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THE CHOICE OF MOSES.

BY THOMAS WILLIAMS.

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THE CHOICE OF MOSES.

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.—HEBREWS, XI. : 25.

IN the chapter, from which these words are taken, the apostle describes the nature and effects of true faith, from the example of ancient believers. He shows, that their faith had a powerful influence on their conduct. Among those persons, who performed, through faith, important services and endured severe afflictions, Moses has an eminent character. Of him the apostle writes, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." This account of Moses shows, that he chose the afflictions of a saint rather than the enjoyments of a sinner.

In our attention to this subject, it is proposed,

I. To inquire what Moses, as a sinner, might have enjoyed.

The words of our text imply, that he might have chosen and enjoyed sinful pleasures. It is evident, he might have enjoyed those pleasures in a very high degree, from his situation in Egypt, before he publicly joined himself to the people of God. If Moses had chosen to avail himself of his favorable circumstances for sinful enjoyments, it is probable he might have enjoyed the pleasures of sin as highly as any other person, who has ever lived on the face of the earth. For,

1. As a sinner, he might have enjoyed an high degree of worldly honor. When he was an infant, he was taken into the royal family of Egypt. He was accounted and treated as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Indeed, it is said, "he became her son." There is good reason for the opinion, that Moses was viewed, as heir of the prosperous kingdom of Egypt. If he had chosen, he might have been the king of one of the most renowned kingdoms of the world. He was eminently qualified to enjoy the royal honors of the Egyptian kingdom. For we are informed, that in his infancy his mother saw that he was "a goodly child." Stephen says he "was exceeding fair." Hence we may conclude, that the personal appearance of Moses, when he became a man, was very amiable. A person of his appearance and deportment, in the office of a king, would have arrested the attention and engaged the affections of his subjects and acquired the highest honors they could bestow. Besides, Moses was a man of superior

talents and abilities. For we are informed in the scriptures, that he "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and was mighty in words and in deeds." Such was his character and reputation, before he renounced his connection with the royal family of Egypt. If he would have allowed himself, when he was come to years, to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he would have enjoyed as high a degree of worldly honor as any man in that age of the world. As a sinner, Moses might have enjoyed the pride and glory of Egyptian royalty. Egypt was then one of the most ancient, prosperous and honorable of earthly kingdoms. It was once very populous and contained about twenty thousand cities. It is probable Moses might have enjoyed the highest honors, that this world could have bestowed on any person, who was then on the earth. It is certain, if he had chosen the pleasures of sin, he might have enjoyed a high degree of worldly honor.

2. Moses might have enjoyed a large portion of earthly riches. In the verse, which follows the text, we are informed he "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." These words imply, that the treasures of Egypt might have been possessed and enjoyed by Moses. If he had been king, or only one of the royal family in Egypt, he might have received the wealth of that kingdom in as large portions as he could have expended, or desired. Egypt was a very wealthy kingdom. After the administration of Joseph, the people with their property were, in a peculiar manner, at the disposal of their sovereign. If Moses had chosen to be son of Pharaoh's daughter, he might have possessed and enjoyed the treasures of Egypt. He might have been, it is probable, the richest person, that then lived on the earth. He might have enjoyed his riches, in any manner and to any extent, that he had chosen. No limits can be set to the riches, which Moses might have possessed in Egypt. If he had chosen the pleasures of sin, he might have commanded and expended the treasures of Egypt, for the promotion of his own happiness. As a sinner, he could have enjoyed as large a portion of earthly riches, as he could desire. Indeed, the world could not afford, for the enjoyment of any person, a larger portion of its riches than Moses might have possessed in the treasures of Egypt. It may be observed—

3. That Moses might have enjoyed the highest degree of sinful pleasures. He might have erected spacious and elegant palaces. He might have procured the most costly and splendid furniture for his royal apartments. He might have arrayed himself in the richest apparel. He might have feasted on the daintiest luxuries; and regaled himself with the choicest wines. He might have commanded and employed an obsequious retinue of servants; and been attended, wherever he had chosen to appear, by the far-famed chariots and horses of Egypt. At home he might have been thronged, whenever he pleased, with numerous and brilliant companies of joyful visitants. Whatever gratification, either the honors or riches of this world, could afford, Moses might have enjoyed without restraint. He might have indulged himself in every pleasure, which the world, the flesh and Satan could offer to his choice. The words of our text imply, that Moses might have enjoyed the highest pleasures, that sinners can ever experience. For the apostle speaks of "the pleasures of sin," without any exception; and he declares, that Moses did not choose to enjoy these pleasures. But if he had chosen, he might have enjoyed worldly

honors, earthly riches and sinful pleasures, in the highest degree. Yet he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. It is proposed,

II. To inquire what Moses suffered, as a saint.

The people of God, in all ages, have many afflictions, which are peculiar to themselves. It is written, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." God says to his people, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Though the people of God, in every every age, have many afflictions, yet they had an unusual portion of afflictions in the days of Moses. But even at that time, he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. As a saint, he gave himself, through his whole life, to a constant series of painful sufferings.

1. Moses suffered an high degree of reproach. When he renounced his connection with the royal family of Egypt; and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he brought on himself the enmity and contempt of the grandees in that kingdom. Nor could he have been less hated and despised, when he opposed and forsook the prevailing religion and popular superstitions of the Egyptian nation. Surely he must have suffered the highest degree of reproach, when he joined himself to the children of Israel, who were then holden in the most infamous and distressing slavery. For his first efforts on behalf of Israel, Moses so highly provoked the king of Egypt, that the king sought to slay him. Without any question, Moses, by his conduct as a saint, brought on himself the most bitter reproaches of the royal family and of the whole kingdom of Egypt. Nor did he suffer less reproach from the children of Israel, though he devoted his life to labor and sorrow to promote their welfare. After the wonders, which God wrought by his hand in Egypt and at the Red Sea, the multitude of Israel frequently murmured against him and poured on him the most contemptuoue reproaches. Even in modern times and to the present day, the name of Moses and his conduct frequently excite the most abusive expressions of hatred and contempt. It is evident, as is intimated in our context, that Moses suffered an high degree of reproach.

2. Moses subjected himself to a state of constant poverty. By his conduct, having incurred the displeasure of the Egyptian monarch, he was obliged to flee from his kingdom, to save his life. In such circumstances, it can not be supposed, he was able to secure to himself the smallest portion of worldly property. That Moses was destitute of property is evident from the account, which is given of his residence in the land of Midian, when he fled from the face of Pharaoh. For he was found, sitting by a well. When he was called to the house of the priest of Midian, that he might eat bread, he was content to dwell with the man. He describes his destitute condition in that country, where he remained forty years, by saying, "I have been a stranger in a strange land." The poverty of Moses, while he was in the land of Midian, also appears from his keeping the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law. He appears to have been destitute of worldly property, on his return from Midian into Egypt. The rest of his days he was in needy circumstances. He never possessed any settled habitation. In his tedious journeys with the children of Israel in the wilderness, he had no provision for future necessities. He was fed and clothed by a series of miracles. When he died, he neither owned, nor

left for his children, any portion of earthly riches. To such a state of poverty Moses subjected himself, by his conduct. For as a sinner, he might have enjoyed the treasures of Egypt. But he chose rather to suffer the evils of constant poverty.

3. By his conduct, Moses subjected himself to the peculiar afflictions of the people of God, the whole time of his life on earth. When he was called to his public services in the cause of God, the children of Israel were in a state of cruel bondage and severe distress. Of the state of his people in Egypt, at that time, God gave Moses this affecting description: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people, who are in Egypt; and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows." From the time that Moses began his public services, until the day of his death, he endured a constant series of the most trying afflictions. He had the greatest portion of labor and sorrow with the people of God, while they were led "through the great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, in which was no water." Of their afflictions and sorrows in the wilderness, Moses says unto God, "We are consumed by thine anger; and by thy wrath are we troubled. All our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years, as a tale, that is told." Again he says, "Make us glad according to the days, in which thou hast afflicted us; and the years, in which we have seen trouble."—From the history of Moses, we have reason to conclude, that he endured as great a portion of affliction with the people of God, as was ever suffered by any other saint. Though he suffered reproach, poverty and affliction; yet he chose to suffer these evils, with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

III. It is proposed to inquire why he chose the sufferings of a saint rather than the enjoyments of a sinner.

Our text asserts that Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the "pleasures of sin for a season." His conduct, in this respect, greatly differs from the common conduct of mankind. To many persons his conduct appears very unaccountable and unreasonable. Whether his conduct was the effect of knowledge, or ignorance, of folly, or wisdom, of wickedness, or goodness, we cannot determine, unless we know why he was induced to choose what he suffered, rather than what he might have enjoyed. What were the reasons, then, which influenced the choice and conduct of Moses? It may be answered:

1. Moses was not a person of inferior capacity. In many instances, the choice and conduct of men are ascribed to their mental weakness. They are supposed to be unable to discern and choose what is most important and excellent; or most expedient and advantageous. But it cannot be supposed, with any reason, that Moses was a person of a weak mind. From the description of his character, as well as from the account of his conduct, as they are given in the Scriptures, it is evident, that Moses possessed a superior capacity. It is probable, that in the extent of mental endowments, he has rarely been equalled and never exceeded by any of his fellow-creatures. Certainly his conduct cannot be truly ascribed to mental weakness. Nor,

2. Did Moses choose the sufferings of a saint rather than the

enjoyments of a sinner, because he had not proper information respecting the objects of his choice. He had passed forty years with the royal family of Egypt; and been favored with peculiar opportunities to learn the nature and effects of sinful pleasures. At the same time he was acquainted with the afflicted and debased condition of the people of God. When he was in the land of Midian, he had forty years to inquire, consider and determine what he should choose. Before this season of retirement, he was a person of extensive information; for he "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." He knew the purposes and promises of God respecting his people. He was acquainted with the difficulties and distress they would have to encounter, before they could possess the land of promise. On these subjects Moses had, no doubt, more knowledge from information, observation and experience than any other person, who was then on the earth. It is probable, that no other person ever formed a choice, under the influence of correct and extensive information, in a higher degree than Moses, when he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Nor,

3. Can it be supposed, that Moses preferred the sorrows of a saint to the joys of a sinner, because he had never been tempted to choose the enjoyments of a sinner rather than the sufferings of a saint. It can hardly be conceived, that any person could be placed, in the midst of greater temptations than attended Moses; and were suited to influence his conduct. He had passed his childhood and youth, in the royal family of Egypt. He was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. He continued in this relation, until his years of manhood. He was famous in Egypt for his wisdom; for his words and his deeds. In such a state every temptation, that could serve to induce him to choose the pleasures of sin, rather than suffer affliction with the people of God, was constantly before his eyes and pressed on his heart. It must have been against the most constant and powerful temptations, that Moses chose the sufferings of a saint rather than the enjoyments of a sinner. With such a capacity, with such information and such temptations, why did Moses form such a choice? To this question the apostle gives the true answer. He says, "by faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." It was by faith, that Moses was induced to choose the sufferings of a saint rather than the enjoyments of a sinner. But, it may be asked, how could faith induce Moses to form such a choice? It may be answered,

1. By faith Moses realized the truth, respecting what he might have enjoyed, as a sinner. He saw he could enjoy the pleasures of sin, only for a season. He saw, that by choosing the pleasures of sin, he would deprive himself of every joy and every hope, after his short and vain life should be past. By faith he saw that should he live in sinful pleasure, he should displease his holy Creator and bring on himself endless torment and despair. He also saw, that the enjoyments of sinners are unworthy the affection of a rational being; and

deserve to be treated with abhorrence and contempt. As he was able by faith to see and know the truth respecting the worldly honors, the earthly riches and sinful pleasures, which are chosen by sinners, he was convinced and persuaded, there was no reason to induce him to choose the pleasures of sin for a season rather than suffer affliction with the people of God.

2. By faith Moses realized the truth respecting what he should suffer as a saint. He saw that his afflictions with the people of God, would soon end. He saw, too, that he should enjoy, in the midst of their afflictions, the presence and favor of God. He also saw, that he should suffer in a good cause, which was worthy of what he could do and suffer for its promotion. By faith he saw, that his future enjoyments, with the people of God in heaven, would make his afflictions on earth to be light and but for a moment. Therefore he was induced, by faith, in view of reproach, poverty and affliction, to choose to suffer those evils with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

3. By faith Moses was induced to have respect unto the recompense of the reward. This truth is plainly asserted in the context. But it may be asked, What is the recompense of the reward, to which Moses had respect? In the first place, it may be answered, It includes the perfect accomplishment of the divine purposes. Moses had the true knowledge of the living and true God. By his knowledge of God, he obtained the true knowledge of his purposes. These purposes Moses would perceive are the greatest, wisest and best, that could be formed by infinite wisdom and goodness. By true faith he would be induced to regard their accomplishment above any other object, which could be placed before him. God has a constant and supreme regard to his own purposes, in his works of creation, providence and redemption. He is engaged, with all his heart and all his strength, for the accomplishment of the purposes, which he formed in the eternal counsel of his own will. By faith Moses regarded the same objects, which God regards; and was engaged to accomplish the purposes, which God is engaged to accomplish. When he renounced the pleasures of sin and united himself to the people of God, he became a holy and faithful servant for the promotion of the divine purposes. By faith he would perceive this object to be the greatest and best, that he could regard and promote. Neither Moses, nor any other being could ever choose a better object than the accomplishment of the eternal purposes of infinite goodness and wisdom. This object must ever be to Moses a sufficient recompense of reward for his labors and sorrows with the people of God. For this object he was wisely induced to choose the sufferings of a saint rather than the enjoyments of a sinner. In the next place—the recompense of the reward, which Moses respected, includes the most perfect manifestation of the divine glory. The essential glory of God is his eternal and infinite greatness and goodness. By the manifestation of his greatness and goodness, in the fullest and clearest manner, God gives the greatest glory to his name, by the most perfect and glorious system of created existence. By the formation and accomplishment of the best designs, God displays his real character, and most perfectly manifests his greatness and goodness

for ever and ever. From a supreme regard to his own glory, in the highest perfection of his kingdom, God has made and he preserves and governs all creatures and all worlds. In the gospel God reveals and manifests himself by the redemption of his people—*“To the intent, that unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* By faith Moses saw the purpose and glory of God; and to promote these objects he chose the sufferings of a saint rather than the enjoyments of a sinner. Nor could he receive a greater recompense of reward than he would enjoy, in the most perfect manifestation of the divine glory.

In the last place: The recompense of the reward, to which Moses, by faith, had respect, included the highest interests of the universe. To accomplish his purposes and display his glory, God will produce the greatest degree of knowledge, holiness and happiness, that can exist in created beings. This object God reveals in the gospel; and places before his rational creatures to engage their affections and exertions. *“With right views and feelings they behold this great object and rejoice in its accomplishment. They are willing to sacrifice and suffer whatever God appoints, as well as do whatever he requires, in order to promote the highest interests of his kingdom. By faith Moses would see and love that great object, which God regards and pursues, in all his designs and works. To be actively engaged in the accomplishment of this object, Moses would cheerfully choose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. In its accomplishment he would enjoy, for ever, the highest recompense of reward, which the eternal purposes, the infinite glory and the holy and blessed kingdom of God can afford his most honored servants. By faith Moses would be influenced, for the greatest, wisest and best motives and reasons, to choose the sufferings of a saint rather than the enjoyments of a sinner.”*

IMPROVEMENT, A. M.*

1. Since Moses, in his conduct, was influenced by true faith, real religion, in its essence, is perfectly simple. True faith is the essence of real religion. Such faith will govern a person's sentiments, affections and enjoyments. In his religious conduct, through his long life, Moses was influenced by one plain, simple principle, which is a proper regard to Divine truth. This principle, which is as simple as light, with its eternal and infinite consequences, was to Moses, in the greatest trials and changes, a sufficient and ever glorious foundation for whatever he might be called to do and suffer for God and his people. Let any person think, feel and act according to the truth; and he is pious: he is a friend and servant of God and man. But no person can be pious, or have the least degree of true virtue, without a rational, practical and cordial regard to Divine truth in heart, word and deed. Let a person have true faith; and he will know, love, serve and please God, as he reveals himself in the gospel. He will glorify and enjoy God for ever.

*See Note at the end of the Sermon.

2. Since faith is a proper regard to the truth, they who are pious, are truly wise. The truth places before us the greatest and best objects, that ever can exist. It places before us the purposes of God, the glory of his name and the interests of his kingdom. It teaches and shows us our duty, in respect to these objects. They, who regard Divine truth, will know and love, will choose and pursue, will obtain and enjoy the same objects, which engage the attention, interest the affections and gratify the goodness of God forever and ever. They enjoy communion with God, in his purposes, glory and kingdom; they possess and enjoy all things. They choose and obtain the best end by the best means. They are truly wise. Did not Moses make a wise choice? Does not God make a wise choice? They, who are pious, by faith, choose what God chooses.

3. Since religion is a rational belief of Divine truth, every person, who has the proper use of his mind, will be a Christian in doctrine, as well as in practice. The religion of the Sacred Scriptures, "given by inspiration of God and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works," is certainly rational in its origin, foundation and influence. It is founded on the truth, not on error. Is it not rational to believe and obey the truth? They, who do not regard and believe the truth, are blinded and befooled by ignorance and error; and if they do not repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will deceive and destroy themselves forever. Whoever is truly religious believes in the "Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit;" and has a rational and permanent foundation for his faith and patience, for his hope and joy; for his refuge, glory and salvation. His sentiments, affections and actions rest on the name and truth and grace of the One only living and ever living and true God, in Three Divine Persons. If the God of truth is worthy of confidence, they, who believe in Him, as he reveals himself by his word and shows himself by his work, are perfectly rational.

4. Since true faith is the essence of religion, pious persons have a plain path. It is, simply, the path of truth. The truth never turns nor changes from what is right. It never falters, nor deceives. It never flatters; it is never dishonest. It is light and life. Darkness and death fly from the brightness of its beauty; and are alarmed and ashamed by its power and glory. Though the legions of Hell tremble at the sound of its voice; its loving smile makes the infant laugh. They, who have the love of God and man in their hearts, are in "the way of holiness;" so plain, so safe and pleasant is this way, "the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err." In this path they are guided and guarded by the truth itself. In this way the children and servants of God have walked in all ages. In this way God walks with his people; and it is their choice, safety and delight to walk with him. The Psalmist says, "I have chosen the way of truth." The truth has but one way. Falsehood has many ways. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

5. Since true faith governs the choice and conduct of pious persons,

we may see what is necessary to a publick profession of religion. It is not necessary for this purpose, that a person should have a high degree of confidence in himself. It is written, "He, that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool," Nor that he should think highly of his religious experience. For it is written, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Nor that he should be filled with high comfort and joy, in the hope and prospect of his own salvation. It is written, "When pride cometh, then cometh shame; but with the lowly is wisdom." True faith in God, for his eternal and infinite perfections, is necessary to a wise and faithful devotion to his service and kingdom, by a publick profession of religion. True faith has God for its supreme object. It leads a person to choose what Moses chose. It leads a person to desire and pursue what Moses desired and pursued against the frowns and smiles of falsehood and folly. He said unto God, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." It will lead a person to pray as Christ prayed: "Father, glorify thy name. Not my will, but thine be done." Let a person believe and love Divine truth; and he will, heartily and honestly, devote himself, wholly and forever, to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

6. With a proper belief of Divine truth, they, who are pious, will devote themselves, by a publick profession of religion, to the service of God. By the light of truth, they believe and know, that no greater and better object than God can be presented to their choice. They may safely and wisely choose God for their present and eternal portion. Let saints look at sinners; their choice, their conduct, their pleasures; their final and endless character and condition. They may be assured, that they never need to be ashamed, or afraid to choose the sufferings of a saint with the people of God rather than the enjoyments of sinners for a season. May they not wisely esteem, the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of this world?—What, then, will be their choice, when they see God by the light of truth, in his eternal purposes, his infinite glory and his holy and blessed kingdom! It will be their safety, their honor, their happiness to bind themselves and to be bound, by the bonds of truth and grace, to God, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, by a publick profession of the Christian duties and doctrines.

IMPROVEMENT, P. M.

1. From the recompense of the reward, to which Moses had respect, it is evident that he exercised disinterested benevolence. There is no medium between such benevolence and selfishness. But it is often pretended, that Moses could not exercise disinterested benevolence, because he had respect to the recompense of the reward. Yet the recompense of the reward, which Moses respected, was not his own personal happiness. For the objects, which he respected, he was willing to sacrifice his own private happiness and to endure the most painful afflictions. From his regard to the purpose and glory of God and the highest interests of his kingdom, he was willing to renounce and sacrifice his own personal interests. He was willing to act contrary to his own interests, for the sake of such objects, as were infinitely more important. A disposition to sacrifice one's own interests, for more

important objects, is the essence of disinterested benevolence. Such benevolence Moses felt and expressed in his conduct. It was the real excellence and glory of his character.

2. Since the conduct of Moses is a proper example of real religion, their own happiness is not the first object, which religion proposes to mankind. Their own happiness is the first and only object, which mankind naturally propose to themselves, in their religious conduct. But the living and true God is the first object, which real religion places before rational creatures. Supreme love to God the law requires; and nothing less is required by the gospel. For the glory of his name and the good of his kingdom, God will sacrifice every opposing interest. His own glory, in the accomplishment of his purposes and the greatest interests of the universe, is the object, which God proposes to himself. They, who do not supremely regard the same objects, are his enemies. Neither the happiness of a single person, nor the happiness of all creatures, is the first object, which real religion requires and binds us to seek and pursue. Religion, in its objects, doctrines and duties, requires us to seek first the glory of God and the interests of his holy kingdom.

3. From the example of Moses it is evident, no person can be truly religious without perfect self-denial. Moses was willing, from a supreme regard to God, to sacrifice a life of pleasure for a life of affliction. He renounced every personal interest and enjoyment, for the sake of God and his people. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him, that sent me." The apostle says, "For even Christ pleased not himself." The Saviour has given us a perfect example of piety and virtue. He did not sacrifice selfish interests and sinful pleasures; for he never had any such interests and pleasures to sacrifice. But he denied himself holy enjoyments for the sake of the Divine glory. And he requires sinners to deny themselves of all things, for the kingdom of heaven. He said to the multitude, who followed him, when he was on earth, "Whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all, that he hath, can not be my disciple." There is no real religion in any person, any farther than he denies himself and lives to the glory of God. Of the first converts it is written, "The multitude of them, that believed, were of one heart and one soul; neither said any, that aught of the things, which he possessed, was his own." Such a spirit of self-denial the glory of God and his law and gospel require of every person. Every true Christian turns from himself to God, in the spirit and practice of disinterested benevolence and self-denial. Such a spirit every person ought to feel and express in his conduct.

4. From the example of Moses we may perceive some common errors on the nature of faith. Some suppose, that faith consists in the appropriation of the promises and blessings of the gospel, without any evidence of a true and just title to Divine mercy, either from reason, scripture, or common sense. But true faith, by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, turns sinners from themselves to God, as he reveals himself in the law of condemnation and by the gospel of justification. Some suppose, that faith consists in a person's confidence, that he is a Christian; and that to maintain and renew an assurance of his salva-

tion, are the true hope and faith, which the gospel requires. But if a person's hope of salvation and his faith in his religious character be not founded on the eternal and unchangeable holiness and sovereignty of Jehovah, he wholly and fatally deceives himself; and is "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity."—Some suppose, the bare assent to Divine truth is the faith, which is required by the Gospel. But a person may, by intellectual speculation, consent to the whole system of truth, as Satan is obliged to do, without any practical conviction of duty; or one holy affection. If a person have no knowledge of Divine truth, but what exists in intellectual speculations, the holy Gospel of truth and grace will have no proper influence on his heart and life. Addison says: "There are reveries and extravagancies, which pass through the minds of wise men; as well as fools." The Devils have the theology of intellect. True faith works by love, purifies the heart and overcomes the world. It affects and governs the whole conduct, by the Divine Spirit.—Some suppose, that faith consists in elevated emotions, with solemn impressions and ardent and happy fancies and feelings. It has been taught and preached that "it is an ultimate law of our being, that a vivid conception affects us, by inspiring a momentary belief in the thing, which is conceived." Such is the theology of feeling. Satan has luminous and delusive imagination. But demoniacal hallucinations however delightful, luminous and powerful, are in perfect agreement with the excited devotions of Heathenism; the enthusiastick illuminations of anti-christian Catholicism; and with the Satanick imaginations of superstition and infidelity; of enthusiasm and impiety. The transformations of Satan, into an angel of light, are the most fatal and terrible of his devices. The theology of Scripture and reason, of truth and duty is not of the intellect only, nor merely of the feelings; but of the conscience. Says the Divine Teacher and Preacher, "*Yea! and why even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?*"

By the apostle, the Holy Spirit says to believers, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them."

5. From the conduct of Moses, it is evident the objects of this world afford no good reason, for any person, to neglect the religion of the gospel. It is for the sake of worldly objects, that mankind, naturally and generally, disregard and disobey what the gospel teaches and requires. Worldly honors, riches and pleasures are the common objects of pursuit to human beings. Moses had as many inducements to devote himself to such objects, as any person ever had, or ever can have. Yet he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the honors, riches and pleasures of the world. Why should any person, for worldly objects, refuse to follow his wise and holy example? Greater and better objects, than this world presents, demand and deserve the attention and pursuit of human beings. The whole world can offer no reason, nor any inducement, which is sufficient to justify any person in the disbelief and hatred of divine truth; and in enmity against the purpose, the glory and kingdom of God. What do

they, who refuse to believe and obey God, obtain by their cares and labors for worldly objects, but vanity and vexation of spirit? They, who live without true faith in God, deprive themselves of the highest honors, the richest treasures and noblest pleasures, even in this life. Yet they have their good things in this life: and in the future and eternal existence will have nothing, but evil things in the torments of hell. They, who believe and obey the truth, now obtain an hundred fold, for what they renounce for Christ's sake. But "what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

6. From the choice and conduct of Moses, it is evident the religion of the Bible is perfectly rational. It is often supposed, that faith and reason are totally opposed in their nature and effects. It is thought, that a person can not have faith, unless he renounce the dictates of reason. But Moses had good reasons for his faith; and for his conduct, which was the effect of his faith. His faith was founded on the most substantial and permanent reasons. It was founded on the existence, perfections, purposes, promises, conduct, gospel and law of God. They, who act rationally, will be truly religious. For real religion is founded on truth and knowledge; and not on falsehood and ignorance. Is it not rational to believe and regard what is true?—They, who do not regard and believe the truth, act under the influence of ignorance, delusion and error. They have no reason for their conduct. In his religious conduct and in the greatest changes and trials, Moses was influenced by one plain, simple and rational principle, which was a proper regard to divine truth. The truth places before us the greatest and best objects, that ever can exist. It places before us the purposes of God, the glory of his name and the interests of his kingdom. These objects, in their design, connections and consequences, include all beings and all events. Truth and reason require us to regard and esteem God above all other beings. They, who regard divine truth, will choose and pursue, obtain and enjoy what God chooses and pursues, obtains and enjoys. They choose and pursue the greatest and best ends, by the wisest and best means. They will enjoy communion with God in his purposes, in his glory and kingdom for ever. Is their conduct, their choice, their faith enthusiastick, imaginary, irrational? Did Moses act without reason, without wisdom, without goodness and truth? Does God act unwisely and without reason? They, who believe and obey the gospel, choose what God chooses. They will obtain perfect, eternal and infinite holiness and happiness, glory, beauty and praise. In their sentiments, affections and actions, they are influenced by the reasons of infinite wisdom and goodness.

7. From the example of Moses, it is evident that faithful believers have a most joyful prospect. Though they may have no confidence in themselves, nor think highly of their religious character and attainments; though they may have little comfort and joy in the hope and prospect of their personal safety and eternal salvation; yet with faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ, they may remove trouble and fear from their hearts. They may be assured, that no greater, or better portion, than God, can be offered to their choice. The foundation of their confidence can never change nor fail. They may rely on the everlasting covenant, which God makes with his people, through the

name and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power and grace of the Divine Spirit. They may, cheerfully and unreservedly, devote themselves to his service and praise, by a publick profession of religion; and confide in his truth and grace, in his wisdom and faithfulness, in his compassion and loving-kindness, for instruction and protection in the darkness and dangers of this life, for support in the hour of death and victory over the king of terrors. Though they are weak in themselves; God is their strength. They may have many changes; but God, in whom they trust, can never change. They may have many sorrows; but they may always rejoice in God. They may have many afflictions; but their afflictions are to be chosen rather than the enjoyments of sinners. They may wisely esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; while by faith, "they have respect unto the recompense of the reward." How wise and happy appear their faith and choice, when God is seen in his eternal purposes, in his infinite glory and his holy and blessed kingdom! Pleasant and glorious for life and death, for the judgment and eternity, is the prospect of every person, who becomes, through faith, an heir of God and joint heir with Christ.

8. From the example of Moses, whose character and conduct show the excellence of true faith, we may see why God is highly displeas'd with unbelievers. As faith consists in the belief and love of divine truth, it is essential to the knowledge and performance of our duty to our Creator, our fellow creatures and ourselves. Divine truth places before us the holiness and majesty of God, the purity and perfection of his law and the glory and grace of the gospel. They, who reject divine truth, which teaches and shows the true knowledge and real glory of God, reject God himself in his infinite greatness and goodness. Unbelief arises from an evil heart, which hates and rejects the truth. No one would ever disbelieve and reject the truth, if he had not "the carnal mind, which is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be. So then they, who are in the flesh, cannot please God." Unbelievers, who hate and reject the truth, hate God for his holiness, justice and goodness. Nor have they any true love to their fellow creatures, or to themselves. They, who will not love and obey divine truth, oppose the great and good and wise designs of God, his infinite and eternal glory and blessedness and the holiness and happiness of his kingdom. Unbelievers feel and express peculiar enmity and contempt towards the Lord Jesus Christ; because God reveals his greatness and goodness, most fully and clearly, in the purpose and work of redemption, through the mediation and atonement of the almighty and ever gracious Saviour. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. But they, who disbelieve and reject divine truth, prefer and exalt themselves and their selfish interests and sinful pleasures, above God and the law, Jesus Christ and the gospel. Unbelief is the most criminal and malignant expression of depravity and sinfulness, that can exist in human beings. The Saviour says, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." Again, "If I had not done among them the works, which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my father." From the

sinfulness and criminality of unbelief, the character and conduct of unbelievers appear to be perfectly hateful and guilty; and to be worthy of God's present displeasure and indignation and of everlasting condemnation and punishment. It is written, "He, that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

9. From the faith, the choice and conduct of Moses, it is evident that the present state is suited to try every person's heart. The present pleasures of sinners and the present afflictions of saints are constantly placed before us, for our choice. The future enjoyments of the righteous and the future sorrows of the wicked are also placed before us. We must choose between the present conduct and state of the righteous and of the wicked; and receive the effects of our choice and conduct, in the endless joys of heaven; or in the endless sorrows of hell. God gives you all the instruction you can need, or desire, in order to make a wise choice. Your choice and conduct will be wise, or unwise, holy, or unholy, happy, or unhappy, according to your own heart in the love and belief, or in the hatred and rejection of divine truth. God calls and urges you, by the strongest motives, to make a wise and happy choice. He uses the wisest and best means, which perfect knowledge, wisdom and mercy can devise and employ to persuade you to repent and believe the gospel. By every event of his providence and in every moment of your existence on earth, he searches your hearts and tries your reins, that he may give you according to your ways and according to the fruit of your doings. The voice of divine truth and of infinite wisdom calls our attention to one point, saying, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Now, life and death, heaven and hell are set before us. According to our sentiments, affections and actions, in this state of constant and decisive probation, will be our character and condition at the final judgment and in the retributions of eternity. Does not God try our hearts, as gold is tried in a furnace? Have not these trials been constant and solemn all the days of our lives? Are not the choice and conduct of the righteous and wicked, from the trials of Cain and Abel, of Moses and Pharaoh, of Peter and Judas placed before you, so that you may perceive and decide to which of the two classes you belong? Can you not see your own hearts by the light of divine truth, as it shines in the choice and conduct of Moses? Do you not see and know your own choice and conduct, in respect to the afflictions of the righteous and the enjoyments of the wicked? Your trials will continue and increase until your short, hasty and uncertain period of life on earth shall end. Under these trials you will form yourselves into vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction; or be formed into vessels of mercy, prepared unto glory.

10. The instructions of the present discourse call and urge such persons as are not true christians, to renounce their unbelief. It is by falsehood and deceit, that sinners refuse to know God; and choose to walk in the broad way of wickedness and perdition. Through the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of their hearts, mankind choose the ways of error and sin. As they advance in life, they are emboldened, by the multitude of transgressors and the delusions and vanities of the world,

to err from the ways of God and to harden their hearts from his fear. God instructs, intreats and warns sinners to repent and turn to him for life: He says "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" The Lord Jesus Christ says, "Come unto me, all ye, who labor and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." God pleads with sinners, not only by the multitude of his tender mercies and most gracious promises; but also by the terrors of his wrath. He says, "Thinkest thou, O man,—that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man, that doeth evil." Such are the instructions, the promises and threatenings, which God urges on sinners, through the name and blood of Jesus Christ, by the truth and grace of the Divine Spirit. Though they may now refuse to believe and obey his truth, they will be obliged to hear the supreme and final judge say to the wicked, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; prepared for the devil and his angels." And he says, "They shall go away into everlasting punishment."

11. From the instructions which God gives us by the faith, the choice and conduct of Moses, Christians ought to be encouraged and animated to live by faith. So far as Christians do not live by faith, they act under the influence of error and deceit. By such conduct they depart from God, incur his displeasure and subject themselves to his faithful and fearful reproofs and chastisements. The only way to prevent these evils is to increase their faith: and to live, by the light of divine truth, in the holy fear and true love of God. For the saints in Rome the apostle offers the following prayer: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit." The only way for Christians to be filled with all joy and peace and to abound in hope is to know and believe and practice the truth. If they would be raised above themselves and above the world, they must be taught and learn to see God in his infinite and eternal purposes, in the majesty, glory and beauty of his perfections and in the everlasting and ever increasing advancement of his holy and blessed kingdom. If Christians decline from the truth in their sentiments and affections, they will depart from the commands of God in their words and deeds. Then they will involve themselves in darkness and temptations; and they will bring reproach and contempt on the gospel, which they profess to believe and obey. If they are unwilling, ashamed, or afraid to labor and suffer for Christ and his kingdom, they will turn from the pure doctrines and holy duties of the gospel. If they keep themselves in the love of God, by the love of the truth in their hearts, they will, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may

grow by it. As they grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they will walk in "the path of the just, which is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." By the light of truth, Moses formed a wise and happy choice and lived a holy and useful life. By this light, they, who have gone from earth to heaven, have walked in the path of truth and peace.—But how many professors of religion now walk in the darkness of error and the madness of sin! To such persons may be applied the words of the apostle, who says, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."—Are you, who profess religion, in no danger? Are you not in great and constant danger?—True faith is your only safety.—It is written, "This is the victory, that overcometh the world, even our faith." We ought most faithfully to obey the exhortation of the apostle, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

Providence, 3d May, 1822, first written—revised 15th June, 1858.

NOTE.—In the discourse on the official character of Dr. Emmons is the following statement: "At home, it was his common practice to have but one subject and one text for the Sabbath. In the first part of the day, he stated, explained and proved the doctrine of his sermon, which was, so far, wholly written. In the afternoon he improved the subject, which he had illustrated in the morning, commonly with nothing written, but the simple statement of the inferences, observations, reflections and remarks, which he derived from the doctrine for practical purposes; and which flowed from his lips and from his heart, like rivers of living water from the fountain of life. His method gave him, in every discourse the advantages of a sermon correctly written; and also the freedom and fire of extemporaneous instruction."

This method was not peculiar to Dr. Emmons. Often, on the conclusion of the doctrinal illustration in the forenoon, some remarks were made, on special occasions, as the administration of the eucharist, or of the ordinance of Baptism, or the admission of members to the Church; while the usual improvement and application of the subject were referred to the afternoon.

This account will show the reasons for which the remarks, in the preceding discourse, were distinguished by A. M. and P. M.

ADDRESS TO THE NEW-ENGLAND CHURCHES.

The Saviour God, whose throne is high,
Beholds your sinful ways ;
His sword is fixed upon his thigh,
Yet still he offers peace.

“Two hundred years, my name ye ’ve known,
And richly shared my grace ;
Yet now your sins provoke my frown,
Your lies my soul displease.

Turn, then, at my rebuke ; return,
While yet my vengeance stays ;
Repent in truth, your folly mourn ;
Then peaceful be your days.

My truth ye ’ve known and long professed ;
But yet ye ’ve faithless been ;
My richest blessings ye ’ve possessed ;
Yet turned my grace to sin.

My last demand, ye churches, hear ;
Your sins and lies forsake ;
Or, soon in judgment, I declare,
Your lovely crown I ’ll break.

My cries, my tears, my blood you scorn ;
And can my mercy wait ?
Turn then to me, ye churches, turn—
Or know your dreadful fate.

My faithful teachers, never faint ;
I know your heavy sighs ;
I ’ll hear and answer your complaint ;
I ’ll help, though nature dies.

My faithful children, watch and pray ;
Your watchful pastors hear ;
The proud shall know the woeful day,
Which they declare is near.

My name, my word, my day revere ;
The rights of man regard ;
Trust in my grace with holy fear,
While sinners I reward.”

THOMAS WILLIAMS.

Providence, July 1, 1858.

THE CHRISTIAN WARRIOR.

EPH. VI: 10, 20.

Jesus, my God, the war proclaims,
 And calls his warriors by their names ;
 " Behold your foes on every side,
 Their arms, their strength, their rage and pride.

Stand in my strength ; and in my name
 Put every hateful foe to shame ;
 Satan with all his wiles oppose,
 Though floods and flames your way enclose."

His piercing voice with joy I hear,
 I see his face, I feel no fear ;
 By his dear cross I'll firmly stand,
 'Till Satan falls in every land.

My loins I gird with sacred truth,
 No lie shall issue from my mouth ;
 My breast I guard with righteousness,
 My feet are shod with holy peace.

Strong faith in God, my shield shall be,
 To quench the darts they cast at me ;
 Hope, as an helmet, keeps my head,
 And strikes my foes with shame and dread.

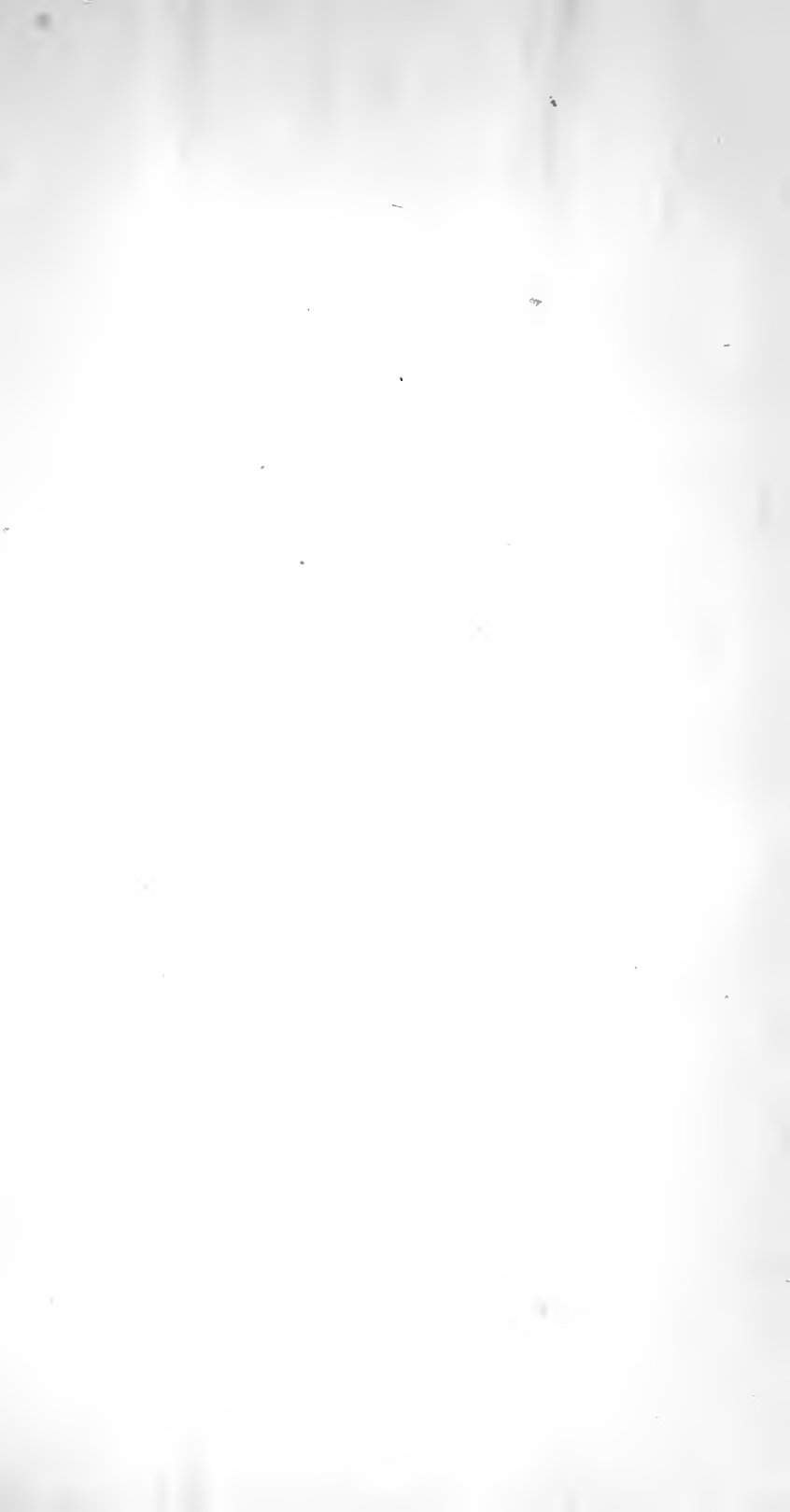
I boldly take the word of God,
 It is the Spirit's two-edged sword ;
 With this I'll slay my stubborn foes,
 Though earth and hell their strength oppose.

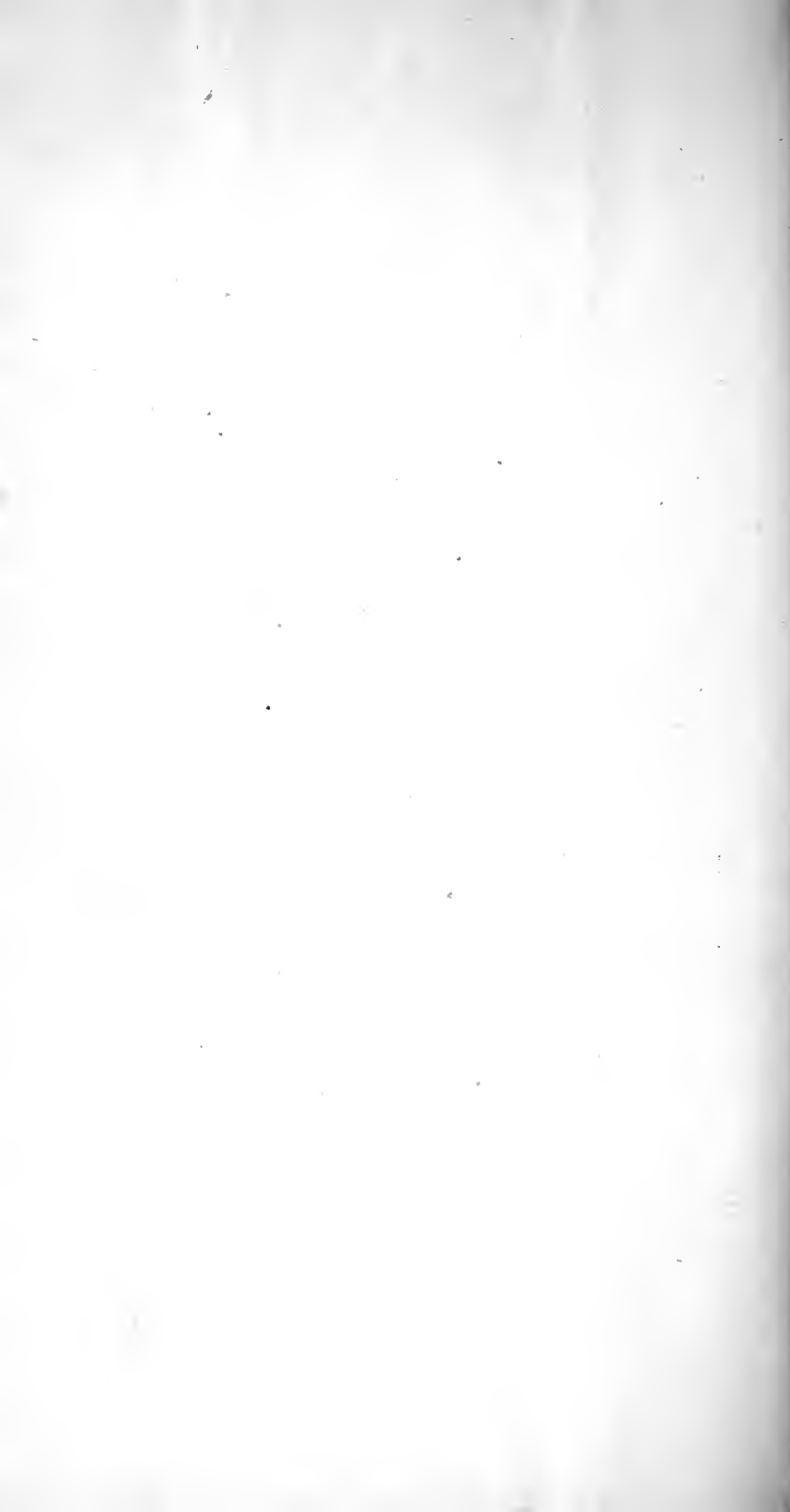
Thus armed, to God in constant prayer,
 I cry, to save me in this war ;
 To God I cry for every saint,
 That none may in the battle faint.

His ministers my prayers demand,
 That bold and faithful they may stand ;
 With strength and zeal his doctrine teach,
 And through the world his gospel preach.

This bloody conflict soon will close,
 The Church shall triumph o'er her foes :
 The earth shall own her God and King,
 And every tongue his praises sing.

T. W.





27

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

