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# P R E F A C E

BY

THE PRESENT EDITOR.

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THE following Essay and Sermons were published, by subscription, soon after the Author's death, and were honored with as respectable a list of subscribers, as any work now extant. Mr. DE COURCY was so worthy a man, so distinguished a Christian, and so excellent a preacher, that we need not wonder, that all who had the happiness of his acquaintance, or enjoyed the benefit of his public ministry, wished to have, in their possession, some memorial of so valuable a friend. Mr. De C.'s views of the gospel were truly evangelicā, the Parishioners of Saint Alkmond enjoyed the unspeakable advantage of a faithful ministrātion of the word of life; for, what he himself

“tasted and felt, and handled,” of the good word of God, the preacher, with much zeal, affection and earnestness, recommended to others: the devotions of the desk and the instructions of the pulpit were not at variance; but, the one explained, elucidated and enforced the other, wherever this great man officiated. The attention of hearers, of all descriptions, was sure to be arrested, by the importance of the doctrines on which he insisted, the clearness with which he defended them, and the fervor with which they were enforced: his labors were abundantly blessed; and multitudes, we hope, will appear as his “crown of rejoicing,” another day.

When the present proprietors (who are also the publishers) of the work, first contemplated its republication, it was both their wish and intention to gratify the religious public with a memoir of the Author, and arrangements were made for that purpose; but a friend of the deceased expressed a wish, that it might not be carried into execution: it is therefore withheld.

Happy would it be for the Christian Church, if all who officiate at her altars could “give as

full proof of their ministry." Mr. De. C. has not only ably vindicated "the peculiar doctrines of the gospel," but he has shown, in a very masterly manner, that those who claim to themselves the title of gospel-ministers, are the only persons who preach according to the 39 Articles, and that, instead of being the enemies of the Establishment, are its only *consistent* friends and its most able defenders. Having, "cordially and without mental reservation, equivocation or disguise," signed the Articles, and declared his "assent and consent to all and every thing they contain," and being convinced, after the most serious investigation and earnest prayer, that the doctrines of the Church of England *are* the doctrines of the gospel, he would have accused himself of hypocrisy and wickedness, had he not founded all his services upon those important truths, which are found both in the Bible and the Prayer-book. And, it is asked, What churches are so well attended, as those in which the pure word of God is preached? What clergymen are so truly exemplary in their conduct, as those who are termed "evangelical

ministers? and, What congregations are so ready to every good word and work," as those who attend such preachers? Immoral, antichristian shepherds scatter the flock; the pious pastor, by his truly evangelical labors, keeps them in the fold. When persons leave the Established Church, it is, in a great majority of instances, because they cannot receive *there* "the true bread of life," and their souls hunger and thirst after *that*, which they cannot find, *where* they would otherwise willingly attend. Let the established clergy preach the gospel, and they will have no cause to complain of increasing Sectaries.\* Of the first edition, very few copies (more than were subscribed for) being printed, the present publishers presume that they are performing an office very acceptable to the religious public, in presenting them with a new edition of a volume of sermons pos-

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\* See an excellent little piece, just published, entitled, "Remarks on the Present State of the Established Church, and the Increase of Protestant Dissenters."

sessing every recommendation which such a work *can* have. Here will be found the purest doctrines expressed in the most eloquent and glowing language, and enforced with all the ardor of the Christian Minister. Feeling their immense importance, and being fully convinced that “the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes it,” Mr. De C. “has not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God;” he has preached the doctrines of the gospel practically, and enforced its duties evangelically; he has rescued the scripture-doctrines from the false imputation, that “the grace of God leads to licentiousness;” he has described Christian faith, not only in its nature, but in its effects; he has shown, how the grace of God operates on the heart, and is productive of the peaceable fruits of holy obedience. If modern infidels possessed sufficient candor, to read the “Essay on Pure and undefiled Religion,” they must be convinced, that the love of God and Jesus Christ is the only source of purity of morals, that every species of morality which has not this

foundation, is superficial in its nature and uncertain in its operation ; while he has also shown, that the heart which is enlightened by the Spirit of God, and purified by the Spirit of Christ, will be the seat of every holy and heavenly temper.

The present Editor, who is totally unconnected with the family of the deceased, is far from thinking that Mr. De C.'s works need any recommendation from *him*. They speak for themselves ; they need only to be known in order to be admired ; for they will always be read with both pleasure and profit, so long as evangelical piety, fervent devotion and genuine godliness, have any charms in the estimation of the servants of Christ.

*London, May, 1810.*

# P R E F A C E

TO

THE FIRST EDITION.

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THE following discourses, which were found among the manuscripts of the Author after his decease, will, no doubt, be extremely acceptable to those, who have been accustomed to hear the word of truth from his lips, and who, engaged by his eloquence, and won by his entreaties, have, through the influence of divine grace, which he never failed to inculcate as the source of all holy desires, dedicated themselves to God through Jesus Christ, and become wise unto salvation.

As the copies were written delicately fair, and with wonderful accuracy, no pains were requisite to decipher, no labor was wanted to correct them; so that the reader has, in this volume, the genuine works of him, whose name it bears;\* and, whatever he may think of

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\* Except in the introductory Essay, to which a few sentences have been added to finish the contrast drawn between the righteous and the wicked, which evidently wanted a conclusion. Intimation of this is given in its proper place.

the doctrines which it contains, I am much mistaken, if he will not be struck with admiration at the fertility of imagination, the force of argument, and the uncommon elegance of language, which are herein displayed. But, let him take heed, that his attention be not too much engaged by the gay flowers of oratory ; let him compare what he here finds written with the scriptures of truth, and let him not be in haste, either to censure or approve, till a competent share of divine knowledge, and a thorough acquaintance with the work itself, enable him to decide, with some appearance of justice, on its merits.

I feel the more inclined to recommend this advice, from the impression, which a *cursor*y view of the following discourses made upon my mind ; for, wishing to pay all possible respect to the memory of my deceased friend, no sooner was the idea of a publication suggested, than I volunteered my services to carry it through all its stages, not thinking, at the moment, of any difficulties, which might occur in the accomplishment of the design. Not many hours, I believe, elapsed, before I began to consider, that some degree of responsibility attached to me as an Editor, and that I was bound not to make known to the world any sentiments, of which I did not thoroughly approve ; at least, not without offering an antidote for the evil,



which they might occasion. Under this persuasion, though extremely reluctant to obtrude myself on the public notice, or to provoke controversy from the Author's admirers, I sat down with the determination not to let a sentence pass unregarded, which I did not conceive to be strictly conformable to the word of God. Accordingly, when I had perused a *few* discourses I wrote my animadversions freely; but when I had read and considered *all* with more minute attention, I found that several of my objections were levelled against *words* and *phrases*, and that, though I choose to express myself upon some points differently from the Author, we were perfectly agreed in the principal doctrines of the Christian dispensation. This being the case, I have thought it sufficient to refer the reader to his *Bible*, the standard of truth and orthodoxy; and though, among the variety of opinions which distract the Christian world, he may conceive it to be almost impossible to find the road to glory, yet I will venture to assure him, the word of Christ authorizing me to do so, if his *eye be single his whole body shall be full of light*; Mat. vi. 22; i. e. he shall be able clearly to discern the way of salvation; for the Sun of Righteousness shall dispel the mists of error, and gradually diffusing his beams over the soul, shall shine more and more, even to the full splendor of the perfect day.

As I firmly believe, that the following discourses, read with candor and attention, are likely to be productive of much good, I shall here take the liberty of obviating the objections, which may be made to one point of doctrine, which forms a prominent feature in the whole. I allude to the justification of a sinner by the *imputed righteousness* of Jesus Christ. This doctrine, as it is expressed in one or two passages, might induce a *hasty* reader to throw aside the book, and condemn it severely as leading to licentiousness. But, I can assure him, that the late Vicar of Saint Almond admitted no such consequences; and I only request him to read attentively all the discourses in this volume, and he will be convinced that what has been written upon that subject is neither designed to set aside the necessity of self-examination, nor of personal holiness. As a proof of the former, I beg leave to refer him more particularly to Sermon VI. p. 240; and of the latter, to the whole of Sermon II. upon the dedication of the heart to God; in which, as well as in several others, he will find the most forcible exhortations to maintain purity of heart, and to abound in the practice of every good work; insomuch, that if he should take occasion, from any thing here written, to sin, that grace may abound, let him recollect, that he will meet the Author before the judgment-seat of Christ, where

he must render an account for his perversion and want of candor, as well as for all his other crimes.

But not only upon this, but also upon other subjects handled in these discourses, there have been, and still are, great diversities of sentiment among divines, not merely among such as are skilful in controversy, and void of the spirit of heavenly love, but among others, who are warmly attached to the cause of Christ, who labor much in the word and doctrine, and whose piety, humility, and other graces, evidently prove that they are born from above, and live under the continued influence of the spirit of holiness. These, conceiving the several systems, which they have embraced, to be most conducive to the glory of God, set them forth with all the eloquence and argument of which they are capable; and sometimes, it must be confessed, in their zeal to defend the truth, forget the candor, which is due to persons, who are equally zealous with themselves, and who may, perhaps, have a larger share of that divine love, which forms the best Christian, though he may be far from making the most able disputant. That which constitutes the essence of Christianity appears to me to be comprised within 'a very small compass. "The law" is "our school-master, to bring us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith:"

Gal. iii. 24; and faith, working by love, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, gives us a disposition to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. This, I repeat it, appears to me to be the essence of Christianity; but, as the talents and capacities of men are various, as there is a constitutional peculiarity in every individual, and as education, custom, and connexions, conspire to constitute the character, it must be expected that truth will be exhibited in divers manners, not always in its native beauty and simplicity, but clothed with the gaudy decorations of human wisdom and philosophy, about which, and not about the truth itself, contentions may arise, to the great grief and concern of every sincere and pacific disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It has been thought proper to introduce the following Discourses with an Essay, found also among the Author's papers, entitled, *Pure and undefiled Religion, delineated in its Nature, Influence, Fruits, Evidences, and Consummation*. Though no text be prefixed to it, yet it seems to have been originally designed for the pulpit, and to have been written when the subject of negro emancipation first engaged the attention of Parliament. It is unnecessary in this place to point out

its excellencies ; suffice it to say, that every friend of *Pure and Undefined Religion* will rejoice that so valuable a treatise was not disregarded, and consigned, with various unfinished Essays, to oblivion.

THE EDITOR.



P U R E  
AND  
UNDEFILED RELIGION,  
DELINEATED  
IN ITS

NATURE,  
INFLUENCE,  
FRUITS,



EVIDENCES,  
AND  
CONSUMMATION.

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“ RELIGION! thou the soul of happiness ;  
And groaning Calvary of thee ! There shine  
The noblest truths ; there strongest motives sting ;  
There sacred violence assaults the soul ;  
There nothing but compulsion is forborne.”

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

Its advocates have not been in general either “many, or mighty, or noble, or wise, according to this world;” but, on the contrary, riches, strength, philosophy, and opulence, have distinguished its enemies. Hypocrisy hath assumed its mask, to give religion its deepest reproach, to wound it in the house of its friends, and to arm its adversaries with plausible objections. And yet, amidst all the attempts of men of different complexions, to destroy or deny its existence, to abuse or blaspheme its doctrines, to pervert its nature, to divest it of its essence, or to obscure its lustre; still, religion is a glorious reality, and, like its divine Author, from whom it derives its origin and influence, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. An attempt, at least, to illustrate, if not to prove this position, is the design of the following pages. The arrangement I propose, is, to consider religion in its *origin*, its *foundation*, its *nature*, its *influence*, its *fruits*, and *evidences*; and recommend it, principally from a consideration of its *importance*, its *consolations*, its *loveliness*, its *end*, and *prospects*.

1. As to the *origin* of religion, it requires little argument to prove it divine. As the very word itself implies something that binds the heart under the strongest ties of love, homage, and obedience to the Supreme Being; what can produce this disposition, and give force to those



obligations, but that system of infinite grace which God himself revealed unto man immediately after the fall? which, in subsequent and brighter discoveries, formed the basis, and invigorated the principles of that religion, which distinguished the character of Old Testament saints, and afterwards attained its meridian lustre under the clear economy of the gospel, and in the lives of that noble army of martyrs; the history of whose sanctity, sufferings, and conquests, even unto death, is, in fact, the history of true religion exemplified in its influence, its origin, and its triumphs.

It is an established maxim of revelation, that "all things are of God." No one doubts, but the credulous atheist, whether the universe be the result of his power. But the Creator of the universe and the great Author of our religion, is one and the same agent. John, i. 1. The former was created and arranged by Omnipotence, and the latter no less required the exertions of that attribute of Deity. The heavens declare his glory, as Creator. In religion, considered as a plan of redeeming mercy, shines "the glory of his grace." The firmament, with all the orbs that move there, according to the rules of the most systematic contrivance, and regular though amazingly swift rotation, deciphers his wisdom. But it is in the plan of redemption that "the

*manifold* wisdom of God” is more illustriously and advantageously displayed. Religion, considered as a system, applying itself to the state of man, not as in innocence, but under the ruin of the fall, is entirely of God. Man had no hand in forming it, nature no power in executing it. It equally surpassed, in every point of view, the expectations and the desert, the wisdom and power, of man. Considered in its renovating and practical tendency, as a system of morals, its origin is equally of God. This appears from the various representations of the purity of its precepts, as well as from the expressive epithets given to it in the sacred scriptures. It is called “the wisdom that is *from above*,—the kingdom of heaven,—the new *creation*,—the being born from above,—the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness, &c.—the fruits of the spirit,” &c. If union to Christ be the root of true religion, and good works its fruit, both are from God. “OF HIM are ye in Christ Jesus.” 1 Cor. i. 30. “We are HIS *workmanship* created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Ephes. ii. 10. From whence we may deduce this scripture axiom; that religion, doctrinally or practically considered, is, as to its original, the offspring of heaven, and the sole glorious work of Him,” *by whom, through whom, and to whom, are ALL THINGS.*”

2. The *foundation* of religion. This foundation the scriptures have expressly laid in the life and death of him who was the Mediator of the new covenant, having been made, as a *surety*, responsible for the performance of its grand and awful stipulations. "Behold," says Jehovah, "I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." Isa. xxviii. 16. 1 Pet. ii. 6. "Other foundation can no man lay," says St. Paul, "than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. iii. 11. This foundation, when it is laid in the heart by FAITH, which produces a dependence on the salvation of the Son of God, becomes the only basis of the sinner's hopes, and forms within him a living and permanent principle of real godliness. Convinced of the evil of sin, and justly apprehensive of suffering its awful penalty, as a transgressor of the law, he looks for relief from his fears, and pardon for his offences, to "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Whatever is not built on this foundation may satisfy the conscience and comport with the religion of that man, who never saw his guilt in the mirror of God's law; but every hope not founded on the Redeemer's righteousness will prove infinitely presumptuous and dangerous, and nothing give peace to the conscience, but what secures the

honour of the broken law, and provides an adequate satisfaction for the inflexible justice of Heaven; and nothing can do either, but the atoning blood of Jesus Christ applied by faith in that gospel testimony, which declares, that he who shed it, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, and presented himself on the cross a sin-atoning victim to Almighty God. However, therefore, we may admit the dictates of candour respecting some points of "doubtful disputation," and embrace in Christian love the differing parties respectively; we can never give up the doctrine of the atonement, without yielding up to our adversaries, at the same time, the very essence of truth, the glory of the gospel, and the only foundation of our hopes and prospects for ever. Nay, we may boldly affirm, that the scheme of religion that is not formed upon this plan, wants every thing essential to the glory of the divine perfections, and every thing that can consistently secure the peace and salvation of man, as a sinner. All the opponents of this truth, who choose to discriminate themselves by names flattering to their pride, or declarative of their attachment to some stale and long-exploded heresy, are in the same predicament with Jews and Greeks; the basis of whose religion was pride and self-righteousness. What men call natural religion, rational religion, or

New Jerusalem doctrine—those pompous schemes of human contrivance, emblazoned with glittering epithets to catch the unwary, and only suited to the wild fancy of visionaries and deists—I say, what men thus call religion, if not founded on the propitiation and righteousness of the Son of God, is the religion of Satan, and must lead to his kingdom. For, how that system, which leaves out the infinite virtue of the death of Jesus, as an expiation for sin, can ever bring a man to heaven, I cannot conceive, when I find it written, “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin,” when that is denied or degraded, “but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment.” Heb. x. 26, 27. So that, as true religion is in its origin of God, who planned its system, and plants its celestial seed in the heart; so, in its foundation, it is equally divine, being built on the knowledge of Christ crucified, and “through faith in his blood.” Rom. iii. 25.

3. The *nature* and *influence* of religion demand our next consideration. To judge accurately both of the one and the other, it will be necessary to abstract whatever is circumstantial, external, nominal, or adventitious, and to confine our ideas to that which is essential and intrinsic. And in this disquisition, we only act by the same rule, which we observe when forming a judgment of the real worth of an individual.

We leave out the accidents of birth, office, titles, fortune, and form our idea of the man from his mind, from the state of his heart, from his virtuous excellence. Any other mode of forming an estimate of characters in a moral point of view, only tends to confound our ideas, and leads to a servile admiration of what is neither great nor excellent in itself: which lays the foundation of all the false homage men often pay to profligacy and meanness, because they happen to be titled and rich. Apply this to religion. We cannot form a true estimate of its nature from the pomp and dignities with which the profession of it is invested in some of its ostensible patrons; nor from any external forms, however excellent in themselves, if men rest in them, and go no farther. Forms no more constitute religion, than the external trappings of rank and retinue constitute the man. On the contrary, St. Paul classes with the very worst of characters, those, “who have only the form of godliness, but deny its *power*.” 2 Tim. iii. 5. So does the prophet Isaiah, when describing those who “drew nigh to God and honoured him with their lips, while their *hearts* were FAR FROM him,” Isa. xxix. 13; though in the language of pomp and delusion they vainly boasted, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.” True religion is the religion of the

*heart.* For God is a spirit; and they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Solomon describes its nature, when he demands, in the name of Jehovah, "My son, give me thy *heart.*" Prov. xxiii. 26. So does St. Paul, who says, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink," does not consist in outward things, "but is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. xiv. 17. And again, when endeavouring to undeceive the Jews, who were blind on this very point, he says, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one *inwardly*, and circumcision is that of the *heart*, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God." Rom. ii. 28, 29. Forms may be excellent; the means of grace are necessary, and of divine institution. They are however but means, and operate, through the blessing of God, as the transparent medium does, which admits the light of the sun into a place of worship. But he who rests in them, and supposes a regular attendance upon them to be the whole of what is required in religious homage, thinks and acts as absurdly as a man, who, trusting to a transparent medium still to give him light, after the sun had quitted the horizon and ceased to illuminate the hemi-

sphere, should find himself involved in the darkness of night. A sad but true emblem of the situation of the sinner, whose heart is not given up to God and changed by his grace; who sits down contented with the formalities of religion, though in the "region and shadow of death," till death dissolves the delusion, and consigns him to the blackness of darkness for ever.

When we say that religion is the religion of the heart, we mean to extend our description of its nature far beyond outward form, or mere moral decency. Religion includes morality, but it comprehends *much more*. A sinner may be outwardly moral, and inwardly immoral, as the pharisees were, full of self-righteousness, pride, love of the world, and hypocrisy. The civilization produced by morality alone, is like the whitening of a sepulchre, which is full of rotteness *within*. Our Lord's advice to such characters among the Jews, was, "cleanse *first* that which is *WITHIN*." The essential characteristics of the religion of the heart, are *faith, humility, and love*: the first of these graces, leading the renewed sinner to eye nothing for the justification of his person before God, or the peace of his conscience, but the complete work of Jesus finished on the cross; the second, making him abhor himself and repent as in dust and ashes;



and the third, prompting him to love, with a supreme and ardent affection, that gracious God, who hath loved him in his Son; and to whom, from that sacred and noble principle, he wishes heart and life to be solemnly and unreservedly consecrated. But, in the religion of a mere moralist, these three graces make no constituent part. *His* faith is dead, being made up of speculation, and some general notions, without any regard to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His humility, if he pretend to any, is feigned, or consists in condescending to let the Redeemer have a *share* in the honour of his salvation. And his love, having no gospel root, is servile, or imaginary, or absolutely false, not springing from a sense of the pure love of God to sinners in his crucified Son. In short, he has every thing of religion but its essence. And, wanting that, nothing remains in his possession to boast of, but the shadow, and the form; whereas, religion itself is a sacred flame kindled at the cross of Christ; which, while contemplating the love that bound him there, has, like the living creatures in St. John's vision, Rev. iv. "eyes within," to view with sorrow the fallen and guilty nature, which requires his blood to cleanse it, and his love to conquer. A sight that softens the heart, and diffuses throughout all its powers a sense of the love of God, the strongest incen-

tive to gratitude and obedience. Hence, a celebrated Christian poet of our own says,

“ Talk they of morals ? O thou bleeding love !  
Thou Maker of new morals to mankind !  
The grand morality is love of thee !”

4. In describing the *influence* of religion, we mean not to extend it so far as to suppose it extirpates every vestige of the fall, or destroys all the relicks of human frailty. It is not the religion of angels, nor of “ the spirits of just men made perfect,” but the religion of the soul imprisoned in the body, and embarrassed by that enclosure, in the exertion of its faculties, that is the subject of our consideration. It is the religion of sinners, saved by grace ; and, as sinners, to the very last moment of life, depending upon grace alone : in whom, amidst their various conflicts, and numberless infirmities, it nevertheless produces the most surprising effects. Observe its influence on the heart of a sinner. It softens what was obdurate as the rock, and fixes what was inconstant as the wind ; arrests the fugitive in his flight from the ways of God, and brings the once profligate prodigal back to his father’s house with a heart pierced with sorrow for past transgressions, and more deeply still by a sense of the love that pardons them. It makes the stout-hearted tremble before the majesty and

power of Jehovah, and constrains the abandoned to give up the most beloved lusts. It produces greater wonder still, in obliging the pharisee to give up his self-righteousness, and the formalist to trust no longer in his forms. It can light up a sacred flame in the breasts that had been frozen with formality, and dilate with sentiments of pure benevolence a heart long contracted by self-complacency or worldly-mindedness. It bursts the bonds of the captive who had been "tied and bound with the chain of his sins;" and makes the self-conceited rationalist, who is no less a captive than the profligate, to sit down, Mary-like, at the feet of Jesus, in the character of a pupil, a novitiate, a fool. It pours the balm of comfort into the breast of the afflicted, tempted mourner, and makes "the bones that had been broken to rejoice." Psal. li. What was it that so instantaneously stopped Saul in his career of cruelty and persecution, and changed a blasphemer into a preacher of the faith, which once he destroyed? What was it that brought Magdalen, a prostitute, to bathe the feet of Jesus with tears of penitence and joy, and to wipe them with the hairs of her head? What was it that tore Zaccheus from an occupation of worldly-mindedness and extortion, and disposed him to make restitution, and to give half his goods to the poor? What was it that made

Paul and Silas sing praises to God, though smarting under the lashes they had received, and when confined to a loathsome prison? that kept Stephen composed, and filled him with rapturous views of the glory of God, even when his murderers were taking his life; and that enabled those pious heroes of antiquity, mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to perform so many wonders? It was the *sovereign* influence of religion in the first instance, its *softening* and *converting* power in the second, its *expanding* efficacy in the third, and its *victorious* operation in the last.

Mark the influence of religion on society. It is the grand cement of pure and permanent friendship among individuals; is the great preservative against disorder and discord in families; is the sacred bond of union in the assemblies of the righteous; the only safe guarantee of the faith of nations; the healer of divisions; the sovereign peace-maker between contending parties; and the most powerful antidote against strife, animosity, and revenge, and all the other vindictive and turbulent passions, that disquiet the breasts of individuals, break the bonds of domestic tranquillity, or disturb the peace of nations. "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" says St. James: From religion? No, from the want of it. "Come they not

hence? even from your lusts that war in your members." Were religion but universally known, and the empire of the Prince of Peace as extensive as the dominion of pride and secular power, of ambition and revenge, we should then see all the belligerent powers of the earth "beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks," and wars of every kind cease for ever.

5. The *evidences* of religion. Religion, when possessing its sacred empire in the heart, is in scripture called by different names, according to the different faculties which it governs, or the passions respectively which it controls. In the understanding, it is light; in the affections, love; in the will, acquiescence and submission. In the passions of the renewed mind, it is the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom; the hope that maketh not ashamed; the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory; the holy shame that covers the soul with overwhelming awe in a view of the presence and condescension of God; the peace that passeth all understanding. Under crosses, it is patience; under affronts and injuries, meekness; under persecution and losses for Christ's sake, fortitude and resignation; in prosperity, humbleness of mind; in adversity, spiritual support; in death, triumph. Considered in a complex point

of view, either as implying the commencement of the divine power that produces, or the progressive influence of the grace that advances, that assemblage of the fruits of the Spirit, which form religion into a sort of bright constellation; it is, the new birth, sanctification, the divine life, the image of God restored, the soul's union to Christ, and a growing meetness for the everlasting inheritance of the saints in light.

Religion, when it can produce tempers so sacred, and so benign, must necessarily display its nature in a course of external evidence before the world. Being in its effects "pure," and preserving him who is the subject of it "undefiled" from the corruptions that are in the world, it must necessarily teach us to live "righteously, soberly, and godly," amidst every temptation to injustice, intemperance, and impiety, to which we are every day exposed; as well as provide for the laws by which every relation in social life ought to be governed, from the prince and subject, down to the very lowest ranks of subordinate characters. But let us attend to the particular evidence adduced by St. James. "Pure religion and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Of all the situations, which the calamities of life distinguish among

the sons and daughters of affliction, none could be more to the apostle's purpose, than that of the orphan and the widow; and none more apposite, as an evidence of true religion, than to visit *such*. The state of the orphan is greatly to be pitied, as being destitute of the guide of his youth, and deprived by a premature stroke of him, to whom nature directs him to look up as to his guardian and support; in a world too, in a passage through which, youth stands so much in need of all that a wise and tender father can do for his offspring. The widow is an object of still greater commiseration; who, besides the affliction of having been bereft of her dearest earthly friend, is left to struggle alone with the difficulties of a family and of the world, to educate with maternal solicitude the party that became an orphan by the same calamity which made her a widow, and to suffer an affliction, which is the more poignant, as her sex, age, and the tender relation in which she had been placed, would contribute to make her feel more sensibly the loss, to which the orphan seldom adverts. These are the parties, whom pure and undefiled religion enjoins us to visit; not for the purpose of mere form or curiosity, but for the purpose of administering actual relief, and mingling with the acts of beneficence the counsel and consolations, which the religion of Jesus inspires. But

how few love to make *such* visits! and how fewer still, to make them in *this* style! Had our apostle made it a mark of religion to frequent scenes of dissipation, to run the round of worldly pleasure, to mix with each convivial assembly, and to visit only the house of laughter and levity, what multitudes would put in their claim to religion and to the recompense annexed to it! But let not the sons and daughters of dissipation deceive themselves. Religion seeks different society, loves different pleasures, visits the abodes of wretchedness and sorrow, and prefers the house of mourning, where it can shew its sympathy, impart its benefits, and learn lessons suited to the condition of suffering and short lived humanity, above all the gilded scenes of earthly splendor. And we may be bold to say, that if the pleasure-taker could, from the highest style of sensual indulgence, prove, that he tasted delight in any degree equal to that, which *he* feels, who makes the "widow's heart to dance for joy;" we would then leave him in peaceable possession of the amusements that engross his time. But as he can never possibly prove it, we must mortify him in the midst of his gratifications, by telling him, that he who liveth in pleasure is "dead while he liveth;" dead to the life of religion and to the offices of real humanity; and that there is an



awful day approaching, in which the Judge of heaven and earth shall say to sinners of a certain description, "In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me."

But humanity and charity do not constitute the whole of religion. Something more is required; and that is, that a man "keep himself unspotted from the world." The christian character, or the conversation of a true believer, is, according to scripture metaphor, represented under the emblem of a white garment; the color denoting purity and glory. They who walk consistently with their profession, are described as not sullyng the purity of it. So our Lord says of some in the church of Sardis, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." Rev. iii. 4. Perhaps the allusion in both places is made to the custom of arraying, as the word signifies, all candidates for offices, as among the Romans, in white robes. Christians are candidates for glory. They are adorned in the white garment of Christ's righteousness for their justification before God; Rev. iii. 5; and they wear the sacred robe of personal holiness, as the justification of their character before men. The former is incapable of defilement, and is that

“ fine linen, clean and white, in which the bride, the Lamb’s wife,” is to be adorned in the grand solemnization of her nuptials in the last day. The latter, when under the inspection of omniscience, and compared with the extensive purity of the law, requires to be “ washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.” Rev. viii. 14. It is this last robe, the Christian’s walk and character, which it is incumbent upon him to keep unspotted from the world. And as a white garment shews any accidental defilement on it sooner and more conspicuously, than one of a different color; this application of the emblem points out the greater necessity of watching against every inconsistency, that would disgrace his profession and bring his character into suspicion. The world watches for his halting, and will be ready upon every occasion to impute faults where there are none, and to aggravate and triumph in real ones. If defamation, false charges, misrepresentations, untruths, could really blot the Christian’s garment, it would be never white. But the blackening of the wicked in this respect, is all their own. Happy and blessed the Christian, who, when “ the world says all manner of evil of him,” proves by his conduct, that it is “ falsely for Christ’s sake.” But it is not from hence that his principal danger arises. The world is less to be feared when it frowns,

than when it smiles ; and many a professor, who has stood firm in the midst of opposition, has been lugged to death by caresses. In short, he, who is truly wise, will consider the world as a hostile country, in which the enemy of his soul has spread ten thousand snares for the purpose of alluring to destruction. The whole armour of God, and all the power of grace, will be requisite to guard and keep him amidst such innumerable dangers as compass him about. The power, which the world has of accommodating its baits and changing its temptations, will demand the exertion of every grace of the christian soldier. His experience will instruct him when to resist, and when to flee ; when to exercise caution, and when to summon up fortitude. Sometimes he will be in danger of loving the world ; at other times, of fearing it too much. “ The course of this world ” being totally opposite to the word of God, and its principles, maxims, and amusements, tending to promote error, vanity, and sin, he will often recollect the words of Solomon, “ Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned ? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned ? So he that goeth in to his neighbour’s wife ; whosoever toucheth her, shall not be innocent.” Prov. vi. 27, 29. And he will pray with David, “ Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, let

them not have dominion over me, then I shall be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." Psal. xix. 13. The words of St. Paul too, warn and animate him. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the *unclean thing*, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

But it is not only from the spots of gross criminality, or the commission of flagrant offences, that religion teaches us to keep ourselves pure and undefiled. Even the smallest approaches to these, or a *temptation* to any, in the secret workings of inward depravity, give the Christian infinitely more pain, than acts of injustice do the fraudulent; a life of unremitted excess, the licentious; or adultery, that epitome of all villanies, the wretch, who, by committing it, gives the most deadly stab to his own reputation, and the deepest wound to his neighbour's peace. An idea in the imagination, a thought, a word, any sudden sally of unguarded temper, that cannot be justified or harboured, without grieving the Holy Spirit, and violating truth, will give him pain, and excite resistance, and produce humiliation. The conscience of the believer being "cleansed from dead works to serve the living God," is susceptible of the

slightest spot; while that, which is totally defiled by long accumulated guilt, feels no uneasy sensation, and sees not its own pollution. Being made the seat of sensibility as well as of purity, the conscience, though wounded with even a slight offence, is like the tender organ of the eye, when only a mote incommodes or lacerates its delicate texture. It makes him weep, and robs him of repose, till that blood which washes out the deepest or the slightest stain of sin, and that Spirit who subdues its power, renew their respective and sovereign influence. This guard against the access of inward defilement, and this gospel mode of cleansing it, are the only safe preservatives from grosser corruptions. Therefore, as the heart, like tinder, is too susceptible of the sparks of temptation, he shuns the converse of those, through whom he might be drawn aside; thinking his character too sacred to be habitually mixed or trusted with the company of the gay and irreligious; and his peace too precious, to be lost by what, in review, must often give so much pain, without the smallest real advantage. Even if there were no other argument to enforce the necessity of keeping ourselves unspotted from the world, this is sufficiently strong and alarming; that that very world, by a sinful conformity to which, men contract guilt and risk salvation,

after having acted as *tempter*, will, like Satan, be the very first to turn *accuser*, and *tormentor*.

The *consolations* of religion. When we recommend the consolations of religion, as an argument to engage men to enter upon the experience and practice of it, we cannot so far delude their hopes, as to insinuate, that it excludes every idea of trouble and conflict, as well as every sensation of sorrow and solicitude. As compared to a warfare, a pilgrimage, a race, religion must, of course, presuppose enemies, who cannot be overcome without fighting; a journey, that cannot be undertaken and completed without difficulties; and a prize, which cannot be won by indolence and inaction.

Every science and art is attended with difficulties; and nothing that is useful and ornamental in the business of life can be acquired without study, and toil, by which the value and pleasure of the acquisition are proportionably increased. Can any persons, then, reasonably expect, that in a world lying in the wicked one, they should meet with no opposition? in a body of sin and death, they should feel no conflicts? that their peace should remain undisturbed by any annoyance from Satan? that no thorns should perplex their path in a wilderness, in which nothing naturally grows but sorrow, sin, and care? and that their head should be hereafter adorned with

an immortal crown, without sustaining one previous cross, or making one sacrifice in their way to it? They cannot suppose this. The great Author of religion says, "Except a man deny himself, take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple. Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Yet, to encourage the diffident, and fix the resolution of the hesitating and the timid, an apostle assures us, that God "hath given everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" to all believers in Christ.

The Lord himself says, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you. In the world you shall have tribulation; but in me, you shall have peace." The unhappiness of mankind arises in general from five principal causes; from guilt in the conscience, tyranny in the passions, want of real enjoyment in what they possess, want of spiritual resource under affliction, and an inordinate love of life, which makes death terrible, and even the thought of it the most imbittering intruder into the human breast. But against all this mass of wretchedness, religion provides an antidote. If we know and follow Christ, he will bring the peace which he purchased on the cross, into our conscience; he will sanctify and govern our passions, and make our heart the seat of his peaceful dominion; the enjoyment of his "favor, which is better

than life," will give a sacred zest to ordinary comforts, and fill up in our soul, a void, which the whole world cannot satisfy ; he will keep us resigned amidst the cares of life, and tranquil in the prospect of its awful close. Life shall have no real bitterness ; sin, no dominion ; the smiling world, no real charms ; and death, no real sting, when we can say, " My beloved is mine, and I am his." Under crosses and adversity, we shall never want a spring of comfort in the salvation of Jesus, nor want a friend, when interested in the love of Him, who drank up the dregs of inexpressible sorrow, that we might partake of the richest ingredients in the cup of gospel consolation. However chequered our scene of life may be in the dispensations of Providence, being made up of joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, crosses and comforts, his grace will enable us to adopt the language of primitive Christianity, and say, " We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed ; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9. As tribulation aboundeth, our consolations in Christ shall much more abound." And as they flow from a source, which is as perennial as it is pure, and are founded upon a basis as firm as the co-



venant and oath of Jehovah, can any language describe the happiness of true religion, when its real votaries can pronounce in faith and experience, the two following sentences of sacred writ? “ Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. We *know* that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

The *loveliness* of religion. Another and most powerful allurements into the ways of religion, is the *loveliness* of its character in those who adorn its profession. St. Paul ranks “ whatsoever things are *lovely* with whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, and of good report.” Phil. iv. 8. And, as true religion is the work of Christ, delineates his image, and is one of the brightest emanations from the glory of the Sun of righteousness, we may say of it, as of its divine Author, that it is “ altogether lovely.” In regulating our opinion, and dilating our ideas on this subject, some caution is necessary, lest we mistake counterfeits for the original, and fall in love with appearances, or even with deformity. Whatever hopes we may entertain of the existence of religion in the hearts of some, who profess it, under great disadvantages, arising from natural temper, prejudices of education,

weakness of capacity, or rusticity of manners; it is not from such that we are to form our idea of what is amiable. Still less are we to draw the portrait from the impertinent sallies of juvenile profession; from the affected look of solemn ignorance; from the affectedly sanctimonious aspect, with all the pharisaic contorsions of features and the grimaces that form it, an apology often for want of genuine sanctity within; not from the starched behaviour and rigid manners, that excite contempt and confirm prejudices; not from the insufferable pomp of illiteracy, assuming the dictator's air, and demanding all that respect, which an humble sense of deficiencies would procure; not from the forbidding brow and sour-address, those terrific guards that some plant around their persons, lest you should approach too near, or make too free with their self-consequence; not from the unfortunate manners of those, who behave as if they thought there should always subsist an irreconcilable variance between the character of a gentleman and that of a Christian; not from the false fire of those, who make an abrupt remark, a haughty air, a pert censure, the marks of religious zeal, and seem to have no more idea of prudence, than if the word was not to be found in the Bible, and the grace itself constituted no part of the christian character. All

these blemishes in religious profession have nothing to do with the loveliness of religion, and in too many instances carry a strong implication of the want of the thing itself. Religion is first pure, then *peaceable*, “*gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits.*” It is modest, unassuming, kind, benevolent. The “law of kindness is in its lips; and, without being servile, fawning, adulatory, or timid, can tincture the manners of a Christian with delicacy, and give to one, who is firm as a rock in his attachment to truth, all imaginable softness and delicacy of address. It dreads clamor, and is equally remote from forwardness and impetuosity. It “bridles the tongue,” and forms that “unruly member” for uttering the dialect of candor, gentleness, and caution. It imparts the wisdom of the serpent without the poison of its subtilty, and the harmlessness of the dove without its timidity. It is discerning, and can explore characters without impertinent curiosity, without any pretensions to prophetic intuition, or any interference with the private concerns of others. It teaches to cultivate friendship from disinterested motives, and to guard it by acts of delicacy and reciprocal generosity; and will enable a Christian to make sacrifices here, when the connexion is manifestly dangerous, whatever may be the consequences arising from the misrepresentations

or slanderous tales of the rejected party. In short, the loveliness of religion and religion itself appear so interwoven with each other, that we cannot in some points of view *separate* them without destroying the very essence of Christianity. Of this, our Lord's sermon upon the mount, and St. Paul's beautiful delineation of charity, that is *love*, in 1 Cor. xiii. afford a striking proof. " Love suffereth long and is kind ; charity envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth (*εσγει* covereth) all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." The close examination of one of these passages made a great man once exclaim, " Either this is not true, or we are not Christians." And, perhaps, were some but to alter the form of the exclamation, by making the first member of the sentence an affirmative, and leaving the last in its negative state, and then apply the whole to themselves, they would utter an awful truth, declarative of the real condition of their character before God.

A distinguished writer observes, that St. Paul, in the above description of charity, had certain characters in view, whom he wished to wound through the medium of an abstract delineation,

rather than expose them by personal or local references. In doing this, he acted like a surgeon, who once enclosed a lancet in a sponge, which he applied to a breast that wanted opening, under a pretence of washing it, and by that delicate method at once prevented the fears of his patient and performed the operation that restored her health. But it should seem that the apostle had to do with persons more impressible by the strokes of his cutting pen, than those whom, in the present day, an easy and callous profession hath rendered impenetrable by the lancet of truth, however smooth its edge, however soft the medium through which it passes, and however delicate the operation throughout. Men, long accustomed to the favorite element of teaching, dictating, and reproving others, seem to claim an exclusive right of using the lancet themselves. And, if they have learned to call rudeness and rusticity of manners, or ill-timed reprehension, by the sacred name of *faithfulness*, that word so much abused in the mouths of the forward and impetuous, the disease becomes almost incurable. It is in vain that the lancet directed against themselves be oiled or enveloped in sponge by the most cautious hand. A hint will awaken their resentment, and the most delicate wound given to the vulnerable part will only send them into company to give vent

to their malignant feelings, by copious effusions of slander and invective, or make them ascend a pulpit to scold and storm there. Yet the former is called honesty or faithfulness, and the latter, to the scandal of the most sacred and lovely exercise, is termed *preaching*. If any thing be more surprising than this, it is, that the one should meet with defenders, and the other with private patrons. But what is it, which the ignorance, the false zeal, and the wickedness of some will not prompt them to defend? With such, the grand plea is, that the *truth* is spoken. But it is this very fact that is the grand aggravation. Let religion be only left out of the question, and our complaints cease. But to borrow its sacred name as a vehicle of conveyance for gall and wormwood, and then to quote it in justification of the most unhallowed tempers, is a double inconsistency, equally fraught with false reasoning and sin. This is to furnish an answer to a question proposed by St. James, to which he thought none but a negative one could be given. “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place *sweet* water and *bitter*?” “Yes,” may some say, “we will undertake to exemplify this phenomenon, by making our tongues the vehicle of malignity and grace.” We would hope, however, for the honor of religion, and the credit of the apostle’s me-

taphor, that the *malignity only*, in many instances, comes from the "fountain" within, and the sound of *grace* is confined to the *tongue*, as its place of residence. What, then, are the most splendid talents, the finest chain of reasoning, or the greatest extent of oratorical powers, if unaccompanied, as they certainly may be, with the temper of Christianity? And in what light are we to look upon that false fire, which has none of these glittering recommendations, but makes its bold advance in the rude garb of confidence, illiteracy, and moroseness? The former is bearable, as a display of genius; but the latter, having neither genius nor religion, is insupportably detestable: and the best antidote against the dangerous influence of both, is a close consideration of the words of St. Paul, "Put on therefore (AS THE ELECT OF GOD, holy and beloved) *bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering*; Col. iii. 12: let all *bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking*, be put away from you, with all *malice*; and be ye *kind* one to another, *tender-hearted, forgiving* one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." Ephes. iv. 31, 32.

Some little acquaintance with the religious world, added, I hope, to some little knowledge of religion itself, has helped to furnish these

remarks. Subjects are seen to most advantage, when placed in a contrasted point of view. And as there cannot exist a greater contrast than the essence of religion, when opposed to the spurious profession of it, or the loveliness of its character to the deformity in which it is sometimes exhibited; a regard to truth, and a sincere desire to recommend it in its native beauty to those who may have mistaken its nature, or to such as may have been prejudiced through the unlovely behaviour of its injudicious patrons, have extorted from me a discrimination of characters, which, if more amply discussed, would be proportionably useful. Let none then impute to religion, what is only imputable to fallen man, who abuses it; nor any form his ideas of it from the unsightly attire in which enthusiasm or false zeal *chooses* to array it. To view its genuine excellence, search the scriptures. To form a collective idea of its principal *features*, take into your account the faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, with the deep repentance and sacred zeal of his father; that most noble act of forgiveness shewn by Joseph to his brethren, and by Stephen to his murderers, with the triumph of this lovely temper in the conduct of Jacob towards the enraged Esau; the holy intrepidity of prophets, the persevering boldness of apostles,



together with the noble sacrifices which they made, who “took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and who loved not their lives even unto death,” for the sake of the gospel; the invincible zeal of St. Paul, the boldness of Peter, the affectionate and amiable temper of “the beloved disciple.” But, as some infirmity was blended with the virtues of the most illustrious of these characters, behold all their respective and detached excellencies, concentrating in their most bright assemblage, without frailty or sin, in the sacred person and spotless life of the blessed Jesus. In him, the scattered rays of human and angelic excellence all meet, and from him they derive their irradiation. And it is in Jesus alone that you see all the essence, and all the loveliness of religion exemplified; because of him alone it is true “that he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” Form your ideas, in both respects, from him; and from that excellence in every character, that most resembles him. “Let that mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Phil. ii. “Be ye followers of me, says Paul, even as I also am of Christ.” And then say, whether religion does not surpass in beauty and excellence, every thing below, that assumes the name of the one or the other. What is it that guides reason, sanctifies philosophy, adorns literature? What,

but religion? Without which, the sublimest style of mental exertion may be not only useless in the end, but even pernicious. What is the loveliest form, or the lustre of the fairest countenance, unaccompanied with those tempers and that demeanor, which religion teaches? What is the crowning accomplishment in all those graces, that charm the beholder, and make the possessor of them happy? Religion. Of how much greater worth is the aspect of benevolence, the look of modesty, the calm reply, the gentle and unassuming carriage, than all the blooming tincture of a skin! In vain do the rose and lily diversify their lovely tints to beautify that countenance, which covers a heart full of pride and vanity. Even when disease or age makes ravages on external charms, religion possesses the exclusive power of rendering itself amiable under all these disadvantages, and of communicating loveliness amidst all the ruins of declining nature. But, without religion, how awful the idea of a form, once the object of adoration, consumed by disease and turned into putrefaction by death! once the fair enclosure of a mind, the seat of sin, and now separated, for a season, from those tempers, which being let loose upon the soul, fill it, in its disembodied state, with misery and terror; and, when returning, as they will do in the morning of the resurrection, will complete the

unhappiness and disgrace of soul and body for ever ! Solemn reflection ! Sufficient, one would think, to inspire parents with the ambition of instilling religion, as the grand endowment, into the minds of their children ; and to make their offspring anxious to seek the one thing needful. In short, the most elaborate mode of education, in which this is omitted, is but a refined mode of training up the rising generation to the most certain destruction. It is religion that gives the loveliest charms to youth, and makes the hoary head a crown of glory. Even the monarch upon his throne is not half so august by the crown that adorns his brow, as he is, by the religion which makes him the father of his people, and the obedient subject of the King of kings.

The *prospects* of religion. Were the religion of Jesus Christ to be limited in the duration of its influence to this life alone, it would well demand the care and anxiety of mankind to understand its nature. But “ godliness hath not only the promise of this life,” of a secure passage through all its snares, and of a proportion of grace to surmount every difficulty, and come off victorious, but it hath also a promise of that life “ which is to come.” The title to it is secured by the everlasting righteousness of Christ, the gift of the Father, the covenant

faithfulness of the three persons in the Godhead, and the representation of all God's elect in the highest heavens, in the person of their illustrious Head. "I will," says he in John, xvii. "that they whom thou hast given me be *with me where I am*, that they may behold my glory." "Whom he justified, them he *also* GLORIFIED." Rom. viii. It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. He that believeth hath eternal life," in the earnest and commencement of it, and shall infallibly have it in its consummation. "He will give grace and he will give glory." Psal. lxxxiv. The first-fruits here ensure the inheritance hereafter. What Jehovah hath transferred in the bond of the covenant, he will never annul or revoke; because "two immutable things," the promise and oath, "in which it was impossible for God to lie," shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, and make their admission to glory a certainty in prospect, and, at last, in possession. Thus speaks in the language of sovereign authority the divine person who undertook to purchase, and claims the honour of conferring, eternal life upon his people, "I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE, AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH."

Such is the glorious prospect, which religion, as a system of infallible truth and divine certainty, sets before the believer in Christ. Several

considerations unite their force to prove this prospect of future blessedness, to be in every respect worthy of Him, who gives it, and fully calculated to ascertain the hopes of those who entertain it. The basis of the expectation is the well ordered covenant, or that irreversible stipulation in the contracting parties, by which the Father hath agreed "to give eternal life to as many as he hath given" to the Son. John, xvii. This title-deed is sealed with the blood of the Surety of the New Testament, who became responsible for fulfilling all its conditions. The testament supposes the death of the testator; without which, it has no force. And the testament, solemnly executed by that event, implies a bequest of blessings, the transfer of which must take place in perfect conformity to the will of the testator; which will is a perfect transcript of the covenant of redemption agreed upon "in the counsel of peace which was between both" the Father and the Son before all worlds. The work finished upon the cross by the Mediator, was the accomplishment of that "obedience unto death," which he had stipulated to render to law and justice, in doing and suffering the will of the Father. Psal. xl. Heb. x. The believer, who receives God's testimony respecting this transaction, "lays hold of the covenant" to save him from death; apprehends

the Mediator's righteousness as his title to glory, and sees the inheritance now secure by a reversion of the forfeiture incurred through the disobedience of Adam. Here is firm footing. On this rock the believer founds his salvation and builds his prospects, which ought never to be obscured by doubts and uncertainty, since the expectations, which the gospel teaches him to entertain, spring from a hope that is "sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Heb. vi. 19.

How different is the prospect, afforded through the medium of promises, from that vouchsafed to Moses of the land of Canaan! He was commanded to ascend the top of mount Pisgah, was from thence shewn the goodly inheritance, but, to call to his remembrance and to punish his sin, at the waters of Meribah, was told he must die on that mount, and never personally enter that land which his eye then so wishfully surveyed. Faith gives the prospective view of the celestial Canaan; hope anticipates an admission into it; and nothing can possibly occur to darken the animating prospect, to frustrate the joyful anticipation, or to hinder actual possession. Sin, that would bar the entry, is taken away by the sacrifice of the Son of God. The great "forerunner is *for us* entered," and hath taken possession of the glorious inheritance in behalf of

his people. Not one angry cloud can intercept the prospect, since the Sun of Righteousness hath arisen with healing in his wings, to dissipate those noxious mists of darkness, which would otherwise have enveloped in impenetrable gloom our views of future happiness. "He hath blotted out as a thick cloud our transgressions, and as a cloud our sins." The purchase is made in full proportion to the extent and glory of the inheritance, though in both respects infinite. The promise of admission is given by Him, whose veracity is pledged, and whose omnipotence is exerted, to accomplish what he hath spoken. The believer has, therefore, nothing to do but die, and take possession of a portion, of which earth and hell, sin and Satan, law and justice, life and death, cannot deprive him.

Delightful prospect! glorious inheritance! What are the dim uncertain prospects which this world affords, when compared with the luminous and well grounded prospect of future glory! Or what is the duration of them, even if they were realized to the full extent of human wishes, compared with that glorious eternity, which is to stamp perpetuity and purity on the Christian's bliss through everlasting ages! Here some earthly hope seizes the imagination, and paints there in captivating colours some fair future prospect, that looks bright, and promises bliss.

A slight contingency, such as this world abounds with, soon occurs, makes the imaginary Eden vanish, and leaves the soul smarting under the anguish of delusive and disappointed expectation. Happy if those, who have existed in this ideal earthly heaven, see their error, and lay hold on a hope, the powers of which, in their greatest expansion, can never form the idea of that immortality with which it blooms! How often does vain man rest his hope on an arm of flesh, and erect his prospects on human promises, uncertain as the wind, and unsolid as the floating bubble! Religion teaches us to desert these weak resources, and to rely on the promises of the gospel, which, he who revealed them, wants neither sincerity nor ability to fulfil. While multitudes circumscribe their views, and contract their happiness within the narrow limits of a miserable and short-lived existence, imbittered by cares and bounded by time; the believer passes these boundaries, with a noble ambition, enlivens his prospects, and expands his views with the anticipation of future glory. Thus, "mounting on wings as eagles," he ascends the sacred hill of contemplation; from thence views by the eye of faith the fair inheritance, which is prepared for him; and often breaks out into effusions of joy and gratitude, under the impressions of such a ravishing prospect. "What a



rich inheritance does my wondering eye survey!  
How extensive! how glorious! What is a land  
flowing with milk and honey, the glory of Is-  
rael's portion, compared with a country, where  
there are rivers of pleasures, and joys for ever-  
more! Here no sorrow can embitter, no sin di-  
minish, no enemies interrupt, no lapse of time  
exhaust, the joys of its blest inhabitants. Here  
is an eternal sabbath, an uninterrupted state of  
repose. No fruits of the curse, no assaults of  
Satan, can endanger the bliss of this Eden,  
through which flows the river of life, clear as  
crystal, from the throne of God and of the  
Lamb, and in which grows the tree of life,  
whose fruit is the repast of heaven, and whose  
leaves are for the healing of the nations. Here  
is that society, which the most perfect harmony  
unites, which the blood of Christ redeemed, and  
which his grace shall animate with songs of  
never-ending praise. Here is the mansion of  
rest and glory, which the Redeemer went before  
to prepare for his once disconsolate disciples.  
But is this mansion mine? Yes. He who pur-  
chased it is mine, and I am his; and the mansion  
where he dwells is mine, by covenant right, by  
gratuitous donation, by unalterable promise, by  
rich redemption. Unworthy of admission, his  
righteousness alone is my title and recommend-  
ation. Ah! what are now the little busy scenes

of earth, that perplex the mind and engross so much time and thought? or what the gilded trifles of the world, riches, honors, and pleasures? They all die away and disappear, absorbed in this delightful prospect, as stars that vanish before the mid-day sun. The world recedes, heaven opens to my view, death is advancing to fix the period, where my happiness begins, that shall never conclude. Soon shall I see Him, in whom all my hopes and happiness are wrapt up, and cast my crown in deep humility before his throne. Let the world change, time flow with its wonted velocity, the outward man decay, and death put on his most terrific form: still this can make no alteration in my state, or impede my prospects into glory. I rejoice in hope of it, and shall one day enter upon the possession of what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive."

Whether we consider religion in its origin, foundation, nature, influence, fruits, and evidences; or examine the consolations it imparts, the attractive loveliness it displays, and the prospects it opens to its happy votaries; it must, in every point of view, be a concern of great importance.

The *importance* of religion. This an inspired writer comprehends in the following short sen-

tence, "Godliness is profitable for all things." Man's best interests here and hereafter, are essentially interwoven with the experience and practice of it. As a dependent, dying, sinful creature, he can never act his part honorably through life, or meet death without dismay or stupefaction, but as supported by the guidance and consolations of true religion. In every line of life it is of infinite utility. By making sin hateful, it guards against the false maxims or vicious examples, that would hide the deformity, or give sanction to the practice of that great abomination. If we ask, Why do fraud, injustice, oppression, predominate, to the overturning of all the rights of humanity, the laws of conscience, and the claims of civil liberty? The answer is at hand. Because the sacred mandates of religion, which transfer these privileges as the unalienable claim of human nature, have been disregarded. Had the voice of religion been only heard, and her merciful dictates obeyed, an inhuman traffic would not, for so long a season, have transmitted its bitter fruits to this country, at the expense of the blood, the sweat and toil, the lives and liberties of millions of our fellow-creatures. Barbarous traffic! that begins, and is prompted by avarice, is conducted by desolation, oppression, and unprovoked hostilities, and that ends in a species of slavery, which, in

point of enormity, has hardly ever had an example among the most uncivilized heathens ! But who knows but the happy hour of emancipation is at hand ? The cries of the poor Africans, that have long entered the ears of the Lord of Sabbath, are likely soon to be carried to the ears of our legislators, through the laudable exertions of some, who deserve all praise for having taken the lead in this humane undertaking. Others are taking up the subject with equal ardor. Let us figure to ourselves, thousands of our fellow-creatures, torn from the embraces of friends and relations, and dragged from their native home ; sold by an African tyrant, to a greater one from England ; linked together like oxen under a yoke ; driven in that ignominious situation to a floating prison that is to receive them ; treated without the smallest regard to the delicacy of sex or age ; and at last, after a voyage that proves fatal to many, transported to a foreign clime, there to undergo the severest toil, and smart under the lash of a merciless planter ; and there, by an accumulation of slavery and misery, often sold by public advertisement like beasts of the field, and transmitted from one mercenary hand to another ; till exhausted by excessive toil, or cut off by the tortures of an inventive barbarity, death comes at last, self-procured in many instances, to close the dismal

tragedy. I say, let us form to ourselves an idea of this concatenated slavery and misery, in the case of millions of our own species, who have the reason and feelings of men, and then we shall unite our prayers and supplications with the rest of the nation, for the purpose of procuring the abolition of such an execrable traffic. It is a solecism in politics, that in a free constitution, like that of Great Britain, there should exist *one* slave in the whole extent of the British empire. How great the solecism, then, that it should connive at the commerce that enslaves thousands ! Should our legislators take the matter into serious consideration, the act that would emancipate the subjects of West Indian vassalage, would reflect the highest honor on the wisdom and humanity of British legislation, and make the British name more dear and more illustrious, than all the conquests that have carried it with so much renown to every distant corner of the globe. The event would form a memorable epocha in the annals of British history ; would exemplify the genius of that pure and undefied religion, the leading characteristic of which is, that it is "*full of mercy ;*" and would be an imitation of its great Author, who " came not to destroy men's lives but to save them ;" not to rob them of the sweets of liberty, but in the most exalted sense to make them free.

The voice of religion, the voice of justice, the voice of humanity, the voice of the nation, and I am sure I may add, the voice of God, says, "Abolish slavery, and extend the blessings of freedom to the oppressed Africans." What a high indulgence would it be to the feelings of humanity, to be the bearer of the act that would confirm the blessing, and spread the joyful intelligence through the seats of oppression and slavery abroad!\*

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\* Had the life of the worthy Author been spared a few years longer, he would have seen that happy event realized which he enjoyed only in anticipation; and would have rejoiced at the removal of those dreadful evils, which he has here described in such glowing colors. That shameful traffic, which has added such an awful weight to our national sins, is now brought to a conclusion.

Long had the condition of the oppressed and injured African interested the feelings of the British nation, and called forth the energies of many of the members of the British parliament; often had their cause been pleaded in the senate, without success: but, at length, "their cries have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth," the oppressed negro is released, and slavery is no more. The name of WILBERFORCE will vibrate on the ears of the sable sons of Africa till the end of time; Britons will long remember, by whose patient exertions, (amidst opposition and reproach,) a disgraceful stain has been removed from our national character; and posterity will learn the important lesson, that "*Exertions in the cause of truth and justice cannot finally prove unsuccessful.*"—Present Editor. April 2d, 1810.

But it is not to the West Indies or to Africa alone, that we are to wish the blessings of liberty. Even in this land of freedom we abound with slaves ; who, while entreating liberty for others, feel not the chains that enslave themselves to a degree the most humiliating. Many boast of political freedom, who are under the galling yoke of spiritual thralldom. They are tied and bound with the chains of sin, which is the worst slavery, and are led captive by Satan, the most dreadful of tyrants. Yet they bear his yoke contentedly, and feel not the chains that form a sad prelude of eternal captivity. But here the great importance of religion is displayed. By revealing an act of emancipation from the council of the Trinity, and directing a world of captives to look for life and liberty to Jesus the mighty Redeemer, it “ opens the prison to them that are bound,” Isa. lxi. 1, and shows a ransom paid down by his precious death, which makes infinite justice say in behalf of the sinner who believes the record, “ Deliver him from going down to the pit.” Oh! that each enslaved sinner may apply the great redemption! and, “ knowing the truth as it is in Jesus,” be set free from the entanglements of the world, the dominion of his lusts, or the more refined but deeply rooted delusion of self-righteousness!

See the importance of religion, when other things, even the most estimable, are brought in competition with it. Form life's estimate agreeably to the pursuits and plans of its greatest admirers, and throw into the scale whatever weighs heaviest in the opinion of the sons of opulence and of dissipation. Load the balance with riches, honors, pomp, and pleasures, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. This is the whole aggregate of terrestrial good. But what can all this avail, to shield the sinner from the terrors of the law, the clamors of conscience, or the wrath of Heaven? to give him tranquillity of mind under the pain of inward reproaches, or afford him confidence in the hour of dissolution. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath; but righteousness delivereth from death." Prov. xi. 4. For how short a season are riches possessed! How many thorny cares, and ensnaring temptations, are connected with that possession to imbitter and make it dangerous. That inward peace which religion inspires, is so far from being the companion of opulence, that the wealthy and the great are in general strangers to its heaven-born influence. The happiness that flows from it, quits the mansions of vicious pomp and earthly magnificence, and takes up its abode in the dwellings of po-



verty and dependence, where grace teaches contentment, and opens through Christ the prospect of final deliverance from every trouble, in its root and effects. Examine more closely these opposite conditions, with the characters respectively which they include. Fancy a sinner, full of wealth and bold in sin. He lives "as without God in the world," indulges his pride, and feeds his lusts with the provision, which might be used to the noblest purposes. Accustomed to the tribute of flattery and homage from unfortunate and fawning dependants, his heart drinks in the luscious poison, which feeds his self-consequence, but at the same time renders him more sensible of mortification from the affronts of superiors, and impatient under the afflictive hand of Providence. His heart swells and says, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?" and his life more emphatically speaks the insolent question. In his family, in his closet, in his conversation, in his thoughts, God has no place, religion is not allowed to enter; except when infidelity fills the scorner's chair, profaneness animates "the song of the drunkard," or Satan suggests the bold imprecation, the vulgar oath, or immodest jest. That is, religion is never introduced but to be *ridiculed*, nor suffered admission for a moment, but to be driven out again with disgrace by the scourge of the infidel's

tongue. Thus he lives independent of the Being, who gave him life, and rebellious against the mercy that spares it. But mercy will not always spare, nor life always last. See him on his death-bed. The farce of life is ending; the curtain about to be drawn on all its pleasurable scenes; and the dismal tragedy begins. If not hardened with infidelity or stupified by disease, all within feels dark, uncertain, and disturbed, full of fears and forebodings, the prelude of hell. What will his riches avail him now? They can procure him medicines, physicians, attendants. But the king of terrors mocks all their assistance. The sinner wants now, what they cannot give: he wants *religion*. But the joys of that, with all the peace and hope it inspires, are fled for ever. Behold the contrast. Look into the humble habitation of a little family, sequestered from the noise and snares of life, like the humble shrub in a valley, that escapes the fury of the tempest, which tears up by the roots the lofty cedar. See at the head of this modest happy household, an upright Christian, whose industry provides them food, and whose religious example leads them in the way to heaven. His daily resolution resembles that of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;" and his practice exemplifies it. The morning finds him upon his knees to implore the blessing

of Heaven : the day is closed with thanksgivings to God for the gift of his Son, and for every domestic, social, and personal blessing vouchsafed, of which his evening sacrifice is a solemn and grateful recognition. The sacred scriptures are constantly applied to, as to a source of uncorrupted truth, of consolation, guidance, and instruction. The religion which they inspire, sweetens his cares, is a spur to industry, and helps him to bear the frowns of the world, or the visitations of domestic affliction, with patience and submission ; persuaded that the goodness and faithfulness of his heavenly Father will “ make all work together for good.” To walk by faith with God reconciled to him through the Son of his love ; to act as under the inspection of his all-seeing eye in his intercourse with men ; to bring forth the fruits of faith and keep a conscience void of the least allowed offence ; *constitute* the main business of life, and the chief object of his care and solicitude.

\* But see the righteous drawing near the hour of his dissolution ; then do the graces of faith, of patience, and of resignation, shine forth with the most resplendent lustre. Confidently relying

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\* The reader is desired to take notice, that the following sentences have been subjoined by the Editor of the first edition.

upon the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, neither the debilitating pains of protracted sickness, nor the more excruciating agonies of acute disorders, provoke a murmur from his lips. At the prospect of that hour, the very thought of which is terrible to the unbeliever, his happy soul exults; and knowing that death is the gate to everlasting life, he longs for the moment of his dismissal, when he shall enter into the joy of his Lord, and join the glorified spirits of the redeemed in songs of unceasing praise. How important is Religion, if such be it's termination, and with how much justice are all our afflictions called light and momentary, seeing they work out for us an eternal and exceeding weight of glory ! O my soul, let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his !

## SERMON I.

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EVANGELICAL TRUTHS STATED, AND THE CHARGE OF  
NOVELTY AS A GROUND OF PREJUDICE AGAINST  
THE GOSPEL, REFUTED.

[Preached at Nantwich, July 28, 1782.]

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*“What new doctrine is this?”* MARK, i. 27.

**I**F you look back to the twenty-first verse of the chapter, you find our Lord teaching in a synagogue at Capernaum, and all his hearers filled with astonishment at his doctrine. Truth naked and unadorned has been known often to produce this effect. How irresistibly powerful must have been its efficacy, in the mouth of such a Teacher! whose manner was as engaging, as his wisdom was profound! What seems principally to have struck the audience, while listening to the incomparable doctrines of the Lord Jesus, was, “that he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.” For, as

the origin of truth is divine, it claims the just prerogative of commanding obedience to its sanctions, and gives its advocates an authority in pleading her injured rights, which error can seldom counterfeit.

That our blessed Lord might authenticate his mission, and enforce his doctrine, he took occasion, in the synagogue, to dispossess a demoniac. The unclean spirit that tormented him instantly yielded obedience to the word of Jesus, after having previously acknowledged him to be "the Holy One of God," verse 24. A miracle, performed upon such an occasion, and attested by a variety of circumstances of public notoriety, excited the amazement of all present; who said, "What thing is this? What new doctrine is this?" Two things were the object of their surprise; the miraculous cure of the demoniac, and the supposed novelty of our Lord's doctrine. But had they been properly conversant in the writings of their favorite lawgiver Moses, they would have seen, that Jesus came not to reveal truths in their nature absolutely new, and altogether unknown; but only to place in a new light, to communicate by a new style of preaching, and to enforce by motives unfolded with clearer radiance, those original truths, which the divine legation and ritual economy of Moses, as well as the corroborating testimony of all the

prophets, were intended to teach from the beginning. See Acts, x. 43, and John, v. 45. But St. Paul accounts for this ignorance in the Jews, and the prejudices which sprung from it, by observing, that “ their minds were blinded : for, until this day, remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament ; which vail is done away in Christ.” 2 Cor. iii. 14. Had not “ a vail” of darkness and unbelief “ been upon their hearts,” they would have both known and acknowledged, that the doctrines which Jesus preached, were of patriarchal as well as Mosaic antiquity ; and that Jehovah himself “ preached *that gospel* unto Abraham,” Gal. iii. 8, which Jesus came to confirm and elucidate by a dispensation, superior in light and glory to any that had preceded it ; and that what “ God spake at sundry times and in divers manners unto the fathers by the prophets, he spake in the last days by his Son.” Heb. i. 1.

Blindness in the Jews made them fix the charge of novelty on the doctrines of Christ, although so visibly inscribed with the marks of divine authenticity ; and the effect of that presumptive and hasty imputation, was an unwillingness to receive his testimony or credit the truth of his mission ; and the consequence, a stubborn opposition to truth and a fatal insen-

sibility in sin, terminating, at last, in such judgments as render them now a hissing and a proverb to all the nations of the earth.

But, are such prejudices new? or was the baneful root of them confined only to the regions of Judæa? No. In this land, and in this day, with all the advantages which we derive from the free circulation of the word of God, and from a national establishment so auspicious to the interests of truth, there are multitudes, who are ready to cry out, when they hear the gospel, as "certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics" did, when Paul preached at Athens, "Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears. May we know what this *new doctrine*, whereof thou speakest, is?" Acts, xvii. 19, 20. Thus, with many, to attribute novelty to a system, is the way to reprobate, and make it odious. And there are not a few, who satisfy themselves with no other argument for their unbelief, than that they may have happened not to hear before, what they contemptuously spurn. As if the nature of truth can be altered, or the credit of it shaken, by the want of previous acquaintance. We should have thought it a strange species of argumentation, had the Athenian philosophers attempted to demonstrate, that St. Paul's doctrine must have been false, merely



because it was new, and they happened not to hear it before. Yet upon this weak ground, do numbers reject the truth, and militate against their own happiness; while their conduct is as grossly repugnant to the dictates of calm reason and common sense, as it is reprobated by the voice of scripture. It will be a poor excuse, for any to make at the tribunal of Christ, that they contemned the great doctrines of revelation, merely because they thought them novel, when they neglected the opportunity of being convinced to the contrary; or that they adopted their ideas, and regulated their practice, by the maxims of the world. Such apologies, with all the mistake and precipitancy on which they are founded, may pass current now with those, who are credulous enough to drink in the monstrous absurdities of infidelity, whether ancient or modern. But, they will never satisfy those, who wishing to investigate truth at the fountain-head, like the noble Bereans, search the scriptures daily, whether those things are so." Acts, xvii. 11. And that none here may ignorantly plead such excuses, for their indifference or unbelief on a subject of such vast concern, I will endeavour, *First*, to show what the doctrine is which we preach, and on which we build our eternal all; and, *Secondly*, That this doctrine is no more justly chargeable with novelty, than

it is with error; and, *Thirdly*, That other objections brought against the ministers of the gospel, are equally frivolous and undeserved.

1. As to the doctrines, which we preach, although we look upon ourselves accountable for them to that most excellent church, whose system of theology is the glory of her establishment, and the sacred depositum of all her ministers; yet, when truth is concerned, we acknowledge ourselves obliged to look from her authority, venerable as it is, to the infallible decisions of the lively oracles of God; since every church and every doctrine must be tried, must stand or fall, by that great standard. To the sacred scriptures we are glad to appeal, as to a divine authority, not superseding, but corroborating the doctrines of our church; without which, no obligation, arising merely from a national establishment, could lie upon the conscience to believe and receive them. And, indeed, the liberality and candor of our church appear in this, that she unites with the state in granting what, it must be confessed, are the natural rights of all who think themselves authorized to dissent from her: and admits in her sixth *article*, that “whatsoever may not be proved by holy scripture, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith. Taking it for granted, however, that her constitution is

founded upon a scripture model, and her articles consonant with the truth as it is in Jesus, while she requires, and has indeed an indisputable right to insist, that her ministers should preach those doctrines, and those only, which she had professedly derived from the fountain of truth in sacred writ ; she has manifestly opened to them a fair opportunity of investigating the origin, and examining the tendency, of the system she hath received, and of acting agreeably to the result of their researches. No dissentient, therefore, can plead hardship or injury in this case. If he be out of the church, he is not compelled to come in. And if he should happen to be within the pale of her communion, no compulsion is exercised to keep him there. He was supposed to enter freely and cordially, and is permitted as freely to go out, if his sentiments are inimical to her great distinguishing doctrines. She hath only claimed, what every society in the world hath thought itself warranted to claim for the security of its laws and the benefit of its members ; and that is, a liberty of judging for herself. And that judgment she conceives to be obligatory and directory to her ministers, not as set up in opposition to the word of God, but as perfectly coincident with its authority.

In this view, when a minister of the Church of England is either directly by controversy, or

indirectly by secretly-invidious imputations, called upon to declare and vindicate his sentiments; to all the members of the same church with himself, he has a right to quote her authority as a sufficient justification of the tenets he inculcates; and has an equal right to expect, that an unequivocal appeal to her discriminating doctrines ought to be considered as an indirect evidence, at least, of the uprightness of his intentions, if not of the orthodoxy of his sentiments. He thinks himself authorized to expect too, that he should be reputed an honest man, as long as he professes to advance nothing but in subserviency to the scheme of doctrine which he solemnly subscribed at his ordination. And should he happen to err, yet candor should acknowledge, that he is mistaken with the Church of England, since her sentiments he avows as his own. And in such venerable company he is not, and cannot be supposed to be ashamed to declare them, that all may judge for themselves of the inconsistency or validity of his pretensions. And, when interrogated, he might think it a sufficient apology to say, "If you wish to know my sentiments, from any secret supposition of their heterodoxy, I refer you to the 39 articles of that church, of which we are both members. I subscribed to those articles with hand and heart. My assent and consent to them were sincere and

unequivocal. I firmly believe them to be agreeable to the word of God; and, while they epitomize the sentiments of the church, they speak my own. As such I believe them, and I preach them. Read over those articles, therefore, and you may then know, what are the leading topics of my ministrations." Such an answer a minister of the gospel might esteem a reasonable and a sufficient one, to cavillers of every description, when either ignorance censures, or malevolence detracts. But lest, upon the present occasion, such an appeal should be thought to carry too much the appearance of indolence and evasion, I will endeavour, with all the faithfulness and precision in my power, to state the outlines of that system of doctrine, which I verily believe to be according to truth and godliness, and upon which I build my own hopes and prospects for eternity.

1. Although the nature of God, as a Being of infinite wisdom, power, justice, glory, purity, and goodness, surpasses the comprehension of men and angels; yet, according to the revelation which he hath thought proper to give of himself in holy scripture, we think ourselves authorized to believe, and to preach in consequence, that in the divine essence there are three persons, who are incomprehensibly *one* in all the perfections of the Godhead; and, according to

their respective offices in the economy of redemption, are called in scripture, *Father, Son,* and *Spirit*; that, though economically and personally three, they are essentially one; that all objections to this doctrine arising from the incomprehensibility of it, apply equally to the truth of the very being of a God; and that a denial of it, is one of those heresies that enter very deeply into an apostacy from the truth and power of godliness. The doctrine of the Trinity, or of three co-equal and co-essential persons in one undivided Godhead, as an object of adoration to men and angels, we look upon as one of the great mysteries of revelation, and as a fundamental article in the Christian faith. If the opponents of this leading tenet think proper, as too many of them have done, to ridicule it as inexplicable, and contrary to reason; we are sorry for their inconsistency, and would remind them, that their sneers might very easily be retorted on themselves, were they only required to account for, and reconcile with reason, a thousand phenomena in nature, the existence of which they dare not dispute, though their occult qualities, origin, and extent of operation, are wrapt up in mystery. And if nature, in some of the most common and sensible objects, abounds with mysteries, which philosophy cannot explore or account for; how incomprehen-

sible must the God of nature be, when his own peculiar mode of existence is the object of contemplation ! We believe, therefore, that the impenetrable mystery that envelopes the doctrine of the Trinity from the comprehension of reason, ought to be no bar to the reception of it ; and that it ought to be believed upon the simple authority of revelation, like other doctrines equally mysterious, which it would be folly and blasphemy to contradict for a moment.

2. We believe that God made man at first upright, but that he hath sought out many inventions ; and that the moral image of the Deity stamped on his heart was obliterated by his disobedience : in consequence of which, he instantly fell into a deplorable state of darkness, bondage, and death.—That all mankind were radically and federally in Adam, and were to stand or fall in him.—That his apostacy affected all his descendants, who inherit his fallen nature, with all the guilt and depravity inherent in it. And, though the disobedience of Adam was not, and could not be the sin of his posterity in point of personal concurrence ; yet, as an act of high treason in a nobleman is considered, by an attainder in the law, as affecting his children, and they suffer in their titles and inheritance for what was properly and personally the crime of their ancestors ; so an entail of the penalty an-

nexed to the act of original transgression, which is death, proves more forcibly, than a thousand arguments, that there must be also an entail of guilt; and that “in Adam *all* died,” 1 Cor. xv. 22, because by “his disobedience they were made *sinner*s,” κατέσθησαν ἁμαρτωλοὶ, Rom. v. 19, constituted transgressors. And, therefore, according to the 9th article of the Church of England, that “man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil;” and that although he still possesses all the original faculties, which in their state of primeval rectitude constituted man the image of his Maker, yet they are now so depraved and alienated by the fall, as to require a divine agency to regulate and renew them. Indeed, the dreadful disorder which death hath introduced into the natural world, loudly speaks the prior existence of some fatal evil in the moral world; and evinces, that the cause must be as malignant as the effect is universal. We assert, upon the authority of scripture, that the consequences of the first transgression to Adam and all his descendants, which “were in his loins,” as the sons of Levi are said to have “paid tithes in Abraham,” Heb. vii. 9, 10, appear to have been, a loss of the divine image, a forfeiture of happiness, a death in sin, a subjection to the death of the body, and an obnoxiousness to death eternal



of both soul and body ; and that all, without exception, that are naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam, “ are by nature children of wrath.” Ephes. ii. 1, 3. Rom. v. 14—21. Rom. vi. 23.

3. It is of the highest importance to the system of Christianity, to maintain the doctrine of human guilt and depravity, because it is such an advantageous foil to set forth the unbounded love and glorious redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ ; which, without an acknowledgment of the apostacy of man, must of course be reputed a solemn redundancy, if not an absolute nonentity. And it always happens, that they who deny the fall reject some of the capital doctrines of revelation, that are concomitant with it, and are generally convicted of entertaining low and blasphemous thoughts concerning the person and salvation of the Son of God. But as we take for granted, that that original sin, which some have dared, in derision, to call original nonsense, is a most melancholy and humiliating matter of fact, we assert, that the only person qualified for rescuing man from the consequences of that depraved and helpless condition into which he was plunged by sin, was the eternal Son of God. Of him we believe, that his qualifications for the high office of Mediator between God and man depend entirely upon the truth

his divinity; that when the scriptures call Jesus God, they give him that divine title in the proper sense of the word; that he is, as Mediator, subordinate and delegated, and sent; but not, as *God*. We believe the inspired writers continually mean to represent him, under that name of divinity, as one with the Father in the essence of the Godhead, because he claims all the other incommunicable attributes peculiar to it; such as omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity of existence a *parte ante*, &c. We cannot conceive that Jehovah would be the infringer of his own law, in commanding “all the angels of God to worship” the Son, Heb. i. 6, if the Son were not by nature God; since a subordinate Deity, as an object of inferior adoration, is an idea expressly repugnant to the very letter of that law, which enjoins the worship of one God, and condemns the translation of it to any other being: and to worship any creature, whether a seraph or a quadruped, whether angelic or superangelic, is idolatry; that since the great Lawgiver could never intend to violate his own law, which is as unchangeable as his own nature, in commanding homage to be paid to the Messiah, he meant to proclaim to all the earth, that “in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, παν το πληρωμα της θεοτητος σωματικως. Col. ii. 9.

We preach Jesus, therefore, as very God; as the agent, and end of all things; for by him and for him were all things in heaven and earth created. Col. i. 16. We preach his blood as deriving all its efficacy to atone for sin, and purge the conscience, from the infinite dignity of his divine nature. We believe his righteousness to be "the righteousness of God" in all respects consummate, and divinely glorious; 2 Cor. v. 21; and that, abstracted from the fulness of the Godhead, it could have no more availed towards the justification of a sinner before God, than the righteousness of Gabriel. We believe that it was the incomprehensible yet real union of the divine nature to the human, in the person of the Lord Christ, that enabled him to make "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for sin," to bruise the serpent's head, to conquer death, and to tread the wine-press of the wrath of God. We believe Jesus to be God-man, and point lost sinners to him as the object of their trust and adoration; and we are fully persuaded, that, take away the truth of our Lord's proper Deity, and you discard the rock on which the church is built, and subvert the foundation of his people's hopes. If unbelievers start the old trite objection of proud reason, that this doctrine too is unworthy of acceptance, because incomprehensible, our an-

swer is in the words of the apostle, "Great is the *mystery* of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." 1 Tim. iii. 16.

4. As to the decrees and dispensations of Almighty God, which originate in "the good pleasure of his will," Ephes. i. 5, and are made subservient to his glory, I would wish to think of them with caution and humility, and to speak of them with the most profound reverence: And though I cannot but acknowledge that my thoughts recoil with horror at the idea of God's dooming sinners to hell by a positive decree of reprobation, or of his taking a delight and complacency in the misery of any of his creatures; yet I cannot withhold my hearty assent to that authority, which declares, that believers were "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world;" Ephes. i. 4; that they are "elect according to the fore-knowledge of God;" Pet. i. 2; that they are "chosen to salvation," 1 Thes. ii. 13, as the certain end of that choice; and, as the 17th article says, "that the godly consideration of our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to such as *feel* in themselves the working of the spirit of Christ."

The adversaries of this doctrine, who, in the warmth of their zeal, apprehend, that a discriminating election of sinners to salvation, irrespec-

tive of any moving or meritorious cause in the creature, is an impeachment of the divine justice, seem to forget, that to form a judgment of God's dispensations from *our* ideas of equity, is fallacious and dangerous; since, "as the heavens are above the earth, so are his thoughts above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways." Isa. lv. 9. For "who hath known the mind of the Lord? or, being his counsellor, hath directed him?" Rom. xi. 34. Since the wisdom of God hath appeared foolishness to the world, why may not the very equity of his proceedings to the same incompetent and partial judges be construed into injustice? Yet who would argue, that the conclusion in either case is according to truth? Rather, who would not conclude, that the same false reasoning that has deluded mankind into an error, respecting the *wisdom* of God's dispensations, should also incline them to arraign the *justice* of them too? A race of beings suffering for their apostacy under the hand of God, must, of course, view the dispensation that inflicts their punishment, in a very malignant light, and cannot be looked upon as competent judges in a case, wherein torment excites rebellion, and prompts them to blaspheme the hand of the Most High, merely because it holds the vengeful rod of chastisement. The angels that left their first estate, no doubt, think it

hard, that they should be “ reserved in chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day ;” and, while they are suffering justly, are, probably, ready enough to curse God as an arbitrary tyrant, because their remediless condition leaves them in that power of his wrath for ever ? Yet what is the opinion of such unhappy beings, but the impotent rage of rebels against the just dispensations of the Holy One of Israel ?

The charge of injustice comes with a very ill grace too from the mouth of rebels incarnate. They have no claim upon Jehovah for a single favor. Having forfeited all by sin, their real desert is death eternal. So that, had Jehovah thought proper to have passed by the whole human race, they would have had no more real cause to blame, as unjust, this judicial preterition, than the angels have, who are unexceptionably and eternally lost. Instead of quarrelling, therefore, with his dispensations and his truths, which, like his own nature, are inscrutable ; it becomes us, as sinners, to fall down at his footstool with self-abhorrence, and to adore that great mystery of redemption that hath opened a way of salvation for any ; and, instead of indulging a proud and disputatious temper, “ to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure.” If a contrary spirit were carried to its full extent, there would be no end of impeaching the divine

justice in the affairs of the universe. The same pride that actuated the Jews to kill the Son of God, because he pleaded the divine sovereignty in choosing Naaman and the woman of Sarepta as objects of his favors, above all the lepers or widows in Israel, Luke, iv. 27, would lead men to inquire with arrogance, why this man is born to riches and honors, while another inherits poverty and wretchedness;—why some are idiots, and others adorned with bright and cultivated understandings;—why some inherit disease from their birth, and drag on a miserable life for years in torture and pining sickness, while others enjoy an unintermitted portion of health through every period of their lives, and go down to their graves without any pain, save that of dying, which, with such, is often a short and easy transition;—why it is the fate of some to be the unhappy subjects of insanity, that torturing disease of the mind, which secludes them from society, and makes them dreaded as the most furious animals; while others, by the free and vigorous exertion of their mental powers, are ornaments to society, and preside in the management of states and empires;—why multitudes are condemned to the galleys, or, for no other crime but that of defenceless and impoverished condition, are sold for slaves, and, by an inhuman traffic, become the property of Chris-

tian tyrants, who often treat them more barbarously than the beasts that perish, while others enjoy the protection of law, and all the blessings of civil and religious liberty ;—why one country is burnt up with heat, another is a region of inhospitable deserts, or inaccessible mountains ; a scene of barrenness and desolation ; and a third is visited with the pestilence, or shaken with continual earthquakes ; while other parts of the globe are crowned with perpetual verdure, are blessed with plenty and fertility, and enjoy that constitutional peace, and unanimity, to which those nations are strangers, that are torn with faction and depopulated by the sword ;—why some countries are visited with that first of all national blessings, the *light of the gospel*, while others are suffered to lie for ages buried in paganism and superstition ;—why, in particular, the Jews should have been God's favorite people for more than half the period of the world's present existence, and the Gentiles excluded from their privileges, till the set time for their incorporation arrived ;—and why the gospel meets with a more favorable reception in some places than in others, where there is no reason to suppose that the difference arises from any superior disposition in the hearts of the inhabitants, all being alike dead in sin. These are phenomena in the dispensations of provi-



dence, which, according to the principles of some, ought to be made a subject of curious and querulous investigation, as well as the mysterious dealings of divine grace. But, if God hath a right to do what he will with his own, in dispensing temporal favors, why should he not be equally a sovereign in bestowing spiritual ones? since, among all the children of men, there does not exist a single claimant deserving for his own sake either the one or the other, in the smallest degree of vouchsafement? "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" Rom. xi. 35. And, if any, viewing the goodness and severity of God with a curious eye, should still persist in reiterating objections, and ask, "Why doth he yet find fault? for, who hath resisted his will?" Our answer is in the words of St. Paul, "Nay, but, O man! who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Rom. ix. 20.

While we assert the eternal sovereignty of God in choosing sinners to salvation, we would not insinuate that any compulsion is exercised over the will. The freedom of that is eminently preserved by the grace that restores it to the original object of its choice. The will is not compelled, but drawn, *suavi omnipotentia et omnipotenti suavitate*, by a sweet and all-powerful at-

traction ; and then the sinner is “ made willing in the day of God’s power.” Psal. cx. Neither has this great truth the least tendency to relax the obligation of personal holiness, or to affect the interests of morality in the world ; since the people of God are said to be “ chosen in Christ, *that they should be* holy and without blame before him in love.” Ephes. i. 4. The invidious charge, that, “ if persons are chosen to salvation they may live as they list,” has no foundation in truth and facts ; and there is no position more abominable in our view, than that by which some accommodate to us, “ Let us do evil, that good may come.” And to sin, *because* grace abounds, we esteem a species of the most detestable and first-rate wickedness. If some have abused these doctrines to purposes of licentiousness ; it should be remembered, that the world in general use the opposite ones as an opiate to lull them asleep in fatal supineness. So that, if any argument be founded on the number of those who are influenced by these tenets respectively, an immense majority will be on the side of opposition both to truth and godliness ; and the argument must, of course, preponderate in favor of those, who, by partial judges, are supposed to be most affected by it. But as we admit of no election, but such as hath holiness for one of its salutary streams, and

look for no perseverance, but such as implies the habitual practice of good works, and a continuance in them even to the end; so we insist, that, without the election of grace, the power to perform them would be wanting, and the hopes of salvation rest on a very precarious foundation. It is the everlasting spring, from whence floweth that river of God, which is full of water, that gladdens the church with its perennial source and inexhaustible supplies. Built upon this rock, the people of God are secure; and their salvation as great a certainty, as the purposes, dispensations, covenant, promises, and blood of Jesus, can make it.

5. On the doctrine of justification, the scriptures teach us, that the only meritorious cause or primary ground of it before God, is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which includes his obedience to the moral law, and the satisfaction he made to divine justice by his expiatory sufferings:—that this righteousness is transferred to the believer by a gratuitous imputation, and being apprehended by faith, constitutes the ground of his peace, as well as the matter of his justification before God:—that it is given “unto all,” as a free and unmerited donation, and is “upon all them that believe,” Rom. iii. 22, as a rich and immaculate garment of salvation:—that the moment a sinner believes

in Jesus with ever so weak a faith, his justification before God is complete, because he lays hold on the perfect righteousness of Christ. And by him *all* that believe are justified from *all* things. Acts, xiii. 39. “There is *no* condemnation to them.” Rom. viii. 1.—And that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ being, in all respects, consummate and glorious, cannot want, and will not admit of, any works of the sinner as auxiliary to his justification. For, “by the obedience of *One* many are made righteous.” Rom. v. 19. And “to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness.” Rom. iv. 5.

The faith that apprehends the righteousness of Christ, is the gift of God; and, before it exists, no works deserve the name of good, because, until a man's person is accepted, his works cannot be well-pleasing in the sight of God; and till the tree is made good, the fruit cannot be good. No good works can precede justification by faith; and therefore the 13th article properly observes, that “works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, for as much as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ.” Which truth St. Paul confirms, by declaring, that “without faith it is impossible to please

God." Heb. xi. 6. Good works, therefore, are subsequent to justification, and are not the matter, but the evidences of it. They justify a believer before men, but his faith justifies him before God; because, the fruits of righteousness, though deserving commendation from man, are open with all their imperfection before the eye of omniscience; and "in his sight can no man living be justified." Psal. cxliii. 2. And in order that this part of the subject may be summed up in as perspicuous and concise a manner as possible, I close it with laying before you the following distinction; viz. *A believer is justified meritoriously by the righteousness of Christ, instrumentally by faith, and declaratively by works.* In the first sense, he is justified before God; in the second, in his own conscience; and in the third, before the world. These several truths are equally inimical, by this distinction, to the pride of self-righteousness, and the licentious pleas of Antinomianism. And, by this arrangement, the truth is so guarded on all sides, that Christ, and faith, and works, have their respective place, without any injury or dishonor to one or the other. For, though Christ hath, and will have in all things the pre-eminence, and both faith and works act in subordination, and lay all their honors at the Redeemer's feet; yet both are indispensably necessary, since

without faith there is no pleasing God, and that faith which hath not works can save no man. This distinction, and the truths which arise from it, you will find vindicated in the 11th, 12th, and 13th articles of the Church of England.

6. As to faith and repentance, if men, when they call them the conditions of salvation, only mean, that we cannot be saved without them, in this point of view we perfectly agree. But if, under these terms, is conveyed an insinuation, either that they are performed by any power of the creature, or possess such a degree of merit, as to be intrinsically conditional of salvation, which I fear is often intended, we then enter our protest against not only the inaccuracy, but the dangerous error, couched under the expression. Both repentance and faith are the gifts of God. What is given, cannot be a condition of the love of the giver; but must be the effect of it. It is the greatest solecism in divinity and common sense, to say, that the favors bestowed are the conditions of antecedent affection. As well might we argue, that the effects produced in the earth by the sun's rays, are the condition of his existence as the source of light and heat. Whereas the very reverse is true. The light of the universe, and the fertility of the earth, depend upon the influence of that

great luminary ; without which, the world would be a dungeon, and all creation a blank. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ shines in the firmament of his church as the Sun of Righteousness. The light of faith and the renovating influence of repentance, are those beneficial rays which he emits, as tokens of his love and power. The effects produced prove to individuals that this Sun shineth ; but they do not make him shine. His glory is independent, as his goodness is undeserved. Besides, as the power to believe and repent, is from God, Acts, v. 31, John, vi. 29, these acts of the mind can possess no merit or proper conditionality, unless it can be supposed that a sinner has a right to expect heaven for what is not his own. And when so much is attributed to faith and repentance, the great object of both is forgotten. And that object is the Lord our righteousness ; whose obedience and death were the great conditions of reconciliation ; without which, one sinner could not have been saved. When we talk of the conditions of salvation, we should, therefore, remember, that “ to do the will of the Father,” which implies the performance of these conditions, is represented in Psal. xl. 6, and Heb. x. 9, as the sole work of the Redeemer.

7. We conceive it to be of the utmost importance, as well for the consistency of the gospel

plan, as the happiness of sinners, to maintain the necessity of *a divine inspiration*; not for the purpose of working miracles, as some absurdly imagine that expression always implies; but for the purpose of effecting that great change in the heart, without which, none can enter the kingdom of heaven. A change so difficult to produce, that it is called in scripture a new birth, John, iii. 7; a new creation, 2 Cor. v. 17; a translation from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ; and that requires an exertion of the same omnipotent power that brought light out of darkness in the beginning, and arranged the universe itself. When St. Paul says, that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9, we apprehend the apostle declares an awful truth, that not only affected his contemporaries, but in which all are concerned to the end of time. And since the world as much wants now to be "convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," John, xvi. 8, as in the day that our Lord promised to send the Holy Ghost for these important purposes; it is reasonable to conclude, that his inspiration is still continued with the church, notwithstanding the opposition which this truth meets with from multitudes, many of whom call *that* enthusiasm, which they are taught to pray for in



the services of the church. But the misfortune is, they make their own stupid feelings a comment upon those of others; and the force of their arguing centres entirely in this, that the influences of the spirit must have ceased, because they never felt them. Which is reasoning, just as wise and conclusive, as if a man born blind should insist that there is no such colour as scarlet, because he never saw it.

Thus have I endeavoured to give you a summary of the truths of God, which, like the several links in a chain, are so closely connected, that whatever affects one, endangers more or less the whole system; while, to maintain the distinct authority of each, and to point out its coherence with every concomitant link in the golden chain of evangelical truth, must necessarily tend to the preservation of the whole. But it remains now that I shew that,

II. The system of doctrine I have laid down, is no more justly chargeable with novelty than with error.

To urge antiquity alone, as a sufficient recommendation of any doctrine, is often the refuge of superstition driven to its last resource. And it is well known how much this plea is maintained by the Church of Rome, as a covert for all the errors, impositions, and pious frauds, that for centuries have banished purity and

truth from her communion. The plea of antiquity is but a fallacious one at best; since error is very old as well as truth, and in every age of the church men have always called in the suffrage of their ancestors as a sort of sanction for their own blasphemies; imputing to antiquity a certain virtue to make error venerable, or to stamp a dignity on folly, merely because it may have happened to be folly before the flood. Equally inconclusive and fallacious too, are either the objections started against any doctrine, or the countenance sought in favor of it, merely because it may be new. People are apt, in most cases, to be strangely wedded to antiquity; insomuch, that a friendly effort to rescue them even from nonsense, or to liberate them from slavery, has been at different times construed into a dangerous innovation. When men have been habituated to an old track, they become in time so reconciled to it, that what with indolence and a stupid predilection in favor of antiquity, they discover an unwillingness to be driven out of it. And the man that has courage enough to make the attempt, does it often at his peril. The person that first declared there were any such beings as *antipodes*, was put to death as a monster of wickedness. The discovery was new; and the mere novelty was enough, in the opinion of a

sage pope, to constitute him a heretic, and judge him worthy of death. Yet, it seems necessary to guard with proper caution against the pretensions of novelty. Men are often ambitious of making new discoveries in religion, as well as in other sciences. And when long established truth in the scriptures checks them in their bold attempts to advance any thing absolutely new, they will often put ingenuity upon the rack, at least, to devise some new refinement upon an old error, that they may set themselves at the head of a party, and rear their own consequence upon the ruins of truth and peace. A bigot of this class has more than once complained bitterly, that, “in the Church of England, there is nothing new left to be found out in religion; but that the 39 articles tell all.” As if religion were a fluctuating system, that requires to be changed and improved like fashions of a day.

From these observations it is plain, that the pleas, both of antiquity and novelty, either for or against any thing, are indecisive, and may be dangerous; and that when any doctrines are proposed to us, our principal inquiry should be, not whether they are new or old, but whether they are *true*. It is not the *date* of a bond that gives it its validity in law, but the sign manual, and the attestation of witnesses. Who ever

thought of inquiring, *when* a piece of money was coined, provided the metal were pure, and its currency legal. Gold is the same in every age; and none would think it more intrinsically valuable, either for the antiquity or novelty of its coinage. So, the nature of truth cannot be affected by any accidental circumstances of date, time, and place; and all, who are in search of it, merely for its own sake, will make no account of such trivial considerations. However, as prejudices are sometimes best removed by being a little humoured in their requisitions, capricious as they are, I will endeavour to shew that the truths I have stated, claim antiquity as well as purity for the ground of their excellency.

1. If the writings of Moses may be considered among the most venerable and authentic records, I think I can prove my point even from the Pentateuch. A plural substantive and verb singular in the very first verse in the Bible, united in a description of the act and agent in creation, convey, if not a direct proof, yet a very strong intimation, of a plurality of persons in the Godhead, and of their oneness in point of essence. But that truth is more expressly declared, when upon the fall of man Jehovah says, "The man is become as one of us." Gen. iii. 22. —The history of the first transgression is re-

corded in the same chapter. And the effects of it soon appeared in the murder committed by Cain against his own brother, and in the flagrant wickedness of one of his descendants, that infamous polygamist Lamech. The communication of the original taint from father to son is so expressly recorded by Moses, that when St. Paul says, that “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” he does not speak more intelligibly, than when the Jewish Lawgiver says, that “Adam begat a son in his own likeness;” Gen. v. 3,—“in his own,” as contradistinguished from the divine image, in which he had been created. What words can more forcibly describe the total and desperate apostasy of the human heart, than the following? “And God saw that *every* imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was *only* evil *continually.*” Gen. vi. 5. And what was the universal deluge, but a tremendous comment on this humiliating truth? And, lest it should be presumed, that postdeluvian wickedness was less flagrant than that which provoked God to destroy the inhabitants of the earth with a flood, or, that human nature was materially altered for the better, David says, that “God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. But, behold! they are *all* gone aside, there

is none that doeth good, no *not one.*” Psal. xiv. 2, 3. A passage of scripture this, which the Apostle Paul quotes in Rom. iii. “to prove that both Jews and Gentiles are *all under sin.*” Rom. iii. 9.

2. The appointment of sacrifices, as typifying the way of salvation through Christ, appears to have been one of Jehovah’s earliest institutions after the fall. For the flesh of those animals, with the skins of which the Lord God clothed our first parents, was probably offered up as a sacrifice; the one, prefigurative of the expiatory death of Christ, and the other, of the imputation of his righteousness, that best robe, with which the nakedness of guilty sinners is covered from the eye of God’s justice. This supposition respecting the appointment of sacrifices immediately after the fall, appears to be confirmed by the conduct of Abel. The great characteristic of his piety consisted in the presenting to the Lord “of the firstlings of the flock.” Gen. iv. 4. This act, which implied a consciousness of his guilt, and a dependence on the great propitiation of the Messiah, was done in faith; and, therefore, “Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” Heb. xi. 4. The same institution, which Jehovah appointed to Adam and his household, and was continued through the patriarchal æra,

became at last one of the principal ceremonies in the law of Moses. The necessity of an atonement for sin was promulgated in every beast that was slain; and the great truth was not only kept up by the solemnity of an annual festival, but also by a daily sacrifice. The blood poured forth upon these occasions was called the blood of atonement. The constant repetition of sacrifices was intended to preach that unalterable maxim, common both to the law and the gospel, that “without shedding of blood is no remission.” And what the economy of Moses exhibited in shadowy types, was at last illustrated substantially in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who “hath offered one sacrifice for sin, and hath put it away by the offering of himself once for all.” Heb. x. 12. So that both law and gospel unite in proclaiming to the inhabitants of the earth, that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved;” but the all-meritorious name of the Lamb of God. Acts, iv. 12.

3. If we require the testimony of the prophets, their unanimous suffrage is ready to confirm the truths I am pleading for.—Can the doctrine of *original sin* be more explicitly or feelingly taught, than in the confession of the Royal Psalmist? “Behold I was shapen in ini-

quity, and in sin did my mother conceive me!" Psal. li. 5; or, than in the description of the human heart by Jeremiah? "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9. The glory of the Lord of hosts in Isaiah's vision, (chapter vi. compared with John, xii. 41, and Acts, xxviii. 25,) was the glory of the Trinity: and what words can more expressly or more sublimely delineate the divine nature of Jesus, than those of this enraptured prophet, when he styles him "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Isa. ix. 6. The same inspired writer, who is very justly styled the evangelist of the prophets, declares, in language equally intelligible and sublime, the doctrine of our Lord's vicarious satisfaction, of the translation of our guilt to him, and of his righteousness to us, in his 53d chapter. "And the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all—for the transgression of my people was he smitten—by the knowledge of him shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." Verse 6, 8, 11. The same truth is taught by *Daniel*, when he prophesies, that "Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself; that he should make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness." Dan. ix. 24, 26. *Zechariah* speaks of



the sword of justice as drawn against the "man that was Jehovah's fellow," and of the "fountain of his blood opened for sin and uncleanness." Zech. xiii. 1, 7. When we assert that sinners are justified before God, only by the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, apprehended by faith, to the exclusion of all works in point of merit, we think ourselves authorized to do so by the authority of the prophets and of the apostles. "This is his name," says Jeremiah, "whereby he shall be called the Lord our Righteousness." Jer. xxiii. 6. And Habakkuk speaks the same truth, when he says, that "the just shall live by faith," Habak. ii. 4, compared with Heb. x. 38. The work of the Holy Ghost, for the purpose of cleansing the heart from the love of sin and the dominion of inward idols, is described by Ezekiel under the similitude of applying clean water to the body. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean—a new heart also will I give you—and I will put my spirit within you." Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. The same divine agency is by Malachi compared to the operation of fire on metal, to purify it from any adherent dross: Mal. iii. 3. And our blessed Lord himself hath compared the Spirit's influence to the effects produced by these two elements respectively. To all these, we may superadd the testimony of Joel: "And it shall

come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Joel, ii. 28. For though this promise, as quoted by Peter in Acts, ii. 17, relates principally to the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, yet it comprehends also a prediction of his saving influences to all that believe among Jews and Gentiles.

4. That God hath loved his people from everlasting, Jer. xxxi. 3,—that he will "rest in his love," Zeph. iii. 17, without variableness or shadow of turning—that "he knoweth," with a peculiar and discriminating knowledge, "them that trust in him," Nah. i. 7,—that "he delighteth in mercy, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage," Mic. vii. 18,—that "salvation is of the Lord," Jonah, ii. 9, and must be a glorious certainty, since its contrivance and execution are both the Lord's—that he will "bring again the captivity of his people," Amos, viii. 14, and "heal their backslidings, and love them freely," Hos. xiv. 4,—that "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but that the kindness of the Lord shall not depart from his people, nor the covenant of his peace be removed," Isa. liv. 10,—are glorious truths, expressed in scripture language, and corroborated by the concurring testimony of the prophets Jeremiah, Zepha-

niah, Nahum, Mical, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah.

As I have already made an appeal to the inspired writers of the New Testament, I shall not reiterate their testimony ; though, as it is so very copious, it would be no difficult matter to produce new and additional evidence to authenticate the great doctrines which I have undertaken to defend. Suffice it to observe, that if revelation had been confined to the contents of the 6th, 10th, and 17th of St. John's gospel ; from those three chapters alone we might collect materials sufficient for laying the foundation, and rearing the superstructure, of the temple of truth. In that small portion of sacred scripture you have the whole gospel epitomized ; and that, not by the opinion of an apostle, but by the infallible authority of that great Prophet, " who spake as never man spake," and from whose judgment there can lie no appeal.

It would be a task far from difficult to collect the opinion of the primitive Fathers on these subjects, and to point out their coincidence with the doctrines of the established church. Those of them that flourished nearest to the days of the apostles, such as Tertullian, Irenæus, Justin Martyr, &c. and those venerable ecclesiastics that presided at the council of Nice

in Bithynia, and united, at the instance of Constantine the Great, in condemning the heresy of Arius; or the not less respectable names of Augustin and Hierom, who so ably defended the truth against the subtleties and errors of Pelagius;—are authorities in our favor, not only venerable for their antiquity, but, what is more valuable, for the purity and consistency of those systems, in which they guard the truth and combat error, even when abetted by such heresiarchs as Arius and Pelagius; the former at the head of those, who blaspheme the Deity of the Son of God; and the latter, of those that deny the fall. But, to come nearer home. In the reign of James I. several of our English bishops were sent over by that monarch to the synod of Dort, which was convened for the purpose of examining and condemning the tenets of Arminius. Among these the names of Bishop Hall, and Davenant, shine with distinguished lustre. In the reigns of Edward the VIth, and Queen Elizabeth, the doctrines contained in the 39 articles, and the two books of *homilies*, received the sanction of both houses of parliament; and the former were compiled expressly for the purpose of “avoiding diversity of opinions.” The doctrines contained in them receive no small recommendation from such excellent reformers as Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley,

Hooper; men that sealed the truth with their blood. Let any man of common honesty and candor but read over the homilies and articles, and then say, whether they do not avow, as consonant to the sacred scriptures, those tenets, which, by many, and even by persons that have subscribed them, are, in the present day, branded with terms the most opprobrious. I appeal to the common sense of any man, whether the *1st Article* does not expressly and unequivocally receive the doctrine of *the Trinity*—the *2d*, the divinity and consubstantiality of the Son with the Father—the *9th*, the doctrine of *original sin*—the *10th*, the inability of the human will without the prevenient operation of the grace of Christ—the *11th*, the nature of *justification*, not by works, but by the merits of Christ—the *13th*, the inefficacy, and even sinfulness, of works antecedent to “the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit”—whether the *15th* does not disavow the notion of impeccability in this life—and whether the *17th* does not as expressly, but more copiously, and, if possible, more unambiguously, state the doctrine of election.

A solemn subscription, and as unequivocal as solemn, to these doctrines, is required of every man that commences a minister in the establishment. As long as we preach these doctrines,

we act consistently with the sincere attachment which we promised to her interests. And will any person be bold enough to assert that these doctrines are *new*? when they manifestly claim, at least, the æra of the reformation as a sanction for their antiquity? Whether they be true or false, is not the question immediately under consideration. *That* has been discussed already. But are they *new*? Or, are they not the discriminating doctrines of the Church of England? If they are not, how came a number of the clergy a few years ago to associate at a tavern, and there to project a petition to parliament for easing their consciences from the burden of subscribing them? And why do their brethren among Arians and Socinians at this time so bitterly regret the existence of these doctrines amongst us? I grant that to two sorts of people they may appear new; either to those, who never heard them before, or to such as “are lost” to all the light and power of truth, “in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” 2 Cor. iv. 4. Or they may be reputed so, by those who never took the trouble to read the articles of their own church. And it is not a little remarkable,

that they are most forward to bring this charge, who are the most incompetent judges of the matter.

In order to do the work of Satan, and prejudice people's minds against the truth, it has been the industrious contrivance of some to call certain systems by some obnoxious epithet of novelty, enthusiasm, or fanaticism. Whether these words have some meaning, or none at all, is never inquired by the vulgar. Nor does it appear to be ever the wish of those who use them, to give any explanation of them. If they can only frighten men from the truth, and the preachers of it, by the bugbear of some obnoxious appellation; *they* are satisfied, and so is the *devil* too. But the application of hackneyed epithets, we esteem the effect of ignorance, want of politeness and candor, and often the refuge of enmity against the gospel; which, when disarmed of arguments, and stript of every plea for its unreasonable opposition, at last flies to the scorner's chair to call names, and vent the poison of asps in calumniating and traducing, when it can do nothing more. But "none of these things move us; neither count we our lives dear unto us, so that we might finish our course with joy; and the ministry, which we have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Acts, xx. 24.

We beg, however, brethren, it may be remembered, that the application of any name, by which the laborious and faithful ministers of Christ are distinguished from those who live in indolence and luxurious ease, we esteem an honor ; because we recollect, that even the blessed Jesus himself, who “ went about doing good,” was nevertheless stigmatized with names of the most diabolical import, and his apostles branded as men “ that turned the world upside down.” But, any epithet that conveys the most distant idea of propagating doctrines repugnant to those, which our reformers have given us in the articles, homilies, and liturgy of our church ; or any name that implies any infringement on the constitution or discipline of our most excellent establishment, we totally disavow ; and I must be excused, if I add, that to call men, who are so warmly attached to the interests of the Church of England, by names that imply the contrary, is both unjust and invidious. Although we honor many, who happen not to be within the pale of the establishment, and love all, who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, by whatever denomination they may be distinguished, (for, difference in non-essentials ought to be no bar to Christian Catholicism among the common friends of truth,) yet we profess to be of no party, and to call no man master upon



earth, but the great Prophet and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus the Lord. The very summit of our ambition is to acquit ourselves as faithful ambassadors of the Prince of Peace, and to see the interests of the everlasting gospel crowned with prosperity, in the conversion of sinners. Compared with this great end of our function, the consideration of worldly emoluments, or human applause, is lighter than vanity itself: for, to an enlightened minister of Christ, the salvation of immortal souls from sin and hell, is an event of infinitely greater moment than the temporal salvation of kingdoms and empires. To this great event he wishes to direct all his studies, prayers, and exhortations; and rejoices to spend and be spent, if haply he may be instrumental in saving one sinner from the damnation of hell. If, in the delivery of his message, any thing should seem *new*, as to *matter* or *manner*, the novelty is rather eventual than real. When the cause of God, and the interests of souls, are under consideration, who can help being in earnest? The highest degree of pathos, which sentiment, expression, and gesture united, can arrive at, will always fall far below the dignity of our subject, and the solemnity of our charge, when called to address an assembly of dying mortals, and to declare to them the whole counsel of God. However,

without controverting the objections made to a particular manner of conveying gospel truths, we do insist that the matter is agreeable to the system we solemnly subscribed at our ordination; and we defy any man living to prove, that the doctrines I have this day delivered, are *new*; unless the charge of novelty can be brought against the doctrines of the reformation. Examine them, brethren, with care and coolness of temper. Compare them with the scriptures, first; and then read over the 39 articles. If you love truth, you will do the first. If you love the Church of England, you will do the last. And if you have any pretension to candor of inquiry, or solicitude about your everlasting interests, you will not desist; till you have found an answer to Pilate's question, "What is truth?"

"Consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things!" 2 Tim. ii. 7.

## SERMON II.

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THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF GIVING THE HEART  
TO GOD, CONSIDERED AND ENFORCED.

[Preached at Nantwich, July 1, 1781.]

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“ *My son, give me thine heart.*” PROV. xxiii. 26.

IT is a very strong proof of the depravity of human nature, that the most persuasive arguments, that revelation itself can furnish, are insufficient to induce the children of men to seek the things that belong to their everlasting peace. When the world calls, and secular interest prompts, they want no spur to their assiduity, no incentive to their zeal. The greatest toil is sustained with cheerfulness, difficulties apparently insuperable are surmounted with ease, and no degree of solicitude is deemed excessive, although in the ardor of pursuit; the only object that presents itself, is either the fascinating phantom of pleasure, the accursed lure of gold, or the bubble of worldly honor, which often is

burst by the same uncertain breath that inflated it. But when God calls, either in the menacing language of incensed majesty, or in the attractive voice of parental mercy and pity; how slow to hear are the insensible creatures that are addressed! how unwilling to yield obedience to a call, that invites them to happiness, to heaven! Although the way into which they are solicited to enter, and walk, is the path of glory, honor, and immortality; yet how many objections are made, how many difficulties started, to impede or intimidate the heart in a pursuit of its best, its eternal interests! And, although present peace, as an earnest of permanent bliss in reversion; a sense of the divine favor, as a pledge of one day entering his kingdom; all the unsearchable riches of grace, and all the inexhaustible treasures of glory, are the substantial blessings held forth to sinners in the gospel of the blessed God; yet, how strangely is all this profusion of grace and goodness overlooked or contemned, even by those who are most interested in it! In the eyes of multitudes, worldly vanities possess more intrinsic charms than the eternal realities of the invisible world; He, who is "altogether lovely," has no form or comeliness, in the opinion of the gay, the proud, and the self-righteous; and all the glories of heaven itself are so depreciated in the estimate

of deluded mortals, that, in their false balance, a feather outweighs a kingdom, and a never-dying soul is of less value than the bread that perisheth.

An infatuation of so gross and of so perilous a nature, can arise only from some dreadful evil latent in the innermost recesses of the mind. This evil is *sin*, which hath depraved the soul's noblest faculties, and given it a corrupt bias, by which it is disinclined to that which is good, and precipitated to that which is evil. Otherwise, men would never act with such fatal inconsistency, as they appear universally to do, when the objects proposed to their choice are the temporary pleasures of sin on the one hand, and the unsearchable riches of Christ on the other. Were not something dreadfully amiss within, the human mind would not be so totally blind to its own favorite principle, self-interest, as to admit its weight, when worldly acquisitions are in view, and yet forget it, when even a vast eternity is at stake. What, but the utmost carnality and depravation of heart, can make men fly in their Maker's face, or rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler, by trampling under foot, what it is their duty and happiness to observe and reverence! And what, but the very foolishness of folly, can prompt them to prefer the slavery of the devil to the liberty of the sons

of God! Or what, but the most vitiated taste, can make them relish the foulest dregs of sensuality, and discover no thirst for those rivers of pleasure, that flow deep and pure at God's right hand!

Whatever the Father of mercies enjoins, must be a transcript of his law,—holy, just, and good. His counsels are replete with wisdom, and are admirably directed to the great end of making us better and happier. His service is founded upon principles the most highly reasonable, and leads to bliss of the most permanent nature. When he commands, he consults our good; and when he threatens, no less than when he promises, his end is to save. When he demands any thing of us, he only asks his own; and acquiescence here is salvation. And what but the most perverse repugnancy to the divine will can ever prevent us from complying with proposals, that equally involve in them our own happiness and the glory of God? O the hardness of the heart of man, that can make him a foe to himself, and an enemy to his God! Can any demand, for instance, be couched in terms more reasonable or more captivating, than those in our text? whether we suppose them as the affectionate request of Solomon to his son, or, as the tender and just requisition of one greater than Solomon to the sons of men? Hath not

God an indisputable right to our hearts? Is not his claim to them founded on reasons that derive their strength and cogency from the greatest and most gracious works of JEHOVAH? Ask creation; consult all the dispensations of providence; but especially that grand dispensation of grace and mercy in the gospel; and then say, who ought to have our hearts, but He, who made them, and bled for them? Oh! that when the important question is put, "Who amongst us will give God, the Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer of men his heart?" there may not be one negative voice in this assembly! And may he, who hath all power both in heaven and in earth, "who openeth and no man shutteth," effectually conquer every prejudice against the truth, while I proceed to consider; *First*, What is implied in giving the heart to God; *Secondly*, The tempers which ought to actuate us in making the surrender; *Thirdly*, The necessity of doing this, principally arising from the natural state of the heart; *Fourthly*, The motives to induce us to comply with God's reasonable demand.

I. What is implied in giving the heart to God? Now, in order to complete this important surrender, it is indispensably requisite, that unruly appetites should be subdued, and the most beloved lusts sacrificed;—the alienated affec-

tions restored to their original claimant, and set upon God as their supreme object,—and an outward evidence of the truth of this dedication be given, in an habitual consecration of our corporeal faculties, our time, health, families, fortune, &c. to the honor and service of the Lord.

1. It implies the conquest of passions, and the sacrifice of the most beloved lusts. These in the heart are like rebels in a state. They usurp the chief power; and, while they domineer, there “is confusion and every evil work.” Reason is subjected to the loose reins of impetuous passion. God, the rightful sovereign, is dethroned. His law is violated. His will despised. While Satan, that infernal usurper, gives laws to every faculty, and “leads the heart captive at his will.” And what renders this scene of anarchy and rebellion the more melancholy, is, that the heart naturally hugs its own chains, and delights to feed the vipers that spread poison and death through all its powers. From hence arises the cordial love of sin, and a delight in those sinful propensities, which lead to endless ruin. And from hence arises the difficulty of giving the heart to God: because it is requisite that every inordinate pursuit be checked, every tyrannical passion bridled, and every sin, whether gainful, or constitutional, or fashionable, be mortified, before the heart can



be emancipated from its slavery. For, how can it be free, while the tyrant sin reigns in it? Let none, therefore, boast of liberty, until the predominant lusts that lead him captive are given up, and sacrificed at the foot of the cross. Neither let any suppose, unless they wish to flatter themselves to their ruin, that their hearts are right with God, so long as they harbour internal adversaries, which he hateth. As well might they attempt to reconcile light and darkness, Christ and Belial, together; or to make the liberty of a Briton consist with the thralldom of a galley slave.

And here it seems necessary to observe, that our renunciation of sin must extend not to gross indulgences merely, but to spiritual wickedness, to internal favorite lusts, to the secret working of which no eye is privy, but God's and our own. Though the parting with them should exceed the pain that attends "the plucking out a right eye, or cutting off a right arm," the one the most tender organ, and the other the most useful member in the human frame; yet they must be given up; and not some, but all. Thus it is written: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved! How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Jer. iv. 14. "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his

cross, and follow me." Mark, viii. 34. No man, therefore, can be said to have given his heart to God, until he hath given up his sins, and until his heart hath been cleansed from the guilt, and rescued from the tyrannical sway of those vicious inclinations, by which he had been made the miserable dupe of Satan and the world.

It would incur equal danger and absurdity for any man to conclude that he is a partaker of the blessing recommended in our text, either because he may have *outwardly reformed*, or desisted from sordid and impious gratifications *through accident*. In the former case, the partial change is effected by a mere regard to reputation, without any real love of virtue, or hatred of sin ; and thus a degree of outward reformation, where the heart is not renovated in its leading principles, may spring from pride, and perfectly consist with the inherency of every corruption, which self-complacency and formality can nurture. Or the apparent alteration may be the result of that pain of mind, which is often occasioned by embarrassed circumstances, a distempered constitution, or a sullied reputation ; and is not seldom produced by some temporary pangs of legal remorse, or corrosions of natural conscience. When the hand of the Lord was stretched out against Pharaoh, he

seemed to relent and repent. But no sooner were the desolating judgments removed, and the apprehension of present danger ceased, but the impious tyrant “hardened his heart,” and gave evident proof, that service arising from servile fear is transient and deceitful, and that the obedience of a slave and that of a son differ very materially in this, that the one is permanent and voluntary, the other temporary and compelled. Belshazzer was filled with horror, when he beheld the awful hand-writing that announced his approaching doom. Felix trembles, when Paul “reasons” before him “of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.” And Herod “did many things” while he sat under the ministry of John the Baptist. But not one of these men trembled or acted to any saving purpose, because the secret attachment to the most abandoned lusts remained. Sin was too sweet in an adulterous heart to be given up for the awful warning of an apostle, or the intrepid reproof of the illustrious forerunner of the Son of God. So that many things may be done, and yet if *one* thing be omitted,—if the *heart* be not given to God—it annuls all the rest; and all the concessions and seeming remorse extorted by present sufferings, or the dread of future torments, are often as insincere as the reformation produced by them is

superficial. Besides, let us be extremely cautious how we conclude, that either ourselves or others are safe, because a degree of outward decency or freedom from grosser impieties may have taken place ; since it is very possible that one great evil may be exchanged for a *greater*, and the *last* state of some sinners may be worse than the *first*. Mat. xii. 43—45. A sepulchre, whited and ornamented to a high degree, may nevertheless be the seat of rottenness and putrefaction. So a reformed licentiate, where the renovation of the *heart* is wanting, has been often known to sink into the very dregs of formality and self-righteousness, and to turn out a virulent blasphemer of the most glorious and discriminating doctrines of the gospel. If the *heart* be not washed from the wickedness of domineering *pride*, *worldly conformity*, *fear of man*, *self-conceit*, and *unbelief*, to “ wash the outside of the cup and platter,” will avail nothing. “ Cleanse *first* that which is WITHIN,” is our Lord’s direction. Mat. xxiii. 26.

As to the other case alluded to above, it often happens that a degree of reformation may take place through accident, or the unavoidable course of nature. This happens either through old age, or those contingencies, which often suddenly deprive some, of the means of gratifying their lusts. When the vigor of constitution is

abated by declining age, or ruined by a long series of debaucheries; when health sinks with the lapse of time, or fortunes are exhausted by long extravagance; the aged become chaste, and the young, sober, *through necessity*. But neither, in numerous instances, forsake their sins in reality. Their sins have only forsaken *them*. This would appear evident to a demonstration, were both only placed in the circumstances that once contributed fuel to their passions. Were only youth, health, or fortune, restored, the aged miser would again add his love of lewdness to that of money, and the enfeebled or impoverished rake return to all his juvenile voluptuousness, with greater ardor than ever. Through all the varying circumstances of life, the heart of an unconverted sinner is still the same, and the sinner himself would be the same, if no such variation occurred, by which his pursuits are circumscribed, or his line of sinning altered. But where the heart is really transformed, former lusts are hated; the remembrance of sin is grievous; the burden of it is intolerable; and a desire to mortify it is deeply rooted, and universal. Pure principles are implanted. Noble passions predominate. Sublime desires and spiritual appetites attract the heart to God, and fix the conversation in heaven. From

whence it arises, that to give the heart to God implies,

2. A restoration of the alienated affections to their original claimant, and a placing of them upon God as their supreme object.

The heart is the seat of the affections ; and the principal of these is *love*. According to the nature of the object, or the degree with which some objects are pursued, this affection becomes either innocent or criminal, sordid or sublime. If sin in general be the object, love is then the most diabolical passion, and pollutes every other faculty of the mind. Before the fall, it was the glory and happiness of man to love God perfectly and incessantly. Since that melancholy event, it is his misfortune to be under the influence of a “ carnal mind φρονημα σαρκος” that is *enmity* against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Rom. viii. 7. Hence flows an innate propensity to love the world, and from the ignorance and pride of the heart to idolize *self*. This alienation of the affections is, in scripture, called adultery; and they who love the world rather than God, are branded, in the same unflattering pages, with the odious epithet of “ adulterers and adulteresses.” James, iv. 4. It matters not, *what* the thing is, to which we give a primary place in

our affections ; even though it may be a necessary, an useful, a lawful, or even an amiable object, yet if it be loved inordinately, or with a supreme affection, it instantly becomes an idol : insomuch that our Lord saith, “ He that loveth *father* or *mother*, *son* or *daughter*, more than me, is not worthy of me.” Mat. x. 37. Things unlawful, or of moral turpitude, are not to be loved at all. And things lawful are only to be loved in a certain degree. It is not the *love* of these last that is sinful ; but the *excess* or inordinacy of that love. In giving the heart to God, or restoring the idolatrous alienation of the affections to him, *that* is given back which was originally his property. He then possesses the supreme affection, delight, and homage of the heart ;—is the centre of its wishes, and the spring of its comforts. This is called “ yielding ourselves to the Lord.” 2 Chron. xxx. 8. And the grateful language of such a solemn surrender is, “ Whom have I in heaven but THEE ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside THEE ?” Psal. lxxiii. 25.

Where the affections are thus gained over, the other sublime faculties follow of course. The contrariety of the will is broken, and made to bend in submission to the divine will. Reason resigns its pretensions to the sacred authority of revelation ; and the intellectual powers

are extricated from the teeming darkness of nature, and brought, by the irradiating spirit, into the bright regions of light and liberty. And the memory is so sanctified as to become the faithful repository of sacred truth. Conscience is reinstated in her vicegerency in the soul; and being cleansed by the blood of Christ from the guilt and pollution of sin, establishes peace in the heart, and pours the balm of pardoning love into all its wounds. All the passions are made the willing captives of the prince of peace; and instead of rending the heart with their impetuous and clashing propensities, unite in forming concord and harmony there, by exerting their respective powers in subordination to the grace of God. Thus fear, joy, desire, hope, anger, sorrow, hatred, are no longer so many noxious springs fraught with poisoned waters, but convey to the heart, in their respective streams, the health and purity which they have derived from the fountain of life. Those things are dreaded, which had been once pursued with eagerness. Indignation burns against once beloved idols; and affection fixes on objects, that had formerly been rejected with scorn and contempt. The heart weeps over what it once rejoiced in; and bleeds at the remembrance of those things, which, but lately, perhaps, were the spring of all its shallow and unholy mirth.



Objects are now desired insatiably, for which the heart never before panted, and upon which the mind never bestowed one serious thought. Instead of living under the anguish of worldly disappointments, hope now plumes her golden wing, and stretches with a nobler flight towards the confines of a glorious eternity; leaves the sordid trash of earth below, and soars in joyful anticipation of heavenly realities. The slavish fear of the creature gives place to the filial fear of God; and he who was awed by the frown of a worm like himself, now reveres the great Omnipotent, who hath power to destroy both body and soul in hell. The love of the world is expelled by the love of Jesus; and the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, all lose their charms, or rather appear infinitely odious, when compared with even the reproach of the cross, much more when contrasted with the happy prospect of a crown of glory. The "sorrow of the world, which worketh death," is exchanged for that godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto life; and "joy unspeakable and full of glory," succeeds the bitterness of conviction of sin, and brings a foretaste of heaven. God, whom the heart once hated, and the sinner shunned, is contemplated in all his august and amiable perfections, with delight and wonder; while the humble

believer, enraptured with a view of him as reconciled to him in the Son of his love, gives vent to the fulness of his heart in the most glowing effusions of gratitude and astonishment.

“ \_\_\_\_\_ Thou my *All!*  
 My theme! my inspiration! and my crown!  
 My strength in age! My rise in low estate!  
 My soul's ambition! pleasure! wealth! my world!  
 My light in darkness! and my life in death!  
 My boast thro' time! bliss thro' eternity!  
 Eternity, too short to speak thy praise,  
 Or fathom thy profound of love to man!  
 To man, of men the meanest, ev'n to *me!*  
 My sacrifice! My God!—What things are these!”

YOUNG.

3. An outward evidence that the heart is given to God, appears in the habitual consecration of the corporeal faculties, of time, health, fortune, family, &c. to the honor of God.

As in every science some first rudiments or primary principles must precede the attainment of complete knowledge; and in every structure a foundation must be well chosen for the security of what is to rest upon it; so, in the great concerns of religion, some permanent principles must be rooted in the heart, before the sacred superstructure of holiness and righteousness can be reared in the life. Where the former are

implanted, the latter will follow of course ; as a good tree in a rich soil will necessarily produce good fruit. But this fertilization produced in the heart is the effect, not of natural goodness, but of efficacious grace. When, therefore, the citadel is stormed and taken, the out-works fall with it, in consequence. So that, as soon as the heart is given to God, outward fruits appear in the conversation ; without which, nothing can be more fallacious or fatal than the most towering profession. And, therefore, in the clause that stands in immediate connexion with the text, it is added, “ And let thine eyes observe my ways.” For, “ if any man be in Christ he is a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold all things are become new.” 2 Cor. v. 17. The conversation takes a new turn ; and pure words and true, issue from that mouth which was once filled with malice, blasphemies, and uncleanness. The feet are swift to bear the renewed sinner to the house of God, which once carried him to the haunts of the profane. Health is no longer consumed in the service of sin ; nor time wasted on the egregious follies of pleasure and dissipation. The body, once a co-partner with the soul in rebellion against God, is now the sacred temple of his in-dwelling Spirit ; and all the members are now “ yielded as servants to righteousness

unto holiness." Rom. vi. 19. And the principles, which lead to this universal dedication, are arguments of its genuineness, while they provide for its permanency: which reminds me of the second general head, under which I proposed considering,

II. The manner or temper, which should actuate us in making the surrender of all we have and are to the glory of God.

1. This great affair should be done *solemnly*. If reciprocal acts of covenant and amity among the children of men, require deliberation, and are executed in a manner the most serious and binding, where only temporal inheritances or transitory engagements are concerned; how much more deliberate and solemn should that act be, whereby the soul maintains an intercourse with the awful Majesty of Heaven, and soul and body, with their respective functions, are surrendered to the service of the Most High for ever! in which God is chosen as the soul's portion, and every thing is to be sacrificed to his injunctions, or given up to his care and guardianship! O with what profound reverence and self-abnegation should we make the tender of our hearts to Him, when his majesty, or our vileness, is considered. Commune with your own heart, therefore, and in your chamber," about this solemn act, and "pay thy vows unto

the Most High." Count the cost of surrendering your heart to him ; since, without due reflection, you may be disappointed and basely retract, when you hear that unless you deny yourself, and take up your cross, you cannot be his disciple.

2. No *reserve* must enter into any act of dedication to God ; much less into that, by which we restore him his own property. He is a jealous God, and will have the *whole* heart or none. He cannot, he will not bear a rival. He must have the pre-eminence in the affections. A divided heart is his abomination. Remember how the Lord's anger was kindled against Saul, because, when commanded to destroy the Amalekites, " he *spared* Agag and the *best* of the sheep, and all that was *good*, and would not *utterly* destroy them." 1 Sam. xv. 9. And ponder well the case of the rich young man, in the gospel, who approached the Lord Jesus with a seeming desire to give him his heart, but " went away sorrowful," when Jesus insisted on the sacrifice of his bosom sin, and recommended the utility of taking up the cross. It was upon that memorable occasion, that our Lord said, " A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven," Mat. xix. 23; that is, the difficulty of entering heaven is great to all who have riches, and rises to an impossibility,

where they are trusted in, and idolized. And the case is the same in every circumstance, where the heart is divided between any thing and God. So that, if there be a competitor within, that shares your affections, so as to rob Jesus of his prerogative over them, be assured you are yet in "the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." And the idol, whether it be the love of pleasure, or profit, or honor, or self, must be pulled down, or it will dethrone Christ, and ruin your immortal souls.

3. The heart should be given up *cheerfully*. In every offering presented to God, it is required, that we should not "give grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. ix. 7. This is a requisition more especially important, when the heart is the gift, and God the receiver. Why should we hesitate or grudge to give him *his own*? Instead, therefore, of entertaining one repining thought at the idea, we should rather rejoice that we have hearts to give the Lord, and that he is so condescending as to take them at our hands. Mark with what readiness and vivacity the sensualist and the pleasure-taker devote their time and affections to pursuits of the most trifling and sordid nature. These poor deluded idolizers of a perishing world, think no time too long, and no pains too great, though exhausted in a ser-

vice that is perfect bondage. They want no arguments to enforce conformity to the world, neither is the smallest compulsion necessary to drive them to their pleasures. Self-gratification is a sufficient inducement. Earthly things have an irresistible attraction. The current of their affections carries them away with an impetuous tide; and they glide swiftly and cheerfully along, though the objects of their false felicity are empty and precarious as the bubble, and the deceitful stream is wafting them with a rapid but imperceptible course, to the gulf of ruin. And shall these infatuated triflers be such willing slaves of Satan, such cheerful devotees to folly? and we engage in the service of the blessed Jesus, with reluctance or reserve? Shall they give the world and its God their *whole* hearts? and we *divide* ours with Him, who made them and redeemed them? Shall they *fly*, when dissipation solicits, and amusements call? and shall we *creep*, when the God of love cries "Follow me?" Forbid it gratitude, devotion, and common sense! Rather may we say, "Thine we are, Lord, by ties the most sacred, and obligations the most binding, and thou shalt have our whole hearts; for, thou art worthy!" And, in order to prevail on you to do this, give me leave to urge those,

III. Motives, which ought to prompt our compliance with the reasonable demand in the text. Now, these are founded upon the state of the human heart by nature—the many mercies we receive from God, the uncertainty of time, and the great danger of procrastination—and the nature of Him, who makes the demand.

1. If the heart were now in its primeval state of rectitude and purity, the requisitions of its attachment and obedience would be superfluous. But as it is very far gone from original righteousness, and estranged from its great original of blessedness and perfection; the effaced characters of holiness and purity must be restored by the agency of the Holy Ghost; and the foul stain of sin expunged by the blood of Jesus. Hence, the scriptures so strongly insist upon the necessity of “a *new* heart and a right spirit,” Psal. li. because the natural heart is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Jer. xvii. 9. And, as the same infallible authority declares, that “except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven,” John, iii. 3, see the important necessity of that great change, and of the act of voluntary surrender, by which it takes place. If you wish that obduracy, which steels them both against



threatenings and promises, softened ; and that corruption, which makes your hearts naturally the sink of sin, pardoned and subdued, you must give them to Jesus, for these great purposes. Fancy not that any power of the creature is sufficient to accomplish this. Sad experience may teach you the contrary. Therefore, until your heart be given to God, the fountain being evil, the streams must be so of course. So that, all your thoughts, words, and actions, like the foul exhalations that ascend from a stagnated and putrid lake, must partake of the polluted source, from whence they rise, and be infinitely odious in the sight of the Lord. And sooner shall God cease to be, or his word fail in its accomplishment, than any sinner, with an unchanged heart, shall enter his kingdom.

2. Consider the mercies of God. How great ! how numerous ! when traced from the moment of your birth, through the successive stages of life to the present hour ; or contemplated in his glorious works, and most merciful dispensations ! Divine mercy hath spared the life, which divine power first gave, and a long list of favors, as unmerited as they are numerous, hath swelled the account through every interval of your days. Fruitful seasons, exuberant plenty, outward peace, the possession of health, the light of yonder sun that cheers the world with his

prolific beam, and the clouds that drop fatness on the earth, vallies standing thick with corn, and liberty, that crown of national privileges, are all mercies, that have a voice, would sinners but hear it, that cries, " Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men!" Psal. cvii. 8. Reflect upon the mercies of redemption—upon the breadth, length, depth, and height of them, as they shine out in richest lustre in Jesus Christ; and say, Should you withhold your heart from the Father of these mercies? Because he is merciful, will you presume? And while he is dispensing his favors, will you rebel against him? Had not mercy interposed, your worthless heart had never been inquired after; and had God dealt with you as your sins deserved, you might have been at this moment beyond the reach of mercy for ever.

3. Know that another day may find you in eternity. And if the great work should not be done, who would be in your condition for ten thousand worlds? It is high time to awake out of sleep. You have, perhaps, sometimes seen and acknowledged the necessity of seeking the Lord. But, as if this were a kind of bondage in which you were to engage, or some grievous business you wished to postpone; you have been

putting it off to some distant period, as if life were at your own disposal, or religion the last thing a man should think of. Or, you wished to give your heart to God; but a constant succession of snares and rivals hath to this day prevented. Oh that you may procrastinate and delay no longer! Lest, while you are asking leave of the world and your lusts to give your heart to God, death should strike the fatal blow, and transmit you to the eternal world, to lament for ever your having trifled with your immortal soul, your time, your conscience, and with God.

4. I come now to urge the last motive, taken from the nature of the person, who says, "My son, give me thine heart." That person is God; the most high, and holy God; the Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer of men, who gave us a being, and, when in a state of apostacy, took our nature, and was manifest in the flesh, that he might save us from sin. The three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit, unite in the request; especially the second, who groaned beneath our weight of woes, and sunk under the burden of our imputed guilt; whose bitter passion bespoke the horrid nature of sin, and the greatness of redeeming love. It is Jesus, the chiefest among ten thousand, that asks your hearts, O sinners! They are the pur-

chase of his blood; and can you deny him his own dear-bought property? See him in his bloody sweat, or view him bleeding and mangled on the cross, and then say, whether he must not have loved your hearts, when Gethsemane's garden and Calvary's mount have been witnesses to the intenseness of his desire to win them? Fancy that you were present at the tragical scene of his sufferings, and that you saw him this moment nailed to the accursed tree; and that, while in this state of ignominy and torture, you were accosted with the following address from his precious dying lips:—"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see, if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow! Behold in my hands and feet the marks of my dying love; and see, there gushes forth a fountain in which the guilty may wash and be clean. While my temples stream with blood, they are disgraced with a crown of thorns that lacerate them, which I contentedly wear, that a diadem of glory may encircle your brow. My heart is big with sorrow, and upon my eye-lids is the shadow of death. My soul is transfixed with the arrows of Almighty vengeance, the poison whereof is the bitterest ingredient in my cup of sorrow. For your sins I suffer all this, and die to save you from death eternal. The last drop of my blood shall be shed to expiate

your guilt, and the merit of it shall cleanse the earth, and perfume heaven. My dying breath shall be spent in prayer for the persons who brought me to this shame and pain; and I shall rejoice in this travail of my soul, if you look to me for salvation. I die to win your heart. Do not plant additional daggers in mine, or tear open my wounds afresh by denying my request. O, my son! give ME thine heart."—Thus may we suppose the dying love of Jesus to address us. And who can withstand such philanthropy, or withhold his heart from a Redeemer, who asks it in agony and blood? A believer, contemplating his crucified Lord in such circumstances of love and sorrow, would say, with the poet,

“ O may I breathe no longer than I breathe  
 My soul in praise to Him, who gave my soul,  
 And all her infinite of prospect fair,  
 Cut thro' the shades of hell, Great Love, by thee!  
 Oh! most adorable! most unador'd!  
 Where shall that praise begin, which ne'er should end?"

And now, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and upon the authority of his sacred word, I beg leave to put the grand question; which I pray that every one of us may be able to answer in the affirmative, HAVE YOU GIVEN YOUR HEARTS TO GOD? I ask the question most solemnly, as one that must shortly

meet you at the judgment-seat of Christ ; where if either preacher or hearers appear without the blessing suggested in the text, it would be better we had never been born. Remember, as you will answer at the great and terrible day of the Lord, that I have this day begged you to give Christ your hearts. If you do, he will wash them in his blood ; he will make them happy, and keep them so. But, if the world engross your affections, and sin be suffered to tyrannize in your heart, the consequence will be horrible beyond all conception. Will you, therefore, *can* you, *dare* you deny a request, that involves in it your eternal happiness or misery ? May there not be one dissentient voice ! But, with the most unanimous and solemn surrender, may all cry out, “ Here are our hearts ; blessed Jesus, take them, and seal them eternally thine.” Amen and Amen.

## SERMON III.

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AN INVITATION TO THE GOSPEL FEAST.

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“ *Come ; for all things are now ready.*” LUKE, xiv. 17.

THE parable, from whence I have selected the text, resembles, in its general import, *that* recorded in Mat. xxii. 2—10. The design of our Lord, in both, is, to represent, under the similitude of a sumptuous feast, the rich provision, which he hath made for his people in the *covenant* of redemption;—the *suitableness* of that provision to all the effects and consequences of our fall;—the *medium* of its conveyance, the divine person and glorious salvation of the Son of God;—the extensive and merciful *invitation*, given in the gospel to participate of its rich blessings;—and the different *reception*, which that gospel meets with from the men of the world; some treating it with indifference and scorn, and others, through grace, embracing it

as the most acceptable message, that ever addressed the ears of mortals, and as the most invaluable gift, that God could bestow, or sinners receive.

These are the principal topics illustrated in both parables: the analogy, beauty, and important tendency of which must strike the mind of any person, whose eyes have been opened to see the worth of his soul, and the method by which its guilt is to be expiated and its pollutions cleansed; who is athirst for truth, and longs to experience that happiness, which only they feel, who know Christ and him crucified: by such an one, the blessings exhibited in the parable will be considered as the most gracious vouchsafement of Heaven; and the *call* given in the text, as infinitely superior in importance, to that which would invite the most indigent beggar to the table of plenty and munificence, or raise a fettered captive from the *terrors* of a dungeon to the splendor of a throne.

Though the parable, when delivered by our Lord, had a more immediate reference to the state of the Jews; yet, as Providence hath distinguished us by a similar greatness of religious privileges; and to abuse and slight these favors is a characteristic of our guilt, as it was of theirs; since, whatever was written aforetime was written for our learning; and it is a matter that in-



volves in its consequences of the most serious nature, whether we receive or reject that greatest of all the favors of Providence, the GOSPEL of the blessed God ; I shall take occasion to enforce the important invitation in the text, by considering : I. The nature of the provision to which sinners are invited : II. The extent and freeness of the invitation itself : III. The grand argument to excite obedience to the invitation, viz. “ All things are ready.”

1. As to the nature of the provision to which sinners are invited, it is represented under the similitude of a *feast* ; prepared in the counsels of the Trinity before all worlds, and exhibited in the fulness of time, when Messiah, the bread of life, came down from heaven, and “ gave himself a ransom for many.” A feast, where all is of God’s providing ; and in which, although the entertainment cost an immense sum, and infinitely surpasseth all the delicacies of nature, yet all is offered “ without money and without price.” Isa. lv. 1. A *great* feast, because of the *dignity* of him who prepared it, the rich *provision* made in it by the hand of munificent grace, and the *multitudes* that in all ages have been fed from this exhaustless store. It is called in the context a *supper* ; and the period in which the invitation was given is called *supper-time* ; perhaps in allusion to the period of

our Lord's incarnation, and of the promulgation of the gospel, which happened in the eve of time, and is therefore styled by prophets and apostles "the last days," Acts, ii. 17. Heb. i. 2, or last dispensation: not, that the blessings of redemption were *confined* to that period, or commenced only with the manifestation of Christ in the flesh. Abraham rejoiced to see his day; and he saw it, and was glad. John, viii. 56. And the gospel was preached to him, when Jehovah said, "In thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed." Gal. iii. 8. The promise made to our first parents after the fall was a virtual exhibition of the gospel feast; and the whole economy of Moses, with all its rites, types, and oblations, but "a shadow of good things to come," of which Christ is the substance. Heb. x. 1. Israel in the wilderness "ate the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink. For, they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ." 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. The prophets were raised up at different periods, to unfold the blessings contained in the original promise to preach Christ, and predict his "sufferings and the glory that was to follow." For, "to him give all the prophets witness," Acts, x. 43: so that, from the beginning of time, in the family of Adam, the days of the patriarchs, and

prophets, and the dispensation of Moses, the same truth was revealed that afterwards shone forth with superior lustre under the gospel dispensation; and believers then feasted by faith on that Paschal Lamb, that was at last actually offered up to take away the sin of the world. But it was not till after a period of four thousand years had elapsed, that the longings of the church of God were indulged with that "feast of fat things," Isa. xxv. 6, now exhibited in the gospel. As there is but one sun to illuminate both hemispheres, and his rays are sent forth in all directions; so there is but one Sun of Righteousness to both dispensations; and both are illuminated, though with different degrees of irradiation; the light vouchsafed to the church before the coming of Christ, resembling that of the "morning spread upon the mountains;" the evangelical light, like the sun in his meridian brightness. Yet, as the church is one, so is the sun that illuminates her; and that sun is the Lord our righteousness.

Some, guided in their interpretation of scripture, more by sound than by sense, and by the analogy of faith, have supposed, that the feast in the text, to which sinners are invited, is the sacrament of the Lord's supper; and they have added one fatal mistake to another, by assuming from hence a false authority of giving unlimited

and pressing invitations to sinners to approach that sacred ordinance; as if, because, when the bread and wine are prepared for the celebration of it, "and all things" in *that* sense "are ready," therefore every man, who receives the invitation, ought to "come." Without enlarging here on the extreme folly and danger of pressing men to come to the sacrament, before they have by faith come to Christ; I cannot help observing, that the scripture before us affords no room to justify their conduct, or to countenance the absurd comment, on which the temerity of it is founded. Not to say, that the parable looks back to a period long *before* the sacrament was instituted, and that the extensive invitation before us is absolutely incompatible with the state of communicants in general; it is sufficient to refute the interpretation imposed on the text only to observe, that a parable cannot delineate an ordinance consisting of outward symbols; since this would be to make one set of external images and metaphors explanatory of another; and even to make the latter, the *thing signified*, when it is itself *but a sign*. The nature of a parable, and that of a sacrament, may agree in delineating one subject common to both; but they cannot mutually represent each other. Thus, the sacrament of the Lord's supper is a feast, but it is only so as being in its

elements a representation of the body and blood of Christ. These are the "inward part and thing signified." But to those who receive the sign, without acting faith on the thing signified, the sacrament becomes no feast at all: they have no life or enjoyment in it; and through their unbelief it turns eventually into poison instead of food. So that what is the inward spiritual substance of that institution, constitutes also the divine realities couched under the metaphors in the parable. The supper in both is, Jesus crucified for sinners, with all the riches of his atonement and dying love; on which the soul of a believer feeds, as its richest repast.

This reasoning is further strengthened by the consideration, that in the corresponding parable in Mat. xxii. "the *kingdom of heaven* is said to be like unto a man making a great supper or a wedding for his son. Now, the kingdom of heaven never signifies a sacrament; but is used, when occurring in parables, to represent the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah; or, the manner in which he conducts the affairs of his church at large, with respect to the dispensation of the gospel, and the influence of his grace. And this observation leads us of course to examine one most striking circumstance introduced by St. Matthew into the correspondent

parable, as stated by *him* ; which is, that the feast was made upon occasion of “ a *marriage*, which a king made for his son.”\* The marriage is the union between Christ and his church, which he espoused to himself from all eternity in “ the counsel of peace which was between ” the Father and him. Ephes. v. 32. Zech. vi. 13. He agreed to be the church’s bridegroom ; to take her into covenant relation, and into a most sublime and intimate union with himself. He stipulated to purchase her with his blood ; and to transfer, as a dowry richer than heaven and earth, the glorious righteousness which he was to bring in by his life and death ; together with all the personal excellencies and divine perfections, which make him the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely. The day of his nativity was the day of his espousals ; and the hour of his death, the important hour of her redemption. Each ransomed sinner in his regeneration exemplifies this spiritual marriage ; and Christ does that actually in time, as fast as his redeemed are called, which he did decretively before the foundation of the world. And when all the purposes of his grace shall be finished,

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\* The Greek word *γαμος*, in Mat. xxii. 2, signifies a nuptial *banquet*, and is used in that sense by other writers.

and "the number of his elect accomplished," then shall the grand and final solemnization of the nuptials between the heavenly bridegroom and his church take place; and heaven and earth shall sing, "Let us be glad and rejoice: for the marriage of the LAMB is come, and his WIFE hath made herself ready." Rev. xix. 7.

It is, from hence, easy to perceive, that the high entertainment provided for sinners, elected, redeemed, regenerated, and united to Christ, is, the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, of which he is the messenger and the mediator; the conditions whereof were fulfilled by his perfect obedience and meritorious death and passion; and all the blessings comprehended in which, are as sure as the stipulation of the glorious Trinity, the inviolable oath and promises of Jehovah, and the redemption of Christ Jesus, could possibly make them. This gracious covenant is the eternal charter of all their privileges; and is, therefore, all their desire and all their salvation. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. They consider it as incapable of being ever invalidated by the requisitions of law or justice, the accusations of Satan, or the demerit of the foulest iniquity. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is GOD that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died."

Rom. viii. 33, 34. They behold the contents of this mysterious volume unfolded in the person of the Mediator—for, none in heaven or in earth was found worthy so much as to look upon, much less to open, the book with seven seals, but himself, Rev. v. 3,—and they see, with rapture, its glorious ratification by his testamentary death. Herein they read, not only their exemption from guilt, but also their well-grounded title to everlasting glory, through the imputed righteousness of God manifest in the flesh. O what a rich feast is this covenant to him who “takes hold” of it by faith, Isa. lvi. 4, to save him from sinking in the gulf of perdition, and to secure his everlasting salvation! With such a hold, he stands the shock of earth and hell, maintains his ground amidst ten thousand difficulties and dangers; sees his enemies all under his feet; sings in the ways of the Lord, that great is the glory of the Lord; and, “although the fig-tree should not blossom, or fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat, the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there should be no herd in the stall: yet,” participating of such a banquet, and standing upon such a rock, he “rejoices in the Lord, and joys in the God of his salvation.” Hab. iii. 17, 18.



The covenant *agreed upon* between the persons of the Trinity, is the feast *prepared*: the covenant revealed, is that feast *exhibited*. But, O what a mysterious and gracious exhibition! Behold it in the person, in the obedience, and death, of the Prince of Peace! in that profound mystery, “ God reconciling the world unto himself, by bearing their sins in his own body on the tree,” and putting himself in our law-place, to endure the dreadful curse and wrath of Jehovah! 2 Cor. v. 19. 1 Pet. ii. 24. Gal. iii. 13. When the Jews asked, “ How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Jesus answered, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” John, vi. 52, 53. His flesh and blood are the life, the feast, the salvation of sinners. The rending of the one, and the effusion of the other, constituted that great propitiation, by which sin is fully expiated, and inexorable justice completely satisfied. Remission of sins, peace with God, and peace in the conscience, all spring from this mysterious source. When the eye of reason, blinded by unbelief, views the Saviour in his humiliation, his poverty, his sorrows, his death; it sees no form nor comeliness in him, to make him an object of desire or attraction; pride abhors the sight, and self-righteousness turns away with disgust. But in that man of sorrows, covered with blood,

crowned with thorns, and nailed to the accursed tree, the believer beholds the most glorious and beautiful object in the whole universe of God; because he considers and trusts in him as that great sacrifice, in the offering up of which all the perfections of Deity shine forth in the most stupendous exhibition. Faith beholds ten thousand charms in a dying Christ, that captivate the heart, and fill it with love and amazement. The beauty and glory of all creation are eclipsed by the superior excellence of this bleeding Prince of Peace. "The chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely," are the favorite epithets, by which the enraptured soul speaks its love and admiration of Jesus: and "WHAT SHALL I RENDER?" is the astonished question it utters for a gift so great. What faith sees, and admires, it feasts upon. The flesh of Jesus is meat indeed, and his blood, drink indeed, John, vi. 55, when that appropriating grace is in lively exercise. Hence, every thing that belongs to the *crucified* Jesus, becomes a feast, for food and delight, for strength and refreshment. His blood and righteousness, his offices, and relations to his people; his several titles that characterize his compassion, and delineate his affection towards them; afford so many inexhaustible themes for delightful meditation; by which the souls of the weary are satiated,

and the conscience of the burdened sinner calmed, and set at liberty. His agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion, are healing springs, from whence ten thousand salutary streams of life, peace, and salvation, flow.

A wond'rous feast his love prepares,  
Bought with his blood, his groans, and tears!

Hence, the *promises* are a feast, because they are all sealed with his blood; and the *gospel* is a feast, because it publishes a free and complete salvation through his name;—that dear name, which, “like ointment poured forth,” diffuses an exquisite fragrance throughout all the promises, and communicates a “preciousness to the gospel, which makes it a rich savor of life unto life. And, when in that sacrament, which, by sacred and significant symbols, exhibits his dying love, the soul is enabled to eat the bread of life, and drink that stream that gushes from the smitten Rock, 1 Cor. x. 4; it then joins issue with the experience of the church in the Song of Solomon, “He brought me into the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love.” Solomon’s Song, ii. 4.

As the provision, which God hath been pleased to lay up in the covenant of grace, and the redemption of his Son, is calculated to commu-

nicate entertainment infinitely more exalted and refined, than what can be derived from the highest gratification of the senses; it follows, that the feast we are considering, is of a *spiritual* nature: it is a feast for the *soul*, that nobler part of us, which constitutes our real selves, and in which are lodged the quickest perceptions and most permanent susceptibility of pleasure. For, as the soul, in the extent of its desires, the capacious powers of its exertion, and the resources of its enjoyments, surpasses, in so great a degree, that earthly vehicle in which it dwells, and by an union with which its immortal vigor is so much repressed and circumscribed; so are the *pleasures* of the mind capable of being proportionably more pure, more lasting, more refined, and more sublime. But, as the senses are so intimately connected with the rational faculties, and form those inlets by which various pleasing sensations are conveyed to the soul; hence the enjoyments of the latter are called, in scripture, by those very terms which describe the exertions and distinguish the nature of the former. Thus believers are said, “to *taste* and *see* that the Lord is good,” Psal. xxxiv. 8; to “*handle* the word of life,” 1 John, i. 1; to “*drink* the river of pleasures,” Psal. xxvi. 8; and to “*eat* the bread of life.” And those objects in creation which strike the

senses with the most exquisite delight, or are best calculated to convey strength and nutriment to animal nature, are selected, by the inspired writers, as symbols of those resources, from whence the rich variety of a Christian's pleasures are derived. The blessings of redemption are compared by the prophet to *wine* and *milk*. Isa. lv. 1. This, the most nutritive—that, the most exhilarating—liquid in nature. The delicious droppings of the honey-comb were inferior in sweetness, in the opinion of David, to the word of God; and even “the most fine gold” had, in his estimation, no value, when weighed in the balance with that sacred treasure. What object in nature is so celebrated as the *rose*, for its fragrance? the *lily* of the vallies, for beauty? and the *sun*, for grandeur and utility? Yet, the pleasure, which the senses imbibe from the splendor of the one, or the perfumes of the other, is languid and transient, compared with the superior satisfaction which the enlightened soul feels, when contemplating the amiable perfections of that Redeemer, who was white in immaculate innocence as the lily; who, as the rose of Sharon, blushed in blood; whose sacrifice sends up an odor before the throne of God, that perfumes the heavens and the earth with the sweetest incense; and who as the Sun of Righteousness, risen with healing

in his wings, irradiates and cheers a world, naturally sunk in misery and sin.

From hence it follows, that there is a divine reality in true religion, of which the soul of a Christian is as sensible, as when the eye beholds a beautiful object ; the mouth tastes delicious food ; or the ear is charmed with harmonious sounds. To dispute or deny this, would be to rob Christianity of its essence, the gospel of its power, Christ of his preciousness, and the soul of its heaven upon earth ; and to place the sordid gratifications of the epicure and the brute upon a level with the enjoyments of a Christian living in happy communion with his God, exulting in a sense of his favor, and anticipating the prospect of everlasting felicity. But what pleasure is comparable, then, with that of all the faculties of the mind, engaged in intercourse with a reconciled God ? The *understanding* is feasted with views of the unsearchable riches of Christ. The *will* is captivated with sweet complacency in the plan of salvation through him. The *affections* banquet on the sense of pardoning love. And the *memory* is a repository of ten thousand sacred sweets, collected from that bed of roses, the scriptures of truth, and treasured up there, for the purpose of feeding and regaling each spiritual sense. Thus is the *whole soul* feasted. And this is the feast

of saints on earth ; and this, the banquet of the skies.

But, what endears the provision, and the God of all grace, who made it, is ; that it is a feast for *sinner*s—for sinners of the race of Adam—for the poor, the wretched, the guilty, and the undone—for those, who have nothing to pay, nothing to plead, and nothing to bring but misery and sin. And this leads me to consider,

II. The extent and freeness of the invitation itself.

We are here carefully to distinguish the general invitation of a preached gospel from the inward and effectual call of the Holy Spirit : because, though in the salvation of individuals they always co-operate, yet experience demonstrates, that, in innumerable instances, the influences of the latter do not necessarily and invariably attend the promulgation of the former. If they did, what multitudes would be saved ! Yet, that sinners may be left without excuse for their obstinacy and unbelief, the ministers of Christ are authorized to “ preach the gospel to every creature ;” Mark, xvi. 15 ; and to give a general call, to all that have ears to hear, to come to the gospel feast. And, whatever some may argue to the contrary, who affect to be “ wise above that which is written,” and who indulge themselves in a sort of mischievous re-

finement on the system of evangelical truth; yet it is evident, as well from the blessings which have particularly distinguished the ministrations of those, who give a general call, as from the fact recorded in the parable, of multitudes having been actually invited, who made light of the invitation; that the ministers of Christ are warranted to "set life and death before all," and to beseech them to "choose life, that they may live;" Deut. xxx. 15; yea, to exhort even a Simon Magus to "pray God, if haply the sin of his heart may be forgiven," though previously in "the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity." Acts, viii. 22. Yet they know that the power to "choose life," to "pray with the spirit," and the blessing of forgiveness, are all of God; that none can "come to Christ except the Father *draw* him;" John, vi. 44; and that a putrid corpse in the grave could as soon raise itself to life, or the "dry bones," Ezek. xxxvii. 1—4, in Ezekiel's vision, form themselves, by their own power, into an army of living men, as sinners "dead in sin," Ephes. ii. 1, can, without a divine agency, obey the invitation of the gospel. But, knowing that to obey, and not to reason against the divine command, is the duty of ministers; satisfied that secret things belong unto the Lord, who reserves the knowledge of the human heart,



and the distribution of his own favors, to himself; and being persuaded that God can make the breath of life accompany the breath of men, for the purpose of "quickenings *whom he will*," John, v. 21, they, therefore, in imitation of the prophet, who cried out, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!" say to sinners in general, "Come; for all things are now ready."

Besides, the gospel furnishes us with arguments so forcible, and contains in itself motives so constraining, as to warrant and encourage an address to all, as rational creatures. These arguments and these motives are principally reducible to this one, that "God commendeth his love towards us, in that when we were yet SINNERS, Christ died for us." Rom. v. 8. And, as all are in that predicament, it is upon a presupposition of that humiliating truth, and the suitability of a proportionate remedy, that I proceed to urge the gospel invitation upon all present, and to recommend the great provision of the covenant, because it exhibits a feast for *sinners*. This is the leading motive.

1. Had man retained his primeval innocence; to delight himself in God as his supreme portion, and to feast the powers of his soul in contemplating his glorious perfections; would have been an employ as easy as it would have been pleasant. In that case, the creatures would

have been considered as so many streams leading up to one common fountain of goodness and blessedness ; while the wisdom, power, and benignity, which they displayed, would have afforded to the mind an exhaustless fund of love, and praise, and wonder, through everlasting ages. But he sinned ; and by sin was cut off from the fountain of his happiness. The crown of honor fell from his head ; and the moral image of God, in which he had been created, was lost. So that whatever delight he may have once experienced, in a contemplation of the nature, works, and attributes of Deity ; it must have all ceased in the moment of his transgression. He could not, in his fallen state, have derived any comfort from a view of perfections, that bore the tremendous aspect towards him as a rebel against his Maker. But here grace interposed. The guilty fugitive is called back from his apostacy, and invited to a scene, where he beholds all Heaven's attributes receiving their respective claims, and all harmonizing together for the purpose of his salvation. Even stern *justice* itself advances to plead the sinner's cause ; and, in sweet concert with truth and mercy, to shower blessings on his guilty head. It points to Calvary ; there shews its vindictive sword lying at the foot of the cross, reeking with the blood of the slaughtered LAMB ; and cries with

a loud voice, " Deliver him from going down to the pit ; for I have found a ransom." Job, xxxiii. 24. Thus justice infinite, joins to spread the most delicious part of the gospel repast ; because it is written, " God is just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 26. And, though this part of the feast may be particularly disgusting to the disciple of Sozo,\* who tramples under foot the blood of the covenant, by denying its atoning virtue, and the Deity of him who shed it ; though it may be thought unworthy the notice of the proud Sceptic, who employs his philosophic wit to ridicule what he does not understand ; or, though the Pharisee should be so enamored with his dear idol, Self, as to fly from a truth that aims at pulling the dagon of self-righteousness down to the ground ; yet to one, who hath *felt* himself a sinner, and hath been made to *dread* the requisitions of God's justice as a bar to preclude the claims of mercy, no saying will appear so worthy of acceptation, as that " Christ Jesus came into the world to save the chief of sinners," and that God is both " faithful and *just*," when he extends forgiveness through his Son. 1 Tim. i. 15. 1 John, i. 9.

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\* Socinus's *Italian* name.

2. The condition of the persons, for whom the gospel feast is prepared, affords another most powerful motive to encourage our approach to it. The messengers in the parable were commanded to invite "the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind." Persons labouring under bodily infirmities, here represent poor sinners oppressed with spiritual maladies, and waiting, like the paralytic at Bethesda's pool, for a cure. Such crowd about the door of mercy; and only such will bless the hand of the great Physician. The call is general: but, to none will it be particular, or welcome, or effectual, but to those who *see* their wants, and *feel* their sins. The message of the gospel is manna itself for sweetness, to such as have received the sentence of death in themselves by the law. But the "*full* soul loatheth *this* honey-comb." Prov. xxvii. 7. It would be deemed an insult, to spread a feast for the full; to recommend a physician, or propose a remedy to persons in health; to offer water to him that is not thirsty, or a garment to him who is already clothed; to preach liberty to him who is not bound, or to point him to a fountain who is clean in his own eyes. But, though the "whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick," Mat. ix. 12, to such as see themselves foul and leprous, lost, and guilty, the

streams of Jordan were not more efficacious to eradicate Naaman's leprosy, than the fountain of Christ's blood is to cleanse from sins of the deepest dye. Say not then, "I am unworthy; my sins are too enormous to be forgiven; my spiritual maladies of too long standing, and too inveterate, to be cured; and my heart of too stubborn a mould, to be softened or vanquished." If all the enormities of Manasseh, the blasphemings and persecutions of Saul, the backslidings of David and Peter, and all the guilt of Magdalen, met in thy single person, so as to make thee a monster in iniquity; yet, all this accumulated transgression would be no more to the infinite merit of the Redeemer's blood, than the smallest cloud to the sun's meridian brightness, or the debt of one single mite to the treasure of an empire; than a drop to the ocean, or a grain of sand to the globe. "The blood of Jesus cleanseth from ALL sin." 1 John, i. 7. No patient ever failed under the care of that great Physician: no indigent beggar was ever spurned from his door: no heart ever remained unsoftened under the influence of his grace: no sinner ever perished at the foot of his cross. If you are weary and heavy laden, Jesus saith, "Come unto ME, and I will give you rest." Mat. xi. 28. If your heart be hard and unbelieving, he saith again, "My son give me thine

heart." Prov. xxiii. 26. If your transgressions are numerous and aggravated, he saith again, " Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. i. 18. If all the rebellion of the prodigal centres in thy conduct, and thou, nevertheless, art desirous of returning to thy God ; see, as in his case, the Father of mercies runs to meet thee, he opens his arms to embrace thee, his house to receive thee, his wardrobe to clothe thee, his heart to love and pity thee, and he spreads his table with the richest dainties wherewith to feed thy famished soul. And if thou still persist to think thy case even worse than his, and unbelief could furnish thee with ten thousand arguments to keep thee from coming to Christ, the following glorious promise is sufficient to overturn them all : " Him that cometh to me, I will in *no wise* cast out." John, vi. 37.

3. But, the last, and by no means the least motive, that I shall mention under this head, as an inducement to warrant and encourage the self-diffident and returning sinner to partake of the blessings of the gospel, is, that they are all the free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. vi. 23. " Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money, let him come." Isa. lv. 1. Indeed a moment's serious

reflection on the nature of the favors requisite to a sinner's salvation, such as, an interest in the covenant, peace with Heaven, pardon of sin, justification before God, the spirit of holiness, and eternal life; or on the greatness of the price, with which they have been purchased, even "the blood of God;" Acts, xx. 28; or on the demerit of those, who are the recipients of those immense favors;—might convince any one of the folly and presumption of expecting the very least, on the ground of personal worthiness; and yet encourage the hope and banish the fears of the weakest and most depressed sinner upon earth. "Think not" then, as the apostle said to Simon the sorcerer, "that the gift of God may be purchased with money"—with human merit. Acts, viii. 20. Were you a possessor of all the treasures of the earth, or of all the moral excellencies that ever centred in any natural man since the fall, you would not therefore be entitled to even the crumbs that fall from God's table. Yet the deepest poverty, the greatest unworthiness, are no bars to preclude your receiving the choicest of his favors, even eternal life. As, therefore, you *have* nothing to pay off the immense debt you owe, so nothing is required; no merit, no works, no recommendation whatever. All is purchased already; and all gratuitously tendered. Nothing remains for

the sinner, convinced of his lost condition, but to receive with an empty hand and humble heart what infinite beneficence freely offers. Mercy's door is open. The ministers of Christ invite you in. The master of the feast bids you welcome, saying, "Eat, O friends, drink; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Solomon's Song, v. 1. The table is spread with ten thousand rich and costly benefits. The banquet is a feast of love; and "the spirit and the bride say, *Come*, and let him that heareth, say, *Come*, and let him that is athirst, *Come*, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. xxii. 17.—But this leads me to urge,

III. The grand argument mentioned in the text to excite obedience to the invitation, viz. "All things are ready."

This head of the discourse will contain little more than a recapitulation of the principal subjects already considered; and they might, indeed, on that account, be thought superfluous. But, as upon occasion of a sumptuous entertainment, it would engage the attendance of a guest more, to see presented all together the several delicacies to which he is invited, than to hear a logical discussion about their various qualities; I shall, therefore, now bring together in one view, all that a God of rich grace and profuse munificence hath exhibited in the gospel feast;



praying, if it be his blessed will, that all who hear the invitation this day may have grace to accept it.

“ All things are ready.”—The great *deed* is ready, that recites the covenant stipulations between the Father and the Son, and records the names of all the ransomed of the Lord; signed by infinite truth, and sealed with blood. Psal. xl. 6—9. Heb. x. 5—9.

The great *sacrifice* is ready; on which the fire of vindictive justice fell, in the day of our Lord's crucifixion; prefigured by the beasts that bled for a long succession of ages on Jewish altars; typified in Isaac, but realized in that propitiatory victim, the crucified Jesus. Heb. x. 1, 12.

A *pardon* is ready; procured for infinite offence; for crimes of the deepest dye; for sinners of the most flagrant complexion; and which speaks its value infinite, bought with the blood of God incarnate. Ephes. i. 7. Acts, xx. 28.

A *righteousness* is ready; wrought out by the obedience and death of Messiah; the imputation of which covers guilt, screens from the curse of the law; fulfils its precepts, and satisfies justice; a righteousness, which “justifieth from ALL things, and is *unto* all” as a free gift, “and” as a spotless robe “*upon* all them that

believe." Acts, xiii. 39. Rom. iii. 20. This is the wedding-garment. Mat. xxii. 11.

A *fountain* is ready; that gushes from the Saviour's side, with a mingled stream of water and blood; to wash away the guilt and filth of sin; of efficacy to purify from all uncleanness; where thousands have bathed their leprous souls, and in which thousands more may wash and be clean as an angel of light. Zech. xiii. 1.

A *provision* is ready; rich in inexhaustible supplies of *strength* for the weak, of *wisdom* for the ignorant, of *medicine* for the diseased, of *consolation* for them that mourn, of *bread* of life for the hungry, of *water* from a never-failing spring for the *thirsty*; and all in Christ, free for his people as the air they breathe, and deep in boundless fulness as the ocean. John, i. 16.

The *Spirit of holiness* is ready; to change the desert of the human heart into an Eden, and to make springs of grace arise, where streams of bitterness and pollution flowed before; to take of the things of Christ, and shew them in all their riches to the poor and contrite; to form the new creation, and take away the heart of stone. Isa. xxxv. 1. Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

The *promises* are ready; to attest the truth of God; to seal the salvation of Christ; to give encouragement to the weary and heavy laden

to cast their burdens on him ; and to delineate his all-sufficiency : in him they meet : in him they are all yea and amen : from him they derive their preciousness, and every one of them is as unchangeable as the God that spoke them. 2 Pet. i. 4. Mat. v. 18.

The *Father* of mercies is ready ; to receive the returning prodigal, to blot out his rebellions, and love him freely. The *Son* is ready ; to plead the purchase of his blood, and carry the sheep that was lost into the fold of his flock.

The *ministers of the gospel* are ready ; to preach deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to instruct the ignorant, and guide their feet into the way of peace ; and to rejoice in seeing the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul in the salvation of sinners.

*Angels* are ready ; to take up their harps of gold, and tune them to notes of the sweetest harmony ; to make the heaven and the heaven of heavens resound with praises to Emmanuel, and with joy over one sinner that repenteth. Oh ! that they may repeat that anthem 'to-day, which they have had occasion to sing, whenever souls have been brought home to Christ ! These blessed spirits watch with eagerness the effects of the gospel-message ; and when any

one sinner obeys it, they fly with the good news to the realms of light, and diffuse fresh joy through all the spirits that surround the throne. But if angels could weep, surely they would drop a tear, with sorrow and surprise, to see sinners spurn a feast, which their Creator prepared, and to which they themselves would have been proud of an invitation.

Come, then, ye that dread the wrath of God, and wish to escape from those sins that have exposed you to it; ye, who are oppressed with their intolerable load, and can find no relief from all the expedients you have hitherto adopted; O come to this sacred feast of redeeming love! Multitudes, whose case was worse than yours, have been admitted to it; have found the blessings they stood in need of, and are now feasting around the throne of God and of the Lamb. They, like you, were afraid to come; and their unworthiness, which should have driven to Christ, kept them, for a long time, from him; till, having at last seen all resources fail, every creature a broken cistern, and all their works and duties but miserable comforters and physicians of no value; they were obliged to go with all their complaints, and wants, and wounds, to him, who is the sinner's forlorn hope; and in Jesus they met with a physician and a friend: He bound up their wounds,

supplied their wants, removed their burdens, spoke peace to their consciences, and shewed them all the riches of his grace and righteousness to comfort and support. One look by faith to his bleeding sacrifice, dispelled the gloom that covered their desponding minds, and filled them with hope, and joy, and peace. They only wonder now, that they should have so long doubted of his sufficiency and love; and, if any thing *could* interrupt for a moment the bliss of saints above, it would give them pain, even in heaven, to reflect, that they should have ever entertained a suspicion of Christ's ability and willingness to save; or have hesitated to come to the gospel feast when God himself invited. But their doubts are now for ever done away; and it magnifies the riches of sovereign grace, that Jesus conquered and pardoned the unbelief, that gave the lie to his promises, and depreciated the great remedy of his atonement. Yet, having "come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," they hunger no more, neither thirst any more: but the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, doth feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters; and God hath wiped away all tears from their eyes." Rev. vii. 14, 16, 17.

As the feast recommended in the text is of a sacred nature, it can of course afford no entertainment, and give no encouragement, to those presumptuous professors, who dare "to sin because grace abounds;" who take occasion, from the sumptuousness of the gospel feast, and the benignity of its Founder, to quote his very favors in justification of the most abominable licentiousness of manners; and sit down to his table only to insult him for the liberality that spread it. *Grace*, it is true, and grace alone, presides throughout with unrivalled glory, in contriving, accomplishing, and applying the great plan of salvation through the Redeemer. And though that grace confers all its favors gratuitously, and strongly presupposes the guilt and unworthiness of the recipients of them; yet as personal holiness is one of the favors it communicates, and makes a considerable branch of the evidences of a sinner's salvation; they who leave it out in their pretended systems of evangelical truth, or disregard it in their walk and conversation, are convicted by the very fact of fatal error on the one hand, as well as of practical impiety on the other. For "the grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present world." Tit. ii. 12. Whoever

sits down to the banquet of redeeming love, is supposed to rise up with a heart overflowing with gratitude to Jesus for the blessings imparted to him, and to go away more wise, more happy, and more holy. To act differently, would be to imitate the outrage of a victorious army rioting on the spoils of the vanquished, and intoxicating themselves with the fruits of their Commander's conquests. Christ hath conquered for us; and the gospel feast is the consequence of his glorious victory over sin and hell. Believers conquer and feast with him. But their triumph ought to be sober, and their mode of rejoicing suited to the dangers they have escaped, and the sacred service in which they are engaged. But they who make Christ, either in their systems or their practice, "the minister of sin," bear his name in vain, or expose it to reproach in the face of the world. The gospel, therefore, spreads no feast for the Antinomian; and, where it is abused, the food which it exhibits is turned into poison, and proves a savor of death unto death. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Ye devotees of pleasure, ye lovers of the world, ye egregious triflers with your immortal interests; ye, who, though hastening to your

graves, are still sporting on destruction's brink, and indulge a false and fatal levity, though the precipice is before you, and one single step would determine your doom for ever; ye, who have been pursuing phantoms, and grasping at shadows, while you suck happiness in a world lying in wickedness, and, amidst all your cares and schemes for this world, forget that you are to die, neglect your souls, and never take one solemn anxious thought about eternity; to you also I bring the invitation in my text: "Come; for, all things are ready." I invite you this day, in the name of my great Lord and Master, to Christ, to happiness, to heaven. Ye have been long toiling for that which is not bread, and spending your strength for what can yield little satisfaction in life, and none at all in the hour of death. Still time flies with its wonted velocity; and the king of terrors is drawing from his quiver the arrow, that shall ere long lay you in the dust. Satan, the world and sin, strongly unite to keep you in their servitude; and spread ten thousand baits to allure you to destruction. But shall their call be obeyed? and God's invitation disregarded? Shall hell be preferred to heaven? the care of your bodies to that of your souls? Shall time engross all your solicitude, and eternity, dread eternity, none? Shall the adversary of God and man call



with a more attractive voice, than he who bled for sinners? and the biting pleasures of sensuality, be preferred before the joys that are at God's right hand? God forbid! O sirs, pause a moment! Consider what you are, whither you are going. Your souls are at stake, and you must soon stand before the living God in judgment. Obey the call of the gospel; and all shall yet be well: disobey it; and the call itself shall be more than a thousand witnesses against you: and he who gives it will be clear of your blood. But, embrace the invitation; and my soul shall rejoice over you, even mine; and you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable, when the Judge comes in the clouds of heaven, and time shall be no more. Amen.

## S E R M O N IV.

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 THE CONTRAST.
 

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*“ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

ROMANS, vi. 23.

It appears, at first view, rather extraordinary, that there should be any opponents of the doctrine of original sin; since, not to say, that it has a voucher for its existence in the heart of every individual son of Adam, and is corroborated by the testimony of melancholy matter of fact; upon the acknowledgment of this doctrine depends every truth of revelation; and more especially that, which relates to the redemption of sinners by the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God. Indeed, the entire system of the gospel stands or falls with it. The truth of man's apostacy from original righteousness forms a grand and necessary link in

the golden chain of evangelical doctrines. Take *that* away, and the coherence between the rest is broken of course; and, by the fatal disruption, the fairest hopes of a sinner are torn up by the root, and all his bright prospects into eternity clouded and obscured. For, it is upon a pre-supposition of man's depravity, helplessness, and guilt, that a propitiatory sacrifice hath been offered up, and a foundation for peace and pardon laid in the cross of Jesus; that a remedy hath been offered, proportionate to the depth of our malady, and a proclamation of mercy issued out, from the throne of God. Blot out these inestimable benefits, then, and what is man?—an inheritor of sorrow and sin, borne rapidly along by time's impetuous tide, and, like a ship without a rudder or sails, at the mercy of every storm; liable to be shipwrecked in death, and to sustain an irreparable, an eternal loss; without one cheerful beam of hope to guide him through the gloom of adverse dispensations, or to light his footsteps in the valley of the shadow of death.

A denial of the fall is an absurd effort to dispute a fact the most incontrovertible, to subvert the foundations of Christianity, to bereave sinners of their choicest hope, and virtually to supersede one of the most necessary, and most glorious works of God. For, what is redemp-

tion, if we are not "by nature the children of wrath?" Ephes. ii. 3. Would it not, in that case, be an unmeaning and superfluous undertaking? Why did the co-equal Son of the Most High leave the bosom of his Father, to pay a ransom of infinite value, if there were no captives to be redeemed? Or why did he, in unparalleled mercy, quit his throne "to seek and save those that were lost," if mankind were not in that unhappy predicament? What is it that places the love of God, and the philanthropy of the Friend of sinners, in the most captivating and admirable point of view? It is the helpless and guilty condition of the race of man. This is the foil, that sets off redemption to infinite advantage, and that reflects such unrivalled honor on the gracious Author of it. But deny the fall, and redemption shines no more; and all the glory of him, who contrived and executed the plan, is destroyed at once. Whereas admit that humiliating fact, and you hear all the harps of heaven tuned to the praises of Jesus, and see him adorned with the crown of salvation; while men and angels join their loudest and most grateful tribute of thanksgiving to that condescending Saviour of sinners. The most variegated and lively tints that form the rainbow, are painted by the reflection of the sun's rays on the body of the darkest cloud. So, it is on the

gloom of our apostate nature that the rays of the Sun of Righteousness are reflected with the most conspicuous lustre; and it is even by that dark medium that all the perfections and attributes of Deity shine out with the greatest harmony, and the most wonderful irradiation. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The text exhibits a surprising contrast; and the design of my improvement upon it, is to consider separately, and oppose to each other, the constituent parts of that contrast; to the end that we may enjoy an opportunity of seeing, how low human nature hath been sunk by sin, and to what a height of exaltation it hath been raised by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one view will help to inspire gratitude into the breast of a saved sinner; the other will give him cause for self-humiliation, and afford him an inexhaustible topic for praise and wonder, through everlasting ages. This contrasted representation, like a happy mixture of light and shade in a well-executed piece of painting, will place the great doctrines I am to insist upon, in such an advantageous point of view, as to display the consistency, connexion, wisdom, and beauty, of the whole. From whence we shall see, of course, that, though the text presents a dark side, in which the principal and

awful figures in the back ground are “sin and death;” yet, like the pillar of a cloud and fire that followed the camp of Israel, it has a bright side too, sufficiently luminous to guide the Christian pilgrim through the wilderness of this world, and to light him to glory, with safety and triumph.

The first thing to be considered is, that “the wages of sin is death.” But, as death is an event so humiliating and so formidable, let us attend a little to the nature of that great evil that produces it.—According to the definition given by an inspired apostle, “sin is the transgression of the law”—of that moral law, or rule of rectitude, which had been originally written on the heart of man, and which, when the characters of it were obliterated there, by the first act of disobedience, was afterwards inscribed on two tables of stone. A circumstance that wisely suggested the propriety of placing the decalogue in the most conspicuous part of our churches; to the end, that whenever we cast our eyes on these two sacred tables, and reflect on the sanctions and purity of their precepts, we might see our transgressions, and implore that mercy which God hath revealed through that Saviour, who is the “end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” The law is “holy” in its precepts, “just” in its requisitions, and “good”

in the end, for which it was originally given. It delineates, as it were, and transcribes the moral image of the Deity. And such is the rigor and extensiveness of its demands, that it not only condemns every the least deviation from the letter of its commandments, but it also takes cognizance of the thoughts of the heart, as well as the actions of the life. "The law is spiritual." Rom. vii. 14. And its spirituality extends to the most latent recesses of the mind. Its penetrating light breaks in upon the desires and inclinacions of the heart, in their darkest retreat, and condemns sin in embryo, as well as when it "is brought forth" into actual commission. Having originated in the wisdom of the supreme Legislator, and having been appointed as a rule of life and a test of obedience, to protect the interests of the divine government in the world, it stands as unchangeably pure in its nature, and as unalterable in its requirements, as the God, who gave it, is in his own immutable essence.

Behold sin, then, in this pure mirror. How is its deformity exposed, and its malignity enhanced by the purity of that law of which it is the transgression! Every sin, in a greater or less degree, aims at destroying the very existence of the divine law; and at subverting the dominion which Jehovah claims as his own indisputable

prerogative amongst his own creatures. Sin implies an effort to set up another in direct opposition to the supremacy of Heaven. It is a direct and gross insult upon the Majesty of God. It pours contempt on his legislative authority to make laws, and virtually impeaches his wisdom and justice in requiring obedience to them. Sin is rebellion against the Most High ; and its dreadful concomitants are anarchy and confusion. In its hideous deformity, it bears the impress of hell ; and, like that malign spirit that attempted to usurp the sovereignty of the skies, it carries the features of that black apostacy, that would have pushed from his throne the Holy One of Israel.

Such is the nature of sin. But trace it, in its origin, its consequences, and its effects, and you will perceive its aggravations swell in every view. See its fatal effects even in heaven itself. What disorder did it occasion among the armies of the skies ! When, after having lifted up an innumerable company of angels with proud rebellion against the throne of God, it plunged them, with Lucifer at their head, from the summit of bliss and honor, down to the inextinguishable flames and bottomless abyss of tophet. Or, go to Eden, and mark there the sad catastrophe of our fall. See our first parents arrested by the hand of justice, and, like



a pair of criminals, compeers in guilt and partners in woe, turned out of that delectable spot, where all the rich spontaneous gifts of nature concurred with the light of God's countenance, to make it a representation, in miniature, of the celestial paradise. See the angry cherub brandishing his flaming sword, placed as a vengeful guardian of the tree of life. Behold shame, sorrow, disease, and death, the melancholy attendants on the unhappy culprits! the earth under their feet, cursed with briers and thorns! and elements around them, armed with the thunder of their Creator's frown! Ask, what is the cause of this sad reverse of their former state of rest, peace, and fertility? The answer is, this hath sin done.

Consult the history of mankind since the fall, especially those faithful records given us in the inspired writings, and you will see one continued chain of successive dispensations, loudly declarative of the evil of sin. Why were the windows of heaven opened, and the fountains of the great deep broken up, to form that immense inundation of waters, that covered every part of the globe, and topped its highest hills; and, the little family in the ark only excepted, swept away all the inhabitants of the earth at a stroke? It was because "God saw, that the

*wickedness* of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. vi. 5. Why was Sodom consumed by fire from heaven, and that sink of sin converted into a lake of the most putrid and pestilential quality? Why did the earth open, and swallow up Korah and his company? or a succession of plagues depopulate and deluge with blood the Land of Egypt? How came Israel to fall by thousands in the wilderness? and in great numbers to be carried away into an enemy's country, and to wear the galling yoke of long, grievous, and reiterated captivities? What was the cause of their final dispersion? It was SIN that lay at the root of all these visitations. And the same evil that laid Babylon or Jerusalem in ashes, and annihilated the proudest empires of Greece and Rome, is to this day proclaiming its existence in the judgments that are abroad in the earth. If the pestilence walketh in darkness, or sickness destroyeth at noon-day; if war rages, or famine stalks through the land; if earthquakes make whole continents tremble, and spread devastation and death; it is SIN, that hath awakened these awful visitants of incensed justice, which will, all at once, be let loose upon a guilty world, in the great and terrible day of the Lord, to complete

its ruin, and give one final demonstration of the malignity of sin, by the conflagration of heaven and earth.

We have visited the Garden of Eden, to view there the melancholy origin and fatal effects of sin. Let us now go to another garden, where we shall see this great evil still more conspicuously displayed. I mean the garden of Gethsemane. Behold! *who* lies there prostrate on the ground! drowned in tears! and bathed in blood! What means that agony, which tortures his immaculate soul, and makes him “sorrowful even unto death?” What was the heavy load under which an angel is despatched from heaven to support him? Hark! how he entreats his Father, that, if possible, “the bitter cup might pass from him.” Follow him to Calvary. See him fainting under the load of his cross, as he ascends the hill. Now begins the tragical scene. Behold him extended on the accursed tree! Why, thou blessed Jesus, wert thou brought so low, and covered with such foul ignominy? Why didst thou suffer thy sacred head to be crowned, and lacerated with thorns? and thy hand to be disgraced with a symbol of mock royalty, when it might have been extended to the destruction of thine enemies? Was thy death, with all the circumstances of horror and shame that attended it, the just wages of any personal iniquity? No.

Thy nature was immaculate, and thy life unblemished. But it was sin imputed, that constituted the bitter ingredient in thy cup of sorrow; and our guilt transferred, that brought thee down to the chamber of death. They were our transgressions that pointed the thorns, and sharpened the nails that pierced thy bleeding head, and hands, and feet, and opened the current that flowed from thy heart. Thou wast "wounded for *our* transgressions, and bruised for *our* iniquities." Isa. liii. 5. O teach us to see the bitterness of sin in the depth of thy sufferings, and to stand amazed at the unexampled love that shines through them all! This will embitter sin to our hearts, and endear to us that blessed cross from whence the remedy for it flows, with the current of thy blood.

There is but one leading point of view more, in which the evil of sin is discoverable by the melancholy effects which it produceth; and that is, by the consideration immediately suggested in the text; which is,

That death is the wages of sin. This is a truth so obvious, that it hardly requires any argument, either to illustrate, or confirm it. The fact is, at least, incontrovertible. The notoriety of it hath been established by an intermitted series of mortality, through all the successive generations of men, from the beginning of the

world to the present day. "The fathers, where are they? the prophets, do they live for ever?"

But, though the event itself is indisputable, the cause of it, as well as the nature of that cause, are subjects of sharp controversy, with those, who, when unable to stand against the evidence of facts, transfer their contentious disposition to the revelation of God; and so wrest the scriptures to their destruction. All admit, that death is the inevitable lot of human nature, because the truth addresses our very senses. But some, with strange inconsistency, insinuate, and not only insinuate, but even attempt to give it the form of an argument, that, though all must submit to death, yet the event is not to be considered as the effect of the first transgression; or, at least, that death is no penal evil, or the consequence of any entail of original guilt: since, as they argue, it would be inconsistent with the divine justice to punish a whole race for the sin of an individual; and that, since so many good men die, death ought rather to be accounted a blessing, than a penalty. All this is reason as full of fallacy, as it is of danger, and is overturned to the very foundation, by the express authority of the word of God. St. Paul asserts, that "by *one* man, *sin* entered into the world, and *death* by sin; and so death hath *passed upon all men*, for that all have sinned." Rom. v. 12. Death was announced as the

threatened penalty to Adam before his transgression, and it was inflicted after it, agreeably to the decree of God. Why should it be penal to him and not to his descendants? The text says, that death is the wages of *sin*. The cause is evil, and so must the effect produced by it. This is penal because that is criminal; unless it can be proved that there is no moral evil in the violation of the divine law, and no natural evil in an event, that tears in sunder, and reduces to dust and ashes, that frame which bears the impress of divine workmanship, and was originally the seat of health, honor, and immortality. If ever death turns out a blessing, it is over-ruled to that end by the grace and providence of God. The cause and nature of it are not, however, altered. And in every instance, it is the wages of sin, and the desert of sinners unexceptionably and universally; even of those "who did not sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression;" that is, by actual sin. For though all infants are undoubtedly saved, who die in infancy, yet their death evinces previous transgression, though not actually, yet originally and inherently. It is a scripture maxim, that "the body is dead because of sin." The inherency and imputation of that great moral evil makes the body obnoxious to death. And the seeds of both have an existence together in the nature of every son of Adam: which, in due time, spring up in

that vicious soil, and bring forth actual transgression, and actual death.

If this doctrine, equally corroborated by scripture and facts, be not admitted, the divine justice would stand impeachable for taking off infants, whose death is often the instant successor of their birth, and is accompanied with a train of diseases, and agonizing pains. And, though in the case of them, as of adult believers, death proves a blessing, through the redemption that is by Christ Jesus; yet to those who continue in the practice of sin, and die under the guilt of it, their dissolution is the commencement of eternal woe. For, the wages of sin is death, eternal as well as temporal. The eternal duration of the penalty is, in that respect, proportioned to the infinite demerit of the offence, as being committed against the sacred law of an infinite God, and rising in aggravation according to the dignity and majesty of the Being offended. The perverse reasoning of men of corrupt minds may controvert this awful truth, too, as unjust. But their quarrel is with scripture. For that declares, that the wicked shall “go into *everlasting* punishment,” Mat. xxv. 46, and shall “suffer the vengeance of eternal fire,” never to be extinguished through ages more numerous than the drops of the ocean, or the countless sands upon the sea-shore.

Here imagination might paint a scene sufficient to harrow up the soul, and make the blood of every mortal run cold; were we to dwell upon the sufferings of those who are lost for ever; and to consummate and perpetuate which, the wrath of God unites with the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched. I might lead you, in order to behold an exemplification of the truth in our text, not only to beds of sickness, where the pallid countenance, the cold sweat, and throbbing breast, indicate death's near approach—to the haunts of the debauched, or the chambers of the luxurious, where sin reigns, and death triumphs with a long train of diseases both of body and mind, the sad recompense of a life spent in sin and vanity—to the dungeon's doleful cells, where criminals drag the galling chain, and expect, with horror and remorse, the hour that is to fix them to the gibbet, and make an ignominious death the wages of their iniquity—to the church-yard, that repository of the promiscuous dead, where the crumbled bodies of the rich and great are not distinguishable from the dust of the earth; or to the charnel-house, crowded with the dry and ghastly relics of thousands, who were once flushed with health, and bloomed with beauty, like their present gay survivors, who hardly ever spend a serious thought on death, and live



as if they had made a covenant with the grave—to the historic pages of the annalist and the poet, recounting the horrors of the tented field, and telling over the tens of thousands that have been cut off in the midst of their sanguinary and ambitious schemes—I say, I might not only lead you to these several scenes, as declarative of the truth before us; but I might urge, as its most tremendous completion, the state of those, who are now receiving the final wages of sin in that lake, which burns, and shall to all eternity burn, with inextinguishable flames. But I would rather wave the description, or rather an attempt to describe, what it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. Let us throw a veil upon this awful scene, and pass to the consideration of one that is as bright and glorious, as the other is gloomy and terrible; which is, that

“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

We had occasion to observe, in the outset of this discourse, that the text places, in a contrasted view, some of the principal truths of revealed religion; that the one might serve as a foil to the other; and that the love of God to a sinful world might appear the more stupendous, by a consideration of the very abject condition to which sin reduced us, and from which no

hand was able to extricate us, but that which made the world.

In this contrasted scene, the things set in opposition to each other—are eternal life, and eternal death—the wages of sin, and the gift of God—the disobedience of Adam, and the righteousness of Christ—with all the calamities springing out of sin and death, and all the rich blessings flowing from that tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. Sin is opposed to obedience; death, to life; the eternal duration of the one, to that of the other; the malignity of sin and the demerit of sinners, to the undeserved and gratuitous mercy of God, and the infinite merit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, that our hearts may overflow with gratitude, when we reflect, that we have the bright side of our text to contemplate with rapture! when, had Jehovah entered into judgment with us, the sad subject of our meditations for ever might have been like the superscription on Ezekiel's roll—mourning, lamentation, and woe. But now the voice of the Lord cheers the wilderness of our nature with that reviving word, “Where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded.” Which, to a burdened sinner, is like clear sun-shining after rain, or the return of a serene and a bright morning after a dark tempestuous night; or like a pardon, unexpect-

edly brought, to a criminal under sentence of death. This we shall see in what follows.

In Paradise, the test of man's obedience was the commandment of God; the reward would have been eternal life. But he sinned, and forfeited that reward in behalf of himself and all his descendants; and the penalty incurred was as infinite as the recompense would have been great, in case of perfect obedience. To take off this forfeiture of life eternal, and recover the inheritance that had been lost, Jesus undertook to become the sinner's substitute, and to take the penalty upon himself. As sin was the fatal cause of all the misery and disorder introduced into the world, he suffered it to be laid upon himself, and "was made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The awful penalty of a violated law fell upon him, in the day that he was "made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13, and bled to death as a propitiatory sacrifice on the cross. It was exacted of him, and he made full payment. Perfect obedience to the law, and full satisfaction to the justice of God, were the two great branches of that righteousness, which constitutes the matter of our justification before him. Death was the consequence of Adam's transgression; but Jesus died, and by his blood drew the monster's deadly sting, and "destroyed him that had the power

of death, that is, the devil." Heb. ii. 14. And, as he was God manifest in the flesh, his divinity communicated an infinite sufficiency to his atonement and righteousness, to deliver from sin and hell, and to render valid and secure the believer's title to eternal life.

In the business of salvation, as it is God's most glorious work, he is studious and jealous of having all the glory of it. Accordingly, eternal life is held out in the text as his "gift," free on his part, and altogether unmerited by those to whom this blessing is communicated. We have no claim upon him even for the crumbs that fall from his table; much less for the glory of his everlasting kingdom; between which, and the obedience of the best, there is an infinite disproportion. All in earth or heaven, necessary to complete our happiness, is a gift. Christ himself, with all his unsearchable riches, is called the gift of God. The knowledge of him by faith, and the grace that calls, justifies, and sanctifies, come under the same denomination. He gives grace and glory. When the apostle takes a view of death, he calls it the *wages* of sin. But he wisely and designedly alters his language when he speaks of eternal life. He does not say that *that* is the *wages* of human works, or to be earned by the merit of human obedience. No. It is the *gift* of God

through Jesus Christ our Lord,—through him, because he is the medium of all Jehovah's gifts, and the purchaser of all the blessings of the new covenant. His atoning blood is the great channel of conveyance for every benefit on earth, and his righteousness the meritorious title to life eternal. The crown of salvation is the unrivalled claim of that adorable Saviour; and well doth he deserve, that it should be placed on his royal head, since

There's not a gift his hand bestows  
But cost his heart a groan.

Let not pride, therefore, presume to dispute the honor with Jesus, or self-righteous sinners arrogate to themselves a meritorious title to favors, of the least of which they are altogether undeserving. God hath an open hand filled with blessings for those who approach the throne of grace as needy beggars, and supplicate mercy through Christ, as condemned criminals. But the proud he beholdeth afar off, and those that are rich in supposed goodness and personal merit, he sendeth empty away. For, he resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Think not that heaven is to be purchased by human merit, or that the eternal reward is to be earned by human obedience. The purchase hath been made by the death and

passion of the Son of God; and it is the merit of his blood alone that can open the kingdom of heaven, or reverse the forfeiture which we have incurred by original and personal transgression. The scripture hath concluded all under sin. And the wages which every transgressor hath earned, is eternal death. This is every man's desert, and will be the reward of his iniquity, if he is found out of Christ. No future works can make an atonement to God for past transgressions; since, if this were possible, Christ would have died in vain. Gal. ii. 21. Salvation is by grace, "not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephes. ii. 8, 9. And "we are justified freely (*δωρεάν* without a cause on our part) by this grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. iii. 24.

The text speaks an awful language to the gay and the dissolute, who may be said to be earning, by a hard drudgery, the worst wages under the worst master. How many, in the full career of dissipation, are so infatuated by the splendid outside of glittering trifles, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and so deluded by the hope of happiness, that phantom which flies from them as fast as it is pursued; that to the pursuit of sensual pleasure every consideration of honor and virtue is sacrificed. Let those, who are running the same fruitless chase,

remember, that though their path should be strewn with rose-buds of delight, yet there lurk under them corroding care, remorse, and shame, and anguish, more to be dreaded than the poison of asps. If their minds are unawed by the threatenings of the Lord, and steeled against the remonstrances of truth, and conscience, Oh that they would but look into the house of mourning! and behold the sad spectacle of a youth cut off in his prime, either by a series of debaucheries, that brought rottenness into his bones, and infamy on his reputation, or that had been hurried to an act of desperation, the effect, often, of frequent intoxication, infidel principles, or of disappointed projects at the gaming table! Or, let them look at yonder pale corpse, that has fallen a martyr to the etiquette of dress and all the parade of fashion; that lived such a life of dissipation, that she hardly ever knew there was a God, till she saw him at his tribunal. Do not such instances, while they declare the folly of mankind, loudly preach to you, ye sons and daughters of dissipation? You, who flutter in gaiety, though on the brink of ruin? O listen to the solemn lecture! Fly from the wages of sin. You have sought happiness in the world, but have been disappointed. Pleasure's gilded bait hath promised you much, and looked fair; but its pro-

mises have been delusive, and its enjoyment a shadow. Come now, and try what the gifts of God in Christ Jesus can do for you. He gives a peace, which the world cannot, and ascertains happiness, of which earth and hell are not able to deprive. "His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace."

Thus hath the text set before us life and death: the one, the wages and consequence of sin; the other, the unmerited and glorious gift of God through the Son of his love. Ye who believe the record, and see your ruin, bless the Lord for the gift of a Saviour—for pardon through his blood, and acceptance before the throne through his righteousness and intercession. Love the Lord and trust in him at all times: by telling of his salvation from day to day. You owe to Jesus your life, and happiness; your all in earth and heaven. He has given grace, and he will give glory, and will withhold from his people no good thing. Since he hath given himself, what gift can he keep back? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will he not also with him freely give us all things? Whilst, therefore, ye highly-favored children of the Most High, ye are reviewing the great, the unnumbered blessings, that crowd in upon you from the streams that issue from the upper and



the nether springs; whilst you enjoy the gifts of Providence, and are tasting the riches of divine grace; and, whilst gratitude springs up in your hearts for favors as distinguishing as they are undeserved; remember him, to whom you are indebted for them all. And, while you are thanking God, for life, health, food, raiment; the light of yonder sun, and the clouds that drop fatness on the earth; for the joyful sound of the gospel, and hearts to relish its salutary doctrines; then look up to the fountain of all, and say, But, above all things, everlasting praise and honor be ascribed to God for the unspeakable gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, and an interest in his blood and righteousness. Amen.

## SERMON V.

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AN ALARMING VIEW OF GOD'S DESOLATING JUDGMENTS.

[Preached on the Fast Day, February 21, 1781.]

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“Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth.” PSALM xlvii. 8.

WHATEVER *the heart of the fool* in ignorance and infidelity may suggest, or the tongue of the bold blasphemer dare to utter, the voice of unerring wisdom declares, *there is a God*;

“And that there is, all *nature* cries aloud.”

To this great primary truth, every object in creation bears its testimony; from the first-born seraph down to the meanest reptile; and from the great ruler of the day, down to the minutest part of that stupendous system, of which he is, at once, the ornament and the centre. The celestial, the terrestrial, and aquatic worlds, with all their respective inhabitants, are pregnant

with demonstration in favor of *God's eternal power and Godhead*. Beings rational and irrational, animate and inanimate, possessing either spiritual, sensitive, or vegetative life; whether they walk the earth, swim the ocean, or fly through the ærial expanse; are so many vouchers to the existence of a supreme BEING. Through the various orders of the great scale of beings, from the lowest to the highest, we behold visible traces of divinity; from the flower of the field up to the cedar in Lebanon, from the minutest insect to the lion that roars in the desert, or from the smallest fish that swims in the briny flood, to the huge leviathan that taketh his pastime therein. In the origin of their existence, the formation and contexture of their frame, and the provision adapted to their support, we behold equally the infinite wisdom and profuse beneficence of JEHOVAH. Yea, the very minutiae of creation proclaim his inimitable perfections. Insomuch, that only a blade of grass, or the wing of a moth, exhibits marks of infinite contrivance, which mock the skill and baffle the comprehension of the most sagacious philosopher; while they read him a loud lecture upon that great truth, "Canst thou, by searching, find out God? canst thou know the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than

hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea." Job, xi. 7, 9; and chap. xii. 7, 8.

If, from the parts, we ascend to the great whole; or, from contemplating some of the lower stories, we pass to a comprehensive view of the vast fabric of the universe, what a system of wonders rises to declare the glory and handy-work of the supreme Architect! Who can behold an immense multitude of lucid orbs, each of them *a world*, suspended in the vast expanse, without any visible support; some of them fixed to their stations, though of prodigious magnitude; while others, with a velocity hardly credible, perform their revolutions, and move in their orbits, with the nicest observance of the space and time allotted to them;—who, I say, can observe this wonderful machinery, without acknowledging a present DEITY? What is the firmament of heaven, but a golden alphabet, that in capital letters, which all the world may read, deciphers the name, and displays the perfections, of the all-wise God? Who can view the sun, in his azure "tabernacle," that fairest and brightest image of his Creator, "coming forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run his race," without confessing in him, the most glorious witness to the existence of that

God who gave him to be the cheerer of this nether world, and appointed his "circuit," Psal. xix. 6, which he has punctually performed for thousands of years? Or who can contemplate the moon, the silver lamp of night, and all the stars that glitter in her train, and not hear the silent yet emphatic eloquence with which they publish the praises of their great Original?—

" For ever singing as they shine,  
The hand that made us, is divine!"

But man is to himself a voucher for the truth; since he is in himself a microcosm, a little world, or an epitome of a larger system. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," Psal. cxxxix. 14, was the acknowledgment of an inspired philosopher, when he contemplated himself; when he looked back to his embryo-state, and traced the footsteps of that divine art, by which his "substance, yet imperfect, was curiously wrought," or, as he considered its perfect formation by the plastic hand of Jehovah, "in whose book all his members were written, which, in continuance, were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Psal. cxxxix. 15, 16. And, if the sight of even a shapeless skeleton, bereft of that beauty which adorns the human frame in its perfect state, could strike conviction into

the breast of a philosopher,\* and save him from Atheism; how forcible, how irresistible the evidence, when the same frame is viewed in all the wise arrangement, symmetry, coherence, usefulness, and elegant proportion of its parts! If human nature, even in ruins, can thus speak loudly for the divinity of its Maker; what an emphasis of demonstration must it give, to view the fabric complete, and forming, by the inhabitation of the soul, a rational and immortal being! So that it is as great a reflection upon the head, as upon the heart of that man, who, amidst all the evidence that surrounds and dwells in him, continues an unbelieving sceptic: and it would be difficult, perhaps, to determine, whether there be more folly or blasphemy in genuine Atheism.

But, while all creation echoes the voice, and implicitly demonstrates the existence of God, so as to “leave without excuse those, who worshipped and served the creature more than (*μαλλον ἢ rather than, or and not*) the Creator;” Rom. i. 25; yet it is to Revelation we are indebted for that information respecting the nature, works, and dispensations of Jehovah, which

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\* Galen.

the most refined systems of human wisdom have never been able to give us. In the sacred volume, we receive more instruction from a single page, and often from one short sentence, than from whole volumes of antiquity; and more truth too, than all the elaborate systems of philosophers and speculatists have been able to investigate for thousands of years. What they groped after by the dim light of reason, is here revealed to the full satisfaction of the most illiterate inquirer. And what their schemes attempted to elucidate, and, in elucidating, only made more obscure and absurd, is here unfolded in a manner, that exhibits indubitable marks of divine authenticity, and affords an opportunity to "the wayfaring man, though a fool," to surpass in genuine knowledge the most renowned philosopher, who either had not, or would not have, the "oracles of God," for his counsellor and guide. Here we are informed not only that God is, but also, "that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" Heb. xi. 6;—that "the worlds were framed by the word of God;" verse 3;—that they did not exist from eternity, as some of the philosophers whimsically maintained, but that "*in the beginning*, God created the heavens and the earth;" Gen. i. 1;—that the frame of the universe was not formed from pre-existing materials, for that "the things

which are seen, were not made of things which do appear ;” Heb. xi. 3 ;—that, contrary, to the atheistical and stupid hypothesis of the Epicureans, who ascribed the creation of all things to chance, or a fortuitous concourse of atoms ; the world and all its inhabitants were the production of an eternal, infinitely intelligent, spiritual, wise, and powerful Being, whom the scriptures call God ;—that he, whose almighty *fiat* from darkness educes light, and from the confusion of chaos brought harmony and order, was the very person, who afterwards disrobed himself of his divine splendor, and “ was manifest in the flesh,” took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Phil. ii. 7, 8. For, by him, “ in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, and who is the” express “ image of the invisible God, were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ; all things were created *by* him,” as the Agent, “ and *for* him,” as the *End*. Col. ii. 14, 15 ;—that all the calamities which prevail in the natural and moral world originate in that act of disobedience recorded in Gen. iii. 6,—and that the great remedy provided by infinite Mercy and Wisdom for sin and its bitter effects,



is Jesus, the adorable Prince of Peace, who "gave himself for us, an *offering* and a *sacrifice* to God, for a sweet-smelling savor." Ephes. v. 2.

While the sacred writings open to guilty mortals a prospect of life and immortality, through the revelation of a system of truth, peculiar to themselves; they throw light upon the dispensations of Providence, by assuring us, that all things great and minute, are under the control and superintendence of an omniscient Being, who numbers the very hairs of our head, and suffers not even "a sparrow to fall to the ground" without his sovereign permission; that, although the grounds of the divine dispensations are often inscrutable to human penetration, and form a great deep, which finite intelligences cannot fathom; yet that infinite wisdom presides in them all, and will render them subservient to his own glory, and his people's good; and that, whatever happens, respecting the fate of empires and states, and all other grand revolutions upon the globe, that display either the goodness or the severity of God, fall out according to the positive design of HIM, who "doeth what seemeth him meet among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth; of whom, and *through* whom, and *to* whom, are all things." Rom. xi. 36.

With the volume of inspiration in our hands, and the concurrence of innumerable facts confirming the evidence which it adduceth to the certainty of the preceding truths; let us, upon the present solemn occasion, First, take a view of some of those tremendous works of Jehovah, which, while they speak his existence and interposition, proclaim his wrath; and then, secondly, consider, in what light, and with what temper, we should contemplate such portentous dealings. “Come, behold the works of the Lord; what desolations he hath made in the earth.”

I. There are some works of Jehovah, which proclaim his benignity and tender mercy. All his dispensations are big with a display of these most attractive and endearing attributes. They crown his providence, and shine forth with brightest lustre in the boundless riches of grace. Every land is witness to his patience, and equally so to the vast profusion of his all-bounteous munificence. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord; and all nature smiles under the tender mercies of our God. And, were this the proper place, or would the reference of our text admit of the digression, we might take a view of that beautiful scene, painted by an inspired hand, and in the most sublime imagery, in

Psal. lxxv. 8—13. We might meditate, with rapture and with profit, on those works of paternal goodness, which “the outgoings of the morning and the evening rejoice” to publish; when the Father of Mercies makes his “paths to drop fatness on the pastures of the wilderness,” and “crowneth” the opening and closing “year with his goodness;” when pastures clothed with flocks, and valleys covered over with corn, “make the little hills rejoice on every side,” give an universal festivity and gaiety to the face of nature, and “shout for joy” in praise of nature’s God. Or we may pass to a contemplation of a still more enrapturing scene, which the former but faintly pictures; I mean that of the human heart emerging from darkness and from barrenness under the propitious rays of the “Sun of Righteousness,” softened by the dew of divine grace, watered by the divine Spirit, that “river of God which is full of water,” clothed with that *best robe*, the Redeemer’s righteousness, and transformed from a wilderness into a little Eden, flourishing like the garden of God. Or, we might fix our meditations on that most gracious and most stupendous work of infinite mercy, the redemption of sinners through JESUS CHRIST. A work this, which is the great labor of the skies, and the grandest work of God; on which the believer employs his sweetest medi-

tations, and from which he derives his brightest hopes.

But the subject of the text, as well as the solemnity of the day, calls us, for the present, to consider *other* works, in which, not the olive-branch of peace, but the rod of vindictive justice, is held forth; where not the goodness, but the severity of God, is the chief object; in which the desolation of the earth is his awful purpose; and by which he speaks, not in the still small voice of mercy and benignity, but in accents more awful than the noise of conflicting elements, and more tremendous than the sound of ten thousand thunders. “For, behold the Lord cometh out of his place to *punish* the inhabitants of the earth for their *iniquity*; therefore let all the earth keep silence before him.” Isa. xxvi. 21. Hab. ii. 20.

Whether we consider the desolating *works* themselves, or the *instruments*, by which they have been accomplished, we shall have abundant cause, in either view, to acknowledge the finger of God, and to confess, that “he ruleth in the kingdoms of the earth, and is very greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints;” that he is “glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.”

1. As to the works themselves, they reach as far as the utmost extent of the terraqueous globe,

and are as numerous as the several countries, kingdoms, or insular districts, into which it is divided by intervening mountains, or intersected by the currents of the ocean. There is not a spot of any considerable extent upon the earth, that has not, in some period or other, experienced the desolating hand of Jehovah; nor can the history of any nation be produced, whose annals do not record some awful visitation, through which he hath "answered" its inhabitants "by TERRIBLE THINGS in righteousness;" Psal. lxxv. 5, and forced even pagan nations "that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth to be afraid at the TOKENS" of his existence and indignation. Indeed, what is the earth, but one vast theatre, on which have been exhibited the successive scenes of mercy and of judgment? bearing, under its various revolutions, visible inscriptions of a divine hand, and visible traces of divine power? and in such phenomena, as might make even an atheist to cry out, "Thou, even thou, art to be feared; and who may stand in thy sight when thou art angry?" Psal. lxxvi. 7.

But, if we consult the sacred writings, those infallible records of God's works and ways; in them we shall meet with the most numerous and prominent testimonies to the truth before us. There we read of that great work of desolation, produced by an universal deluge; when

the earth suffered the most dreadful disruption of its parts; when “the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened;” Gen. vii. 11; when descending cataracts from the clouds meeting with ascending torrents from the great abyss, formed that vast congregation of waters, which overspread the earth, and covered the summits of its loftiest hills; when sin received an indelible mark of its abominable nature, the inhabitants of the earth met with the just desert of their accumulated iniquities, and the earth itself was reduced to such a state of desolation, as can only be exceeded by the terrors of that day, when a different element shall be employed to consummate its final and total wreck; when a flood of fire shall finish, what a deluge of water began, and intermediate desolations have been carrying on for thousands of years; and when God shall accomplish all his works of judgment and of mercy, to the eternal ruin of the wicked, and the complete redemption of his own people.

Although Jehovah hath set his *bow* in the clouds, as the significant symbol of that covenant, which he made with Noah, for the security of the earth from another general inundation, and of a better covenant established through Christ, whereby the salvation of his people from a deluge of divine wrath is ascertained; yet, if

we examine the subsequent dispensations of Jehovah, they will evince, that post-diluvian wickedness has received marks of divine displeasure, in a constant succession of desolating judgments. Of this let the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah be a standing proof; whose inhabitants, for their unnatural lust, were visited with a judgment which served as a prelude and a pledge of that "vengeance of eternal fire," Jude 7, which they were to "suffer" as the reward of their crimes; while all the cities of the plain, converted into a fetid lake, or *dead sea*, whose foul exhalations spread barrenness and death all around it, exhibit, as long as the earth itself lasteth, an awful memorandum of the effects of sin, and the judgments of a sin-avenging God.

Or, if the truth require further illustration, let us visit Egypt, and see what "signs Jehovah wrought there, and what wonders in the field of Zoan," Psal. lxxviii. where he "smote all their first-born and the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham;" where a succession of plagues, desolating their country, and depopulating its inhabitants, terminated at last in the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. What a scene must that land exhibit, wherein the nutritive parts of creation were impregnated with poison and death! the most innocent creatures became a dreadful annoy-

ance ! the most useful animals were visited with sickness ! the very dust of the ground converted into loathsome insects ! the light of heaven changed into “ darkness that might be felt !” the first-born of man and beast cut off in a night ! the survivors trembling for themselves, and shrieking for the dead ! while every element was armed with vengeance, and conspired to complete the desolation. Yet such was the scene, when God sent tokens and wonders into thee, O thou land of Egypt !

But the time would fail me to tell of Moab, and of Babylon ; of populous Nineveh, or of imperial Rome ; and of Jerusalem, the city of the great King ; of the various nations, tribes, and people, to which these mighty cities gave names of pomp and distinction,—of the various revolutions which they have severally undergone, in the course of providence ;—of the captivities of some, the conquests of others, and the desolation of all. The history of Israel from their Exodus out of Egypt, to their settlement in Canaan, with their journeyings through the wilderness inclusive, principally contains a narrative of their sins and of God’s judgments ; nor does the history of the Jews, through their several captivities, and defections from the Lord, diminish, but rather swell, the dreadful account ; as we view them, from the revolt and dispersion



of ten tribes, down to the final subjection of the residue to the Roman yoke; an event, which, by a judicial chain of providence, rapidly brought on the melancholy catastrophe, which ended in the ruin of their city and temple, and marked that awful æra, in which they ceased to be a people. “How unsearchable are God’s judgments, and his ways past finding out!” Rom. xi. 33.

Admitting that there is a God, who created and now governeth the universal frame of nature, a truth, as we have seen, founded upon the most incontestable evidence both of his word and works—it follows of course, that He can never be at a loss for expedients to assert his sovereignty, and vindicate his injured laws. As the heavens and the earth are his property, he can, with as much equity as ease, summon either or both to act in his controversy with a guilty world. His own creation will, at all times, furnish him with ample materials for conducting his judicial dispensations; insomuch, that every creature might be armed against us, and every element be made the vehicle of destruction; or the divine appointment might make the very food we eat, or the air we breathe, the channels to convey instantaneous death. But our business is not now to consider these ordinary incidents, by which “the King of terrors” is continually peopling the regions of the dead, and

to which the constitution of our frame is subject; but rather those awful instruments of divine visitation, which are scourges of the Almighty to a guilty world. And one of the most fatal of these, is

1. WAR. This, howsoever necessary and inevitable it may often be, is always to be esteemed a great evil; if we advert, either to its origination or its effects; and nothing can justify its exertions, but the laws of self-preservation. The sin of man first gave it an existence; and the same bitter cause continues it to this day. “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even from your lusts?” James, iv. 1. Tyrannical passions predominating in the mind, give birth to those sanguinary schemes, which, when pursued, produce every species of confusion and death. If we examine carefully, from whence all those scenes of devastation have arisen, that have deluged the world with blood, we shall find, that, in general, they have sprung from unbounded ambition, avarice, pride, or resentment. And multitudes of tyrants, as well as factious confederates in usurpation and rebellion, have never been able, in thousands of cases, to assign any other reason for their enterprises in blood and slaughter, but this; that the one could not bear an equal, nor the other a superior; or those had

too little, and these not enough. While, to foment the dreadful quarrel, the lust of revenge and rebellion operates like oil poured on the flame. Thus nations begin and carry on war, until they are tired of worrying and killing one another; and when the consequences of this horrid work are weighed in the balance of humanity and reason, many a conqueror may sit down and weep over his victories, when he reflects that they have been purchased at the expense of the blood of thousands of his fellow-creatures. And he who could contemplate such victories with pride or pleasure, unmingled with remorse and compassion for the sorrow, the ruin, the desolation they have caused, is a desperate character, that, one would hope, can meet with a parallel, only in

“ Macedonia’s madman and the Swede.”

What desolations have been made in the earth by war, the history of former and latter ages informs us; and, God knoweth, *we* need no comment on the awful truth. What we want principally, is to be humbled under the visitation; to “hear the rod, and Him that appointed it.” For, we are sure the matter is not fortuitous. If the sword be drawn, it is because God hath said, “Sword go through this land.” Or, if it continue unsheathed, it is because he hath

said also, "O thou *sword of the Lord*, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord *hath given it a charge?*" Jer. xlvii. 6, 7. Or, if wide-extended destruction mark its progress, it is because, "Thus saith the Lord, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished; it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; should we then make mirth? The sword is sharpened, to give it into the *hand of the slayer*. I Jehovah have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that their hearts may faint, and their *ruins be multiplied.*" Ezek. xxi. 9—11, 15.

These awful passages intimate, that it is an act of justice in God, to appoint that evil, into which men's inordinate passions precipitate them: and it may turn out an act of mercy too, if they see their sin in their punishment, and get sick of both. Otherwise additional expedients may be adopted, and increasing judgments be sent. For, the Lord hath at his command the

2. PESTILENCE. When David, for his sin in numbering the people of Israel, had proposed to him his choice of three modes of punishment, and he preferred falling into the hand of the Lord, for very great were his mercies, and not into the hand of man, whose tender mercies,

often, are cruel; "the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men." 1 Chron. xxi. 12—14. This sore visitation, which sin brought upon David and his people, was often repeated among the other judgments which desolated Israel. See Lev. xxvi. 25. Psal. lxxviii. 50. Jer. xlv. 13. It is mentioned as one of the ominous antecedents of the day of judgment, that "there shall be *pestilence* in divers places." Mat. xxiv. 7. And in that inimitable piece of sublime description in Habak. iii. where all nature is represented as convulsed and shrinking to nothing, under impressions of the indignation and grandeur of God, "before him," it is said, "went the *pestilence*:" verse 5. Because of the secret manner in which this fearful visitant performs his work, the Psalmist saith, "the *pestilence* walketh in darkness." Psal. xci. 6. He enters silently and secretly as the thief, and imperceptibly yet rapidly executes his commission. There is often no security against its approach, since the air we breathe wafts the deadly contagion to all the senses, which, in a moment, convey them to, and, in conveying, contaminate the whole mass of blood. Thousands imbibe the poison, and fall in agonies under the stroke. The bolted door is no barrier against its intrusion; the power of medicine no antidote to the

noisome malady. Thousands and tens of thousands fall on the right hand and on the left; and it has been known that this sweeping scourge has often swelled the bills of mortality more in a few weeks, than the whole train of common diseases have in as many years. Never do death's arrows fly so thick or so envenomed, as when he fills his quiver with the plague; and never is the grave so crowded with dead, as when the pestilence waiteth at its gates. Though the land before it should resemble the garden of Eden, yet behind it the scene will be like a desolate wilderness. And were it not for that hand, which guides its progress, and limits its commission, nothing but rapid desolation and destruction would ensue; especially if we consider, that there follows close at his heels,

3. **FAMINE.** As bread is the staff of life, if the prop be removed, the constitution must necessarily fall. The vitals deprived of their wonted nutriment, must languish and die, under one of the most painful and insatiate sensations of nature. As famine is an evil in effect, the causes which produce it may be various. The spread of war, the want, or excess of rain, parching or vitiating the fruits of the earth, great inundations, blasting and mildew, long sieges, intense heat, a long frost or multitudes of devouring insects, locusts in particular, called by

one of the prophets, "God's army," may, and often have, in their turns, introduced the plague of famine. But who can describe, or bear a description of such scenes as those which mark the effects of this pale visitant! when, as in Samaria's siege, those things which the stomach would nauseate the very mention of, in a time of plenty, are coveted as food, when the unhappy sufferers have been driven to the horrid necessity of turning cannibals, and casting lots for each others' persons, till at last a want of every resource brings death, and closes the ghastly scene. A visitation this, one would think, sufficient to alarm and reform a careless people; and yet it is recorded, as an astonishing instance of stupidity and hardness of heart in Israel, that when God "gave them *cleanness of teeth* in all their cities, and want of bread in all their places, they returned not" unto him that smote them. Amos, iv. 6. So that divine justice was obliged to repeat the stroke, by that, which is of all others the most tremendous visitation of Jehovah, the

4. EARTHQUAKE. Of all judicial dispensations, that which appoints the earthquake, is the most terribly vindictive; when the earth, thrown into dreadful concussions, cracks and opens like the gaping grave, or heaves and swells like the agitated ocean. Even the sword,

the pestilence, and the famine, are mild in their effects, and slow in their progress, when compared with the earthquake. It often gives no warning, but overwhelms in a moment. Its subterraneous motions tear the bowels of the earth, and make its solid pillars bend, like a reed shaken with the wind; while the sound of thunder from beneath, and the crash of falling structures from above, are often heard at the same instant. A few minutes put a period to the works of ages; to wisdom's archives; to all the boasted monuments of conquest and of fame; to all the pageantry of the great, and all the hoarded riches of the wealthy; to all the illicit pleasures of the licentious, and all the busy schemes of the proud or factious contending for sway. The loftiest towers, the strongest rocks, afford no hiding-place from its fury, but often increase the ruin. Nor is there any security in flight; since in the open field or spacious plain, a yawning gulf may open and devour multitudes in an instant, or jam them between the closing earth.

“ Tremendous issue! to the sable deep,  
Thousands descend in business, or asleep.”

To the desolations which this messenger of Almighty vengeance has spread through the earth, let Lima, Callao, Catania, Jamaica, Lis-



bon, bear witness. In the last place, soon after the dreadful visitation which, in 1755, disturbed the procession of the cursed *Auto de fe*, and shook the foundations of that bloody tribunal, which Popish barbarity and superstition had set up; the king of Portugal represented his distresses to the king of Spain in a letter, in which was the following affecting passage:—" I am without a house, living in a tent; without subjects, without servants, without money, and without bread." How humiliating the stroke, which reduces royalty to the dust, or brings all the dignity of crowned heads to a level with the common beggar! Such, but accompanied with circumstances infinitely more terrible and abasing, will that final catastrophe be, when " the Lord shall arise to shake terribly the earth; when it shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall and not rise again;" Isa. xxiv. 20; when " the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty." Isa. ii. 17, 19.

The quiver of Jehovah is not yet exhausted, though we take into our account the ravages of

war, the desolation of famine, the fatal effects of the noisome pestilence, or the overwhelming fury of the earthquake. When he "opens his armoury, he can bring forth" innumerable "weapons of his indignation." Jer. l. 25. He can execute his tremendous purposes by "fire and hail, snow and vapor." Psal. cxlviii. 8, or "fulfil his word" of threatening and promise, by

5. STORMS and TEMPESTS. These are nothing more than the violent and unnatural agitation of that circumambient air, in which we live and breathe; and which might at any time be excited to such a degree of fearful perturbation, as to discharge some of the most dreadful artillery of heaven. What secret laws produce these phenomena are only known to that God, whose "way is in the whirlwind and in the storm, who maketh the clouds the dust of his feet, and holdeth the winds in the hollow of his hand." For their dreadful effects we have no occasion to look very far back. The close of the last year exhibited a scene of desolation in the western islands, which their inhabitants can never forget; and in reviewing which, we ought to be actuated with sentiments of the tenderest commiseration and benevolence towards the unhappy sufferers, as well as with impressions full of reverential awe of that God, who sends his judgments through the earth, that the in-

habitants thereof might learn righteousness. A few outlines of the devastation occasioned by the late hurricanes, will, it is presumed, convince us of this.—After the storm began, which had been preceded by weather remarkably calm, but by a sky surprisingly red and fiery; the wind was so impetuous as to bear down every object that stood in its way, with a sudden breaking in of the sea, in some places, which swept every thing away with it, so as not to leave the smallest vestige of man, beast, or house, behind;\* and all this scene of horror and desolation heightened by repeated shocks of an earthquake. In one island,† we have been informed, that not ten houses survived the fury of the storm. Whole families were buried in the ruins of their habitations; and many, in attempting to escape, were maimed, and disabled. A general convulsion of nature seemed to take place, and universal destruction ensued. On the one hand, might be seen the ground covered with mangled bodies; and on the other, reputable families wandering through the ruins, seeking for food and shelter. Every building and plantation was levelled with the ground; trees were torn up by the roots, or

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\* Savannah-la-mar.

† Barbadoes.

stripped of their branches; and the most luxuriant spring was changed, in one night, to the dreariest winter. In vain was it to look for shelter, when all was a general wreck before the sweeping tempest. Many fell victims to the violence of the winds; and great numbers were driven into the sea and there perished, to the amount of *some thousands*. Alarming consequences were dreaded from the multitudes of dead bodies which lay uninterred: while, to complete the dismal scene, inevitable famine seemed to stare the miserable survivors in the face. This description includes the calamities of a single island; and, when to these we add, what other islands belonging to us and our enemies suffered by a similar visitation, how accumulated must the loss be of property and of lives! And who can help, in a reflection upon such events, crying out, "Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord! who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto Jehovah! Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand; justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne." Psal. lxxxix. 6, 13, 14.

I presume not to decide on the particular designs or intentions of Providence, in selecting some parts of the earth for a manifestation of his power, while others remain untouched;

much less do the scriptures warrant us to conclude, that exemplary sufferers are necessarily "sinners *above*" the rest of the world. A hasty conclusion of this nature would reflect highly on our candor and humility, and involve in it too, a bold usurpation of the prerogative of God, to explore and distinguish the grounds of his own dispensations. And, indeed, the late visitation was so indiscriminate, as to leave us no room to draw inferences, either flattering to ourselves, or insulting to our enemies. And, perhaps, the impartiality and severity, which have marked these recent calamities, in their application, might serve to prove, that powers exhausting blood and treasure in a contest for the empty names of power and sway, are both wrong; when JEHOVAH seems to take up the controversy, and to punish both. One thing we cannot help seeing; which is, that if the Most High God were to exercise his power, as he is able, or, as we deserve, the necessity of waging or carrying on war would be very soon superseded; for there would exist no belligerent powers to do either the one or the other. We talk of our fleets and armies, and record with triumph the mighty achievements of our heroes; but, behold! the Almighty accomplishes in a few hours, what the armies of the earth are not able to effect in numerous campaigns!

We may, however, safely conclude in general, that if "there be evil in a city, the Lord hath done it," as the scriptures peremptorily affirm. That is, if any part of the earth is visited with evils or calamities, the agency of God, either permissive or decretive, is to be acknowledged in them. We may with equal safety infer, too, that all the judgments originate from, and imply the existence of, *sin*; since it would be an impeachment of his justice, to suppose, that he would suffer the elements to conspire to man's ruin, if there were nothing in human nature to provoke his wrath. But this leads me to consider

II. In what light, and with what temper, we ought to contemplate such portentous dealings.

If we consider the works themselves, they should teach us the great evil of *sin*; if we reflect on the great author of them, they should impress us with a reverential awe of his tremendous majesty, and a dread of his wrath; or, if we have any just idea of our own character as sinners and mortals, they should preach to our hearts the necessity of seeking the great means of conciliating the divine favor, that we may be prepared for those contingencies, which render our existence upon earth so very precarious, and proclaim the folly of those who seek terrestrial good to the fatal injury of their ever-

lasting interests. If we are Christians, we should contemplate the works of Jehovah, with confidence and joy ; and, standing at a distance equally from presumption and unbelief, should rejoice with trembling that the great Ruler of the Universe is our Father and our God ; while we feel ourselves encompassed with the most forcible motives to love his name and obey his will. But if, instead of living as Christians, any of us should be sunk in ignorance, dissipated by pleasure, supine in carelessness, and immersed in sin ; we should awake from the fatal lethargy, and fly from the wrath to come, ere death overtake us, and judgment fix our miserable and eternal doom.

1. The desolating works of God are intended to display the heinous nature of *sin*. All the evils which overspread the natural and moral world spring from this source. Sin is the great parent-evil, to which, as to a bitter and common fountain, may be traced every corruption that has depraved the heart, every malady that has invaded the human frame, and every judgment that has rent the earth. All the disorder of jarring elements, all the commotions in contending nations, all the convulsions that shake the globe, and all the dispensations that sweep away its inhabitants, imply its existence, and publish its malignity. The sin of man " is

written as with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond, on the tables of the heart," and stands engraven, in capital characters, upon his words and actions; while all the dispensations of God, directed to the great end of obliterating the writing, shew how enormous that evil must be, which requires the exertions of omnipotence either to punish or reform. Come, ye, who think or speak lightly of sin, and see what desolations it hath occasioned in the earth. Look at the ruins of mighty cities, the depopulation of flourishing states, and the fall of great empires, and then say, whether it be a small thing to sin against God. View the first rebellious pair expelled their earthly Paradise; their sinful progeny swept away with a flood; the earth cursed for the sin of man; and all the generations that are past buried in the promiscuous ruin of the grave; and entertain, if you can, low thoughts of the evil, that has produced these dire effects. Or, if this complex scene of misery and desolation does not sufficiently display sin's enormity; examine death's quiver, review the envenomed shafts that fill it; count over the formidable names of war, pestilence, earthquake, famine, tempest, fire, with the numerous train of bodily and mental disorders; and then if you ask, what has given such strength to the arm of the King of terrors,



and such execution to the deadly arrows upon the string of this insatiate archer? an apostle informs you, that “ the sting of death is SIN, and the strength of sin is the law ; 1 Cor. xv. 56 ; that by one man SIN entered into the world, and DEATH *by* sin, and so death passeth upon all men, for that ALL HAVE SINNED.” Rom. v. 12. But, should this representation not answer the end of convincing some of you, that sin is an abomination of such enormity, give me leave to ask, “ Wherefore hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure?” Isa. v. 14. What kindled the flames of Tophet? what awakened the wrath of God? or what exposed his Son to the bitter agonies of the cross? In each dreadful view, *sin* is the instrumental cause. The sufferings of Jesus, the torments of the damned, proclaim its God-provoking nature. Go then, sinner, and after you have in thought traversed the globe, and seen its desolations; after you have dropped a tear over the monuments of the dead, and looked with horror into the chambers of the grave; go, and visit Calvary. See who hangs there in agonies and shame. What means this affecting scene? Wherefore is the sun darkened, and why are the rocks rent? Why does the immaculate Jesus thus suffer and die, while nature feels the shock, and sympathizes with strong con-

vulsions? *Sin, thy* sin is at the bottom of this tragic scene. This was the bitter ingredient in the Redeemer's cup, the dregs of which he drank off in our stead. This was the intolerable burden which he bore for us; and which in the bearing sunk him to the grave. Say then, must not that be a great evil, which is the cause of such calamities to man, and of such incomprehensible sufferings to the "Son of man?"

But do we see this? and are we affected at the sight? We are assembled together for the purpose of humbling ourselves before Almighty God, on account of "our manifold *sins* and *provocations*." Do the feelings of our hearts correspond with the profession of our lips? Do we *mean* what we say? Is it not to be feared, that many content themselves with a repetition of a devotional form, adapted to the present occasion, without ever entering into the spirit of it? and hereby add to that immense load of inconsistency and guilt, which similar conduct has been increasing for numbers of years? And does not melancholy matter of fact demonstrate, that we are guilty of no breach of truth or charity, when we assert, that multitudes mock Jehovah to his face, by loving and living in the secret practice of those very sins, which, on this day, they condemn with their lips? We profess to regret the continuance of war, and

to lament the expense of blood and treasure incurred by it. But, if our eyes are shut to the real cause of the evil, the visitation may be lengthened out, until we are at last forced to read our sin in our punishment. For, whatever some may think, war is a grievous scourge of the Almighty, permitted as a chastisement for crying sins, and a loud call to the nations of the earth to repent and turn to God. Hear what the Lord saith by the prophets. "Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart: therefore destruction upon destruction is cried." Jer. iv. 18, 20. "*Because* they have cast away the *law* of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the *word* of the Holy One of Israel; therefore the anger of the Lord is kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his HAND IS STRETCHED OUT STILL." Isa. v. 25. And, in that long list of threatenings recorded in Lev. xxvi. among other denunciations, is the following:—"If ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me, then will I also walk contrary to you, and will punish you yet *seven*

*times* for your sins ; and I will bring *a sword* upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant." Verse 23, 25.

Would to God there were no occasion to apply the following charge to ourselves ! " 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 ; they have refused to return." Jer. v. 3. Whether this scripture is not fulfilled in this day, let facts declare. We have been for some years involved in all the horrors of war. The desolations of it are continually upon the increase. Our enemies are multiplied ; and with them our dangers too. Four great powers are uniting their force against us ; and we have not one single ally in Europe, that we can call our own. The conjuncture of our affairs is more and more critical ; especially if we consider, that an intestine faction still secretly works in the bosom of the state, and labors hard to kindle and keep alive the expiring flame of discord and rebellion. Add to this, that, through the last year, the metropolis of the kingdom was just upon the point of destruction ; and with it the wealth and power of the nation. These are loud calls ; alarming visitations. The rod hath spoken again and again ; yet how few hear its voice,

or fear him that appointed it ! The rich and poor amongst us go on as usual. Iniquity stalks with brazen front through our streets ; and error, in ten thousand forms, vents its unsoftened blasphemies against God and his Messiah. Places of amusement are crowded ; and the whirl of dissipation goes on, as if there were nothing to solemnize us, or make us think. Multitudes of our gentry are laughing, at the play-house, or pursuing a more childish farce at the masquerade, while their poor countrymen are groaning in the field of battle, and, at the expense of their blood and lives, are fighting for that which is to keep others in ease and idleness. Thus, while the deepest tragedy is exhibited beyond the Atlantic, on this side the water we are carrying on the grossest farce. Youth are educated in ignorance, or trained up in fashionable vice ; by which they fall an easy prey to the first bold invader of their morals and their virtue. Dress, visiting, and various species of dissipation, leave no time for the serious calls of religion ; and a knowledge of the truths of revelation forms, in the system of many, no part of modern education. Frothy and lascivious novels occupy the place of God's word ; and there is no book so little read or understood, as the *Book of books*. The aged lead the way in folly and vanity ; and

endeavour to initiate their tender offspring, as early as possible, in those “pomps and vanities of a wicked world,” which both promised to renounce. Thus grey hairs give a sanction to evils, which youth want a curb in the pursuit of. And thus many a child has to curse its parent for an initiation into the pride of life and lusts of the flesh, by which his disgrace and ruin have been led on by a sort of necessary gradation. An introduction to the world, that is, to its nonsense, vanity, and dissipation—is deemed, with many, an essential in good-breeding. And, with many, to keep *good* company, is not to associate with those who fear God, but with those, who are distinguished by no other excellence but the possession of a title or a fortune. These accidental acquisitions are often complimented with the appellation of *good*; though all beside should be nothing but a compound of wretchedness and vice. Thus no distinction is made between men and their accidents; and adulation frequently offered at the shrine of debauchery and pride. And thus men confound the names of good and evil; put darkness for light, and light for darkness.

And can it be said that God’s desolations have taught us the evil of sin? No. While vice maintains its wonted vigor, pleasure attracts its votaries as usual, and profaneness rears

its triumphant crest without control or shame, it can never be said, that we are advancing in reformation. Rather, as our visitations have increased, the stupefaction of sinners has increased with them. The storms, which should rouse, have eventually rocked them to rest. Even the *deaf adder* is quick of hearing, when compared with numbers, who neglect or refuse to hear that "Charmer," whose voice, in his *promises*, is sweeter and more harmonious than all the choristers of heaven; and, in his *threatenings*, more tremendous than the roaring of the seas, and all the artillery of conflicting elements. Which leads me to observe, that,

2. GOD'S desolations in the earth should impress us with a reverential awe of his majesty and a dread of his wrath; should make us see his hand and acknowledge his interposition in every event.

As it is the part of bad divinity to make as little as possible of the Lord Jesus Christ, so it is the province of bad philosophy to leave God out of its favorite systems. In the latter case recourse is had to the doctrine of second causes, and to what are called the laws of nature. 'Upon this principle, vain man would attempt to *account* for every thing, and to exclude all mystery from the natural and spiritual world; although, in both respects, the phenomena exhibited evince

the vanity and danger of the effort, and prove that, "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts." But, still proud man cannot bear that his reason should be confounded, or his understanding limited; and sooner than confess his ignorance, will explore depths, which angels cannot fathom, and soar so high into the regions of speculation, as to drop into materialism, and lose sight of his God. Thus it appears, that from pride springs every atheistical hypothesis, that produces a contempt of God and a denial of his sovereign interposition; but that the very first step in that heavenly science, which revelation styles "the wisdom from above," is humility, which makes a man submit to be taught by his Maker, and not dispute away the existence of what he cannot comprehend.

The system of nature, it is allowed, is a chain of second causes, concatenated in such a manner, as to make one link depend upon another by a necessary coherence. But second causes must have a first, and laws must originate in some law-giver. So that, admitting that nature is regulated by certain laws interwoven with its existence and constitution, still the contrivance and execution of the wonderful plan force us to acknowledge, that an infinite



mind must have tied together at first every link in the golden chain ; and that what heathenism called the *anima mundi*, is in reality the all-pervading, all-supporting, and all-comprehending presence and power of Deity. But what shall we say, when the laws of nature suffer a temporary infringement ? When the regularity of her course is diverted, and broken in upon ? Do the convulsions of the earth, and the rage of elements, form any part of her laws, or any link in the concatenation of her parts ? Was it by any inherent law, that the ocean once burst its barriers and overspread the earth ? that the ground opened and swallowed Korah and his sacrilegious associates ? that Sinai's base shook, while its summit was enveloped with "blackness, and darkness, and tempest ?" that the sun was eclipsed without any intervening sphere, and the rocks were rent, when Jesus expired on the cross ? Or upon what principle will philosophy account for that final conflagration, which shall, in the destined period, burn up the earth and the works that are therein ? when

" The cloud-capp'd tow'rs, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great Globe itself  
Shall dissolve ; and, like the baseless fabric  
Of a vision, leave not a wreck behind !"

Are these nature's *laws* ? No ; they are the disruption of them—the rending, not the order

of the system. Who breaks in upon this harmony? The God of nature. The Creator is the dissolver of the world. He who spoke it from chaos into light and arrangement, speaks it into ruin. And those who insinuate, that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the world," an inspired apostle calls, "*scoffers*, who walk after their own lusts. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But, the heavens and earth which are now, by the same word, kept in store, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment." 2 Pet. iii. 4, 7.

As, therefore, there is a Supreme Being, that made and now supporteth the world, so there is a God that *judgeth* the earth. And as the world could not have existed in the beginning without his *fiat*, so neither can the course of nature be disturbed without his interposition. And they who are so ready upon every occasion to ascribe to second causes merely, what must be the effect of the great FIRST CAUSE, indirectly strike at the existence of *sin*, and the being of God. Leaving, therefore, the vain philosopher and cavilling sceptic to speculate about the natural causes of earthquakes, tempests, pestilences, famine, sword; come, behold

the works of the Lord, what desolations HE hath made in the earth. For thus saith Jehovah, " I form light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the LORD do *all these things*." Isa. xlv. 7. If the earth be convulsed, Jehovah shakes it. If the sword rages, *He* " gives it its charge." If the tempest lours, and the heavens are clothed with black, *He* guides the storm, and rides upon the wings of the wind. If the artillery of the skies send out their voice, and shoot their arrows, it is *He*, who maketh the thunder and darts the lightning. If Jerusalem is to be buried in ruins, it is because *He* saith, " This is the city to be visited." Jer. vi. 6.

Let all the earth stand in awe of Him, and all its inhabitants revere his majesty and dread his indignation. " He measured the waters in the hollow of his hand; he meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity." Isa. xl. 12, 15, 17. Behold the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning

with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy ; his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire." Isa. xxx. 27. If he whet his glittering sword, and his hand take hold on judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, and will reward them that hate him." Deut. xxxii. 41. " Fear ye not ME ? saith the Lord. Will ye not tremble at my presence ?" Jer. v. 22. " Who can stand before his indignation ? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger ? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt and the earth is burned at his presence, yea the world, and all that dwell therein." Nah. i. 5, 6.

" He frowns, and darkness veils the moon,  
The fainting sun grows dim at noon ;  
The pillars of heav'n's starry roof  
Tremble and start at his reproof!"

These sublime passages taken from the inspired writings, and descriptive of the wisdom, majesty, grandeur, and indignation of GOD, are written, that we might form a due estimate of the littleness and impotence of that reptile man, when contending with Omnipotence ? and learn from the desolations of the earth, to tremble at his presence. But where are the people that

have learned this lesson? If a veneration for the institutions of Heaven, a delight in the ways of God, a reverent mention of his sacred name, a conscientious observation of the Sabbath, and a hatred of sin, be characteristics of God's peculiar people, I fear the number will be found very small, when compared with the bulk of the profane. And here I cannot paint in stronger colors the prevalence of immorality in the present day, than by adopting the words of good Bishop Sherlock, in his description of the predominant wickedness of his own times. In a sermon delivered at Salisbury, the good bishop says, " Surely the Gospel of Jesus Christ was never treated with greater malice and contempt by *Jews* or *Heathens*, than it has been in this Christian country.—Is not Sunday become a day of diversion to great ones, and a day of idleness to little ones? And has not this been followed by a great increase of great wickedness among the lower sort of people?" And, when speaking of the licentiousness of that period, which succeeded the Restoration, and opened flood-gates of iniquity, which have continued through similar channels ever since; he says, " The sense of religion decayed, and the very appearances of it were suspected as a remnant of hypocrisy. And, if we may judge by the *performances of the stage*, which are formed to the *taste* of the peo-

ple, there never was a time when *lewdness*, *irreligion*, and *profaneness*, were heard with more patience." No wonder that, from a contempt of the gospel, and a love of dissipation, should spring what the good Bishop asserts in his Pastoral Letter, p. 7, " Blasphemy and horrid imprecations domineer in our streets; and poor wretches are every hour wantonly and wickedly calling for damnation on themselves and others, which may be, it is to be feared, too near them already. Add to this, the lewdness and debauchery that prevail among the lowest people; which keep them idle, poor, and miserable, and the number of *lewd houses* which trade in their vices, and must be paid for making sin convenient to them; and it will account for villanies of other kinds. For where is the wonder, that persons so abandoned should be ready to commit all sorts of outrage and violence. A CITY WITHOUT RELIGION CAN NEVER BE A SAFE PLACE TO DWELL IN."\*

Thus the excellent prelate, like a faithful watchman, lifted up his voice like a trumpet, and dared to *speak out*. And should not the ministers of the present day copy the example? The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The

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\* See Whiston's Memoirs, pages 94—96.

Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy? O ye ambassadors of Christ, "cry aloud and spare not," that sinners may take the alarm, and fly from impending judgments and imminent destruction, to that way of salvation revealed in the gospel. And this suggestion points to another improvement to be derived from a view of God's desolating dispensations; namely,

3. The necessity and importance of an interest in the blessed JESUS, as the great antidote against every calamity, and the glorious security against sin and its consequences.

Of all the symptoms of false security, which mark the complexion of the present day, there is none more truly alarming, than the supine indifference about truth, and the sovereign contempt of the gospel, which prevail amongst us. Our times are distinguished by much free thinking; and I wish there was no cause to add, by much free blaspheming too. I mean not here to insinuate any thing derogatory from that liberty which every rational being indisputably claims of thinking, and judging for himself, in the investigation of truth; provided always that he make the scriptures the ground and guide of his researches. Freedom of inquiry has ever proved friendly to the cause of truth, and inimical to that of ignorance and superstition.

But, when this liberty is abused, as penal shackles are taken off, it looks as if men only wanted an easy opportunity of setting up for system-makers, to draw after them a gaping multitude, and make them stare at these prodigies in theology, who profess to suit their tenets to the taste of all. Hence, some make liturgies, and omit all divine homage to Him, whom the scriptures command us "to honor even as we honor the Father." This appears a bright discovery to others, who immediately take the hint, and frame a manual upon a broader plan; in which the name of Jesus Christ is not so much as *mentioned*. A compliment this to the Deists, who are very much enraged at the idea of making a crucified man the centre of any system, or the object of any divine honors. But a third, still more hugely catholic, steps forward, and proposes a more enlarged plan, in which Jews, Turks, and the worshippers of Jupiter Ammon, may be blended together in one common brotherhood with believers in Jesus Christ; and a way to happiness be secured for Julian the Apostate, as well as Paul the Apostle. This is free-thinking with a witness. But, would such persons think as closely and calmly, as they think freely, the desolating judgments of God might teach them, that the Jewish nation could not practise idol-



atry without suffering severely for it ; and that rejection of the Messiah, and contempt of his gospel, were the aggravated sins that reduced their city and temple to ashes, and themselves to the abject state of vagabonds on the earth.

If there be any one truth, which appears more prominent than all the rest in the sacred scriptures, it is, that “ other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ ;” —that he is our “ wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ;” —that “ there is none other name under heaven whereby we can be saved ;” —that he is “ set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood ;” —that he “ offered himself a *sacrifice* to God, and died to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of himself ;” —that not our works, but his work, is to be the ground of our acceptance, since “ we are accepted *in* the beloved ;” and that, to stamp sufficiency on his glorious salvation, “ in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” And yet how little do these truths enter into popular systems ! Is there any question that would appear more difficult to many professors of Christianity to be solved, than, “ What think ye of Christ ?” But while the infidel sports with truth, and the careless contemn its admonitions, O let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure. Let us fly to him,

to whom all the nations of the earth are commanded to look and be saved. Would we be secure from the guilt of sin, or armed against the sting of death, let us betake ourselves to him, who bore the one and conquered the other, by dying himself. Would we be prepared for whatever afflictions may befall us as individuals, or judgments overtake us as a nation; let us but build our hope upon the rock of ages, and then all shall work for good. If Christ be ours, then whether wrath is revealed or judgments impend, we shall have a secure shelter in his blood and righteousness. The earth may be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea; yet, in the midst of nature's wreck, we shall sing, "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

4. We should view even the desolations of the earth as an accessory ground of joy and confidence in God. When Martin Luther and his associates in reformation were in any trouble, he used often to say, "Come let us sing the 46th Psalm." With the words of this sweet composition in his mouth, and the energetic power of it in his heart, he animated himself and his companions in tribulation. When any storms arose within, the subject of the psalm dispelled them, and, like the melody of David's harp, soothing to rest the turbulent spirit of

Saul, calmed their fears, and enabled them to sing their troubles away. We should imitate the heroic spirit of these champions in the cause of truth; for we have the same reason to rejoice that they had. If the Lord be our God, we should trust in him and not be afraid. He never gives up that tender relation towards his people, amidst any troubles that may arise. Though he desolate the earth with the most fearful judgments, yet he is the Father of his chosen still. And when this globe shall be in flames, Jesus will collect his jewels, and preserve them from ruin. Therefore, in the words of Habakkuk, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet let us rejoice in the Lord, let us joy in the God of our salvation." Hab. iii. 17, 18.

## S E R M O N VI.

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THE NATURE AND DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF TRUE  
CONVERSION.

[Preached at Nantwich, December 8th, 1782.]

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*“ Except ye be converted, and become as little children,  
ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”*

MATTHEW, xviii. 3.

OUR blessed Saviour uttered these words upon the following memorable occasion:—The disciples came unto Jesus, saying, “ Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” verse 1. Upon comparing this with the parallel place in Mark, ix. 34, it appears, that “ they had been disputing among themselves, who should be the greatest.” A dispute this, extremely unprofitable, and highly unbecoming the disciples of that meek and lowly Jesus, who, though he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet took upon him the form of a servant, and

came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Phil. ii. 6, 7. Mat. xx. 28. But see how deeply the love of power, and a fondness for pre-eminence, are rooted in human nature! One would have thought, that with such an illustrious example of humility and condescension before their eyes as their divine Master, *they* should have been the last men in the world to commence a contest about greatness; especially if they at all reflected, that the uniform obscurity of their origin and education placed them all upon a level. But when we behold pride creeping into the little college of our Lord's own disciples, and see a company of illiterate fishermen urging a controversy about superiority in office, we may from hence infer, that "to be as gods," Gen. iii. 5, is a desire as predominant in the nature of man as it proved fatal to our first parents; that every man is born a Diotrephe, —would have the pre-eminence in all things; and that the same arrogant spirit, which lifts up a Roman pontiff with pride and blasphemy, is congenial to human nature; and that there is that in every man's heart, which would incline him to be a little pope in pre-eminence, how low soever his pretensions may be, or contracted his sphere of action.

What led to the dispute among the disciples, was, probably, the mistaken notion they had conceived respecting the nature of the Messiah's kingdom. Fancying that it was to be a secular establishment, and having their heads full of ideas of their own future greatness, it should seem that they anticipated the period of their exaltation; and, concluding, that they should be raised to the highest posts of civil and ecclesiastical preferment, it remained only for them to determine, who among them should be chief. For genuine pride can never brook a superior; and is never perfectly gratified, until every competitor is vanquished, and its own sovereign mandates acquire a sanction from a pre-eminence of office and power. The source this, of all the fierce contentions, that have often for centuries rent the church, and are at this day ravaging the world. The unsanctified disputes of ecclesiastical rulers, or the bloody contests among the tyrannical governors of states and empires, when narrowly examined, appear to originate, for the most part, in this question, "Who shall be greatest?"

In order to strike at the root of this imperious disposition in his disciples, their wise Master gave such an answer to their question, as would best tend to mortify their vanity, and

disappoint their affectation of false greatness. To give an emphasis to his observations on this important question, he took a child, and placed him in the midst of them, and then pronounced the great and interesting truth of the text. As if our Lord should say, "Imagine not that my kingdom, as to its origin and establishment, is of this world. It is entirely spiritual; is not to be founded on secular dominion, or to be conducted agreeably to the principles and temper of earthly potentates. And whereas, among men, human greatness is estimated by worldly exaltation; and they are generally deemed the chief, who rise to the highest post of honor, though avarice, pride, and ambition, are the mischievous tempers that lead to their exaltation, and are fed by the enjoyment of it; yet it shall not be so in the kingdom which I am about to establish in the hearts of the children of men. There, ambition is to have for its object, not earth, but heaven; not temporal, but eternal concerns: and the laws by which the subjects of that kingdom are to be governed, will require, not the temper of the proud and the ambitious, that is so successful in the schemes of the men of the world, but the disposition of a child, humble, teachable, dead to the world, and dependant upon me for every provision. And except ye be inwardly changed,

and become transformed into this amiable and heavenly characteristic of the subjects of my kingdom, ye cannot be partakers of my glory.”

From the words, thus opened, I shall take occasion to consider ; *First*, The nature of conversion ; *Secondly*, The temper that distinguishes this great change ; *Thirdly*, I shall endeavour to shew, how much every individual among us is concerned in the subject, since our Lord declares, that, without conversion, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

I. As to the nature of conversion, it essentially consists in an inward and universal change of heart, wrought by the gracious operation of the Spirit of God ; by which new principles are established in the mind, new inclinations are imparted, and new objects pursued. The word conversion signifies the being turned away from an object of former attachment, in order to contemplate and enjoy one, that had been previously disregarded and despised. In the work, which this word is adapted to describe, there occurs this twofold change. The heart is turned away from the love of sin, the love of self, and the love of the world, and becomes captivated with the love of God, and turns to him as its chief good. Sin loses its dominion, the world appears in its true colors, stript of all that false beauty, in which a depraved heart is



apt to paint it. Pleasure, that fatal enchantress, can allure no longer. She spreads all her nets, and gilds all her baits, in vain. The converted sinner perceives no melody in her syren voice, and feels no attraction from all her studied blandishments. Conversion removes the scales from his eyes, and rends the veil from his heart, that prevented him from seeing through the false disguise that covered all her lying vanities. And he turns away with disgust and disappointment from that cup, of which he once drank so freely. He nauseates what he once imbibed so eagerly; and in that draught, from which he once hoped to derive such happiness, he now sees poison and death concealed. The love of God having vanquished the love of the world in his heart, he now heartily coincides with that wise man, whose experience taught him, that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Eccles. i. 14.

As it is a very common case for one, who has been a profligate, to commence Pharisee, or to turn from sin to self, which is but a refined species of wickedness; it is necessary to observe, that in the great change of which the Holy Spirit is the author, it is the principal office of that divine Agent, to convince of sin, and to drive the sinner from the false refuge of self-dependance, to the glorious righteousness

of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without this, a sinner would take down one idol only to set up a worse in its stead. And, as there is none so injurious to the honor of the Redeemer, or so deeply prejudicial to a sinner's immortal interests, as self-righteousness; this idol, as the leader of all the rest, must be dethroned, that Christ might have in all things the pre-eminence. "In *him* shall all the seed of Israel be justified." Isa. xlv. 25. When a man, therefore, is truly converted, the Holy Spirit never teaches him to turn in upon himself, and contemplate with proud self-complacency his own worthiness, or to admire his own performances; while, like the Pharisee in the gospel, he looks down with conscious superiority upon a poor publican at the footstool of mercy. No. With Job, he abhors himself, and repents as in dust and ashes. Job, xlii. 6. With Isaiah, he cries, "Woe is me! for I am undone." Isa. vi. 5. And, with St. Paul, he desires to "be found in Christ, not having on his own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness of God by faith." Phil. iii. 9. So that, as naturalists say, it is the peculiarity of the heliotrope or sun-flower to expand its beauties to the rays of the sun, and always to keep its face turned towards that bright luminary; in like manner, the converted soul spontaneously turns to the Sun of Right-

eousness, by the light of whose countenance it is cheered and attracted, and to whose merits it is indebted for all its prospects in time and eternity. The love of Jesus is the load-stone that draws, and his perfect righteousness the object which the happy sinner contemplates with delight and admiration. To that exhaustless spring of all the hopes and comforts of God's people he turns, and from him he looks for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. 1 Cor. i. 30.

Where conversion is genuine, it may be discovered by the universality of its influence, and the depth of its operation. It begins at the heart, and extends its salutary effects to all the sublime faculties of the mind, and the whole tenor of the outward conversation. The understanding is renewed in knowledge. Col. iii. 10. The contrariety of the will is broken, and is changed into a passive acquiescence in the sovereign will of God. "The carnal mind, which is enmity against God," Rom. viii. 7, is subdued by the superior influence of divine grace. All offences at the gospel-plan of salvation cease; for, when the veil of unbelief that covers the heart is rent, it then "turns to the Lord." 2 Cor. iii. 15. The languid affections are quickened, and are set on things above. Col. iii. 1. The desires are turned into

a right channel, and directed to proper objects. The eye of the understanding being illuminated to "behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord Jesus," 2 Cor. iii. 18; the heart, enraptured with a view of his matchless excellency, cries out, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth, that I desire besides thee." Psal. lxxiii. 25. The desire of the soul is to him, and to the remembrance of his great name and glorious salvation. Isa. xxvi. 8. The thoughts, that formerly wandered upon subjects of the most trivial, or the most pernicious nature, are now turned to the interesting concerns of eternity, and are often employed in meditating upon that sweetest, most sublime, and most copious of all topics, the stupendous love of God manifested in the unspeakable gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. The strain of conversation becomes very materially altered, from froth and levity, or, what is worse, from perhaps indecency and gross profaneness, to seriousness, purity, and spirituality. The aversion to engage in religious converse ceases; and no company appears so honorable or so delightful, as that which is composed of persons, who love to talk of the great things that belong to their peace. Prayer is deemed an exalted privilege, as well as a duty; and praise is considered as the employ of heaven. The hands are lifted up, and the

knee is bent in supplication before the divine throne; and the tongue, which is the glory of man, awakes to vindicate the honor of truth, to recommend the Friend of sinners, or to publish the preciousness of his salvation. The feet, turned away from crooked and perverse ways, are swift to bear the converted sinner to the house of God; where, as he sits rejoicing in the name of Jesus, and happy in the sound of that blessed gospel, that charms his ear, and captivates his heart, he joins issue with the sweet Psalmist of Israel, and says, "How amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts! One day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 10.

It has been suggested in the beginning of this head of the discourse, that to turn the heart of a sinner is the work of God. And most certainly, whatever conversion is, the scriptures authorize us to believe, that it is not the work of man; and indeed cannot be, since the extreme depravity and helplessness of his nature render him altogether insufficient to any good word or work. If conversion consisted in nothing more than the breaking off some outwardly vicious courses, or the mere adopting a line of regular attendance on the external forms of devotion; if it implied no more than decency of manners, and an exemp-

tion from gross indulgencies, or the relinquishing of former excesses ; in those cases, perhaps, man might exert his power with considerable success, and, in part at least, claim the honor of being instrumental to his own salvation. But as conversion hath, for its subject, the immortal soul, with all its strong propensities, intemperate desires, irregular passions, impetuous appetites, and depraved principles ; as it comprehends a work that gets at the very root of sin, and cleanses the fountain of corruption, that renovates the very constituent faculties of the human mind, and forms a radical cure in the very centre and seat of the malady ; it is evident, that the change necessary to produce this effect must be the result of a divine agency ; or, in plainer terms, that HE who made the heart, and HE alone, can change it. A truth this, confirmed by the express authority of the word of God. “ Without me,” says Christ, “ ye can do nothing.” John, xv. 5. And he says again, “ No man *can* come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me, *draw* him.” John, vi. 44. In that solemn prayer uttered by the church in her distress, and recorded in the lamentations of Jeremiah, she acknowledges the same truth, when she cries, “ Turn THOU us unto thee O Lord, and we *shall* be turned.” Lam. v. 21.

And this is the language of Ephraim bemoaning himself in Jer. xxxi. 18. Where, after having bewailed the refractoriness of his heart, that made him feel, under the discipline of Jehovah's rod, like "a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," he cries out, "Turn THOU me and I shall be turned." And when the great change was effected, in retrospect, as before in prospect, he attributes the accomplishment of it to the power of God, saying, "Surely, after that I WAS TURNED, I repented," &c. verse 19. And, indeed, the passive form of the words of the text fully implies the truth I am contending for, especially when compared with similar language in Acts, iii. 19. Psal. li. 13. As for those passages of scripture, which seem to make the power of turning to be the sinner's sole act, or to rest in the efforts of the ministers of the gospel, as Ezek. xiv. 6. and Mal. iv. 6. Acts, xxvi. 18. they are to be interpreted, in consistency with the general maxim already laid down, as only declarative in one case, of the *instrumentality*, which divine wisdom useth in the accomplishment of its purposes; and, in the other, of the derived influence, which the sinner himself is enabled to exert, but by a power, originally not his own. Thus, ministers are said to turn others from darkness to light, and sinners to turn themselves, only in consequence of the

blessing and power of God, which enable them to do the one and the other respectively. For, when the great Apostle of the Gentiles reviewed the success of his ministrations, or when he contemplated the evidences of his conversion, he resolves both into the agency and sovereignty of divine grace, saying, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.—By the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Cor. xv. 10.

I cannot prevail upon myself to dismiss this branch of the subject, without observing further, in confirmation of what hath been already urged, that the change effected in the conversion of a sinner, is compared, in scripture, to some of those operations in nature, to accomplish which nothing short of an Almighty agency is requisite. It is, for instance, called "a new *creation*," 2 Cor. v. 17 ;—a new *birth*, John, iii. 3 ;—a *resurrection* from the dead, Col. iii. 1 ;—a quickening from a death in trespasses and sins, Ephes. ii. 1 ;—the communication of light to the soul, by the same powerful voice that said in the beginning, "Let there be light." 2 Cor. iv. 6 ;—a translation from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Col. i. 13. And the renovation which it produceth, is said to make believers "the habitation of God by his spirit," Ephes. ii. 22 ;—"his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto



good works," Ephes. ii. 10;—branches, taken from a barren stock, and engrafted into the "true vine" by the operation of the Spirit, John, xv. 5;—sons of God by adoption, Gal. iv. 6;—and joint-heirs with Christ to an everlasting inheritance, purchased at the price of his blood.

Now, from such bold and striking metaphors, as make the power that created the universe, that arranged the elements when in a state of chaos, that formed the light, and that raised the dead, to be representative of that influence exerted in conversion, what are we to infer? but that, as an omnipotent agency is displayed in the works of nature, it is equally requisite in the operations of grace; and, in fact, that none but HE who made the world, can convert a sinner. A truth this, to which the experience of every true believer bears an additional testimony. Reviewing himself as a brand plucked from the burnings, he cannot but stand astonished at the mighty power of that grace, which saved him from eternal perdition, when he was just upon its very brink. "How infinitely indebted," he will often say, "do I consider myself to that gracious Saviour, whose mercy vanquished such a rebel! and whose blood was sufficient to expiate the guilt of such deep-dyed transgressions! When I reflect, with what im-

petuosity I was running in the road to ruin; with what obduracy of heart I defied Omnipotence, while I was trampling his law under my feet, and lived regardless either of his threatenings or his promises; what a contumacious resistance I made to all the overtures of divine mercy in the gospel, and with what blindness, unbelief, and hardness of heart, I quarrelled with the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour; in what a false security I was wrapt up, even when my headstrong corruptions were precipitating me to destruction; and how determined I was never to relinquish the fond but fatal prepossessions that only fed the pride of my heart, and kept it in a state of servile conformity to a world lying in wickedness;—when I revolve all these considerations in my mind, I rejoice with trembling, to think, how narrowly I escaped; and am constrained to attribute all to the sovereign and unsought interposition of divine grace. Surely nothing but a supernatural power could have softened a heart so hard as mine; and none but God himself could have saved a sinner so rebellious. Therefore, while life, and breath, and being, last, to HIM I will offer up the glowing effusions of love and gratitude, and record through eternity what he hath done for my soul.

A work of this nature, in which the hand of God is so conspicuous, must be productive of the most salutary effects to the highly favored sinner, who is the subject of it. For, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (*ἡ καινὴ κτίσις* a new creation): old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." 2 Cor. v. 17. The renovation, intimated in this passage, having introduced new light into the understanding, and new desires into the heart and affections, it must consequently have a proportionable effect upon the temper; not wholly to eradicate the constitutional peculiarity of it, but to sanctify, and render it subservient to the glory of God and the good of society. Nor does this great change go merely to correct, regulate, and sanctify the natural temper, whatever in different constitutions it may happen to be, but it likewise establishes in the heart tempers, to which it was before an utter stranger; which I now proceed to consider under the second head; and that is,

II. The distinguishing mark of true conversion, that, of "becoming as little children."

Although, in numerous instances, the work of conversion is attended with circumstances so striking as not only to obviate all doubt respecting the reality of it, but also to enable many to fix, with the utmost precision, the

date of its origin, and to recollect perfectly the time and manner in which the light of conviction first dawned; yet, as in others, the work has been wrought at an early period of life, has been less perceptible in its first impressions, and has been carried on by degrees slow and progressive, like “seed cast into the ground, which springeth and groweth up, a man *knoweth not how* ;” Mark, iv. 27. I prefer the consideration of what is essential to conversion, and *common* to all the subjects of it, to what is *peculiar* to some, and comparatively of little consequence. For the point of real moment with every sinner is, not so much to inquire how, when, and by what instrument he was converted, as to ascertain, that the work has really been wrought. And, indeed, as it is extremely possible for a man, busy in the former inquiry, and partial in his inferences respecting the safety of his state, to rest the great affair on circumstances rather uncertain in their nature, and at no time decisive, while he fatally overlooks what is essential to the work itself; in order to set us right in a matter of such vast concern, the text, and the whole tenor of sacred scripture, lead us to examine, whether we are “become as little children;” because this is the safest and most certain criterion of our being the children of God: and thus, in particular, St. Peter argues with

the professors of Christianity in his day, saying, "If these things, (faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity,) be in you, and abound, they make you, that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see afar off." 2 Pet. i. 8, 9.

When our Lord makes the principal characteristic of true conversion to consist in a temper resembling that of little children, the comparison is not designed to consider them, as they are by nature, but as they happen to be by constitution, by the texture of their tender frame, and their accidental inability to exercise those faculties of the mind, or those organs of the body, which, when age and strength co-operate, man very soon uses as instruments of unrighteousness. It is in this light, and this alone, that we can interpret the force of the resemblance in the text, consistently either with scripture or matter of fact. The former assures us, that "man is born as the wild ass's colt." Job, xi. 12. And experience soon demonstrates the truth of this striking comparison, when that "folly which is bound up in the heart of a child," Prov. xxii. 15, shooteth forth into those branches of iniquity, and fruits of unrighteousness, which, like the flower in the seed, or the

fruit wrapt up in the germ, only wanted time and strength to bring them to maturity. Yet, as long as corruption is checked by infantile weakness, and nature has not power, in that first stage of the life of man, to put forth its innate propensities, infants and little children become eventual teachers to adults; and many with hoary heads need not be ashamed to go and learn wisdom from the weakest and youngest of their own species; especially if they attend to the several points of view, in which scripture places little children, as objects worthy of our imitation.

1. In the first place, as they are no sooner ushered into life, than they cry for that nutriment, which the God of nature hath so wisely adapted to their weak condition; in like manner, must we evidence the reality of our regeneration, by an insatiate thirst for that spring of salvation opened in the scriptures of truth. Thus the Apostle Peter says, "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." 1 Pet. ii. 2. And St. Paul uses the same idea, when writing to the Corinthian Church, he says, "I have fed you with milk and not with strong meat." 1 Cor. ii. 2. See also Heb. v. 13, 14. As the new-born babe, by instinct of nature, cries for the breast, so the new-born soul first evidences its introduction

into divine life, by its love to the scriptures. For this spiritual food, other things are thrown aside; and what constituted the soul's repast, when dead in sin, is, after its regeneration, esteemed as chaff, or dreaded even as poison. The midnight lamp, that had been often exhausted in the perusal of publications of the most frothy or the most pernicious tendency, is now extinguished, that the soul might indulge in sweet meditation on the word of God. In the streams, which flow from this fountain, there are no dregs of latent error or poison of lurking impurity. And, while they communicate life and health by their salubrious influence, they convey also the most refined enjoyment to the renewed mind. The sacred pages, like the fragrant *name*, which gives them all their preciousness, are as "ointment poured forth." Solomon's Song, i. 3. They emit an odor that regales the senses and ravishes the heart. The promises are those "breasts of consolation," from whence the new-born soul derives all its nourishment; and while it "hears them, reads, marks, learns, and inwardly digests them,"\* its life is fed, and its happiness enlarged. This made the Royal Psalmist say, "How sweet are

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\* Service of the Church of England.

thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." Psal. cxix. 103. So that they who can delight more in frothy novels, and the pernicious productions of the stage, than in a perusal of the word of God; or who can make any other book whatever take the lead of the Bible, have no more pretensions to refinement of taste, than they have to true religion. And such persons need not go far to find out whether they be converted or not; their disrelish to the scriptures is as decisive a mark against them as possible. And till their vitious taste is refined, and their depraved nature renewed, they cannot resemble little children, according to the idea suggested in the text, and must, therefore, be far from the kingdom of heaven.

2. Another sense, in which we should become as little children, is in the imitation of their humility. This is the temper more immediately recommended in the context, because it is the direct reverse of that which led the disciples to dispute about pre-eminence, and to ask their Lord an unimportant and vain question. Whatever seeds of pride lurk in the nature of infants, yet such is their imbecility of constitution, that, for want of power to exert themselves, they are rather patterns of humility; but more especially, if such little children as our Lord referred



to, are partakers of the grace of God. Pride shews itself in forms of various nature. Elation of heart, when the sun of worldly prosperity shines, and proportionable depression and pusillanimity, when the scene shifts to the gloom of adversity—envy at another man's good fortune, and repining at our own—impatience of reproof, and a quick and acrimonious resentment of injuries—an overweening desire to grasp at worldly things, only to feed and pamper a worldly mind—a violent promptitude to boast of personal endowments, to the depreciating of others, and the aggrandizing of SELF, that darling idol of an unhumbed heart—are all pride, that hydra with many heads, shewing itself in these and various other ways impossible to be enumerated. But, to be humble, look at the infant lulled to rest in his mother's arms, or the child taken up with the objects of his puerile amusement, dead to the broils of the contentious, and to all the ambitious pursuits of the proud: the former, anxious only for that nutriment, which, when received, operates as a pleasing opiate to its senses; the latter extending his solicitude and ambition only to some little matter, which it costs no care or expense to possess, leaving sceptres, titles, riches, and honors, to those who exert all their subtlety and all their pride to procure them. To be

thus easy, like a little child, about worldly pre-eminence, and to be solicitous only, or primarily, about the honor that cometh from God, is the privilege of a Christian, and a mark of conversion. And why should infatuated mortals indulge a contrary temper, when, “before honor is humility;” but especially when it is considered that the loftiest head must be laid low in the grave, and that “dust to dust” will conclude the noblest song of earth. If you disdain to learn humility from a little child, yet take as your pattern that illustrious example of condescension, the holy child Jesus, who for us men and for our salvation exchanged the glory of the heaven of heavens for a manger and a cross.

3. We must become *teachable* as little children. This amiable disposition is one principal branch of true humility, and essentially consists in submitting our reason to the authority of revelation. A point this, not so easy to be accomplished, when we reflect on the pride of the human heart, and see multitudes propagating such tenets, as if they meant to teach the scriptures, and not that the scriptures should teach them. This more especially happens, when the pride of reason and the parade of learning unite their influence to puff men up with a fond conceit of the superiority of their

wisdom. But how mortifying to the vanity of these sons of science to hear the following declaration from the mouth of the Son of God!" "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto *babes*." Mat. xi. 25. Were a man possessed of all the learning of Greece and Rome, he may, notwithstanding, be a fool in God's account; and, until he is so, in his own estimation, his profound wisdom is nothing but foolishness, and, instead of aiding him in the investigation of truth, often proves a dreadful bar in his way. "If any man among you seem to be wise in this world," says St. Paul, "let him become a fool, that he may be wise." 1 Cor. iii. 18. And the reason which the apostle urges for this extraordinary requisition, is, that "the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God." Verse 19. Conceive human nature at the very summit of secular wisdom, and you see it elevated to the very pinnacle of pride; from whence men find it very difficult to descend into the valley of self-abasement. And yet descend they must, if ever they would know themselves or Christ Jesus the Lord; and instead of going to the throne of divine grace with philosophic pride and conscious wisdom, they must approach it as children, and as fools.

The language of this humble temper is, "That which I see not, teach thou me." Job, xxxiv. 32. — "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Psal. cxix. 18. And he who has been enabled to adopt it, like a child under tutors and governors, submitting to their instruction, and acquiescing in their discipline, sits at the feet of JESUS, to learn the mysteries of his kingdom, and receive the fulfilment of that promise, "It is written in the prophets, *And they shall be all taught of God.*" John, vi. 45.

4. As true religion is the most efficacious bond of society, by inspiring such tempers as promote benevolence and peace among men, St. Paul recommends the following maxim to the church of Corinth, "In malice *be ye children*, but in understanding be men." 1 Cor. xiv. 20. Malice is a deeply-rooted ill-will, accompanied with rancorous hatred, and a thirst of revenge; a temper that rages in the hearts of natural men, but cannot be harboured or indulged in a regenerate breast. Here again we are to learn of little children. If a momentary passion ruffles their temper, or awakens their feeble resentment; yet how soon is the cause of their indignation forgot! and in how few instances does the sun ever go down upon their wrath! In the bounds which nature hath fixed to their

short-lived anger, they become examples highly worthy our imitation, that we should be “slow to wrath;” James, i. 19; “be angry and sin not;” Ephes. iv. 26; and that we should “put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave us, so also should we.” Col. iii. 12, 13. But, where the contrary tempers of studied revenge and inveterate malice predominate, and are secretly indulged, they are as certain evidences of the reigning dominion of sin, and of an unconverted state of heart, as habitual drunkenness and debauchery.

5. As *children* look up to their parents for their entire provision; are indebted to them, under God, for their being; and receive their education and their fortune from their hands; so, to demonstrate our conversion, we must live a life of dependance upon the Supreme Being for every thing contributory to our comfort here, and our salvation hereafter. That we all live, move, and have our being in God, is a truth admitted by all. But yet, multitudes who subscribe to the doctrine, nevertheless “live as without God (*ἀθεοί* *atheists*) in the world;” possessing atheistical hearts with

orthodox heads ; “ professing that they know God ; but in works denying him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate ;” Tit. i. 16 ; never heartily imploring his blessing upon the bounties of his providence, or thanking him for the continuance of favors, which, by their ingratitude, they are daily forfeiting, together with the lives that his mercy so eminently spares. To instil the opposite temper, of dependance, gratitude, and confidence, our Lord sends us not only to little children, but also to the fowls of the air, and the flowers of the field ; that, from the growth of a lily, or the provision made by the great Father of the universe, for the young ravens that call upon him, we may learn to live upon his all-beneficent hand ; to acknowledge his parental care ; and to trust that all-surrounding and all-protecting Providence, which makes the hairs of our head, as well as the whole world itself, the objects of his preserving and merciful superintendence.

But how much more should we learn to look up to the great Author of redemption for our spiritual provision ! Whatever is necessary to the delight, the refreshment, the guidance, the establishment, the salvation of sinners, is all laid up in the rich fulness of the Son of God. If they want spiritual repast, he is

the "bread of life." If they want consolation, he is the fountain of living waters, and the God of all comfort. If they want wisdom, all the treasures of it centre in him, and he is Wonderful, Counsellor. If they want a righteousness to justify before the great Jehovah, his name is The Lord our Righteousness. Jer. xxiii. 6. If they want a friend to speak for them to God, to plead their cause, and render their services acceptable, he is their Advocate with the Father; and, for the unchangeableness of his affection, hath in all ages proved himself a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. If they want one, whose wisdom and power are sufficient to baffle all the stratagems of hell, and to vanquish the most formidable enemies, Jesus is the Captain of salvation, and his strength is the arm of the Lord God omnipotent. If they want a foundation, whose stability is adequate to the immense weight that rests upon it, Lo! Jesus is a sure foundation and the rock of ages. Upon the covenant and promises sealed with his blood they may securely rest their peace and happiness, all their vast interests for time and eternity.

That the mind may be formed into a susceptibility of these great truths, the temper of a

little child must first be implanted in it. For, while its natural pride and enmity remain, there is nothing to which a sinner is so averse, as to that of renouncing self, and being dependant for his whole salvation upon the Lord Jesus Christ. From hence arose the unwillingness of the Jews to "submit themselves unto the righteousness of God;" Rom. x. 3; and from the same bitter root sprung self-righteous Saul's "confidence in the flesh." Phil. iii. 4. But, as soon as the power of God brought that once-elated Pharisee to the dust, and effectually broke his heart, he who thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus, is made to cry out to that very person, whom he once blasphemed, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" From that moment, the lofty self-justiciary became a little child, and ever after gloried only in the cross. He learned to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord;" Phil. iii. 8; esteemed himself nothing, and Jesus all; and "the life which he lived in the flesh, was by the faith of the Son of God." Gal. ii. 20. The idol of self-righteousness in his heart was pulled down, that Christ, and Christ alone, might ever after possess, in all things, the pre-eminence; as he must, in ours also, if ever we



would enjoy a well-grounded hope of entering the kingdom of heaven. Which leads me to consider,

III. How much every individual is concerned in the subject, since our Lord declares, that, without conversion, in the scriptural light in which it has been represented, none can be partaker of his glory.

This awful declaration rests upon the veracity and power of God, and upon the nature of that work of the Spirit, “ which makes us *meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Col. i. 12.

1. Unconverted sinners can not enter the kingdom of heaven, because the God of truth hath declared they *shall not*. His word is more than ten thousand barriers in the way. And his veracity is so engaged to defend and fulfil every threatening, as well as every promise, that sinners might as well expect that God should change his nature, as change his word. Therefore if he hath said “ the wicked shall be cast into hell;” Psal. ix. 17;—“ he that believeth not shall be damned;” Mark, xvi. 16;—and that, “ neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God;”

1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; we may be fully persuaded, that Jehovah will as certainly fulfil these most tremendous threatenings, as if we saw the accomplishment of them, this instant, with our eyes. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the scriptures, until all be fulfilled. If Satan suggest “you shall not surely die,” remember “he was a liar from the beginning;” and that the fatal consequence of crediting that original falsity, was a confirmation of this unalterable truth, “that the wages of sin is death,” and that “what a man soweth that shall he also reap.”

2. When God makes a promise or denounceth a threatening, his *power* as well as his faithfulness is exerted equally to the accomplishment of the one and the other. No intervention of second causes shall stay his hand, or obstruct, or even retard his designs; because himself the great FIRST CAUSE makes them all subservient to his sovereign will. So that he must fulfil every promise to his people, because his ability is equal to his veracity, and both spring from his eternal willingness to do so. And he will execute every denunciation of his wrath, because he can. Could the potsherds of the earth contend successfully with their Maker, they might then entertain some distant hope at least of evading his threatenings, and eluding his

wrath : but, before they can expect to accomplish either, they must first cope with Omnipotence, and take heaven itself by storm : for, sooner shall the great Jehovah be dethroned, and his dominion in the heavens be subverted, than sinners unconverted be suffered to dwell there. The hand of God himself shall shut the gates of the celestial city against them ; and all the power of the Lord God Almighty shall be exerted, together with his truth and justice, to keep them out, for ever. In vain shall the sons of Belial attempt to enter ; in vain shall they knock, and importunately cry, saying, “ Open unto us.” Their exclusion will be announced and confirmed by those cutting words of the Judge, “ Depart from me, for I know you not.”

3. But the admission of unchanged sinners to the kingdom of God is an utter impossibility, because they want that conformity of heart to the exercise of heaven, which is necessary to make them willing to stay there, even if they were admitted. And it was upon this ground, that our Lord told Nicodemus, that “ except a man be born again, he could not see the kingdom of God.” John, iii. 3. By regeneration, the aversion of the heart to spiritual exercises is taken away, and a delight in them substituted in its stead. But in a carnal

mind this aversion is deeply rooted. And could a sinner, under the influence of it, be suffered to enter the kingdom of heaven, all the bliss of paradise would be no heaven to him. Carrying with him an indisposedness of heart to the employ of heaven, and having his eyes previously blinded by carnal lusts, he would not see any beauty in the palace of the great King, or enjoy any satisfaction in the beatific presence of the King himself. Having been accustomed on earth to frequent the company of the dissolute and the gay, he would feel awkward and unhappy in the society of saints and angels. All the harps of heaven would communicate no melody to his ears; and the exercise of praise and adoration would appear, as it did on earth, an intolerable burden. He would derive no enjoyment even from that river of the water of life, that floweth in a pure and perennial stream of happiness from the throne of God, and of the Lamb: for, having left the world with his heart full of carnal delights, the recollected pleasures of the sensuality and dissipation below, would crowd in upon his mind to mar all the felicity of heaven, and to make him prefer a Mahometan paradise to the exalted fruition of the blessed God, and all the refined pleasures which they taste, who contemplate his perfections, and bask in the beams of his love.

Besides the want of a disposition to the employ of heaven, there is in the hearts of the unregenerate a positive enmity against God, and the laws of his kingdom, which makes them rebels and enemies. And it cannot be supposed that such could find a place in that harmonious society, where perfect love to God is the bond of eternal concord and happiness among the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem. As soon might the devil and his angels expect to be translated to glory, as sinners, with hearts fraught with enmity against God, hope for a place in his kingdom. Rev. xxii. 11, 15.

From what has been said, it is evident,

1. That, as conversion is the work of God, to prescribe "rules" for the sinner's own accomplishment of it, as some legal authors have done, is palpably as absurd as to furnish a man with a set of rules for making a world. For the old and the new creation have one and the same agent; and he is the Almighty Creator of the universe. Isa. xlv. 17, 18.

2. That conversion doth not consist in those things, which the blindness of some, the pride of others, and the pharisaical zeal of not a few, would substitute in its stead. For instance; baptism is not conversion. It is only the outward sign of it. And, to mistake the sign for the thing itself, is as absurd as to make a sha-

dow equal to the substance. The thing signified in baptism is, "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness:" and this is conversion. But how many content themselves with having partaken of the outward ordinance, who do not understand the significancy of the institution, and know nothing of the blessings symbolically represented in it! "He is not a Jew, who is one outwardly," (nor is he a Christian who is one no farther); "but he is a Jew," (and a Christian,) "who is one inwardly: and circumcision," (or baptism) "is that of *the heart*, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Rom. ii. 28, 29.—Neither does the great change consist in a transient effect on the passions. These may often be mechanically wrought upon, and violent emotions excited in them, without the least concomitant influence from the Spirit of God. One man may be affected under a sermon, and another weep at a tragedy, and both be in the same predicament as to their state of heart towards God. When the passions are moved, because the affections are engaged, and the understanding enlightened in the subject, then the work is produced, not by the pathos of eloquence, or the violent mechanism of bawling and unmeaning vociferation, but by the finger of God. A change of the latter kind

will be permanent and abiding. But conversions, such as spring from a transient gust of passion, will always evaporate, "like the morning cloud or the early dew, that passeth away." Hos. vi. 4.—It would be equally absurd and dangerous to place true religion in an outward and partial reformation, often accompanied with a shew of zeal, which, at the bottom, is nothing but emptiness and ostentation. When a man all of a sudden cuts off some superfluities of naughtiness in dress and outward indulgence; when he prunes off some excrescences, while the root of corruption remains untouched; when to-day he acts the part of a novice, and to-morrow, like a fungus that shoots up in a night, he raises his head as a Reformer, without wisdom or materials for beginning or conducting a reformation; in such cases, the conversion is often from bad to worse; it is as if a harmless statue should be transformed into a venomous reptile; or folly, stealing the venerable garb of truth, should commence tyrant, and like Solomon's madman, with the hand of outrageous zeal, scatter about arrows, fire-brands, and death. Prov. xxvi. 19. From such conversions, and such converts as these, may the Lord at all times defend and save his church! —To change a denomination, or to adhere to that in which one may happen to have been

born and educated, is not conversion. A man may turn protestant, then turn calvinist, then turn arminian, then turn methodist, then turn quaker or quietist, (an usual transition,) then turn dissenter, and last of all turn churchman, and yet, through all these revolutions, which have been more than once exemplified in a single character, he may not once have thought seriously of turning CHRISTIAN—a name infinitely more honorable than all the empty titles that men assume to themselves to distract the minds of their brethren, and to rear their own consequence, often, upon the ruins of peace and union. Some are, no doubt, very sincere, and highly to be commended, for changing a denomination, when the interests of truth and the prosperity of their souls, or the dictates of conscience, are the objects in view. But there is not a greater delusion under the heavens, than for a man to infer the safety of his state, merely from an idea of the purity of the communion to which accident or bigotry may have induced him to join himself. To turn to a party, and to turn to God, are as different as light and darkness.—As for those, who plead for their continuance in the old beaten track of formality, because, as they say, “they will not change their religion,” a discourse upon the nature of true conversion is intended to con-



vince *such*, that *they have*, in fact, *no religion to change*. And as for those, under the influence of a more refined delusion, who place religion in the espousal of orthodox opinions, which have no renovating influence on their hearts and lives, and often take a false refuge in doctrines, of which, alas! they never experienced the power; it is necessary to tell these, and their partners in self-deception, that religion is principally A TEMPER; and that to be really changed, is to have "the mind that was in Christ Jesus," to be governed by that love, which St. Paul describes in 1 Cor. xiii.; and to be influenced by the humble temper of a little child. Without this, party is an insignificant badge, doctrines but chaff, zeal but wild-fire, and conversion but a name.

To conclude. Whatever denomination we adhere to, or whatever principles we espouse, let us remember, that, without the power of vital godliness, such badges of distinction must appear to him, who searcheth the heart, only as a "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." And as I have labored to urge this as a leading sentiment through the whole discourse, every candid hearer must see, that the ambition of my heart, like that of every disinterested servant of the Lord Jesus Christ,

is, to be instrumental, not in turning you to a particular name or favorite persuasion, but in converting you to God. Whether, then, you have erected your hopes, and built your system on the broad but rotten base of infidelity; whether you have commenced a free liver in consequence of being a free thinker—for they are characters closely allied—or, with some right notions in your head, betray a heart immersed in the world and dead in sin; whether you are dissipated with the gay, dissolute with the abandoned, or formal with the self-righteous; whatever accidental superiority, by birth, education, or fortune, you may possess above others; or howsoever applauded you may be for decency of manners or regularity of outward devotion; yet, in whatever light, either infidelity, libertinism, formality, or morality, can place a character, the unalterable truth of the text stands to cut off the fallacious pretensions of each. Conversion implies infinitely more than any moralist upon earth can attain to: and it differs as much from mere orthodoxy, as the genial and vivid light of the sun doth from the faint beams of the pale orb, that borrows light, but derives no heat, from his luminous body. As for formality in religion, it is not even the

shadow of that, of which it claims the essence. And as for the profane and the licentious, *continuing* such, the text stands as a barrier against the impiety of their principles, and the presumptuousness of their hope. For, except they, and the characters already alluded to, be converted, and become as little children, they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

## S E R M O N VII.

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THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF DOCTRINE THE FRUIT  
OF OBEDIENCE,

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*“ If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.”* John, vii. 17.

**T**HE malevolent and unremitting opposition, which the truths of revelation have met with from infidels in all ages, hath made it necessary to urge every argument, derived from the external and internal evidences of Christianity, in order to demonstrate that its origin is from God. This business of demonstrating would have been altogether superfluous, were the heart of man naturally accessible to truth and righteousness. But it is deplorably sunk in prejudices against both, in consequence of an apostacy from the Fountain of Wisdom. Hence, men quarrel with

revelation, because they have first rebelled against the divine Author of it. An innate aversion to the genius of true Christianity is generally productive of controversies about the proofs of its divine authenticity. Corruption in the heart of an infidel prompts him to wish that some of the doctrines of the gospel may not be true; because they hurt his pride, or propose a bridle to his lusts. And what men earnestly wish, they at last bring themselves obstinately to believe. From this unhappy mixture of credulity and obstinacy in an infidel spring all his objections to the dictates of reason, and the evidences of sacred truth. But the cause of Christianity is supported on all sides by pillars of such strength, that the efforts of its adversaries to overturn the fabric, only serve to shew its firmness, and to expose their weakness. Its plan originated in the mind of Jehovah, and its foundation rests on eternal truth. The same wisdom that arranged the universe modelled the gospel system; and the creation of the world and the revelation of truth in the Bible have but one and the same Almighty Agent. This will appear, if we consider, as proposed, the several arguments, that evince

1. The divine origin of the doctrines of the gospel. But these are so numerous, and would require such a compass of reasoning to discuss

them fully, that I must content myself with only giving you the outlines of them. The principal of these, as far as the external evidences of Christianity are concerned, are *prophecies* and *miracles*. When events have been predicted thousands of years before they happen, the correspondence between the fact and the prophecy must be the effect of divine interposition. Yet such a correspondence, the most punctual, even in the minutiae of time and circumstances, is visible from the very face of scripture prophecy. Miracles are justly considered as an additional evidence of the divine origin of any doctrine, and of the divine mission of him who preaches it. And having been performed before a number of credible witnesses, under circumstances of public notoriety, with marks of preternatural operation, and with a tendency the most beneficial to mankind, they become so many indubitable vouchers to the cause of truth. Much accessional strength to this sacred cause might be derived from a consideration of the character of the first preachers of the gospel; who went forth to spread its truths, under the expectation, not of ease and honor, but of contempt, and poverty, and death itself; and, without any aid, save what they derived from the presence and blessing of the Lord, amidst universal opposition, erected the

standard of truth in divers countries, and planted truth in the most distant regions of darkness and error.

But the internal excellences of the doctrine are among the other proofs of its divine original. Here you meet with none of the monstrous absurdities of paganism or superstition, that have often made virtues of the most abominable passions, and deified vice itself, by consecrating temples to lust and cruelty ; or that have dethroned both reason and religion, and established the most egregious fooleries, as maxims of truth, and modes of worship. Here every virtue is rescued from the false glosses that had been imposed upon it by the craft, or ignorance, or wickedness of men ; and every moral precept is placed in its true light of purity and extensive obligation ; shewing, that what is so pure in its tendency must have for its author the Holy One of Israel.

What other system, but that of the gospel, produces such a harmony between the divine perfections ! Here, notwithstanding the opposite claims of mercy and truth, justice and peace, each is respectively honored, yet all mutually harmonize. They meet at the cross of Jesus, and, from his great propitiatory satisfaction, derive a power to unite with perfect con-

cord in the salvation of sinners. While Jesus bleeds, justice is satisfied, truth is fulfilled, mercy erects her throne, and peace extends an olive branch to a guilty world.

Where is the system that carries such marks of divinity, as the gospel does? even from the suitability of its provision to the peculiar necessities of lost sinners? If any are oppressed with fears, or burdened with a load of guilt; here they are pointed to the fountain of a crucified Saviour's blood, which is of infinite efficacy to heal the broken hearted, and make the foulest clean. If the world is a scene of misery and sin; here life and immortality are brought to light, and the horrors of death changed into the portals of bliss. The king of terrors appears bereft of his sting, and he that had the power of death, that is the devil, receives his deadly bruise. The weak and ignorant, the poor and wretched, are invited to the feast, where all is of God's providing; and all is offered without money and without price. Happy they who obey the invitation, and taste of the rich provision! Their own experience is then the best comment on the truth of the text. They have an internal evidence of the truth of the doctrine, because they have felt the power of it: which leads me to consider,



2. Wherein consisteth the privilege of knowing that the gospel is of God.

As the gospel is a system calculated equally to illuminate the understanding and to renovate the heart; the blessedness of knowing that it is from God, must be in proportion to the greatness of the privileges which it communicates. And these are, a deliverance from perplexing doubt and endless speculation—a discernment of the way of truth—and such an established persuasion respecting the believer's personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, as quickens his affections, and engages both heart and life in devotedness to the Lord his God.

I. As the fall of man hath plunged his intellectual faculties in great darkness; in the investigation of truth and the contemplation of spiritual objects, he thinks and judges as absurdly as a man born blind would do, in an attempt to expatiate on the nature and distinctions of colors. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. And as long as this veil of natural obscurity covers his understanding, the very same reason, which, on natural and scientific subjects, exerts itself with such vigor and success, leaves him the subject

of doubt and uncertainty on the great concerns of eternity—the humiliating and unhappy situation of every man by nature, from the grossly ignorant up to the acute and learned blasphemer. What a blessing to be extricated from all this scepticism and the darkness which occasions it! To have the mind no longer distracted with doubts and disquietude on what it is concerned to know! This is the privilege of him who knows the gospel to be of God. He is no longer tossed about with every wind of doctrine, or agitated by the clashing opinions of men, who are often more earnest to oppose one another than to investigate truth. The spirit of God hath rent the veil of darkness, and dissipated the mists that rendered his path doubtful and perplexed. Retiring from the din of controversy, and the niceties of the schools, he hath seated himself down at the feet of Jesus, to learn, as an humble pupil, the truth from his mouth. There he listens to that word, which, while it drops refreshing as the dew on the tender herb, pours on his mind a divine light, that puts an end to former cavils at the authority of revelation, and to former doubts about the doctrines contained in it.

2. A discernment of the way of truth and salvation is one essential branch of that know-

ledge, recommended in the text. "He that is spiritual judgeth (*διακρίνει* discerneth) all things." 1 Cor. ii. 15.

This branch of knowledge is essentially necessary to constitute the being of faith, and the comforts of a Christian. It is by "the knowledge of Christ that he justifies many." Isa. liii. 11. But that knowledge implies the manifestative light and apprehensive power of faith, by which an interior eye is opened in the soul to behold the glory of Christ, and to cleave to his righteousness for justification. Hence, St. Paul was so anxious to "know Christ," that he "counted all things loss for the excellency of that knowledge."\* Phil. iii. 8. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

And could we suppose a Christian destitute of that light necessary to discern the way of salvation, we must suppose him to be the subject of very painful disquietude. Because, when conviction of sin hath taught a man the knowledge of himself, and made him weary and heavy laden with the burden of his guilt, a discernment of the way of salvation must be imparted, in order to buoy up the mind, and to support it under a load, which would otherwise be insupportable. Therefore the Holy Spirit

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\* Το υπερέχον της γνώσεως.

operates as a Divine Agent, and the gospel as a powerful instrument, in manifesting the glorious sufficiency of Jesus Christ to the sinner, and in drawing out his soul in hope and dependance upon him. And to shew that a supernatural illumination is requisite to this end, an inspired apostle compares the power that effects it to that which commanded the light to shine out of darkness at the creation. 2 Cor. iv. 6. So that, if men pretend to any saving knowledge, and yet appear to be ignorant altogether of the gospel salvation, if their knowledge does not centre in him, and, by the Spirit's teaching, lead to him, in whom God's people have their all; it is evident, that the light in them is darkness. 1 Cor. xii. 3. John, xvii. 3.

3. The privilege of knowing that the gospel is of God, implies such an established persuasion of the believer's personal interest in Christ, as quickens his affections, humbles his heart, and engages body and soul in the consecration of all their faculties to the honor and service of God.

This, it must be acknowledged, is not immediately the privilege of many, who nevertheless know the things that belong to their peace. Nor is it, in numerous instances, vouchsafed, until, after a long series of various trials, by which the soul is greatly exercised, but acquires

deep and genuine experience. Some valuable Christians, who know the gospel savingly, and adorn it greatly, are so bowed down with a discouraging view of themselves, that unbelief robs them of that comfort, which they are warranted to take from the promises, made to those, who come to Christ by faith; and it is a considerable time, often, before they arrive at any well-grounded evidence of their title to heaven; though the inheritance is secure to them, and their title to it as valid, as the purchase of Christ and the immutability of the covenant could make it. It is, however, their privilege to overcome their doubts, to have a clear view of their interest in the Son of God, to rejoice in hope of future glory, and to know that, “when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” 2 Cor. v. 1. These invaluable blessings are called by the Apostle, “the riches of the full assurance *πληροφορία* of understanding;” Col. ii. 2; and are the result of that establishment in the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God, which “fathers in Christ” enjoy, when they become rooted and grounded in the truth as it is in Jesus. Let not the weak and self-diffident, then, be discouraged. He who maketh “the path of the just to resemble the shining light

that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," Prov. iv. 8, will, in his own time, dispel the clouds that hang over their minds, and make the day-star arise in their hearts with assurance and consolation. "Then shall they know, if they follow on to know, the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto them as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." Hos. vi. 3.

If any think that this established persuasion, or appropriating knowledge of Christ, is apt to beget pride and presumption in the heart; let it be remembered, that the objection, plausible as it may appear at first view, is entirely overthrown by this single consideration, that the kind of knowledge, which the gospel conveys to the heart, is always clothed with humility, and productive of holiness. Did it imply a fond opinion of a man's superior claim to the divine favor above his fellow-sinners, in consequence of supposed superior merit; or, did it allow of indulged self-confidence of heart, and licentiousness of manners; then, indeed, the assurance I plead for, would be presumption of the most pernicious and the most dangerous sort, and the knowledge it springs from would be worse than the most profound ignorance. But this is far from being the case. Self-knowledge attends every step of the believer's progress in

the knowledge of Christ; and an abiding sense of his dependance upon the Redeemer for every thing, must of course check the risings of vanity, and keep him, where a sinner ought to be, in the vale of self-abasement. In that humble frame, he sees himself nothing; and while he reviews the unspeakable obligations, which the undeserved grace of God hath laid him under, and reflects upon the innumerable benefits, which Jesus hath bought for him with his precious blood; his heart overflows with gratitude to the kind Donor of his mercies; and the language of it is, "What shall I render unto the Lord?" Words are weak and inexpressive to speak the sentiments of his mind, either when he views himself, or contemplates the unsearchable riches of Christ. And the predominant desire of his soul is to grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of Christ. His advancement herein keeping pace with the knowledge of himself, a poor dependant sinner all his life; from hence flows a desire, and, through grace, a determination, to evidence the humility and gratitude of his heart, by giving the glory of his salvation wholly to Jesus, and by dedicating himself in righteousness and true holiness to the honor and service of his divine LORD and MASTER.

And it will appear, upon calm consideration, that the knowledge, which the text recommends,

and the fruits which always attend it, are perfectly correspondent with the genius of the gospel, and the end for which it has been sent to the children of men. Its great design is to abase the sinner, exalt the Saviour, and promote holiness. And the kind of knowledge I wish to inculcate, is specifically of that nature; by which all possible honor is given to Christ, and the heart penetrated with an habitual conviction of the necessity of glorifying him in body and spirit, which are his. How can he be elated, who knows that he has nothing to glory in but the cross of Christ? How can he be presumptuous, whose assurance rests upon the promise and him that made it? Or can he possibly want motives to obedience, or a principle of gratitude, whose eyes are opened to behold the salvation that rescued him from sin and hell, and whose heart is filled with love to the gracious Author of salvation? No. If the enemies of truth are disposed to seek for objections against our experience and our principles, let them find some more plausible than that of a charge, which might with great ease and greater justice be retorted upon themselves. A proud presumptuous spirit, inflated with vanity, filled with speculation, puffed up with self-conceit, and void of humility, we disclaim, because we think it the very bane of all religion. And the



amiable idea, which a Christian would wish to give of religion, is that of a man, who, the more he knows, the more he sinks into self-abnegation; whose head is filled with light, and his heart with love; and who would rather feel a little genuine poverty of spirit and contrition of heart, than possess the most shining endowments. And, that this apology for the principles and temper of a true Christian is a just one, will still farther be made evident, if we consider,

III. What is necessary to the attainment of that knowledge which the text promiseth.

If the general plan of redemption, or the several constituent parts of that plan, be accurately surveyed, it will appear throughout to have been a very leading design of its great Author to pour contempt on those things, which are highly esteemed among men; and to adopt a procedure in all his dispensations directly subversive of those principles, which are most commonly received. Had he acted in conformity to the maxims and pretensions of the world, men of wisdom, of prowess, and of nobility, should have been his sole favorites. But that the very reverse is the case, is evident from St. Paul's testimony in 1 Cor. i. 26; who asserts, that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and weak

things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are ; that no flesh should glory in his presence."

In no respect does this truth appear to be more remarkably verified, than in the kind of pre-requisite, which infinite wisdom hath thought proper to fix upon as necessary to the attainment of divine knowledge ; which is, not what human policy would have recommended, profound learning, an acquaintance with sciences, languages, or philosophy ; but a willingness *εὐνοίας θελή* to do the will of God ; a temper of mind that is humble and docile, and that has been brought into subjection to the will of God, as revealed in the scriptures. What that will is, the following considerations will determine :

1. That it is the will of the Father, that the objects of salvation should honor the Son by looking to him as their propitiation. For, the work, will, and commandment of God, is, that we should believe in Christ to that end. 1 John, iii. 23.
2. That they should be set apart for the glory of God, by the dedication of soul and body to his service. " This is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thes. iv. 3.
3. That they should renounce conformity to the world, and all friendship

with those who inordinately love the things that are in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Rom. xii. 2. 1 John, ii. 15, 16. 4. They should take up the cross, and tread in the footsteps of the blessed Jesus; following his illustrious example in doing and suffering the will of heaven with patience and resignation; in a crucifixion to the world, and an ambition for the honor and favor that cometh from God. This is called "doing the will of God from the heart," Ephes. vi. 6, and is opposed to the doing of it, partially, insincerely, or by constraint.

As true Christianity is of practical tendency, *doing* the will of God is contra-distinguished from a mere knowledge of it. "Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of the Father." Mat. vii. 12. For, though a man cannot *do* the divine will, without having previously *known* it; yet a knowledge of it is often entirely destitute of any sincere inclination to perform it; and in every such case, "he that knoweth his Master's will and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." Luke, xii. 47. So that, while the word of God abounds with severe reproofs and awful denunciations against those, who are under the power of that self-

deception, which makes them content with being hearers of the word, and not doers of it, and leaves them satisfied with some head-knowledge, though accompanied with carnality and hypocrisy of heart; the same sacred word gives all imaginable encouragement even to those, who are *willing* to conform to the will of God, though between their wishes and their practice there should be a considerable disparity, and the weakness of their faith should throw many impediments in their way. "The Lord will not despise the day of small things. He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. To that man will he look, that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word." Zech. iv. 10. Isa. xlii. 3. Isa. lxvi. 2. These, and promises of similar import, confirm the truth of the text, and embolden every true follower of Christ to look for a fulfilment of them in his experience; while with child-like simplicity of heart, and an earnest desire to be taught of God, he diligently useth the means of instruction, and waits for that blessing, requisite to render them effectual. Such persons the Lord will take by the hand, and guide into the way of truth, and peace. He will open to them the mysteries of his kingdom; and unfold the riches of his grace. The secret of the Lord is with them; and he will shew them his cove-

nant. He will manifest himself to them, as he doth not to the world; and shine upon their ways with a progressive and cheering light. They shall become conversant in the deep things of God, and acknowledge those very doctrines to be of divine original, which at first they trembled to receive. They shall see their consistency, and know them to be of God, from their effects; since the doctrines of distinguishing, efficacious, and victorious grace, and these alone, have a tendency to make the heart humble, holy, and happy, and to keep it so; to support the believer in an hour of temptation, and to help him to trust in the everlasting covenant when he walketh in darkness and hath no light. And, when multitudes of the presumptuous and self-confident, who soar on the wings of a towering profession, shall faint and grow weary, and utterly fall into error and sin; they shall hold on their way, and wax stronger and stronger, they shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. Fed by the sincere milk of the word, their souls shall grow and thrive; and experiencing the preciousness of the promises, they shall anticipate with joy their fulfilment in glory. Safe in the everlasting arms of Divine protection, they shall be kept from every fatal snare. And happy in the

guidance of the Holy Spirit, they shall enjoy the influence of that Divine Comforter, until all the clouds of sin and error being passed away, a flood of divine light and ineffable glory shall break in upon their souls, and they shall sin, sorrow, and complain no more for ever.

Having shewn, that the doctrine of the gospel is of divine original—from the prophecies and miracles that attest its divinity—from the purity of its system, equally remote from the monstrous absurdities of paganism and superstition—from the harmony it produces between the divine attributes—from its utility and suitableness to the condition of fallen man ; having considered the privilege of knowing that this doctrine is of God ; and having shewn what is necessary to the attainment of that knowledge, I shall conclude with observing,

In the first place, that a rejection of the gospel argues a want of that temper necessary to investigate truth ; and that pride, or an attachment to some beloved lust, is at the bottom, whereby the judgment is corrupted and the heart depraved. Hence be assured, that evangelical truth and moral righteousness are inseparably connected ; and that ignorance of, or opposition to, the truth, is the road direct to every immoral and dangerous path.

Secondly, since a willingness to do the will of God is the pre-requisite towards attaining the knowledge recommended in the text; let us confine ourselves to this simple criterion of heavenly wisdom and of a gracious heart, and not look for marks of it in the parade of learning and pomp of profession, among those, who, upon these superficial grounds alone, boast of superior knowledge.

Thirdly; since to know the gospel, is the privilege of a renewed mind; and to practise its precepts, the result of a divine power; how should we importune the Father of lights to give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of his Son; without which, we must grope in the dark and fall into error! Mat. xi. 27.

Lastly; encouraged by the salutary promise in the text, let the timid and unestablished plead it in faith before the throne of grace. God is faithful to fulfil what he hath spoken; and the experience of his people hath borne testimony to his veracity and his compassion in all ages. Plead the promise in the all-meritorious name of Jesus, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. Urge the covenant engagements of the Father to him, whereby he hath promised that all his children shall be taught of God. Expect no favor upon your own ac-

count ; but look for every thing from him, in whom all fulness dwelleth, and in whom the Father is well pleased. Let not some difficulties, or a little suspense, discourage you. Continue instant in prayer. Wait in faith, in hope, in patience. And the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by CHRIST JESUS, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you ! To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever ! Amen.



## SERMON VIII.

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BELSHAZZAR'S DOOM; OR, SINNERS, WHETHER PRINCELY,  
PATRICIAN, OR PLEBEIAN, WEIGHED IN THE  
BALANCE, AND FOUND WANTING.

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“*TEKEL, Thou art weighed in the balances and  
art found wanting.*” DAN. V. 27.

THE history, to which the words of the text refer, is extremely memorable. During the captivity of the Jews, a variety of singular events concurred to prove that the sins, which brought desolation upon their country, and subjected them, for a period of seventy years, to the Babylonish yoke; had not, nevertheless, wholly alienated the affections of Jehovah from them, or dissolved that covenant relation which he had originally adopted towards them, as the “God of Abraham,” and that any act of indignity perpetrated against an afflicted people, or

any insult cast upon the service of their temple, would be recognized as the highest affront to the Majesty of Heaven, and not be suffered to pass with impunity, though the perpetrators were the princes and potentates of the earth.

Of this, Belshazzar is a remarkable instance. He was grandson to Nebuchadnezzar, and had an opportunity of seeing, in the divine dispensations towards his royal ancestor, how hateful pride is, even in royalty itself; how instantly God can blast the most blooming dignity of the brightest crown, and reduce him that wears it to a condition level with the beasts that perish; how quickly, when the divine decree goeth forth, a haughty rational can be converted into a brute, and a Nebuchadnezzar, in all the pomp of majesty upon his throne, be driven from human converse, and become a fit associate only for oxen that graze the field, and are wet with the dew of heaven; and how much, therefore, the prosperity of kings, and the stability of their thrones, depend upon acknowledging, that "the MOST HIGH ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will—that all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; that he doeth 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 doest thou?—that his

works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

Dan. iv. 25, 35, 37.

But this instruction, though conveyed through a dispensation, calculated to write it upon his heart as indelibly as with a pen of iron, or the point of a diamond, seems to have been all lost on Belshazzar. In a depraved and debauched mind, the most striking memorials of divine interposition are soon buried in oblivion; and all the impressions, which the most tremendous judgments of God generally make in such a case, only resemble characters made in the sand, which the first flux of the tide totally obliterates. Belshazzar had undoubtedly often heard the memorable history of his royal grandfather, and could not avoid seeing in it the great outlines of that divine system of truth, which inculcates the evil of sin, and recommends the fear of the Lord as the supreme wisdom. The very sight of those fields, where Nebuchadnezzar once roamed, or of the animals with which he herded, when deposed from his throne, and deprived of his understanding, must have brought to his recollection the singular event, that so strongly marked God's displeasure at all sin; especially that kind of it, which lifts up the heart with atheistic pride, and prompts arrogant worms of the earth to affect independence of

Him, "in whom they live, and move, and have their being." But Belshazzar, like libertines in all ages, buried the remembrance of these things in his cups, and company; or sought relief from any disquieting apprehensions, in the fulsome flattery of the civil and ecclesiastical sycophants, that herded round his throne, and constituted his levee. Thus soothed into a false security by court adulation or pulpit-daubing, he became a beast in sensuality, and indulged in every sordid gratification, that could make him hateful to God, and contemptible to man; in which we may suppose him to have been immersed the more deeply, for want of some faithful monitor near his person, to tell him the truth, like honest Micaiah, without dread of royal resentment. There was one man in Belshazzar's kingdom, who was especially qualified for this important office; but he had not the opportunity, being a Jew, and a captive, till a singular event brought him out of his obscurity, and displayed the superiority of his wisdom above all the pretenders to it in Belshazzar's court.

Upon a particular day, Belshazzar made a feast, to which were invited "a thousand of his lords." Dan. v. 1. Being a lewd polygamist, like all the heathen princes of the East, "his wives and his concubines" formed a part of his guests; for, to an abandoned prince a palace

hath no beauty unless it be a receptacle for prostitutes ; the whole apparatus of a court appears incomplete without a seraglio ; and in the esteem of the drunken king of Babylon, or the grand Turk with Mahomed's Koran in his hand, there are no blessings comparable with the blessings of polygamy.—Belshazzar, thus environed with his concubines and his lords, pushes about his intoxicating goblet, and poured out libations, or toasted the memory of their “ gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.” Verse 4. Proper deities, it must be acknowledged, to preside in *such* assemblies, in which the songs of the drunkard, and the conversation of the lascivious, render the scene perfectly worthy of all that indecency and excess, which idolatry ever promoted among its votaries. The king of Babylon, not content with blending idolatry and voluptuousness together, at his luxurious feast, where lords and whores unite to strengthen him in his wickedness, adds sacrilege to his other sins. “ He commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem ; that the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, *might drink therein.*” Verse 2. Thus this impious prince insulted the God of heaven by sacrilegiously profaning those vessels that had

been consecrated to the service of his temple ; as if his wine would be doubly sweet, when drunk out of God's sacred chalice, or the vessels of his holy sanctuary were only fit to be prostituted to the purposes of riot and excess. In the desecration of these vessels, the temple-worship was profaned, a captive people insulted, and an atrocious act of indignity committed against the Holy One of Israel.

While Belshazzar was thus employed in filling the vessels of the temple with intoxicating liquor, God was filling for him the phials of his indignation. He bent his bow and made it ready ; and the moment was approaching in which the barbed arrow of swift destruction was to be directed by an unerring hand against Belshazzar and his kingdom. A most awful presage of this event is given, when least expected. In the midst of the entertainment, while the king and his guests are absorbed in pleasure ; behold ! a strange phenomenon arrests the solemn attention of the gay circle, and suddenly damps all their mirth. Every face turns pale, and every heart is filled with a horrible dread. Their festivity and carousings are changed into confusion and despair. The sumptuous entertainment entertains no longer ; and the wine, sparkling in the glass, or mantling in the goblet, can yield no antidote against

the chilling fears that seize the hearts of the disturbed guests. The mirth and gaiety of this festive assembly are changed into silence, solemnity, and distraction. But what occasioned so instantaneous a perturbation? Was it the appearance of some angry cherub, like him whom God appointed as the flaming guardian of the tree of life? or, was it the discovery of some instrument of death suspended from the ceiling over the king's head, like that sword, which hanging by a hair over Damocles, the base flatterer of a Sicilian tyrant, disturbed his peace in the midst of a banquet? No; it was nothing more than "the fingers of a man's hand, writing over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace," verse 5, "and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." He saw, and trembled. But what ailed thee, O Belshazzar! that thy peace should be broken at the sight of an object, that carried nothing hostile in its outward appearance? Ah! it is not the first time that a sinner has been made to tremble at hand-writing, when the hand of God appears to hold the pen. Belshazzar's conscience instantly commented upon the mysterious characters. The hand of God wrote his doom, and his own guilty fears anticipated it. "His countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins

were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." Verse 6. To what an abject and pusillanimous condition, a consciousness of guilt, and a dread of punishment, reduce often the most stout hearted! Nay, "the wicked fleeth, when no man pursueth, while the righteous is bold as a lion." Prov. xxiii. 1.

Belshazzar, distracted and amazed, cries aloud to bring in the astrologers and soothsayers. A considerable reward is offered to those, who should read and interpret the writing. They try, but in vain. The queen advises to consult Daniel. He is brought before the king. The honest Hebrew tells him of his pride, idolatry, and sacrilege. He reads the writing, and gives the interpretation; which was, that "God had numbered his kingdom and finished it; that he was weighed in the balances and found wanting; and that his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians." Verse 26—28. The interval between the writing of this awful prediction, and the accomplishment of it, was very short. For "in that night" was Belshazzar surprised by an army headed by Cyrus, "and slain," and the kingdom of the Chaldeans transferred by conquest to that of the Medes and Persians. Thus judgments tread close upon the heels of guilt, and are sometimes as swift in their progress, as they are sure in their ar-



rival ; the commission of sin, and the infliction of punishment, happening, not seldom, at the same instant.

Let us now, first, make some practical observations on the history referred to in the text ; and, secondly, accommodate the images in it to the purpose of forming a scrutiny into the hearts and lives, the principles and pretensions, of sinners.

I. 1. The profanation of things sacred is highly affrontive to the Divine Majesty ; incurs great guilt, and exposes to danger in proportion ; because God himself is virtually dishonored in the abuse or contempt of what relates to his service. The men of Bethshemesh only look into the ark, and Uzzah only touches it, and God instantly punishes the presumption of the one, and the profane curiosity of the other, with judicial chastisement. And it is not so much the act as the intention of the agent, that God regards in such a case. Under circumstances of peculiar necessity, David “ eats the shewbread, which it was not lawful for any to eat but the priests.” And yet this infringement of a positive ceremony passes with impunity, because God considered the nature of the case, and saw the purity of David’s intention. But when the king of Babylon sent for the vessels of the temple, it was evident, that he meant

studiously to affront the God of the Jews, and to make the people and their religion objects of malicious triumph, and "cruel mockery." By thus blending the "cup of the Lord with the cup of devils, Belshazzar filled up the measure of his iniquity, and provoked Jehovah to make his punishment as conspicuous as his impiety was public. As sacrilege is a sin of very comprehensive application, let us beware how we rob the Most High of the honor due to his *truths*, his *ordinances*, his *name*, and his own *day*. And particularly, let us see to it, that we profane not that sacred institution, which is commemorative of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; when we reflect, what judgments this species of profanation brought upon the Corinthian Church. And, as public feasts are too often scenes of voluptuousness and intoxication, where the sons of riot sometimes amuse themselves with ridiculing religion and its advocates; and instead of partaking of *such* mirth, which is perhaps made up of the obscene jest, or the horrid oaths and imprecations, of the indecent and profane; let us fly from the place, as from the very confines of hell. And, be assured, that "only fools make a mock at sin;" and that, though God in general is patient, though provoked every day, yet he sometimes strikes offenders dead upon the

spot, and calls them to his bar, just as the lie or the blasphemy was issuing from their mouth.\*

2. Sensuality and security in sin, are the certain presages of impending ruin. When the wicked say in their hearts, "Tush, God careth not;" or the worldling counting his riches, and wrapping himself in false tranquillity, breaks out into that sordid soliloquy, "Soul take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up in store; eat, drink, and be merry;" then the storm is at the blackest, and the angry cloud ready to burst. Transgressors take occasion to sin, because "vengeance against an evil act is not speedily executed;" and the people of the world often draw flattering inferences respecting one another from outward prosperity or inward gaiety; measuring their interest in the divine favor by the extent of their rent-roll; or, the degree of their happiness, by the height of their levity.

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\* A most awful instance of this sort was recorded in the *Evening Post*, for June 1781, in the following words:—"Last week two soldiers at Chatham laid a trifling wager which could swear most oaths. After one of them had uttered many shocking ones, he hesitated a short time, and said, '*He could think but of one more, which should be his last;*' but was instantly struck speechless, and so remained for about three hours, when he expired. His body was, by order of his officers, made a public spectacle to the populace and soldiers, as a warning."

But, alas! they consider not that the ox is fattened to the slaughter, and that "the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." The world, like a true Delilah, makes a soft lap for her votaries to sleep on; but it is only to render them a more easy prey to the enemies that lie in wait, and consign them over to drudgery more servile than that of Sampson deprived of his sight, shorn of his locks, and grinding in a mill at Gaza. Besides, it is not considered, that God's judgments, though long protracted, are sure; and are the more tremendous, for being delayed. They are often conducted, and operate, like the mine, which is sprung in the dark, and which never discovers its subterranean progress, until it involves all around it in darkness, uproar, and ruin. A sensualist is never nearer the verge of destruction than when he speaks peace to himself; and a "foolish virgin," assuming the appearance of happiness, while a life of perpetual thoughtlessness and dissipation destroys time, and unfits for death and judgment, is only like the moth that is at last consumed in the flame that attracted it.

3. See how easily the carnal repose of the wicked may be disturbed, in the height of their voluptuousness and festivity! This may be effected at any time by a variety of incidents or instruments. God need only drop a slight sen-

sation of wrath upon the conscience ; suffer that faithful vicegerent to assume the office of severe remonstrance ; or let loose Satan with his train of accusations upon the sinner, and immediately all is tumult and disquietude within. For, “ when he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble ? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him ? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only ? ” Job, xxxiv. 29. Let God but give a reverse of fortune, and touch that mountain of prosperity on which the proud and opulent elevate their hopes so high ; and down fall all their imaginary peace and bliss in a moment. How low they build, who build beneath the skies ! when the fabric and the builders of it may be crushed together before the moth.

O ye dissipated and profane, consider, before it be too late, that he, who surprised the king of Babylon at his feast, and called him, unprepared, from his cups to a tribunal ; will one day come suddenly as the thief in the night, and put an end to your mirth, by the summons of the archangel’s voice, and the trump of God.

I might here call your attention to the singular contrivances of divine wisdom displayed, in the case of Daniel, with a view to exalt debased and injured excellence ; or, consider, how incumbent it is upon Christ’s ministers, when

called upon, to do it, in imitation of the illustrious Hebrew, with faithfulness and impartiality, even before kings. But waving any enlargement upon these points, I shall proceed to state, as the last practical observation upon the history before us,

4. How unsafe and fallacious it is, to infer any man's happiness or infelicity, merely from outward appearances, be they ever so specious, or afflicted.

Behold Belshazzar upon his throne! Contemplate the magnificence of his palace, and the extent of his empire. He looks around upon Babylon, the superb residence of his court, and calling "the glory of the Chaldees excellency" his own, thinks himself the happiest and most august monarch of the East. Thousands do him homage, and tens of thousands bow at his footstool. The earth and seas are ransacked to supply his table with delicacies; and he needs only ask, to have every luxury that the most unbounded appetite could desire. Multitudes live upon his smile, and princes triumph in the honor of being in the train of his dependants. His word is a law, and confers dignities or death at pleasure. And the grand emulation among courtiers, domestics, and subjects, is, who shall be first in obedience to the tyrant's edicts.—Such is Belshaz-

zar on his throne. But could we only have followed him to his secret retirements, or looked into his breast, we should have seen all this semblance of splendor and felicity tarnished by some corroding care, that banished repose even from his bed of down; or some vicious passion, that preyed continually upon his heart. A dreadful rival in power, a sullen contemner of his false dignity, like another Mordecai, refusing to bow to impious Haman, or a single disappointment in the pursuit of dominion and conquest, were sufficient to make his diadem tremble on his brow, and to plant such sharp thorns in the crown that adorned it, that a man upon the rack could not be more miserable than the haughty monarch of Babylon seated on his imperial throne. Who, therefore, would not have preferred the situation of a peasant in his cottage, or that of the poorest captive Jew within the walls of Babylon, before the grandeur of a palace, in which wretchedness and sin took up their abode?

But, follow Belshazzar to his banquet. See him seated at the head of his convivial assembly. The sumptuous feast is prepared; and his lords sit down to share in the entertainment. The charms of beauty, and the harmony of music, are called in, to heighten the repast. Every face shines with mirth, and every heart

overflows with joy. The richest juice of the vine contributes, in abundance, to the festivity of the scene. And, to the heart of an epicure, or in the eye of a bacchanalian, there never was a more pleasing object than Belshazzar, at the head of his lords and concubines, laughing at religion, toasting his favorite gods, drinking destruction (as it is probable he did) to the poor captive Jews, and getting drunk out of the hallowed cups that once adorned their temple. But, should any really think this jovial assembly a happy one, let them remember the *text*, and the *hand* that wrote it. Look from the festive board to the *lettered wall*. What is written there? Then turn to Belshazzar. See, he looks aghast, and trembles! Whither is his mirth fled? Why are his lords astonished? What will his riches and the glory of his kingdom do for him now? See him falling under the sword of a victorious adversary; and, after death, falling into the hands of the living God; and then say, who would have been in his case, for his crown and empire? or, for a thousand worlds?

From hence it is manifest, that, in order to judge aright of happiness, we must look deeper than the surface, and farther than the passing moment. The completest misery is, often, permitted to assume a smiling countenance; and



it is only the event of things that is to throw light on the mysteries that veil present dispensations. A fallacious outside deceives and deludes the world in general. And were our judgment to be guided by the opinions, or our practice modelled by the lives of many, we should conclude, that the rich man "clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day," had the best pretensions to happiness, and Lazarus at his gate, full of sores, was misery itself; till we heard, that the one was translated to Abraham's bosom, and that the other was lifting up his eyes in the torments of hell. With a view, therefore, to detect the fallacy and danger of such conclusions, and to brush the vermilion from the cheek of painted misery or gilded error, I go on, as proposed, to

II. Accommodate the images in our text to the purpose of forming a scrutiny into the hearts and lives, the principles and pretensions, of sinners of various complexions.

The principal image in the text is taken from a custom, which hath prevailed amongst all nations, of regulating commercial intercourse, by the test of the balance, or of determining the value or deficiency of any commodity, by certain standard weights. In allusion to this mode, the adjustment of which formed a part of that sacred code of juridical ceremonies,

which God gave to the Jewish legislator ; the king of Babylon is represented as put into the balance. His kingdom, and the glory thereof, his crown and sceptre, his wealth, dominion, and titles, are put in with him. These would be thought objects of prodigious appreciation in the eyes of the world, and would weigh immensely heavy in the false balance of human estimation ; as they probably did, in the opinion of Belshazzar and his abandoned court. But it is not a human hand that holds the balance, or the eye of a superficial mortal that is to watch its preponderation. No ; the beam is suspended from God's hand, and the balance is to be regulated by ONE, in whose sight " a false balance is an abomination." Prov. xi. 1. Belshazzar is weighed by Him, who can neither err nor be deceived. And the result of the scrutiny is, that he is found wanting. His moral character is defective, weighs nothing. The glory of an *empire* cannot make up for what is wanting in the *man*. In God's account, an act of truth or mercy outweighs a kingdom ; and, without holiness, earthly dignities are as the small dust of the balance, and all sublunary excellence lighter than vanity itself. Belshazzar's whole empire is no counter-balance against Belshazzar's iniquities. And, while a court or pulpit-flatterer pronounces bliss and glory in the *king*, God

makes no other account of his royalty, than to damn it in the *sinner* with the greater emphasis.

Let us borrow the striking imagery in the text, and apply it to ourselves. Let each individual fancy himself represented, as a mortal and a sinner, in the person of the king of Babylon, before his doom was fixed, and his life hung in suspense. Let him suppose himself,—his principles and pretensions,—his heart and life,—put into the balance. The scriptures of the Old and New Testament, in perfect coincidence with each other, are the two sacred even-balanced *scales*, by which his whole self is to be weighed. As the decalogue is the great standard of moral rectitude, and the gospel is the test of evangelical principles; I hope it will not be any straining of the *métaphor*, to consider the *two tables of the law*, and the *requisitions of the gospel*, as the just *weights*, by which the pretensions of the pharisee and the soaring professor are to be examined; since we are commanded to bring every thing to the test of “the law and the testimony.” This is the more requisite, because the *essential truth* of God is the *beam*, from whence the two scales of scripture are suspended, and by which they are made to connect in perfect harmony. Let us consider the hand of infinite *justice* as hold-

ing the balance, weighing its contents, and determining the value. And let every sinner under heaven fancy himself thus subjected to the examination of the Most High God, and his state to be determined by his just and unalterable judgment; while the fate of his never-dying soul is to be fixed for ever by the issue. It is in vain to attempt either to supersede or elude this scrutiny. For, it is carrying on, every moment, though by an invisible process; death is now hovering round the head of every one of us, and only waits for the divine commission to take out of the scale what God hath weighed in it, and to turn over the sinner to that tribunal, which retributive justice shall one day erect.

In detecting the fallacious hopes and specious principles by which mankind are deceived and destroyed, it is necessary that we weigh in the balance of the sanctuary, all *human righteousness*, all the *possessions of earth*, and all the *pleasures of sense*. These are the three principal sources, from whence men, in general, are labouring to derive happiness. And if I can only convince them that every one of these springs is dry, and that happiness floweth in a pure and perennial stream from a different fountain; much may be done towards bringing them to the enjoyment of what they have hitherto pur-

sued, with fruitless search, in objects calculated rather to ensure misery, than procure happiness.

1. When it is proposed to put to the test all human righteousness, I mean by that term, every kind and degree of moral obedience, which a sinner in his natural state can perform, and upon which he builds his hopes of heaven. As the scriptures positively declare, that "there is none righteous, no, not one;" it is plain, at first view, that the terms *human righteousness* are intended to describe only what is so called, not what really exists. For, since that degree of moral rectitude, which implies perfection of obedience to the law of God, is no longer the claim of fallen sinners; the word righteousness is used, as the language of the self-justiciary, not as the concession of truth. So that, when I adopt these terms, I do it, in order to prove, that the language of many, on theological subjects, is as improper as their pretensions are ill-founded.

Now, that you may be convinced that all human righteousness, as a ground of acceptance before God, is absolutely ideal, and forms no part whatever of that moving cause, which prompted Jehovah to confer upon us the blessings of his kingdom, please to recollect that it is written, "Not by works of righteousness

which we had done, but according to his *mercy* he saved us." Tit. iii. 5. Mercy presupposes guilt and wretchedness. And to say that sinners, who possess no previous works of righteousness, but require to be dealt with as objects of divine compassion, are notwithstanding righteous, and must be saved by the merit of their works, is one of the grossest solecisms in divinity, that the church of Rome itself could ever have established in her erroneous creed. Besides, when revelation points us to the Mediator of the new covenant, as to one who sustains the office of a *Saviour*, how can any man, that pays the least deference to divine authority, suppose, without violating the dictates of even common sense, that he can save himself, and at the same time give the glory of salvation to the Lord Jesus Christ? Upon the plan of the erroneous hypothesis I am combating, the truth of man's depravity must be denied, and the glorious redemption of the Son of God altogether vacated. So that, before a sinner can arrogantly plead his own righteousness, as the meritorious cause of his salvation, he must first reason himself out of common sense, and, in the face of allowed truths and indisputable facts, endeavour to demonstrate that he is not a sinner, nor Christ a Saviour.

But, let us examine the bold pretensions of human righteousness by the moral law. This is the standard of equity and the touchstone of truth. Before it gives the denomination of *righteous* to any act, or of *righteousness* to any agent, the law requires perfect, pure, universal, and uninterrupted obedience. A single failure even in thought, makes a man virtually a transgressor of the whole law, and brings him instantly under its curse. For, “if a man keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” James, ii. 10. The law requires too, that not merely some, but all its precepts should be observed not only in the letter, but also in the spirit of them; and not only for a certain space of the life of man, but also from the commencement to the close, with every moment inclusive. For, it is written again, “Cursed is every one that *continueth* not in *all* things written in the book of the law to do them.” Gal. iii. 10. The Apostle Paul contemplating the sanctions of the moral law, and its requirement of universal and incessant conformity, when compared with the corruption of human nature, and the utmost efforts of all human works, draws this inference from the humiliating comparison, “If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. Knowing that a man is not justified by the

works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; for, by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. ii. 16, 21.

Let every person, now, who fondly supposes his soul is safe, because he is outwardly moral, or that his works will merit heaven, put all the very best performances he can glean up in the balance of truth. Put your works of charity, of benevolence, of devotion, your sincerity, your prayers, and your alms, in one scale. In order to render it, as heavy as possible, you are welcome to throw in every thought, word, and action, by which you suppose you have honored God, benefited your neighbour, or profited yourself. Now, only lay in the opposite scale, the two tables of God's righteous law, inscribed with its holy sanctions, rigorous precepts, and extensive requirements. While we are watching the turn of the beam, give me leave to ask, Have you kept the *whole* law? Did you ever violate it in a single point? Has there been any interruption in your obedience? Has your heart been *always* pure from every sinful thought, and your life from every immoral act? The law requires this, without admitting the smallest abatement in its demands. Now view the balance. See how it preponderates on the side of the law. Your scale, containing all your works, flies up, and



kicks the beam. Your righteousness, compared with that of the law, is only as a bubble to the globe. God writes *Tekel*, where you have written *Merit*. Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting. You may perhaps urge, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." So the young formalist in the gospel thought, to whom Christ said, "*One thing thou lackest.*" But as you cannot produce perfection of obedience, all your charity, formality, morality, will avail nothing. You want a justifying righteousness, but you have it not in yourself, nor can you get it from the law. As a "ministration of death," 2 Cor. iii. 7, it condemns you and denounceth a curse; while justice, like the angel armed with a flaming sword, stands ready to inflict the merited blow, should you pertinaciously dare to touch the tree of life with the hand of merit.

But, should you ask, what is to be done, while the balance is suspended in the hand of impartial justice? I answer, Cry for mercy, as an offender, and look to JESUS as a complete SAVIOUR. But take care of blending his merit with your own, or of making a convenience of his righteousness to supply the defects of yours. This would be to aggrandize yourself at the expense of his honor. You must not presume to put Christ's excellency in the balance with your

works, in order to give them the required weight. No. You must, with a self-renouncing hand, first take out all your own works, leaving not one behind in the scale, and then with the hand of faith put in Christ's work. This will weigh heavy. His atoning blood and perfect obedience will counterbalance the requisitions of law and justice ; will give your conscience peace ; save you from hell ; and introduce you without spot into the presence of the Holy One of Israel. Thus the apostle of the Gentiles was enabled to act, after he saw the ruin of his nature, and the spirituality of the moral law. His own words are a perfect comment on the truth I have just now endeavoured to establish. "Yea doubtless," says he, "and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung (*σκυβαλα* offal) that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Phil. iii. 8, 9.

2. Let us examine the weight of earthly possessions, comprehending under that head the greatest accumulation of wealth, and the most unlimited extent of empire, accompanied with the most distinguished titles of dignity

and honor. Now, the very height of these saith, "Happiness is not in me." Having a tendency to deprave the appetite, and sensualize the affections, the things of earth, in ten thousand instances, have so much of the alloy of misery mixed with them, that it is with great reason God in his word saith, "This is not thy rest, for it is polluted." Terrestrial good is of too gross a nature to satisfy the vast desires of an immortal spirit; and every portion of it is held by a most precarious tenure. Vexation in the pursuit, and disappointment in the fruition, attend those, who seek for a heaven in earth. All the acquisitions of the world cannot fill the vacuity in a mind, destitute of the "true riches." Put, therefore, the whole globe in one scale, with all the pomp and opulence of which it boasts; and only lay in the other, the interests of a never-dying soul, and the vast concerns of an awful eternity; then say, what is the world, but a dream; and its enjoyments, but vanity?

Ye that dote on earth, and are building tabernacles in this wilderness, consider ye not, that the place of your residence will ere long know you no more for ever; and that this terrestrial ball, were you possessors of all the riches that are buried in it, could not make you truly rich or happy, without the knowledge of Jesus Christ. You have had experience of its insufficiency in

these respects ; and yet continue the fruitless chase in the very same track, where disappointment and vexation have often strewed briers and thorns before. Your mind is still upon the wing ; your hopes, still big with expectation. The world has teased you with solicitations, flattered you with promises, and deceived you in the moment of anticipation. Yet you trust the flatterer, and live still upon her smiles. Though you have smarted under her rod, yet you continue still a drudge to her maxims ; sometimes determined to throw off her yoke, and yet anon enamored with her service, in hope of better days. She has given you riches, perhaps, or worldly prosperity, but has denied you peace. All this time, death is hastening on apace. Sickness visits as his forerunner. “ Grey hairs are here and there upon you, and you know it not.” You and the world are weighed together in the balance, and are found wanting. The world cannot make you happy ; and you want discernment to see it. You want, perhaps, neither assiduity nor wisdom in the management of temporal things ; but in those which are spiritual and invisible, all your ingenuity deserts you. You are deficient in great matters ; in little and unimportant ones, you are sedulous, to excess. You want to know, what you are least of all anxious to learn ; and that

is, *that to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified, is the very centre of happiness and the summit of wisdom.* Without this knowledge, all human science is imperfect; and all earthly opulence abject penury. You have few wants, or none, perhaps, for your body; but, while opulence pours her favors around you with a luxurious hand, you may be an utter stranger to the more substantial blessings of the grace of God. O sirs, consider this seriously before it be too late. Though your lives should glide along with ever so smooth and placid a stream, yet remember, the boundless ocean of eternity is just before you; and you may find *that*, a more turbid sea than you expect. And I am certain you will, if the love of the world be not previously expelled your hearts, to make room for the love of Jesus. After you have passed the limits of time and the confines of death, it will be too late to say, the world is a cheat, I thought so once, but now I know it. Experience then will be hell.

3. But may not the votary of pleasure put in his claim to happiness, without having his principles examined, or his dissipation interrupted by rigid inquiries? No. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." It is an act of charity to arrest levity in a career that deprives of all seriousness, and unfits for another

world; and though a solemn admonition may be unwelcome at first, it may be admitted as a salutary visitant in the end.

I will suppose you then possessed of every advantage, which youth, health, and fortune, can give; while, perhaps, your education and natural temper render you an object of envy to all around you. Your time flies imperceptibly along in the gay world; and diversified scenes of amusement, in concurrence with constitutional vivacity, give you the appearance of felicity in the very abstract. Happiness is the object of your pursuit, and pleasure the way, which you think must lead to it. But are you what you seem? Or have you attained what you have been seeking? Is there not an emptiness in your enjoyments, which you are made sometimes deeply to feel? Nay, do they not often leave a sting in the heart, which the constant succession of them, so far from extracting, only makes more impoisoned? Is there no solemn moment, wherein conscience doth loudly cry, "You are not happy?" And can all your dissipation keep you from low spirits, when death stares you in the face, and secret misgivings make you dread his approach? You want something still, and that cruel something unpossessed, mars all your gaiety. You want Christ. You lack the knowledge and love of

that divine personage; and in wanting him, you want every thing—wisdom, righteousness, holiness, heaven. You must be born from above by the spirit of God. Your heart must be renewed, and the corruptions of pride and discontent, of formality and self-righteousness, which are lodged in it, must be conquered by the grace of God. And, until that great change takes place, you must and would be miserable upon a throne, and discontented even in an Eden.

And now, men and brethren, suffer the word of exhortation.—Yet a little while, and this present scene of things shall come to an awful close; when rolling years shall cease to move, and the great Angel shall lift his hand to heaven, and swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, that *time shall be no more*. Then the veil that hath parted the visible and invisible world shall be thrown back; and all the mysteries of eternity shall burst upon our astonished view. Methinks I see the Judge enthroned, the judgment set, and the books opened. Imagination anticipates the circumstances of that decisive period, while faith almost realizes the appearance of Messiah. The trumpet sounds, and he is coming. Go ye forth to meet him. Are you ready? Are your lamps burning? See eternal justice once more lifts her balance, and weighs in her

impartial scale, the world and its inhabitants. Methinks I hear the JUDGE pronounce the awful words, "Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting;" and reiterate them, as often as souls, unwashed in the blood of the Lamb, and unrenewed by his spirit, pass from his tribunal. O sirs, take care how you slight the way of salvation, lest your ears should be forced to hear that tremendous sentence. Mercy's door is now open. Enter by it, and live for ever. Neglect it, and you will find the judgment-day will shut it to eternity. Beware how you trifle with the gospel, that directs you to JESUS. It is God's message of mercy and peace to a lost world. It requires credit and demands obedience. It is *our* message, because the Head of the church hath committed to our trust this word of reconciliation. I have this day endeavoured to be faithful in the delivery of it. See that you condemn it not. If you do, remember, you must answer for it at the judgment-seat of Christ. O fly, fly to the throne of his grace, before you are summoned to his bar! To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts. To-morrow you may be in eternity!



## S E R M O N IX.

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THE PREPARATION REQUISITE FOR THE DAY  
OF JUDGMENT.

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“ *Prepare to meet thy GOD, O Israel.*” AMOS, iv. 12.

THIS concise but comprehensive address contains one of the most solemn warnings, that can possibly sound in the ears of sinful mortals. *Prepare to meet thy God!* Awful sentence! Every word in it is fraught with meaning, is big with importance; and rings an alarm, louder than the voice of ten thousand thunders. Who can read it with inattention? Who can hear it with irreverence? Who can preach upon it, without deeply feeling, himself, the weighty truths he enforceth? And yet the most nervous language must be inexpressive, and the warmest sentiment flat, when compared with a subject,

which, for majesty and importance, rises infinitely above all the powers of description or the utmost stretch of conception itself. To whose heart is it not sufficient to carry, at least, a transient impression of seriousness? Methinks when the solemn sentence, *Prepare to meet thy God*, is repeated, the votary of pleasure, even in the giddy whirl of dissipation, is made to think, and levity itself, for a moment, looks solid; an irresistible awe seizes the mind of the licentiate, that imbitters his gratifications, and disturbs his sensual repose; that extorts a sigh from the unrelenting breast of impenitence, draws a tear from the eye of the prodigal, and forces a blush into the hardened cheek of immodesty itself:—even the daring *infidel* himself cannot stand the shock of the solemn warning; he starts—turns pale—looks aghast—and all the guilt of his conscience, all the misgivings of his heart, and all the horrors of his mind, fly into his pallid countenance, as so many witnesses against his atheistical principles, as so many vouchers for the truth of revelation; so that, methinks, even infidelity itself for a moment believes, and trembles.

In the context, (i. e. the passage immediately connected with the text,) we shall behold an additional evidence to the solemnity and importance of the warning before us. There the

prophet is reciting the various judgments with which God had visited Israel ; the end he had in these severe visitations ; and the strange incorrigibleness of the people under them, and after their removal. The judgments were, famine, drought, blasting, and mildew, the pestilence, the sword, and an overthrow of some of their cities, judicial and final, like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Dreadful and numerous as those public, those national calamities were ; yet Israel was not humbled, did not repent. *Yet have not ye returned unto me, saith the Lord*, is the complaint of God himself, as annexed by the prophet to every verse, that recites their visitations. Jehovah spoke to them repeatedly, and awfully, by the *rod* ; but they would not hear it, nor did they regard HIM who had appointed it. He *met* them in his judgments. All of them were his *messengers* ; each had a *voice*, that spake loudly for God and vehemently against sin ; and all, in accents thundering through their land, solicited the dutiful attention of the inhabitants. But in vain. Though they were obliged to give those dreadful visitants the meeting, yet they would not give them an humble audience. They were too busy to hear ; too proud to submit ; too stubborn to obey. Well, since the ambassadors are despised, the king will resent the affront :

since they would not regard the harbingers, all the MAJESTY of God shall summon them to an interview. One meeting more is therefore determined upon ; in which the holy and eternal God himself shall be one of the parties, and an incorrigible and rebellious people, the other. *Prepare to meet thy God.*

From the words thus stated, I propose, with a view to our personal improvement, considering,

I. That there will be a certain, an awful, a swiftly-approaching, and an inevitable *interview* between God and sinners.

II. What kind of *preparation* it is incumbent upon sinners to make in the prospect of that interview.

III. After which, I shall, in an applicatory way, consider, *to whom* the warning is directed.

I. The interview ;—1. at death ; 2. in the day of judgment.

1. *It is appointed unto all men once to die*, agreeably to the original sentence delivered to our first parents, *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. For, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* Rom. v. 12. *The wages of sin is death.* Rom. vi. 23. That we might be impressed with a due sense of the *cause* of that awful change which passeth upon

man at his dissolution ; the scriptures uniformly ascribe it to the first man's disobedience, in which was involved the sin of his posterity, and death, as one portion of the entailed penalty. The scriptural account of the origin of death, as very precisely and satisfactorily traced in the 5th chapter of the epistle to the Romans, is, that Adam sinned ; that *in him*, as a public person, *ip̄e q̄*, all sinned ; and that, because all *sinned in him* as their representative, therefore all die through him, or are obnoxious to death, the very moment they are born, and are *by nature the children of wrath*. Ephes. ii. 3.

After the scriptures of truth have instructed us in the origin of sin, they then proceed to a description of that calamity of universal influence—death, with which are connected innumerable woes. This is done, with a view to impress man with a solemn truth, which every trifle tends to obliterate from his mind, viz. *that he must die* ; to humble him under a sense of that guilt, from whence his mortality originated, and to solemnize and prepare him for an event as inevitable, as uncertain, in the time of its arrival.

Hence death is represented as a king of mighty power, extensive dominion, and universal sway ; before whose unconquerable arm, even conquering kings themselves fall ; and to

whom, as to a superior potentate, they must resign those very trophies that marked their own conquests, together with all the glittering regalia of sceptres, diadems, and thrones, which lie as spoils at death's footstool.—As a king of *terrors*; whose train is composed of the terrific attendants of the pestilence, the famine, the sword, the earthquake; and all the numerous maladies which attack the body, or torture the mind; by which, as by a great army, death invades this *microcosm* man, and converts the globe into an *aceldama* or field of blood, filled with promiscuous heaps of slain. As a monster, armed with a *sting*, 1 Cor. xv. 56, so *pointed* as to strike through the liver of the stoutest transgressor; so impoisoned, as to communicate a venom, which mocks all the powers of medicine; and so *deadly*, as, by its baneful influence, to blast health in its highest vigor, and youth in perfect prime; and to reduce the outward fabric of man to a state, humble as the dust, and vile as the crawling reptile.

This king of terrors, this deadly monster, all must meet. He is a messenger of the Almighty. He bears a warrant signed in the court of heaven. He has executed his commission already upon millions; and millions more shall fall before his invincible arm. Even now he is knocking at the door of thousands of our fellow-mor-

tals, and God only knows, who next may be accosted by this awful visitant. In the midst of fancied security, and boasted health, this invisible foe may be this very moment whetting his scythe, and meditating a blow at the healthy and the strong; while the pampered miser, who says to his soul, *Soul take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up in store, eat, drink, and be merry*, may be instantly the first to be surprised with the unexpected call, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee*.

If death call, we must hear. If he summon, we must obey. If he enter our doors, we must give him the meeting. Who can stay his hand? Who can reverse or even retard the execution of his summons? Is he to be bribed by *wealth*? Is he to be repelled by *force*? Can *titles* or *honors* demand his partiality? Will he compliment the dignified, or the opulent? Can entreaties move him? Or,

“ Can *flatt'ry* sooth the dull, cold ear of death?”

No. He is as impartial, as he is relentless and inexorable. He pays no respect to age, sex, rank, or fortune. He visits equally the palace and the cottage. The king and peasant are alike indiscriminate objects of his summons. Crowns and sceptres are no more in his estima-

tion, weigh no more in death's balance, than rags or pebbles. The prince and the subject, the wise and the foolish, the healthy and invalid, the beautiful and deformed, *shall lie down alike in the grave, and the worms shall cover them.* Job, xxi. 26. *The small and the great are there ;* Job, iii. 19 ; *in that land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, where the light is as darkness.* Job, x. 22.

Sin makes man meet death ; and death brings him to a meeting with God. Those, who would not meet him, in his ordinances, by *prayer* or through *faith*, in a Mediator, shall be *forced* to an interview with the holy and eternal Jehovah at his tribunal, to *give an account for all the deeds done in the body.* To those, who *have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,* Rev. vii. 14, this meeting will be the commencement of perfect, perpetual, and uninterrupted bliss : but to the unrighteous it will be, beyond description, horrible. To *these*, death comes as an executioner ; lays his axe to the root of the trees ; and gives the fatal blow. If rotten and fruitless, down they fall, and so they lie as fuel fit for *everlasting burnings.* Isa. xxxiii. 14. Then the wicked launch into eternity ; are consigned over to the bar of God ; and receive their eternal doom. The instant life's silken cord is broken, and the



soul dislodged from the body, the sinner is either transported on the wings of cherubs to Abraham's bosom, or lifts up his eyes with *that rich man*, in endless torments: if he meet God in his sins, unpardoned and unconverted; God meets him as a *consuming fire*, Heb. xii. 29, clad in all his vengeance and terrors.

O sirs, it is this consideration, that strips death of all that unimportance, with which, from the frequency of its arrival, it is viewed, in general, by a thoughtless world. *To die*, sounds common, and appears trivial; but not so, *to die and be damned, or to die and be saved*. When we consider, that either eternal damnation, or eternal salvation, is the instant and inseparable consequence of death; how wicked, how diabolically absurd, are the jests of the infidel and the wit, when affecting to smile at that solemn event! However, with all the affected gaiety of the proud and the profane, when they come to lie on a death-bed, their mirth will forsake them, and all the boasted heroism of infidelity sink in a dreadful succession of horror and dismay. And no wonder; since

“ 'Tis not *the dying*, but 'tis *this* they fear,  
To be—they know not *what*, they know not *where* !”

The prospect of meeting the Lord God Almighty, constitutes the bitterest drug in the

cup of the wicked, and is the most tormenting thought, in the view of their dissolution, that racks them on the verge of eternity. How would they court death, and solicit his arrival; were it not, that *after death is the judgment!* How gladly would they meet and embrace the messenger, could they but be excused from meeting that God; the light of whose countenance makes heaven, but in whose frown, is hell! From a reluctance to do this, arise dismal apprehensions, dreadful impatience, torturing doubts, and a tormenting anxiety to live. All which conflict of raging and tumultuous passions, in a soul, at the article of dissolution, and upon the point of meeting God, is most beautifully described in the following striking imagery of the poet:

“ In that dread moment, how the frantic soul  
 Raves round the walls of her clay tement!  
 Runs to each avenue; and shrieks for help!  
 But shrieks in vain! How wishfully she looks  
 On all she's leaving, now no longer her's!  
 A little longer, yet a little longer,  
 O might she stay, to wash away her crimes,  
 And fit her for her passage! Mournful sight!  
 Her very eyes weep blood; and every groan  
 She heaves, is big with horror! But the Foe,  
 Like a staunch murd'rer, steady to his purpose,  
 Pursues her close through ev'ry lane of life,  
 Nor misses once the track; but presses on;

"Till forced at last to the tremendous verge,

At once she sinks,"——sinks into the bottomless and gloomy gulf of everlasting darkness and death!

Awful plunge! Dreadful exit! What heart can conceive, or tongue describe, the state of an immortal soul, trembling on the brink of fate; arrested by death; the prisoner of guilt and fear; reluctant to depart, yet viewing dissolution inevitable; looking forward to eternity with painful dread, and backward, upon the world, with sorrow and regret; unwilling to go, yet unable to stay; soliciting a reprieve for a year, another month only, or even a week, but denied one moment's delay; putting off in imagination or in wish, what is present to sense; quitting the world, and bidding an everlasting farewell to all its enjoyments, with nothing in prospect to compensate for the loss; at length, forced to launch, though sure of shipwreck; and nothing in view, but a black abyss, a forfeited heaven, and an angry God! This is the end that awaits the wicked. This is the fate of those who die without Christ! Oh that the consideration might awaken the fears of the careless, and prompt the people of God, *to give diligence to make their calling and election sure!* 2 Pet. i. 10. And yet this is not all. For,

2. We must meet God at the judgment-day; when *he will judge the world in righteousness by*

*that man, whom he hath appointed. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth that he may judge the people. Psal. l. 3, 4. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thes. i. 7, 8. I beheld, says Daniel, till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued, and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. Dan. vii. 9, 10.*

These are some of those sublime descriptions, which the inspired writers give us of that period, in which every circumstance that is grand, terrible, and august, shall conspire to render it *the great and terrible day of the Lord, Joel, ii. 31, the great day of his wrath, Rev. vi. 17, the general assize.* If we contemplate the dignity of the Judge, the splendor and multitude of his retinue, the majesty of his throne, the process and issue of the judgment, together with all the

circumstances that shall precede, attend, and follow, his glorious appearing;—if we take into consideration either the goodness or the severity, the wrath or the mercy, the destruction or the redemption, the felicity or the woes, which shall be respectively dispensed in this important period, have we not reason to cry out, *who shall be able to stand before this Holy Lord God?*

Consider, what a *Judge* we have to meet!—one of infinite dignity; for he is the *King of glory*, Psal. xxiv. 7; *the great God our Saviour*, Tit. ii. 13; *the mighty God the everlasting Father*, Isa. ix. 6; *King of kings and Lord of lords*, Rev. xix. 16; *the Lord of hosts himself*, Isa. viii. 13, 14; compared with 1 Pet. ii. 8. *The true God*. 1 John, v. 20.—A Judge as much transcending in dignity all earthly judges, as the heavens surpass in glory the earth, or the sun in the firmament, the twinkling stars, which all disappear, when he riseth.—A Judge, at whose footstool the kings of the earth shall prostrate themselves in either cheerful or compelled adoration; and, before whose tribunal, judges themselves shall stand, and be judged. A Judge, whose eye is so keen, as with one glance to survey the universe; to pervade the thickest darkness; to penetrate the depths of hell; and to search the heart; whose arm is irresistible; and whose power neither men nor

devils can control. He shall be seated on a *great white throne*; *white* in unspotted, unbribed, uncorrupted administration of justice, from whence nothing can issue but purity, equity, wisdom, and truth; and *great*, as being reared on the ruins of all earthly thrones, and as forming the magnificent seat of him, who is *the Most High God, possessor and arbiter of heaven and earth*. Gen. xiv. 19. *Thy throne, O God! is for ever and ever*. Heb. i. 8.

What *attendants* shall grace his advent! Countless myriads, a multitude, which no man can number, of saints and angels bearing the *harps of God*, and decorated with crowns of gold; all ambitious to be of his train; all vying with sacred emulation, who shall tune their harps to the sweetest notes, and exert their voices in loudest harmony, to the praise of Emmanuel; and all joining, without a single discordant string, in one grand and unanimous hallelujah, *To him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen*. Rev. i. 5, 6. *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing*. Rev. v. xii.

What *signs* shall announce his arrival! On earth distress of nations, with perplexity; men's

hearts failing them for fear—wars and rumours of wars—earthquakes in divers countries—pestilence and famine—all nature thrown into universal convulsions, dreadful pangs that pre-  
sage her approaching dissolution—the earth shaken to its centre, and sea horribly agitated—the heavens wrapped together like a parchment scroll, and passing away with a great noise—the elements melting with fervent heat ; while the heavens and the earth are in one general flame—the sun turned into darkness, being utterly eclipsed by the overpowering lustre of the Sun of Righteousness ; and the moon into blood—the stars falling, as when the untimely fruit of a fig-tree are thrown down by the wind—the tremendous blast of the trump of God, so loud as to pierce the caverns of the earth and the depths of the sea, to sound an alarm in the abyss of hell, and carry an awakening summons through the regions of the dead—the grave and *hades* resigning their respective charge—gaping tombs, and parting seas giving up their dead—bodies that slept for thousands of years in a bed of dust, roused at the Archangel's voice, to sleep no more ; and re-united to immortal souls, their ancient mates, all thronging to the tribunal of God.

See the JUDGE himself enthroned ! a mixture of majesty and mercy, of vengeance and love,

seated on his brow;—the clouds his chariot, and the heavens his canopy; while rocks and mountains flee before his face!

“ His lightnings flash, his thunders roll,  
How welcome to the faithful soul !”

Millions attend his bar. Men, angels, devils, all receive the summons, to await his decisive sentence. Adam and his numerous posterity, Lucifer and his apostate train, and all the angels who kept not their first estate, compose the awful levee. The righteous fly swifter than the wind or the rapid lightning, to meet their Lord in the air; devils and the wicked, like criminals in chains dragged from their cells, are compelled, though reluctant, to appear at his tribunal. *Small and great stand before God; the books are opened*; Rev. xx. 12; the judgment begins; the grand transaction that is to decide the fate of the world goes on, till at last sentence is passed, *Come ye blessed*, or *Depart ye cursed*; and then, upon the one hand, are heard doleful cries, tumultuous lamentations, bitter weepings, that bespeak guilt and despair; but upon the other, the triumphant songs of elect angels and redeemed sinners, rending the heavens with applausive shouts and acclamations in honor of the Judge; and with a voice, louder than the noise of many waters, and more har-



monious, than that which celebrated the creation of all things, shouting SALVATION to our GOD *who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the LAMB!*

And must we *meet* this glorious, this tremendous Judge of heaven and earth? We must. *Every eye shall see him*; every knee shall bow to him; every ear shall be witness to his decisive sentence; and every tongue confess, either with cheerful and voluntary acknowledgment, or with forced and irresistible conviction, that he is God. The people of his grace shall see him, and kindle into rapture at the sight; shall meet him, and find their heaven of heavens in the interview. *They* shall meet him, to grace his triumphs, and adorn his mediatorial crown, as jewels, of an immense purchase, of infinite value, of unfading lustre. The day of Messiah's second appearing will be his grand coronation day; whereon, in the presence of admiring and applauding millions, the *crown of salvation*, that crown of crowns, shall be unanimously, publicly, and solemnly placed on the head of King JESUS; and every voice shall shout, *Worthy is the Lamb*. Oh! that each of *us* may bear some humble part in that immortal song! some humble office in that great solemnity!

But *who*, among the wicked, *may abide the day of his coming*; and *who shall stand, when he*

*appeareth?* Mal. iii. 2. *For behold the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the PROUD, yea, and all that DO WICKEDLY, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.* Mal. iv. 1. O what a meeting will take place between the Judge, and those, who once refused to acknowledge him as their Saviour and their King! He will meet them as a bear bereaved of her whelps, and devour them as a lion; Hos. xiii. 8; and they shall meet him, as the briars and thorns, the flame that consumeth them. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living GOD.* In the character of the *Lion of the tribe of Judah*, his advent will be tremendous: but it is *the wrath of the LAMB*, of the once-wounded, rejected, persecuted, blasphemed, and injured LAMB, that will be most insufferably dreadful; and it is from *that*, they will earnestly solicit *mountains and rocks to hide them*, as a shelter from his indignation. Rev. vi. 16. But, rocks and mountains will be no veil from his all-seeing eye; no covert from his Almighty arm; no obstruction to the shafts of his vengeance. He will find them out though they make their bed in hell; will pursue and overtake them, though they take the wings of the morning, and flee to the uttermost parts of the earth or sea; and

bring them down, though they make their nest in the stars. And who can conceive how fearful that meeting must be, when the parties are, rebellious mortals and a holy God;—potsherd of the earth, and the Creator of all worlds! worms, and Omnipotence!

Since, then, there will be a certain and swiftly approaching interview between God and sinners, at the solemn hour of death; and a more awful and decisive one, at the general assize: O how deeply incumbent it is upon all, to prepare for both! But, are you ready? Should death call, or God-Messiah descend to judgment; would you be found in circumstances of security and preparation? Ask your *hearts*. Are there no guilty misgivings there? Ask your *lives*. Are they such as correspond with the temper of persons, looking out for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God? Ask *conscience*. Sprinkled from the evil of guilt by the blood of Christ, does it witness to your salvation? or loaded with sin, and fraught with pollution, does it proclaim you the subject of misery, and the heir of hell, and bear a loud testimony to your condemnation? Ask the *word of God*. Will your hearts and lives bear to be tried by that touchstone of truth? If you profess Christianity; are you *Bible* Christians? If you think you are sound

in the truth ; will you bear to be probed ? If you shrink from this examination ; is there not cause to fear, that there is some latent sore you wish to conceal ? some morbid part, you are unwilling to be touched even with a gentle hand, though it is festering deep, and spreading wide, and threatens death everlasting ? You may *think you are prepared*, when you *are not*. The thought, in such a case, arises from a spiritual mortification, that deadens the conscience, and deprives it of feeling. And a supposition of safety, where there is no scriptural ground to warrant it, is only the reverie of a sick man, or the chimera of one that dreameth. That you may not be deceived, or flattered, in a point of such vast moment ; let us now consider,

2. What kind of *preparation* it is incumbent upon sinners to make, in the prospect of an interview with God at death, and in the day of judgment.

I. A *gracious* preparation ; or, a preparation through the inherent efficacy, and transforming influence of *divine grace*. The nature of man is so depraved, and all the faculties of the soul are so alienated from the life of God, that a divine and supernatural power is absolutely requisite to the restoration of that image, which sin effaced ; to the recovery of that happiness,

which man, as a transgressor, has forfeited; to the implantation of those fruits of righteousness, which were eradicated by the fall; and to the possession of *that* divine and gracious “*thing, which BY NATURE man CANNOT HAVE.*”<sup>\*</sup> For, “the condition of man, after the fall of *Adam*, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his *own natural strength* and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: wherefore we have *no power* to do good works pleasant and *acceptable* to God, without the GRACE of God by Christ *preventing* us, *that we may have* a good will, and *working with* us, *when* we have that good will.” Thus speaks Article X. “Of free will.” And the XIIIth is equally strong and express. “Works done *before* the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith.”

It may be urged, that “these are the words of fallible men.” A poor evasive plea this. For though the *words* be the composition of fallible men, yet the sentiments are the truths of the infallible God: for the scriptures declare that *the preparation of the heart in man is OF THE LORD*; Prov. xvi. 1. See also 1 Chron. xxix. 18;

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<sup>\*</sup> Office of baptism in the book of common prayer.

that we *must be born again*, John, iii. 7; that being *dead in trespasses and sins*, we must be *quicken*ed by God, Ephes. ii. 1; that *no man can come unto Christ, except the Father DRAW him*, John, vi. 44; that, *if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his*, Rom. viii. 9; that *it is God who worketh in us, to will and to do of his good pleasure*, Phil. xxii. 13; and that, *without* (or χωρὶς severed from) *Christ we can do nothing*, but sin, and err. John, xv. 5. The nature of man, since the fall, is *depraved*: nothing but grace can rectify and renew it. It is *disordered*: grace alone provides a remedy. It is *polluted*: its innate defilement is cleansed by grace. It is *unholy*: the grace of God, which bringeth present salvation, teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. Titus, iii. 12. It is *debased* by sin: nothing can ennoble or exalt it, but all-sufficient grace. It is *weak and impotent*: grace alone can strengthen and fortify it against temptation. It is *rebellious*: grace controls and captivates its most stubborn opposition, and makes its powers passive, and flexible. Human nature is *barren*: and nothing but all-conquering grace can subdue its sterility. It is grace that *breaks up the fallow ground*; softens the soil; sows the seed; cherishes it, when sown; makes it spring; brings it to maturity; blesses it with sunshines and showers; defends it from nipping frosts

and scorching heat ; and crowns the once-barren and stubborn soil with a rich harvest of fruit. It is grace that makes that wonderful change, so beautifully described in Isa. xxxv. 1—9. *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them : and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose : it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing.—For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land, springs of water : in the habitation of dragons (fierce, untamed, impoisoning lusts, that make a carnal mind to resemble the haunt of venomous beasts) where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of Holiness.*

Such is that gracious work which renews the soul, and makes it meet for a meeting with God ; which makes all *old things pass away and every thing become new* ; 2 Cor. v. 7 ; and without which, man is indisposed to the ways of righteousness, and unfit to perform any thing acceptable to God. O that you may be enabled to determine whether or not this work has been wrought in you ! Trust not to poor, naked morality ; that meagre, superficial thing, which unsanctified immoral Pharisees make their all. Morality only skins over the wound ; but grace

effects a radical cure. Morality strikes at outward branches ; but grace alone can lay the axe to the root of corruption. Morality may give a specious white-washing to a sepulchre, or a gilded varnish to a statue ; but grace alone can cleanse from inward foulness, turn rottenness and death into life and purity, and convert dead men's bones into living members of Christ. Morality confines its attention only to the cleansing of the *streams* : but grace, like *Elisha's* wonder-working *cruse of salt*, goes up to the *springs of water*, and pours its primary, its salutary, influence *there*. 2 Kings, ii. 20, 21. Morality gives the *appearance* only of that, of which grace makes the reality. Morality assumes the name of religion ; but grace forms its nature. Morality may make an useful member of society, but grace alone can make a faithful member of Christ. Human power can accomplish a doctrinal speculatist, or constitute a pharisaical formalist ; but God that made the world, must make a *Christian*.

2. The preparation requisite, is such, as demands the solemn and unreserved dedication of the heart and life to the service and honor of God ; or such a devotion of all we have and are, to his glory, as bespeaks the purity of the principles by which we are to be governed ; the power and sincerity of the motives, by which



we are to be actuated ; and the great importance of the *end* we are to have in view.

God has an indisputable right to all we possess ; because all we have is the effect of his power, and the result of his unmerited bounty. The *heart* is more especially his claim ; because he first made it himself, and, when fallen, redeemed it with the blood of his Son. *My Son give me thy heart*, Prov. xxiii. 26, is therefore his most reasonable and gracious demand. To give it to any thing else, save to its original Proprietor and Redeemer, is black ingratitude, is palpable idolatry : and to pretend devotion, when the heart is withheld, is hypocrisy and dissimulation. Give God any thing, and keep back the heart, and you virtually give him nothing, or present him with an abomination. *He is a Spirit, and they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* John, iv. 24. The most tedious round of duties, the most punctual and ceremonious attendance upon forms, are but so many elaborate modes of affronting Jehovah, if *the heart be not right with God* ; and so many delusive methods to conceal a latent malady, which is open to the eye of omniscience, as the foulest insincerity, and the rankest pride. They who honor the Lord with lip-service, or draw nigh to him in

mere formality, are they who *trust in lying words* and espouse a delusion ; especially when crying out, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.* Jer. vii. 4.

But how few consider this with becoming seriousness and attention ! Hurried on in the circle of dissipation, and driven impetuously forward by the torrent of popular example, multitudes possess neither leisure nor inclination, to examine the grounds of their profession, or to compare their hearts and lives with the word of God. As if religion had nothing to do with the *heart*, they only profess with their lips, what, alas ! is strongly reprobated by the current of their affections and the tenor of their lives. The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, are their favorite idols : and to sacrifice to these, not to the Lord of Hosts, is the wish, the desire, the ultimate resolution of their hearts. To such, an inspired Apostle says, *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God.* James, iv. 4. They attend public worship ; but while they are visible in their pews to the eye of man, their real selves, their hearts, appear to omniscience to be pursuing their vanities, and wandering immeasurably far from God, when they

should be approaching him in the most solemn and intimate communion : so that in the very act of pretending to worship him, they mock him most. Their " week's preparation " is hurried over with the rapidity of a school-boy repeating his task ; only with not so much attention, nor with equal fear ; and, while they feel religion to be perfect bondage, and go through it as a drudgery, they nevertheless depend upon their lame performances for acceptance, and so make their very sin and abomination their Saviour.

And is this the preparation the scriptures require ? Is this giving the heart to God ? Are such persons consistent worshippers of that God, who is a *Spirit* ? Can these be said to be preparing to meet the Lord ? Are they at all ready to go forth at the coming of the bridegroom ? No. A spiritual infirmity, deeper than that lameness, which prevented *Mephibosheth* from going out to meet King David, incapacitates, and indisposes them totally for the advent of the King of kings. Their preparation, like the ceremony of a funeral, is nothing but the pageantry of *the dead* ; and the decorations of a breathless corpse carried in pompous procession to be food for worms in the grave, exhibit too striking a representation of that unanimated

and lifeless formality, which, with all its gaudy trappings, is but the *corpse* of religion, and leads to the chambers of everlasting death.

3. An habitual *watchfulness* of spirit, that implies diligence, solicitude, fidelity, prayer, holiness, is absolutely required of those, who would wish to meet God with joy. This watchfulness, in scripture, is contrasted to sloth, inaction, unfaithfulness, inordinate care, worldly-mindedness, and carnal security. It is compared to that circumspection and fidelity which should mark the conduct of a servant, entrusted with the care of a household, and obliged by the nature of his office, as well as the injunctions of his master, to manage every thing in his absence with wisdom, and to prepare for his return ; and to that wakeful diligence, by which a house is guarded against the depredations of nightly robbers. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.* Luke, xii. 35—39. The contrary temper of unwatchfulness is de-

scribed in the character of an unfaithful, quarrelsome, disobedient, and drunken servant, who takes occasion to riot and revel, from the delay of his master's returning home. *But, and if that servant say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken, the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.* Luke, xii. 45, 46. And in all those instances, the principal argument to urge the necessity of watching, is founded on the uncertainty of the time of our Lord's arrival. *Be ye therefore ready, for the Son of man cometh at an hour, when ye think not.* Luke, xii. 40. *The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.* 2 Pet. iii. 10.

The watchfulness, therefore, recommended by our Lord, and implied in the text, comprehends an habitual spirit of prayer; hence the exhortation, *Watch and pray—habitual sobriety; Watch and be sober;* Thes. v. 6;—holiness in conversation; *Set a watch before my mouth;* Psal. cxli. 3;—a patient, yet ardent expectation of the Lord's arrival; and a cautious avoidance of every care, of every pleasure, and

of every entanglement, which might ensnare the heart, captivate the senses, and immerse the affections in sloth and self-indulgence. All which is enjoined in that concise but most solemn and comprehensive exhortation of the Son of God, *What I say unto you, I say unto all, WATCH!* Mark, xiii. 37.

## S E R M O N X.

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ON THE DEATH OF MR. I. A.

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*“ He shall enter into peace.”* ISAIAH, lvii. 2.

THE great and irreversible decree of Heaven, respecting the whole human race, is, “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.” This sentence, originally pronounced upon the transgression of the first man, evidently included also his whole posterity to the end of time. It has already received its solemn execution upon the generations that are past : we see with our eyes, its effects in the multitudes, that are daily passing from time to eternity : nor shall its influence cease, until the wide-extended dominion of death be destroyed, and mortality swallowed up of life.

The divine appointment, through which the grave becomes the common receptacle of all

men, is not more awful, than it is *just*: for, “the *wages* of sin is *death*.” Man *deserves* to die, because he hath *sinned*. Hence, there ariseth a necessary and inevitable connexion between our origin and our end. So that, if we wish to trace the innumerable calamities attendant upon death, to their source; we shall soon find, that they all originate from SIN. “As by one man SIN entered into the world, and *death* by sin, and so death passed upon *all* men, for that all have *sinned*.” Rom. v. 12. It is sin that hath brought universal disorder into the natural and spiritual world. It hath sown the seeds of mortality in the human frame; hath filled the heart with alienation from God; and rendered body and soul obnoxious to the sentence of everlasting separation from the kingdom of heaven. Sin hath given death his sting; and furnished that king of terrors with his formidable message and tremendous appearance. It hath opened the horrors of the tomb, and expanded wide the mouth of hell. It hath armed the law with a curse, more to be dreaded than death; hath given the sword of justice its sharpest edge; and hath awakened the indignation of that God, who is as a consuming fire. It is the great bar of separation between the creature and the Creator; and is that moral evil, which, when finished, brings forth death,



temporal and eternal. It brought a flood of waters upon the old world ; was the cause of Sodom's destruction ; and will, at last, bring a deluge of fire upon the world that now is.

In a review of those innumerable evils, of which, even death is not the greatest, it will be incumbent upon us, therefore, to keep our eye fixed on the origin of them all, *SIN*. Hereby we shall be able to vindicate the righteous procedure of God, even when we behold him sending death to pull down the beautiful fabric, which his own hands had made ; and opening the grave, as the sad and silent repository of his own curious workmanship. When we reflect, that it is *sin*, that hath produced this melancholy change, and that this evil is found upon us ; the reflection will help to restrain the extravagance of grief, and to suppress that predominancy of discontented repining, which often makes sinners fly in the face of God, and charge him foolishly. For, if death be not duly considered and acknowledged as the desert and wages of sin, I can easily conceive that, for want of such humble consideration, sinners may be led to arraign the dispensations of the Most High ; to charge unerring wisdom with foolishness ; infinite justice with unrighteousness ; and mercy itself with cruelty. But, when once sin is viewed, in its *damning nature*, its *dreadful*

*effects*, and *just deserts*; the discovery will produce submission to the divine will, under the most severe dispensations. It will make us “put our mouths in the dust,” in silent acquiescence in the wise and sovereign disposals of Heaven. Or, if we open them, it will only be to confess, that “the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.” By attentively considering the nature of sin and the manner of its introduction, in order to account for the origin of all the evils that prevail in the natural and spiritual world, and to vindicate eternal Providence, and justify the ways of God with men; we shall hereby also possess the consequent advantage of beholding, in its most glorious point of view, the inestimable REMEDY for sin, by the death and resurrection of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And, if the former considerations may be deemed sufficient to work in the heart patient submission, and unrepining acquiescence in the dispensations of Jehovah; *this* will inspire it with a hope blooming, and full of immortality. If reflections on the demerit of sin can stop the mouth in silence in the dust; *this* will open it in bursts of praise, and glowing effusions of gratitude and admiration. *Sin* is redemption’s advantageous foil. And as the variegated colors of the rainbow shine with greatest beauty on the blackest cloud :

so, the malignity of sin, and the gloom of death, tend proportionably to set off the glory of the Saviour, and to give additional lustre to that bright manifestation of life and immortality, which are brought to light by the gospel.

This chain of thought, if pursued, will necessarily lead us, not only to behold the riches of divine grace and the out-beaming of all the divine attributes, rendered eventually more glorious even by the intrusion of the most horrid evil; but also to consider death itself as the portal to eternal life. This consideration will immediately fix the heart in delightful meditation on the great work of HIM, who came "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and through death to destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil." Heb. ii. 14. And here such a bright scene will present itself to the eye of contemplative faith, as shall dispel the horrors of the tomb; gild with joy and triumph the shadow of death; and enable us to derive wisdom and consolation, even from the solemn apparatus of a funeral. Here we shall be led to meditate on the great and glorious end of the Redeemer's incarnation, and the wonderful effects of his mediatorial undertaking. We shall behold him triumphing over sin in his cross, and leading captivity captive by his glorious resurrection. Bereaving death of its

sting, and embalming the regions of the dead by his own burial;—shutting the mouth of Tophet, and opening to his people the gates of everlasting bliss; and still going forth conquering and to conquer, till sin, Satan, the world, and death, are made his footstool.

These contemplations will suggest the grand preservative against immoderate grief; and administer that healing balm for woe, which the heavy calamities of this mortal life require; and without which, the pressure of them would be insupportable. Whoever is acquainted with the great doctrines of the gospel, and the saving influence of them upon the heart, is the only person duly prepared for the arrival of those alarming incidents, which often give such a vehement shock to the feelings of human nature. And, as no event whatever more sensibly touches the heart, than that which bereaves us of our earthly friends; consequently nothing can bear up the mind under such losses, but that which administers a ground of consolation, adequate to the cause of our sorrow. This, divine revelation can do. It assures us, that “blessed are the dead which die in the Lord:” that, though “one event happeneth to the righteous and the wicked,” yet that the souls of the former are “taken away from the evils” of time, and made possessors of the glories of eternity: that,

therefore, "we should not sorrow" immoderately, as others which have no hope, but, "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." 1 Thes. iv. 14.

Truths these, which brighten the prospect of even a dread eternity, and strip death of every thing really terrifying. Under a firm persuasion of their credibility, we may give up our friends, without any reluctance, into the icy arms of death: and when depositing their precious remains in the cold and gloomy recess of the tomb, may rejoice in lively hope of that happy resurrection-morn, when the sound of the last trumpet shall awaken them from their slumber in the dust, and call them from their long confinement into life and glorious immortality. So that, while a disconsolate parent is bedewing the corpse of a beloved child with his tears, or one friend is bemoaning the loss of another, crying, "Ah, my brother! it is sufficient at any time to repress the impetuous current of grief, and admit the soothing remonstrances of *hope* and *resignation*, to reflect, that deceased friends are not lost, but gone before; and, that if they have died in the Lord, our loss is their everlasting gain. But here let us

I. Examine the character of those, who shall be thus favored: and

II. Consider the nature and extent of their happiness implied in the terms *entering into peace*.—After I have gone through these two heads, I shall, then,

III. Endeavour to suggest some serious reflections, particularly adapted to the consideration of young persons, and not unworthy the solemn attention of the aged.

I. We are to examine the character of those who shall be so favored, as, after death, to be translated to glory.

They are described, in the very first verse of the chapter, from whence I have selected the text, under the general character of “the righteous.” A denomination this, which comprehends their manner of acceptance before God, and the nature of their walk before men. But, as mistakes respecting these two points are not more frequent, than they are fatal, permit me to state this part of the subject, under the following scriptural observations.

1. We can only determine what is righteous or unrighteous by the test of God’s holy law. Every thing that is repugnant to this perfect rule, is unrighteousness ; and that which is commensurate with its sacred requisitions, is righteousness. In the former branch of the definition, there is implied every *kind* and every *degree* of contrariety to the law : as the latter

comprehends universality and perfection of obedience. From hence it must, at first view, appear, that although there is, allowedly, a deeper *malignity* in some sins than in others, yet that *every* transgression of the law is sin, and merits death: and that, therefore, no *medium* can be found between righteousness and unrighteousness: for the scripture asserts, that “ *all* unrighteousness is sin :” so that, before the popish distinction between sins *venial* and sins *mortal* can be admitted, it must first be demonstrated that there is a middle something between righteousness and unrighteousness, which neither keeps the law nor breaks it; that there are some sins, which in their nature are not damning; and are pardonable, *merely* because they are *little* in point of aggravation. But, that absurdities of this nature are as contrary to sound divinity, as they are repugnant to right reason, it is evident, because, “ the *wages* of *sin*,” of every sin, “ is death ;” and the holy law of God, without leaving vain man to judge for himself in a matter of so great importance, stamps a *curse* upon every failure in obedience, whether great or small; saying, “ *Cursed* is every one that continueth not in *ALL* things written in the book of the law to do them.”

2. As every transgression of the law is sin, consequently, that can only be denominated

*righteousness*, which implies a full conformity to all its precepts. Under this term, therefore, are comprehended *purity of principle, perfection, universality, and spirituality* of obedience. 1. That any single act of an external nature can possess no claim to righteousness, unless the *principle* be intrinsically good, is evident; because, St. Paul supposes it possible to “give one’s goods to feed the poor,” and to suffer martyrdom, and yet to do both from a false principle. The nature of fruits is determinable, not by their *appearance*, but by the state of the tree: and fruits of righteousness can only grow upon a righteous stock. As the *heart* is the seat of principle, *that* must consequently possess “truth in the inward parts,” in order to communicate purity to its desires, purposes, and aims. If the streams are pure, they must issue from a pure fountain. So that there must be spotless purity of heart to give existence to a righteous act. 2. There is included in the term *righteousness*, not only immaculate purity in principle, but likewise perfection and *universality* in the act. As every branch of the law is equally holy, just, and good; therefore every precept of it hath an equal demand of obedience, “For, he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor



of the law." James, ii. 11. Man is not left to pick and choose, according to his own option, which of the commandments he may think proper to keep, but is required, on pain of death, to observe the *whole* law : for, if any *one* precept could be dispensed with, so of course might all. But "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *ONE* point, he is guilty of *ALL*." James, ii. 10. 3. The righteousness which the law demands, must not only respect the *letter*, but also the *spirit* of it ; for "the law is *spiritual*." Rom. vii. 14. By the spirituality of the law, the *thoughts* of the *heart* come as much under its strict cognizance, as the outward actions of the *life*. Thus the same precept, which prohibits the act of adultery, equally condemns the *lustful thought* and *lascivious glance*, as violations of the seventh commandment. "Whosoever *looketh* on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Mat. v. 28. And the same prohibition which, in its letter, condemns the worshipping of images ; gives, by its spirituality, the name of *idolatry* to the inordinate love of any thing that robs God of his right. Thus *covetousness* in the heart, or the inordinate love of pleasure, will as effectually constitute *idolatry*, in the eye of the law, as the most formal prostration to graven images. So that the *righteousness*, which

the law requires, includes a conformity to its sanctions, as fully, in the *spirit*, as in the *letter* of them; and as much to the *whole*, as to a *single precept*.

3. From the foregoing considerations, it is plain, that as righteousness consists in a fulfilment of the whole law, according to the perfection, purity, and deep spirituality of its commands; consequently he alone can be denominated a *righteous* man, whose conduct is a literal transcript of the above definition of righteousness. Or, in other words, he is righteous *legally*, whose thoughts, words and actions, can bear the rigorous examination of God's law; whose heart is perfectly free from every wrong principle, and every corrupt inclination; whose life exemplifies the whole obedience of the law in its fullest extent; and who can therefore challenge either the law or the law-giver to find *any sin* in him. And, there is one ingredient more indispensably requisite in the character of a man righteous, according to the *law*; which is, *incessancy* of obedience. In order to be justified by it, man must not only obey, but *persevere* in obeying. Perfect obedience will not be sufficient unless it be continued, and that to the end of life. The righteousness of the law saith, "The man that doeth those things shall live by them." Rom. x. 5. And its penal sanction

crieth, "Cursed is every one that *continueth* not in all things," &c.

4. And now, where is such a righteous character to be found? The heart and life of Adam, indeed, previous to his fall, literally exemplified it in its greatest perfection. But since that melancholy event, there is an end of all human righteousness. For "the scripture concluding all under sin," declareth that "there is none *righteous, no not one.*" Rom. iii. 10. A declaration, which equally affects Gentiles as well as Jews, and places the fallen children of Adam upon an equal footing, in point of justifying righteousness. "Every mouth must now be stopped, and ALL THE WORLD become GUILTY before God." Rom. iii. 19. Man cannot justify *himself*: for an attempt to do so would only "prove him perverse," and be an additional manifestation of his unrighteousness. The *law* cannot justify him, because "it is weak through the *flesh*," or the inherent corruption of human nature. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified." Rom. iii. 20. For, "if righteousness come by the law"—if a sinner could be justified by his obedience to it—"then Christ is dead in vain." Gal. ii. 21. This inability to justify, is not the effect of any absolute weakness in the law itself, but is eventually occasioned through the dreadful degeneracy of

human nature, styled in scripture, "the flesh." The law still retains as intrinsic a power in itself to constitute righteous, as it ever did; and if any man could be found capable of fulfilling its condition of perfect obedience, it would not only justify him, but also entitle him to glory, independant of the Son of God: for its condition and promise are connected, when it says on this wise, "*Do this, and live.*" But man's original guilt and practical disobedience, incurring a double forfeiture of the promised reward, the law possesseth an eventual incapacity of *making righteous*: and this is, what the apostle says, "the law could not do," Rom. viii. 3, or το αδυνατον τω νομω is, the *impossibility of the law*. So that, whoever seeks justification by it, seeks an *impossibility*; and by having recourse to its obligation of perfect obedience, and failing notwithstanding in a fulfilment of that obligation, he lays himself open to the full force of its condemning sentence, its penal sanctions, and tremendous curse. "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the CURSE." Gal. iii. 10.

5. But, since, according to numerous testimonies of scripture; agreeably to the purity, spirituality, and indispensable requirements of the law; and consistently with the universal depravity of human nature; man cannot, with-

out the highest arrogance, and even blasphemy, lay any claim to personal merit: how then is he to become *righteous*? This is an inquiry of infinite importance; since it is declared, that “the *unrighteous* shall not inherit the kingdom of God;” and since, without an exemption from guilt and an interest in a positive righteousness, man can have no scriptural ground to hope for a deliverance from death or a title to life; to expect the favor of God here, or to claim his kingdom hereafter. In illustrating this point, it will be necessary to consider, how a man’s person may be righteous towards God, and how his works may so justify his religious profession before the world, as to vindicate his character from the imputation of hypocrisy, and demonstrate the genuineness of his faith.

6. As to the manner, in which a sinner is to be made righteous before God; since it has already been demonstrated, by irrefragable proof from the scriptures of truth, as well as by arguments deduced from the corruption of human nature, and the sanctions and sentence of the law, that all obedience of the sinner is insufficient towards his justification before the majesty of heaven; nothing farther in a negative way need be added, to corroborate, what is, indeed, in itself, so evident, and incontrovertible. It may, however, be necessary to quote a few scriptures,

in which two of the most illustrious saints, in language of the deepest self-renunciation, disclaim any the least pretensions to justification before the most High and Holy God, howsoever they might esteem their conduct justifiable before fallible creatures, like themselves. "BEHOLD I AM VILE!" says he, who was a mirror of patience, "what shall I answer thee?" Job, xl. 4. "How can man be JUSTIFIED WITH GOD?" says the same person, "or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon and it shineth not: yea the stars are not pure in his sight; how much less man that is a worm!" Job, xxv. 4, 5. Hear how the man after God's own heart trembleth at the thought of Jehovah's entering into judgment with him, or any other creature. "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand? Psal. cxxx. 3. Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for, in THY sight shall nō man living be justified." Psal. cxliii. 2.—Passages these, which are but few out of the multitudes that might be produced, to demonstrate the impossibility of being justified in ourselves before a heart-searching God, as well as the dreadful peril of abiding the sentence and scrutiny of his righteous law.

7. But how, then, can man stand before this holy Lord God, and be constituted righteous in

his sight? This question cannot better be answered than in the words of the XIth article of the Church of England. "We are accounted righteous before God *only* for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and *not* for our *own* works or deservings." I quote this excellent article of our church, not with any design of establishing its authority as infallible and decisive, but merely because it affords a plain and scriptural definition of the point in question, as well as exhibits a striking proof, that our sentiments, on the mode of a sinner's justification before God, are supported by the venerable sanction of the Church of England: and I believe it will satisfactorily appear, that it is not without scriptural ground, that she requires of all her ministers, an unequivocal and solemn subscription to this, as well as every other article in the *thirty-nine*.

8. According to our church, therefore, and the word of God, with which, on this head, she perfectly accords, our justifying righteousness is the meritorious work of Christ; which consisteth in a perfect obedience to the law, and a full satisfaction to divine justice; the one including what he *did*, the other what he *suffered*; and both, in inseparable connexion, constituting that glorious and "everlasting righteousness," which the Mediator hath brought in, by his en-

tire obedience to the death of the cross. This is called by our church, “the *merit*” of Christ, because when the dignity of his person is taken into consideration, it appears that an infinite sufficiency is thereby communicated to his obedience, and every part thereof; and that he possesseth an inherent power of meriting for others, or of *constituting* others righteous, as well as being righteous himself. This he can only do, as being “God over all, blessed for evermore.” For, if he had been a mere creature, though his righteousness might be sufficient to justify himself, yet it could never have transferred a power of justifying others: because, it is repugnant both to reason and scripture, that *any created* being, even the first-born seraph round the throne of God, should not only merit for himself, but also possess a redundancy of merits transferable to others. But that the Redeemer is possessed of such a power, is evident from the words of the apostle, “By the obedience of one shall many *be made righteous.*” Rom. v. 19. This argument proves, therefore, that Christ is *very God*, as well as *very man*: that there is a translation of merit infinitely sufficient in a sinner’s justification: and that the active and passive obedience of the Mediator, is, through the infinite dignity of his person, a *divine* righteousness. Hence it is written, “This is his name



whereby he shall be called, JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Jer. xxiii. 6. And again, " We are made *the righteousness of God* in him." 1 Cor. v. 21.

9. " We are accounted righteous before God ONLY for the merit of Christ," says our church: and so saith the scripture. " There is *none other* name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts, iv. 12. " I will make mention of thy righteousness," says David, " even of thine ONLY." Psal. lxxi. 17. To suppose, that any thing but the righteousness of Christ can justify us before God, is a supposition big with pride, blasphemy, and absurdity:—with *pride*; because it inclines a man to esteem himself a sort of coadjutor in the work of salvation with Christ:—with *blasphemy*; because, by implying an insufficiency in the Redeemer's righteousness *fully* to justify, without the co-operation of human merit, it detracts from his personal and mediatorial honor, and gives a share of glory where none is due:—with *absurdity*; because it implies, that Christ came only to be a *half* Saviour; and attempts to establish a coalition between human *works* and divine *grace*, by making eternal salvation depend partly upon the one, and partly upon the other; a heterogeneous mixture this, which the scriptures disavow in most explicit terms.

“ If by grace, then it is no more of works : otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace : otherwise work is no more work.” Rom. xi. 6.

10. The righteousness, by which we are justified, is made over to us by an act of gracious and sovereign *imputation*. Thus “ David describeth the blessedness of the man, to whom God *imputeth* righteousness without works, saying, blessed are they, &c.” Rom. iv. 7. And, because *faith* is the instrument in receiving and cleaving to this righteousness ; therefore this grace is said in a secondary and subordinate sense, to operate in our justification. So “ Abraham *believed* God, and it was accounted *ελογισθη* *imputed* to him for righteousness. But, that faith itself cannot constitute a justifying righteousness, properly so called, is evident, because it is opposed to *working*, to him that *worketh not* but *believeth*,” &c. Rom. iv. 5 ; and because, if it justified in the proper sense of the word, as an act, our justification being in that case by *works*, we should then claim heaven as a reward due to personal merit. For, “ to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of *grace* but of *debt*.” Rom. iv. 4. But, that faith cannot found any such claim, is abundantly demonstrable, from the distinction which the scriptures observe between faith and its object ; making

use so frequently of the terms, “ the righteousness which is *by* and *through* faith,” Phil. iii. 9, and “ faith *in* the righteousness of Christ.” 2 Pet. i. 1. So that, when our church says “ we are justified by *faith* only” in opposition to works, it means that we are justified *instrumentally* by faith, but that the object which it apprehends, viz. the righteousness of Christ, is the primary and meritorious cause of our justification.

11. The grace of faith, by which we are justified, is also the great instrument in the inward work of *sanctification* ; because it “ receives from Christ’s fulness,” grace to “ purify the heart” and “ work by love.” It cleanseth the conscience from dead works to serve the living God ; and lays the axe to the root of corruption, by destroying the love, and mortifying the power of sin. An increase of faith produceth a proportionable increase of sanctification : for, as the first production of the fruits of righteousness originates from this life-giving grace, so the subsequent abounding of them derives its prosperity from its fructifying influence. And, as “ works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his spirit are not pleasing to God, because they do not spring from faith ;” (see the article) ; consequently, those which follow after justification, derive their acceptable-

ness from that faith, which offers them upon the golden altar of the Redeemer's sacrifice, which sanctifieth the gift. Hence we see how a sinner is made inherently holy, as well as personally righteous; viz. by one and the same faith, apprehending Christ as our sanctification, as well as our righteousness in justification. And, from hence it is apparent, 1. that no good works can go before justification; or that, until a sinner is made partaker of divine faith, he can perform nothing acceptable in the sight of God; because, "whatsoever is not of faith, is sin:" 2. and therefore, that he cannot bring forth the fruits of righteousness in his heart and life before men, until the person is accepted before God, through the infinitely meritorious work of the Mediator.

12. This inward work of the spirit is absolutely necessary to the sinner's *mectness* for heaven; and the external fruits of it justify his religious character before the world. Thus Abraham was justified by *works* before men, and by *faith* before God. The intentional offering up of his son was the illustrious instance of the strength and genuineness of his faith, and constituted his declarative justification before the world: but his "believing in the promised Messiah, which was accounted to him for righteousness," was the ground of his justification

before God, and preceded his justification by works. So that the father of the faithful himself, "if he were justified by works, hath whereof to glory, but NOT BEFORE GOD." Rom. iv. 2. And thus the scripture, without incurring the charge of self-contradiction, was eminently fulfilled, when it saith, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness:" and, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works?" James, ii. 21, 23.

13. By this scriptural distinction, every thing is kept in its proper place. Justification and sanctification are not confounded; and their respective offices are so ascribed to faith and works, as that the honor of the one is not vacated, nor the declarative evidence of the other superseded; but both are established in their proper stations;—*that* to justify before God;—*these* to justify before men. By this distinction, the word of God is easily reconciled with itself; and while one branch of it furnishes an antidote to the insolent claims of self-righteousness, the other equally secures obedience to the law, against the presumptuous hope of the antinomian hypocrite. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea we establish the law." Rom. iii. 31.—"By *grace* ye are saved through faith: *not of works*, lest any man should boast." Ephes. ii. 8, 9.

From all, which I have urged on this head, with studied copiousness because of its importance, it is manifest that a *righteous man* is one, who renouncing his own, betaketh himself to the righteousness of Christ; who, through the infinite merit of the Saviour's blood, and the perfection of his obedience to the law, is delivered from curse and condemnation, and is possessed of a legal title to heaven; who receiving this method of justification by faith, believeth to the saving of the soul; in whose heart the fruits of righteousness are implanted; and in whose life there is a complete portraiture of a consistent professor of the gospel. Such a man is now blessed in the possession of present good; but he has secured to him still greater happiness in reversion. Standing in Christ, he has nothing to fear from sin, Satan, the law, or justice. And having his loins girded and his lamp burning, he is ready at all times to arise and meet the bridegroom. To him to live is Christ, to die is gain.—But this brings me

II. To consider the nature and extent of his happiness implied in the terms *entering into peace*.

As *peace* necessarily pre-supposes trouble or warfare, it consequently leads back our ideas to the state of the righteous in this howling wilderness, previous to their arrival at the heavenly

Canaan. Here, as pilgrims and sojourners, in a strange land, they undergo a great variety of fatigue and hardship before they accomplish the important journey they are taking; and one can never contemplate the *rest* they enter upon in a glorious hereafter, without tracing in idea the *wearisome steps* that lead to it.

Afflictions and trials are the lot of the righteous in this world; and they are not more remarkable for their number, than for the peculiarity of their nature, and the end of their appointment. Though they are sharers in those common and general afflictions, to which human nature, since the fall, is subjected, and to which man is born as the sparks fly upward; yet they have a superadded portion of trials distinct from those, which are inseparably connected with their character, as Christians, and with their life, as believers; and for bearing of which they require a proportionable degree of grace and consolation from on high. Indeed, those trials, peculiar to God's people, are not only the inevitable consequence of their gospel profession, but also the result of divine appointment. So the Apostle Paul expressly declares in his epistle to the suffering professors of the church of Christ at Thessalonica; when, after exhorting them "not to be moved by their afflictions," he immediately adds, "For yourselves know that

ye are *appointed* thereunto." 1 Thes. iii. 3. As the great Head of the church is glorified by the patience and fortitude of his suffering witnesses on earth ; his infinite wisdom appoints the nature, and fixes the weight, number, and measure of their trials, in order that he may have an opportunity of illustrating the power of his grace in their support. And there is a no less manifestation of mercy and love, than of *wisdom*, in the various trials which God hath appointed as the lot of his church militant. Hereby, he possesses innumerable occasions of demonstrating, that he *loves* his people under their afflictions, and that the severest chastisements of his rod are suggested by the most tender parental affection. By making the darkest dispensations work together for their good, he shews them the determinations of his *love*, and the wonder-working operations of his over-ruling *power* : he points out to them what he *can* do, and what he *will* do for them. So that their sufferings illustrate his goodness, and furnish the most ample display of that wisdom, mercy, faithfulness, and power, which so illustriously shine forth in all the gracious and providential dispensations of Jehovah towards his church and people.

Besides ; affliction constitutes a distinguishing *mark* in the character of the righteous.



“ Many are the troubles of the righteous,” says David. “ In the world you shall have *tribulation*,” said David’s LORD to his disciples. And, as a proof that neither persecution, nor any other species of affliction, was confined to the days of the apostles, St. Paul assures Timothy, that “ ALL who *will* live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” 2 Tim. iii. 12. The world and the “ god of the world ” will ever unite in opposition to those, who have deserted the maxims of the one, and have solemnly renounced the service of the other ; and because the righteous are engaged in a cause diametrically opposite to the interests of both, therefore the world and Satan hate them with a perfect hatred, and pursue them with intentions of the most infernal nature. And is this to be wondered at, when it is considered, that the most spotless character that ever appeared upon earth, was loaded with the heaviest reproaches ? If, therefore, affliction be the path, which the blessed Jesus himself trod ; and if they called the Master of the house *Beelzebub* ; can they of the household hope for an exemption from similar calumnies ?

As long as the righteous are in a state of nature, so long the world loves them. But, the moment a saved sinner enters into the peace of the gospel, in that very moment the world and

the devil enter the lists against him. As long as the strong man armed is permitted to keep his palace undisturbed, all is peace; but when a stronger than he comes to dispossess him, then Satan begins to rage. While a sinner fights under his banner he gives him no disturbance; but as soon as he is delivered from the captivity under this infernal tyrant, instantly Apollyon draws the sword, and never puts it up during the Christian soldier's abode in the wilderness. Then he prepares all his snares; sets all his engines to work, and has recourse to every stratagem; in order, if possible, to recover him, whom he looks upon as a deserter from his camp. He brings forth his loaded quiver; puts his most envenomed arrows upon the string; and shoots many a *fiery dart*, at least to distress, where he cannot destroy. But the believer having put on the whole armour of God, receives coolly all the accusations, terrors, blasphemous suggestions, and discouraging fears, of the enemy of his salvation, and snaps them to pieces on his adamantine shield of faith. And yet renewed assaults and renewed disappointments of the enemy never discourage him from repeating the attack; in a renewal of which, the world heartily joins him. While he lived according to the course of this world, blind, careless, and at enmity with God, so long no encomium was

too high for him; and not only the most fulsome panegyrics were poured upon his virtues, but blind partiality threw a veil over his very *vices*, and would not allow that "so mighty good a man could be wrong;" although at the same time, perhaps, his principles and practice were equally corrupt. But let this same person, late the *darling* of the world, and the object of its warmest commendations, only be awakened to a feeling sense of his lost state, take but a few steps out of Babylon; and immediately the note of the men of the world is changed: their blessings are converted into curses; their praises, into reproach and calumny; and the most ridiculous, depreciating, illiberal, and even abominable epithets, are not bad enough for him, who has avowed non-conformity to the world, and is determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. So that, if to these trials from Satan and the world, be added a consideration of the still keener ones from the remainder of corruption; with how great propriety do the scriptures represent the life of a Christian, as a *warfare*, a *race*, a *difficult journey*, an *agony*?

But is there no release at all for the Christian soldier from this severe struggle with sin, Satan, and the world? Yes, the same hand that appoints the scene of battle, will sign a discharge

from it also. The day is fixed, when, after his exit from the field, he is to “enter into *peace* :” not like a coward who flies from battle, but as a magnanimous veteran, worn out in the services of the Captain of his salvation ; to whom “to live was Christ, and to die is gain.” Then shall he put off that “*harness*,” in death, which he put on, when he enlisted as a volunteer under the Messiah ; and shall lay down the weapons of his warfare and his earthly tabernacle together. His ears shall then no longer be stunned with the din of war, nor his heart be made so frequently the seat of terror and agitation, under apprehensions of losing the day after all ; but, relieved from all his fears, and released from all his conflicts, he shall enter into that land of consummate peace, in his march towards which he had been obliged to fight every step of the way, with his sword in hand. There he shall receive, as the gratuitous donation of divine grace, and as the *gracious* reward of his faithfulness unto death, an immortal crown of glory ; which, when his divine Captain places it on his head, he shall, with the hand of self-renunciation, take off, and in deepest humility lay at Immanuel’s feet. There he shall be placed at an infinite distance from the seat of war in this troublesome world ; and, beyond the reach of

all his enemies, shall enjoy peace that shall never be interrupted, and bliss that shall never have an end.

View the righteous man under the representation of a *traveller*. A sinful world is the place, from whence he sets out : heaven, the country to which he is bound. Satan and sin are the great enemies that oppose him in his journey ; and many a wearisome step he takes, before he gains the point in view. Temptations from his own heart's corruptions, as well as from the world and Satan, are the storms he meets with in the way ; but Christ is his sun and shield, to illuminate and defend. After having, perhaps, borne the burden and heat of the day, death at last arrives, a welcome messenger, to relieve him from his toil, and usher him into his heavenly Father's kingdom. " The rest of a laboring man," says Solomon, " is sweet." How much more delectable must rest in the placid bosom of the tomb be to him, whose labors have been great in proportion to the greatness of the cause in which he embarked ! and all the powers of whose body and soul were exerted in the arduous toil ! But after the fatigue of the day, how sweet the approach of the season of repose ! Even in the prospect of it, the believer anticipates a degree of heaven ; and an

assurance that his light afflictions will, as it were in a moment, come to a period, alleviates every present cross, and enables him, in the view of future trials, to take no anxious thought for to-morrow. When death actually comes, he finds him prepared for his arrival. Clad with the whole armour of God, and washed from every defilement in the Mediator's blood, he shouts, "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?" With intrepidity of soul, he touches the *sting* of death, and feels it not only blunted, but also free from poison. He then examines the whole strength of the *quiver* of death, and finds there is not one shaft in it that can penetrate his shield of faith and wound his soul; and then he shouts again, "Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ!" And as soon as death executes his commission; that fatal blow of the King of terrors, which, by a judicial sentence, cuts down the wicked as cumberers of the ground, and is only a prelude to the transplantation of the righteous from this desert to the celestial Eden; his body then drops into its original dust, and is consigned to the silent grave; where "it lieth down and riseth not, till the heavens be no more." Job, xiv. 12. There the wicked cease from

“troubling, and there the weary are at rest.” Chapter iii. 17. Then his mortal part “enters into peace,” being exempt from every thing that could give pain, or cause trouble. There

“The corpse is affected no more  
 With trouble, or shaken with pain,  
 The war in the members is o'er,  
 And never shall vex him again.  
 The languishing *head* is at rest ;  
 Its *thinking* and *aching* are o'er :  
 The quiet immovable *breast*  
 Is heav'd by affliction no more.  
 The *heart* is no longer the seat  
 Of trouble and torturing pain :  
 It ceases to flutter and beat ;  
 It never shall flutter again.”

But what tongue can describe, or heart conceive, the nature of that peace, which the disembodied spirit enters upon ! The instant the thread of life is cut, and the soul is disengaged from the cumbrous clod of earth in which it was imprisoned, it flies to regions above, and towers away on the wings of cherubim, to that celestial city, whither it had often fled before on the wings of *faith*, and *hope*, and strong *desire*. A convoy of angels attended till the happy spirit was released from its prison ; after which the heavenly escort conducts it to the promised

rest. The gates of the New Jerusalem are thrown open wide to admit the blessed stranger; whom Immanuel waits to introduce to his kingdom, and clasp to his heart. Then the righteous *enters*, amidst the congratulatory salutations of kindred spirits:—*enters!* through the infinite merit of the blood of atonement:—*enters!* like the weary traveller arriving joyful, though fatigued, at his journey's end:—*enters!* like an exile, returning from a long captivity, to his native home:—*enters!* triumphant, as a victor loaded with spoils, and crowned with conquest, after a severe campaign:—*enters!* like some richly-laden vessel, with all its sails crowded to the wind; escaping the horrors of the deep, and making for the destined haven, where it would be.—Thus the righteous enters, while, we may suppose every golden harp is new-strung, to shout him welcome to the celestial city; and every voice is exerted in singing, “Open ye the gates, that the righteous which keepeth the truth may enter in.” Isa. xxvi. 2.

He enters into *peace*. This blessing was in a degree the privilege of the believer upon earth, when, “being justified by faith,” and “having access into this grace wherein we stand,” Rom. v. 1, 2, he entered into peace passing all understanding. But, as that peace was con-



stantly assaulted, and frequently interrupted upon earth, it is necessary that he be for ever delivered from such interruption and all the causes of it. Such “ a rest remaineth for the people of God :” where Satan shall never be able to annoy, the world cannot obtrude its temptations ; and sin shall no more extort that groan, “ Wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death !” Rom. vii. 24. “ Where the righteous shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more : for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters ; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes !” Rev. vii. 16, 17.

What a glorious exchange ?—of sickness and pain, for everlasting rest and peace !—of a ruinous tabernacle ; for a house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens !—of a howling wilderness ; for the heavenly Canaan, the palace of angels, the city of God !—of the groanings of corruption and sin ; for the songs of the redeemed round the throne !—of the chamber of sickness ; for the regions of unfading health, “ where the inhabitant shall never say, *I am sick !*”—of the cross ; for a crown of glory, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away !—and of earth, with all its distractions, vanities, vicissitudes, and woes ; for the beatitudes of

heaven, and the rapturous enjoyment of the vision of God!

“ ——— Happy day! that breaks our chain!  
That manumits; that calls, from exile, home:  
That leads to nature's great metropolis:  
And readmits us, thro' the guardian hand  
Of elder brothers, to our *Father's* throne!”

But it is time I should now proceed to consider the last thing proposed, which was,

III. To suggest some serious reflections, more particularly adapted to the consideration of young persons; and not unworthy, I hope, the solemn attention of the aged.

1. You have heard the character, and the blessedness of *the righteous*, described: Do you wish to be followers of such? Follow them to the *grave* you certainly must; and it is impossible to tell, how soon that may be the case. While your passions are moved under a subject, that is in itself deeply affecting, perhaps you are adopting the wish of *Balaam*, “ Let me die the death of the righteous, and let *my* last end be like his!” But do you wish, not only to follow the righteous to the *glory* that awaits him, but also to tread that *path* which leads to it? If not, your wishes are insincere, and delusory. The *life* and *death* of the righteous will always be of a piece: if *that* be not holy, *this* will not be blessed.

2. But, perhaps, subjects of this nature, and the scene to which they refer, are too solemn for the gaiety of your temper. But, O remember, that scene (I mean that of death) in all its solemnity, will very soon be exemplified in yourself, as it constantly is, in the departure of multitudes, that drop beside you on the right hand and on the left. You are *young*. But youth, in its utmost vigor, is accessible to disease; and the most healthful constitution possesses no infallible antidote against the shafts of death; which make equal havock in the bodies of the youthful and robust, as in those of the aged and infirm:—Surely the sable ornaments of the pulpit, in which I stand, afford a most striking memorandum of this truth.—Death's cold hand often seizes, and effectually chills the most blooming flower; and either nips it in the bud, or blasts all its full-blown beauties, just as they arrived at maturity. How many go off the stage of life, "in their full strength," as the book of Job says! "How soon might the *consumption*, that ravager of youth, if commissioned by the sovereign arbiter of life, lay thy blooming constitution in ruins! and reduce thee to such a state of languor and debility, that "the grasshopper should be a burden!" Yea, cannot death find access to thy frame, by innumerable avenues? Are not the seeds of mortality sown in

the very substance of our bodies, and mingled with the minutest particles of their contexture? So that, “in the midst of life we are in death?” Are not our *end*, and our *origin*, DUST?

3. If, therefore, health be so fading a flower, and the young are no less liable to disease and death, than the aged: is it wise, is it *safe*, to squander away your precious, your *precarious* moments in vice and dissipation? Can you imagine that your business in this world, is nothing more than “to eat and drink and rise up to play?” Remember what was the dreadful fate of those who thought so, in the days of Noah. Is our time so *long*, that you can *spare* such a considerable portion of it to vanity? Is it so much *at our disposal*, that we can even promise ourselves *to-morrow*? Or, is it of so *little value*, that we should throw it away upon pernicious lusts?

“————— Throw *time* away?——

Throw *empires*, and be blameless. Moments seize:  
*Heav'n's* on their wing. A *moment* we may wish,  
 When *worlds* want wealth to buy!———”\*

4. Perhaps you suppose, that youth is the season for gaiety and dissipation, and mature years, the proper time for seriousness and devo-

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\* Young's Night Thoughts.

tion; and, therefore, that you are to seek the salvation of your soul, only in some distant period of life. But this supposition is not more dangerous, than it is erroneous. How do you know, that the time will ever come which you allot for that great work, which is not so much as *begun*? Have you made a covenant with death? And if you should even arrive at old age; it is ten thousand to one, that your soul's concerns will occupy your thoughts, in the least, after a long series of previous dissipation, deadness, and delay. Does not the want of certainty, therefore, in this case, furnish a most awful argument against the daring presumption of your conduct? Besides, why should the prime of life be devoted to sin, and only the enfeebled close of it consecrated to religion? Is there any reason, (rather, is there not the most infernal absurdity?) in supposing, that God may be put off with the services of infirm old age; while the Devil is to be complimented with the blooming honors of health and strength? Dreadful preposterousness!

5. If, therefore, the great uncertainty of *life*, under all the advantages which youth and health can give it:—if the importance of *time*, which surpasseth, in *value*, the *gold of Ophir*; and in *swiftness*, the flight of the eagle or the arrow:—if the great danger of postponing matters of

infinite moment, to some future period, which may never arrive :—if the awful absurdity of dedicating youth to pleasure, from a supposition, that only the close of life is to be appropriated to religion :—and, if the probability of being suddenly cut off by the stroke of death, amidst all these vain imaginations ; and of being summoned into the presence of God, before a single resolution has been adopted, respecting the securing of future bliss, or the avoiding of future misery :—if solemn considerations, like these, can have any weight with you ; let me beseech you, to admit their force, and to obey their powerful suggestions. If you do not ; the time will come, when each of them will penetrate your heart, keen as so many daggers ; and when it will be out of your power, *for ever*, to recal the opportunities, talents, and privileges, which you are now so grossly abusing.

6. *Young* as you may be, you are old enough, it seems, to rebel against God : and why not old enough to begin seriously to seek an interest in JESUS ? Would you wish to postpone your *happiness* ? True felicity consists in a solemn dedication of the heart to God. The sooner this is done, the sooner you will be happy : the longer it is delayed, the longer you will be estranged from true bliss. Why then should not your happiness commence as *early* as possible ?

I know, the blessed attainment will cost you the loss of your lusts, or your self-righteousness. But, who ever esteemed it a *loss*, to exchange fleeting and unsubstantial *trifles* for glorious and eternal *realities*?—to give up the *world* and gain CHRIST?—to part with *sin*, and secure *heaven*? Your loss, here, will be your everlasting gain; and so you will esteem it, when life is made to appear in its genuine colors of vanity and nothingness; when “the chief among ten thousand” is manifested to your heart, in all his matchless beauties; and when death draws the curtain, that hides the invisible world from your view.

7. But what is it, which the world has to bestow, that will admit of any comparison with the unsearchable riches of Christ? “The things that are in the world,” says St. John, “are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” These are the great all of which the world can boast: these the sum total of its admired gratifications. And, when you weigh the entire aggregate of all its accumulated good in the balance of truth, it amounts to no more than “vanity of vanities. All is vanity!” But, *supposing*, that the gratifications of sense and all the pride of life *could* furnish a degree of felicity: yet how extremely *short* is their duration! “The world *passeth away* and the fashion there-

of." Ere long, every fleeting object shall be torn from your embraces. "The lusts of the flesh" will expire in corruption: the "eye" be closed in darkness: and all "the pride of life" evaporate in smoke, and vanish like a dream of the night. But, the existence of sublunary bliss is not more fleeting, than the inordinate enjoyment of it is pernicious. The positive declaration of God's word is, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," eternally. Will you, then, erect your happiness on so precarious a basis; when misery and ruin must be the certain consequences? Will you, dare you, run the awful risk of losing an eternity of bliss, for the enjoyment of a little transient pleasure in time? Had you rather endure the gnawings of "the worm that never dies," than deny the cravings of some headstrong lust? Is it a matter of greater moment to flutter away in all the emptiness and parade of dress and dissipation, than to "redeem the time" and prepare for eternity?

8. If you wish to be in earnest about the salvation of your souls, let me entreat you; 1. to avoid the company of those, who, as a color for their profligacy and licentiousness, laugh at all religion, as *priest-craft*. Shun the conversation of such, as you would the *plague*. Their principles are supported by *infidelity*; their practice founded upon *wickedness* itself; and their steps



lead to *hell*. 2. Be not intimidated by those titles of reproach and epithets of calumny, by which, such as dare to be singular, are now distinguished. It is a fact as lamentable, as it is notorious, that the power of religion is by multitudes decried and discountenanced, under the application of hackneyed stigmas, that have no more *sense* in them, than *seriousness*. But this has been always the case. When people want *arguments*, they call *names*; and because they have no religion *themselves*, therefore they abuse *those who have*. Sitting in "the seat of the scornful," they contemptuously arraign the conduct of the humble followers of the Son of God, because it is such a contrast to their own, and reproves their *ignorance*, *carelessness*, and *vanity*. But "whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto such men rather than unto God; judge ye." Acts, iv. 19. 3. Beware of despising in your heart or lightly esteeming that *gospel*, which "is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth." Rom. i. 16. Rather, "give the more earnest heed to the things which you have heard;" Heb. ii. 1; because, a reflection in an awful hereafter, that the salvation of the gospel has been offered, but rejected, will constitute the most torturing aggravation in the miseries of a sinner finally lost. Read Heb. x. 28, 29. 4. Be not satisfied

with a little external decency of behaviour, without a real inward change of *heart*. If you would enter into heaven, you must be *converted*: and conversion is a work of the spirit of God, which corrects irregular propensities, in their very *rise*: it lays the axe to the *root* of sin; so that where this inward eradication takes place, outward branches fall with it. You may be *civilized* and *orderly*, as the Pharisees of old were, and yet, like them, be equally *unchanged* and *unpurified* in heart. But, if it please God, to “renew you in the spirit of your mind;” you will then be furnished with an antidote against the force of temptation: you will be prepared for death and judgment: and “whether you live or die, you will be the Lord’s.”

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