For, though they will never subject him to condemnation from God, for this very reason he condemns himself the more. He is often heard, like Ephraim, bemoaning himself, and mourning like a dove in the valley, for the sad prevalence of the body of sin and death.

He can drop a generous tear for the miseries of his fellow-creatures, and remembers them that are in bonds as bound with them. He cannot but be grieved with transgressors ; cannot but be vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, cannot but sigh and cry for all the abominations that are committed in the land of his nativity. He satisfies not himself with open censures of public evils, which may proceed from pride and malice, but weeps for them, like Jeremiah, in a secret place ; and thus he proves his real charity, his sincere regard to the divine honour, and disinterested benevolence to men. Moreover, that he delivers his own soul from the guilt of those sins for which he mourns. If the church of God is involved in great distress, if she is under persecution ; or, what is infinitely worse, if the bulk of her sons and daughters are labouring under a lamentable decay as to the power of godliness, if her pastors are brutish, if her ordinances are barren, if her doctrine is corrupted, if her discipline is perverted, if her government is neglected, if her unity is broken ; then is he sorrowful for the solemn assembly ; he weeps when he remembers Zion, like Nehemiah, who was the king's cup-bearer ; and like you, ye captives of Babylon, when ye hanged your harps upon the willows.

He follows for his pattern the great apostle of the

Gentiles, who served the Lord with many tears, warning every man ; who had continual sorrow in his heart for his brethren according to the flesh ; and could not, without weeping, so much as mention the enemies of the cross of Christ. But chiefly he looks on him whom he has pierced, and mourns for thee, O suffering Redeemer ! " Surely thou hast borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. We have often heard of thy tears, but never of thy laughter.

O greatly wise, whose heart is in the house of mourning ! strangers indeed they are to loud and jovial mirth, and to the drunkard's noisy song ; but not unto the smile at heart, and calm sunshine of the mind. For them Christ is anointed to preach glad tidings ; to give them the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. With them the Holy One will deign to dwell before all palaces and temples. Even now he keeps a bottle for their tears, and is mindful of them, as they were written in a book. A time approaches, when, with his own kindly hand, he will wipe them for ever from their eyes ; and they who have gone forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall bring back their sheaves with rejoicing.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE SUPPER.

. IT was in that fatal night, when the accursed traitor had resolved, with calm, deliberate malice, upon the most unworthy terms, to betray his Lord and Master into the hands of sinners. Ah ! cursed lust of gold, to what enormous crimes dost thou push on the human race ! O heart impenetrably hard, which was not softened by all the endearing speeches and deportment of the meek and dying Saviour ! The rulers of the Jews were met in close cabal ; and thirsting for the blood of the innocent Lamb of God, who

takes away the sin of the world ; they concerted measures for apprehending him, like a notorious disturber of the peace, and troublesome pest of society. Their dark designs were not unknown to the wise Redeemer, whose penetrating eye beheld them through the deepest shades. Full well he knew the success their enterprise was to meet with, according to the plan laid down in the eternal council of the skies. He was not unapprised of the inglorious and agonising death which was immediately before him ; nor of the still more dismal conflict with angry Omnipotence. Gethsemane can tell how he, the heavenly vine, was squeezed in the wine press of the wrath of God, till, from his opened pores, even in the cold night, and on the cool ground, there issued forth great drops of bloody sweat. Under all these direful apprehensions, he enjoyed a calm serenity of mind, and mixed familiar discourse with his disciples at the last passover-supper. If the last words, and dying actions of our friends, claim our peculiar regard, the last concluding scene of our Redeemer's life, is ten thousand times more worthy our attention. It was in those precious moments, he, as the King of Israel, instituted the commemorating ordinance of the supper. No more, ye true Israel of God, shall ye practise the bloody rites, which I commanded Moses, in memory of your deliverance from the bondage of Pharaoh ; now, that my blood is as good as shed, and I, who am the true passover-lamb, on the brink of being sacrificed for you ; be it enacted, That in all succeeding generations, the simple elements of bread and wine be my only memorials.

Had this ordinance been of a trifling nature, a matter of indifference, and but of short duration, who can persuade themselves, that a person of such consummate wisdom, would have employed those valuable hours, in giving any injunctions about it to the dejected apostles ? The holy evangelists record it, and the chosen vessel to bear God's name unto the Gen-

ties, adds his confirmation ; " For I have received," says he, " from the Lord, that which I also delivered unto you, That in the same night wherein he was betrayed," he appointed this expressive ordinance to be perpetuated in the church.

Lo ! he takes the bread, which was before him on the table ; bread, which is the staff of life ; bread, which strengtheneth the heart. He blessed it ; not for a natural use, as ordinary bread is sanctified by prayer for common purposes, but he blessed it for extraordinary purposes, and supernatural ends. As man, he craved, as God he bestowed the blessing ; he breaks it, he gives it into the hands of the apostles. Take with your fingers, eat with your mouths, he says, this consecrated bread. For this, and not the roasted flesh of the passover lamb, is, by my own appointment, the sign and symbol of my body, broken by the stroke of justice in your law-room, and place. Supper being ended, and the wine poured out to his hand, he takes the cup, he blesses it, he gives it to his disciples. The wine which is contained in this cup of blessing which I give you, is an emblem of my blood ; by which, not the Old, but the New Testament, is confirmed ; of my blood, which is now about to be shed, not in typical sacrifices, but in my real crucifixion. Shed, not for the remission of ceremonial guilt unto a few Israelites, but for the remission of the numerous sins against the moral law, both unto Jews and Gentiles.

Ye that are the lovers of Christ in sincerity, reverence his dying command, who said, " Do this in remembrance of me." Had he left us in charge to do some great thing, to practise some burdensome rite, to observe some unintelligible ceremony, whose meaning it was not easy to take up, we ought to have been all submission. How much more, when he only bids us eat the consecrated bread, and drink the consecrated cup, as a memorial of him to all generations !

Great is your privilege ! exalted is your honour !

who eat bread in the kingdom of God, and are worthy partakers in this mysterious feast. Here Christ is clearly crucified before you, and you taste that the Lord is gracious. Let the deluded followers of the Antichrist of Rome, fall down to their breaden deity, and fondly dream of swallowing the real flesh of the Redeemer; ye have not so learned Christ, for ye know, that the flesh profiteth nothing. Monstrous absurdity! unprofitable and senseless vanity! the belief whereof none can profess, who renounces not all his sense, and bids not adieu to reason, without being guilty of the grossest hypocrisy. Or, if any can believe for true such a glaring lie, let us tremble at the strong delusion.

No wonder the adversary, who sits in the temple of God, and exalts himself above all that is called by that tremendous name, should fearfully disfigure this holy institution, by his cursed abominations. No wonder, that, in numerous instances, they are guilty of sacrilegious mangling, and, in numerous instances, of presumptuous and horrible adding to this important ordinance of the supper. For here, as in a medal, there are engraven in miniature the characters of dying love; and in the conscientious discharge of this commanded duty, the soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness.

Full oft the true christian can tell, how, in this holy supper, his diseases are cured, his desires are satisfied, and his discouragements converted into exultations; whilst he feeds, not on bare and empty symbols, obvious to the corporeal touch; but on the hidden manna, signified by external elements, and obvious to faith alone. What wonder, his body and his blood afford such heart-felt satisfaction to the believer in the sacrament, when even the heart of God was infinitely delighted therewith, while on the cross he offered himself through the eternal Spirit! This is the true bread, with which the angel's food may not compare; This is the true wine which rejoiceth the heart of man,

and even makes glad the heart of God. When blooming in spiritual health, this makes you grow ; or if you languish under woeful decays, this will restore your souls again. At this banquet of wine, the King will give commandment to put to death the wicked Haman of this and that corruption. Yea, "what is thy petition ?" will he say, "and what is thy request ? It shall be granted, unto the whole of the kingdom."

Blessed be that bleeding love, who instituted these holy rites for the remembrance of itself. But cursed be that impious superstition, which, not content with the plainness and simplicity of the original commandment, goes about to refine the ordinance, and trick it up in robes of human ceremonies. Glory to God, for that happy providence which ordered our lot in these reformed lands, where we have open access to worship God in his own comely order. The mass—an unmeaning word, an unscriptural name, worthy to be used for such an anti-scriptural abomination—the mass is now banished from our high-favoured island, with all its magical rites, and base idolatries. Blessed be God for his mercy.

Vain man would be wise, though born a fool, even like the colt of the wild ass. In no instance have the children of men bewrayed their ignorance and folly more than this, attempting to improve and amend the ordinances of Heaven, with their own puny inventions. The plainness of the elements, and the simplicity of the actions, have given them offence ; and therefore they will deck the simple ordinances with gaudy pompous rites. Why are they not offended also at the inglorious cross ? why not disclaim the lowly Saviour also, who made no splendid appearance in the days of his flesh, but wore the humble garb of poverty ? As the carnal Jews would not receive a mean despised Saviour, but wanted a Messias that should be distinguished with worldly grandeur ; so carnal christians will have carnal ordinances, and a worldly sanctuary, or they can see no glory in them.

But those who are endued with the Spirit of wisdom and illumination, behold a glory in the naked ordinance, which they search for in vain in all the solemn fopperies of man's invention. It was not the privilege of every one who conversed with the incarnate Redeemer, to behold his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father. Nor can every one discern in the sacramental symbols, the body of the Lord. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." It is only they, the desire of whose soul is towards thee, and towards the remembrance of thy name, who shall see thy power and thy glory in the sanctuary.

ON THE DIVINE INSTITUTION OF THE SABBATH DAY.

Now had six days finished their rounds. The heavens and the earth, and all their host, had underwent the last retouches of their Creator's hand. He, from his high and holy place, reviewing, with delight, his recent works, as yet unstained by sin, pronounced them all very good. "And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that on it he rested from all his work that he had created and made." How blessed it? How sanctified it? To be sure the Sabbath was made for man, as the Lord of the Sabbath tells us. He blessed it; he sanctified it; because he ordained that every seventh day should be employed, by his newly-formed creature, in holy exercises. Was it not then, that the morning stars did sing together, and all the angel-sons of God shouted for joy.

But soon, ah! soon was the harmony interrupted. Man, being in honour, did not abide. Full soon the foul impostor found means to involve in his apostacy,

our wretched race. Here, if mercy had not interposed, the Sabbath would have been for ever at an end. For he, whose justice is inflexibly severe, would never have consented to accept of any religious homage from his fallen rebellious creature. But having from eternity proposed to restore us again to his love, favour, and image, by the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ, he comes, and preaches peace to our trembling first parents.

Who can suspect, that the Sabbath should be now superseded unto him? that such a holy institution should be discontinued, and its observance neglected by Adam and his believing seed? Surely this law was not first given by Moses? Is it not evident, that great lawgiver speaks of it as a thing in use before the giving of the law? The glorious JEHOVAH had not yet uttered all these words from amidst the thunders of Sinai; yet even then the manna was miraculously restrained on the seventh day, and what they gathered on the day before, miraculously preserved from putrefaction. "And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments, and my laws? see for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day, the bread of two days. Abide ye every man in his place."

To what original shall we trace up the custom, which universally obtained among all nations, the Roman and the Greek? Can any natural reason be assigned for it, like what may be assigned for the division of time into months and years? Can we reasonably suppose they would copy it from the despised nation of Jews? Is it not more than probable, that it was an ancient tradition, conveyed from the first man, and preserved among his apostate race, when its true design was forgotten.

May we not then more than presume, that the

ordinance of the Sabbath was an eminent part of the religion even of the patriarchal age ? and that it was on this day, a very ancient sacred writer informs us, the sons of God came to present themselves before him ?

But now God plants his sanctuary among the peculiar people of the Jews. How great a part this was of their national religion, is witnessed both in their law, their prophets, and in the history of their church.

Let us descend to the days of the Messiah, who, indeed, has abolished the ceremonial law, but has not made the ordinance of the weekly Sabbath to cease. Why did you reproach him, O malicious Pharisee, as though he had been a Sabbath-breaker, who indeed was Lord of the Sabbath day ? On the Sabbath day he honoured the synagogue worship with his presence ; and speaks of it as an ordinance which he was to perpetuate in his church after his resurrection. "Pray," says he, to his disciples, "that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the Sabbath day."

It is true, indeed, we that are christians do not observe unto the Lord the seventh, but the first day of the week ; but we observe one day in seven, which is the substance of the commandment. If the Lord of the Sabbath shall establish this alteration by his authority, who can reasonably find fault ?

If the day on which he rose from the dead, be the day which is called *the Lord's* ; if on the first day of the week, the primitive christians, even in apostolic times, did assemble for religious purposes—did hear the word—did celebrate the supper—did lay by them in store, as God had prospered them ; shall we not conclude, that it is the will of God, that now the seventh day shall give place unto the first ? Hereby is intimated to you, christians, that ye are not first to work, and then to rest, as under the ancient covenant of works ; but that, in the order of the new covenant,

your privilege precedes your duty, and your labour follows after your rest.

O thou queen of days, shall we not count thee our delight, and thou holy of the Lord honourable? Be shut our heart to vain thoughts. Let no idle discourse flow from our tongue. Let us not only rest from servile labour, but chiefly from all our sinful, and from all our legal works. Then shall this earthly rest be but a sweet prelude of that eternal Sabbath they are now celebrating, who died in the Lord, and their works did follow them.

ON THE BENEFIT OF ORDINANCES.

"A DAY in thy courts," says David, "is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness," Psalm lxxxiv. 10.

Never did any words proceed out of the mouth of the sweet singer of Israel, in which more of that noble character, the man after God's own heart, appeared. In this beautiful ode, where piety strives with elegance, the royal psalmist extols the happiness of those who have it in their power to attend upon the divine ordinances—the whole psalm being an illustration of that rapturous introductory exclamation, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of Hosts!" He not only pronounces them truly blessed, who perpetually resided in God's tabernacle, but also them who travelled thither, from the most distant parts of Judea, three times in the year, though the weather was rainy, and the journey was tedious. By a strong poetical flight, he seems to envy the little birds that nested near the altars of his King and God, from which himself was now debarred.

The subject of which he speaks in this text, is the courts and house of his God. By which we are to

understand, the tabernacle, or that magnificent tent which Moses reared up in the wilderness, and which, at this time, was the royal palace of the Mighty King.

Concerning this tabernacle, he affirms two remarkable things.

“A day in thy courts is better than a thousand.” A divine sentence indeed! The celebrated Roman orator, long after, hit upon a thought that bears some small resemblance to this: “One day, O philosophy, spent in obeying thy precepts, is to be far preferred to a sinning immortality.” Here that saying is brought to pass, “One shall chase a thousand.” A day in thy courts, that is spent in the exercises of devotion, and abstracted from the cares of the world, is not only equal to two days, or ten days, or twenty days, in any other place, but better than a thousand days; or if you will, a thousand years; yea, a thousand ages. And, though the happy person who enjoys but one day of communion with God, were to resign his breath that very evening, and never more behold the outgoings of the morning, he need not retract his assertion as too bold and daring, when he considers, that a day in the courts below, of fellowship with God, is a sure earnest of everlasting days in the courts above.

“I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” Let us here observe how the psalmist, not content with approving the things that are excellent, in a speculative manner, makes a particular and practical choice of them for himself. The contrast between the house of God, and the tents of wickedness, and betwixt being a door-keeper in the one, and an indweller in the other, is abundantly striking. At this time the house of God was but a tent. He speaks as it were a palace. The houses of the wicked were, perhaps, sumptuous and magnificent palaces. He stiles them but the tents of wickedness. Here it is natural to think how the divine presence can aggrandize a tent into a palace. But if God be absent from a palace—if the

voice of riot, instead of prayer and praise, is heard in it—if it is inhabited by doleful creatures, as all wicked men are, it is more despicable in the eye of God, than the most ragged cottage can be in the eye of men.

ON THE EXCELLENCY OF CHRISTIANITY.

LET this man glory in his illustrious ancestors, and think himself entitled to the honour and esteem of others, because descended of the worthy and renowned; yet, if he does not at all inherit their supposed virtues, the nobility of his birth is the stain of his reputation, and the sounding titles wherewith he may be addressed, are in reality no better than a satire upon his manners. As it will not add any thing to the value of lead or tin, these vulgar metals, that they are extracted from the precious silver ore; so neither will an high extraction impart a value to the worthless and vulgar character.

Let another bless himself in a fancied superiority to others, because he enjoys the favour of the great, dwells in a fine house, heaps up silver as the dust, maintains a numerous retinue of servants, and loads his table with the most delicious food; I never can think his character ennobled by all this pomp and wealth. He enjoys the favour of the great, but not thy loving-kindness, O God, which is better than life. He dwells under a magnificent roof, but he makes not the Most High his habitation. Tell me not of his heaps of silver and gold, for he is not rich in good works; nor of his numerous servants, for himself is a slave to vile affections. He loads his table with luxurious food, but his soul feedeth on ashes, and husks that swine do eat.

Nor has he a whit better title to fame and solid glory, who enjoys what is commonly stiled popularity, and lives upon the tongues of multitudes. Alas!

how far are they from being competent judges of what is truly great and laudable ! What wise man values himself on the commendation of fools ?—But sometimes they may be in the right. Be it so. Yet still how scanty the limits, how short the duration, in which the fame of the most renowned must necessarily be confined ! How many places, even on this our globe, where the name of the most celebrated man on earth has not been heard of ! How many heroes of antiquity, that kept the world awake with noise and lustre, whose names and actions are forgot, as though they had not been ! Where now are the mighty troublers of mankind ? O death, what contempt dost thou pour on princes ! As clouds are driven by the northern blast ; as snow is melted by the sun ; and as stubble is consumed before the fire ; so vanishes all glory and renown at thy approach.—Seest thou that repository of the dead, where the dust of the vassal and his lord are blended together in gross familiarity ! Here all precedence is a jest. In vain is the corpse of the right honourable deposited in marble, or inclosed in silver. Alas ! the worms are not afraid to riot on his flesh, who wore imperial purple. They keep no awful distance from majesty itself.

Miserable they ! who were not careful to distinguish themselves from the common herd of mankind, but by these distinctions that are abolished in the grave, and that are of no avail in the awful judgment. With what blank faces will they look, who have no other recommendations but their illustrious pedigree, their abundant wealth, and their popular renown, when the Son of the carpenter, whose life was lowly, and his death ignominious, shall sist them before his tribunal ? When every mask shall be pulled off, and every man appear in that character which really belongs to him ? When their eternal state shall be adjusted, not according to what they seemed in their own or others' eyes, but according to what they were

in the eye of God, the most unquestionable Judge of all their actions ?

Cease then, O my soul ! to admire, or to envy the glory of the world. Nor judge them truly honourable, whose souls are not truly great, and whose glory will not descend after them into the grave. If a horse is not judged of by the gaudiness of his trappings, a statue by the grandeur of its pedestal ; why should we judge of men by their outward appendages, which may be stript off in this present life, and must of necessity be in the life to come ?

Christianity, it is thine alone to lift the poor from the dunghill, and the needy out of the dust, and set them among princes ! In thy light we see clearly how these that are esteemed the off-scourings of all things, may, notwithstanding, be the excellent of the earth. He—he is truly honourable, whom the Almighty, from the heavens beholds, despising in his heart those things which are reckoned great among men ; and ardently aspiring at those sublime distinctions that are worthy of his rational and immortal nature. He pays indeed a due regard to his good name ; and would not willingly so much as incur the suspicion of being guilty of what is unworthy of him. If a fair reputation may be acquired and maintained by a patient continuance in well doing, he does not at all despise it, but esteems it more than riches : for a good report maketh the bones fat, and enables the man that is possessed of it to be more extensively useful, in promoting the good of his fellow-creatures, and the glory of his Creator. But even when he does good, it is not the applause of men he principally courts ; but by honour and dishonour ; by evil report and good report ; he approves himself unto the conscience of every man. If he gains their commendations, he does not greatly rejoice ; if he incurs their censure, he is not greatly sorrowful. Sometimes he takes pleasure in reproaches ; and rejoices that he is counted worthy to suffer shame for his name's sake.

What though he should live in the vale of life ? though he be not pointed at as he goes along ? though he hear not the acclamations of his people ? His praise is not of men, but of God ; who knows his way ; who points him forth to angels, as the object of their regard ; while they, with true applause, recount his praises.

What though he boast not the honours of his race, when the royal blood of heaven flows in his veins, because he is born from above ?

What though he be not a favourite of the prince ; when, like a prince, he has power with God ?—Though he possesses not a great quantity of wealth ; when the unsearchable riches of Christ are all his own ?—Though his steps are not attended by a numerous train of servants ; when even the blessed angels are ministering spirits unto him, and keep him in all his ways ?—Though he have no better mansion than a cobwebbed cottage, when the King of glory deigns to come under his lowly roof, and even to dwell with him ?—Though his clothes are not besmeared with gold, when he puts on righteousness as a garment ?—Though he lives on homely food, and drinks not generous wine in gold and silver vessels, when the flesh and blood of the Son of God is his daily provision.—And though his memory should die away, in the city where he lived, yet his memorial in heaven is everlasting.

Go then, O immortal soul ! seek this honour that comes from God only, which is no phantom that will mock thy grasp ; no bubble that will break at thy touch ; no shadow that will fly from him that pursues after ; but a blessed reality that will crown thy wishes. This passion needs not fill thy cheeks with blushing ; for it is adequate to thy rational nature. O glorious honour ! which Cesar cannot confer ; which money cannot procure. The praises of men cannot bestow ; the reproaches of men cannot take it away. The Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all

other glory ; but this honour shall never be laid in the dust.

ON THE HIGH PRIVILEGE OF ADOPTION.

BEHOLD what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God ! This was an exclamation worthy of thee, O beloved apostle, whose favourite topic was love ; inspire us with these admiring thoughts, O divine Spirit ! inkindle in our hearts that holy flame which the apostle felt, who declares unto us the things which he saw and heard, that we may certainly know it is not merely a rhetorical flourish, but a most weighty truth, and a most blessed reality.

For, O ye children of this world, who glory in the nobility of your birth, and trace your pedigree from ancient kings ! and ye that said, we have Abraham for our father ! what title can you show to such an exalted honour, to such a glorious prerogative, as to be called the sons of God ? This honour have all his saints, being born from above, and adopted into the family of heaven. To the adoption of children they were predestinated before the day-spring knew his place, according to the good pleasure of his will. And when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. By faith in Christ Jesus they all partake of this high privilege, and in some happy moments they are pleasingly conscious of this distinguished felicity, while the Spirit of his Son, sent forth into their hearts, bears witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, and enables them to cry, Abba, Father.—It is true, their real glory is eclipsed in this state of their pilgrimage, while absent from their Father's house ; but the day of their manifestation is fast approaching, and

in the mean time they wait with humble hope for the adoption, the redemption of their bodies, when, by their resurrection from the dead, they shall, like their glorious Redeemer, be declared the sons of God, with power, before the assembled world.

Justly, very justly, may our wonder be raised to the highest pitch, when we consider the greatness of that God by whom this blessing is conferred, the meanness of those persons on whom it is bestowed, the loftiness of the means by which it is procured, and the innumerable advantages with which it is attended.

If the glory of children is their fathers; if kindred to the great is valued, though remote; if to be the son-in-law of a king was held by David a matter of such great importance: how distinguishing is their lot, whose God is their Father, and Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren! Though every king and every emperor that wears a crown, and sways a sceptre, were allied to them by the ties of blood, it could not equal, by ten thousand degrees, this high and ample renown.

And wherefore, O glorious Jehovah, wouldest thou confer upon the children of men such inconceiveable honour, to join them to thy family! It was not to supply thy wants, who was sufficient to thy own happiness, and infinitely well pleased in thy beloved Son. It was not to reward our worth, who had no attracting qualifications to recommend us. This is not the manner of men, O Lord, who use not to adopt, unless they have no children of their own, or at least observe some amiable quality about the object of their favour. Thus Esther is adopted by Mordecai, being a beautiful virgin; and Moses, being a proper child, is drawn out of the water by the daughter of a great king, and nourished as her own son; but we were the children of wrath, heirs of damnation, and cast out in our blood to the loathing of our person. How often have we rebelled against the reproofs of his word, con-

temned the thunders of his law, and rejected the offers of his grace ! yet patience waited for us, and mercy apprehended us.

And that we might receive the adoption of sons, the Son of God did not abhor the ignominious cross ! With a great sum indeed hast thou obtained this freedom for us ! To make us creatures did cost thee but a word ; to make us children, demanded the effusion of thy blood ; and it pleased the Father to bruise thee ! Herein perceive we the love of God, that he withheld not his Son, his only God, from the most inconceivable agonies, to compass his design.

Glorious indeed must be the advantage of this high relation, the purchase of such precious blood ! Angels, ye shall have in charge these favourites of Heaven. Ye enemies of their salvation, rejoice not against them : if you devour them, you shall offend ; if you touch them, you shall touch the apple of his eye ; for in the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his children shall have a place of refuge ; their parents may leave them, but the Lord shall take them up ; he may correct, but will not cast off ; if he speaks against them, he earnestly remembers them ; his heart is turned, his bowels yearn, and his relentings are kindled : their strength is small, but he spares them as a man spareth his son that serveth him : their imperfections are many, but he pities them as a father pitith his children : as a crane and as a swallow, so do they chatter, but he loves to hear their voice : make known your request unto him, and he will give you what is good : cry unto him, my Father ! he will be the guide of your youth. But, O the riches of the glory of that inheritance, which is neither corruptible, like thy gold and silver, thou vain world ! nor defiled like the paradise of Mahomet ! but incorruptible, and undefiled, and fading not away, which is reserved in heaven for them. How justly may they say, The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, when God himself is their portion ? For thus runs

the apostolic declaration, "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Hail, ye distinguished, happy persons ! who, though poor and despised, are the children of the Most High. Live to his praise, and demonstrate to the world, that you are indeed the children of your father; imitate his example, reverence his authority, and let it be your meat and drink to do his will.

THE COMPLAINT.

SWEET was the time when he whom all the angels love, and all the ransomed tribes adore, did hold familiar discourse with me a prisoner of earth : for, whither could I turn mine eyes, and not behold the most ravishing prospect ? Above me, I could lift up my most ardent thought to God that dwelleth in the heavens, and I could call him mine ; and these bright globes I could contemplate but as the pavement of my Father's house. For me, O radiant sun ! you shine, you rise, you fall ; angels ! ye are my guardians ; ye beasts of the earth, and ye stones of the field, are my allies around me. The various ills of life I could survey with calm composure ; yea, in the midst of them, I could rejoice as more than a conqueror.

Before me, death met my view deprived of his sting ; and I could ask the grave, where is thy victory ? yea, even the awful judgment could not appal my soul, in some distinguished moments : "Amen ; even so, come, Lord Jesus !" could I say. Begone, ye envious clouds ! prepare his way, ye glorious storms of thunder and lightning ! For, O my conscience ! what perfect peace was made in all thy borders !

The rising morn beheld me pouring out my prayers ; and when the evening star arose, this was my

exercise. O then ! the sacred word was sweet as honey, refreshing as the dew, and cheering as the light. The high praises of God were uttered by my mouth ; and when they said, Go up to the house of the Lord, to the tabernacles of the Most High ; how greatly I rejoiced ! Then I could count the Sabbath a delight. Methought the lovely light did wear another aspect than that of other days. How sweetly could I meditate on the law of the Lord ! The doctrines of religion, the mysteries of redemption, and the promises of the everlasting covenant, were my darling theme ; and my delights were with the excellent ones of the earth.

Ah ! lovely peace of mind, where art thou fled ! The thoughts of God are a terror to me : I tremble at his justice, and even his mercy and his goodness afford not consolation. How dismal is the vale of death, and the grave's solitary mansion ! The glory is departed. I went out full, but am returned empty. O ! wherefore wouldest thou leave thy first and best beloved for all that is in the world ? Can sin, with its bewitching pleasures, the world with its empty enjoyments, or thy own imperfect legal righteousness, be in the stead of Christ unto the soul ? Begone ye vain pretenders, “ I will return unto my first husband ; then was it better with me than now.”

THE SUCCESSFUL SUPPLICANT.

SOME take delight in hunting after the breath of popular applause ; and if they can live upon the tongues of the multitude, they fancy they have attained a great measure of felicity. This man revolves with a world of pleasure, the works of the learned, and reads the stars, and talks with heroes of former ages. The flowing bowl and jolly company, are the delights of another.

But, to the real christian, no exercise appears with more distinguished grace than prayer in the name of Christ. This opens the gates of heaven, and fetches blessings from on high. The bended knee, the lifted hand, the imploring eye, with the inflamed heart : these never fail to be attended with joys unknown to you, ye sons of the earth ! Angels rejoice, and God's own ear listens delighted. Lift up your voice to him ; O ! talk with him ; whether the morn purples the east, or the evening-star lights up his lamp.

The eternal Son was yet unclothed with flesh and blood ; but, trying on the coat of our humanity, he is recorded to have appeared, in human shape, unto the father of the patriarchs, from whom the Jewish nation derived their original. Overwhelmed with perplexity, and deeply distressed how to face the supposed rage of his incensed brother, he tries to pour his complaint into his compassionate bosom ; nor was his labour vain. It was night, and silence reigned over all ; when, lo ! a human likeness is presented to his view. With him he held discourse, and spun out the night, till now the star of the day was advancing his chariot-wheels ; and thus the heavenly stranger spoke, "It is enough, O friend of God ! permit me to depart : the rising day, and flying shadows, forbid my presence here." "No," said the favourite of Heaven, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." He wept, he made supplication, he had power over the angel and prevailed. Hence he had deserved the name of *Israel*. O happy victor ! He had power with God, and conquered the Omnipotent ! Let us go and do likewise.

ON WATCHFULNESS.

THIS may be considered, either as relating to sin, that we may resist temptations to it ; or to judgment,

that we may be prepared for the coming of the Son of Man.

In these views the watchful christian is one, who, from a persuasion of the strength of his enemies without, who wait for his halting,—of the wickedness and deceit of his own heart within,—and the greatness of the danger he incurs,—carefully guards all the avenues of temptation. There is nothing about himself he judges safe to trust: not his lips; for with thee, O David! he prays, “Set a watch, O Lord! before my mouth; keep the door of my lips:” not his eyes; for he makes a covenant with them: not his ears; he shuts them from hearing of blood, of slander, and detraction, and of the instruction that causeth to err: but, chiefly, he darts a jealous eye over his heart: for, of its being “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,” he has the most unquestionable proof, both from his own experience, and from the experience of the great surrounding cloud of witnesses.

No *sin* he judges himself absolutely secured against, though ever so atrocious; whilst he surveys the numerous troops of slain, and sees how many stronger than he hath fallen by the power of temptation. How can he be confident in himself, when he sees the man according to God’s own heart weltering in murder and adultery? and that most eminent apostle, whose faith the Lord so highly commended, who was with him in the holy mount, and faithfully as well as particularly warned of his danger;—even that most eminent apostle, denying his Lord and Master; (blush, ye papists, who make *him* the foundation of your church!) denying him thrice; denying him with oaths and curses; not when intimidated before any tribunal, at the presence of his judges, but at the accusation of a silly maid.

Neither is there any *time* in which he thinks it safe to intermit his vigilance. The whole time of his sojourning here, he studies to pass in fear; and

even when he sleeps, his heart is waking. He knows, that although there is a time for the body to sleep, that its wearied powers may be recruited by these balmy dews, and reanimated to new labours; yet there is no time for his soul to slumber, whose nature, like the fiery flame, is to be ever in motion; and instead of being repaired by indolence and inactivity, is rendered more dull and languid. Neither in prosperity nor adversity, neither in solitude nor in society, can he sing a requiem to his soul, as if it were without the verge of danger. And even in the time of special enjoyments, and distinguished manifestations, he knows very well that he ought not to say, "My mountain stands strong, and I shall never be moved." As he who comes out of a hot bath is very careful how he ventures himself immediately to the cold and chilling air, as being never more ready to catch a cold than upon such an occasion; so, he is never more circumspect how he returns into the world, and exposes himself to its hurtful snares, than when he has been enjoying the happy hours of fellowship with God.

But if there is any *known* sin which may gain advantage over him, or easily beset him, whether because suited to his natural constitution, or perhaps it is common to the age, and not branded with the infamy it deserves; or, perhaps it is of a secret nature, and may be transacted without the knowledge of others; or, perhaps, it is an old sin from which he was purged, to which, if he should return, his last state would be worse than the first; or, perhaps, it is a sin which is very ready to put on the vizor and mask of duty, of which it is very difficult to repent;—he is peculiarly watchful against *that* sin. And that he may keep at the remotest distance from all approaches unto iniquity, and abstain from all appearance of evil, he goes not to the brink, or utmost verge even of lawful liberty. That he may not be guilty of any unlawful thing, he will abridge himself in the use of lawful things, upon a proper occasion.

But it is no less the duty of the watchful christian “to wait the coming of his Lord,” that he may be found of him in peace. He gives diligence, that neither his conscience be defiled with known sin, nor his affections entangled with vain cares; that when he shall appear, he may have confidence, and bid an unreluctant adieu to transitory vanities. He refers not his eternal interests to be adjusted till he is stretched on his sick or dying bed; for he knows, that both the time and manner of his exit are wholly in God’s hands. The numerous deaths of his acquaintances and fellow-mortals, he considers as the calls of the bridegroom, “Be ye also ready.” If his head ache, if his stomach loathes its food, or sleep fly from his eye-lids, all these, and such like distresses, he regards as a set of monsters crowding round about him, and telling him, “that the Judge standeth before the door,” and “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” Death comes; eternity unfolds itself to his view. See! with what dauntless magnanimity he enters the list with his last enemy. Far from discouraging his surviving fellow-christians, by a dispiriting behaviour, he throws an additional lustre on the christian faith, and makes the beholders wish themselves were the dying person.

Ye lying vanities of life, farewell! Welcome, ye heavenly joys! “Amen: even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.” Such are the wishes he breathes from his inmost soul. His latter end is peace.

ON GENTLENESS.

IT is that amiable grace, whereby the christian restrains unlawful anger, and moderates even just resentment. Perhaps his natural temper is of the rugged kind; yet he has experienced the accomplishment of that gracious promise, that “the leopard shall

lie down with the kid, and the lion shall eat straw with the ox." It is not in his tongue, but in his heart, where this grace chiefly resides. He pretends not, with the ancient Stoics, wholly to discard the passions of anger, which were not the meekness of wisdom, but of folly. Nor does it wholly lie in a courteous and obliging behaviour, commonly called *good manners*, which may be but an artificial appearance. Sometimes he may come with a rod, and assume a prudent severity, but it is rather in the cause of God, than in his own cause. If he smites, he breaks not the head ; but his reproofs are precious oil. Blessed be his anger, for it is merciful, and his wrath, for it is kind. O my soul ! come thou into his secret, and be thou united unto his assembly.

Cruelty and delight in the miseries of others, though his most bitter enemies, is a disposition he greatly abhors ; far less can he suffer his attachments to any particular party to swallow up all his sentiments of humanity to those who differ from him. Let bloody Papists sport themselves with the torments of whom they call *heretics* ; he has not so learned Christ, upon whom the Spirit descended, not in the likeness of a vulture, but a dove. When man is born at first into the world of nature, we behold him a peaceful infant, all naked and defenceless, not armed with claws and teeth, as some other animals ; and can we reasonably suppose, that when a man is born again into the world of grace, he will come, armed with fire and sword, to destroy all around him ?

So far is he from stretching forth his hand against them that are at peace with him, that he will not suffer rancour to foster in his breast against his most malignant foe. He wisely considers, that he himself has acted a more unjust part towards his God, than ever the most ungenerous person did to him, and yet obtained mercy. He does not only suppress his resentment from bursting out into violent vociferations ; nor is he like some who affect a sullen silence, louder

than all words, to proclaim the implacable malice of their hearts : but he banishes from his very thoughts the purpose of revenge. He considers, that it is far more glorious, that it bespeaks more solid wisdom and greatness, to forget an injury than to requite it. He leaves it to fools and madmen, to furious beasts and silly wretches, to tear themselves in their anger, to flash fury with their eyes, to falter in their speech, to tremble in their joints, to stamp with their feet, to wreak their resentment on whatever comes in their road, though perhaps senseless and inanimate ; when they receive some petty affront, or meet with contradiction.

He resembles not a city without gates, or broken down, and without walls, that may easily be assaulted ; nor powder, that may quickly be inflamed ; but may be compared to green wood, that is not easily kindled, but may soon be extinguished. He looks not at every petty injury as through a microscope, which magnifies far beyond the life.

THE NATURAL STATE OF MANKIND.

SEE ! how the mountains are covered with snow, and the valleys are stript of their lovely verdure. No fragrant flower perfumes the air, nor embalms the evening walk. The songsters of the grove have folded up their wings, and forgot their notes, who, some time ago, did sing among the branches. Where are the golden treasures of the harvest, or the smiling flowers of the spring ? Joy and gladness is fled from the plentiful field, and all is one scene of desolation. What wonder ! when the glorious fountain of our day has withdrawn his enlivening beams ; resigning to the power of chilling cold, both the aerial regions and the watery element. In comparison with the heat of summer, the warmest days are cold even at the height

of noon. Full often the scowling wintry clouds wrap up the day's fair face. All joy is darkened. The sun seems to be swallowed up : the moon and stars withdraw their shining. The low-bent clouds pour down. Short is the day. How tedious the length, and how deep the horrors of the night ! When every brook is swelled to a river, let not the traveller pursue his journey. Ye that do business in great waters ! be not rash to tear your cables from the shore, when winter's fury rages on the main.

But, while I muse on the rigours of this unjoyous season, let me reflect what moral sentiments may here be taught. Even the barren winter may be fruitful of intellectual truths ; and binding frosts may be instrumental in thawing the heart, and melting the affections.

And first then, what a lively emblem have we in this, of that state we are in when we come into the world ! who are, as an apostle tells, "by nature children of wrath." While this winter is not past, the flowers appear not in the earth, the time of the singing of birds is not come, the voice of the turtle is not heard in our land. Then we derive not our consolation from the glorious Sun of righteousness, but from the fire of worldly enjoyments or sinful pleasures ; no flowers of divine grace adorn the conversation, nor are we filled with the fruits of righteousness ; we know not the joyful sound, neither is the melody of praise heard in our tabernacles.—Is the day short, and the night long ? Know, O natural man ! that it is the very picture of that natural state wherein you are. How soon is the day of prosperity made dark with night!—a night that shall not see the dawning of the day, and no joyful sound comes therein. Though for a while you may cheer up your heart, and think to kindle a fire, and walk in the light of your fire, and compass yourselves about with sparks ; what will you do, when the shadows of the everlasting evening shall be stretched forth, and the long night of eternity shall

wrap you in its impenetrable gloom? Who can live in his cold? Who knows the power of his anger?

And here I recal to mind an admonition of our Lord to his disciples, when warning them of the dreadful catastrophe of that ungrateful city Jerusalem, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter." O merciful Father! let it not be my miserable fate, to take my flight from time and this my mortal body, while the winter of thy wrath is not past, while the rain of thy indignation is not over and gone.

ON IMMORTALITY.

REJOICE, ye wise and good! tremble, ye knaves and fools! (who is anxious for your happiness?) for immortality, that pleasing awful thought, is no fantastic dream. Not only is it brought to light in the gospel; it is written in the volumes of creation and providence. Set immortality aside, and beasts are wiser and happier than men, and vice is preferable to virtue.

Ye brutal race! that fly in air, or swim in floods, or tread the ground, soon you arrive at your highest perfection, and are quickly put in possession of your chiefest good. You are not cursed with carking cares, nor anxious thoughts of evils yet unfelt. Small are your capacities; and your desires are few, but none of them are vain. But we always travel by slow degrees to the summit of our perfection; yea, in vain we think to arrive at the perfection our nature is capable of. How dim is our knowledge! How languid is our virtue! How imperfect is our happiness!—while here. Our eyes are not satisfied with seeing, nor our ears with hearing, nor our understandings with truth, nor our desires with good. Were we to live coeval with the sun, we might be still enlarging our views, exalting our sentiments, approaching nearer to the glorious

Godhead, whose image we are. Large are our capacities, many are our desires, which are not filled, which are not satisfied.

Nor is the desire of immortality the feeblest. Who among mankind covets not to be remembered, when he himself shall forget all mortal things? For this the image of the mind is transfused into the page of the orator, the poet, the philosopher. It is the office of the statuary and painter, to eternize the image of the body; and even the poor mechanic erects his monumental stone. There were who have called their lands by their own names. Their inward thought was, that their dwellings should continue to all generations. Death comes; Death, the mighty leveller; he stops our ardent pursuits, disappoints our fond hopes; and even the monuments designed to immortalize our names, are mortal.—Like you, ye thoughtless herds! we fall, we die, and are laid in the grave; our place no more beholds us. And, even in death, you seem less wretched than the human race. To you, death comes undreaded; but we, long ere we feel, must fear the blow. Yet we are your superiors, higher in the dignity of our natures, and higher in the divine regards. Short lived is your happiness, with which your existence terminates in death. But ours then first commences, when the dull body falls into the grave. The sprightly mind spurns the vile earth. No more we complain of unsatisfied desires, and useless capacities. Then, and not till then, shall we attain that perfection, and taste that satisfaction, to which we were designed.

Thus, even our inferiority to the brutes, proves that we are superiors; and the eternal perfection of our nature, is proclaimed by our greatest imperfections. Nor is it the only merit of immortality to assert the glorious prerogative of human nature above the bestial order: it is this alone which can support the cause of virtue, and justify the ways of God to men.—Virtue has charms indeed; none will contest it. Being a

lady of heavenly extraction, she shines in native elegance and beauty. The radiant sun is not so fair, when he emerges from the eastern wave; nor the fair-handed spring, when she flushes the infant year with many-coloured blossoms. Yet, O celestial virgin! who would match with thee for good and all; if misery here, if annihilation hereafter, were all thy dowry? Even peace of conscience, without the glory of immortality, were but a shadowy happiness. Were this hope a mere delusion, how could we justify thy procedure, O thou wise and holy Governor of the world? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" See! Wickedness, in various shapes, lifts her proud head, and reigns triumphant; while modest Virtue seeks the shades, or pines in want, or groans in chains, or mourns in the dungeon.

And, even in these happy countries, where Justice, enthroned by wholesome laws, draws his impartial sword, how many secret crimes, exceeding heinous and detested, which cannot be found out by the most accurate inquisition, or are capable of being animadverted upon! How many virtues which cannot be rewarded! Presume not to blame the divine procedure, nor question the wisdom of Providence, when Jacob-like, she lays her hands awry; the right hand of prosperity, and the left hand of adversity, appearing as misplaced, upon the heads of righteous and wicked men. "For, verily, there is a reward for the righteous, and a strange punishment for the workers of iniquity." You see the wicked great in power; but suddenly you curse his habitation. But, mark the perfect man; behold the upright; his latter end is peace. "Righteous, O Lord! are thy judgments; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

O glorious Immortality! it is thine alone to maintain the rights of virtue and humanity. Without thee, the beasts were our superiors, and the worst of men would have the advantage of the best, in numberless instances. The dying raptures of the saints

and of martyrs, and the misgiving horrors of the ungodly, are inspired by thee alone. And though thou wert a gay chimera, and but a pleasing deceit ; yet were it the interest of mankind to hold thee fast, to refuse to let thee go.

And can eternity belong to ME ? With what an awful joy are all my powers affected ? Ye worldly vanities ! where are ye now ? Lo ! there the beggar stands upon a level with the king. At once the robes, at once the rags, have disappeared. Weighed in this even balance, how small your weight, ye worldly afflictions ! Where is thy grisly aspect king of terrors ! Be still a king of terrors to the wicked, I crown thee prince of life. Why should I fear, if it is only thine to wound my mortal part ? My heaven-born soul laughs at the shaking of thy deadly dart. "O death ! where is thy dreadful sting ? O grave ! where is thy boasted victory ?"

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

HAIL, sacred page ! volumes of inspiration ! in whose presence the compositions of mortal wit hide their ashamed countenances ; as stars which shone brightly in the clear sky, disappear, when the morning sun purples the eastern clouds. Where shall we find such venerable antiquity, as in this reverend code ? Before Abraham was, was Christ, the great I AM. Before Orpheus, or Linus, or Hesiode, or Homer, were the scriptures of the Hebrew lawgiver.

It is true, the hoary head is not a crown of glory, except when found in the way of righteousness. There are trifling, there are immoral, there are inconsistent productions. If these should vie with the sacred oracles, in the earliness of their existence ; yet they must not presume to claim an equal regard from men, with the book of God, whose subject is a compound

of the *marvellous*, the *pious*, the *useful*, and the *grand*. The histories of past, the prophecies of future events, are neither trifling nor deceitful. The precepts, how pure ! the doctrines and mysteries, how sublime ! how worthy of God to reveal them ! of man to believe them ! Here, both the natural and moral world unfold to our view. Here, we behold this beauteous fabric, emerging out of nothing, and wrapped in a winding-sheet of flames. Here, we are informed of the birth of evil, both natural and moral ; and how they are again rooted out of the world. The miseries you are to avoid ; the happiness you are to pursue ; the method wherein you may attain the one, and avoid the other ;—these are the important and interesting themes of the Bible. Peruse these holy records, and be acquainted with thyself, and with thy God, O mortal ! To ransom thee from death, to render you blessed both here and hereafter ; see here, thy great Creator, lying in the womb, groaning on a cross, and sleeping in a grave. Jesus ! thou Saviour of the world, these Scriptures testify of thee. Thou art the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending of them. In the Old Testament, thou art concealed ; in the New Testament, thou art revealed. Thou art the end of the law, and the sum of the gospel.

It is true indeed, not every place shines with an equal lustre. But is it any detraction from the beauty of the material world, the fair book of the creation, that here there is a champagne country, and there a barren wilderness ; here a craggy rock, and there a fruitful valley ? We despise not the beauty of the firmament, though some parts of it are not sown so thick as others with starry lamps. But should we nearer view those seemingly barren places in the field of revelation ; should we dig into those rocky texts, with care and reverence, perhaps then we might find cause to altar our sentiments. Even the genealogies are not useless, nor the ceremonies insignificant. Even

here we find rich veins of wisdom ; and Christ the pearl of great price.

But is there not something more than moral breathing through every page ? It is here the attentive mind is struck with awe, as under the impenetrable shade of some aspiring grove, or under the roof of some religious edifice. Thus, angels which appeared to holy men of old, struck the beholders with a dread, for which they could not well account. There was something in their voice, in their air, in their gesture, which spoke more than human. What loftiness of phrase in some ! What majestic simplicity of expression in other passages ? How unparelleled ! How inimitable by mortal pen ! Thus he whose name is called "the Word of God," in his exalted state, is more glorious than the kings of the earth ; and, even in his humiliation, there was something exceedingly majestic, which poured contempt upon princes.

Be not ashamed of the Scriptures. They are the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth. O blessed word ! thou convertest the soul ; thou enlightenest the eyes ; thou rejoicest the heart ; thou givest wisdom unto the simple ; and light unto the blind ; and life unto the dead ! Peruse the Scriptures ; your corruptions shall be mortified, your graces shall be vivified, your thoughts, your words your actions, shall be sanctified, be purified, be rectified. These will alleviate your sorrows in adversity, and in prosperity heighten your enjoyments. Here, multitudes have found life everlasting.

O ye who have received the truth, in the love thereof ! who have his blessed word sweeter than honey to your mouth ! give glory to that God, who, when the human race, were wandering in uncertainty and error, was pleased to make such a revelation of himself ;—a revelation even dropt, where we have notices conveyed to us, more true and certain than from the famed deadly oracle of Delphos, or Dodona.

Praise him, who has not committed the intimations of his will unto the leaves of uncertain tradition, which every breath of wind might puff away ; which, in later ages, might have been greatly corrupted, by passing through a multitude of hands. But he hath written the same word, which formerly was only verbal, in a book the peculiar care of Providence ; where the divine revelation is kept as in a garrison, and needs not fear from the injuries of time, from the cunning of Satan, nor from the evil designs of corrupt men. Adore him, who, by his Holy Spirit, informed the minds of holy men of old, with such concealed truths, and guided their pens in writing these holy originals. Acknowledge his goodness, who hath preserved these heavenly records from flames, and floods, and desolations ; who hath cast your lot, not in those dusky corners of the world, where the word of God sheds not its holy light, or is, by public authority, prohibited from being consulted.

Know thy privilege, O happy island ! much are you advantaged every way beyond thy neighbouring states ; but, chiefly, that unto you are committed the oracles of God. Turn not your blessing to a curse. Young men ! search the Scriptures, they will make you wise unto salvation ; you shall have more understanding than the ancients. Old men ! search the scriptures, they will be the support of your old age, and make you to sing as in the days of your youth. Ye men of rank and station ! who dwell in lofty palaces, and ride in gilded chariots, O make them your heritage for ever ! Ye weaker Christians ! here is much to satisfy your craving appetite. Ye men of genius ! here is strong meat, to suit your nicer palates, and drive away disdain.

Meditate on the law of the Lord both day and night. The more you draw from this refreshing fountain, the more will the waters abound. But, would you enter into the secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear him ? Bring with you a pure,

an humble, and a fervent mind. Whom shall he teach knowledge? whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Those whose hearts are not haughty, nor their eyes lofty; but who are like the child weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts; those who are estranged from their lusts, who lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness; those whose souls do pant exceedingly, and long for God's commandments, like thee, O blessed David, whose eyes did timeously prevent the night watches, to meditate on the statutes of the Lord.

Take to yourselves, ye jealous Papists! your fabulous traditions, and hide this holy lamp under the bushel of foreign languages; and, by this confess the weakness of your cause. Ye wild Enthusiasts! vaunt of the light within you, but take heed, lest that light you boast is in you be darkness. Walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks of your kindling, ye unbelieving Deists! But, O house of Israel! come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. Consult this heavenly guide, O thou my soul! and let your delight be in the law of the Lord. Let me often expatiate in these hallowed fields of revelation, and, like the disciples, pluck the full ears of corn, and rub them from the husk, by ardent meditation and fervent prayer.

Shine upon my soul, O heavenly Spirit! bear witness in my heart. Imprint the Bible there, make this the library of God. Then shall I be made wiser than my teachers, and, in all my afflictions, be comforted; and, though I walk through death's dark shades, yet will my steps be conducted unto those blissful regions, where "the sun shall no more go down, nor the moon withdraw her shining; but the Lord shall be my everlasting light, and my God my glory."

ON ELECTION.

STOOP down, presumptuous reason ! remember from whence thou art fallen. Behold ! even in thy perfect state, it was not in thee to find out God, by the most accurate researches ; how much less shalt thou now be able to find out the Almighty unto perfection ? Come, holy faith, and humble reverence ! teach us to lift our thoughts to the most distinguishing privilege of electing love. O that while we admire the sublimity of the doctrine, we may taste the sweetness of the benefit ! Happy they, who, instead of intruding, with bold curiosity, into the secrets of the Most High, give diligence to make their calling and election sure. By the dictates of unerring wisdom, let our sentiments be regulated in this important article of our most holy faith—the purpose of God according to election.

The date of it is eternal. Yes ; it must be so ; for every purpose of his will must be coeval with himself. O glorious thought ! to have dwelt upon the heart of a loving God, before the foundation of the world ! What grateful emotions may it not excite in the minds of these high favourites, that God has loved them with an everlasting love, before the day-spring knew his place ? How deservedly shall their meditations of him be sweet, both in the night and day, whose precious thoughts towards them, are ancient as eternity itself ?

Its objects are particular. Of the determinate counsel of God we read in the scriptures ; but of the indeterminate counsel we do not read. If the names of the disciples were written in heaven ; if Clement's name was in the book of life, assign a reason, if you can, why any that are the Lord's, should be less fore-known by him, who knows whom he hath chosen, without respect of persons. If in thy book, O God ! all our members are written, which, in continuance,

were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them ; much more are all the saints, the members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones, written without exception, in the fair book of life. O ye that are partakers of such distinguished honour ! live to his praise ; and be his worthy name engraven on your hearts, and on the palms of your hands—by whom your worthless names are written among the living in Jerusalem, when others are written in the earth.

Its motives are sovereign. Boasting, thou art for ever excluded here ! Even the Saviour's merits, to which we owe our salvation, are not the source of our election. Nor will precious faith gather where it has not strawed, by laying claim to be the cause of God's electing love. But least of all can it be said, that God hath chosen us because we were holy, and according to our works. Election is the root, these are the flowers ; election is the foundation, these the superstructure ; election is the fountain, and these are the streams that issue from it. How can they be elected of God for any civil distinction, or moral prerogative, when some of them were profligate and flagitious—most of them illiterate and poor—and all of them by nature the children of wrath, even as others ! This is not the manner of men, O Lord ! How deservedly they love thee, who, without deserving, were loved by thee !

The tenor is irrevocable. For, though the purposes of earthly sovereigns may be disannulled—though unforeseen accidents may dash their maturest schemes, and encroach upon their wisest plans, what should alter the counsel of the Most High, who is not a man that he should repent ? The mountains, these strong foundations of the earth, may be removed, but the foundation of God standeth sure. The election shall obtain both grace and glory, though earth and hell were leagued against them. As many as are ordained to eternal life, shall believe ; nor shall they be de-

ceived by the most cunning artifices of the enemy of their salvation.

EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

IT is true that miracles are ceased, by which, in early ages, it pleased the Holy Ghost to attract the observation of the unthinking world, to the doctrine of the gospel, and to confirm the faith of true disciples. But, let not modern infidels complain on this score, for want of sufficient evidence to the truth of christianity. Though we see not now the laws of nature reversed—the lame foregoing his crutches—the blind rejoicing in the light of day—and the dead restored to life again ; we are not wanting of other advantages, which the miraculous age could not afford. The doctrine of the gospel has travelled with the sun ; is publicly professed by sundry nations of differing customs, and various dispositions. Glorious are its effects upon the hearts and lives of many (though, alas ! too few) of its professors. The sensual man no more serves divers lusts and pleasures, when he obeys it from the heart. The cups of the drunkard, the oaths of the blasphemer, the sordid gain of the oppressor, are renounced and forgotten. Those who once wallowed in every sinful pollution, now shine in the beauty of holiness. Such blest effects, it is true, were known even in the age of miracles, in those places where the gospel was first preached. But what shall we now think of the almost universal spread, and long continuance of this holy profession, in spite of the philosopher's wit, and the persecutor's sword. Be it so ; these favourable presumptions in behalf of christianity, do not beget that lively faith that purifies the heart, nor what the great apostle calls “the full assurance of understanding.” No more could

miracles. Yet both the one and the other are sufficient to screen the holy faith from absolute contempt, ay and until its high pretensions are candidly examined by the serious inquirer after truth.

Nor can I be easily persuaded that ever the deist was born, who can truly say, I exerted myself to the utmost of my ability, to find out the truth ; I begged with my utmost fervour, my Maker to show me his way ; I was not previously prejudiced against the gospel, by the love of any lust. But, after all my efforts, I cannot think that Jesus is any more than an impostor. Such an impartial and vigorous inquiry, is certainly that will of God, which, if any man will do, he shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God.

Shall we say, then, that it is in the power of every man to acquire the noble grace of faith, by his native abilities ? Is not faith the gift of God, and not of works, lest any man should boast ? The gospel itself affirms they cannot please God who are in the flesh. How then shall they, by prayers, or tears, or utmost fervour, prevail with him to bestow this good and perfect gift ? But we need not be under any uneasy apprehensions, as though the gospel were impeached, by asserting that a gracious God reveals himself to such an impartial inquirer. This will not in the least infer the natural power to do that which is well-pleasing in his sight. Nay, it rather confirms the doctrine of the fall. For such is the depravity of human nature—such the aversion to every divine thing, that no man is able to do all which himself allows is in the power of his hand. It is only supernatural grace which can enable one to exert even his natural ability to the utmost, and do with all his might, what his hand findeth. Happy the man who is thus strengthened from above, to search for God with all his heart ! I say not that the sovereign God is obliged, is constrained, to confer the blessing of faith : “ for, who hath first given unto him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again.” But such is his goodness, now

that he is in Christ—such his condescending regards to the sons of men, his ears will not be deaf, his heart not slow to give them their importunate requests for things agreeable to his will. When the deist, then, has exerted himself to the utmost of his confessed abilities, (which he cannot do but by the Holy Ghost in a saving operation) let him complain for want of evidence. I cannot but think it will bear an orthodox sense, what a noted poet says :

“ An honest deist, where the gospel shines,
Matur’d to nobler in the christian ends.”

But, if he is not able to do all he can, (which is a certain truth, though it sounds hard in Pelagian ears) and be unable to believe the gospel, why should his unbelief be counted to him for a sin ? For it seems he cannot believe till it please God to give him the Holy Spirit. Indeed, we are come at last into the depths of God, whose way is in the sea, whose path is in the mighty waters, his footsteps are not known. Perhaps it will not satisfy the refractory understanding of the haughty deist to tell him, that Sovereignty may withhold and dispense her favours as she pleases, and that it is not unjust to punish men for inability, when it is of a voluntary kind. Yet, right reason will attest the first, and conscience the last.

It is not required that you renounce your reasoning powers, O ye unbelievers ! Ye need not turn simpletons to be christians ! Faith is no light credulity ! But when the proposed doctrines are matters of everlasting importance, do not belie the Lord, and say it is not he, whether he speaks in the promise, or in the threatening, merely because they quadrate not with your vicious inclinations, or transcend your shallow apprehensions. Alas ! is the mystery, is the purity of the gospel, the stumbling-block in your way, which ought to prejudice right reason in its favour ? But when you stop the mouth of conscience, it is just

your reason should mislead you. You are afraid, you are unwilling, to know, to understand the truth, whatever you pretend; and therefore you walk on in darkness.

If you were the true and genuine sons of reason, you would see the necessity of submitting it to your Maker. If you really had the interests of virtue and morality at heart, you would willingly see the imperfection of all human righteousness, and the necessity of a better than your own. If you knew what real good and true happiness was, willingly would you believe in the eternal reward of blessed life and immortality. Infidelity is an enemy to wisdom, virtue, and felicity.

Be convinced that you are blind and miserable ! Down with your high imaginations ! Reflect as you ought, what a God he is, with whom you have to do ! How just and severe, that you may not presume ! How merciful and good, that you may not despair ! Shall empty honours, swinish lusts, great possessions, part you and your Redeemer ! Perhaps there are not wanting who would believe on Christ, and gladly be saved by him from misery, but not from sin. If the grace of faith would start up in a night, without their care or labour—if they could yawn themselves into heaven, then good and well. But love of sin, and love of ease, are inconsistent with striving to enter in at the strait gate ; and being followers of them, who, through faith and patience, now inherit the promises.

Some are not startled, if eternal vengeance is denounced against the lawless and disobedient—if against murderers—if against adulterers—if against blasphemers—if against idolaters : but why, say they against unbelievers ? “ He that believeth not, shall be damned.” A hard saying ! who can bear it ! As though unbelief were not the worst of murder, that crucifies the Lord of glory ; that stabs him to the heart, not in his human nature only, but in his mediatorial office. As though it were not the worst of robberies, that steals

away from God his most precious jewel, his glory, which he will not give to another; the most horrid blasphemy, that makes the God of truth a liar.

Uphraid a miscreant wretch, one of the gallant spirits of the age, with lewdness and debauchery; upbraid him with his revelling and drunkenness; upbraid him with his horrid swearing;—he may perhaps hear you with patience, nor take it in bad part, to have his good-humoured and fashionable vices thus kindly laid before him. But should you call his sincerity in question; you are nothing, Sir, but a villain, a liar, a knave: you touch him in a tender point. Roused are his resentments. He storms, he rages, he breathes! you are in danger of having your throat cut, for the insolence of your tongue. Wicked as he is, this foul reproach he would willingly wipe away with your blood.—Now, shall a puny mortal have such regard to his character for truth; and will not the holy God, who cannot lie, any more than deny himself, render a due reward to that audacious sinner, that tells him, He is a liar, either in the promise or in the threatening?

But especially if you reject his testimony concerning his beloved Son; you pierce him in every attribute, as Christ was wounded in every member; you touch the apple of his eye; you filch away the most splendid gem of his crown; you do what in you lies to pluck him from the throne of grace, and wipe away that precious blood, wherewith the mercy-seat is sprinkled; you pour contempt upon his prime Messenger; you bring his counsel to nought, and say upon the matter to your Maker, “Thy gifts be to thyself. I see no glory in the contrivance of thy infinite wisdom.” You declare that Christ hath laboured in vain, and spent his strength for nought.—All this, and much more than this, is the language of the evil heart of unbelief.

What more shall I say of thee, thou cursed monster! What sins are not involved in thee only!

What innumerable evils compass thee about, thy constant and inseparable attendants ! Thou art the soul which animates the body of sin ; Beelzebub, the prince of devils ; the great Antichrist, that in the heart exaltest thyself above all that is called God. Thou art the shield of every sin, and the enemy of all righteousness. Whereas other sins are wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores ; it is thine to cast away the healing plaster. Sooner shall God cease to be true, cease to be just, cease to be God ;—than those in whom thou reignest shall enter into everlasting rest.

THE DIFFERENT STATES AND ENDS OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED ; A FRAGMENT.

YE sons of men, give ear whilst I relate the different states, the widely different ends, of the righteous and the wicked. Who is the blessed man; and where shall you find the possessor of true felicity ? Will you call them happy who work iniquity, and greatly scorn religion, whether in its sacred doctrines, or in its distinguished practices ? No ; you are not happy, though fame should sound her trumpet, and honour should prepare your way before you ; though you should fill your coffers with glittering dust, and swim in tides of polluted joys. How far am I from envying you, your perishing honours, your winged riches, your brutal satisfactions ! But, lo ! the man, the rare and despised man, who, far from imitating the pernicious example of the sinner, or reducing their hellish devices into practice; who, far from mocking at religion with lordly pride, and assuming impudence, will even abandon the society of the wicked, greatly disdaining to make them his bosom friends, or sit in their assembly: This is the man who hath found true and perfect felicity. I will not say he will be blessed, but he is so already. Neither is it in the power of language to

express, or of my thoughts to represent, this superabundant blessedness. Blessed shall he be in his immortal soul, and even his mortal body shall partake of his joy. Even in this wretched state of imperfection, even in this vale of tears, he is a happy man, without the smiles of fortune, nor waits he dissolution to be blessed.

Would you know where the exalted delights of this uncommon person are pitched, who thus abandons the society of the wicked, and is not indebted to the world for his felicity? To meditate upon the scriptures of truth is his favourite employment, whether they point forth unto him the doctrines that are to be believed, or the duties that are to be practised, by thy authority, thou great Lawgiver, that speaks in every part of that hallowed page. Not content with a superficial knowledge of these sacred contents, he seeks to enter into the life and spirit of these heavenly writings; and knowing how rich they are in hidden and valuable treasures, he is not wearied in digging for the latent truths, whether the cheerful morn purples the east, or whether the evening star lights up his lamp.

As a tree planted by an industrious man upon the verdant banks of a copious unexhausted stream, spreads far and wide its watery roots, defies the stormy blasts, nor is much dependent on the clouds of heaven; but in sultry years, and under parched skies, this fails not, in the proper season, to adorn his branches with fruit, after his kind, and verdant foliage: so, just so, the truly religious man, planted by the divine hand, along the margin of the sanctuary-waters; he shall not be afraid of the wintry blasts of temptation, because he shall acquire an unshaken stability; neither shall he be meanly dependent on the variable clouds of worldly enjoyments, because he shall, without them, be maintained in a perpetual moisture. And, therefore, whatever seeming barrenness may for a time appear; yet, in the convenient

and proper season, this tree of righteousness adorns his branches with fruits of holiness and consolation, after his kind ; the leaves also of his fair and beautiful profession shall not be tarnished or fall away.— Success shall crown his enterprises ; and even when disappointments shall betide him, yet in the event it shall appear how all things wrought together for his real good, and every action of his hand was truly prosperous.

But as to those who are despisers of the divine word, and arm themselves with honour and insolent contempt, and are the workers of iniquity ; they are far from being resembled to this deep-rooted and fertile plant, however considerable in the esteem of others, or in their own conceit ; they are but like the chaff, which, being light in its own nature, and altogether unprofitable when separated from the grain, is suffered by the careless husbandman to fly abroad, the sport of winds, which, with the greatest ease imaginable, drive it away.

ON THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD.*

THAT “God is a Spirit,” we are assured by the great Prophet of the church, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and by whom, he whom no man hath seen at any time, hath been declared. To his infallible dictates we must give up ourselves with all that confidence due to the Teacher come from God. Let us try then if we can find out what properties of the divine nature are bosomed in this short description.

Here, indeed, we must confess ourselves unequal to

* This and the fourteen following Essays, on the Divine Perfections, are additions to the original work.

the task of giving any positive description of that mysterious rank of beings, denominated spirits. "There is a spirit in man;" so call we our better part, which triumphs over death and the grave. Of this we know but little. The angels are spirits, both those who stood and those who fell. Of these we know still less. But least of all are we able to define the spirituality of His essence who is the Father of spirits, and by whose visitation they are preserved. "All flesh is not the same flesh," says an inspired apostle; and may we not also say, All spirit is not the same spirit? However, as there are certain qualities common to all the various kinds of flesh, so there are certain qualities common to all the various kinds of spirit. For every spirit is a real or permanent substance; endued with life, thought, and power of acting; that is not compounded of different parts; that cannot be seen with the bodily eye, cannot be touched or affected by bodily force, cannot be described by the statuary's art, or by the painter's device; a substance that never dies, being incorruptible.

Is a spirit a real substance, which has an existence of its own, being neither a creature of the mind, nor a quality of a thing which must have a subject to support its very being? And who can doubt but He is the most real of substances, whose existence is necessary, and independent of any? for so much is imported in that most admirable epithet, **I AM THAT I AM.** To suppose God to be an idea of the mind, and not a real being, is to be atheist at once; is to say with the fool, "There is no God."

Is a spirit endued with life? Life ennobles the being in which it is. Life makes a despicable fly more glorious than the sun; and "a living dog is better than a dead lion." And must not He live, who gives life to all, from the triumphing angel down to the crawling insect? Yes. He is the living God; and the fountain of life is with him alone. In this he stands pre-eminent: nor must ye compare yourselves

with him, ye idols of the nations, ye blind people that have, and ye deaf that have not ears ; though silver plates from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz be your costly materials ; though blue and purple be your clothing, and you be all the work of cunning men. For the Lord is the true God ; he is the living God and the everlasting King.

What is a spirit ? A substance thinking and intelligent. Brutish indeed must they be who can persuade themselves that the exquisitely nice regulations of the universe are owing to an unthinking cause ; or that he himself doth not know who teacheth man knowledge, and lights in human hearts the heavenly lamp of reason, that candle of the Lord.

Is a spirit an immaterial substance, that hath neither flesh nor bones, nor is manacled with joints and limbs, nor is compounded of different parts ? Indeed, that thought can spring from matter, however modified, seems repugnant to all our ideas of its properties, and contradicts all our experience of its power. Combine matter in your most ingenious manner, ye artificers, ye cunning workmen ; subject it to all the changes which can be effected by heat or mixture, ye who make the material world the object of your curious research ; has it ever sprung up to life among your hands, or discovered any power of thought ? You surprise us by phenomena unexpected and strange ; you produce machines complicated and useful ; but have you ever found, in any of your contrivances, that matter acquired the power of self-government, capacity for speculation, or any consciousness of right and wrong ? But why appeal to you ? One who cannot err, hath assured us that spirits hath not flesh and bones, and different parts, as material substances are known to have. Of what materials, then, is Jehovah composed, who is the most excellent and perfect of spirits ? Must not his essence be simple and uncompounded, who is continually present with all his works, who filleth heaven

and earth, who is not only every where, but all in every place? Bodily parts cannot belong to the incorruptible God. Even divine perfections are not parts of God; they are only God, whom we cannot comprehend at one glance, viewed by our narrow minds in different relations to his creatures, or acting in various ways. The divine wisdom is the only wise God; the divine power the Lord God Omnipotent.

Can a spirit, which is immaterial, be seen by the eye, or touched by the hand? How then can God be seen or felt? Symbols of the divine presence may be the objects of our senses; we may see a form or hear a sound; but the blessed and only Potentate himself is one to whom no man can approach, whom no man hath seen or can see. Ye ancient people of God, bear witness to this truth. What nation ever had God so nigh unto them as you? Ye saw a visible representation of his glory on the burning mount; ye witnessed the smoke of Sinai, and ye heard a voice, but his essence ye did not, could not see. Your lawgiver Moses assures you, that "ye saw no manner of similitude in the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire;" a greater than Moses told you, "ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape." Have symbolical representations of God been given to the ancient church; and has God represented himself as having bodily organs in the written word, and spoken to us in our own idiom of those things which could not have been uttered or made intelligible in any other way? Let us not despise this condescending goodness, nor fancy that the Godhead is really like these visible representations or figurative descriptions. What is his face? It is the manifestation of his favour. His mouth? The revelation of his will. His nostrils? The acceptation of our prayers and praises. Omniscience is his eye; power his arm; mercy his bowels. His feet is the ubiquity of his presence, and his heart the sincerity of his love.

Where then are they who changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the image made like to corruptible man, or into the likeness of an ox that eateth grass? Be astonished, O heavens! even four-footed beasts and creeping things have been mistaken for the eternal Godhead. But for this cause, God gave them up to vile affections. Remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.

And lastly, if God is a spirit, he must have immortality. A spirit waxes not old, nor dies. All flesh is grace. The heavens and the earth shall perish; they all shall wax old, as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same and thy years shall have no end.

So then, they that are in the flesh, cannot please God; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. Let us therefore have grace to maintain a spiritual frame before him, to expect spiritual blessings from him, to offer spiritual services to him, and to seek satisfaction to our spirits in him alone.

ON THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD.

THAT the Father of lights is without variableness or shadow of turning, is the express assertion of Scripture, and an important article of christian faith. It results from the perfection of his nature that he is incapable of change. How can he become better, who is infinitely perfect; or how become worse, without ceasing to be God? By his immutability he is distinguished from all creatures, and exalted infinitely above them. They either do change, or may be changed; their qualities may be altered, their beings may be destroyed; they were already changed from

nothing to something, and what is there in their nature to prevent their being changed in a thousand forms, and at last changed from something to nothing? But God must always continue what he has always been. All alterations of substance, all variations of condition, all fluctuation of passions, all revolution of purpose, are eternally removed from him who has said, "I am the Lord, I change not."

What a variable being is man? We all do fade as the leaf. Sickness impairs our health; death changes our countenance; the grave devours our flesh and our bones. The teeth of time will even leave some impression upon the hardest body, and the rocks may be removed out of their place. Though spiritual substances are incorruptible, we are sure that the same power that spake them into existence, may command them to return again into the wide womb of uncreated night. But Jehovah is the incorruptible God, the rock of ages, the living God, and stedfast for ever. O earth, whose foundations were laid of old, and which fools dream shall endure for ever, thou shalt perish; and ye heavens, which the divine skill has spread over the earth like a splendid canopy, ye shall wax old like a garment, and be thrown aside as an useless thing. But he who made you is ever the same, and his years shall have no end. "I am that I am:" this, Moses, shall be thy credentials; and this, Israelites, shall be your consolation.

Variation of condition is as foreign to his nature as alteration of substance. The sun may be eclipsed. Beauty may degenerate into deformity, strength into weakness, honour into ignominy, wisdom into folly. He who yesterday filled a throne may this day mount a scaffold, or mourn in a dungeon. Even the more excellent qualities of righteousness and holiness may diminish, or be utterly lost. Man kept not his first estate; and it is not even with saints always as it was in months past. Angels are not all as they once were: how are ye fallen ye morning stars, and ye sons

of Adam, how is the gold become dim? But God is never different from what he was. His righteousness, his every perfection, is like the great mountains, which cannot be removed, but abide for ever. The same creature is at one time the object of his justice for wickedness, and at another of his love for goodness; but the change is not in God, but in the creature. The tree alters not its place, though, because we change our position, it is at one time on our right, and at another time on our left.

To what fluctuations of passion are we subject? Now we love, now we hate; now we hope, now we fear; now we grieve, and anon we rejoice. But that passions are not in God, is evident from the logic of Paul and Barnabas: We are men of like passions; therefore we are not gods. Be it so, that God is spoken of in Scripture as grieving, joying, and the like; we need not be surprised, though, in condescension to our weakness, he should speak in the language of men, when in condescension to our misery, he hath taken to himself, and appeared to us in the nature of man.

Nor let it be said that he ever alters his purpose. We indeed resolve one thing to-day and another thing to morrow; but he is in one mind, and who can turn him? As for us, from levity of temper we change our purpose without reason; and often, from the discovery of mistake, we change it with the highest reason; but he is not a man that he should have cause to repent, or have the folly without cause to change. There are many devices in a man's heart, not a few of which he cannot, and many of which, though he could, he ought not to execute; but the counsel of the Lord, as it always should, always will stand. Say not, if God were not mutable in his purpose, he would not be free. Who ever heard that freedom was opposed to constancy? It is only opposed to constraint. If he said to Hezekiah, thou shalt die and not live, and afterwards said, I will add unto thy days fifteen

years, the reprieve granted that good king was in consequence of no change in the divine purpose : the first was a declaration of the natural consequence of the distemper with which he was afflicted ; by declaring this he did not exclude himself from working a miracle for his recovery, which he had always purposed, and now meant to effect. He abolished the Old Testament dispensation after he had long sanctioned it, and introduced a better ; but he gave, during its continuance, many proofs of his purpose to change, and therefore the change itself, when it took place, indicated no change of purpose. In short, our prayers, when they prevail, prevail not on God to change his decree : by pulling, the boatman drags his vessel to the shore, not the shore to him ; and by praying, we bring not the decree to our will, but our will to the decree.

In the word of this unchangeable God, how firmly should we trust ; to his dispensations, how cheerfully should we submit ; and on him, amidst all vicissitudes, how safely may we rely ? Why doubt his word ? His word is like himself. One jot shall not pass from it. What he has said is certain as it were already done. He will perform the truth unto Jacob. Why refuse to submit to his dispensations ? It is his will, and who can turn him ? Whatsoever he doth shall be for ever. In all his works there is so much wisdom, that they are incomprehensible ; so much righteousness, that they are irreprovable ; so much power, that they are irresistible. Why should we peevishly complain ? Adversity is imbibed by fretful impatience, is sweetened by patient submission. What meanest thou, O murmur? It is the will of God. Shall the earth be forsaken for thee, and shall the rock be removed out of his place ? Nay rather, submit, and learn to approve ; thus shalt thou suck honey out of the rock, and sweetness out of the wormword and the gall.

Imagine not, christian, that thou shalt be exempt from vicissitude in this ever-changing scene. It is

not always that we are permitted to die in our nest, and to multiply our days as the sand. The godly have often had reason to say, changes and war are against me. It is inseparable from our condition while here; for what is there on earth but continual change? See here the shepherd's crook turns a sceptre, and there the sceptre is transformed into a hatchet. Here an empire rises, and there it falls. Here an earthquake swallows up a city; there a deluge sweeps away a country. One generation goes and another comes. Day follows night; year follows year. After meagre winter comes the delightful spring, and winter sweeps away the golden fruits of harvest. New constellations have actually appeared in the heavens, and vanished again. But, O what a rock is God! unchangeable among changeable worlds. This rock lifts its towering head above the waves of this troublesome sea, unshaken by the billows which roll beneath, and affording safe anchorage to the long lost mariner who retires to it for safety. Amidst the vicissitudes of time, let us contemplate by faith the immutability of God, of his purpose, and of his promise. When our heads are like to turn giddy by looking at the rapid motion and surprising turnings of the high rolling wheels of his providence, let us fasten them on that unchangeable God, who sits above and directs all their motions. Let us say, The fashion of this world changes continually and passeth away; but my God is the same, and therefore, though a miserable son of Jacob, I am not and shall not be consumed. My flesh and my heart shall soon fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Ah! how unlike the unchangeable God are his children on earth, who ought, as far as suits their condition, to imitate their Father! How unbecoming in them to be unstable in all their ways, when his ways are everlasting; to waver in their persuasions, and fluctuate in their resolutions; to have their opinions, like travellers, here to-day and away to-morrow; their

good resolutions, like the morning cloud, which is dissipated before noon ! Unstable as water, variable as the wind, how can we excel ? Be stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Let your only change be, from glory to glory.

How miserable must ye be who are constant in nothing but in sinning against the Lord ! The unchangeable God is an excellent friend, but a dreadful foe. When he rises up, the boldness of your countenance will be changed, however impudently you dare at present to offend. It must be so. You are unholy, and either God must change, or you. You will not, he cannot change, and therefore you must be consumed. Be wise for yourselves. You serve the world ; how long will you serve this Laban, who hath changed your wages so many times ? How long will you make the changeable things of this life your supreme good ? How long shall you seek rest in the dry places of the creation ? Arise, this is not your rest ; for is this the rest wherewith he causeth the weary to rest ? Come to this unchangeable God in Christ ; trust in him, and you shall be like mount Zion, that can never be removed, but abideth for ever. In him your rest shall be glorious.

ON THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD.

WHEN we say that God is omnipresent, we mean that he is absent from no place ; when we say that he is omniscient, that he is ignorant of no thing. The first necessarily implies the second ; for he who is every where must know every thing,—the nature of all beings, the thoughts of all hearts, and the events of all places and of all ages.

Infinite knowledge must be one of the glorious attributes of him who is infinitely perfect ; for partial ignorance would be imperfection. Besides, is there a

being which God did not create, a place where God does not reign, an event which God did not determine ? and can he be ignorant of any creature which he formed and sustains, or unacquainted with any occurrence which takes place in his presence, and by his appointment ? Moreover, that God is a God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed, has in every age been the terror of the bad, and the comfort of the good ; for why do the wicked fear, if conscience tell them not that God knows ? or how could the righteous rejoice, if they were not persuaded that the God of Jacob regards ?

Such knowledge, indeed, is too wonderful for us ; it is high, we cannot attain unto it. Many things we know not at all, many things we know but imperfectly ; there is not one thing which we thoroughly understand in all its properties. Alas ! we are nonplussed even by a pile of grass. Vain man, thou wouldest be thought wise ; but turn thither and learn to be modest and humble. Every object with which thou art surrounded is calculated to confound thine understanding, and repress thy pride. Understandest thou the balancing of the clouds, the springs of the sea, and the treasures of the snow ? Have the foundations of the earth been discovered by thee ? Or have the doors of the shadow of death been opened unto thee ? Our knowledge is rather of facts than of causes ; the little that we know is as nothing, compared with what remains unknown ; the works of nature are more properly the objects of our admiration, than of our knowledge. Look here, these things are so small that they escape our notice ; look there, those are so hugely great that they overwhelm our minds. The variety of nature's works distracts us, the multitude of them confounds us. Even the little knowledge which we acquire is not gained without a great deal of labour, and so weak are we, that while toiling for more, we lose much of what we have already acquired. It is so in natural things, and much more in

things supernatural. We cannot by searching find out the works of God, even though we have pleasure in them ; much less God himself and the mysteries of his will. How many puzzling questions are there in divinity ? how many dark Scriptures which we must refer to the Holy Ghost? In his word as in his works, there are paths which the vulture's eye hath not seen. But as for thee, O God, before the view of thy mind all mysteries evanish. There is no searching of thine understanding. Thy knowledge is intuitive. Thine understanding, which is infinite, embraces the universe of things at one glance, with greater ease than that of men can view a single point ; it neither acquires knowledge by labour, nor retains it with difficulty ; it knows nothing by halves, it comprehends every subject in all its circumstances and all its relations. " All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Even the fountains of that great deep, the human heart, are broken up by God ; and there is no secret spring of action within man so concealed, nor any current of thought that flows so silently or passes through the mind so swiftly, as to elude his observation. Ye uncharitable, who at every turn are passing sentence on another man's servant, and who presume to decide with oracular confidence on the secret motives of his actions, ye take too much upon you. Ye intrude into things which you have not seen, vainly puffed up by your fleshly mind. Ye sacrilegiously invade the peculiar province of the Omniscient. Who can know the heart ? " I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins." This is his glory, and he will not give it to another. Amazing knowledge ! to know the thoughts, not of a few men, not of a multitude of men, not of all the inhabitants of London, Paris, and Constantinople, but of all the men that live ! The Lord looketh from heaven, he beholdeth all the children of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He

fashioneth their hearts alike, he considereth all their works. Dig deep, ye wicked, to hide your counsels from the Lord. It shall be in vain ; for I know the things, saith the Lord, that come into your mind, every one of them. Cover your hypocrisy with the vail of a profession, ye Pharisees. It shall be in vain ; for he searcheth Jerusalem with candles, and his eyes are upon all the ways of its inhabitants ; they are not hid from his face, neither is their iniquity hid from his eyes. But comfort ye, his people. Thoughts are words which are heard in heaven ; it is not necessary, for this purpose, that they be expressed by sounds, or evidenced by actions. Tell God your wants ; but remember, that though prayer is the expression of our desires, it is not a teacher to God ; he knows what we need, and what we wish, before we ask it.

From this God what event can be hid ? Must not he know all events that have happened, exactly ; that are taking place, minutely ; that shall come to pass, distinctly ? Look back to the past ? whatever has happened, he remembers exactly. Have his people wept in secret over the sins they have committed, or the injuries they have sustained ? Not a tear has one of them shed, which he has not put into his bottle. Have they poured out many prayers before him, and often with delight meditated and conversed on his marvellous grace ? Not a believing prayer have they offered, not a holy converse have they held with their own minds or with their godly neighbours, which he has not written in a book. All is recorded in heaven, and cannot be forgotten. But have men lived in sin ? Unforgiven iniquity may be forgotten by the transgressor, but not by the lawgiver and judge ; transgressions of the wicked are sealed up in a bag, and God seweth up their iniquity, to be produced against them in that day when the Lord shall make inquisition.

Survey the present ; whatever is taking place he observes minutely. His eyes run to and fro through

the whole earth ; but though the sphere of his observation be wide, the notice which he takes is not general and superficial ; every individual event is remarked as accurately as if there were not another to demand his attention. How extensive, yet how accurate and minute his observation ! Before him passes in review whatsoever all the angels are doing in heaven, all the devils in hell, and all men on the earth. What say I ? Not a bird takes a flight through the air which is unobserved by him ; every cloud which blots the sky, is turned about by his counsel ; every blast of wind which blows, he has brought out of his treasury. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven.

Look forward to the future ; whatsoever shall come to pass, he foresees distinctly. Into futurity we are curious to pry, but an impenetrable cloud covers it from our view, and the shrewdest of us can pierce into it but a little way ; we rather guess than know what shall happen ; and every day's experience evinces that our conjectures, even respecting those probable events that seem most within our reach, are more frequently erroneous than just. But the most distant futurity is unveiled before Jehovah's mind, whose distinguishing character it is, that he knows and "declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." What though I cannot comprehend, nor answer every objection against the divine presence ? It becomes me, notwithstanding, to ascribe foreknowledge to God, and to exclude from his knowledge no future event, whatever be its quality ; though it be what we call sinful, though it be what we deem small and inconsiderable, though to us it be contingent and uncertain. Though it be evil. Glass is not sullied by reflecting the image of polluted things, and the foreknowledge of evil actions impairs not the purity of the divine nature. Did not he foreknow the fall of man by sin, who knows before it happens, the fall of sparrows to the

ground? though it be small and inconsiderable. All things, indeed, are so to God; but even those which appear so in our eyes are not beneath the divine foreknowledge. A man cannot carry a pitcher of water, but he knows the place and the time when it shall happen, and can inform disciples beforehand of the circumstances, though it be contingent and uncertain. Contingency to us is certainty to God. Is the lot cast into the lap? He knows on whom it shall fall. Is the bow drawn at a venture? He knows the track of the arrow's flight, and the individual whom it shall wound. The freedom of the human will is not such as to hide from God any one of its future volitions, or of their consequences and effects. But why speak of proofs of the foreknowledge of God? On the one hand we have the infinite perfection of his nature, and on the other, all the predictions of scripture, which unite in assuring us, that from God nothing future can be hid.

Instead of perplexing ourselves with fruitless attempts to solve the difficulties which may be started respecting the divine knowledge, let us rather learn from the subject to be humble and watchful; humble, because we know so little; watchful, because we are continually before him by whom nothing is unknown. "Knowledge," saith Paul, "puffeth up;" let this consideration allay the tumour. The greatest branch of knowledge is to know our own ignorance. Had we the incredible memory of Cyrus, of whom it is said, that he remembered the names of all the men in his army; or were we possessed of the huge genius of Solomon, who had understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart as the sand that is on the sea shore; it would become us, in the presence of the Omnipotent God, to acknowledge ourselves brutish and ignorant, and as beasts before him. Nor is watchfulness less incumbent than humility. The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord; and shall we presume to do that before God, which we would not do before

our fellow? When we commit wickedness, if one know us, we are in the terror of the shadow of death; shall it be otherwise when we are in the presence of the Holy One of Israel? Say not, the Lord doth not see. If we forget the name of our God, shall not God search this out? with him the night shineth as the day.

O what consolation springs out of this attribute to the godly in danger and distress! Art thou, Christian, unjustly accused, and thy character, liberty, or life at stake, for crimes of which thou art innocent? Here is the consolation: "Thou knowest that I am not wicked." Art thou oppressed by enemies, who seek thy ruin? Here is the consolation: "Thou hast seen it, the poor committeth himself unto thee." Art thou involved in darkness, and at a loss to know what the issue of the trying dispensations of Providence towards thee may be? Here is the consolation: "He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." What though thy body be infirm? he knoweth thy frame, he rememberest that thou art dust. What though thou be poor and friendless, one whom no man careth for? "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry." What though thou art not able to express to God thy complaint? "He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit," and understandeth the language of a groan.

But tremble, O sinner, before the omniscience of God. Thine iniquities are set before God, thy secret sins in the light of his countenance. In vain shall be every attempt to impose upon him; his eyes are as a flame of fire, they penetrate through every disguise. He cannot be mocked, like old Isaac, by the smooth hands of the hypocrite. If thy heart condemn thee, God is greater than thy heart, and knoweth all things. And all things which are now secret shall be revealed by him, when he shall bring to light the hidden things of dishonesty. Sinner, thy transgressions can never be hid from the eye of God's om-

niscience ; but thou thyself mayest find hiding from the stroke of his wrath, under the covert of the Redeemer's righteousness. To flee to this is thy duty, thy interest, thy only safety ; but if thou wilt not hear, in the latter days thou shalt consider it.

ON THE DIVINE WISDOM.

WISDOM relates to economy and design, as knowledge to speculation. A very distinguished perfection this ! Wisdom maketh the face to shine ; and a man is commended according to his wisdom. He whose knowledge is not attended by wisdom, which is profitable to direct, may be compared to a ship which, though she crowd much sail, is destitute of a rudder. The man of knowledge is not always the man of wisdom. But, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! who never acts but to the most valuable ends, never is nonplussed with difficulty, never mistakes his measures in the execution of any design.

Bear witness, every divine work ; beings endued with reason, with instinct, with motion, with existence, bear witness to the wisdom of God. Angels of God, ye high celestial orders, who far surpass the human kind in the excellency of wisdom, it was he who made you such ; and when compared with him, you are chargeable with folly. Ye men on earth, it was he who taught you more than the beasts of the earth, and made you wiser than the fowls of heaven : for, "there is a spirit in man ; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." Ye that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, it was he who taught you to manage the gales, to tame the unruly element, and turn about your bulky vessels, that are driven of the fierce winds, with a little helm. Ye military men, wise and prudent generals, who marshal numerous armies in the bloody

field, and dart your experienced eyes through the long files of the battle, it is he who teaches your hands to war, and your fingers to fight. Tradesmen, who by honest labour and industry earn your daily bread, ye that toil at the plough, and ye that beat the anvil, it is he who instructs you to discretion ; it is he who creates the smith, that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work. Magistrates, kings, and counsellors of the earth, who judge your subject people, and govern them by salutary laws, it is God who is a spirit of judgment to you when sitting in judgment ; it is God who subdueth the people under you. Whosoever thou art, who findest out the knowledge of witty inventions, it is God who putteth wisdom in thy inward parts, and giveth understanding to thy heart. If, by your finite and derived wisdom, such curious works may be produced, such amazing schemes may be planned and executed, how great must be the wisdom of the liberal Giver unto all !

Ye beasts, and birds, and insects, whose heart God has hid from understanding, it is he who inspires you with those amazing instincts so much resembling reason. Ye little ants, emblems of wisdom and activity, it is God who teaches you to lay up, with prudent foresight, your scanty food against the approach of winter. O that we considered your ways so as to be wise unto salvation ! Ye winged inhabitants of the air, to him you are indebted for that inimitable skill wherewith you build your nests, and for that nice discretion by which you choose the food convenient for you. Ye conies, it is he who bids you be diffident in your own strength, and make your houses in the rock, because you are a feeble folk.

Ye dead and lifeless creatures that compose this beautiful universe, it is he who has adjusted all your motions, disposed all your parts in such a comely order, and contrived you for the various uses to which you are eminently fitted. A curious watch bespeaks

the skill of the artificer ; a lordly palace proclaims the design of the architect ; an elegant treatise declares the genius of its author ; and when our ears are regaled with charming music, we conclude that a skilful musician is touching the vocal strings. And can we impute to blind chance, yea, even to an ordinary wisdom, the admirable regulations of this beautiful system ? Even the clouds are turned about by his counsels ; and from him the sun learneth the time of his going down : “ He hath established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion.”

Bear witness, ye providential ways of God. Who seeth not that these wheels have been full of eyes in every age ? What crafty projects have been disappointed ? How often has God gathered grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles, (though it is not the manner of men), by making all things work together for the good of his chosen ? The burning lamp of wisdom has ever attended the smoking furnace of affliction.

But chiefly in redemption he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Thy cross, O Jesus, though foolishness unto the natural man, is unto them that believe, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Into these things the angels ever desire to look with most prying attention ; and these shall be the subject of long eternity’s triumphant song.

Happy are these thy servants that hear thy wisdom, said the Queen of the East, when she came to visit the wise and wealthy Solomon ; but more happy they who, through desire, have separated themselves to contemplate the wonderful works of God, who stand in his counsel, who submit to his laws, which are a fountain of life ; who acquiesce in his dispensations ; who admire his wisdom where they see it, and where they see it not, believe that all his ways are judgment. For, O vain man, thou art born like the

wild ass's colt : who art thou that thou darest to judge the dispositions of his providence ? that adventurest to refine upon his sacred institutions, and to contemn the counsel of the Most High ? Shall any teach God knowledge ? Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him ? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. But if you kick against his appointments, and contemn the counsel of the Most High, you are a people of no understanding : He that made you will not have mercy on you, and he that formed you will show you no favour.

ON THE POWER OF GOD.

IF we speak of strength, lo ! God is strong. "He hath a mighty arm ; strong is his hand, and high is his right hand." If he had not power, who would either confide in his mercy, or tremble at his justice ? Without power he might promise, but he could not bless ; he might threaten, but he could not punish. The power of God gives confidence to them that hope in his mercy, but inspires the wicked with the terror of his wrath.

But is power an attribute of Deity ? The point is put beyond all doubt. "God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." Indeed he hath not only said it, but shewn it. His works speak as explicitly on this subject as his word. By his name, God Almighty, he made himself known to Abraham ; and under the same character he has revealed himself in every age to all the nations of men. "For the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." Look we up to heaven, we behold the firmament of his power ; look we around us on earth, we see every where the working of his

mighty power ; when the thunders roll, we hear the thunder of his power ; and when the floods lift up their voice, they tell us that “the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea ; by his strength he setteth fast the mountains, being girded with power.” In ancient times was Egypt plagued ? It was by the *finger* of God. In later times were devils cast out ? It was by the finger of God. What then must be the power of his *hand*, and the strength of his *arm* ? Even by the *word* of his power all things were created, and by the same word are all things upheld. It is this which supports archangels and heavenly thrones ; it is this which binds fast the fetters of the damned, making strong their bands.

Let us not then set limits on the Holy One of Israel. If thou sayest in hesitation, Is any thing too hard for the Lord ? Job shall answer thee, “I know that thou canst do every thing ;” or rather, let us receive an answer from the Saviour’s lips, “With God all things are possible.” All things ! Can he perform contradictions ? No, he cannot ; but a contradiction is nothing ; what is naturally impossible is not the object of divine power. Or, can he speak falsehood, or commit sin ? No, he cannot ; for to be able to do these things would argue weakness, not strength ; it is because he is the strength of Israel that he will not, and cannot lie. Yet still it is true, that with God all things are possible. What can he not do ? Any thing that his people ask ? He can do all this, and more ; he is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what they do or can ask or think.—Any thing that his people need ? With respect to the present, he is able to make all grace to abound towards them ; with respect to the future, he is able to save them to the uttermost.—Any thing which he has promised ? He is not only faithful who hath promised, but able also to perform. Fear not, Daniel, the den of lions,—thy God, whom thou servest continually, is able to

deliver thee ; neither fear, christian, the assaults of the roaring lion of hell, for he is able to succour them that are tempted.—Any thing which he has purposed to do ? “Whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that doth he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.” Nor is this all : God can do many things which we cannot conceive, and many things which he himself hath never determined to do. Could he not, if it had pleased him, of the stones, have raised up children to Abraham ? or have commanded twelve legions of angels to have rescued Christ from his enemies ? Every star he could have made a sun ; every pile of grass a star ; and every soul an angel. Nothing he can make something. If it please him, he shall knead the dust of the earth into flesh and bones, as in Adam ; a virgin shall conceive, as in Mary ; or a Sarah shall bear an Isaac, when she is as good as dead. If it please him, water shall stand immoveable as the rock, and fire become harmless as the morning light ; the water shall blush into wine, or redden into blood ; the river shall drive back its course ; yea, the dead shall hear his voice, and shall arise. Nothing indeed can resist his power. Even thy stubborn untoward heart, O sinner, must bend to his will : he can turn it whithersoever he will, and cause the most obdurate to come to him as a willing people in the day of his power.

As to God all things are possible which imply not a contradiction, or discover moral imperfection in the performer, so to God there is nothing difficult. In his operations he works without time, without instruments, and without weariness.—Without time. It is true he took six days to make the world, but he could have done it in the twinkling of an eye. Each day's work was performed by a word ; he spake, and it was done ; he commanded, and it stood fast.—Without instruments. It is true that in common he employs inferior agents in his operations ; but he uses them, not from necessity, but from choice ; and his

conduct is a proof, not of weakness, but of wisdom.—Without weariness. “The glory of young men,” says Solomon, “is their strength;” but, as Isaiah adds, “Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men,” by labouring long, or beyond their ability, “shall utterly fail.” But “hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God fainteth not, neither is weary?” It is true, after he had finished the work of creation, he rested and was refreshed; but the rest of Jehovah was not the token of fatigue occasioned by his labour, but the evidence of the complacency which he took in his work: he saw whatever he had made, and pronounced it good. God can with as much ease make a world, as we can think of it.

Christian, thy Redeemer is strong; the Lord of Hosts is his name. Be firm in the faith of the divine power; this faith will not be barren, but fruitful in strength and consolation to thy soul. View his power in relation to the promises, that thou mayest believe them;—to the precepts, that thou mayest obey them;—to the dispensations of Providence, that thou mayest reverence them;—to the corruptions of thine own heart, that thou mayest subdue them;—to the temptations of the devil, that thou mayest resist them;—to the frowns of the world, that thou mayest despise them.

He who has promised is able also to perform. He is able, O Abraham, to raise up thy Isaac, though buried in a grave, because he hath promised thee a seed; and let not Sarah laugh when God promises that she shall conceive when old and well stricken in age; for “is any thing too hard for the Lord?” Why did ye doubt, ye Israelites, saying, Can God prepare a table for us in the wilderness? And why did you, ye Sadducees, deny the possibility of the resurrection of the dead? Ye erred, “not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.” Give your power to the beast, ye kings of the earth; yet Babylon shall come down, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. Oppress

Israel; ye nations; yet let none say, "By whom shall Jacob arise when he is small," for he shall arise by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. What promise cannot the Almighty perform? Ye hardened Jews, God is able to graft you in again; thou feeble-minded christian, God is able to keep that which you have committed unto him against that day: Yea, where is thy victory, O grave? for though we die, we shall live with Christ by the power of God.

He who commands can enable us to perform. What can be too hard for the Lord? and what too hard for me, if God be for me? "I am not sufficient of myself to think any thing as of myself; but my sufficiency is of God," and I can do all things when he strengtheneth me. "All things are possible to him that believeth;" for his divine power giveth us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Go, then, in your infirmities, christians; put your hand to every piece of work which he calls you to perform; shrink not back, because of its real or apparent difficulty. He who bids you labour, "gives power to the weak, and to him that hath no might increaseth strength." Strengthened in the Lord, and in the power of his might, the feeble among you shall be as David, and David as the angel of the Lord. When you are weak, then shall you be strong; for God is the glory of your strength.

Are the dispensations of divine Providence adverse? Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. You are not stronger than he, and why by an impatient unsubmissive spirit should you provoke him to jealousy.—Are the corruptions of your own hearts strong? Greater in power is he who is in you than he who is in the world, and his strength can enable you to mortify and subdue them. We have no might, O our God, against this company of lusts that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee. In thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

Thou art my battle-axe and weapons of war: with thee will I break in pieces the nations.—Are the temptations of the devil powerful? The Almighty is on your side. He “will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape.” What though there be given thee, Paul, a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet thee? His strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness. And what, christian, though thou wrestlest against principalities and powers! Cry to him, and he will strengthen thee for the conflict with strength in thy soul.—Does the world frown on thee? Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord? If they reproach, if they oppress, if they persecute me, I will seek to God, and unto God will I commit my cause, who doth great things and unsearchable. I will boldly say, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

Hearken then to reproof, ye who limit the power of the Holy One. Where, Moses, was thy faith, when God promised Israel flesh to eat? Though the flocks and herds should not be slain, nor the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, yet he can give meat in abundance; for is the Lord’s hand waxed short?—Ye who make the divine power a plea for your own laziness. Why, sluggard, refuse to work out your own salvation? The power of God’s operation is not an excuse for indolence, but the great argument for diligence; for “it is God that worketh in you.”—Ye who engage not the power of God by the prayer of faith, ye have not, because you ask not. Behold the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God.—Ye who trust not in his power. Ah, Israel, ye have seen the breaches of the city of David, that they are many, and the houses ye have broken down, that ye might fortify the wall; but ye have

not looked to the Maker thereof, neither had respect to him that fashioned it long ago. Ah, Britain, trust no more in chariots and horses, in fleets and armies, but say, "We will remember the name of the Lord our God."

What a powerful friend is this God! but ah, what a powerful enemy! It must be a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Think not, impenitent sinner, that his threatenings are unmeaning words. He is able to execute the judgments which he has threatened. Resistance on thy part will be vain. "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" If you return not, by the blast of God you shall perish, and by the breath of his nostrils shall you be consumed. He is mighty in strength; who hath ever hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? Behold, he removeth the mountains, and they know not; he overturneth them in his anger. He shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. He commandeth the sun, and it riseth not. When he is displeased, he beholds and drives asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains are scattered, the perpetual hills bow. And shall sinful man stand before him when he riseth up?—How dreadful to have his power known in your destruction! for who knoweth the power of his anger? and where shall the victim of his vengeance fly for help? Take hold, sinner, of Jehovah's strength, that you may make peace with him.—"On mine arm," it is written, "shall they trust."

ON THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

THE heathen represent God to their senses, by images made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things: this is to rob him of his spirituality and majesty. The

wicked of all religions represent God to their imaginations, as altogether such an one as themselves, and who will approve their sin : this is to rob him of his holiness, and to do him a greater indignity than is done by the heathen ; for his holiness is his peculiar glory. Unless we conceive of him as holy, we figure to ourselves a devil, and not a God. Without holiness, what were wisdom, but subtlety ; what were justice, but cruelty ; what were sovereignty, but tyranny ; what were mercy, but foolish pity ? Power is Jehovah's arm, omniscience is his eye, mercy is his bowels, grace is his riches ; but holiness is the beauty of the Lord.

But what is his holiness ? We call a man holy when he obeys the law ; but God is holy when he is a law to himself. A man is holy, when he makes God his chief good and highest end ; but God is holy, when he makes his own will his rule, and his own glory his end. The holiness of a man consists in the conformity of his nature and actions to God ; the holiness of God lies in conformity to himself ; in the impossibility of his doing or approving any thing but what is consistent with the infinite perfection and excellency of his own nature. It is hence that flow his hatred of all sin, and his delight in all purity and righteousness : the opposite would be unworthy of himself. How indeed can God do evil, or approve of evil ? Through ignorance ? his infinite knowledge prevents it. Through weakness ? his infinite power forbids it. Through necessity ? his infinite fulness raises him above it. Through malice ? his infinite rectitude abhors it. His pure eyes cannot behold evil, nor look on iniquity.

God is glorious in his holiness ;—so glorious, that the splendour of this perfection, like that of the sun, dazzles the eye of every beholder. It shines with a radiance, in comparison of which, the holiness of the brightest seraph is only a dark and opaque mass. Holy seraphims cover their faces in its presence, out of

weakness to behold it ; and cover their feet, out of shame, when they view themselves in its light. Saints and angels are holy creatures, but, " Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts;" they are holy, but he only is holy; for though they are pure from corruption, he only is pure from imperfection. The heavens are not clean in his sight. " God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

What a holy God, christian, is our God ? Every thing about him is holy. Dost thou pronounce his name ? do it with reverence ; it is holy and reverend. Dost thou handle his word ? do it with reverence ; it is the Holy Scriptures. Dost thou tread his courts ? do it with reverence ; the place on which thou standest is holy ground. Honour his people who love and serve him ; they are his saints, a holy nation. Touch not his anointed, and do his prophets no harm ; they are holy men of God. Reverence those spirits who worship before his throne, and minister to the heirs of salvation ; they are his holy angels. Confide in his word ; it is his holy promise. Profane not the Sabbath ; it is his day. Obey his law ; it is holy, just, and good. Despise none of his institutions ; the whole limit of his house round about is most holy.

Holiness has this peculiar glory ; it is the attribute which God and saints delight to honour. God, for by this only he swears ; and saints, for this they chiefly celebrate. Does God, to render inexcusable the incredulity of men, confirm either his promise or his threatening by an oath ? It is by his holiness that he swears. His threatening, " the Lord God hath sworn in his holiness ; surely I will never forget any of their works." His promise, " once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David." Do his people celebrate his glorious perfections ? This attribute in their eyes excels in glory. What chiefly endears God unto them ? his holiness ; for they rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. What about God do they

chiefly desire to contemplate? his holiness. This one thing do they desire and seek after, to behold the beauty of the Lord. What chiefly excites the gratitude of their hearts? His holiness; for they give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, and they praise his great and terrible name, because it is holy.

Nay, God not only honours this attribute most in himself, but he most loves the resemblance of it in his creatures. Ye princes, ye resemble him in some measure in his sovereignty; ye wise men, in his wisdom; ye nobles, in his greatness; ye strong men, in his power: but boast not of your pre-eminence; for if ye resemble him not in his holiness, he will despise your image. He abhors the bloody and deceitful man in the midst of his wealth. But the man who is holy, let him be poor as Job, or wretched as Lazarus, is the object of his delight. One drachm of grace is more esteemed by him than a world of greatness. The Lord taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man, but in them that fear him.

We cannot, on account of its splendour, contemplate this perfection directly; but let us view it, first through his word, and then through his works; through these glasses we shall discover much of its infinite glory.

Look at it through his word. His words are all pure, all clean, all right. What does he recommend in his law? To walk in the high way of duty—the way which is called the way of holiness. What does he forbid? Not only the gross act of sin, but the most latent wickedness of the heart; the evil desire, the thought of wickedness, which is sin. Even the ceremonial law exhibits the holiness of the Lawgiver; for its lustrations and prohibitions all tend to enforce abstinence from moral defilement, and the necessity of purifying the heart. The precepts of the word direct, its threatenings deter, and its promises allure from sin.

: Look at it through his works. What work of God

shows not that he is glorious in holiness? Creation? God made man upright, though man has since sought out many impure inventions. Had not all his works been pure when he saw them, he would not have pronounced them good.—Providence? See how he has treated his enemies. He has revealed his wrath, in many providential dispensations, against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. See how he treats even his friends, when they touch the unclean thing. Though he pardons their iniquity, he takes vengeance on their inventions. Not the person of the sinner merely, but the very instruments of his sin are stigmatised. The serpent was innocent, yet God curses it. The guilty inhabitants of Jericho were extirpated, and even Jericho, their city, must not be rebuilt. The gold and silver which had once been formed into idols, must not be employed, even for ornaments, or in trade: it is devoted, and must be destroyed. For thy sake, Adam, Jehovah cursed the ground. For your sakes, ye inhabitants of the cities of the plain, your very country is transformed into a bituminous lake. What meaneth the heat of this great anger? It proclaims the holiness of God, who hates, and will punish iniquity.—Redemption? See how he treated his own, his beloved Son, though personally innocent, when substituted in the place of sinners. Not all the judgments executed on the wicked in this world; not all the misery of the damned in hell, affords such a demonstration of his implacable hatred of sin, as do the sufferings and death of the Surety of sinners. Here, indeed, O God! thou didst appear sitting on the throne of thy holiness, sparing the sinner, but unable to spare the sin; loving holiness as much as thou lovest thine only begotten and well-beloved Son.

Christians, your God is holy. Are you engaged in any act of divine worship? Remember his holiness. He will be sanctified of all them that draw near unto him. Put off the shoe of every unsancti-

fied affection ; stand in awe, and sin not ; worship him in the beauty of holiness. Are you occupied with the affairs of life ? Remember his holiness. Be holy in all manner of conversation. Let the beauty of the Lord be ever visible upon you, in all your deportment, else the work of your hands God will not establish. Are you afflicted. Remember his holiness. Suppress every impatient, every unsubmissive emotion, with that silencing consideration which was present to the mind of the afflicted Redeemer, and of David, his type, "but thou art holy." If the dispensation be dark, yet wait on him that hideth himself ; for surely God will not do wickedly, nor will the Almighty pervert judgment. The design even of this, is to make you partakers of his holiness. Are you tempted ? Remember his holiness. This consideration will blunt the edge of the weapons of temptation, or perhaps make them drop out of the hands of your spiritual enemies. Shall I do this great evil, and sin against God ? Are you in danger of pride ? Remember his holiness. Shall the glow-worm boast of its splendour, in the presence of the sun ; or a miserable sinner, of his righteousness, in the presence of the Holy One of Israel ? Isaiah saw God in his holiness ; and "Woe is me," was his cry, "for I am undone ; for I am a man of unclean lips." Job had a similar discovery, and abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. Are you in danger of self-confidence ? Remember his holiness. For who can stand in his own righteousness, before this holy Lord God ? You must worship him through Christ, and be accepted in the Beloved ; otherwise you cannot serve the Lord ; for he is a holy God : he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

Happy the man who has begun conformity to God in holiness ! His renovation into the divine image, shall be advanced day by day. He shall be changed into it from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord, till he become altogether like God, and see

him as he is. But miserable the man who is unlike God ! He cannot see God, nor enjoy him. Ah ! sinners, shall not his excellency make you afraid, and his dread fall upon you ? He will surely reprove you. He will be terrible to you out of his holy places. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings. But remember, that as without holiness no man shall see the Lord ; so without Christ, no man shall see true holiness ; for Christ must be our sanctification, as well as our righteousnesss, else he can never be our redemption.

ON THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

Is there unrighteousness with God ? God forbid. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." The infinite purity and perfection of his nature, secure him against every temptation to injustice, and render it impossible for him to do any man wrong. He cannot add to his glory, extend his power or dominion, or increase his felicity, for they are infinite. He has no passions to gratify, no necessities to supply, no private ends to serve, which might warp his judgment, or lead him in one instance astray. His righteousness, therefore, must be, as the psalmist says it is, "like the great mountains," not only, as he elsewhere says, "very high," but so firmly established on its base, that no temptation can shake it, nor any of those convulsions, which overturn the righteousness of creatures, loosen its deep foundations. Yea, the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, the most stable parts of nature may be shaken, and reel to and fro like a drunken man ; but God's righteousness is for ever, and is immutable as the nature in which it inheres.

In whatever point of view we consider his transactions with his creatures, we find him girt about with

righteousness, and are obliged to acknowledge that all his ways are judgment ; that just and right is he. Does he give laws to his rational creatures ? All his commandments concerning all things are right ; there is not one of them grievous or oppressive. Does he execute the laws which he hath given ? He exerciseth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth ; for “in these things I delight,” saith the Lord. Doth he reward ? It is as the righteous Judge that he confers a crown on them that love Christ’s appearance. Doth he pardon ? He declares his righteousness in the remission of sins that are past, and shews himself just, when he justifies him that believeth in Jesus. Does he punish ? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance ? God forbid. It is a righteous thing with God, to recompense tribulation to the wicked—taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel. He ministers judgment to the people in uprightness.

But instead of saying more on the general subject of the divine righteousness, let us consider that branch of it which respects the punishment of sin. This has been styled *vindictive justice*, and has been opposed by every method which human ingenuity could devise. Nor is this just matter of surprise ; for how natural is it for the criminal to accuse the judge of injustice, or the law as too severe ? Therefore, “hearken unto me, ye men of understanding.” Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. I shall not go far to vindicate the ways of God to men. My appeal in his behalf, is to what you see, and to what you feel. God is just in punishing sin, yourselves being judges.

What do you see ? The earth is not only full of the goodness of the Lord, but has spread over its surface, many distinct and awful traces of his displeasure.

Whence is it that the earth often refuses to yield her strength, and mocks at the toils, and disappoints the hopes of the husbandman ? It is an act of justice in him, who "turneth fruitful lands into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." Whence is it that the sword devoureth, and that the earth is drenched with the blood, and covered with the heaps of the slain ? It has received its commission from the God of justice, who appoints it to avenge upon men the transgressions of which they are guilty. What is the pestilence, but the scourge of an angry God ? What the invading spoiler and oppressor, but the rod of his anger, and the staff of his indignation ? Every disease is a minister of justice to punish the guilty ; every adverse dispensation, a token of his just indignation ; and, O death ! in each of thy thousand hideous forms, thou proclaimest the vengeance of God, which will not suffer the sinner to live. In these we see his wrath revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ; and as we conclude that God is good, from the evidences of the divine goodness in the world, why may we not with equal certainty, conclude that he is righteous, and in righteousness punishes sin, from the no less evident tokens of the divine anger ?

But this is not all. Let me ask thee, whosoever thou art who exaltest the benevolence and mercy of God on the prostrate honour of his justice, what dost thou feel ? Is there not a principle of conscience within thee that dictates this truth ? Whence that inward uneasiness which thou sufferest at the consciousness of crimes ? those upbraiding and rude accusations of thy own mind, those fears, those tormenting pains, those forebodings of fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. It is the voice of God within thee proclaiming his justice to punish transgressors. This voice has spoken the same language in men of very different descriptions, in every age. Hence, Adam, didst thou hide thyself among the trees

of the garden. Hence, ye Israelites, did ye entertain the notion that inevitable death would be the consequence of any appearance of the Deity to you. It was this, Manoah, which made thee say to thy wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." It was this, Isaiah, which made thee cry, "I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Yea, the very heathens knew that those who committed sin were worthy of death, and believed that vengeance would overtake the sinner; and hence, ye barbarous inhabitants of Melita, ye concluded that Paul was a murderer, when ye saw the viper fasten on his hand. From what principle but this can we account for the continual terror with which mankind are tormented, on every unusual appearance of nature? Comets, eclipses, prodigies, apparitions, have in every age alarmed men; they have trembled at them, as the tokens of the divine indignation, and as the prognostications of approaching vengeance; and have said on the matter, with the widow of Sarepta on another occasion, "Art thou come to bring my sins to remembrance?" Hence, too, have all nations consulted to appease their deities by sacrifices, and sometimes even human blood has smoked on their altars. But so many witnesses to the general conviction of the justice of God, as the punisher of sin, are unnecessary. Let him be judge in our cause, whose sore runs in the night, or whom the hand of God hath touched.

But we have a more sure word of prophecy, and this let us now consult. Here we are assured, that "every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompence of reward," and that he is righteous who judgeth thus. Here we read of the anger, the wrath, the fury of the Lord, of his hot displeasure, of his fiery indignation, of his furious rebukes, of the smoking of his nostrils. This tells us, that the world was once deluged with water, and shall again be consumed by fire, for the sins of its inhabitants. Thy plains, O Sodom! smoked in ruins; thine, O Egypt! were

laid waste by awful plagues ; and thine, O Babylon ! have been swept with the besom of destruction, and transformed into a possession for the bittern, and pools of water, because God in justice executed vengeance. But chiefly in thy cross, O Jesus ! does God appear in awful majesty, inflicting the vengeance due for the transgressions of men. Neither the waters of Noah, nor the smoke of Sodom, nor the plagues of Egypt, nor the desolations of Babylon ; neither the flames of a burning world, nor the yet fiercer and unquenchable flames of hell, give so awful a display of the justice of God, as the bitter cries of the Son of God in the garden of Gethsemane, and his dying groan on the hill of Calvary. Indeed we may defy all the world to produce an instance that sin is not punished either in hell or on the cross.

Nor let us imagine, that the infliction of punishment on the guilty does not necessarily follow from the justice of God. God may be merciful, but he must be just. Were sin to escape with impunity, how could the glory of the Lawgiver, the honour of the law, or the subjection of the rational creature, be maintained ? God is holy, and cannot but hate sin ; faithful, and cannot but execute his threatenings against it ; just, and cannot but punish it. He may pardon, for justice does not exclude satisfaction by another in the sinner's stead ; but he must punish either the sinner or his surety, else sin would not receive its wages, nor the sinner his due : and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ? Yes, O Lord God, merciful and gracious, thou wilt by no means clear the guilty. Yes, O our God, thou art a consuming fire ; and it is as impossible that fire should not consume what is combustible, as that thou shouldst not punish the guilty. Why were sacrifices instituted, but to teach us, that without shedding of blood there is no remission ? And why were they offered from day to day, and year to year continually, but to teach us, that it is "impossible for the blood of bulls and of

goats to take away sin ?” But chiefly, why didst thou die, O Prince of life and Lord of glory, if thy sufferings and death had not been necessary for the vindication of the divine honour in the forgiveness of sin? Never shall I think so unworthily of God, as to suppose that he was severe without necessity to his well-beloved Son, and inflicted on him the stroke of his vengeance, when he could, without loss of honour, or the failure of his plan of mercy, have spared.

Be thou ever hateful to my soul, O sin, thou abominable thing, which God hateth, and cannot without satisfaction forgive. Every thing proclaims to me thy odious nature ; but because I know nothing so bad as thou thyself art to which to liken thee, I must borrow from thyself the fittest epithet of reproach, and style thee “ exceeding sinful.” See what desolations thou hast wrought ! What made heaven vomit out its native inhabitants ? It was thou, who didst transform them into devils. What turned Eden into a wilderness ? What subjected the earth to a curse, the creature to vanity, man to death ? This is all thy work, thou mother of abominations of the earth. Thou hast armed men against one another, and all against God. Thou hast sown sickness and disease in the earth. Thou hast filled hospitals, and dug the grave, whose open mouth cries, Give, give. Yea, O sin ! thou hast kindled that fire which shall burn unto the lowest hell.

But be thou for ever precious to my soul, O Jesus, thou Son of the Blessed. Had it not been for thy gracious interposition, better had it been for me that I had been strangled in the womb ; better that I had relapsed into nothing ; for I should have lived the slave and died the victim of sin, pursued by the curse through life, overtaken by it in death, and suffering its misery through eternity. If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning. Never, through grace, shall I love that which stabbed thee to the heart ; never shall I walk lightly under that whose pressure

made thee sweat drops of blood ; never follow that which made thee complain as forsaken ; never have that sweet in my mouth which gave thee vinegar and gall ; nor suffer that to go free which nailed thee to the cross.

Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. His wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ; and because there is wrath, beware lest he take you away with his stroke ; then a great ransom cannot deliver you. Since he is just, how can you escape the damnation of hell ? Guilt unpardoned renders your escape impossible. Behold he spared not the Son of his love, much less you. Was this done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry ? Can your hearts endure, or can your hands be strong, in the day when God shall deal with you in awful justice ? Ah no ! for behold the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebukes with flames of fire : and as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so your root shall be as rottenness, and your blossom shall go up as dust. Escape for your lives while you may, for justice pursues you. The gates of the city of refuge are open, and the way is plain ; flee thither that your souls may live. God hath set Christ forth to be the propitiation through faith in his blood ; under the covert of his atoning blood you are safe ; the just God will be merciful to you. But if any thing should satisfy your consciences but what hath satisfied justice, your peace is delusive, and will be short lived. Better now believe that atonement is necessary to satisfy justice, than feel its awful truth to all eternity.

ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

As, by the attribute of justice, God distributes un-

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to every one that which is due, or, to use the expression of a prophet, “the portion of their measure;” so, by his attribute of goodness, he is disposed to be communicative of himself to other beings, in various degrees, according to the good pleasure of his will. Were he not as abundant in goodness as excellent in plenty of justice, we might fear him indeed, but we could never love him. When this divine attribute is called in question, the sinews of all religion, natural and revealed, are cut asunder. What sinner would be led to repentance? What encouragement could we have to serve him, who, though possessed of infinite blessedness and perfection, were but a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, a barren wilderness, a land of darkness? Hence the vile impostor who seduced our first parents to fall off from their Creator, basely insinuated that he was not good, but envious of their happiness; as though he had forbidden them the tree of knowledge, because he knew that the eating of it would have been perfective of their natures, and they should be as gods.

But how great is his goodness! Somewhat of it may be learned from the image of this perfection, which he has instamped on some liberal souls, that devise liberal things; but more of it from the blessings which he hath scattered with an unsparing hand amongst all creatures in general, amongst that class of his creatures called man, and that part of men called the elect in Christ Jesus in particular.

Let us begin with his goodness to all. And here shall we mention first the blessing of existence, which he has imparted to all the various ranks of being? With this blessing of his goodness the angel and the worm are equally prevented. For why did he call them forth from darkness and from silence, when nothing heard his voice?

“ These are thy glorious works, Parent of good!
Almighty, thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair: Thyself how wondrous then!

Unspeakable, who sitt'st above these heavens,
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works ; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine."

Shall we mention next the parental care which he exercises towards all, in liberally providing for the supply of every want ? May we not say, that his hands are like gold rings set with beryl, which never fold their joints, but are ever expanded ? What creature partakes not of his goodness ? The earth is full of it. Behold, though he is great, he despiseth not any. The greatest and the least, the noblest and most contemptible, whether they inhabit the air, the earth, or the mighty waters ; "these all wait upon thee, O Lord, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them, they gather ; thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good." He hears the croaking of the raven, and the roaring of the lion, when they seek their meat from him. He feeds the birds of the air. Yea, he clothes the grass of the field in the gay attire of the spring, and decks the lily with more than kingly glory. Lord, thou preservest man and beast ; how excellent is thy loving-kindness !

Chiefly let man, for whom the whole creation smiles, who is at once the head, the heart, the tongue of all ; let man, on whom he has instamped his image and resemblance, for whom the heavens drop, and the fruitful seasons roll, to fill his heart with food and gladness ; let him never forget, let him never despise, let him never abuse the riches of his goodness. Praise him, whose hands have formed these bodies, so fearfully and wonderfully made ; whose breath hath kindled in your bosoms these rational and immortal souls by which you are animated. Praise him who furnished with such abundance and such variety for your convenience and comfort, this earthly mansion. It is he who spread that spacious canopy, illuminated by the sun, and studded with stars, over your head, and under your feet that verdant carpet of grass. O

taste and see that he is good, whether you behold the pleasant light, or drink the refreshing fountain, or breathe the balmy air. It is he who fills thy mouth with abundance of good things, who regales your ears with the melody of birds that sing among the branches. He warms you in the fire, he fans you in the breeze, he gives you all things richly to enjoy for accommodation and delight. O turn not his rich donations against himself; prepare not for Baal, consume not on your lusts, his corn, his wine, and oil. Let not your goodness be as the morning cloud and early dew, when the goodness of God endureth continually.

But most of all, let the redeemed of the Lord say, "truly God is good." It would require the tongue of angels to mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all he hath bestowed on us, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindness. Lo, for their sakes he sends his Son to assume their nature and expiate their guilt, his Spirit to instruct and sanctify them, his angels to encamp around them. Even in this state of imperfection, he gives them all things that pertain to life and godliness. Sometimes he gives even here, more than he takes, more than he promises, and more than is asked of him;—more than he takes, for the substance of Job was doubled, and the Lord blessed his latter end more than his beginning;—more than he promises, for the rod of Aaron did more than bud, it bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds;—more than is asked of him, for Solomon got riches and honour, when he asked only for wisdom. The life of Ishmael is the request of Abraham; food and raiment the demand of Jacob; the former gets the promise of all nations being blessed in Isaac, and the latter becomes two bands.

But come, Eternity! we know that goodness and mercy shall surely follow the redeemed all the days of their life on earth, but thou only canst declare the goodness of the Lord laid up for them that fear him

in the land of glory. Here they often taste that the Lord is good ; but while thy everlasting ages roll, they shall be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple. O God, thou hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor ; but what thou hast prepared, the eye hath not seen, neither hath the ear heard. Let us never be niggardly to thee, who hast dealt so bountifully with us. O let us never forget to do good and to communicate, that we may be the children of our Father, who is good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works. Witness, every creature, if we be silent, whether the morn empurples the east, or whether the evening star arises ; bear witness, if we shew not forth his loving kindness in the morning, and his faithfulness every night.

ON THE MERCY OF GOD.

THE lovely perfection of divine mercy must not be passed over, than which no branch of his goodness is more emphatically declared in the sacred oracles.

Ye fathers, know what mercy is when ye pity your children, and ye mothers, whose bowels yearn towards your tender offspring. The merciful man knows it when, by a sympathizing temper, he makes the miseries of another his own, and is disposed to relieve him by drawing out his soul to the hungry. But though the mercies of every father, and the mercies of every mother should be collected into one tender heart, this tender heart would not be so full of compassion by the ten thousandth part, as the heart of the Father of mercies. His mercy is great mercy, is tender mercy, is abundant mercy. He is plenteous in mercy, rich in mercy, very pitiful, and full of compassion. Mercy with him is a favourite exercise, in which he is frequently employed, and of which he

never wearies. Who has not heard of the multitude of his mercies ? who knows not that he delighteth in mercy ? What more can we say of the mercy of our God ? is it not great, beyond all that we can express or conceive ? It hath a height which we cannot reach, a depth which we cannot fathom, a breadth which we cannot grasp, and a length which we cannot measure. How high ! “ Thy mercy is great unto the heavens. Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens. Thy mercy is great above the heavens ; for as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy to them that fear him.” How deep ! for great is thy mercy towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. How broad ! he keepeth mercy for thousands ; yea, his tender mercies are over all his works. How long ! the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting to them that fear him. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.

In conformity to our ideas, we read of the pity, of the compassion, of the bowels of our God. But we must not suppose that the sounding of his bowels encroaches on the blessedness of his nature, or that his repose is at all disturbed when his heart is turned within him, and when his repentings are kindled together. Nor must we presume to think that this lovely attribute ever walks abroad but in company with truth, judgment, and righteousness, with whom she takes sweet counsel. Yea, we ought not to imagine that the almighty Sovereign is obliged to exercise his mercy towards his sinning creatures, whom he may justly leave to reap the fruit of their doings. The exercise of justice is necessary, but of mercy voluntary ; the Judge of all the earth cannot but do what is right, but he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy. Yet still we ought to sing of the mercy of the Lord for ever. He hath not left himself without a witness, that, as his name is the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, so is he ; for he commands it in us, for he exercises it towards us.

He requires it in his word, when he shows unto us what is good. Mercy is a weighty matter of the law, according to Christ Jesus, the faithful and true witness. Mercy, even to his beast, is the character of a good man, according to Solomon, the wise son of David. If the Lord Jehovah were not himself very pitiful, and of tender mercy, would he ever give such particular injunctions about it to the children of men? would the high and lofty One descend so low as to forbid in such positive terms to take the dam with the young, to muzzle the mouth of the ox; or would he enjoin us to relieve our enemy's ass when sinking under its burden; were it not to convince us that a cruel pleasure in the miseries of other creatures is what he abhors?

But what he requires in his word, he practises in his works. And here shall we mention his tender mercies over all his works, wherewith he visits every living thing? These doubtless are great, in providing such accommodations for men and beasts, without which their very being would be a misery. Does the sun shine by day? the moon and stars by night? do the clouds drop fatness, does the earth teem with plenty of corn and grass? Acknowledge in all these that the hand of a merciful God hath done this. For consider with yourself, what a theatre of misery this world would be, should he command the sun not to rise, and seal up the stars but for the space of a year; or should the earth refuse to yield her increase, though importuned ever so much by the labours of the husbandman.

Great, however, as these common mercies are, they are but as crumbs that fall from the table, to the children's bread, compared with the distinguishing mercy promised unto the fathers, and actually performed in sending into the world the Son of his love, offering him in the gospel even to the wretched Gentiles, and revealing him in the vessels of mercy; when, according to his mercy, he saves them by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. And

who can enumerate the sure mercies of David, that are built up for ever upon him as their foundation, and knit together by him as their chief corner stone ? Lo, goodness and mercy follow these favoured of the Lord, all the days of their lives. All his paths towards them are mercy and truth. If they are in danger of falling, his mercy upholds them. If an host encamps against them, his mercy compasseth them about. If he afflicts them, it is not willingly ; if he speaks against them, he earnestly remembers them still. But O that mercy of Christ Jesus, eternal life, which they shall obtain in that day when he shall call them from the grave, saying to the prisoners, go forth, and to them that sit in darkness, shew yourselves ! They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor sun smite them ; for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

For ever blessed be that condescending love that contrived from all everlasting such an honourable egress to the mercy of God towards miserable men, as the Lord Jesus Christ is. That he might be merciful to us, he spared not his own Son. Now mercy and truth are met together, and to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses. The breasts of mercy are full, that we may suck abundantly and be satisfied.

Come hither, all ye whose sore runneth in the night and ceaseth not, who are amazed at the multitude of your iniquities, because they are gone over your head. For his mercies are in the heavens, and he will abundantly pardon. But be far hence, ye presumptuous sinners, who are evil because he is good. The mercies of the Lord were never intended to be a pillow for your security. Now he is waiting that he may be gracious, and that he may be exalted in having mercy upon you. Now he is beseeching you by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice ; now he is commanding all men everywhere to repent.

How often have you heard the sounding of his bowels in the invitations of his gospel? But if you kick against them, and contemn the counsel of the Most High, you are a people of no understanding; “he that made you will not have mercy upon you, and he that formed you will shew you no favour.”

ON THE GRACE OF GOD.

As by his goodness God communicates himself to his creatures in general, considered as his creatures, and by his mercy to them considered as miserable; so by his grace he communicates himself to them considered as undeserving.

That God is gracious, as well as good and merciful, is declared by himself, acknowledged by his people, and attested by his works. By the mouth of these three witnesses shall the delightful truth be established. Listen to the divine declaration. Of old he proclaimed his name, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious.” Hear the acknowledgement of his people. Sometimes indeed they are disposed for a moment to withhold it, and say, “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” but the scriptures are full of their grateful acknowledgements of his grace; and their testimony deserves the more credit, because they have not only heard and learned of the Father, but have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Attend to his works. If a Jacob is blessed with a numerous family, they are the children whom God has graciously given him; if his flocks and herd are increased, and he has enough, it is because God hath dealt graciously with him. Does God hear the cry and plead the cause of the oppressed poor? He has told us the reason; “for I am gracious.” Do his people find compassion before them that lead them captive? this, too, is his work, and this is the reason of it;

"for the Lord their God is gracious and merciful." Yea, why is Nineveh preserved from deserved and threatened destruction? The disappointed and angry prophet informs us of the reason, when he peevishly tells God, that from what he knew of him he anticipated the event; "for I knew that thou art a gracious God." Indeed no divine communication to a creature can be any other than gracious; for what are all the creatures of God? They are either ill-deserving, or undeserving; and in either case what they receive is not of merit, but of grace. If guilty, what is due to them is not good, but indignation and wrath; and even if innocent, the good which they receive, they neither could deserve, nor can repay.

But come, Redemption, thou greatest of the works of God, give thine attestation to his grace, and put the matter past conjecture, and beyond all possibility of doubt. His other works shew that he is gracious, by all the good which he bestows on his creatures; but in this work his grace shines with peculiar lustre, and appears in all its glory. The grace of God is the golden thread which runs through the whole web of salvation? which gives firmness to the texture, and beautifies every part of the work. What suggested the plan, what is most conspicuous in the execution, and what shall have the glory of our redemption, but grace, from which it sprung, by which it is carried forward, and to the praise of the glory of which perfection it all tends? He who laid the plan of this amazing work is the God of all grace; he to whom the execution of it was committed is the only begotten of the Father, full of grace; and he whose business it is to apply it, is the Spirit of grace. Indeed the very transaction in which the sacred Three formed the plan of redemption, is commonly styled the Covenant of Grace; and for the same reason the gospel, in which redemption is published to the world, is designed, "The Gospel of the Grace of God." Every where, in short, in this work God appears a

gracious God. Here he not only shows the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus; but grace reigns first, and midst, and last, and without end.

Let us draw near and contemplate God as gracious in our redemption. But where shall we begin, or where shall we end? If we look back to eternity, grace was given us in Christ before the world began. If we look forward to eternity, grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. If we survey the intermediate space called time, grace appears flowing like a mighty river towards us with an uninterrupted course during the whole period of our journey through this dry and parched land. We cannot say when God began to be gracious to his people. The fountain of that grace which appears in the day of the sinner's effectual calling, lies hid from mortal view in the remotest eternity; "for we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." Election to eternal life must have been an election according to grace; for the children being not then born, neither having done good nor evil, what but grace, free and sovereign, could have influenced the choice? Nor let us say that the foresight of their future goodness determined God to prefer them to others. He chose us, not because we were or would become holy, but "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." What indeed are the redeemed before he calls them by his grace? Some of them are openly flagitious; most of them are poor, illiterate, contemptible; and all of them "are by nature the children of wrath even as others." Before they were called, they had no good works to induce God to pitch on them; and since that time they have none but what flow from his grace manifested towards them. The conclusion of the whole matter is, that God is gracious to whom he will be gracious. "If it be of works, then it is no more of grace."

But let us follow the stream which makes glad the city of God. It appeared a river of pure grace when it issued from the eternal throne before the world was made, or time commenced; nor can any thing but pure grace be perceived in it in any part of its progress. How was redemption obtained? We had sold ourselves for nought, and without money we were redeemed. A great price was given for our deliverance, but no part of the mighty sum was laid down by us: it was advanced by the great Redeemer, that it might to us be free; for "in Christ we have redemption through his blood, according to the riches of his grace." Nor is it by the grace of the Son of God merely that we are redeemed. While we "know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sakes became poor, that we might be made rich," we are not ignorant that it was by the grace of God, his and our Father, that he tasted death for every man. Indeed the very way of his death by wicked hands, proclaims his grace. He was put to death by those for whom he suffered. For those he died whose malice would not suffer him to live.

Nor must we stop here. Many who allow grace its due in election and redemption, when they come to effectual calling and regeneration, like unskilful artists, set this precious diamond to disadvantage in the heart, and darken some of its lustre. But here we must say with as little reservation as before, "by grace are we saved." For by what means are we saved? "The grace of God appeared to us," bringing salvation within our reach. Whence was it that we were saved, though we often received the grace of God in vain which had been preached to us? "The Lord waited that he might be gracious" to us. And whence is it that at last we accepted the free salvation which we had often before rejected? "He called us by his grace." Have we faith? We believed through grace; faith is "not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Are we regenerated? "It was not by works

of righteousness which we had done." Are we justified? "We were justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Indeed, we can neither merit righteousness for justification, for it is the gift of righteousness; nor the spirit of sanctification, for it is a free spirit, a spirit of grace. Away then with that rotten doctrine of human merit. If men ever be saved, it must be by grace; if they scorn to take salvation freely, let them know that they shall get merit when they go to hell.

Grace follows saints till they reach the consummation of the salvation to which they were called; for the Lord never ceases to give grace till he give glory. Every spiritual privilege is grace bestowed on them; every heavenly disposition is grace working in them. What keeps them from falling? "His grace is sufficient for them." What recovers them when fallen? "He heals their backsliding, and loves them freely." If they need, they go to the "throne of grace, and find grace to help them in the time of need." If what they already possess be not enough, he giveth more grace; and however great their necessity, grace amply supplies it; for they "receive out of his fulness, and grace for grace. Thus grace carries on as well as begins their salvation, till the cope-stone is brought forth to perfect the good work, with shoutings, Grace, grace unto it.

To the grace of God, then, be the praise of all we have, and all we do; and from it let us expect whatever we desire to obtain. What have we? Whatever it be, we are indebted to grace for it. Is it of a temporal kind? "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies." Is it spiritual? "By the grace of God I am what I am." "Take heed," says God, "lest thou speak in thine heart, saying, because of my righteousness hath the Lord brought me to this land." One portion ascribed to ourselves mars the whole; for all is of grace. What do we? We do all by grace. Does Daniel interpret excellently? "This wis-

dom is not revealed to me for any wisdom I have more than all living." Do David and Israel contribute liberally? "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." Does Paul labour diligently? "I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God in me; and his grace bestowed on me was not in vain." Let us not then sacrifice to our own net, nor burn incense to our own drag. What do we desire to obtain? Let us expect it wholly from grace, ask it as an unmerited favour, say, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; grant me thy law graciously; O Lord, be gracious to us, we have waited for thee; be thou our arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble." This is the argument to which his ear will not be deaf. When we plead with him thus, he will be very gracious to us at the voice of our cry.

ON THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD.

THE power of God enables him to punish transgressors, and his justice forbids that they should finally escape; but his long-suffering, for wise and holy ends, prevents for a while the execution of that punishment on multitudes of the guilty, which he hath power and right to inflict.

Long-suffering is exercised only towards sinners,—sinners of mankind,—sinners of mankind here on earth. Towards sinners, for the innocent need not to be borne with; patience has no room when there is nothing to provoke.—Towards sinners of mankind; for though devils are reserved to greater punishment, they are not spared, and God uses no means for their conversion.—Towards sinners of mankind on earth.

In hell wrath comes on sinners to the uttermost; patience is at an end. In heaven holiness is perfected, and patience superseded. It is not to holy angels, it is not to damned devils, it is not to the souls of departed sinners, that God is long-suffering: he is long-suffering to us-ward.

The long-suffering of God is matter of wonder. He sees sin, he hates it, he has threatened to punish it, he is able to execute his threatening; yet he suffers long, and is kind. See the proofs of the astonishing fact. His long-suffering waited in the days of Noah all the while the ark was a-preparing. For an hundred and twenty years he had patience with the old world, though he saw that their wickedness was great, and that all flesh had corrupted their ways. During this period the preacher of righteousness continued to warn them. They were obstinate, however, and his spirit would not always strive. Nor has his long-suffering been less remarkable since, than before the flood. Let Jews and Gentiles both bear witness. What was the state of the Gentile world before the coming of Christ? They "were filled with all unrighteousness; though they knew God, they glorified him not as God;" they paid divine honours either to deceased heroes, or to damned spirits. Yet the times of this ignorance God winked at; yea, he did them good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons. Similar was his long-suffering towards his favourite people. He suffered their manners forty years in the wilderness, and in Canaan no less than fifteen hundred years, before their final ejection. He did not reject them from being his people, when they had learned the ways of the heathen; yea, he waited forty years after they had murdered the Prince of life; and gave them in the mean time the first offers of peace.

But why go so far away as to the old world, or to the Gentiles and Jews in ancient times, for examples of the patience of God? all mankind, without excep-

tion, are monuments of his long-suffering. On whom doth not its light arise ? I speak not merely of the vessels of mercy, both before their effectual calling and after it ; "he endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." Consider the case. See how God is every day provoked. If the tongue itself, that little member, be a world of iniquity, what must the whole soul and body be ? If every individual may say, "innumerable evils compass me about," how incalculable must be the sins of populous cities, of extensive countries ? How must God be provoked in the dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty ? but especially in those valleys of vision where his name is recorded, and his grace is despised ; where the motions of his Spirit are quenched, where the calls of the gospel are slighted, where the Spirit strives, ministers preach, and the blood of Christ runs in vain ? Yet, O the long-suffering of God ! even those who spurn his precepts are made sharers of his goodness. He spreads a table for his enemies, and fills their cup to the brim. Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out, yet God layeth not folly to them. Still his sun arises, still his light shines, still his rain and dew descend, still his seasons roll, still his gospel is preached ; why ? but because he is long-suffering.

Nor is this all ; for by whom are these mercies bestowed, and against whom are these sins committed ? Is he a God that doth not see, that doth not hate, that cannot punish sin, or that is slack concerning what he hath promised, or threatened to do ? No, but altogether the reverse. He is a God that sees wickedness ; for "his eyes are on the ways of men, and he seeth all their doings." He is a God that hates all the workers of iniquity ; who is pressed under their sins, says Amos, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves ; who is broken, says Ezekiel, with their whorish heart. He is a God who is able to revenge

all disobedience. Though slow to anger, he is great in power. Who hath shortened his arm, or robbed him of his thunder? Is he not able, O sinner, to make his waters drown thee, his fire burn thee, his earth swallow thee up. He can arrest the sun, and extinguish the moon, and make it gross darkness, that thou canst not see. His quiver is full of arrows. He can make thy bliss thy bane, and the air thou breathest pregnant with death. If he give the word of command, he can arm thy conscience with scorpion whips; and while thou sufferest his terrors, thou shalt be distracted. Who that considers these things seriously can fail being astonished that he is long-suffering? Yea, such is his long-suffering, that the meekness of Moses is only a faint shadow of it; so long-suffering is he, that the observation of it hath proved a stumbling-block to the wicked, and the godly themselves have been at a loss what conclusion to draw. The former imagine, that God doth not see, nor the God of Jacob regard; and the latter are ready to slip with their feet, when they see the way of the wicked prosper, and all them happy that deal very treacherously. Even glorified and blessed souls seem to talk as if their patience were quite worn out, while God continues to endure; "How long, O Lord, holy and true!"

Why, why does God suffer so long the wickedness of men? "For my name's sake," he says, "will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off." Yet, though the chief, the glory of his name is not his only end; the salvation of his elect is promoted by his long-suffering. Are they yet unconverted? he waits, that he may be gracious to them at the destined hour. Are they converted? the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; for if he did not bear with the infirmities and sins, with the ignorance, weakness, and folly of his people, they could not possibly be saved. What an example of the patience of God with an elect, unconverted sin-

ner was Paul, in his dispensations towards whom Jesus Christ shewed forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should afterwards believe on him to life everlasting ! But not for the sinner's own good always, so much as for that of others, is God long-suffering towards him. The earth helps the woman, the chaff preserves the wheat. The crab-tree may have sweet fruit engrafted on it, and wicked parents may have godly children. Destroy it not, says patience, for a blessing is in it. Yea, the end of long-suffering may be the sinner's own condemnation ; for this must render thee, O man, inexcusable. Since God waits so long, every mouth must be stopped when at length he strikes.

Despisest thou then, the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ? Is not his long suffering rather entitled to thy admiration and gratitude ? How many are in hell who never provoked him as thou hast done ? Hast thou not committed sins as great as that of Uzzah, yet thou hast not been struck dead ; as that of Nadab, and Abihu, yet vengeance hath not smoked against thee ; as Achan, yet thou hast not been stigmatised with disgrace ; as Ananias and Sapphira, yet vengeance has suffered thee to live ?

Ah ! how is the divine patience often abused ! Because he suffers long, one man thinks God such an one as himself ; another, with the fool, says, Soul, take thine ease ; another, with the wicked, says, Peace and safety, when sudden destruction cometh. This man contemns the Most High because he forbears, and sets his mouth against the heavens ; and that man becomes impudent in sinning, because he is not plagued as other men. But, son of man, whose heart is fully set in thee to do evil, because sentence is not speedily executed against thy evil works, tremble while thou readest what follows : " Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged,

yet surely I know that it shall not be well with the wicked."

The patience of God with thee, O sinner, will have an end ; God suffers long but not always. The talent of lead will be laid on the ephah. If thou sinnest on, soon there may be no remedy ; then God will ease him of his adversaries, his indignation shall cease and his anger only in thy destruction. Thy day, Jerusalem, is now over ; ye for whom the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, have been spirits in prison these several thousand years. And if thou, sinner, dost not become weary of sinning, God will one day become weary of repenting. Thy feet shall slide in due time ; thy calamity is near at hand, and the thing that comes on thee makes haste. The end of the divine patience may soon arrive, thou canst not be assured of to-morrow. The longer it is in coming, the heavier will be the vengeance ; for the higher the axe is lifted up, the greater is the stroke. But whether it be sooner or later, the more excruciating will be the torment of the despiser of divine long-suffering, because space was given him to repent, and he repented not. When, sinner, wilt thou be wise ? When shall it once be ? Thou hast wearied men, and wilt thou weary my God also ? In this thy day, know the things that belong to thy peace, before the decree bring forth.

ON THE TRUTH OF GOD.

TRUTH is every where in scripture ascribed to God as his distinguishing attribute ; and the persuasion of his inviolable veracity has been in all ages the terror of the wicked, and the source of strong consolation to the godly. Though the scriptures were silent, reason would cry out that God can neither lie nor deceive. Even Plato could say, that if God were to appear in

a bodily shape, he would take light for his body and truth for his soul. Men, indeed, may falsify their word, to the great stain of their reputation ; but “he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.” Though they deviate from truth, sometimes from the fear of evil, and at other times from the hope of good, what evil can he have to fear, or what advantage can he hope to gain, that he should impose upon worms ? Can he speak untruth by mistake, who knoweth all things, or by design, who is immaculately holy ? Can he repent, who is unchangeable ; or he prove unable to perform, who is almighty ?

It must, therefore, be ever remembered, that our God is the faithful God ; that he keepeth covenant to a thousand generations ; that he keepeth the truth for ever ; and that he can no more recede from truth, in any the smallest instance, than he can deny himself. If we speak of his counsels of old, we must remember that they are faithfulness and truth ; if of his words, that there is nothing froward or perverse in them ; if of his ways, that all his paths are mercy and truth. Wheresoever he goes, faithfulness is still the girdle of his reins ; whatsoever he speaks, no guile is found in his lips ; whatsoever he does is the performance of his word. Truth is the inseparable companion of the living God ; she goes before his face. Now she walks forth accompanied with mercy, in the accomplishment of the promise ; now accompanied with justice in the fulfilment of the threatening ; and though clouds and darkness should conceal her for a while from the view of mortals, she will soon be revealed, to the joy of the godly and to the confusion of the wicked, in all her glory. Tremble, ye sinners, for he will bring evil upon you, and will not call back his words. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, for he is ever mindful of his covenant. Sooner shall the stars of heaven fall from their orbits, sooner shall the ponderous mountains be heaved from their foundations, than one tittle

of his sacred word fall to the ground. The word of our God shall stand for ever.

And where shall we find a more illustrious display of this glory of God than in the face and person of Jesus, whose name is the truth, and in whom all the promises and all the threatenings are yea and amen?

With respect to the promises, this is certain. What promise may we not confidently depend upon, though its accomplishment should seem ever so difficult, when not one good word has failed of all that was foretold of the Messiah? It was thus the ancient prophets sung concerning the mercy promised to the fathers : "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son," and thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, shalt give him birth. The sceptre shall not be quite departed from Judah, when he shall appear. A voice of one crying in the wilderness shall proclaim the approaching Deity. Then the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness! It is true, indeed, his ungrateful countrymen shall despise and abhor him ; for he shall be "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." But he shall arise from the grave, and swallow up death in victory. He shall go up with a shout, and lead the oppressor away spoiled. Behold, he "shall call a nation that knew him not, and they shall run unto him, kings shall see and arise, and princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful." As in water face answers unto face, so does Messias in the promise, to Messias in the flesh. To him gave all the prophets witness, and in him the word of the Lord is tried. Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read ; not one of his words hath failed. Now the seed of the woman has bruised the head of the serpent ; the people are gathered unto Shiloh, and the prophet like unto Moses is raised up. The sword has now awaked, and smitten the man that is God's fellow. The Messias is now cut off, though not for himself. Haggai's Desire of all Nations is now come ;

Jeremiah's Branch of Righteousness is sprung up; and, Malachi, thy Sun of Righteousness is arisen with healing under his wings.

And, as the promises are in Christ yea, and in him amen, so the threatenings are fulfilled in him in the most striking manner. Thy sentence, Adam, is fully executed on him, "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die;" "because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." And thinkest thou, O sinner, that he will not be true to his word of threatening against thee, when, for the honour of this, he stained the cross with the blood of his beloved Son? In vain did the tears and groans of his holy humanity, and the yearnings of a father's bowels, plead that the bitter cup should pass from him. Though it were to save a son from death, it is impossible for God to lie.

Having before us such glorious illustrations of the truth of God, no room is left for doubting the truth both of his promise and of his threatening in other instances. Without all controversy, the less is confirmed of the greater; and though the Lord should seem slack concerning his promise, there can never be reason for saying, "Doth his promise fail for evermore?" The promise is sure to all the seed, and whatever delays may take place, whatever difficulties may intervene, it will be accomplished in its season, and not one of all the good things which the Lord hath spoken shall fail. I will not, therefore, call in question the faithfulness of God, for he that believeth not, maketh him a liar. I will, by believing his testimony, set to my seal that God is true; and even when the time between the promise and the performance seems long, I will not make haste. Though the vision tarry, I will wait for it; for at the end it will speak and not lie. Though Providence should seem to contradict the promise, I will not cast away my confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. Though the world should frown, I will hold

fast the profession of my faith without wavering, because he is faithful who hath promised ; and when I suffer for righteousness sake, I will not be ashamed to commit my soul to a faithful Creator. How can I suspect that one good word shall fail, when he is ever mindful of his covenant, and when he is strong that executes his word ? Though affliction should visit me, I will reckon that it is in faithfulness. Though conscience should accuse me, I will remember his oath who hath sworn that he will no more be angry, as the waters of Noah shall no more overflow the earth. Though the adversary the devil tempt me, yet will I rest assured that he will not be suffered to cast me utterly down ; for God is faithful, who will not suffer me to be tempted above what I am able to bear. And when I am called to die, why should I fear ? "Into thy hand I will commit my spirit, thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

If it be incivility to give the lie to an equal, insolence to give it to a superior, treason to give it to a prince, what must it be to give the lie to the great God ? Yet, this ye do, "O fools and slow of heart to believe" what he hath spoken. He hath threatened to punish the wicked with everlasting destruction ; yet ye belie the Lord, and say, It is not he, no evil shall come nigh us. He hath promised salvation through Christ in the gospel ; yet ye treat it as a cunningly devised fable, and will not account it a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation. How long will ye provoke him to anger, and refuse to believe his word ? Shall not the men of Nineveh rise up in judgment against you for your unbelief ? Why will ye die ? and die you must, if you persevere in treating the faithful God as a liar, by disbelieving alike the threatenings of his law and the promises of his gospel. Lo, as justice and truth met in the law, so mercy and truth meet in the gospel. God has purged himself by oath that he has no pleasure in your death. He promises eternal life in Christ, and if this

salvation is refused, he has sworn that you shall never enter into his rest. Whether, therefore, ye will hear or forbear, know, that as he is not mocking you when he makes this promise, nor attempting to deceive you, so you cannot deceive him, and he will not be mocked.

ON THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

THE attribute of Sovereignty is none of the least conspicuous in the character of Jehovah. The doctrine of it is mysterious; but it is so far from being merely speculative, that it is one of the rests for our soul amidst a great many perplexing occurrences of Providence. This is our refuge and sanctuary. On this rock are many distinguished doctrines of religion built, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.”

Sovereignty is a relative attribute of Deity, and differs from power. By power God can do what he will; by sovereignty he may do what he pleases. In the fourth chapter of Daniel, the haughty Nebuchadnezzar vouches this truth. Nebuchadnezzar, whose greatness reached, as he thought, unto heaven, and his dominion to the end of the earth; Nebuchadnezzar, before whom all nations trembled: whom he would, he slew, and whom he would, he kept alive; Nebuchadnezzar, who said, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;—even this child of ease and pride, is obliged to confess a higher than himself, in these remarkable words: “He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?”

The divine sovereignty is universal. It extends to heaven and earth, and the armies of them; to the highest angel in heaven, and the greatest potentate on earth. Petty sovereigns indeed you may call the

greatest monarchs. They rule only over a small part of this little globe. They may leave their territories and dominions behind them ; but no place is without, no will above the government of God.

Through all the extent of his dominion his sway is uncontrollable ; he needs not give account of any of his procedure. It is true, indeed, he can do nothing inconsistent with the rules of justice and goodness, which are the foundation of his throne ; but he may do whatsoever he pleases, and many things which we may not think competent to him. He is, indeed, an absolute monarch.

The great foundation of the sovereignty of God is the supereminent perfection of his nature. The more excellent, rules over the less excellent ; men over beasts, the soul over the body, God over all. Should mankind meet to choose a king, they would pitch upon the man in whom the greatest perfection should be found. Now there is none so discreet, so wise, so powerful, so just, so good as God. Forasmuch as “there is none like unto thee, who would not fear thee, O King of nations ? There is none like unto thee, O Lord ; neither are there any works like unto thy works : therefore, all nations whom thou hast made, shall come and worship before thee.”

To this let us add, the dependence that all beings have upon him. He made them ; he preserves them ; and some of them he hath redeemed. Sovereigns of clay are made by their subjects, and for their subjects' good ; but here the subject is made by the King, and made for his honour and glory. A master thinks he hath authority over a servant, because he hires him ; a parent over a child, because he is its parent ; a king over the subject, because he is set upon the throne by consent or conquest ; the potter over the clay, because he bought it ; the statuary over the image, because he carved it. But the parent did not make the child, the king the subject, the master the servant, the potter the clay, the statuary the wood and stone,

as "God made all things out of nothing." If any creature, indeed, had given being to itself, or if it could preserve itself for a moment in being without God, then might it be disputed whether God be sovereign; but not as long as all things are determined to be the works of his hands, and upheld by him. But now they are his servants, for he formed them. He is the possessor of heaven and earth, and the God of the spirits of all flesh; yea, in his hand is the breath of every living thing: for "his pleasure they are and were created."

Let us, however, take a more particular view of the Divine Sovereignty. It displays itself in his decree, in his precepts, and in his works.

We begin with his Decree. He worketh all things after the counsel of his will. Why is this angel's name written in the book of life, and that angel's not? Why is this man ordained to salvation, and that man passed by? Let an apostle declare; it is "according to the good pleasure of his will." Why this poor man chosen, that rich man left? Why this despised man chosen, that honourable man left; this ignorant man chosen, that learned man left; this wicked man chosen, that moral man left? The answer is still the same. You may, indeed, assign a reason of the last condemnation, but not of the first election.

Let us descend from the decree to the Precept. All creatures are at God's beck, not to speak of irrational creatures. Who can quarrel, if he say to the windows of heaven, Be opened, and drown the world;—to the sea, Stand up, that my ransomed may pass over;—to the sun, Stand still, that my host may conquer;—to the raven, Feed my prophet;—to the flame, Touch not my faithful servants;—to the lions, Injure not my Daniel;—to the fish, Digest not my Jonah in your belly? *Stat pro ratione voluntas*, is his motto.—Angels, fly on my errand.—Devils, touch not Job; enter not into the swine, without leave asked and given.—Adam, beware of the tree of know-

ledge.—Abraham, go forth of your country ; offer up your Isaac.—And are there not many of the ceremonies of the Jewish ritual for which no reason can be assigned, but the pleasure of his will ?

But let us come to the Works of his hand. And, first, Creation. For his “ pleasure all things were created.” Why was the world made only some thousand years ago ? because “ it was the pleasure of his will. What adjusts the number of the stars ? Sovereignty.” What makes one star differ from another in glory ? Sovereignty. What marked out the paths of the heavenly bodies ? Sovereignty. What appoints the order of the seasons ? Sovereignty. What the different shapes of animals ? Sovereignty. Why is this portion of matter a flower, that a beast, this a star, that a body of a man ? it proceeds from Sovereignty. Thou hast “ created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.” And God giveth a body as it hath pleased him. “ Thou art the potter,” may all created things say, “ and we are the clay.”

From creation let us come to Providence. Here some appearances may puzzle our reason. One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet ; his breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow : And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure.—Was not Esau Jacob’s brother ? saith the Lord ; yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Why is this man in poverty, that in affluence ? “ The rich and poor meet together, and the Lord is the maker of them all ? ” Why is this man on a throne, that on a dunghill ? “ Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south ; but God is the judge ; he putteth down one and setteth another up.” Why does Uzzah touch the ark, and die ? Philistines sacrilegiously carry it away, and live ? Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips, and is shut out from Canaan ;

Jonah spake unadvisedly, and is only gently reprobred.—Ham is preserved in the ark, though others, as good as he, are drowned.—Job is afflicted, though the most upright of all men ; his wounds are multiplied without cause.—This nation inhabits a fertile country ; that a parched wilderness, a frozen or icy continent. The sovereign will of God determined the bounds of their habitation, the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills.

Let us come, lastly, to Redemption, which is indeed the most remarkable part of divine providence. Here there are many things for which we may pretend to assign some reasons, arguing them to be fit and becoming ; but the sovereignty of God is our best sanctuary. Why was Christ, the Son of God, appointed the Saviour of the world ? it pleased God. Why did he become man ? it pleased God. Why was he born in Bethlehem ? it pleased God. Why in the fulness of time, and no sooner ? it pleased God. Why were the Jews the crucifiers of him ? it pleased God. Why was the gospel preached by fishermen, a publican, a tent-maker ? it pleased God. Why was Paul an apostle, not Gamaliel ? Why is the gospel sent to this part of the world, not to another ? it pleased God. Why is it given to some to know the mysteries of the kingdom, to others not ? it pleaseth God. Why is one man hardened, another moralized, another converted by the gospel ? it pleaseth God. Why is the coming of Christ, the calling of the Gentiles, the inbringing of the Jews so long delayed ? “The times and the seasons, the Father hath put in his own power.”

Since such is the divine sovereignty, let us reverence the decree, obey the law, and acquiesce in the dispensations of the sovereign God. Let us reverence his decree, particularly the decree of predestination. Let no son of Anak, no difficulty which carnal reason may not be able to digest, influence us to bring up an evil report on this decree, which, like

Canaan, flows with milk and honey. Christ could thank his Father for it, Matt. xi. Ask not, reason. Who art thou that repliest against God? Let us obey his law. If he should command the sacrifice of a son, his precept will make it lawful; and, though some commands should seem of a trifling nature, we should be all obedience. Did Moses say, Lord, what will it serve for me to stretch forth my hand over the Red Sea? Did Joshua say, Lord, what need for us to go round the walls of Jericho, blowing rams' horns? Say not, that Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, are better than the waters of Israel. What if God shall make clay of spittle for medicine? What if he ordain ceremonies to the Jews, the meaning of which is hard to be understood; and continue baptism and the Lord's Supper to the end of the world? every ordinance hath meat to eat you know not of. "Come, let us worship and bow down." At thy command, Master, I will let down the net. Let us acquiesce in his dispensations. Why dost thou strive against him, O bold repiner? He giveth not account of his matters. Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked, and to princes ye are ungodly? How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? Even sovereigns of dust allow not their subjects to understand the arcana of government; how much less shall we grasp his designs? Faith is a sworn officer: for every lock proper to be opened it hath a key. If it want, it will not force, but patiently wait till it be regularly opened. I will wait on the Lord, it says, while he hideth himself. "If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter; for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they." Your miscarriages, perhaps, are not uncommon; but your afflictions are extraordinary. Lay your hand upon your mouth. Though you be righteous, answer not, but make sup-

plication to your Judge. There is a cause, though you know it not. It is your wisdom to forbear playing the critic on his dispensations. If he sometimes condescends to give a reason of his dispensations, it is more than he needs to do, and more than you are always to expect. "Be still, and know that I am God."

Be convinced of your sin and danger, ye who have been rebellious against your rightful Sovereign and your Almighty King. You have said, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us." You have said, "We will not have this God to rule over us."—"Be astonished, O heavens; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."—Know and consider that this is an evil and a dangerous thing. He will consume you in his wrath, that ye may know that he rules in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. The demand, for this purpose, is by the word of the Holy One; that you may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.—How dreadful to rebel against that God with whom is terrible majesty; against that God who can arm all creatures against you; arm the sun, arm the moon, arm the stars;—who can command his waters to drown you, his fire to burn you, his sun to scorch you, his wind to breathe contagion and death;—who can arm thy sweetest comforts with the most deadly sting, and bid thy conscience lash thee with intolerable scourges! How dreadful to be a rebel to that God who can crush you in a moment;—that God whom angels obey, before whom devils tremble, whose word, fire, hail, wind, stormy vapour fulfil, and to whom flashes of lightening say, Here we are!

But, though you are rebels, he is willing to dwell among you. He is reconciled;—he is beseeching you to be reconciled.—Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace. I pray thee accept the indemnity. Say, "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." Be no more children of disobedience. If you will not hear, condemn them, ye angels

that obey his word ; condemn them, fire, hail, snow, vapour, stormy wind ; condemn them, ye flashes of lightning, that say to him, Here we are ; condemn them, ye creeping things, and ye birds of the air. Yea, the very devils shall rise up in the judgment against you who were never called to the Most High. And know, that whether you will or not, you shall be subdued by him who is able to subdue all things to himself. As he lives, he hath sworn, "That to him every knee shall bow."

ON THE TRINITY.

THE doctrine of the Trinity is a most adorable mystery, which never would have entered into the thoughts of angels or of men, unless he who best knows his own nature had declared it in the holy oracles. It is a mystery which reason is so far from having been capable of discovering, if it had not been revealed, that she cannot comprehend it when it is plainly declared ; and is obliged to confess, such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is a mystery which amazes our hearts, overpowers our thoughts, and swallows up our words ; in respect to which, logic complains for want of arguments to demonstrate, rhetoric for want of similitudes to illustrate, and grammar for want of terms fit to express it. But though it is incomprehensible to our reason, it is not incredible to our faith, that, "there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are One." We tremble at the thoughts of discoursing of this heavenly mystery. Our words must be few and well chosen. O Thou who dwellest in light inaccessible, teach us what we shall say concerning thee, and captivate our thoughts to the obedience of thy word. Open to us the scriptures which thou hast written to lead us into the truth,

and not to mislead us into false notions concerning ourselves or thee; and enable to take heed unto them as to a light that shineth in a dark place.

That God is one, or that the divine perfections are no where to be found but in one individual nature or essence, is a truth which cannot reasonably admit of dispute. Because your foolish hearts were darkened, ye blinded Gentiles, ye had gods many, and lords many. But the Lord our God is one Lord, and has solemnly declared, "besides me there is no God, I know not any." And doth not nature itself teach us, that it implies the highest contradiction, that more than one being should be possessed of infinite perfection. Besides, is not the existence of one God sufficient to solve all the appearances in the world; and by consequence, is it not evident that the existence of two or more gods must be entirely unnecessary? And how incongruous is it to suppose, that a divine nature may exist without any necessity for it? or to talk of a needless Deity?

But though God is one, yet there are three persons in the Godhead. Hold thy peace, vain philosophy, ask not, how can such a thing be? Deny the being of a God, and the book of nature is full of inexplicable contradictions. Deny that there are three persons in the Godhead, and the book of scripture is the most self-inconsistent of compositions. But let God be true, let reason be a fool, and every man a liar.

Even in the Old Testament there are many no obscure hints of this tremendous mystery. When we read, "that God created the heavens and the earth," and the Spirit "moved on the face of the waters," that God said, "Let us make man after our image;" that "the Lord rained fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven," in Sodom's evil day; that "the Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand;" when it is said by Christ, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me," "the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me." Who sees not here a plurality of persons sup-

posed ; a trinity of persons evidently asserted ? But may we not be allowed to think, that the full and clear revelation of this mysterious doctrine was reserved to grace the solemnity of the Mediator's inauguration to his high and saving work ? Let us then repair to the banks of Jordan, where the glorious Redeemer condescended to receive the baptism of John. Lo, the Father is not seen in any shape, but heard in a voice from the excellent glory ; the Holy Ghost is not heard in any voice, but seen in the likeness of a dove ; and the Son is both seen in the likeness of a man, and heard in the language of prayer and supplication. From Christ's baptism, let us proceed to our own. This initiating ceremony of our holy religion, is performed in the name of the Sacred Three ; for so is the commandment of our Lord and Saviour, " Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Shall we add in corroboration, the solemn apostolical benediction pronounced in the name of these three glorious persons, " The love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all ? "

Produce your strong reasons, ye that would destroy this everlasting foundation. How is it that ye do not understand that this is a doctrine inwoven in the texture of the Bible, and in the whole scheme of our most holy faith ? Shall it be pretended, that perhaps the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are not all personal names ? Whose personality then, will you deny ? The Father's ? Nay, the Father's person is an expression used by an inspired Apostle. Or is it the personality of the Son that you would call in question ? Neither is this pretended. But we much question the personality of the Holy Ghost ; what if he be no more than the influential power of God ? But if he were not a true and distinct person, how could he be grieved ? how could he be tempted ? how could Ananias lie unto him ? how could he be said to search

all things, even the deep things of God ? how to distribute to every man as he will ? How could he say, “ Separate unto me Paul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have called them ? ” Or how could he say unto Peter, “ Go with the messengers of Cornelius, for I have sent thee ? ”

Or, if their distinct personality is allowed, will their proper divinity be objected to ? But what title what attribute, what work, what honour is ascribed to the one God even the Father, which is not also ascribed to the Son and Spirit ? Let us begin with the Son. He it is whose name is the Lord our Righteousness ; the great I AM ; the true, the great, the mighty, the only wise God, blessed for ever. He it is “ whose goings forth are of old, even from everlasting ; ” who knows all things ; who promises, “ Lo, I am with you always where two or three are met together in my name ; ” “ who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” “ Neither are there any works like unto his works.” The world was made by him ; by the word of his power the world is upheld ; and by the price of his blood the world is redeemed. “ Look unto him, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for he is God and there is none else ; besides him there is no Saviour.” Can any forgive sin, but God ? Can any quicken the dead, but God ? Can any judge the world, but God ? No, blessed Jesus ; and these works are thine. Thou thoughtest it not robbery to be equal with God. Even in the days of thy flesh, conscious of thy true divinity, thou didst not reject divine honours. All the angels worship thee ; into thy hands have dying martyrs resigned their departing spirits ; and, “ when thy wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that trust in thee.”

Nor can we think less honourably of the third sacred person. He is expressly called God. He is the good, the holy, the eternal Spirit. Whither shall we go from his presence ? or how declare all his

mighty works ? The creation of the world, the inspiration of the prophets, the sanctification of believers, and the resurrection of the dead, are some of his divine performances ; and what more can be necessary to convince us, that divine honours are his due, than to remark that in his name we are baptized, and against his person the dreadful unpardonable sin is said to be committed ?

We presume not to explain the relation of these divine persons to one another. As to the generation of the Son, who shall declare it ? nor need we be ashamed to profess our ignorance of the manner of the Spirit's procession from the Father and the Son. O may it be our distinguished attainment, to cultivate the most blissful correspondence with the sacred Three, to have access by one Spirit to the Father through the Son ! Then may we wait in humble hope that, in the day of final consummation, we shall more clearly perceive how the Son is in the Father, and the Father in him. In the mean while, let us adore what we cannot comprehend. Let us never think of this mystery but with reverence, nor ever speak of it but with a serious mind.

FINIS.

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