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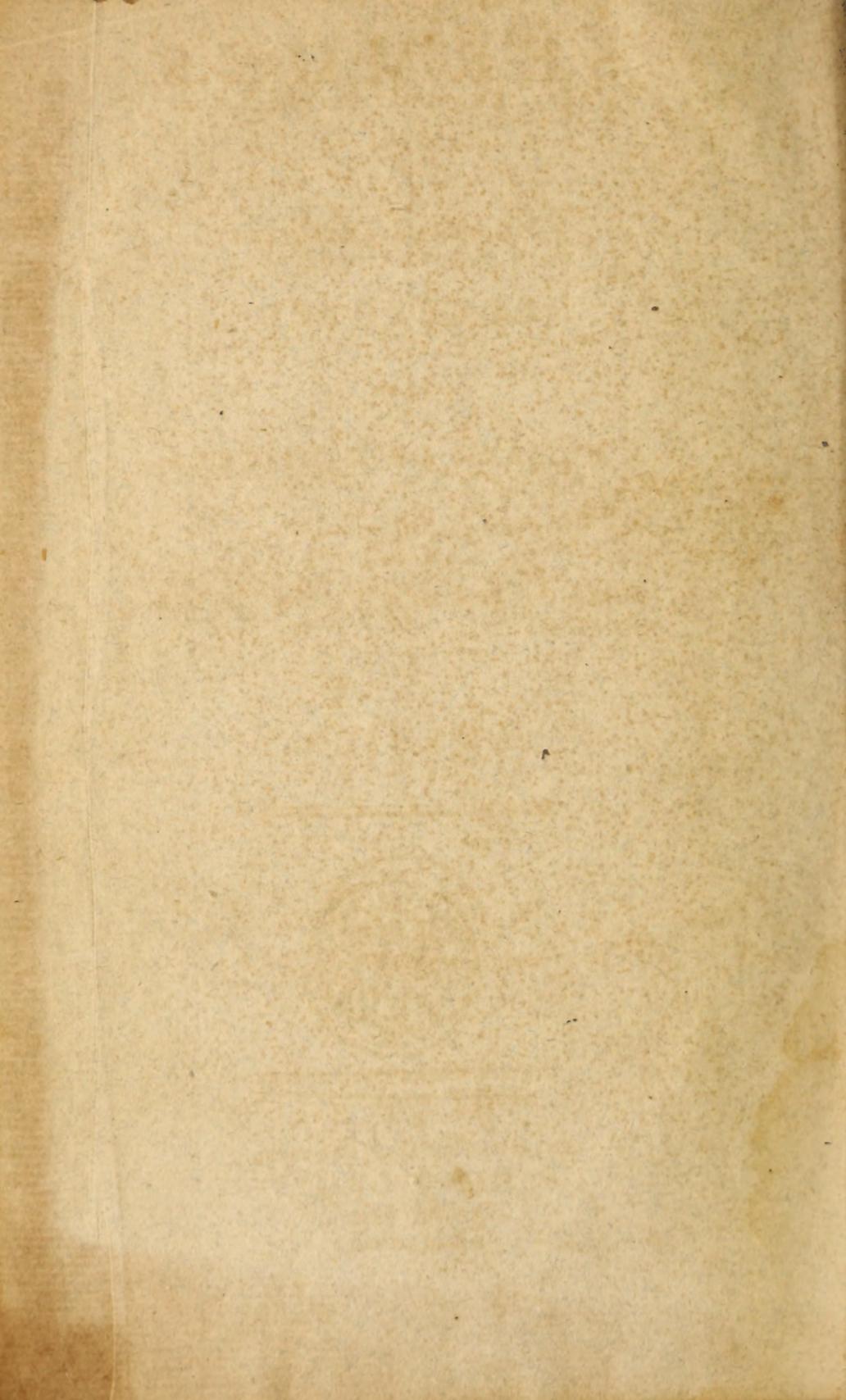
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Peter Starr's
Book



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S E R M O N S

O N

Important Subjects;

COLLECTED

FROM

A NUMBER OF MINISTERS,

I N

SOME OF THE NORTHERN STATES

O F

A M E R I C A.



PRINTED
BY HUDSON & GOODWIN,
HARTFORD.

M D C C X C V I I.

SERMONS

CONTENTS

COLLECTED

A NUMBER OF MINISTERS

OF THE NORTHERN STATES

AMERICA



PRINTED

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1834.

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Sermons on Important Subjects.

The Religious Sentiments of CHRIST.

Exhibited in TWO SERMONS, by SAMUEL
J. MILLS, Pastor of the Church in Torrington,
State of Connecticut.

PSALM XL. 9, 10.

I have preached righteousness in the great congregation ; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart ; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation : I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth, from the great congregation.

IN the prophetic writings, future events are frequently expressed, as though they were already accomplished. This text is an instance of it. The words are a prophecy of the *then* future preaching of Christ. That they have ultimate reference to *him*, will appear, by comparing the preceding verses with Hebrews x. 5, 6, 7. The

words are nearly the same in both places, and in the latter, have particular reference to Christ, as thus; *Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I; Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.* The text contains a declaration, or profession, which Christ would be able and ready to make, at the close of his public ministry. He told Pilate, that one great end of his coming into the world was, to exhibit the doctrines and duties of true religion. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." In his last prayer with his disciples, he appealed to the Father, with regard to his fidelity: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work, which thou gavest me to do."* It is certainly a favour, which never can be sufficiently estimated, that HIS views of the system of true religion, taken from his own mouth, and recorded soon afterwards, have been preserved, and conveyed down to us, that we may, severally, see for ourselves, and be certified what those doctrines are, which it concerns us to believe, and what those duties are, which it concerns us to practise.

To exhibit, in a summary and collective view, the leading doctrines and duties, which Christ preached, is the principal design of these discourses.

To attend, minutely, to every sentiment communicated by Christ, in the course of his public ministry, is not proposed: nor is it intended to advert to *all* the evidence, which might be addu-

* John xvii. 4

ced in favour of the *leading* articles of his scheme. The design is, *only* to give the outlines—to notice the principal doctrines and duties of that system of truth, to which he bore witness—to adduce such evidence, as may be deemed necessary; and then, to make some remarks and reflections.

THE principal doctrines and duties, which Christ preached, were these which follow.

HE taught the *unity of the God-head*—that there is but one God. He ever spoke of God, and to him, in the singular number. He recited, with evident design and approbation, those expressions of Moses; “Thou shalt worship *the Lord thy God*, and *him only* shalt thou serve.”* And, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.”† On another occasion, he said, “There is none good, but ONE, that is GOD.‡”

IN the mean time, and in perfect consistence with the unity of God, he taught the *doctrine of the Trinity*—that this *one God* subsisteth in a manner, to us mysterious, in *three persons*, who are one and the same in essence and glory. This is evident from what he said, with regard to each person in the God-head. That he taught the divinity of the Father, no one will doubt; and that he insisted on his own divinity, as one with the Father, is fully testified, by the following words; “I and the Father are one”—“Before Abraham was, I AM.” He preached, that *all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*. He claimed to be the final judge of the world. Even his enemies were agreed in this, that he *made himself God*.§ That he taught the divinity of the Holy Ghost, is evident by comparing John iii. 5, with chapter i. 13. In the passage first referred to, are these words; Except a man be born of

* Matt. iv. 10. † Mark xii. 29 ‡ Mark x. 18. § John x. 33.

water *and of the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God: but in the other passage, are these words; Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God*. Here the same operation, which, in one place, is said to be *of the spirit*; in the other, is said to be *of God*.

FINALLY: as a lasting, decided testimony, that Christ was a believer in this doctrine, he gave direction, that baptism should ever be administered, "*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.*"

HE also held up to view, and enforced the doctrine of God's *universal providence*. He repeatedly preached on this entertaining subject, and thereby administered great consolation to his disciples. In his sermon on the mount, he called upon them to consider, that God's providential care was most minute and particular—that it extended, even to the birds of the air, and to the grass of the field. It must, therefore, extend to and encircle *all their* concerns. On another occasion, he addressed them in these words; "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father; but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."* If God's providence always decides, as to worthless sparrows, which of them shall be brought to the ground by the archer; well may we believe his providential hand to be concerned, without exception, in every event whatever.

CHRIST preached, that God was a being of unlimited, *absolute perfection*—infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness and truth; and clothed

* Matt. x. 29, 30, 31.

with almighty power. To the young man, who kneeled before him, styling him *good master*, he replied ; “ There is none good but One, that is God.†” And to his disciples he said ; “ With God, all things are possible.”§

To testify in favor of the perfection of the divine character, was the great object in view, throughout his whole ministry. This was the foundation of his whole system of preaching ; hence this was particularly foretold in the text, as what might be expected of him. “ I have not hid *thy righteousness* within my heart ; I have declared *thy faithfulness*, and *thy salvation* : I have not concealed *thy loving-kindness* and *thy truth*, from the great congregation.” That Christ testified, invariably, in favor of the *moral character* of God ; and that this was the foundation, on which his whole system was built ; will more abundantly appear, by attending to the following observation :

HE ever appeared, on all occasions, a most zealous advocate for the *Law* of God—the law of the ten commandments, in which God’s moral perfections are clearly exhibited. According to his own exposition, these ten commandments might all be included in two. “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these *two* commandments, hang all the law and the prophets.”* That he was much attached to this law, is evident, both from what he *said*, and from what he *did*. He said, “ Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets ; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.”†

† Mark x. 18. § Mark x. 29. * Matt. xxii. 37, 39, 40.
 † Matt. v. 17, 18.

His life and conduct agreed with his words. By his *obedience* to this law, he manifested his regard to its *requirements*, by his *bearing the curse*, he manifested his regard to the *penalty*. His obedience and sufferings were more than words; they exhibited the strongest possible evidence of his most cordial and invincible attachment to the law. His obedience and sufferings cast light on such prophetic declarations as these; “I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea, thy law is within my heart.”† “The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake; he will magnify the law and make it honorable.”§ In thus *preaching the law, obeying its requirements, and suffering its penalty*, Christ exhibited the most ample evidence of his intire approbation of the moral character of God, as therein displayed. As the law is a transcript of God’s moral perfection—a glass through which his real character is seen; every expression of respect to the former, is equally an expression of respect to the latter.

In this connection, it may be observed, that Christ preached the doctrine of *disinterested goodness*. It was, evidently, his idea, that this is the love which the law requires. In his sermon on the mount, stating the nature of that love enjoined by the law, he urged, that it was essentially different from the love, which sinners naturally have one for another—that it was of a nature, *pure and impartial*. “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.”¶ All this is urged, as an imitation of the divine character.—“*That ye may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven:*” clearly intimating, that, aside from this, they could

† Psalm xl. 8. § Isaiah xlii. 21. ¶ Matt. v. 44.

not be God's children. This is a most striking method, not only to teach us what holiness is; but, also, to urge upon us the necessity of it. This was the love, which Christ himself exercised. "For even Christ pleased not himself."|| This, and no other, was the love that he ever inculcated, both by precept and example. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."*

As these were Christ's views of the divine law, and of the nature of that love and obedience, which it enjoined; so, it was fully his opinion, that *the penalty of the law was most justly due to the transgressor*. Certainly, had not Christ thus viewed the matter, he would have been willing that *some part of the law should pass*, without being fulfilled. Had he not thus viewed the matter, he would never have consented to bear the curse in our stead. Had not this been our case, there would have been no call, no occasion for his death. If we had not deserved the penalty threatened, it could not have been inflicted on us, though Christ had never died. That Christ considered mankind as utterly ruined, and *justly exposed* to the curse, appears from the following expressions; "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous; but *sinners* to repentance."† "For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."‡

FURTHER. IT was the opinion of Christ, not only, that it was *just*; but that it was *altogether desirable*, and even *necessary*, that the curse of the law should be inflicted on every transgressor; unless, in some other way, a proper testimony were borne against sin, and the honour of the divine authority and government were supported. Noth-

|| Rom. xv. 3. * John xv. 12. † Matt. ix. 12, 13. ‡ Matt. xviii. 11.

ing appears, but that Christ considered it to be as necessary to support the *penal* part of the law, as the *preceptive* part of it. To discharge from the penalty, would, in effect, be, to discharge from the precept; and to do either, would be an encouragement to wickedness. It cannot be conceived, that Christ would have so readily consented to be a substitute, to suffer in the room of sinners; had he not viewed it to be *necessary*. He said, on a certain occasion, “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the son of man be lifted up.”* And his prayer in the garden, with its attendant circumstances, clearly suggested, that it was *not possible* for the cup to pass.

FURTHERMORE. CHRIST considered the *atonement*, which was made by his *death*, in which the highest testimony was borne against sin, as *abundantly sufficient for the whole world*. The parable of the marriage supper, and various things in the gospel testify to this. In conformity to this idea, Christ offered eternal life, indiscriminately, to all: he invited and urged all to a compliance with the gospel. He gave public notice, that none who came, should be cast out. “Him that cometh unto me, I will, in no wise, cast out.”† “Come unto me, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden*, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me—and ye shall find rest to your souls.”‡ “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, *If any man thirst*, let him come unto me and drink.”§ “He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst.”||

WHILE Christ thus preached the *sufficiency of the atonement*, he was very careful to state the

* John iii. 14. † John vi. 37. ‡ Matt. xi. 28, 29. § John vii. 37.
|| John vi. 35.

terms necessary to an interest in it. This leads us to observe,

THAT he ever taught *the necessity of repentance and faith*. As to the nature of that repentance, which Christ insisted on, no controversy can arise, if his views of the character, law and government of God be properly kept in mind. It is apparent, that Christ saw nothing amiss in the divine character, or severe in the divine law and government. He well knew, that God had never said or done any thing amiss, or to the injury of any creature : that there was no just ground for the least uneasiness. Hence the nature and import of that repentance to which Christ called sinners, may, easily, be ascertained. It implies *just views of God, of his law, and of their own conduct ; and the exercise of answerable affections*. Christ evidently viewed this as most reasonable : he knew it to be absolutely necessary to salvation ; and that sinners could not, consistently, object against it. He, therefore, treated their excuses as vain, and abundantly urged the duty upon them. The very first direction that he ever gave to the people was, that they should repent. “ The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand ; repent ye, and believe the gospel.” † He told his hearers, after this, that one main object in view, in his coming into the world, was, to call sinners to repentance. ‡ Observing that many disregarded his calls, even where most of his mighty works were done ; he bore the most pointed testimony against them. “ Then began he to upbraid the cities, wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not.” * On another occasion, he expressed himself thus ; “ except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.” And, as though the

† Mark. i. 15.

‡ Mat. ix. 13.

* Mat. xi. 22.

duty never could be sufficiently urged, he sent forth his disciples, further to enforce it wherever they went. “*And they went out and preached that men should repent.*”†

As to the nature of that *faith*, which Christ preached, as being necessary to pardon and acceptance with God, no one can justly suppose any thing less intended by it, than a hearty reception of his testimony—a cordial approbation of his character, atonement, and scheme of doctrines. Not to come into Christ’s sentiments—not to approve of salvation through his atonement, is not to embrace the gospel, but to reject it. That Christ dwelt much, in his preaching, on the necessity and importance of faith, is well known to all who have ever read his history, his sermons or occasional discourses. When the Jews put the question to him; “what shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” He answered, “this is the work of God, that ye *believe* on him, whom he hath sent.”‡ “He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.”§ “He that believeth on him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already.”|| “*If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*” In this manner Christ taught the importance of evangelical faith.

BUT though Christ considered repentance and faith, as being absolutely necessary to salvation; yet he always maintained the doctrine of *forgiveness and salvation*, not on account of these; but *only on account of his own blood and sufferings*. Christ ever treated repentance and faith, as indispensable duties; but not as duties, which made any reparation for their sins. He taught his disciples to acknowledge, however great their religious attainments might be, even though they

† Mark vi. 12. ‡ John vi. 28. 29.
§ Mark xvi. 16. || John viii. 24.

should comply with every thing required of them, that they were *unprofitable servants*, that they had done that which was their *duty* to do.* That Christ grounded all hope, even for *true believers*, on his own sufferings upon the cross, appears from his own words. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the son of man be lifted up, *that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life.*"† Here it is intimated, that *believing* in Christ would be of no avail, aside from his bearing the curse. Again. "For even the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."‡ This shows, that without the death of Christ, there could have been no ransom. Similar to the fore cited passages, are these words: "thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins be preached in his name."§ Remission of sins in his name, could never have been obtained, or consistently preached; had he not suffered the curse of the law in the place and stead of the transgressor; and had not his sufferings been *necessary* to remission and salvation. Let it now be added, that,

It was a sentiment, greatly urged by Christ, that *mankind are inexcusably criminal, in refusing to comply with gospel offers*. His words are these: "he that believeth not is condemned already, *because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God.*"§ If men were excusable for their unbelief, why should they be condemned for it? Why should Christ say, "they have no cloak for their sin?" Why should he upbraid them, because they repented not? In short, why should he address them, on all occasions, as though they

* Luke xvii. 10. † John iii. 14, 15. ‡ Mark x. 45.

§ Luke xxiv. 46, 47. § John iii. 18.

were inexcusable? The common plea arising from the creature's *dependence and inability*, Christ often anticipated, by stating the nature of this inability. The plea, in his view, was of no weight. The ground, on which he fixed criminality, is this, that the sinner is voluntary and free, in his rejection of gospel offers. "Ye *will not* come to me, that ye might have life."† "How often would I have gathered thy children together—and *ye would not*?"‡ Christ ever treated impenitent sinners, as rational, moral agents; and as accountable for their conduct, even for their internal moral character and affections. He ever addressed them, as though he confided in it, that common sense would dictate to every man's conscience, *his own freedom* and leave him, in his own view, wholly inexcusable in non-compliance with gospel offers. This would, most certainly, be the case, were mankind, by nature, possessed of the least degree of true candour and honesty of heart. They have, doubtless, discernment enough, were it not for their *hatred of the light*, to see and know, that there can be no plea of any weight, for continuing in sin. Were there any thing severe or ungenerous on God's part; or were there any thing criminal and destructive to the true honour and best interest of man, in complying with the gospel, this would furnish a sufficient objection: but as nothing of this can be pretended, it is clear, that every thing advanced by the sinner, to keep himself in countenance, is an evidence against him, leading to the conclusion, that *he is utterly void of all moral goodness*.

THIS, again, is *another* doctrine which Christ preached; that mankind are, by nature, **TOTALLY DEPRAVED IN HEART**. He considered the impenitent, not only, as opposed, *in some degree*,

† John v. 40.

‡ Mat. xxiii. 37.

to the moral character and law of God, to his own character, and to the gospel; but as being at enmity against the *whole*—as unconquerable, by any moral suasion or external means whatever. As a decisive testimony against the Jews, that they were totally void of all moral goodness, he brought up to view their treatment of him. “Ye have not his word abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.”* That any should be full of unbelief and enmity against Jesus Christ, is perfectly inconsistent with the smallest measure of true godliness. Christ promised eternal life to all, who should possess the least degree of true friendship to *him*—to all who could so much as give a cup of water in his name; and yet, he told his hearers, that but few of them would be saved. By this, it is evident, that he viewed the impenitent as being his total enemies—totally void of that love which he enjoined. Instead of possessing any measure of his own spirit; he told them, that they were of their father, the devil, and the lusts of their father they would do.† He told them, that he *knew* they had no goodness. “I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.”‡ This was the idea, conveyed in the observation to Nicodemus; “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.”§ It was on this ground, and this *only*, that,

CHRIST taught *the necessity of the new birth*; or of a change of heart, by the special influences of the spirit of God. Christ well knew, that if mankind were disposed to comply with their duty, or if any thing less than divine power could induce them to it, this would not be necessary. But he saw that nothing short of this could do it. Accordingly, in his conference with Nicodemus, he stated the doctrine. “Verily, verily, I say un-

* John v. 38. † John viii. 44. ‡ John v. 42. § John iii. 6.

to thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* Nicodemus was confounded. Christ informed him that there was no occasion for his astonishment. “Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.”† He afterwards, brought the subject again into view, and referred to the old testament for proof. “No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: as it is written *in the prophets*, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”‡ These things being so, it is natural to suppose,

FURTHER; Christ was an advocate for the doctrine of *Divine Sovereignty*. If the obstinacy of the human heart be such, as not to be overcome by any thing less than the special influences of the Divine Spirit, it will follow of course, that God may have mercy on whom he will have mercy—that he must view himself at perfect liberty to bestow or withhold special favour, as shall appear most wise and desirable in his own sight. It was on this ground, that Christ taught his disciples to pray; as appears in what is called the Lord’s prayer. The ground of prayer is there stated in these words; “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.”§ It was in view of God’s wise and holy sovereignty, that Christ is said, at a certain time to have rejoiced. “In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said; 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: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”** For further evidence that Christ maintained the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, even at the risk of his life, I shall only rehearse a brief discourse, which he de-

* John iii. 3.
§ Mat. vi. 13.

† John iii. 7.
** Luke x. 21.

‡ John vi. 44, 45.

livered at Nazareth. "But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel, in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land: but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel, in the time of Elifeus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong."† This Christ expected, and yet he preached the doctrine.

In perfect agreement with the sentiments already stated, let it be further observed, that Christ preached the doctrine of *election*. This doctrine, in a more general view, reveals God's purpose of pardon and salvation to some of mankind. The coming of Christ into the world to save sinners, and the promises made to him, that he *should have a seed to serve him*, and that he *should see of the travail of his soul*, suppose and imply a *purpose* of this nature. The doctrine, in a more particular view of it, supposes a *certain number*, selected and chosen of God, to be the subjects of this salvation. That Christ thus viewed the matter, abundantly appears, from a great variety of observations, which he made on the subject. He said thus; "Many are called but few chosen."† To his disciples, after he had acknowledged their cordial friendship, he expressed himself thus; "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit."|| Again; "I have chosen you out of the world; therefore the world hateth you."§ He

† Luke iv. 25—29. † Matt. xx. 16. || John xv. 14.

§ John xv. 19.

noticed God's shortning the days of the calamity of the Jews, for the *elect's sake*, whom he had chosen, or *elect*ed. || And he spoke of the *elect*, as those whom the Father had given him, and who were to share in his salvation. "All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." ¶ He also spoke of them as those, for whom, in a special and peculiar sense, he laid down his life. "I lay down my life for the sheep."* And as those who would not be seduced; and whom God would *avenge*. He considered them as the people whom the angels would gather together from the four winds. He often brought the subject into view, not only in his preaching, but also in his prayers. In a certain address to the Father, he hath these words; "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word. I pray for them: I pray not for the world; but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine."† This is a doctrine, peculiarly precious and dear to all the friends of Christ. This is the doctrine, which affords ground of hope, in the case of awakened, convinced sinners, whose eyes are open. That God intends mercy for some, and that he will bestow it on whom he will, must be a blessed and supporting truth to *such*. This must prove their last resort, their only sure support against despair.

How strange it is, that the human kind, who have destroyed themselves, and who wish to be comfortable and happy after death, should so generally as they do, *contend and cavil* against the *only* doctrine, which affords them the least encouragement to hope that this may ever be their portion!

|| Mark xiii. 20. ¶ John vi. 37. * John x. 15. † John xvii. 4—9.

The Religious Sentiments of CHRIST.

S E R M O N II.

PSALM XL. 9, 10.

I have preached righteousness in the great congregation ; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart ; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation : I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth, from the great congregation.

THAT these words have an ultimate reference to Christ, and are a prophecy of what his preaching would be, hath been made to appear from scripture evidence.

THE design of these discourses, which is, *To exhibit the leading doctrines and duties which Christ preached*, hath been, in part, executed. Without any further preamble, we proceed to observe,

THAT the doctrine of the *saint's perseverance* was a favorite doctrine with Christ. From the observations, which have been already made, with regard to the leading doctrines of Christ's scheme, it would be natural to conclude, had little or nothing been said upon it, that he must have been

a friend to this doctrine. The least candid attention will satisfy any mind, that this is a doctrine, which must either stand or fall with the rest. It would be very extraordinary indeed, for any one to believe that God should promise Christ a seed to serve him, and that he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; and that Christ should undertake the great work of redemption, and suffer on the cross; that he should send the spirit to awaken, convince, and even to convert sinners; and yet, after all, as the case might prove, *no flesh should be saved*. But it was not Christ's pleasure to secrete his own views of the matter. His words are, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *bath everlasting life*, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."* He observed to his disciples, thus; "It is not the will of my father which is in heaven, that one of these *little ones* should perish."† He said that he never should disown any one, in the coming world, whom he had known to be his friend in this world—that none should be finally rejected, except those to whom the judge could say, "I never knew you."‡ With regard to his sheep, for whom he tells us that he laid down his life, he expresses himself thus; "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."|| Here Christ declares, that he gives his people a life which shall never end; and that they shall *never perish*—that none shall pluck them out

* John v. 24. † Mat. xviii. 14. ‡ Mat. vii. 23. || John x. 27.

of his hand ; and it is fairly implied, that they shall never pluck themselves out of his hand. For if they should, it could not be said, with truth ; “ They shall never perish.” Christ’s intercession for his followers is a further, and decisive argument of their final perseverance. For he tells us, expressly, that the father always hears him. § Finally, to fix the idea forever, that true believers in him should never perish, he gave his disciples to understand, that their perseverance was as sure, and as infallible as his own. If he failed, they might fail ; but not otherwise : “ Because I live, ye shall live also.”*

It was the opinion of Christ, that the christian’s perseverance did not depend on his *own* stability ; but on grace derived from him—“ As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”† Knowing, therefore, his own power to protect them, and that it would be his pleasure to do it ; he felt most safe in saying, that *they should never perish.*

It may be proper here to subjoin, that Christ was a remarkable advocate for *the use of means.* Many there are, who have questioned the propriety or importance of means, unless the preceding doctrines were to be set aside. But it is abundantly evident, that Christ viewed religious instruction, and a careful attention to it, to be unspeakably important ; and on this very ground, that the doctrines which have been stated were true.

He supposed that the awakening, conviction and conversion of sinners, and the perseverance and final salvation of believers, were all brought to pass in a way of attendance on means ; and could not, ordinarily, be effected in any other way.

§ John xi. 42.

* John xiv. 19.

† John xv. 4.

HAD he not thus viewed the matter, it cannot be accounted for, that, at the risk of his own life and the lives of his friends, he should so exert himself as he did, on all occasions, in preaching those very doctrines in all congregations, small and great ; or that he should send out the twelve, and then the seventy, to preach the same doctrines wherever they went. His calling on the people to attend and *search the scriptures*, and the solemn charge which he gave to his disciples, “ Goye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” decidedly exhibit what his views were, with regard to the necessity and importance of attention to means.

IN addition to all the foregoing observations on the doctrinal topicks of Christ’s preaching, it ought also to be well considered, that he preached a *singular system of MORALITY*. He taught and urged maxims, very diverse from those which are to be found in any other writings, unless borrowed from him ; or from the holy scriptures.

WHO would ever have imagined, had not Christ informed the world, that the way to conquer is to *yield* ?—that, in order to strike an enemy through and lay him prostrate, we must *turn the other cheek* ?*—that we must die to save life, and live by losing life ? †—that the way to exaltation and honour, is to humble ourselves ?—and the way to outshine all others in glory, is to become the *least of all and servant of all* ? ‡ How very diverse are such like maxims from those which are wont to influence and govern the world ; and even from those which are adopted by wise men and philosophers ! Christ opposed all partial, selfish affections, either towards the Deity, ourselves or others—To respect either God or men, mere-

* Mat. v, 39, 40.

† Mark. viii, 35.

‡ Mat. xx, 26.

ly from the consideration of some supposed partial fondness in them for *us* ; or in the view, that they may prove subservient to some private, separate interest of *our own*, he considered as evidence against us, that we are void of all moral goodness. He also bore testimony against a *life and conduct*, which would be, in any respect, the fruit of such a temper. “ If ye love them which love you, “ what reward have ye ? do not even the publicans the same ?”* He even contended against our having any private interest of our own. “ If any any man will come after me, let him deny himself—For whosoever will save his life shall loose it.”† He taught that we ought to view all characters and things as being what they are, and to treat them accordingly—that our whole deportment and behaviour, both towards God and men, as well as towards ourselves, ought to be a practical compliance with the great law of love—expressive of the most pure and impartial goodness.

If any wish to inform themselves more fully, with respect to that system of morality which Christ inculcated, let them attend, particularly, to his sermon on the mount,‡ to his conference with the lawyer,|| to his interview with the young man,§ and to the chief of John’s gospel. The directions and moral precepts which Christ gave to men, are evidently, as singular and extraordinary as the doctrines which he preached ; and though neither of them can be made to agree with any other system ; yet they perfectly harmonize with each other.

It cannot be amiss, in connection with what has been offered, further to observe, *Christ taught that there would be a sensible state of existence, im-*

* Mat. v, 46. † Mark. viii, 34, 35. ‡ Mat. 5, 6 and 7th chapters. || Mat. xxii. § Mark. x.

mediately after death. This is plain from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; ¶ and from what he said to the penitent thief—"To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." This leads us to conclude, that

HE held to the immortality of the soul. This may also be gathered from the promises made to believers, of endless felicity in heaven; and from the threatnings of endless misery against impenitent sinners. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."*

WITH regard to the doctrine of the *resurrection*, he expressed himself thus; "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice; and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life: and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."†

JESUS CHRIST was, also, particular on the doctrine of a *future judgment*. Any one, who hath ever noticed his memorable discourse on this subject, in the 25th of Matthew, and other occasional observations, which, at one time and another, fell from his lips, must be sensible, that in a future day, "The son of man will come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; and that he will then sit on the throne of his glory, and before him will be gathered all nations." They must also be sensible, that *for every idle word that men shall speak* they shall give account in that day.‡ We have only to add, that

HE was also particular, with regard to the consequences of such a day. He abundantly held up to view the great and interesting doctrine of endless rewards and punishments. He declared that

¶ Luke xvi * Matt. xxv. 46. † John v. 28, 29. ‡ Matt. xii. 36.

the righteous should *enter into peace*, that they should *enter into his joy*; and inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. But, on the contrary, that the wicked should be rejected—that they should be sent, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; || where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. § Thus every thing will become fixed and permanent for eternity; as is represented in Abraham's address to the rich man in hell; "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."*

THUS preached the great prophet and Saviour of men—the faithful and true witness.

SOME there are, who are ready to acknowledge themselves convinced, that such, in fact, were Christ's religious sentiments, as have now been stated; but after all, they are unable to see their consistence. They observe that Christ was wont to address men, as though he viewed them rational and accountable—moral agents—capable of observing and obeying his precepts. Accordingly, he promised life to the obedient, and threatened death to the disobedient: And yet, in the midst of all this, they observe that Christ himself, on a certain occasion, said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him;" and on another occasion, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." They further observe, that Christ taught the doctrine of divine sovereignty and personal election to grace and salvation: and hence are ready to enquire, how can these things consistently

|| Matt. xxv. 34—41. § Mark ix. 44. * Luke xvi. 26.

be? Let it here be asked, where lies the inconsistency? What is it that confounds us? If, in fact, it be right, and be our duty to hear and regard Christ's counsels, may we not, with propriety, be addressed and exhorted on the subject? If, in fact, we *are* rational creatures and moral agents, may we not be treated as such? But what if it should come to pass, that, through mere perverseness of heart, we should refuse to act as such? And what if this perverseness of our hearts should rise to such a height, as to be absolutely unconquerable, by any arguments that can be used with us?—by any thing short of divine power? Should we not, in this case, stand in need of being *drawn of the Father*?—of being *born again*? And if the case be so with us, may not God have mercy on whom he will? Let those who are stumbling here, where there is nothing at which to stumble, turn their attention to the parable in the beginning of the xxii. chapter of Matthew's gospel. This parable of the marriage of the king's son sets forth the voluntary obstinacy of all, as the sole reason why they reject the gospel. "*They would not come.*" They took upon them to persecute and slay the servants of the king, who kindly invited them to the wedding. At which, the king's wrath arose, he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city. The truth of the matter is, it is not owing to real inconsistency in the christian scheme, that it is not received; or that it appears inconsistent to us. We are addressed as rational, accountable creatures; but we refuse to hear. "*Ye will not come unto me.*" *This* it is which renders it necessary that we should be drawn of the Father. If we cannot see the consistency of these things, it is because we overlook, or by some means, loose sight of that, on which the connection and agreement depend.

Let us keep in view the natural enmity of our hearts to God's real character, law and grace—the extreme, voluntary opposition of our souls to all true goodness; and the seeming inconsistency, which may be supposed to belong to the doctrines of the gospel will, at once, vanish.

IN reviewing the subject, we shall be led to the following *remarks and conclusions*.

I. CHRIST was a very *peculiar preacher*—singular, in his doctrines and precepts—in his manner of address, he was, no doubt very diverse from the Jewish scribes. “*He spake as one having authority*”—as the Lord from heaven. It is probable, that he was a very plain, striking, intelligible, and pathetic preacher: hence it was reported of him, “Never man spake like this man.” To his disciples, he preached the most consoling truths that tongue could utter. Let any one notice his sermon on the mount, and especially his endearing conferences and discourses in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John, as specimens. On the other hand, he thundered in the ears of his enemies, truths most awful and alarming. He exceeded all men, in laying hell naked before his hearers, and stripping destruction of its covering. He brought up more light, respecting the future punishment of sin, than had ever been published in four thousand years. He really preached the greatest terror, of which the human mind can form any conception. He not only taught that all men, by nature, were total enemies to God; but, that *continuing such*, they would perish forever. He not only taught that they *would continue such*, if left to themselves; but, that God was under no kind of obligation to any of them, ever to interpose for them. He not only taught that God was under no obliga-

tion to interpose for them ; but, that, as a general thing, it was *not his design* to do it. This was the idea suggested in that expression of Christ, “ Many are called, but few are chosen.” To the man, who put the question, “ Are there few that shall be saved ?” he readily answered ; “ Strive to enter in at the straight gate ; for many I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”* Again : † “ Straight is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and *few there be* that find it.” On the whole, the terror which Christ preached was so great, so overwhelming, that his impenitent hearers must have seen and realized, had they believed him, that they lay exposed, from one moment to another, to be sent to instant and endless distress : and that, unless infinite, sovereign grace should soon appear for them, this would, unavoidably, be their portion.

IN the mean time, he testified against some of the most shining characters, in the view of the people—against the most zealous and self-confident pretenders to religion. He told them to their faces, that their hopes were false—that they were but mere hypocrites, on their way to destruction.

2. THE subject will assist us in solving an enquiry, which to many, hath appeared unanswerable ; and that is, why Christ, so soon and so singularly, suffered from the hands of men ? The *seventy* weeks of Daniel were now fulfilled—a general expectation had prevailed among the people, that about this time, the promised Messiah would make his appearance—he, in fact, made his appearance, in exact conformity to the predictions concerning him : *Why*, therefore, was he not received ? Why was he persecuted to death ?—

* Luke xiii. 24. † Matt. vii. 13.

and to a death, the most ignominious? The answer, in the light of our subject, is plain and easy. There were two things, which tended peculiarly to exasperate the people. They found that he greatly differed from them, in religious sentiments; and that he held this difference to be essential to salvation. So far as they understood his scheme, they had a very unfavourable opinion of it; but, after all, had he not made it essential to salvation, they might, more easily, have borne with it. Had he allowed it to be immaterial what men's principles were, had he embraced all, *with equal charity*, this would have had its effects. He might have gained favour among the people. But when they found that he considered all characters as impious, and void of real goodness; and indeed, exposed to hell fire, unless they embraced his creed; they were, at once, out of all patience with him. In short, when we consider what human nature is; how proud, how irritable and outrageous; we shall find more reason to wonder why they bore with him so long, than why they were so hasty in putting him to death.

3. THE subject affords abundant evidence of the truth and divine original of the scriptures. That the bible is from God, that Christ was a strenuous advocate for divine revelation, appears in various ways. Instead of faulting the Jews, for receiving the scriptures as divine, he said many things to establish them still the more in this belief. From the old testament, he often collected proofs of what he advanced. He preached, in a most illustrious manner, the law of the two tables, given at Mount Sinai, and the doctrines of the prophets. It was no uncommon thing with him to observe, that *thus it is written*; and to remark, as events took place at one time and another, that they came to pass, *that the scriptures*

might be fulfilled. It appears to have been a grand object with him, throughout his whole ministry, to throw light on the scriptures ; to open and explain their true meaning ; and urge their importance. He appeared most perfectly to understand every passage, and brought up sentiments from them, which the most learned Jews had never discovered. And his life was a life of perfect conformity to them. He set an example of that holy conformity to the law of God, which he urged from the scriptures. So far, therefore, as his testimony is to be regarded, when attended with all the force of example, the scriptures stand supported as a revelation from God.

BESIDES, the scheme of doctrines contained in the scriptures, as exhibited by Christ, affords us further evidence in their favour. A scheme more crossing to the human heart, in its depraved state, never was, or can be contrived or conceived of. Nothing ever known or heard of has given equal anxiety and disturbance to this wicked world. The friends of Christ may, doubtless, remember the day, when their distress and anguish, occasioned by an overbearing conviction of the truth and reality of the leading doctrines of the scriptures, were such as nothing else could occasion. They can therefore bear witness to the truth of the Apostle's assertion ; " For the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* Such a system evidently speaks for itself, whether it be from heaven or of men.

THE impossibility of the existence of such a

* Heb. iv. 12, 13.

book as the bible, on any other supposition, is also a striking evidence that it is from God. It is very certain that no created beings, of virtuous characters, either angels or men, ever formed or wrote it, unless employed of God. Faggots and flames could never have brought them to it. And it is equally certain, that no beings of vicious characters were ever the contrivers or writers of it. They cannot bear with it since it is written. It opposes and condemns their sentiments, feelings and inclinations; and yet it exists, and must have had a cause. Let some one inform the world from whence the bible originated: otherwise, let it be acknowledged to be from him, from whom are all things.

4. THERE is but one system of religious sentiments contained in the bible—but one system that has the least countenance from it. Our subject has confined us chiefly to the four Evangelists; but in stating Christ's sentiments, we have in effect, a statement of all the leading doctrines, both of the old and new Testaments. Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles were all advocates for the same doctrines and duties, for substance, which Christ himself preached. The Jews, it is true, accused Christ of disagreeing with Moses; but the charge was, evidently, without foundation. Christ repeatedly gave them to understand, that Moses thought as he himself did. "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"* Every one who is acquainted with the writings of the Apostles, must know, that in every essential

* John v. 45, 46, 47.

point, they thought and preached exactly as Christ did. By him, they were commissioned, and they faithfully taught the doctrines, which he gave them in charge to teach. Thus Moses and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles all concur in the same religious sentiments; and there is but one system in the bible.

5. WE hence infer, that all those different schemes of religion, which in one age or another, have been contended for, if they essentially differ from the system which Christ preached, are worthless and vain. Any man would be much more consistent, wholly to reject divine revelation, than to pretend to believe in it, and yet to fasten upon it a scheme of doctrines, with which it never had any concern, and which it utterly refuses to own. In other words; it is more consistent to reject divine revelation, than to reject the peculiar system of doctrines, taught by the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is really somewhat extraordinary, that men should discover, in their own imaginations, so many different and contradictory schemes in the bible; none of which are to be found there; and yet, that they should so easily overlook the only scheme that it contains. This affords strong evidence of the truth of our Lord's observation, that "Every one that doth evil, hateth the light."*

6. WE are instructed, in this subject, what is the scheme of doctrines, and what is the system of duties, which the true church of God have ever embraced and ever will embrace. If it can be decided, what Christ's religious sentiments were, then it can be determined what that scheme is, to which the true church have always adhered. By this, we are to distinguish between true and false churches, as well as between true and false

* John iii. 20.

professors of religion. "He that is of God, heareth God's words."† "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."‡ Again; "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me." To be a christian, and to believe the doctrines and do the duties which he taught, are certainly one and the same thing. To suppose and say that Christ and his followers might essentially disagree in their views and sentiments, is expressly to contradict what he said to Pilate. "Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice."*

7. IT is very reproachful, as well as criminal, for those who live under gospel light to remain ignorant of the distinguishing doctrines and duties of the christian religion. Had no revelation ever been given, or were mankind in general of such weak capacities, as to be incapable of understanding it, it would not be expected of them. But as things are now circumstanced, we must be inexcusable for our ignorance. It must be owing to nothing but wicked prejudice and blindness of heart; according to the words of the Apostle. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts."||

IT is acknowledged, that the whole system of essential doctrines of the gospel is no where, in the scriptures, collected together, arranged and set before us, in the form of a creed. We cannot see at once, without any search or enquiry, what all the sentiments of Christ are. Infinite wisdom hath not judged this advisable; but rather, that they should lie scattered, in one place and another, to

† John viii. 47. ‡ John viii. 31, 32. * John xviii. 47.
|| Eph. iv. 18.

be fought for, and searched out diligently: **SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.*** We attain to the knowledge of no art or science, without application: and it is best for us, that application and diligence be called forth on all lawful occasions. Indolence is a bane of human nature. But the religious sentiments of Christ, or the scheme of doctrines in the holy scriptures is, by no means, so concealed as not to be discoverable, even by weak capacities. They lie open to the view of every honest, candid mind. The humble enquirer searches not in vain. He may easily collect, arrange and compare the main principles of christianity. The Jews wondered at Christ, how he should know letters, having never learned. Jesus answered them and said, "my doctrine is not mine; but his that sent me. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine*, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."†

8. IT is a matter of great importance, that the real truths of the gospel be distinguishingly preached, and constantly urged and enforced. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"† There is nothing so calculated to impress the minds of men with serious thoughtfulness, and to excite attention to eternal concerns, as the truths of God's word. "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails." The religious sentiments which Christ advanced are very diverse from all theories of human wisdom; they will either wound or heal—*prove a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death.* They are a source of endless comfort, or the occasion of endless trouble and aggravated woe. Hence, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; but he that hath my word,

* John v. 39.

† John vii. 16, 17.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 8.

let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?"† In such a day as the present, while infidelity is increasing, while error is spreading, while souls are perishing; let such as know and love the truth, not shun to declare and defend it. Let it be the endeavor of all the friends of Christ, and especially, of his ambassadors, who are set for the defence of the gospel, to inculcate all the plain, pungent, humiliating doctrines and precepts, which were taught by Jesus Christ, the great preacher of righteousness.

9. If such were the sentiments which Christ preached, as have been stated and explained, and if it be thus important, that they be clearly exhibited; what opinion must we form of those who profess to be Christ's ministers, specially called and sent forth by him to preach his gospel; who openly oppose and preach down those sentiments—who level all their strength against those very doctrines, in defence of which Christ lost his life?—who utterly reject his views of the *divine character*, as well as of the character of man—who discard the idea of the total depravity of the heart—the necessity of the special influences of the divine spirit to renew it—who deny God's sovereignty and purposes of special, distinguishing mercy—his electing love, and the certain perseverance of his people; and who, in effect, discard all the leading doctrines of his whole scheme? What opinion must we entertain of those, who preach for doctrines the very sentiments which, throughout his whole ministry, Christ opposed and confronted? Can such expect, hereafter, to be greeted with "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord?" They cer-

† Jer. xxiii 28.

tainly cannot. We must conclude that such are false Apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ.* Hence we find a number of solemn exhortations to beware of such teachers, intimating that they would multiply and greatly endanger the flock of Christ. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps clothing; but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits."† "Beware, lest any man spoil you, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."‡ "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds."§

NOTHING now remains, but to close the subject, with a short address; first to the friends of Christ, and lastly to his enemies.

SUCH of you as were *sometimes darknefs, but now are light in the Lord—sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind, by wicked works; but now reconciled by the power of God*; may do well to remember, that you were then, *like the horse or the mule, having no understanding*—"Children of wrath, even as others"—"Sinners of the Gentiles"—"That at that time, ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."|| You concerned not yourselves what Christ preached, nor what you believed or disbe-

* 2 Cor. xi. 13. † Mat. vii. 15. ‡ Col. ii. 8.

§ 2 John 9, 10, 11. || Eph. ii. 12.

lieved. You have, every day, numerous glasses held up before your eyes, in which you may see your former characters. You now consider the impenitent as objects of pity, as well as subjects of guilt and condemnation. Your hearts ache and grieve and bleed for them, while you behold their stupidity. Had God been as regardless of your welfare, as you then were of his glory, or of the good of your own souls, you might have been, at this day, objects of equal pity and astonishment with the vilest and most abandoned of men. "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."* "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."† Ye who can, with humble hearts, apply these scriptures to yourselves, have become the friends and followers of Jesus Christ. You know his voice—you partake of his spirit, and enter into his sentiments and feelings. O remember! "You are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are Gods."‡ "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."§ Forever acknowledge this—let your conversation and lives testify your conviction of it. Be wholly the Lord's—*Contend earnestly for the faith*; and ever pity and pray for poor, dying sinners.

ONE word to such. Be intreated to realize, that there is but one path which leads to glory—that it is, therefore, worse than loss of time to search for any other. Christ is *the way, and the truth, and the life*; and *other foundation can no man lay*. There is, therefore, no other alternative for you, but either to embrace his gospel, cordi-

* Eph. ii. 4, 5. † 2 Cor. v. 18. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 20. § Eph. ii. 8.

ally, or else to die in your sins. *He that believeth not shall be damned.* In this view, your present situation is truly affecting and alarming. For you are rapidly proceeding from bad to worse—you are *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath*—making proficiency in rebellion against God, and in opposition to Jesus Christ. Your case is hopeless, except from the infinite and sovereign mercy of God, whose long-suffering and patience you are constantly abusing.

HAD you a realizing and abiding sense of these things, you would never have another moment's peace, while unreconciled to God, and opposed to the gospel: and indeed, you must become sensible of them, or perish forever. Of what avail can it be, therefore, to cry *peace, peace*, when there is no peace? Your present inattention and carnality are the most threatening circumstances. Can you wish to sleep on the brink of ruin? Awake from your slumbers, if you would act the part of wisdom and prudence—realize your situation—take your final leave of all hope of heaven and glory; and conclude to lie down in eternal sorrow. But if you choose not to do this, if you shudder at the thoughts of the fiery billows of divine wrath, then believe and embrace the gospel—come into the sentiments of Christ—espouse his cause—devote yourselves to his service, and rest all your hopes on the boundless mercy of God, through Jesus Christ.

THAT this may be your happy choice, may God of his infinite mercy grant; and to his name shall be praises everlasting. AMEN.

The Testimony of God to the Truth of Christianity.

A SERMON, by STEPHEN WEST, D. D.
Pastor of the Church in Stockbridge.

I JOHN V. 9.

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater : for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

GOD never requireth men to believe any thing without sufficient evidence : Nor, doth he ever leave any truth, to which he demands our assent, without proper attestation. The truth, to which our text relates, is, that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*—the person appointed and set apart by the Deity, to be the Saviour of men. This is the truth to which the Apostle saith we have the witness of God. In the preceding verses he tells us that “there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost : And, that there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood.” By the *water*, and the *blood*, are, probably, intended the two sacraments of the New-Testament, Baptism and the Lord’s supper : by the *spirit*, that divine agent who formeth the hearts of men to the love of

Christ, obedience to him, and a careful observance of his institutions. So that the witness of the eternal **THREE** in heaven to this truth that *Jesus is the Christ*, is the existence of the christian church on earth. In this sense, “The church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth.”* The doctrinal observation from the words, is,

THAT the being, or existence, of true christianity on earth, is a sufficient, and an abundant, proof of its divine original.

THIS is God’s seal to the truth of the christian doctrine. The power of God accompanying gospel truth, and causing it to command the hearts and the lives of men, is his testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

BUT, that the evidence in favour of christianity, arising from its existence on earth, may appear in its true light, it will be necessary to observe the following things, viz,

I. **THE** christian system of doctrine is exceedingly diverse from all other systems whatever:— It is not only widely different from all others; but, in some respects, directly the reverse. For,

1. It requires love to enemies; and, forbids all revenge of injuries, however great may be our provocations. This is manifest from a variety of passages in the holy scriptures. Thus, Christ expressly commands, “But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.”† This agrees with what Moses required when he said, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart.”‡ And Christ teacheth that the whole of the duty required of man, is comprehended in love to God, and to our neighbour: directing that the measure

* 1 Tim. iii. 15. † Matt. v. 44. ‡ Levit. xix. 17.

of our love to ourselves, and to our neighbour, should be the same—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." § Again, Christ saith, "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again." || The same spirit and doctrine are inculcated by the Apostle where he saith, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink. ¶"

FROM hence it is manifest that the christian system of doctrine requires an affection which shall embrace all mankind; and, comprehend enemies as well as friends, the bad as really as the good, in its kind and benevolent wishes.—The affection here required is evidently a general one; having for its principal and ultimate object, a common and general interest. A law more beneficial to men, or friendly to human happiness, cannot be conceived. That the affection here required, both towards God, and towards our neighbour, is a disinterested love, cannot be denied: For, we are commanded to love our enemies, and to bless them that curse us, *that we may be like our Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.** As God exerciseth benevolent affection towards us, and doth good to us, even while we are evil and unjust, and have no friendship for him; it cannot be that we should be like him, if we do not love him with all the heart, whether we apprehend him to be angry with us, or not; or whether we suppose him to entertain saving purposes towards us, or the reverse. That we are required to ex-

§ Matt. xxii. 39. || Luke vi. 35. ¶ Rom. xii. 19, 20.
* Matt. v. 45.

ercise an affection of the same general nature towards our neighbour, cannot be questioned when we read the command to love our enemies, and do good, and lend, *hoping for nothing again*.

THAT we are here presented with a system of doctrine and morals, exceedingly different from all other systems of morals that ever appeared on earth, is very manifest; and particularly so, from the consideration that but few who professedly give their assent to christianity in general, can be prevailed on to admit that it requires a good will so generous, so disinterested, and benevolent.

2. THE christian doctrine requires self denial; and, the religion of Christ has its foundation, in the heart, in humility. Therefore Christ saith, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.— And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it."† The same sentiment was often expressed by the Saviour in his discourses to his disciples. On one occasion he made use of these strong terms, "If any man come to me, and *hate* not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."‡ That love which the christian doctrine inculcated, the apostle tells us, is a charity which *seeketh not her own*.§ Therefore he saith, "Let no man seek his own: but every man another's wealth."|| Again, "We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and *not to please ourselves*. Let

† Matt. x. 37—39. ‡ Luke, xiv. 26, 27. § 1 Cor. xiii. 5.
|| 1 Cor. x. 24.

every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself."¶ No other system of doctrine and morals recommends such humility as is required in the gospel. Christ saith to his disciples, "Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you, shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted."* To the same purpose are the words of the apostle where he saith, "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace: wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."†—The same sentiment is thus expressed by another apostle; "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."‡ Therefore it is required, "Let nothing be done through strife and vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, &c."§

It is hence evident that the christian system recommends a humility which gives self the lowest place of all—a humility which aspires to nothing higher than doing the most good to others—which seeks no other dignity than being the servant of all. It directs us to seek principally and ultimately, not the interest and good of our friends, our families, or of our country; but, the

¶ Rom. xv. 1, 2, 3.

* Matt. xxiii. 10, 11, 12.

† James iv. 5, 6, 10.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 6.

§ Philip. ii. 2, 4, 5.

good of God's whole kingdom at large,—the good of the whole intelligent system, comprehending creator and creatures ; and, that this great and general interest shall be sought in preference to any private, separate one whatever. It requires that we should be willing to sacrifice any personal interest of our own, or any private interest whatever, which stands in competition with it, to the general good—that we should love, and seek the glory and good of God's kingdom, above and before every other interest whatever ; and, that all our views and aims should be ultimately directed to this great and glorious object. Accordingly, our Saviour saith, “ But, seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”* This manifestly implies that we ought to feel friendly to God, and to the good of his kingdom, even though his wisdom and righteousness direct that, as a just punishment for our wickedness, we should be forever shut out from the enjoyment of his favour, and the blessings of his kingdom. And all this is made essential to our being received into the favour of God. For, concerning his ancient covenant people, when for their wickedness, they should be banished into foreign lands, he saith,—“ If then their uncircumcised hearts shall be humbled, and they then *accept of the punishment* of their iniquity, then will I remember my covenant, &c.”†

II. No system of doctrine gives so degrading a view of human nature, as that contained in the holy scriptures. Here mankind are represented as sunk unspeakably low into corruption and guilt ; and, so utterly ruined and undone that nothing but almighty power and infinite mercy can ever recover them. And this, we are taught,

* Matt. vi. 33. † Levit. xxvi. 41, 42.

is the case, not only with a few individuals, the most abandoned of our race—not merely in one age, or nation; but, with the whole of mankind, in every age and nation, and *that* without one single exception. The language of the holy scriptures concerning men is, “There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.”* And that this description of human nature is meant to comprehend the whole of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, is evident from the connexion in which it stands with the Apostle’s argument in the chapter in which it is contained.

Most of those things which the pride and vanity of men have dignified with the title of virtue, the scriptures represent as being, not only empty and worthless, but abominable in the sight of God: “For that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.”† The things which recommend to the esteem of men, and gain the friendship of the world, are not only, not pleasing, but hateful, in the sight of God. “Know ye not,” saith the Apostle, “that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.”‡ Accordingly, the spirit of the world has ever been opposed to

* Rom. iii. 10—18. † Luke xvi. 15. ‡ James iv. 4.

the spirit of Christ : And the apostolic prediction, “ Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution,”* has been, in a greater or less degree, fulfilled, in every age of the christian church.

THE scriptures teach us, that there is not the least disposition in the human heart to return unto God : but, that men are so obstinately opposed to the way of salvation by Christ, that all will infallibly perish unless turned by almighty power and sovereign grace. Therefore they who are entitled to the precious promises and blessings of the gospel, are represented as being “ born of the spirit ;”† and, as having been the subjects of a new creation.‡ And in this way it becomes manifest that, “ it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”§

III. It hence appears that the christian system of doctrine is not only exceedingly diverse from all others ; but, that it is a system *greatly* opposed by men, yea, *with the whole strength of the human heart*. That the heart of man is naturally opposed, and *that* with all its strength, to such a system of doctrine as this, every one will confess, who candidly attends to the feelings of his own mind. On this ground, and this only, it is that Christ saith, “ No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.”|| And, “ Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”¶ On this ground, too, it is that the Apostle asserts that “ the carnal mind is enmity against God ; and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be : and, that they who are in the flesh cannot please God.”** Hence it is that such unwearied pains are taken by many, to make it appear that no such doctrines as these

* 2 Tim. iii. 12. † John iii. 5. ‡ Ephes. ii. 10. § Rom. ix. 16.

|| John vi. 44. ¶ John iii. 3. ** Rom. viii. 7, 8.

are contained in the holy scriptures. And, for the same reason it is that others, on finding that such indeed are the doctrines of divine revelation, reject the whole as a mere human contrivance. However unaccountable it be that *men*, the feelings of whose whole souls are so thoroughly opposed to such doctrines, should, nevertheless, without a divine authority for it, ever have urged them as absolutely necessary to salvation from eternal destruction!

THE natural prejudice of the human heart against the doctrines of christianity, is the source of all the opposition which has ever been made to it in our world. Had the holy scriptures contained a system of doctrine which only required a sacrifice of weaker lusts to those which are of greater strength; and, that we should give up a less private and personal interest, for the sake of one that is greater; it would not have differed materially from other religions: but, would have been so congenial to the feelings of the human heart, as that it would have met with no opposition from men; nor, ever been persecuted by the world. But, seeing the nature of christianity is so exceedingly diverse from all other religions, it was presently discovered that it was utterly subversive of all others; and, taught that all other religions were, not only empty and worthless, but, even abominable in the sight of God. Therefore it was that, upon its general promulgation, the world of mankind presently rose up against it. Hence it is that the arts, the learning, and the arms of the world, have combined, though in vain, to suppress and root it out.

THESE things being taken into view, it cannot but appear that, if this religion do in fact exist on earth—if there be men whose hearts and lives are really brought under the power of it—it must

have been originally from heaven. And, there must have been an invifible power accompanying it, unfpeakably fuperior to all the ftrength of the natural biases of the human heart; and, to the united force of the wit, the learning, and the arms of the world. That the Bible doth ftill exift, though combated far beyond what any other book ever has been, we certainly know. That it doth, in a good meafure, command the affections and lives of fome of mankind, is irrefiftibly witnessed by the feelings and experience of, at leaft, a few: and, the evidence of its power over their hearts and lives, is vifible to candid obfervers. The facrifice which men have made of every thing which is naturally dear to them, in a caufe which is perfectly oppofed by every bias of the human heart, ought to be deemed a fufficient and valid proof of the power and commanding influence of this moft excellent religion.

THAT true christianity, a religion of real felf-denial, hath an actual exiftence on earth, in the hearts of fome, we have all the evidence that candid minds can defire. Befides the external evidence we have that this religion came from God, we have all the evidence that can juftly be required, or that the nature of the cafe will admit, of its being really fo wrought, in fome instances, into the hearts and affections of men, as to have fuperior influence to all other principles whatever. When we attend to the prejudices of human nature againft the religion of Chrift, on the one hand; and to the lives of the apoftles and firft propagators of christianity, who had every advantage to judge of the truth of thofe facts upon which they ventured to go forth and preach Jefus, and the refurrection, on the other; we find no reafon left to fcruple the reality of this religion, as being in their hearts, and the power of it over

their lives. Every evidence of that real self-denial which the christian religion requires, that the nature of the case would admit, they actually exhibited to the world. There was every evidence that could reasonably be desired, or asked for, that they in fact had the fullest and most perfect credit in those doctrines which they preached. The sacrifice they actually made of every thing dear to them in life, and of life itself, in defence of these doctrines, was, in reality, the occasion of multitudes being won over to the belief of them. This conduct in a cause which calm reason could not but approve, and to which every passion and prejudice of human nature are so strongly opposed, carried, in many cases, irresistible conviction. According to the doctrines which they taught, and upon the principles which they inculcated upon the world, they had not a single motive drawn from any private, or personal interest of their own, relating either to time, or eternity, to influence them to this conduct, and to these sacrifices:—but, on supposition of their possessing a spirit of real self-denial, the very spirit of the gospel, they had every possible motive to animate them, which can be conceived to take hold of a benevolent mind, and influence a heart which verily felt the power of that religion which they preached. Feeling those truths; and possessing that spirit, which they so zealously pressed upon others, they felt an interest at stake which was unspeakably dearer to them than life, and which was infinitely superior to any thing whatever that was merely private and personal. While, on the other hand, without the most certain and satisfactory evidence of the reality and power of that holy and benevolent religion which they taught, they could not but know, that by preaching Jesus and the resurrection, and affirming the

things which they did affirm, they actually sacrificed every interest, both for time and eternity, and *that* with not the least prospect of any thing better to themselves than the vengeance of angry heaven, and of woful disaster and disappointment to all those whom they profelyted to the belief of it. This being the case, will candour admit a doubt that the Apostles and primitive preachers of christianity, felt the power of that holy and self-denying religion which they taught to others! Can the credulousness of incredulity itself suppose it possible that men can be brought to sacrifice every thing that is dear to them in support of a known falsehood, without a prospect of any thing better, either to themselves, or others on whom they may impose, than indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish!

It will be of no avail to urge, on the other hand, that others besides the Apostles and disciples of Christ, have made a sacrifice of even life itself, in other and very different causes. Various motives may concur, and such, too, as are fitted to influence the carnal and natural heart, to espouse almost any other cause than that of real christianity;—and, when espoused, to support and defend it at the hazard of life itself. But, not so as to the religion of the Lord Jesus: for, in the first cordial embracing of this, every other interest, every thing that is dear to the carnal mind, is necessarily given up. That there should be hypocrites in this religion, and false professors of it, is not at all to be wondered. This was foretold, both by Christ himself, and by his Apostles. Where there is a true religion, it is not at all strange that there should be counterfeits. A counterfeit always supposes there is a true. But that men should counterfeit that which never was, and which, upon the principles of our op-

posers, never can be, and this at the hazard, and the loss of every thing dear to them in life, and of their eternal interest too, is what can be accounted for on no principles whatever, which were ever known to exist in human nature, and to influence it.

HENCE it appears that the evidence of the existence of real christianity on earth, cannot reasonably be disputed. There is all the evidence of this which the holy scriptures themselves teach us to look for; or, which could rationally be expected on supposition of the truth and verity of every thing contained in the sacred oracles.

THUS, is the way now prepared for us to attend more particularly to the evidence of the divine origin of christianity, arising from its existence on earth.

I. NOTHING can be more unreasonable than to suppose that such a system of religion as that contained in the holy scriptures, should ever have been invented and propagated by man.

THERE are many things pertaining to christianity which so far surpass the wisdom of men as, at once, to show that they could not have been of human invention. No man, of himself, would ever have thought of God's being manifest in flesh, and becoming a sacrifice for sin. None could have devised a way in which mercy and truth should meet together; and, righteousness and peace kiss each other.

BUT, aside from the utter absurdity of supposing these great and marvellous things to be the fruit of human device; it is perfectly contradictory to every known principle of human nature to suppose that a religion, which opposeth every bias of the human mind; and, which is resisted and opposed by the whole strength of the heart;

should have been of mere human invention. Who can imagine that *man* should ever have been the author of a religion so every way fitted to abase the pride of all hearts—a religion which ascribes that very character to God to which the heart of man is so strongly opposed ; and, which so fully yields all those claims to the Deity, which are the source of the whole controversy which men have with God ?—Who could suppose that it should ever enter into the heart of man to invent, and entertain one thought of propagating, such a religion as this ; and *that* without arms, without evidence, and without one qualification in it to recommend itself to the wishes of the heart, and to the taste of the world ! Is it supposeable that any man, or set of men, should endeavor to palma such a religion as this upon the world ; and *that* too by divine authority, and in the name of the Lord, when they knew the whole to be a gross imposition, and a most palpable forgery ; and, all this at the hazard of every thing which is dear in life ; and, then suspend their own eternal all upon its truth, subjecting themselves to the everlasting curse of God for not cordially complying with it, and embracing it as the only saving truth ! Surely it requires a much greater stretch of faith to believe this, than to give the fullest credit to christianity upon the evidence it actually hath for its support.

II. If any one of mankind be ever brought cordially to embrace this religion, and imbibe the spirit of it, it must be by the influence of a power foreign from his own, and superior to it. It cannot be denied that the hearts of men are wholly opposed to christianity ; when considered in that light in which the passages referred to, in the preceding parts of this discourse, most naturally represent it. All this opposition of heart must be

overcome before any one will embrace this religion, and rest his eternal all upon it. If, therefore, it be overcome, it must be by a power superior to that of man, operating against the whole strength of the human will and inclination; bringing man to give up, both for time and eternity, every thing that is dear to the natural heart; and, that too, for the sake of an interest to which, before, it was entirely opposed. The power which produceth such an effect as this, and *that* under such circumstances, and against such great and manifold opposition, cannot be scrupled to be divine:—We might with as much reason deny the power, which produced our natural existence, to be almighty and divine. This argument must be conclusive, if it be once admitted that the christian system of doctrine exhibits, both the character of God, and of man, in colours which are ungrateful to the human heart; and, the terms of pardon and acceptance, together with the penalty upon which we are required to comply with them, in such a light as to be resisted and repelled by the whole force of human inclination.

III. THAT such a religion as this should get footing on earth, and maintain its ground in every age, and *that* in opposition, both to the whole current of human inclination and desire, and to the united exertions of the wit, the learning, and the arms of the world—and, that it should be propagated, too, without the assistance of any external force whatever; certainly witnesseth a power above, and superior to, that of the whole world. Not even the existence of the world, the shining of the sun, the falling of the rain, and the productions of the earth, are a clearer demonstration of a divine hand, an almighty power, than this. When we consider human nature, what it

is ; and, the world of mankind, what they are, and what, in all ages they have shown themselves to be ; if we can behold christianity, such as the Bible represents it, actually existing on earth ; we have as clear and full evidence of the power and presence of God, as Moses had when he saw the bush on fire and not consumed. Such a religion, wrought into the hearts of men, and a church formed of men of this spirit, and preserved amidst all the opposition it has met with in every age ; is as striking a testimony of the presence and protection of the God of heaven, as was exhibited in Israel, of old, by the pillar of *cloud* by day and *fire* by night.

THE existence of christianity, such as the holy scriptures really represent it to be, in such a world as this, and amidst such a vast variety of great and strong opposition as is made to it ; is an effect to which nothing but an almighty power is adequate as a cause. It may be said that this is an effect which nothing but an almighty power could produce, with *at least* as much truth and propriety as, the existence and revolutions of the heavenly bodies. Let any one see, and understand, what the truths and doctrines of christianity really are—what is required of man, and upon what penalty—what the nature of the good is, which it offers, and upon what terms and with what a temper only it can be enjoyed : and, on the other hand, have a proper understanding of human nature, and of the human heart, as they really are, and are abundantly represented in the word of God : how could he but be convinced that, to bring the whole soul of man under the power and influence of *this religion*, and save sinners with *such a salvation*, as this, must of necessity be a work proper and peculiar to God.

IN the existence and preservation of a church, formed out of such materials as the christian church is formed, the Deity makes his power and glory known. This is the way in which the ETERNAL THREE in heaven do give and in every age of the christian church, have given, testimony to the truth of christianity. This is God's seal to his own holy truth, set on men's hearts :—The signature of a divine hand—a signature which proclaims its author to be divine.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. WE may, hence, learn the nature of that witness which believers have in themselves. After the apostle had mentioned the strong and remarkable testimony which is given to the truth, that *Jesus is the Christ*; he immediately adds, “ He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.” If the existence of christianity on earth be God's witness, to the world, of its divine origin; how much more convincing and irresistible will the testimony be, to him in whom Christ is formed, and on whose *heart* God has sealed the truths of his holy and excellent religion! The christian has as real evidence, in proportion to the strength of his faith and the degree of grace of which he is possessed, of having been the subject of a new creation, and of that almighty influence which the holy scriptures attribute to the divine Saviour; as he hath from his natural existence, of the being of the one eternal God. That christianity is a glorious reality, and, that Jesus is the Christ, may be as clearly inferred from the new nature which is formed in him; as the being and power of God may be, from his first and original creation.

IT cannot be unreasonable to suppose that the *moral powers*, which are by far the superior part of man, are susceptible of as clear a knowledge, as lively a sense of the perfections of the glorious God, as the mere intellectual faculty. Nor, is it to be conceived that the Deity cannot communicate the knowledge of himself to *these*, in as clear and convincing a manner, as to the other. We, all of us, know that certain perceptions, of which we are the subjects, are more sensible, strong, and vivid, than any which are obtained by mere reasoning and argumentation. It would be un-supposable, that *that* part of man by which he is peculiarly capable of enjoying God, and being happy in him, should nevertheless be unsusceptible of as clear and convincing a knowledge of him, as that faculty in which there is, really, no enjoyment. But, the communication of that knowledge of God in which he is enjoyed, and which is eternal life, is wholly in and through Christ. Therefore, the apostle, speaking of christians, saith, “ But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory as by the spirit of the Lord.”* On this ground it is that our Saviour saith, “ The sheep hear *his voice*—that they *know his voice*—that he knows his sheep, and *is known* of his—that his sheep *know his voice*, and follow him.”† He that believeth on the Son of God as really feels the power of christianity, feeding and supporting a life to which, before, he was an utter stranger; as he feels his natural life supported by that almighty power which originally gave him his existence. Here, then, is the ground of what the Apostle afterwards saith, as an inference from his preceding

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

† John x. 4, 14, 27.

reasonings, “ And *we know* that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” †

2. WE may see, by what has been said on the subject, that the evidence of the divine origin of christianity, is not at all weakened by the existence of other religions upon earth.

CHRISTIANITY is a religion of pure self-denial ; furnishing no one motive capable of influencing the natural heart to espouse and embrace it. All other religions, and religious systems, in some way or other, feed the pride, and flatter the hopes, and the expectations, of the fleshly mind—promising a good, either in this world, or in that which is to come, which is suited to the taste, and fitted to allure the wishes, of the natural man :—As all religions of human invention ever have done, and will do. Nor, is it, even in the nature of things, supposable that *man*, should ever devise a religion of a different complexion, and in no way whatever suited to one bias or inclination of his heart. No *man* would ever devise a religion which, in every view, is utterly ungrateful to his own heart ; suspend all his hopes for time and eternity upon it ; and then palm it upon the world as a revelation from God, and *that* when he knew that the Lord had never spoken to him. The supposition of the possibility of this, contradicts every known principle of human nature.

It cannot be thought strange that religions, and religious systems, which have nothing of the nature of true self-denial in them—which are suited to the taste of the world, and congenial to the feelings of the human heart—which promise a good hereafter, of a nature fitted to attract the wishes, and win the desires of the carnal mind ; should easily find advocates amongst men. Ac-

† 1 John v. 19.

cordingly, they, in every age, have been the most popular preachers, who, in their public instructions, have dwelt least upon those doctrines of christianity to which the proud and selfish heart is most sensibly opposed. However long, therefore, religions of a different complexion from that which is exhibited in the gospel of Christ, may have existed among men; and, to whatever degree they may have prevailed; neither their existence, nor their prevalence, do at all diminish the evidence of *christianity* arising from its existence on earth. Nor,

3. Is the gross perversion, which has been made of christianity, and of its doctrines, any just or solid objection against the truth and divinity of them. When we consider the nature of christianity, and observe how evidently it is fitted to abate the pride, and to repel and combat every wish, of the carnal heart; and reflect, at the same time, that it carries a strength of evidence which can hardly fail of compelling the belief of many, in its divine original; it will be but natural to expect that, even among its professed friends, every invention of the human heart should be employed to pervert it from its original simplicity and design; and, to accommodate its doctrines to the taste of the world, and to the feelings and the wishes of men:—For, this is the only way in which many imagine that christianity will ever be caused to spread over the earth, and gain the friendship of mankind.

THE difference of opinion, therefore, which prevails among those who go under the general denomination of christians, furnisheth no just, or solid, argument against the divine origin of the christian system of doctrine;—especially, when we take into consideration the many predictions, contained in the gospel, of gross errors and her-

esies which should spring up in what is called the christian church, in the latter day :—For, there are more, and far greater, motives to the selfish and carnal heart, to pervert the *holy scriptures*, than, any, or all other, writings whatever.

4. IT appears, further, from what has been said upon the subject, that they who put such constructions upon the christian system, as take away the nature of the self-denying doctrines of it, lose thereby some of the noblest and best evidences of its divine original. Were not the whole current of the doctrines of christianity of a self-denying nature, and every way fitted to abase the pride, and stain the glory of man ; it could not be that they should ever have come from God ;—or, that it ever should have met so strong an opposition from men. No religion can come from God to a degenerate world, which doth not directly and strongly oppose the corrupt and depraved inclinations of men. Whatever allures the wishes, and flatters the pride and vanity, of the human heart, we may at once be certain, is from some different source. Were it not that the christian system of doctrines is wholly of a self-denying nature, there would be no necessity of any real, essential change of temper in men, in order to the fullest enjoyment of all the blessings it could promise. And, therefore, the necessity of the new birth, so much insisted on by Christ and his Apostles, would be wholly done away. Did not the religion of Christ require a temper of mind friendly to a common, general interest and good, and *that* in preference of any private, personal interest whatever, and in opposition to it ; it never could form the heart to relish and enjoy the good of God's kingdom, reconcile it to his government, or assimilate us to Him who, though he

was rich, yet for his people's sake became poor, that they through his poverty might be made rich.

THEY, then, who teach, for gospel truth, a system of doctrine and sentiments accommodated to the taste of the world, and fitted to cherish the hopes, conciliate the feelings, and flatter the expectations, of the depraved, natural heart; give great advantage to their hearers for supposing that christianity itself, like other religions, is but of mere human invention. For, according to such a construction of the christian religion, it doth not materially differ, in its nature, from other religions, which have been invented by men: Nor, is there any thing left in it distinguishing it to be divine.

5. They who have not the internal witness of the power and divinity of christianity, are continually exposed, whatever their speculations at present are, to be led away with the error of the wicked. When the love of the truth is not in the heart, the ear will be easily lent to the suggestions of error; and, men will listen with eagerness to every doctrine and sentiment, which appear more flattering to the hopes, and congenial to the feelings, of their own vicious and depraved hearts, than the plain, unadulterated truths of the gospel. Whatever is flattering, will presently appear plausible: and, when error appears plausible, it will soon gain credit. However firmly men may suppose themselves to be established in the belief of the doctrines of divine revelation; if the truths of the glorious gospel are not wrought into the affections of their hearts, they have no security against being, “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby

they lie in wait to deceive.”* For, they are without that “hope which is as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for his people entered.”†

LET none, then, imagine that they have any security with respect to their eternal state, or that they are in any measure entitled to the blessings of the gospel, until they feel the glorious truths of it written in their minds, not with ink, but by the spirit of the living God; and, their hearts formed to a relish of the self-denying doctrines of it, and a joy in them. If they have this witness, it will yield them an abundant support under temptations and trials. It will carry them above the frowns, and the flatteries of the world; and, will raise them above the fears of men, and of death. This love of the truths of the gospel, forms an union with the glorious sum of all being and good, which can never be dissolved: enabling him who possesseth it, to say with the Apostle, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”§

6. WHAT has been said on this subject gives us to see how real christianity in the heart, arms and fortifies against the cavils and subtillies of infidels. Were there never a conviction of the truth of the christian doctrine wrought into the minds of men, superior to that which arises from the exhibition of its external evidence to the mere intellectual faculty; how liable would men be to continual wavering, to doubt, and to skepticism! Therefore it is common for men, who have no

* Ephes. iv. 14. † Heb. vi. 19, 20. § Rom. viii. 38, 39.

other than a speculative belief of the truth of christianity, to be so often tossed to and fro, and driven about by every wind of doctrine.

BUT, they who have the truths of our holy religion wrought, by an invisible and almighty power, into the affections of their hearts, have a perception and discernment of them, which cannot be eradicated by the subtilty of reasoning and argumentation. Were not this the case, how liable would christians, of weaker natural powers, be to fall a prey to the subtile sophistry of the enemies of this holy religion ! But, true christians have *that shield of faith* which is sufficient to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. They have that sense of heart of the glory and excellency of Christ, and of the reality and power of that divine truth which is contained in the holy scriptures, which none of the subtile objections of its enemies can eradicate, or efface. In proportion to the being and prevalence of this religion in their hearts, they can no more be persuaded that there is not a glorious reality in it, than they can that the sun doth not shine, or that honey is not sweet. They may as soon give up the evidence of the Being of a God, arising from the visible creation, as, of the truth and power of christianity, arising from that new and lively and **entertaining** sense of divine things, to which they feel themselves to have been formed under the influence of it.

So mighty and glorious is the power of christianity, to preserve and keep all those into whose hearts it is once wrought by the power of God. That same glorious cause, which first produceth a cordial belief in this glorious system of divine truth, never ceaseth its operation : And, thus christians are kept, by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. AMEN.

The Church of Christ essentially the same, in all Ages.

A SERMON, by JOHN STEVENS, Pastor of
a church in New-Marlborough, *Commonwealth*
of *Massachusetts*.

EPHESIANS i. 22, 23.

*AND hath put all things under his feet, and gave him
to be the head over all things to the church, which
is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

IT is observable, that the holy scriptures agree
in this great and fundamental doctrine, that
CHRIST JESUS, the mediator, is the foundation of
a glorious building of God, called the CHURCH;
which, by another scripture metaphor, is called
the *body* of Christ. As in our text, so also in
Col. i. 18. *And he is the head of the body, the
church.* This metaphor is taken from the natu-
ral body, consisting of many members, united to
one common head.

AGAIN: IT may be observed, that our text
speaks of Christ and his church, in a general sense;
*And gave him to be head over all things unto the
church.* This appears to be the plain and natu-
ral idea contained in the text—*And hath put all
things under his feet: i. e.* Christ is seated upon
the throne of the universe, and all things are made

subject to his disposal. These expressions imply, that Christ is the only foundation, on which the church of God is built. He has redeemed it, he sanctifies it; and it is he who gives forth laws, prescribes the rules and regulations of his house. The text says that he is *the head over all things*—Every order of intelligent creatures is subjected to him, as the head of the church: *Angels, authorities, and powers being made subject unto him.* Every thing that appertains to the church, as laws, ordinances, privileges, advantages and protection, come from Christ.

AND this is not restricted to any part of Christ's church, in any particular period of time, or in any particular nation; but he ever has been, still is, and ever will be the same to his church. This is intimated in the last clause of the text—*The fulness of him that filleth all in all*: That is, Christ is the infinite source, from which flows all possible good and blessedness to the church, both in time and eternity. Heb. xiii. 8. *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.*

FROM the text, thus explained, the following DOCTRINE arises; that *Christ Jesus never has had, and never will have but one church here on earth.* Or, if it be more intelligible, the *christian church*, so called, is only a *continuance and extension of the Jewish church.*

IN order to derive further light and advantage from the subject before us, the following method is proposed; 1. To explain the doctrine; 2. To prove it; and 3. To answer some objections which may be raised against it.

I. It is proposed to explain the doctrine. And when I say, that Christ never has had, and never will have but one church on earth; I mean to be understood, that he has but one visible, constituted, organized body of people, which he will own

as his true church. Churches, among the different nations, at different times and places, and under different dispensations, are only parts of the general or universal church. For instance; all the collective bodies of people, who ever have been, under divine direction, formed into a church state, or who ever shall be thus formed, till time shall be no more, are only parts of the great whole of Christ's visible family here on earth.

CHRIST never has had but one foundation and constitution for his church. Therefore, all those collections of people, who may be denominated churches; but who are not, as to essentials, formed and established, according to the constitution, rules and orders, which Christ has given; cannot, with any propriety, be said to belong to his church. Such are bodies formed by the invention of men. So, on the other hand, it is undoubtedly the case, that some particular branches of Christ's church may degenerate, become awfully corrupt, and forsake the real foundation of God's church, to such a degree, as entirely to unchurch themselves. But these things do not, in the least, militate against the idea, that Christ has a visible church in the world, formed and established, in some good measure, agreeably to divine requirement.

AGAIN; when I say, that the church of Christ is continued, from the old to the new dispensation, I mean to be understood that the Jewish church and the christian, as to essentials, are the same. The believing Jews, who held fast their integrity in God, and belief in the Messiah to come, continued to be his church, until and after the coming of Christ. And the Gentiles, who embraced christianity, were grafted into the Jewish church, as an old stock; and so Jews and Gentiles became one body, called the Christian

church. This church has continued ever since its first formation, and will continue, essentially the same, until time shall be no more. All the difference which can be found, between God's church of old, and the Christian church, consists in external modes and forms, arising wholly from the different dispensations. God saw fit, before the coming of Christ, to appoint many and various types, figures and emblems, in order to lead the minds of his people to good things which were to come. All the ceremonial rites and institutions typified Christ and gospel days. Therefore, when Christ, the great Antitype came, there was no further use for the external part of those ceremonies; but the substance of them is still retained and enjoyed in the church: so that I consider believing Jews and Gentiles as making but one body.

HAVING briefly explained the doctrine, I proceed as was proposed,

II. To offer several arguments in support of it. And,

1. WE may argue, from the nature of the covenant of grace, which is a fixed and unalterable plan of salvation. It may be necessary, here, to explain what is to be understood by the covenant of grace. There are many, who appear to have no definite idea at all of this covenant; and make no distinction between this and the covenant of redemption, blending them together.—This mistake leads them astray, respecting some of the important doctrines of the christian religion.

THE covenant of redemption subsists, only, between the three persons in the sacred trinity; containing their proposals and engagements, respecting the redemption and salvation of fallen man. God the Father proposes, God the Son concedes and undertakes, and God the Holy Ghost acqui-

esses and engages to assist, in carrying this divine plan into execution. This covenant has subsisted between the three persons in the trinity, from eternity. I have made use of the words, *proposal*, *engagement* and *acquiescence*, only with a view to express my idea of the covenant of redemption, in a plain and familiar manner; and not as expressive of a beginning and succession, in the divine mind. The Sacred Three, between whom this covenant subsists, are upon an equality, and in their transactions, are eternal and unchangeable.

BUT the covenant of grace consists in bringing this divine plan out to the view of guilty, perishing sinners; and in proposing it for their acceptance, with a promise of the greatest possible good, even eternal life and blessedness, to all, who, by faith in Christ, take hold of it. And when we say, that God enters into covenant with men (if we understand ourselves) we only mean, that he makes gracious promises of the greatest good, to all who exercise faith in the Mediator, and become obedient to divine requirements. These are the conditions, on man's part. To such as fulfil these conditions, God engages, that he will fulfil and accomplish all that his gracious promises contain.

IT is said by some, that it is not consistent for God to enter into covenant with men; and the reason urged is, that it would degrade the divine character, and exalt the creature too high—it would put man upon a par with his God. But this arises, entirely, from a wrong apprehension of the covenant of grace. According to the above definition of this covenant, and God's establishing it with men, there is not the least appearance of degrading the divine character, or raising

man to a par with God. Covenant transactions, by no means, necessarily imply equality in the parties covenanting. All that is necessarily implied is, the consent and engagement of the parties. And, that there are promises of eternal good, on God's part, to all who believe and obey, is abundantly evident from the holy scriptures. And further, let it be particularly observed, that the Bible represents God as actually entering into covenant with his people. The term is, therefore, scriptural; and, if it be rightly understood, no ill consequences can arise from the use of it. I observe, once more, that it is upon this foundation, and this only, that God ever has built his church, both under the old and new dispensations.

BUT, in order to see, that the church of God ever was, and ever will be built on this foundation, let us look at two parallel instances, Abraham and Peter. When God designed, in a more public manner than before, to constitute a visible church, he called Abraham out from the idolatrous world, brought up to his view the great plan of redemption, proposed it for his acceptance, and made a gracious promise of infinite good, on condition of faith and obedience. Abraham complied, and God established his covenant with him. The things which God promised could not be any thing short of those implied in the covenant of grace. For he promised to give himself — *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed*. The conditions, on Abraham's part were, to believe God, to obey him, and, as it is expressed, to *walk before him and be perfect*. By the word, *perfect*, is meant, upright or sincere. Abraham fulfilled the conditions required, and God repeatedly confirmed the promises to him and his seed; and added, that, *In him, and in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed*. These things are particularly

stated in the xii, xvii, xviii, and xxii, chapters of Genesis ; and here it appears plainly, how God, at first, distinctly set up and constituted his visible church, in the family of Abraham.

LET us now attend to the instance of Peter. When Christ was about to conduct his church from the old to the new dispensation he enquired of his disciples, Mat. xvi. 15. *Whom say ye that I am?* Peter answered, *Thou art Christ, the son of the living God.* Again, John xxi. Christ repeatedly demanded of Peter whether he *loved him.* “ He saith unto him, yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.” Upon which, in the first instance, Christ made this declaration, *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona ;* and in the last instance, he gave him a charge to *feed his sheep and his lambs.* Christ also added, in the first instance, *I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church ;* that is, the rock on which your faith and love centers. Here observe, Abraham and Peter had the same kind of faith and love; and although Abraham appeared to outshine Peter, yet their standing in the church was on the same ground, they were bound to, and performed the same kind of conditions, and inherited the same kind of promises.

AGAIN. Hear what God saith. Isai. xxviii. 16. *Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.* When was this foundation laid? Was it laid at the commencement of the new dispensation? No. It is a foundation laid of old; and is the only foundation, on which God has ever built his church. Therefore, as the covenant of grace is, invariably, the same, under every dispensation, and as the church of God is always built upon this foundation, which is Jesus Christ; it is evident, that the christian church, so called, is only

a continuance and extension of the Jewish, Christ Jesus never has had, and never will have but one church here on earth.

2. AN argument, in proof of the doctrine, is *sameness of qualification*, in order for visible membership, in the Jewish and Christian churches. The qualification ever has been *right affections of heart* towards God and divine things. Abraham was an eminent believer and friend of God. His faith was first manifested, before he was admitted into the visible church. Accordingly, Paul declares, Rom. iv. 11. *He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised.* The faith here spoken of, is a saving, justifying faith; and this God required of his church of old. Consequently a profession of it was a term of communion and standing in the visible church. Abraham was required to walk before God and to be perfect; that is, to be upright or sincere; and his seed were required to do the same. Holiness consists in a disposition to keep God's laws; and this God expressly required of the Jewish church. Deut. xxvi. 16, 17, 18. *This day the LORD thy GOD hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. Thou hast avouched the LORD, this day, to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, to hearken unto his voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee, this day, to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments.* And this we find not only required, but professed, and *promised* by the Jewish church. Exod. xix. 8. *And all the people answered together, and said, all that the LORD hath spoken, WE WILL DO.* This was often solemnly promised by the

people of Israel, as may be seen, Chap. xxiv. 3, 7. and elsewhere.

IT is further evident, that God required faith and holiness of heart, as a qualification for visible membership in the Jewish church, from his conduct towards them. Unbelief shut them out of the promised land. *So we see, says the Apostle, that they could not enter in because of unbelief.* How often did God, for this, give them up into the hands of their enemies, and send them into long captivities? And finally, for unbelief, he broke off almost the whole body of the Jews from his church, and poured down his vengeance on that nation. Are not these things most convincing proofs, that God designed his church of old to be a holy society? Is it not evident, that there was not, according to divine requirement, any such thing as a proper standing in that church, without faith, any more than in the Gospel church? If faith and holiness of heart were not requisite qualifications for a standing in the Jewish church, why did God deal with that people in such an awful manner, so repeatedly, because they had not that, which he never required them to have? The Apostle declares that they were broken off from the church, *because of unbelief*; and to the christian, he adds, *Thou standest by faith*; plainly intimating, that the qualification for standing, in both, was the same.

AND further; If our minds be not wrapped up in darkness and prejudice, we may clearly see what kind of qualification God required of his ancient church, from what Paul abundantly declares, Gal. iii. 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 29. *Even as Abraham believed God, that is, believed in the Messiah to come, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*

And the scripture foreseeing, that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before, the gospel unto Abraham—Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us—that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ—And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs, according to the promise. Now if God did not require Abraham and his seed, in the Jewish church, to be holy, how does holiness, or union to Christ, constitute us the seed of Abraham? And in what sense did Abraham hear or receive the gospel? Or in what sense does the blessing of Abraham come on us, Gentiles? It is evident from these, and many other passages, that God required holiness as a qualification for his ancient church, and in no other way can the scriptures be made intelligible.

As to qualifications under the gospel, it is evident, that nothing short of faith and gracious affections of heart are required of all who become visible members of the church of Christ. For, aside from plain scripture testimony, it is absurd to suppose, that God required faith and holiness in his ancient church, but does not require the same in his present church.

ONE great difficulty, in the minds of some, is, they look at the *practice* of the church, instead of God's requirements. But in this way, we never can distinguish truth from falsehood. It is evident, that the Jewish church greatly departed from the divine constitution; and, undoubtedly, the christian church does the same. But neither the conduct of one nor of the other can possibly invalidate the constitution itself. God always required the heart, under both dispensations; and from sameness of qualification, it is evident, that Christ has had but one church.

3. ANOTHER argument in support of the doctrine is, the real character which the holy scriptures give of the church of God, under both dispensations. And here we find an exact similarity between the Jewish and Christian churches. *Exod. xix. 5, 6. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant; then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.* Let this be compared with a description of the gospel church. *1 Peter ii. 9. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.* This character is evidently quoted from that of the Jewish church; and is the same.

If it should be urged by any, that the holiness required of God's ancient church was only a *ceremonial* holiness; consequently, very different from that which the gospel requires; it may be observed, that it was such a kind of holiness as was required in the ten commandments, given at Mount Sinai; and such a kind as consisted in supreme love to God and his precepts. *Deut. vi. 5, 6, 7. Thou shalt love the LORD thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* Thus it is evident, that nothing short of moral holiness was required of them. The conclusion of this argument is, that the real character of the Jewish and Christian churches, as held forth in the word of God, being the same, Christ never has had but one church.

4. THE doctrine may be further established, from the similarity of the sacraments, under the old and new dispensations. Circumcision and the passover, baptism and the Lord's supper, are designed to answer the same ends in the church. As this is questioned by some, let the following resemblances be particularly considered. First. Circumcision was a sign or token of a covenant subsisting between God and his church. All, on whom this mark was put, unless they disqualified themselves, by wickedness of heart and life, and were legally cast out, were visible members of the church. Baptism, under the gospel dispensation, answers the same end. Secondly. Circumcision was designed to lead the Jewish church to see and feel the necessity of the shedding of blood, in order for the remission of sins. It typified the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin. Baptism, under the gospel, answers the same end. It is adapted to impress the mind with an abiding sense of the necessity of being washed in the Redeemer's blood, as a proper ground for the hope of pardon.— Thirdly. Circumcision was a testimony to God's ancient church, of the natural corruption of the human heart; and the necessity of its becoming changed and sanctified. Moses, evidently, understood it in this light, Deut. x. 16. *Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.* Deut. xxx. 6. *The LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God, with all thine heart and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.* Baptism answers the same end in the church now. Col. ii. 11. *In whom also ye are circumcised, with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.* Paul frequently declares, that outward

circumcision is not sufficient; but it must be accompanied with that of the heart; which supposes, that baptism is peculiarly calculated to exhibit the natural pollution of mankind, and the necessity of their being washed, with *the washing of regeneration*. Fourthly. Circumcision was a distinguishing mark of separation, between the visible church of God and the rest of the world. It designated the subjects of it to be dedicated to God, and set apart for his service. It was a visible, solemn, covenant transaction. Gen. xvii. 10. *This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised.* Baptism answers the same ends now; and is the same, distinguishing, solemn, covenant transaction.—Fifthly. Circumcision was the door of admission into the visible church—It was the initiating ordinance. So is baptism.

RESPECTING the passover, little need be said, to show the resemblance between that and the Lord's supper. The paschal lamb, the manner of keeping it, previously to its being slain, the killing of it, the use to be made of its blood, the manner of eating it and the like, all which are explained, Exod. xii. typified, in the most lively manner, the Lord Jesus Christ, his death and sufferings, and the redemption purchased thereby; together with the temper of mind, which all ought to possess, who partake of the holy ordinance of the Lord's supper. Hence the Apostle, in his exhortations, respecting this ordinance, uses, figuratively, the very language which respects the paschal feast. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. *Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our PASSOVER, is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us*

keep the feast, not with old leaven neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

THE main difference between the passover and the Lord's supper is, that one pointed to the Saviour to come, and the other to the Saviour already come. Since, therefore, the sacraments, under the old and new dispensations, so perfectly agree, as to their design and import, it is abundantly evident, that Christ has had but one church.

5. ANOTHER argument, in support of the doctrine, is, the similitude, to which the church of God is compared, viz. the natural body, composed of many members, yet but one body. 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, 27. *For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many are one body, so also is Christ. For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit. — Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

6. THE church of God, Jewish as well as Christian, is purchased and redeemed by the blood of Christ, and this proves the doctrine. This is clearly and abundantly declared in the word of God. A few passages, out of many, will be considered. Exod. xv. 16. *Till thy people pass over, O Lord, till thy people pass over, which thou hast purchased.* Psalm lxxiv. 2. *Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old, the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed.* — Isai. xliii. 1. *But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.* Let these be compared with similar declarations in the New Testament. Acts xx. 28. *Feed the church of*

God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.
 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. *Forasmuch as ye know, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things—but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

THUS, the Jewish, as well as the Christian church is declared to be purchased and redeemed: and the redemption of the Jewish church was, not only from Egyptian bondage, but from iniquity. Psal. cxxx. 8. *And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* Consequently, if it be urged, that the Jewish church was essentially different from the Christian, it must be denied, that it belonged to his body, or was purchased by his blood; and this is the same as to say, that God never had a real church until the Christian era. Or if we say, that God had a visible church, though essentially different from the Christian church, we make a monster, a head joined to two heterogeneous bodies, and yet both purchased by the same, infinitely precious blood of Christ.

BUT, from what God declares, concerning the redemption and purchasing of his church, both under the old and new dispensations, it is exceedingly evident, that, under both, Christ has but one church, always essentially the same.

7. ANOTHER argument in proof of our doctrine, arises from the great ends and designs of Christ, in all that he hath done in his mediatorial office. These, in a word, are, to exhibit to the moral creation a uniform character of God, and to redeem and save a people out of the ruins of our lapsed race. How can it, therefore, appear consistent to suppose, that Christ should constitute two successive, public bodies, essentially different from each other, to answer the same ends and designs?—that he should exhibit a covenant and promises, to one of these bod-

ies, principally or wholly, respecting temporal blessings? and teach them, in all their covenant transactions with their God, to have regard to these, as their highest objects? and that he should not require the heart and affections; but only external obedience? While, to the other public body, he should exhibit a covenant and promises, principally respecting spiritual and eternal blessings? and should teach them, in all their covenant transactions, chiefly to regard the glory of God and eternal good? Now I ask; would this be to exhibit a uniform character of God, and to answer the best purposes to effect the salvation of men? Surely, no unprejudiced mind can admit it.

IT is abundantly evident from scripture, that the primary object, which Christ had in view, was, to exhibit the true character of God; although a subordinate end was, to effect the salvation of sinners. 2 Cor. iv. 6. *For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* It is by and through Jesus Christ, that God's true character is revealed, and was revealed to the ancient church; and by him sinners have been saved, at all times. It is evident, therefore, from all that Christ hath done, in his mediatorial office, that he never has had, and never will have, essentially, but one visible, constituted body, or church on earth.

8. My last argument I shall take from plain, express, scripture testimony.

BUT before I quote scripture, directly to prove the point under consideration, I shall introduce a passage or two, in order to show, in what *line*, the church of God hath been handed down, from the days of Abraham. Rom. ix. 6, 7, 8. *Not as*

though the word of God had taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel. Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. Gal. iii. 7, 29. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham—And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. These passages plainly show, in what line the church of God hath been handed down. It appears, that the church took in all who had true faith, and in this way, became Abraham's spiritual seed; and it appears, notwithstanding the great corruption of the natural seed of Abraham, as a body, that there was a believing seed among them, until the Apostle wrote, which God considered and owned as his church. These were reckoned or called *in Isaac*. That is, they were, like Isaac, in all generations, *children of promise*. If any doubt whether the church of God came down, by promise to Abraham, in the line of his *natural posterity*, as well as by taking in other believers, let them read the beginning of the eleventh chapter to the Romans. *I say then, hath God cast away HIS PEOPLE?* That is, hath he cast off the seed of Abraham from being his church? *God forbid. For I also am an ISRAELITE, of the SEED of Abraham. God hath not cast away HIS people which he foreknew.* It appears, in the same chapter, that God never intended to cast off that people. Verse 11th. *I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid.* Verse 25th, and onwards, teaches us, that they are never wholly cast off; but are blind, only *in part*, and are yet had in divine remembrance, *for the father's sake*; that is, for the sake of covenant

blessings, inherited by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. "*Blindness in part, is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved—For this is my COVENANT unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the FATHERS' SAKE. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*" Thus the church hath descended and will descend, to the end of time, in the line of Abraham's natural seed; taking in at all times, from other nations, those who have the same faith. *They who are of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham; and he is the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised.* In this way the promise is fulfilled to Abraham, that in him, not only should his own seed and family, in great multitudes, be blessed; but likewise all the nations of the earth. From this view of the line, in which the church hath been handed down, it is clear that Christ hath but one church.

BUT I now proceed to more positive and express scripture testimony. Eph. iii. 6. *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel.* The Apostle could not use words more plain and express than these, to show, that the believing Gentiles were, in fact, united in one body with the Jewish church. There must be some meaning to the words, *fellow-heirs, and of the same body.* With whom were they fellow-heirs? Evidently, with God's ancient church. And of the same body, means, evidently, the body of God's church, constituted in the family of Abraham. For the Apostle uses the definite article, *THE*, which always denotes a particular thing; and if, by *body*, be not meant the ancient church, it is altogether unintelligible.

FURTHER light will be gained, by attending to the eleventh of Romans. At present I shall only state a part of the description. “ For if the first fruit be holy ; the lump is also holy ; and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them, partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree ; boast not against the branches ; but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee—For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree ; how much more shall these which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree ?”

FROM this description, it is evident, that the believing Gentiles were grafted into the Jewish, or Abrahamic church, and so became one body with that church. For the good olive-tree was the Jewish church, as is manifest from the scriptures, Jere. xi. 16. *The LORD called thy name a green olive-tree, fair and of goodly fruit.* Also, Hosea xiv. 6, speaking of Israel, says, *His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree.* The root of this tree was Abraham ; that is, the visible church sprung up from him, as a tree from its root, according to the metaphor. The branches of this tree, broken off, were the unbelieving Jews, who were rejected of God. The wild olive-tree was the Gentile world ; and when converted to christianity, they were grafted into the stock of the good old olive-tree, by being united to God’s ancient church, set up in the family of Abraham. Observe the expressions, *grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree.* Words cannot make a subject plainer, than these words make the point before us, that the Gentile church, under the

gospel, is only a continuance and extension of the Jewish church. *With them*, that is, the Jewish church, ye, Gentiles, partake of the root and fatness of the olive-tree; ye are admitted, *only*, to the enjoyment of those special privileges, promised to Abraham, and enjoyed by him and his posterity; such as the oracles of God, holy ordinances, divine influences, pardoning mercy, and eternal salvation.

The Church of Christ essentially the same, in all Ages.

S E R M O N II.

EPHESIANS i. 22, 23.

AND hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

THE person here spoken of is Christ; and from the representation of his headship over all things to the church, the following doctrinal proposition hath been stated, explained and proved; viz. That *Christ Jesus never has had, and never will have but one church here on earth*; or, that the *christian church*, so called, is only a continuance and extension of the Jewish church.

THE sum of the arguments, in proof of this doctrine, is, that the church of God ever was, and is, built upon the plan of the covenant of grace, having Christ for the unchangeable foundation—The qualification for visible membership, under the old and new dispensations, is the same—The scriptures declare the moral character of the Jewish and Christian churches to be the same—The similarity of the sacraments, under both dispensations—The natural body, a similitude, to

which the church is compared—Under both dispensations, the church is said to be purchased and redeemed by Christ—The great designs of Christ, in all that he has done, in his mediatorial office; and finally; plain, express, scripture testimony, both respecting the line, in which the church descended from Abraham, and the particular engraffing of the Gentiles into the old stock, in the days of the Apostles.

HAVING, as was proposed, explained the doctrine, and proved it; the way is now prepared to proceed,

III. To attempt an answer to some of the principal objections.

HOWEVER clear and ample the proof may be, which hath already been exhibited from the scriptures, in support of the doctrine; yet it is probable, that some may be inclined to make the following objections.

OBJECTION I. THE Jewish church was national, and never designed to be a holy community; and the Abrahamic covenant, of which circumcision was a token, principally respected the land of Canaan and temporal blessings. But the gospel church is widely different, containing only true believers, and heirs of heaven.

IF a bare, plausible objection were sufficient to overthrow a well established doctrine, the Bible would, long ago, have been overthrown. But let us weigh the objection in the balance of God's sanctuary. This is the only test of truth and error. What hath God ever said or done, from which the objector can possibly get such an idea, as is stated above? We have already examined the foundation, on which God built his ancient church; the qualification required in all, who visibly belonged to it; the sacraments of that church; the real character, which God himself

gives of that church ; together with a number of other things, and find them all similar to those of the gospel church. And, in addition to these things, we have seen the divine conduct towards that church, in sending awful judgments, and finally cutting them off, *because of unbelief*. With what propriety, therefore, can it be said, that God did not require the Jews to be holy, in order to a standing in that church ?

IF it should be still urged, notwithstanding all this, that it evidently was a national church ; because God required all that nation to be circumcised and to keep the passover ; otherwise, to be cut off from national, as well as church privileges ; to this it may be observed, that the Jewish church was national, in the same sense, in which the Christian church is national. Among whatever nation or people the gospel goes, and churches are erected, God, in a special manner, requires all that nation or people to repent and believe, visibly own Christ and unite with his church ; otherwise, they must certainly expect his wrath and displeasure. The import of God's requirements and threatenings, respecting the Jewish nation, and of his requirements and threatenings, respecting mankind now, who enjoy the gospel, is nearly the same. Therefore, it may, with as much propriety, be urged, that God doth not now require the Christian church to be a holy community, as that he did not require the Jewish church to be a holy community. It is true, that external disobedience, in neglecting to be circumcised, and in refusing to keep the law, deprived the Jew of the external privileges of that church ; and internal disobedience and rebellion of heart deprived him of spiritual and eternal blessings. And it is equally true, that external disobedience, in neglecting to be baptized, and in refusing to walk in

the ordinances of the gospel, deprives a person, now, of the external privileges of the gospel church; and this, joined with internal disobedience to God, will wholly deprive him of spiritual good. Thus it appears, that the Jewish church was national in the same sense, in which the Christian church is national.

FURTHER. The inconsistency of asserting, that the church in the family of Abraham was only national, appears from the express testimony of God concerning Christ who is called the *shepherd of Israel*. Psalm lxxx. 1. *Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, thou that leadeest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.* The same personage is again spoken of, Psalm lxxvii. 20. *Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.* And again, Isai. xl. 11. *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* These passages, as well as many others on the same topic, express the character and office of Christ, and the relation, in which he stood to his ancient church. Likewise their views of Christ, and the temper and affections of their hearts towards him. As a shepherd, he directed and guided his church in the way they should go. He prepared, and set before them living food. The unbelievers among his flock, spake against him, and said, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" But he did, not only furnish a table with manna and flesh, but also with more divine and heavenly nourishment. He gave them spiritual meat and spiritual drink. "They drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ." 1 Cor. x. 4. Multitudes did actually receive this divine nourishment. The Apostle, in

connection with what is just mentioned, says, "*They did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink.*" It is true that many, who belonged to that church, gave evidence, that they were only nominal professors; and were, in heart, enemies to the great shepherd. Of this, Paul proceeds to take notice, verse 5th. *But with some of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.* But he appears very far from renouncing God's covenant people, on this account, as not being his true church. It is undoubtedly the case, now, that many who belong to the gospel church, are only nominal members, and will meet with the same disapprobation of God. But doth this prove, that God hath no church under the gospel which he owns and blesses? If not, neither does the same argument prove, that he had no real, spiritual church in Israel.

AGAIN. Christ Jesus, among other titles, hath been pleased to exhibit himself to the gospel church, under the title and character of a *shepherd*. John x. 11. *I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.* 1 Pet. ii. 25. *For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls.*

THUS it is evident, that Christ is the same to his church, even to his nominal, visible church, in all ages. As a shepherd, he protected his flock, and took the most kind and tender care of it, in the wilderness. "*The angel of his presence saved them; in his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them, all the days of old.*" The same, in kind, as their case requires, he hath done at all times; and the same he will be and do, till the end of time. How great is the

absurdity, therefore, of saying, that God's ancient church was only national and political, and entirely distinct from the church under the gospel!

RESPECTING the promise, made to Abraham and the church in his family, having a principal reference to the land of Canaan, and temporal blessings; I readily grant, that temporal good was promised. But it cannot be admitted, that this was the principal thing intended in the promise. And even those who plead for it, often talk about the earthly Canaan typifying a *better country*; and that spiritual blessings, and even eternal good, were exhibited and promised to Abraham and all his believing seed. Accordingly the Apostle, speaking of Abraham and his believing seed, Heb. xi. 16, says, *They desire a better country, that is an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.*

IF, therefore, spiritual and divine blessings, and a *better country, that is, an heavenly*, were, in fact promised to Abraham, and all in the church of old, who sustained the same moral character; with what propriety can it be said, that those promises had a principal reference to temporal blessings? For the least spiritual blessing, far, yea infinitely out-weighs the greatest temporal good.

THE truth is, God did promise temporal good to the ancient church; and, for holy and wise purposes, he was pleased to promise a particular country, in case of obedience; and that they should not be removed, but remain a distinct and favourite body, until the coming of the Saviour, and even *forever*, if they would be obedient; that is, as long as time endures. But what does all this prove? It surely does not prove, that temporal blessings were the chief things contained in those promises; but the reverse. It proves that

they were God's peculiar people, his peculiar *treasure*, above all people; and that God had infinitely greater good in view, and would make them heirs of a heavenly and eternal inheritance.

It is equally true, that the Christian church hath *the promise of the life that now is*. 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is*—Christ promises a *hundred fold*, in the present life; and he assures his church, that their heavenly Father knoweth what things they have need of, in the present life, and will supply their wants. But it would be strange inconsistency, to argue from this, that the principal blessings promised to the Christian church, are temporal good things. But it is no more absurd than to argue in the same manner, respecting the church set up in the family of Abraham.

It is thought, that by bringing into view the arguments in support of the doctrine, together with what hath now been observed in answer to the objection, every candid mind must be fully satisfied, that the objection cannot stand.

OBJ. 2. If the objector have failed, on his first ground, a retreat and refuge are provided, as he imagines, in that memorable passage of the prophet Jeremiah, quoted by the Apostle Paul. Heb. viii. 8, and on. “Behold the days come, saith the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their

hearts : and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people—In that he saith, *A new covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now, that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away.”

It is observed in the introduction of this passage, that *Christ hath obtained a more excellent ministry*, than the Levitical priesthood, *by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises*. Verse 6. When the above quotation is viewed in the prediction by the prophet, and expounded and applied by the Apostle, it is thought, by some, to be a conclusive proof, that the gospel church is materially different from the Jewish ; and taking into view what is said of Christ, that he is the Mediator of a *better covenant*, established upon *better promises*, it is concluded, with great confidence and assurance, that the gospel church is built upon an entirely new foundation.

I AM willing to allow the objection all the weight, which it can, in justice, claim ; but am unwilling to admit its conclusiveness, without examination. Let the following things, therefore, be particularly considered. First. This new covenant, of which the Apostle speaks, cannot be opposed to, or different from that which God exhibited and established with his church of old. For that was nothing short of the covenant of grace ; as is evident from this plain reason, that the same distinguishing blessing was promised in that, as is promised, in what is granted to be the new covenant—I will be a God to you. This God expressly promised to the church of old. Exod. vi. 7. *I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God : and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God*. How very similar are these expressions to those of the Apostle, under consideration !

I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. For God to give himself, or engage to be a God to any people, is the greatest good he possibly can bestow: and this signal blessing is abundantly declared to be given to, and enjoyed by God's ancient church.

IN the second place, it ought to be particularly noticed, that the Apostle, in speaking of the new and old covenant, in the passage before us, has decidedly removed the objection. For he expressly informs us what he means by the *old covenant*. After speaking of the new covenant, which God would make with the house of Israel and Judah, he adds, *Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt*—This old covenant, it appears, was something which took place, at least, four hundred and thirty years after God had made a covenant with Abraham, and set up his visible church in his family. It is, therefore, absurd for any to pretend, that this *old covenant, which was ready to vanish away*, was the covenant which God made with Abraham, and with his ancient church. For the words are plain and unequivocal, that it was that covenant, which God made with Israel, when he led them from Egypt to Canaan. If we can believe the Apostle's testimony, it was the *ceremonial law*, which God appointed for Israel at Mount Sinai, when he ordered and instructed Moses to make the tabernacle, and set up the ceremonial rites. For it is immediately added, Chapter ix. 1. *Then, verily, the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a TABERNACLE made.* Therefore, nothing can be more plain and express than, that, by the first covenant here spoken of, is meant the

system of Mosaic ceremonial rites, which were done away in Christ. But how widely different is this from the original covenant, which God made with Abraham and his seed!

THOSE rites and ceremonies, which consisted in *meats and drinks, divers washings and carnal ordinances*, imposed on God's people, under the Mosaic dispensation, did indeed, *wax old, and were ready to vanish away*. For Christ was now come, to whom they all pointed: consequently, there was no further use for the external performance of them. Accordingly, they subsided and gave room for the ancient covenant of grace to shine forth, with peculiar lustre. So that now the church and people of God are under advantage, without the aid of rites and ceremonies, to view the great and glorious things, comprised in the covenant of grace. And this is that, to which those *better promises* mentioned by the Apostle, have reference.

THIRDLY. It is worthy of particular notice, with whom it is, that the Apostle declares this new covenant shall be made; viz. with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah. How can the gospel church, which is now made up of believing Gentiles, be called the house of Israel and Judah, any otherwise than by admitting a continuation of God's church, from the old to the new dispensation? and that the believing Gentiles become the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by sustaining the same moral character with those patriarchs, and by being admitted to the same standing with them, and united with the same visible body of Christ?

THE above considerations, not only effectually remove the ground of the objection, but likewise, open a consistent view of the old and new covenant, which corresponds with the declared design

of the Apostle. But, should difficulty still remain in the minds of some, as to the word, *new*, applied to the gospel covenant; should they imagine, that it must imply something never made known before; such are desired to read John xiii. 34. *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye also love one another.* Would any person venture to affirm, that this commandment was never enjoined before? It is as old as the Bible; and was expressly delivered to God's ancient church. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, was the second great command, given by Moses, and often renewed afterwards. This is a case similar to the new covenant; and John, in his first Epistle, has given us a clue, by which we may trace out and solve the difficulty. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word, which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth.* BECAUSE THE DARKNESS IS PAST, AND THE TRUE LIGHT NOW SHINETH—This unravels the whole difficulty. Under the old dispensation, the great and important things of Christ's kingdom were but darkly exhibited, through types and figures: and even the plainest things were corrupted—this command to love one another among the rest. But when Christ came he rectified the former mistakes of his church, removed former obscurities, and set all things in open light. So that the meaning of the word, *new*, applied to commandment, is a *renewed commandment*, set forth in its original design. And in the same manner, is the new covenant to be understood.

OBJ. 3. ACCORDING to the constitution of the gospel church, a saving, justifying faith in

Christ is a requisite qualification for visible membership. Not so in the Jewish church. Therefore, the Christian church is materially different from the Jewish.

IN order to see this objection answered, the reader is desired to turn back to the second argument in proof of the doctrine, which contains a sufficient confutation. But should *believer's baptism*, so called, be still urged by any, as having weight against the doctrine, it may be observed, that this is nothing new in the church under the present dispensation. The same was required of God's ancient people, in order for circumcision. In proof of this, what has been already observed upon the qualification, which God required, under the old dispensation, is pertinent to the point. Especially what is said of Abraham, in the above cited Rom. iv. 11. *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised.* Here faith is made the condition of circumcision, and circumcision is made an outward testimony of faith. And previous to Abraham's being circumcised, God required this, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect.* Thus it is evident, that under the old dispensation, it was, *Believe and be circumcised*, as under the new, it is, *Believe and be baptized.* Therefore it appears abundantly clear, that *believer's baptism*, is nothing new in the church under the gospel.

THERE are other objections which are sometimes made; but they are of much less consequence, than those which have now been stated. These are, evidently, the principal ones, by which our doctrine has been opposed. So that if what has been said in answer to them, be sufficient to show, that they are groundless and cannot, in the view of scripture and reason, be sup-

ported, all those of less importance must necessarily fall with them.

IMPROVEMENT.

I. WE learn from our text, that the church of God hath one to preside over all its important affairs, who is infinitely well qualified for this high and exalted station; even Jesus, the son of God, the Saviour of the world. His character is unexceptionable, and his perfection and ability infinite. *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, bodily.* Col. ii. 9. His divine glory shines forth, with distinguished lustre, through heaven, earth and all worlds. The natural and moral creation rose into existence by his command; and all things are, in the most absolute manner, put into his hands as mediator. *The kingdom is the Lord's, and he is governor among the nations.*—Psalm xxii. 28.

SUCH is the personage, who sits king over the church, forever, and he is given to be the *head over all things to the church*. He is the foundation and lawgiver, and hath given such precepts, appointed such ordinances, and granted such privileges as infinite wisdom hath seen fit and best.—And he is the source of all vital influence, grace and support to his church. He it is, who hath engaged to protect and defend his people from being overcome by the assaults of earth and hell; to carry them through all the storms and tempests of these lower regions, and finally to land them on the shore of unclouded, endless and increasing felicity.

II. FROM our text and subject, we are led to see the infinite safety of the church of God.—Earth and hell may rage and combine for her destruction; but her munition being a rock, none

who fight against her shall prosper. *For he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.* God has given the highest assurance of the safety of his church, both by his promises and by a remarkable series of providences. He hath often reprov'd kings and dashed many nations to pieces, when they have stood in the way of his church. In times of distress, he hath often raised up deliverers, who have subdued the enemies of his church; the language of which is, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the safety of the church, uses language very emphatical; Ch. 43. "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." The reason is then given: "For I am the Lord thy God, the holy one of Israel, thy Saviour. I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.—Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not, for I am with thee." What a combination of promises and encouragements here unite! And Christ himself has said a number of things to comfort and support his church against the most formidable opposition. His expressions are such as these, *Fear not, little flock—fear them not—fear none of those things—For lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

Thus the ancient church in Israel, and the same church, since the coming of Christ, have the same glorious promises of divine protection. Of what infinite importance therefore, in God's view, is the church in all ages! He hath redeemed it, with an infinite price, and protected it by almighty power. The attention and admiration of the holy angels are excited to the highest degree, by viewing the glorious things of the Redeemer's kingdom. They are constant attendants on Christ, to execute his orders respecting his church on earth. And there is no dispensation of providence, towards the nations of the earth, or the world in general, but what tends to the accomplishment of the divine purposes respecting the church.

WITH this animating view of the Redeemer's kingdom, let us shake off the slumbers of a long night of deadness and indifference, trim our lamps, and thereby constrain the world to acknowledge that we believe the doctrines of our holy religion. Let us, unitedly, press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Do we trust in such an Almighty friend, being assured that his cause shall stand and prosper forever, after these lower worlds shall dissolve and pass away? and do we hope shortly to exchange transitory things for those which are heavenly? and go and dwell in the beatific presence of our divine Emmanuel? do we hope to join the company of Seraphim, to praise the eternal God, for his infinitely rich, free and sovereign mercy, gloriously displayed in the salvation of sinners? How powerful are the motives which are set before us to fidelity to Christ, and to pray fervently for the peace and enlargement of Zion; and withal, to exercise a holy jealousy over our own hearts, and suitably

to fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, we should seem to come short of it! Let us take the utmost heed, in examining our hope, and be satisfied with nothing short of that which is as *an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.* Such a hope is set before us; and such a hope is laid up in heaven for all the faithful. Such a hope bringeth forth the fruits of holiness; and it is the only one, which will support and carry the soul through death in peace, and land it on the shore of a blessed eternity.

III. THE foregoing view which we have taken of this subject, may serve to correct our mistakes about the church of God, if we have been so unhappy as to imbibe any. It most clearly appears, from scripture testimony, that the church of Christ is the same in all ages. I have endeavored to state my ideas of the church, in a plain and familiar manner, and the reasons why I have embraced them, with a view, rather to assist the common class of christians, than to amuse the learned. And if people are honestly enquiring after truth, they will be willing to attend with candour, and weigh arguments and scriptures justly. Realizing, that they are under the omnipresent eye, they will feel obligation to understand and embrace the great truths respecting the Redeemer's kingdom; and they will not reject a doctrine, merely because it is against their natural inclination, or pre-conceived opinions; but will gladly exchange the most favourite errors for the doctrines of truth.

THEREFORE, let all be earnestly intreated to examine the sentiment here advanced, and carefully to compare it with the word of God; and I am fully persuaded that it will be found to be a sentiment very clearly taught in the scriptures;

and peculiarly adapted to exhibit a consistent view of the great design and work of the Saviour, in redeeming and setting up a visible church on earth ; and conducting it through the various dispensations and changes of time ; and finally causing it to triumph over all opposition, and extend to the remotest ends of the world.

BUT a contrary view of things, which is, that God never had a real, visible church in the world, until the Christian era, is peculiarly calculated to darken and confuse the mind, and leave it utterly at a loss, how to understand things right. For when a person reads the old testament, he finds much said about the church of God, and what great and marvellous things he hath done for it—that he hath called a people out from among the idolatrous nations, and by a series of remarkable events of providence, attending them, for the space of four hundred and thirty years, finally settled them, a distinct body, in the land of Canaan. He finds that the divine conduct towards them, for many ages afterwards, was marvellous ; expressive of fatherly protection, government and discipline : and, moreover, that, by divine direction, they set up and performed the solemn worship of God ; in many instances, with ardent affections of heart for the real enjoyment of spiritual and divine food. It is also found, that God avouched them to be his peculiar people ; and that they, in the most solemn manner, avouched him to be their God, in the presence of heaven and earth, and engaged to walk before him in fear, and obey all his requirements ; and that the Angel of the covenant was their Redeemer, their shepherd and Saviour ; and that glorious things were spoken concerning Zion—that Christ sat king over it—that God dwelt in it—that it

it was the joy of the whole earth—sent forth praises to the eternal I AM—was never to be moved, because God had founded it upon a precious corner stone, and there he commanded blessings, even life forevermore.

THESE, and many other great and important things, the reader finds spoken, in the old testament, concerning God's ancient people. And further, he finds express testimony, in the new testament, that they *did eat spiritual meat, and did drink spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ.*

IF after all this, and much more which might come into view, the reader should be informed, that in all this space of time, which was about two thousand years, God had no real, visible church in the world, and should he be so unhappy as to give credit to it; what darkness and confusion must cover his mind! and how could he get any rational and satisfactory understanding of the old testament? It must, in a great measure, become a sealed book to him.

THE above declarations of God, concerning his ancient people, together with spiritual blessings innumerable, conferred on his people in the course of his providence, are altogether unintelligible, upon any other principle, than, that the seed of Abraham were, in his view, his real church. And the same distinguishing blessings being promised and conferred on the gospel church, it is evident, that God considers believing Gentiles as being grafted into the old stock, and making, with his ancient church, but one visible body. Thus the great and interesting things of the kingdom of Christ are submitted to candid examination; and as Joshua said of old, so I say now; *Choose you, this day, whether you will embrace God's revealed sentiments of his church, and so be on his side,*

or whether you will oppose and reject them, and be found fighting against him.

IV. THE foregoing subject teaches us, in a distinguishing manner, what the new dispensation has done, with regard to the church of God: and this consists, chiefly, in three things.

1. CHRIST JESUS having actually come and performed all those things which were predicted of him, to whom all the ancient types and ceremonies pointed; the new dispensation supercedes any further use of the external part of those types and ceremonies.

2. By reason of the new dispensation's superceding the use of ancient ceremonies, it has taken down the partition wall, which long separated between Jews and Gentiles; and has opened a free, accessible door for all nations to come and enjoy equal privileges in the church of God. And,

3. UNDER the new dispensation, the great and important things of the Redeemer's kingdom are exhibited in vastly clearer light than before: so that we may clearly see and understand things, which were but darkly typified to God's ancient people. By reason of the more clear gospel light, which now shines, mankind may go directly to Christ and to God through him, for pardoning mercy and all spiritual blessings, without the intermediate aid of types and ceremonies.

BUT observe, that in all this, the new dispensation has made no essential alteration in the real church of God. That remains still the same, and so it will continue to the end of the world. It stands upon the same immoveable foundation; its real character, qualification for membership, and sacramental privileges are the same. See the above observations beautifully set forth by the Apostle. Eph. ii. 12—22. "That at that time ye

were without Christ ; being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world ; But in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath *made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us* ; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, for to make in himself, of twain, one new man, so making peace ; and that he might reconcile both unto God, in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby ; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father. Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone ; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord : in whom you also are builded together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit.”

IN what a clear and distinguishing manner, does the Apostle here represent to us what the new dispensation has done respecting the visible kingdom of Christ ! If I mistake not, it is the same for substance, which I have endeavoured to exhibit : and it is worthy of particular notice, that the Apostle is exceedingly careful to hold up to view God's ancient church, under the ideas of *commonwealth of Israel, body, and household of God*, having the covenants and promises made to them ; and likewise, to represent the believing Gentiles as incorporated into the same body with God's people of old ; And further, that this body never had but

one head, this household or holy family never had but one foundation ; being *built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*

THE inspired writer describes to us, in a very striking manner, the sad and awful state of the Gentiles, previous to their embracing christianity ; being strangers and aliens from the covenant of grace, and from the great and precious promises and privileges which are given to the church ; and being without Christ and without God in the world. But as soon as they embraced the gospel, their moral character became the same which God always required for visible membership in his church. Therefore, by their profession of faith in Christ, the door was opened for them to be brought nigh to God by the blood of Christ, not only in the internal exercises of their hearts, but in their outward standing with his church. So that they are now become *fellow-citizens with the saints*, and are *of the household of God* ; and may, with freedom, enjoy all the signal blessings and privileges granted to the same. And the mind of the reader must be exceedingly inattentive, or wholly wrapped up in prejudice, not to see, that one great end of the Apostle's writing is, to teach the believing Gentiles not to imagine, that Christ had dissolved his ancient church, and was about incorporating a new body, distinct and different from that which he had set up ages before. For the Apostle is careful to inform them that God has but one building in this world, called the church, and, that, under every dispensation, he has been collecting materials, and is so fitly framing them together, by the agency of the divine spirit, that it is *continually growing unto an holy temple in the Lord, and for an habitation of God.* Thus we see, with what clearness, Christ exhibits

the interesting and important things of his kingdom, under the new dispensation.

THE church of God, like a material building, to which it is compared, puts on different appearances, according to the different degrees of light in which it is viewed, and of perfection, to which it is raised. In the early ages of time, there were but few external marks, by which the church was distinguished from the common mass of mankind. A view of the church in that stage, is somewhat like viewing the materials of a building in the rough, or before much separation takes place. If viewed from the calling of Abraham to the setting up of the Tabernacle, there appears a greater separation between the church and the world. And if viewed from that time down through the Mosaic dispensation, the marks of God's spiritual building appear much more conspicuous. The foundation was not only laid, but the superstructure rose and advanced on towards perfection. If the view be carried on, from the beginning of the Christian era, down through the millennial period of the church, we may clearly see the advances which it is making towards perfection, by the aid and polish of the unerring Architect. Order, symmetry, beauty and glory begin, and will continue, to brighten up and shine with peculiar splendour. *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God* ; says the enraptured Psalmist ; and the prophet Isaiah, looking down through future times, by the spirit of prophecy, and seeing the accomplishment of the great and precious promises to the church, was flung into the highest extacy of joy, and broke forth in the following rapturous expressions ; *Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O ZION ; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city : for henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the un-*

clean. Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee—All which respects the church in this world, and only preludes the absolute perfection and eternal glory of it, in the triumphant state above.

V. FROM the preceding discourse, if we have paid due attention, we may gain abundant satisfaction, with respect to the privileges to be enjoyed by the Christian church. It being so demonstrably clear, from the holy scriptures, that *the church of Christ is essentially the same in all ages*, in the fullest manner establishes the doctrine of *infant baptism*. And let no one be surprised at this inference: for truth must, sooner or later, clear its way, and the more it is examined with candour, the brighter will it shine.

WITH respect to the doctrine of infant baptism, it is undeniable, that God's ancient church, from the days of Abraham, did enjoy the privilege of visibly dedicating their infant seed to him; and of having his mark, the distinguishing external mark of his flock, set upon them. This institution was expressly appointed and commanded by the great head of the church. Whether it was, in human view, a wise appointment, or adapted to answer any valuable ends, is not the question: but the question is, whether it was, in fact, an appointment of Christ, for his real church? That it was an appointment of God, none dispute, who admit the divine origin of the Bible. But some of our Christian brethren have questioned whether circumcision was an ordinance of the real church of God; or whether it, in any measure, designated the visible family of the Redeemer.

IN order to solve this doubt, the reader is desired to view and weigh, with candour and impartiality, the abundant scripture testimony, proving that God had a real church, under the former dispen-

fation, which he owned and blessed *as his people, and his peculiar inheritance* : and that the gospel church is engrafted into, and incorporated with the same body. To me it appears, that those scriptures must either be dashed out of the Bible, or perverted by unnatural construction, or else, with honest hearts, we must feel constrained to acknowledge, that circumcision was an ordinance of the real church of God, designating the visible family of the Redeemer. Plainly alluding to this idea of circumcision, the Apostle says, "*We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit.*" Thus the very word is synonymous with the true church of Christ. Circumcision, which was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and an ordinance of the real church of God, was an ordinance for the infant seed, as much as for the adult parent and believer. Consequently, as the church is still the same, and baptism of the same import, the validity of infant baptism must unavoidably be admitted.

It hath been already shown, that circumcision under the old, and baptism under the new dispensations, evidently answer essentially the same ends in the church of God. This not only proves, that baptism supplies the place of circumcision ; but likewise proves, that the church under the gospel enjoys the same privilege, as formerly, of visibly dedicating their children to God, in hopes of inheriting for them, the same spiritual good, promised to Abraham and his seed, in the covenant of grace. And, that it is a privilege, thus to dedicate to God, and to receive the seal of his covenant, we have the express testimony of an inspired Apostle. Rom. iii. 1, 2. *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.* Here we see,

that the Apostle viewed circumcision as a peculiar privilege, and great advantage which Christ has granted to his Church. The advantage is *much every way*; and a peculiar part of it was this, of publicly giving up their children to God. The Apostle goes on to give the reason why the Jews enjoyed this privilege, above all other people, *Because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.* The plain import and meaning of which is, Christ has had a church for ages past, to which he has revealed and unfolded the covenants of redemption and grace; and by the profession of faith, which his people have made in him, as the only Saviour, he has graciously taken them into covenant; and not only so, but he has deposited in their hands, as trustees, to keep pure and uncorrupt, the oracles of divine truth, to be, by them, handed down to all succeeding generations.

THE evasion, which is sometimes attempted, by saying, that circumcision was only a seal of a temporal covenant, and of national blessings, and not a seal of the covenant transactions of the real church of God, is directly contradictory to the declared sentiment of the Bible, which has, already, been sufficiently brought into view.

It must, therefore, be proved from scripture, that the gospel church, which is now composed of believing Gentiles, is not grafted into the old stock, God's ancient church; consequently, is, in his view, entirely a distinct and separate body: and it must be proved, further, that Christ, *who is given to be the head over all things to the church*, has actually taken from his people the inestimable privilege of visibly dedicating their infant seed to him for a blessing; or else infant baptism stands as immoveable as the church itself. But I see no possible way, in which either of these things

can be proved. As to the first, the evidence from scripture is as full, plain and express, as any candid mind can even desire, that the gospel church is, in fact, grafted into, and incorporated with God's ancient body of people, which he constituted in the family of Abraham, and continued down for about two thousand years. And as to the second, that Christ has disannulled that express, positive command to his church, to dedicate their infant seed to him; and to put the visible token upon them, which he hath appointed, under the different dispensations; it cannot be found in the bible. Neither can it be found, that he has given the least intimation, either personally, or by his Apostles, that he has taken this privilege from his people. And this is a full answer to the enquiry which is sometimes made; Why did not Christ and his Apostles expressly enjoin infant baptism, if it was his will that his church should practise it, under the new dispensation? A law or requirement is always considered as being in force, until it be repealed by the authority which enacted it. But, in the present case, no repeal is to be found. So that it was wholly unnecessary, for Christ or his Apostles, to re-enjoin, in particular, that which was already in full force. And thus we see, that, as the church of Christ is the same, essentially, under every dispensation, it is not only a privilege, but an incumbent duty on all believing parents, who visibly belong to the body of Christ, to dedicate their children, in baptism, to him. Therefore, my Christian brethren, it will exculpate us no more to say, that we cannot see the scripture evidence to support this duty, than it did those spoken of in the gospel. John iii. 19. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the

world, and men have loved darknes rather than light.”

FURTHER. Baptism is not the only privilege enjoyed by the Christian church, under the gospel. But there is visible communion of saints, in the Lord's supper, answering to the communion of the saints of old, in the passover. The design of these communions is essentially the same. And what ardent desires and affections of heart did many of the ancient saints feel for communion with their brethren, and with their God, in holy ordinances ! So ought christians now, and in a proportionably higher degree, as our light and advantages exceed those of God's people who lived in former and darker ages of the world.

DIVINE worship is another privilege which the church of God has long enjoyed. Under the former dispensation, the people of God often met, and joined in the solemn worship of the Most High. They united in solemn prayer to Him, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. Moses and the prophets were read and expounded—praises to the eternal God filled their places of worship—holy joy and delight glowed in many of their souls. And when those sacred acts of devotion were ended, they retired, with gladness of heart, more than when their corn and wine increased. Yea, it was sweeter to them than the honey, or the honey comb.

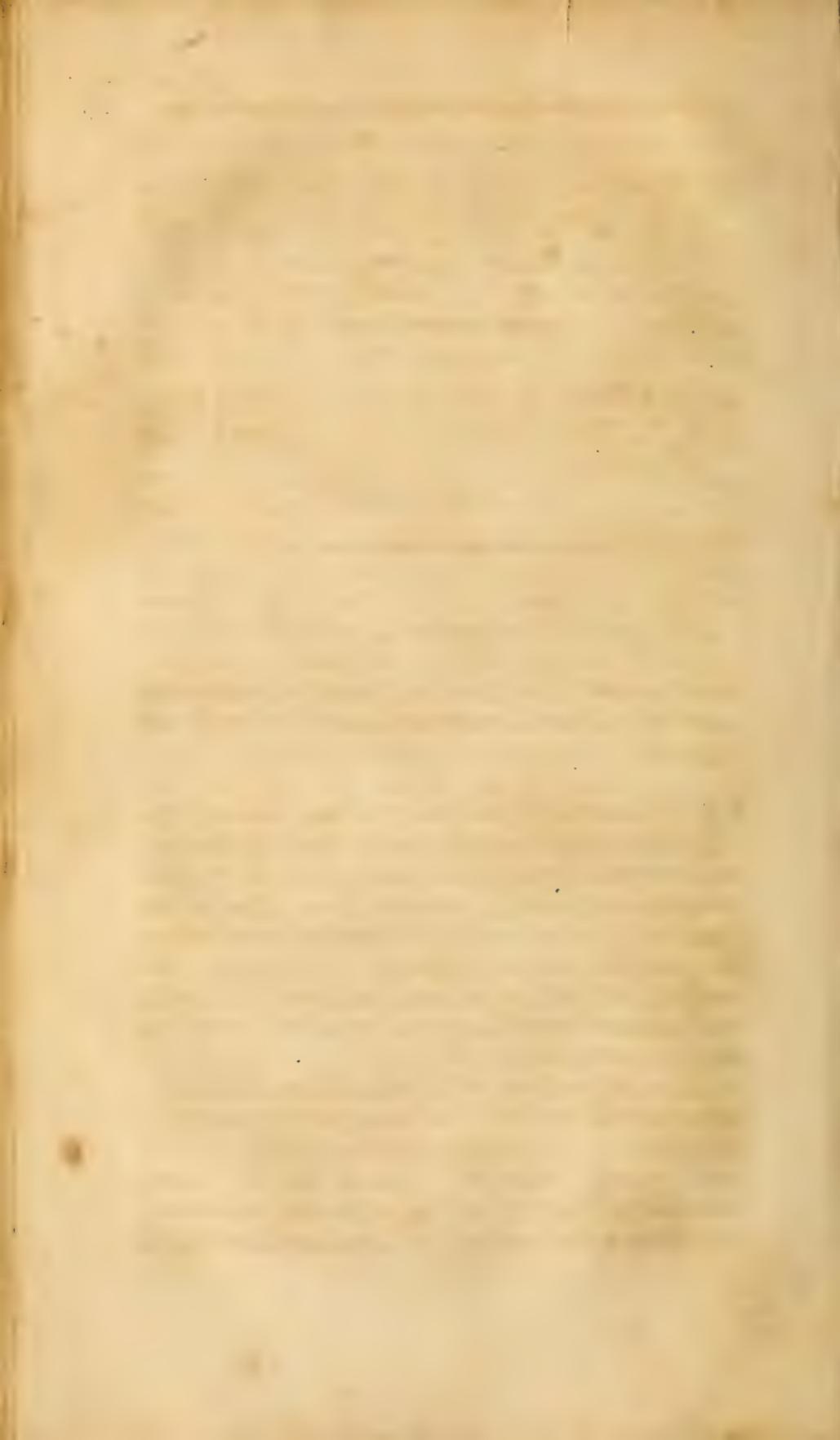
LET us, my Christian friends, catch this holy flame of divine love, and imitate such worthy examples which are set before us. And whereas, at certain periods, many who were visibly God's people, gave evidence, by their indifference to the worship of God, that they were only so, nominally ; let heaven and earth witness the sincerity of our hearts, our constancy and fervency, in im-

proving the great and precious privileges, which we enjoy under the gospel.

VI. Is Christ Jesus given to be the head over all things to the church? And is he building up a holy family in this world, and even in the midst of us? Is he preparing all the real members of it for endless and increasing felicity? We are hence led to see, that it must be a most desirable thing, to every benevolent mind, to belong to this great family of God.

AND as to you, my friends, who are spectators and observers of these infinitely important realities, displayed before your eyes, in a clear and striking manner, by the word of God, by a preached gospel, by the administration of holy ordinances, and by divine providence; and yet reject the whole, by turning your hearts away from Christ, and the interesting things of his kingdom; you are constantly filling up the measure of your sins, and ripening for a most aggravated ruin, unless a speedy repentance prevent. And what can be said to you, more than you have often heard? The infinite amiableness and transcendent excellency of the divine character, the mediatorial offices of the Saviour, together with the glories of the upper world, the permanent and increasing happiness of the redeemed, beyond the grave, have been often exhibited to you. You have also heard the terrors of the law: the flashes of divine wrath from Sinai—the dreadful woes of the eternal God, in his word—striking and overbearing judgments, which have come upon the wicked in this world, and the dark regions of endless despair in the next, all, as it were, stare you in the face. And yet you remain unmoved, heedless and secure. How infinitely short do human language and conception fall of describing such wickedness, obstinacy and folly!

IN this view of your deplorable situation, I cannot but adopt the pathetic language of the prophet Jeremiah : *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears ; that I might weep, day and night, for the slain of the daughter of my people.* Be intreated, therefore, my friends, now to hearken to one more sollicitation of him, who is set to watch for your souls, and whom you must meet before the bar of God. I pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Immediately throw down the weapons of your rebellion against heaven ; and make your escape, by faith, to the ark of safety, Christ Jesus. Enlist under his banner, and fight the good fight of faith—Run, with patience, the christian race ; and let nothing divert your attention from these infinitely important concerns. In thus doing, when he who is the believer's life shall appear, you also, together with all the redeemed from among our race, shall appear with him in glory ; to spend an eternity in celebrating redeeming love and grace. And may God, of his infinite mercy, grant this signal blessing to each of us, and to his whole Israel, every where, for the mediator's sake. AMEN.



A future State of Existence and the Immortality of the Soul, illustrated from the Light of Scripture and Reason.

A SERMON by JONATHAN EDWARDS,
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2 TIMOTHY i. 10.

Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

THE knowledge of a future state and of the immortality of the soul is very important and very practical. If we die like brutes, it is of no great consequence how we live. But if we shall exist forever, nothing is more important to us, than that this our existence be happy. We ought, therefore, to inform ourselves of the truth in this particular, and then to take our measures and live accordingly.

Now this doctrine of a future state and the immortality of the soul, "is brought to light by Jesus Christ." These words do not imply, that it was intirely unknown before Christ. There were many intimations of it in the old testament; and there were some rational considerations urged,

by the heathen philosophers, in favour of it. Still it needed further illustration; accordingly it was, by our Lord, clearly illustrated, and brought out of that obscurity, in which it was and had been, until that time, into clear light. Therefore let us consider,

I. WHAT light we have concerning a future state, and the immortality of the human soul, without divine revelation.

II. What light revelation, and especially the gospel affords, concerning this subject.

I. I am to consider what arguments of a future state, and of the immortality of the human soul, we have without divine revelation.

1. ONE argument of this kind is, that without such a state, it does not appear that this world was made for any very valuable end. As the Deity is possessed of infinite perfection, infinite wisdom and goodness, doubtless all his works are designed to answer some most valuable and important end. But if there be not a future state, the creation of this world, and of the human race, does not appear to answer any such end. For what end shall we suppose the world was created? For the happiness of mankind? This is, certainly, very imperfectly obtained in the present state. If then that was the end, why was not the human race made perfectly happy? Or at least, as happy as it was possible it should be? If we believe, that the happiness of mankind was the end of creation, and that God seeks this end in a lower degree, than it may be obtained, we impeach his goodness. If he seek this to as great degree as possible, and yet obtain it to a lower degree than is possible, this supposition impeaches his power or wisdom.

OR, shall we suppose, that God made the world and mankind for the display of his own glory?

The display of the divine glory is the display of infinite wisdom, power and goodness. And to display these perfections is to produce a system of intelligent creatures, to the highest possible degree, excellent and happy. But it is manifest, that mankind are not, in the present state, to the highest possible degree, excellent and happy. It is in vain to say, that if God had chosen, he could have kept out, at least, some of the diseases, pains, mortifications, disappointments, or other calamities, which mankind suffer in the present state.

To say, that God has glorified himself in the creation of the human race, and has secured the happiness of the race, because, in the present state, men enjoy more happiness than they suffer misery, will not relieve the difficulty. In the first place, it is a matter of great dispute, and has never yet been settled, whether the happiness of mankind, in their present state, does exceed their misery. But let us allow, for the present, that it does; why is *any* misery sent upon them, which it was in the power of Deity to prevent? How is this consistent with the infinite goodness of God? and with his aiming at the happiness of mankind in their creation; or at the display of his glory, especially of his infinite goodness? Is it a sufficient vindication of the impeached goodness of a father, to say, that he does his children good more often than he does them hurt? Or of the impeached justice and goodness of any man, to say, that he pays his debts and bestows charity more often than he robs or steals? No. It is a stain on the character of any parent, that he inflicts pain on his child, in any instance, unless it be necessary to more important good. And it is a stain on the character of any man, that he has been once guilty of theft or robbery. How then can we vindi-

cate the character of God, and make it out, that the happiness of mankind was the end of creation, on any other ground, than that the evils of this life are to be overruled to good to them in a future state? Or how shall we make it appear, that these evils are subservient to the clear manifestation of the divine wisdom and goodness, if there be no future state?

OR if it be said, that the evils of this life are not to be overruled to the good of *mankind* in a future state, because there is no future state; but they are to be overruled to the good of some *other order* or *orders* of beings, and so to the good of the whole; this is to admit that mankind may be made to suffer evil, in this world, in order to promote the general good. If so, how do we, or how can we know, but that they are to suffer evil in the future world for the same end? But this will open a door, by which to introduce the doctrine of the eternity of hell-torments, which it is presumed the advocates for the mortality of the human soul would be very unwilling to open. For once allow, that mankind were made, not for their own happiness, but to promote the happiness of others, by their sufferings, and it will be difficult, if not impossible, to prove that they may not promote the happiness of others, by their endless, as well as their temporary sufferings. Nor is this all; it is further to be observed, with respect to this matter, that if it were ever so true, that men were made not for their own sakes, but for some higher order or orders of beings; still they are moral agents, capable of moral government, and actually do practise either virtue or vice. Therefore God, as the supreme moral governor, and the patron of virtue and opposer of vice, must take suitable notice of the conduct of these moral agents, and must reward and punish them, accor-

ding to their respective characters. So that the plea, that men were not made for their own happiness, does not at all weaken the argument, from the moral government of God, in favour of a future state. But of this, more presently.

2. If the eternal existence and happiness of mankind, as a race of beings, be more subservient to the general happiness of the universe, than their annihilation at death, the infinite goodness of God will doubtless choose and secure their eternal existence and happiness. Infinite goodness seeks the good and happiness of intelligent beings in general; and will consent to the misery or annihilation of any, on no other condition, than that their misery or annihilation is necessary for the greater good of the whole. Therefore, as the annihilation of all mankind at death implies the intire loss of that good and happiness, which they enjoy in life, and might enjoy to all eternity; we may be sure, that infinite goodness and a God of infinite goodness, would never consent to it, unless it were absolutely necessary for the greater happiness of the whole system of intelligencies. But their annihilation does not appear to be necessary, or subservient to the greater good of the system. In what respect would the rest of the system be rendered more happy by it? It is, I confess, impossible for me to conceive, but that the rest of the system might be at least as happy, though mankind should eternally exist and be happy, as they would be, if mankind should be annihilated. As benevolence rejoices in the happiness of others, and is more happy by their happiness; and as all innocent intelligencies are intirely benevolent, therefore we may safely conclude, unless some special reason be assigned to show the contrary, that all innocent and well disposed intelligencies will be rendered more happy by the eternal existence and happiness of man-

kind, as a race of beings, than they would be, if they were annihilated at death : and therefore, that the infinitely good God will secure their eternal existence and happiness.

If it be said, that this argument proves the final *happiness*, as well as *existence* of all mankind ; and therefore leads to universalism ; I observe, it undoubtedly does, unless we have evidence, that the exclusion of some men from happiness is subservient to the greatest happiness of the system, or to the divine glory : and this evidence we certainly have, by divine revelation. If we had the same evidence, that the annihilation of all the race would be subservient to the good of the system, we should, doubtless, have reason to believe, that all men would be annihilated.

3. UNLESS there were a future state of rewards and punishments, it would not appear that God is a holy God, a friend to virtue and an enemy to vice. God can, by no other means, appear to be a friend to virtue and an enemy to vice, than by acting the part of a friend to the former, and an enemy to the latter ; or by discovering, in his treatment of the virtuous and the vicious, approbation of the former and disapprobation of the latter. But he *is* a friend to virtue and an enemy to vice. This is generally granted by infidels themselves. Therefore, he will exhibit this character : he will, on the whole, appear as he really is : he will treat the virtuous and the vicious so as to show his approbation of the former and his disapprobation of the latter. Now such a treatment as this, is rewarding and punishing : it is to befriend, uphold, protect and reward the virtuous, and to punish the vicious.

If God should not thus show his approbation of virtue and disapprobation of vice, he would not

appear in his true character; he would not finally appear to be such a being as he really is: and his final neglect to act out his real character, in the view of his intelligent creatures, would be unaccountable, and irreconcilable with his character and nature itself. But he does not, in this life, thus act out his character. Therefore I infer, that there will be a future state, in which he will act it out.

To this reasoning, several objections are made, which require an answer.

It is objected, that we do not know, but that virtue is properly and fully rewarded in this life: that many whom we judge to be happy are miserable; that perhaps those vicious men, whom we judge to be most happy are extremely miserable; and those virtuous men, whom we judge to be miserable, are happy; and thus the former are properly punished, and the latter are fully rewarded.

To this I answer; the objection supposes, that it is impossible for us to know who are happy, and who are miserable. If so, it is impossible that God should ever so reward the virtuous and punish the vicious, that mankind shall know it. It is impossible that he should ever do it visibly to mankind. If so, God cannot manifest himself to mankind, as a friend to virtue and an enemy to vice. For they can see his true character no otherwise, than by seeing him reward the virtuous and punish the vicious: and this implies that they see, or are convinced of the happiness, which he communicates to the former, and of the misery which he inflicts on the latter.

IF it were indeed true, as this objection implies, that we cannot know, by external appearances, when our fellow creatures are happy, and when they are miserable; we cannot know, that they

are either happy or miserable in the future state. And though, in the state of the damned, they should appear to be exquisitely tormented, yet they might, in reality, be superlatively happy. So that, on the ground of this objection, there would be no foundation to object, to complain, or to be at all terrified in the prospect of hell and all the apparent torments of it. On the ground of this objection, though the virtuous and vicious are really rewarded and punished in this life; yet neither the rewards nor punishments are visible.

BUT the honour of God and the vindication of his character, as a friend to virtue and an enemy to vice, require that, sooner or later, they *be visible*, so that men and intelligent creatures in general shall see and know them. What should we think, and what should we have a right to think of the Deity, if he should always appear to treat the virtuous and vicious in the same manner, or without any proper discrimination?

IF God do, really and properly, distribute rewards and punishments, in this life, why does he conceal this proceeding, when the vindication of his own character, and the relief of his most dutiful children from their anxiety for his honour require, that it should not be concealed, but be openly manifested?

ANOTHER objection to the foregoing reasoning is, that virtue is its own reward, and naturally and necessarily tends to happiness while it is practised; and that, on the contrary, vice naturally punishes itself: so that there is no need of a future state of rewards and punishments.

To this I answer,

1. THAT virtue is thus properly rewarded, and vice properly punished, does not appear. For instance; it does not appear, that our Lord Jesus

Christ was, in this manner, rewarded according to the excellency and merit of his perfect and divine virtue and holiness. Nor does it appear that, in this way, the Apostle Paul received an adequate reward of his virtue and piety. This appears, neither by the history of their lives, nor by divine revelation. Nor, indeed, will it be pretended to be fact. Therefore it is a mere unsupported conjecture.

BESIDES ; if it were ever so true, that virtue is thus fully rewarded, and vice fully punished ; yet as long as this reward and punishment is unseen by mankind, the ends of reward and punishment in the case are not answered : two of the principal of which are, the encouragement of virtue, and the discouragement of vice.

2. So far as virtue, by its native tendency to happiness, rewards itself, and vice, by its native tendency to misery, punishes itself ; *God* does not reward the one, nor punish the other. For this same reward would attend virtue, if *God* were an enemy to it, provided he did not positively interpose to prevent the native effect of it ; and the same punishment would attend vice, if *God* were a friend to that, provided he did not prevent the native effect of it. This reward of virtue, therefore, is no token of his approbation of it ; nor is this punishment of vice any token of his disapprobation. By this reward, and this punishment, we should never know that *God* is a friend to virtue and an enemy to vice.

ANOTHER objection is, that if there be a future state, it needs not be an immortal state ; but virtue may be sufficiently rewarded and vice sufficiently punished, in a limited time. So that, if it should be allowed, that the argument from the unequal distribution of rewards and punishments in this life, proves that the soul exists, for a time,

in a future state ; it does not prove the *immortality* of the soul.

To this it is answered, that what the proper reward of virtue is, we may be very inadequate judges. Whatever the reward may be, it is a reward of grace, and not of debt ; because the virtue of the best man is imperfect. He is therefore, a sinner, and on the footing of law and justice, deserves no reward. But God means to show his own infinite *grace*, in the reward of an imperfect creature.

Now, that a reward sufficient for this may be bestowed on a finite creature, in a limited time does not appear. That a reward equal and superior to *the merit of the creature*, may be bestowed in a limited time, is granted ; for, indeed, he has no merit at all. But, that a reward expressive of the infinite goodness, bounty and grace of God, can be received and enjoyed, by a finite creature, in a limited time, does not appear. Whether it do not appear to be an impossibility, that such a reward should, in such a time, be enjoyed by a finite creature, I submit to my auditory : and whether the punishment expressive of the divine, infinite abhorrence of sin, do not require an equal duration, as that which is expressive of the infinite love and goodness of God, I submit to the same judges.

If there be, indeed, a future state of reward and happiness to the righteous, but a limited one ; the best of men must be rendered miserable, by the prospect, that their happiness, however entire without that prospect, must come to an end, and that they themselves must be no more. On the other hand, the worst of men, under their punishment, must be greatly comforted by the prospect, that their misery, however great, will also come to an end.

BESIDES ; what end can be answered, by the annihilation of either the righteous or the wicked, after they shall have been fully rewarded and punished ? What if the righteous have been rewarded sufficiently to show God's approbation of their virtue, and his own grace and goodness ? Why may they not yet be permitted to exist and enjoy further good ? Would not the same infinite goodness, which, at first, gave them existence, and afterward made them happy, be disposed still to permit them to enjoy the same existence and happiness ? What good, to God or the universe, can we suppose or imagine would result from their annihilation ?

ON the other hand ; what good can it afford, to God or the universe, to annihilate those, who have, by their own sufferings, satisfied for their own sins ? To annihilate them must be, it seems, a further punishment of them ; which, by the nature of the case, must be unjust : as they are supposed to have suffered, already, all that justice requires.

THESE considerations are also worthy of notice, on the supposition, that the virtuous and the vicious are fully rewarded and punished in this life. If they be thus rewarded and punished, why should they be annihilated at death ? The loss of existence, and of all that happiness, which they might enjoy in the eternal state, is certainly a very great evil. And why should this evil be brought on them ? The virtuous might certainly be supposed to escape it, as a punishment, on the same ground, on which they escaped the punishment, which the wicked are supposed to have suffered in this life. And the wicked having, by supposition, suffered the full punishment of their sins, in this life, do not deserve any further punishment ; nor can they, consistently with jus-

tice, be made to suffer any. Therefore, to suppose annihilation brought on them as a punishment, would be to impeach the divine justice.

IF it should be said, that annihilation is brought on, both the righteous and the wicked, not as a punishment; I answer, still, if it be brought on them at all, it must be for some wise and good end; and must be, somehow, subservient to the general good; otherwise we shall impeach, both the wisdom and goodness of God. It is, therefore, incumbent on the advocates for annihilation, to point out some wise and good end, to be answered by it; some end, subservient to the divine glory and the general good. Until this be done, we have no reason to say; nay, it would be unreasonable to say, that the annihilation of mankind will take place at death, or at any future period.

I HAVE now exhibited what appears to me the principal evidence, from the light of nature, of a future state of existence, and of the immortality of the soul. This evidence may be briefly summed up thus;—Men were made for some important end, either their own happiness or the divine glory. But neither of these ends appears to be, in this life, obtained, in a degree correspondent to the divine goodness, power and wisdom.—Therefore, there is a future state, in which, one or other, or both these ends will be properly obtained. We have reason, from the goodness of God, to suppose that mankind will exist in a future state, and be happy; since goodness, especially infinite goodness, delights in the existence and happiness of intelligent beings. We may, therefore, believe that it *will* establish, both their existence and happiness, unless they be inconsistent with the greater happiness of some other being or beings. But there does not appear to

be any reason to believe, that the existence of all men, and the happiness of the virtuous, in a future state, are at all inconsistent with the happiness of any other being or beings.—*Lastly*. Man is a rational creature, capable of virtue and vice, and actually practising either the one or the other. He is, therefore accountable to God; and God, as a friend to virtue and an enemy to vice, must properly reward the former and punish the latter. And, as this is not done in the present life, it must be done in a future state.

I GRANT, that all this reasoning depends on the supposition, that God is a being of moral perfection. This is generally granted by deists. If he be not a friend to virtue, he will not be disposed to reward it, or to punish vice. On the other hand; he may be disposed, eternally to punish virtue, and to reward vice. Or he may be disposed to give all men a future existence, to gratify his own malevolence, in their endless misery. So that the advocates for annihilation will obtain no advantage to their cause, by a denial of God's moral perfections.

II. WE are to consider what light revelation, and especially the gospel affords, concerning this subject.

I. BY revelation, we are clearly taught the moral perfections of God; that he is a friend to virtue, and an enemy to vice; perfectly holy, just and good. This character of God is not clearly demonstrable by the light of nature. Though it affords probable arguments of it, they do not amount to demonstration. Hence the heathen, with all their improvements, were ignorant of God and especially of the moral attributes of the divine nature. They made God like unto men, and imputed to him some vile passions and lusts. But revelation gives us clear light on this subject.

THEREFORE, from the moral perfections of God, fully made known, we may infer a future state of rewards and punishments; and that there will be a state, in which those ends will be accomplished, which are worthy of a God of infinite holiness and goodness.

2. DIVINE revelation directly teaches us, that God will, in the future world, reward the righteous and punish the wicked; that he will render to every one according to his works; that "There is no reward to the evil man;" that "To them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," he will render, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil." But, "To them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour and immortality," he will render "eternal life."

3. THE scriptures teach us that these rewards and punishments are to be inflicted on both the souls and bodies of men; that, not only their souls will live forever and be happy or miserable, according to their respective characters; but that their bodies will be raised, and be made the subjects of happiness or misery.

4. THEY further teach us, that these rewards and punishments are to be dispensed in consequence of a public inquiry, trial and judgment. God has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ. This inquiry and judgment are not for the information of God: but for the conviction of those judged, and for the satisfaction of others. Therefore it is called the day of the *revelation* of the righteous judgment of God; the day in which it will be made to appear, that God's judgment is righteous.

5. THE scriptures teach us, that this state, both with respect to the righteous and the wicked, is to

be of endless duration. The latter shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the former into life eternal. That the state of happiness, awarded to the righteous, will be without end, is easily admitted by all. But, that the state of misery, to which the wicked shall be doomed, will also be endless, is not so easily admitted by many. Yet this is as clearly revealed as the other; and we are bound to receive it, on the authority of God.

I HAVE NOW gone through with what I proposed. I have considered both what the light of nature, and what the scripture teaches concerning a future state: and shall close with some inferences and reflections.

1. How unwise are those who live in neglect of the future state. They must shortly enter upon it; and when once entered on it, they must continue in it forever; and, without preparation, it must be to them a state of punishment and misery. Yet they are easy, careless and secure, taking no pains to render their future state, a state of peace and happiness; which is to be done by preparing for death and eternity according to the gospel.

2. If there be a future state of rewards and punishments, and this be evident, even by the light of nature; let not infidels deceive themselves by the fond imagination, that they are never to be called to an account for their conduct; but are to die like the beasts that perish. Let them not foolishly say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." And let no man embrace infidelity with the idea that it relieves him from all ground of fear of a future state, and of the punishment to be inflicted in it.

3. How important is time! It is the only opportunity we have to prepare for eternity. As our conduct is in time, so our eternal state will be. If we be wise and virtuous; if we walk in the narrow way of holiness, our eternity will be blef-

fed. But if not ; if we cast off fear and restrain prayer ; if we love not God supremely and our neighbour sincerely ; if we live without God and without Christ in the world ; we must expect to be rejected by our final judge, saying, " Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

4. LET us be sincerely thankful for divine revelation. By this we are clearly taught a future state, and that upon divine authority ; and are not left to the mere deductions of obscure reason. By this we are taught, not only the reality, but the *nature* of the future state ; and what it is to be, with respect to men of different characters. We are informed what is to be done by us, that we may be prepared for it ; and the means of preparation are pointed out. All these things demand our sincere gratitude.

5. How much greater are our obligations to virtue and piety than those of the heathen, ancient or modern ! They are greater, in proportion as our light and advantages to know the truth are greater, than those which they enjoyed. To whom much is given, of the same is much required.

6. THEREFORE, if those who live under the light of the gospel, reject this light, or do not comply with it ; they will have so much the more to answer for, as they have more light and more advantage to do their duty. As it will be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for Tyre and Sidon, and even for Sodom itself, than for Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum ; so it will be more tolerable for the heathen tribes of Indians, who inhabit the remote parts of this continent, than for infidels or impenitent sinners, in the United States.

LET this consideration sink into the ears of all such as are concerned in it, and produce a proper effect on their hearts and lives.

ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE.

OR,

The Regeneration and Salvation of Sinners the Effects, solely, of the eternal Purpose, and free Grace of God—

TWO SERMONS, by ELIPHALET STEELE,
Pastor of the church in Paris, State of New-York.

2 TIMOTHY i. 9.

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works; but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.

THE Apostle Paul, who was a surprising instance of grace, takes opportunity, in his writings, very frequently, to call our attention to the doctrines of free grace. Of this, we have an instance in the text before us.

He, first, mentions the safe and happy state of christians. He asserts, not only the certainty of their possession of complete salvation hereafter; but, that they are *now saved*. They exercise, in a degree, the same temper, and enjoy, in a degree, the same happiness, which will be complete, in the future world. Being now

possessed of the christian temper, and assured, by the promises in the covenant of grace, that they shall have possession of future and complete happiness, they are said to be *saved*—saved from the dominion of sin and from condemnation.

WE are next informed, in the text, that a *holy calling* is necessary in order to produce this salvation. *Saved us, and called us with an holy calling.* Those who are saved are in the first place, efficaciously called by divine grace. They are, by divine power and grace, convinced of sin, truly humbled, reconciled to the law and government of God, and to the gospel of Jesus Christ—They are *regenerated*.

MENTION is then made of the ground and cause of this holy calling and salvation. *Not according to our works.* No moral excellency exists in the sinner's character, nor is any thing done by him, antecedently, which operates as a motive in the divine mind, to produce this salvation. *Not according to our works; but according to his own purpose and grace.* The holy calling, experienced by sinners, is a fruit of the purpose, and mere, self moved, good pleasure of God, which designate them to be subjects of grace and salvation.

THE next idea in the text is, that this purpose and grace of God *was given in Christ Jesus.* It is on account of the redemption, by Jesus Christ, that the purpose of God designateth any for salvation, and that any particular sinner is a subject of *the holy calling.* The atonement, made by him, lies as the foundation, as the chief corner stone of the superstructure of grace. This part of the text is full of pleasing, and profitable instruction: *Given us in Christ Jesus, according to God's own purpose and grace.*

THE text concludes, by informing us that this was *before the world began.* If before the world began, it was before time began: and, indeed,

the naked truths, exhibited by the Holy Ghost, in the text, are as follow. God, from eternity, or in eternity, determined to save some, even a particular, select number of mankind. Consequently, whenever any particular sinner is *saved, being called with an holy calling*, or brought into the kingdom of Christ, by the almighty grace of God, there is, in doing this, so far, an accomplishment of the eternal purpose of God, respecting the salvation of that soul. All the good he experiences is a fruit of God's eternal purpose; not a fruit of his own exertions; not in consequence, or in consideration of any moral goodness existing in himself; but a fruit of special grace through Jesus Christ.

THE words of our text will be further attended to, with reference to the following propositions.

I. GOD hath chosen a select number of mankind to salvation.

II. ALL those, who are chosen to salvation, will be called, with an holy calling, or be regenerated.

III. THERE is nothing in the character of a sinner, nor is any thing done by him, which operates as a cause of his holy calling, or as an influencing reason of it.

I. GOD hath chosen a select number of mankind to salvation.

GOD hath not only purposed, in general, to save all who repent and believe; but he hath determined who, and how many of the human race shall be regenerated, justified, and glorified.* *Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* If scripture declarations were candidly attended to, they would

* Rom. viii. 30.

induce us to believe, that God, who is infinitely holy and wise, hath determined, from eternity, the very persons, to whom, he will manifest special grace; who shall unite with Jesus Christ, and finally enjoy eternal life. The Apostle Paul, reciting the history of Jacob and Esau, holds out to view, this sentiment.* *For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* God made this difference between these two, that *his purpose, according to election, might stand.* The same instruction is given us, by those figurative expressions, in which our Lord calls himself the pastor, and believers, the sheep.† *He calleth his own sheep by name.* He names them, calls them, as it were, one by one, calls them, by name. The same idea is expressed by the Apostle.‡ *Nethertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.* Our divine Redeemer, speaking of his disciples, makes a distinction between the traitor, Judas, and the rest.§ *I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen.*

THAT there is a certain number given to Christ, by the Father, who, through grace, shall inherit eternal glory, is evident from sundry passages of his intercessory prayer.∥ He, repeatedly, makes use of the word, *given*, to illustrate the idea. The following words are a specimen: *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* The same truth is further evidenced, by

* Rom. ix. 11, 12, 13.

† John x. 3.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

§ John xiii. 12.

∥ John xvii. 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14.

what Paul says to the brethren. § *God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth.* Parallel with this is another passage. ¶ *According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*

WE may now attend to the nature of the divine act, in election, and consider some of the properties of it.

1. IT is an act of God which is fixed and infallible.

THIS purpose of God is, like himself, unchangeable.* *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.* God never alters his purposes. † *He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth even that he doth.* For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him. If the will of God be thus unchangeable, it is certain that his electing love towards his people is fixed and infallible. ‡ *The foundation of God standeth sure.*

2. THE act of God, in election, is free and gracious.

THERE is nothing in the moral character of those who are chosen to salvation, by which, the mind of God is influenced to make choice of them, rather than of others. The character of all men, in a state of unregeneracy, is, essentially, the same. Jews and Gentiles, in all ages, are in the same state of sinfulness and depravity: || *All under sin.*

RIGHTLY to apprehend the freeness of the divine conduct, in the election of sinners to salva-

§ 2 Thef. ii. 13.

† Job xxiii. 13. 14.

¶ Eph. i. 4, 5.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

* Rom. xi. 29.

|| Rom. iii. 9.

tion, it is absolutely necessary that our ideas of the human character be formed upon the plan of divine revelation. In the holy scriptures, we find depravity, *total depravity of heart*, to be the character which belongs to all mankind. § *Dead in trespasses and sins*. All are in a state of moral death: and, in such a state, there cannot be any amiable moral quality, nor can there exist any holy exercises, or gracious affections. Life and death are opposites. He, therefore, who is spiritually dead, is, in no degree, spiritually alive. To say that a man is, at the same time, and in the same sense, both dead and alive, is a manifest contradiction in terms. Consequently, the words last quoted are a clear testimony of the doctrine of total depravity.

THAT NO moral exercises, but such as are sinful, are put forth, by depraved man, from his sinful, impenitent heart, is evident from numerous and various divine testimonies. Let us attend, with solemnity, to the testimonies given by the holy and omniscient God, concerning the wickedness and depravity of mankind.* *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*. We cannot evade the force of this testimony, by supposing it descriptive only of the character of the antediluvians. We find, by the testimony of God, the same character, universally, in the human race, thousands of years after the deluge. † *The Lord looked down from heaven, upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside; they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one*. Nor may we think to invalidate this divine testimony,

§ Eph. ii. 1.

* Gen. vi. 5.

† Psalm xiv. 2, 3.

by saying that it respected only the Jews, who always exhibited an exceedingly vicious character; who were a *stiff-necked and rebellious people*. For the apostle quotes these expressions of the psalmist, and applies them to the character of both Jews and Gentiles, meaning all mankind, in his day. † *They are all under sin*. The close of the melancholy description, in the same connection, is, *Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes*. The apostle adds, in the same epistle, another testimony. || *When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness*. Not free from obligation to be holy; but perfectly destitute of holiness.

THUS the holy and omniscient God views the character of mankind. He pronounces the human heart wholly corrupt, totally sinful. It follows, therefore, as a consequence, which cannot be denied, that there is nothing existing in the character of that person, who is an object of God's electing love, which operates as a reason why he should be chosen to salvation, rather than any other person.

FROM all which, it appears, that the election of God is free and gracious.* *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth; observe the appellation, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*. By the Apostle, this is resolved into the good pleasure of God's will. † *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*.

† Rom. iii. 9.

* Mat. xi. 25, 26.

|| Rom. vi. 20.

† Eph. i. 5.

3. ELECTION is a sovereign act of God.

WHEN we attend to events which take place, under the divine government, we are, sometimes, capable of discovering the reasonableness and propriety of them. But, at other times, and respecting other events, divine wisdom is not so conspicuous. It is seen, only, by faith. The short line of our understanding cannot fathom the depths of infinite wisdom. We find this to be the case respecting the subject under consideration.

WHY God chooseth one particular person to salvation, and not another, he assigns no other reason, but *his own good pleasure*. In his sovereign will, we must acquiesce. Thus saith the high and lofty ONE who inhabiteth eternity. † *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy upon whom I will shew mercy.* Again, § *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion* — *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.*

LET our proud hearts oppose this doctrine, and quarrel with it ever so bitterly, yet we must finally believe it, or lay aside our Bibles. There is but this alternative: we must believe in the sovereignty of God's election, or give up divine revelation.

4. ELECTION is an eternal act of God.

IN the text, it is said to have been *before the world began*. If so, it was before the person elected had existence. The same sentiment is again expressed by the Apostle. || *According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world.* Indeed, the plan of redemption, by which God, made a display of his manifold wisdom and

† Exod. xxxiii. 17. § Rom. ix. 15, 18. || Eph. i. 4.

grace, was* *According to the ETERNAL PURPOSE, which he purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

IT hence appears, that all, *who are called with an holy calling*, were, by the purpose of God, chosen, to be vessels of mercy, even before they had existence.

No objection, it is presumed, can be urged against the eternal purpose of God, which does not lie, with equal force, against his present purpose. If a sinner be regenerated by divine power, it is certain that God previously determined to regenerate him. We cannot conceive of divine operation, but in consequence of divine determination. The cause is always prior to the effect. If therefore, it be suitable that God should regenerate a sinner, it is equally suitable that he should previously determine to do it. If it be suitable that he should, for one previous moment, have this determination, it is just as suitable that he should have it, an hour, a day, a year, or any period of time, since the sinner had existence.— And if it be suitable that God should determine in time, that the event should take place, it is equally suitable that this determination should exist in his mind from eternity. Consequently, objection against God's eternal election and purpose implies objection against his present purpose.

BESIDES. If there be any, who live under the light of the gospel, so grossly ignorant of the plan of revealed doctrines, as to deny the eternity of the election and decree of God, respecting the regeneration of sinners; on this ground, they must, of necessity, deny the divine immutability, omniscience, and perfection. For if, at this moment, there exist, in the divine mind, any purpose or determination, which did not exist there be-

* Eph. iii. 21.

fore, it implies a change of mind. And if the divine mind be now possessed of any knowledge, of which it was not before possessed, this implies that God hath been, so far, ignorant; and, in both cases, imperfect. From all which, it is evident that all the knowledge of God, all his purposes and decrees are eternal as his existence. God's electing love is, therefore, eternal.

5. THE elect are chosen by God, *in Christ Jesus. According to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus.* The sinner, who is an object of God's electing love, is chosen to salvation, not because holiness is found in his heart; but that he might be made holy. * *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* By the prophet, † those who are elected are considered in the state and character of sinners.— *When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live.*

IN the constitution of the plan of redemption, Jesus Christ is appointed head of the elect; in and by him they are chosen: † *I have chosen you out of the world.* By him they are governed. § *And hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church.* From him they receive all support, and all supplies. The elect, therefore, are the subjects of God's grace, pursuant to his purpose, in and by Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

II. ALL those who are chosen to salvation will be called with an holy calling, or, will be regenerated.

* Eph. i. 4, 5. † Ezek. xvi. 6. ‡ John xv. 19. § Eph. i. 22.

ALL who are to be vessels of mercy, according to his eternal purpose, will, by the special grace of God, be called into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Those whom God foreknows will, according to his foreknowledge, and in consequence of his predestination, be conformed to the image of his son. * *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son.* A conformity to the character of Jesus Christ is that, to which, the elect are predestinated. For, it is added, *Whom he did predestinate, them he also called.* There is an infallible connection between the eternal purpose of God in election, and that holy calling which sinners experience, when, by the special grace of God, their hearts are renewed.

THE way is now prepared to explain the nature of this *holy calling*, which is regeneration.

1. IT is a divine operation.

† *WHICH were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* Grace is not conveyed by natural generation. *Not of blood.* ‡ *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.* *Not of the will of the flesh;* because, || *They that are in the flesh cannot please God.* Nor is regeneration a fruit of the exertion of the will of man; because, § *The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* BUT OF GOD. It is a divine operation. ¶ *We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath foreordained that we should walk in them.*

2. IT is a powerful work of God.

REGENERATION is a work, in which, there is a most magnificent display of divine omnipotence.

* Rom. viii. 29. † John i. 13. ‡ Job xiv. 4. || Rom. viii. 8.
§ Rom. viii. 7. ¶ Eph. ii. 10.

He, who is *mighty to save*, now goes forth, *in the greatness of his strength, conquering and to conquer*. Satan is the *strong man armed*: Jesus Christ is the *stronger*: regeneration is the *conquering of the strong man, and the dividing of his spoils*.

It is thus that king Jesus, by his irresistible power and grace, takes possession of the sinner's heart, which was the place of Satan. Divine omnipotence is as gloriously displayed, when God, by his grace, renews the sinner's heart, as it was, when he raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and exalted him to glory and honour, at the right hand of the majesty on high. * *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power; which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places*. Here is a display of power, of exceedingly great and mighty power, manifested towards those who believe, when God, by regenerating grace, first subdues their hearts to himself. Regeneration is, by the Apostle, considered as a *spiritual resurrection, and creation*.† Hence may be inferred the absolute necessity of almighty power to effect it. And further; such is the temper of sinners' hearts, so intirely, so fixedly, so stubbornly opposed to holiness, that no power short of that which is *all power*, can form them to holiness, and make all things new. Thus, in the light of scripture, the work of regeneration appears to be a powerful work of God: a work, indeed, of power absolutely *irresistible*.

WHEN divine omnipotence operates, the designed effect will certainly be produced. As in natural creation, God said, *Let there be light and*

* Eph. i. 19, 20. † Eph. ii. 1, 10.

*there was light, let us make man, and man existed; so, in spiritual creation, God speaks, and it is done, God breathes divine life into the soul, and it is alive. Divine power, in this case, as well as in the other, operates irresistibly. * Thy people SHALL be willing in the day of thy power. The sinner, who is spiritually dead, can no more effectually resist almighty power, operating, in a way of sovereign grace, on his heart, than those, who lie in the embraces of natural death, mouldered to dust in the silent regions of the dead, can resist, effectually, the voice of the archangel, when he sounds the universal summons, at the day of judgment, to call the sleeping dust into life again. As those, who are under the power of natural death, will then arise and come forth, at the voice of Christ; so, when the Son of God, by his powerful and quickening word, speaks to the sinner's heart, who is under the power of spiritual death, he hears his voice, and lives. † Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear SHALL live.*

3. THIS, however, does not imply any coercion, or force upon the will of mankind. To speak of forcing the will is a contradiction in terms. Because, the idea of voluntary agency is inseparably connected with the idea of the will. And, although we may not be able to explain the manner of divine operation, and show how divine power effects the work of regeneration, and inclines the will of man, in consistency with the freedom of all its volitions; yet we must not explode this truth. Should we explode every truth, and deny every fact, which we cannot fully com-

* Psalm cx. 3. † John. v. 25.

prehend and explain, very little would be left, with which our minds would be satisfied.

IT hath been already proved, by the clearest testimony of divine revelation, that the renovation of the sinner's heart is a divine work, powerful and irresistible: and, at the same time, every one finds by experience, every one feels, that he follows his own inclinations, does as he pleases, and is free, in all his volitions. Here, therefore, are two facts, one learnt from divine revelation, which is this, that God doth incline the will of sinners; and the other from experience, which is this, that we act freely, and not by compulsion. Of these truths we are convinced, by the clearest evidence, and ought to be satisfied.

BE it further observed, christians of twenty years standing have the utmost assurance of their own freedom. But they are, certainly, no more free, than in the first gracious exercise of their hearts. Because, all gracious exercises, through life, are of the same nature, terminate on the same objects, and, are from the same cause. The will of the newly regenerated is as free from compulsion, in the first right choice, as in the last, be it ever so late. The first holy affections in the renewed heart are, indeed, as free as any wicked affections, which existed antecedently to the work of regeneration.

FINALLY. Those who were regenerated twenty years ago are as dependent on God, for preservation in spiritual life, as they were, for the beginning of spiritual life, when *dead in trespasses and sins*. The Apostle, speaking of christians, says, *they are kept, by the power of God.** The same power of God, which forms the babe in Christ, supports and preserves the aged christian. He

* 1 Pet. i. 5.

would not, without immediate, divine influence, continue to be a christian. He lives wholly and absolutely dependent on constant supplies of grace. If, therefore, the exercises of aged christians be free, there is equal freedom in the first exercise of the new born babe in the family of Christ.

4. THE change which takes place, in regeneration, is instantaneous. It is not affected, gradually, or progressively, by a succession of divine operations, but the change, consequent upon the operation of divine power on the heart, is instantaneous. The immediate fruit of this divine operation is holy or gracious affection. A strict and concise definition of regeneration is as follows: *It is a cessation of the exercise of supreme and intire enmity against God, and the immediately consequent exercise of supreme love to him, in the heart.* The exercise of supreme enmity ceases, and the exercise of supreme love commences, by divine operation alone, without the interference of any means whatsoever, and without any previous disposition of will, in the sinner, co-operating with divine power, as a partial cause of the great change which takes place in the sinners heart.

IF, however, we take into view, regeneration, conversion, sanctification, and all christian knowledge and improvement, it is true that the word and providence of God are means of carrying on the work of religion, and of forming the christian character. The word instructs, is the rule of duty; and, by it, we are to estimate our character. Yet the good effect of the word is *through the spirit*.* But, when we speak of regeneration, meaning the first real change of heart, this is not progressive, but immediate; because no means

* 1 Pet. i. 22.

whatever, except divine, almighty power, are made use of to effect it. As, in the creation of the world, *God spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast*; † so, in regeneration, the work is wholly divine, immediate and instantaneous. It is unasked for, by the sinner: ‡ *I am found of them that sought me not.*

IN the case of miracles, the effect immediately follows divine operation. Thus our Lord raised the dead. At the grave of Lazarus, *He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth, and he that was dead came forth.* To the widow's son he said, *Young man, I say unto thee arise, and he that was dead sat up.* Christ, also, by his word, healed diseases, immediately. But there is no greater miracle, in the kingdom of providence, than regeneration is, in the kingdom of grace. In both cases, it is the same power which operates: in both, the effect is produced without the co-operation of means: and, in both, the effect produced is instantaneous.

5. THE holy calling, by which the elect are called, is, so far, the execution of God's purpose respecting their salvation.

REGENERATION is the first operation on the heart of sinners, in the execution of the benevolent purpose of God respecting their salvation. By this, however, it is not asserted, that, antecedently to a change of heart, nothing takes place in the intellect, different from what is commonly in the minds of the unregenerate. Conviction precedes the divine work of regeneration. The sinner realizes truth: he finds that he has an exceedingly wicked heart: he sees that the law is holy, religion of infinite importance, and yet his heart opposed to it: he is sensible that he lies at

† Psalm xxxiii. 9.

‡ Isai. lxxv. 1.

the mercy of God, and considers his own state as unspeakably dangerous. Such views and feelings do not imply any right exercises of heart. They are no better than the devils and damned may have, to all eternity. But when God, by his almighty grace, bows the stubborn *will* of the sinner, he then, in some degree, executes his eternal purpose respecting the salvation of that particular soul. * *But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

III. THERE is nothing in the character of a sinner, nor is any thing done by him, which operates as a cause of his holy calling, or as an influencing reason of it.

THIS proposition, naturally flows from the expression in the text, *Not according to our works.* Whatever may have been the conduct of the sinner, in attending on means ; or his supposed exertions to obtain regenerating grace ; yet the holy calling, with which he is called, is not a fruit of these exertions ; the renovation of his heart is not connected with them, as an effect with its cause. If there were this connection, the work would not be wholly divine ; but the scriptures assure us that it is, intirely, a work of God.

IF the work of regeneration be divided between God and the sinner, each co-operating with the other, and thus, at last, the sinner be made a *new man* ; to whom must this new man give thanks ? Partly to God, and partly to himself. How shocking the sentiment, when viewed through the medium of divine truth ! But, unscriptural as it is, a very large part of mankind endeavour, strenuouf-

* Titus iii. 4, 5.

ly, to defend it. Alas, the little regard paid to divine revelation, by many who call themselves christians! * *How is the gold become dim, the most fine gold changed!* To say that the sinner co-operates with God, in his effectual calling, and exerts himself to obtain regenerating grace, is as absurd as to say that he is spiritually alive, while *dead in trespasses and sins*; or that he is heartily exerting himself to obtain what his very soul abhors.

IN the word of God, we learn that the sinner's character is perfectly vile, completely wicked: not any thing, therefore, which is done by him hath the least influence, as a cause, or reason of the renovation of his heart. † *Not according to our works.* ‡ *Not by works of righteousness which we have done.*

THE truth of the proposition may be evinced by the following observations.

1. THE heart puts forth no holy exercises, until it is renewed by divine grace. § *The carnal mind is enmity against God.* Mere enmity is inconsistent with supreme love to God, or holy affection. Jesus Christ asserts, || *An evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil.* Again, ¶ *A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit—neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.* In this scripture light, we may, with safety, assert, that there cannot be any thing in the sinner's character, which is an influencing cause of his regeneration: because, all the affections of his heart are stubbornly and fixedly opposed to holiness.

2. SPECIAL grace is not granted on account of any foreseen goodness in the sinner. Those whom God hath predestinated to eternal life, he *predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son:*

* Lam. iv. 1.
§ Rom. viii. 7.

† Text.
|| Luke. vi. 45.

‡ Tit. iii. 5.
¶ Mat. vii. 17. 18.

and, in consequence of his predestination, they are *called*.† By this, it appears, that the image of Christ did not exist in them, before they were predestinated. And, to say, that God predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son, because he foresaw that they would be thus conformed, is a mode of expression, both improper and unscriptural. In the scriptures, we are taught that those who are the objects of the distinguishing grace of God, in effectual calling, experience this grace, not because he foresaw that they would be holy; but that he might, pursuant to his gracious purpose make them holy. * *According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy.* It is, from this passage, evident, that regeneration is a fruit of election, and not election a fruit of regeneration. It is also to be noticed that the faith which the gospel requires, and with which salvation is connected, is not exercised, prior to God's ordination to eternal life; but is a consequent fruit of it. † *As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.*

THE true state of the case therefore, if we may depend on scripture representation, is as follows. Regeneration is a fruit of election, and salvation a fruit of regeneration. Between election and regeneration, and between this and salvation, there is an infallible connection. Those who are elected, will be regenerated; and those who are regenerated, will be saved. § *God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth.* Gracious affections are exercised, by the sinner, only in consequence of divine operation: and we

† Rom. viii. 30, 31.

† Acts xiii. 48.

* Eph. i. 4.

§ Rom. xi. 6.

cannot conceive of divine operation, except in consequence of previous divine determination.

WHEN, therefore, God, by his special grace, brings a soul into the kingdom of Christ, it is a fruit of *his own purpose and grace*: not a fruit of foreseen holiness, not in a view of any moral excellency in the sinner's character.

3. To suppose that regenerating grace is bestowed on a sinner, on account of some moral excellency in his character, is totally inconsistent with the idea of salvation by grace. The word of God, uniformly, ascribes the *whole* of the salvation of sinners, from the first purpose of it, in the eternal counsel of Deity, to the completion of it, in endless glory, to free grace. The Apostle argues thus: *¶ If by grace then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.*

4. If there be any thing in the sinner's character, or if there be any thing done by him, which operates as a *cause of his holy calling*, he hath whereof to glory. This supposition affords our proud hearts a most ample ground of boasting. Agreeably to this sentiment (and it is the sentiment of multitudes in the christian world) the prayer of the pharisee was highly to be commended. * *God I thank thee that I am not as other men are.* In like manner, every convert to Christ, if he had done any thing, which was a reason why he should be called with an holy calling, may lift his hands and eyes to heaven, and, with the same outward gravity, but inward pride, may say, *God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers.—I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

¶ Rom. xi. 6.

* Luke xviii. 11.

But this language is stated, by our Lord, only to be reproved. The scripture doctrine of grace wholly excludes boasting. * *Not of works lest any man should boast.* † *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.* We, therefore, see the propriety of the conduct of the publican, who, with an affecting view of the prodigious wickedness of his heart, and sensible that he lay at the mercy of God, to be disposed of as he saw fit, *smote upon his breast, saying, God be MERCIFUL to me a sinner.* ‡ Sinners have nothing to plead, but mere mercy: consequently, have no recommending qualifications for the holy calling of God. All their holiness, be it more or less, is from God. § *By the grace of God I am what I am.* || *We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* ¶ *Of his fulness have all we received and grace for grace.*

FROM the observations which have been made, and the testimonies of scripture which have come into view, under the last general proposition, it must appear, with abundant evidence, that *there is nothing in the character of a sinner, nothing is done by him, which operates as a cause of his holy calling.* It is, wholly, the operation, and effect of the sovereign, infinite goodness and grace of God, in the accomplishment of his eternal, and immutable, and infinitely benevolent purpose and decree.

* Eph. ii. 9.

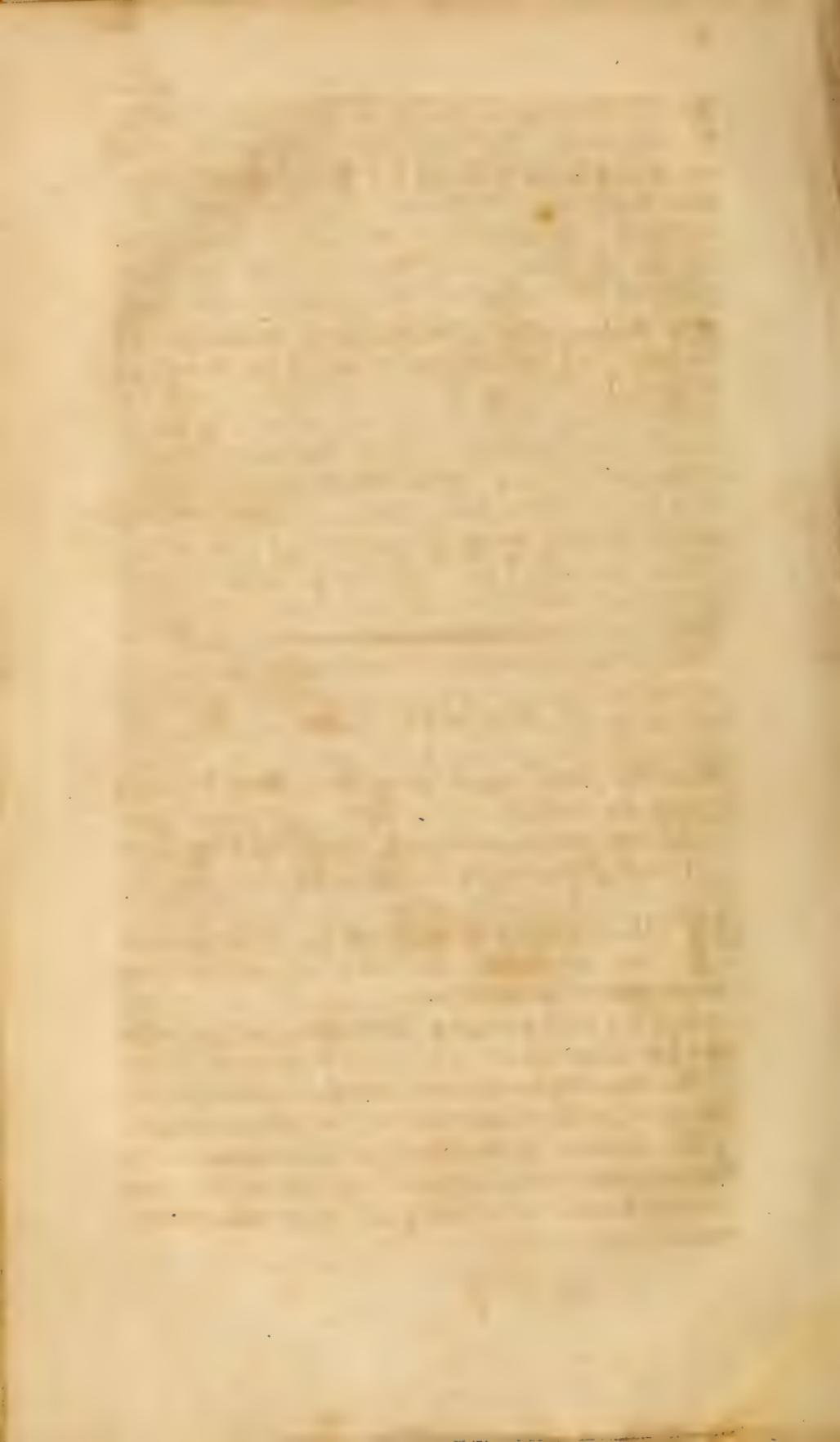
† Rom. iii. 27.

‡ Luke xviii. 13.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 10.

|| Eph. ii. 10.

¶ John i, 16.



ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE.

OR,

The Regeneration and Salvation of Sinners the Effects, solely, of the eternal Purpose, and free Grace of God—

S E R M O N I I .

2 TIMOTHY i. ix.

WHO hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works ; but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.

THE discussion of these words, in the preceding discourse, has been, by attending to three general propositions.

I. GOD hath chosen a select number of mankind to salvation.

II. ALL those who are chosen to salvation will be called, with an holy calling, or be regenerated.

III. THERE is nothing in the character of a sinner, nor is any thing done by him, which operates as a cause of his holy calling, or as an influencing reason of it.

HAVING proved, from scripture, each of these propositions, it remains only to make an IMPROVEMENT.

I. FROM our subject, we learn, that we are all in the hands of God to be disposed of according to his own purpose. If sinners, in order to be saved, must be *called with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to God's own purpose and grace*; they, certainly, lie at the mercy of God. He hath the sole disposal of them; and, according to his eternal, and infinitely wise counsel, orders all things respecting their salvation or damnation; and this, in a manner, most conducive to the general good of the universe.

SHOULD any consider these as presumptuous expressions, they are requested candidly to review those passages, quoted from the scriptures of truth, in support of the doctrinal part of the preceding discourse. If they candidly and faithfully attend to these divine declarations, and, without prejudice or prepossession, form their opinions accordingly, they will certainly have full conviction of the universal agency and supremacy of JEHOVAH.* *His kingdom ruleth over all.* If we discard this doctrine, we discard a fundamental doctrine—a doctrine, on which the security of the church depends: we subvert the plan of redemption, and the scheme of christianity: we annihilate the doctrines of grace, and place the affairs of the universe in a state of the greatest uncertainty. Very little more than this would be infallibly certain, and of this there would be no doubt, that, if we should exist eternally, we should be eternally miserable.

IN the word of God, we have plain testimony, that the continuance of the church, the support of christianity in this world, and the salvation of

* Psalm ciii. 19.

sinners, are the fruits of God's eternal decree, the effects of his *determinate counsel*, of his *own purpose and grace*: and that the purpose of God respecting these things, and all other things, was fixed and established, in his infinite mind, *before the world began*. We have, also, evidence that his counsel will stand forever. * *The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.* † *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*

IN a view of these observations, some, perhaps, with an indignant frown, will exclaim, ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE! Is this the case? Are we all in a state of absolute dependence? Yes, we are; and how highly doth the proud heart of man resent the thought! But why not resent the thought that we are creatures? Creatures we are; consequently in a state of absolute dependence on the Creator. We exist, creatures, and, unless we could emerge from a state of created existence, and array ourselves with all the majesty, dominion, and perfection, of the only true and living God, it is utterly impossible that our existence should be any other, but a dependent existence. No being, but JEHOVAH, in the whole circle of existence, is independent. Men, therefore, would act as consistently, should they quarrel because they are not Gods, as they do, when they quarrel because they are dependent on God. In plain truth, the quarrel terminates in nothing short of this. Proud men would, if they could, wrest the throne and government from the hands of Deity, and enter, themselves, into full possession of unlimited dominion, and supreme sovereignty. † *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* § *This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly that said in her*

* Psal. xxxiii. 11. † Isai. xlvi. 10. ‡ Exod. v. 2. § Zeph. ii. 15.

heart, I am and there is none beside me. § We are lords ; we will come no more unto thee. || The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. Such is the language of the heart of every impenitent sinner.

OUR dependence on God, and his right to dispose of us, appear by the following considerations.

1. HE gave existence to all creatures. † *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ¶ All things were made by him.* Every creature, of every kind, received existence, by the creative power of God. He is the great first cause of all things.

2. HE not only created, but upholds and supports the whole creation. Creatures, after they have received existence, can no more uphold and support themselves in being, than they could, at first give themselves existence, independent on the power of God. He not only created, but *upholdeth all things, by the word of his power.*** He feeds and supports all who have need of such things. From the storehouse of his goodness, he deals out liberal supplies to feed and support his creatures. * *The eyes of all wait on thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.*

3. FROM these premises, it clearly follows that God hath an absolute right to all creatures. If he creates, preserves, and provides for all creatures, all are his property, in the most complete sense. All are wholly dependent on him, as is acknowledged by the prophet. † *We are the clay, and thou our potter ; and we are all the work of thy hand.* Now if God hath such an indisputable right to creatures, it will undeniably follow,

§ Jer. ii. 31. || Psal. xiv. 1. † Gen. i. 1. ¶ John i. 3.
** Heb. i. 3. * Psal. cxlv. 15, 16. † Isai. lxiv. 8.

4. THAT he hath a right, in the most complete sense of the term, *right*, to dispose of them and of every thing respecting them, as, in infinite wisdom, he may see fit. † *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own ?*

WE are sensible that the proud heart will not relish this sentiment. But, whether we are willing or unwilling, that God should have this right, he certainly assumes it, and conducts accordingly. Holy men of old have concurred with this divine claim, and ascribed to God absolute, universal, and uncontrollable, sovereignty over all his creatures ; as appears by the following passages of scripture. || *See now, that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me : I kill, and I make alive, I wound, and I heal ; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. § The Lord killeth, and the Lord maketh alive ; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich ; he bringeth low, and lifteth up. ¶ And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing : and he doth according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou ?* The Apostle Paul stated this prerogative of God, and gave his own concurrence, under divine inspiration. * *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. † In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* According to these scripture declarations we find that God claims a right to

† Matt. xx. 15.

¶ Dan. iv. 35.

|| Deut. xxxii. 39.

* Rom. ix. 15, 18.

§ 1 Sam. ii. 6.

† Eph. i. 11.

dispose of his creatures; and, by his faithful servants, the justice of his claim is acknowledged.

HOWEVER disagreeable to our selfish hearts the doctrine of absolute dependence may be, the fact is, we are dependent, and dependent we *must* be; because we are creatures. God is the creator and upholder of all things; therefore, supreme: he is the absolute sovereign: and, without asking leave, or advice, of proud mortals, of sinful worms of the dust, *HE will do as he pleaseth, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.* Let us feel, therefore, that God is God, and that we lie at the mercy of God.

II. GOD is no respecter of persons.

THERE are those who say, that the doctrine of divine sovereignty, and of salvation by particular election and grace, implies partiality in God, and represents him as a respecter of persons.

IT behoves them to attempt a proof of what they assert; rather than us to prove the negative assertion.

To hold up light, however, respecting this matter, the objector is requested to view the character of mankind in the same light, in which it is represented by the word of God—a character wholly sinful and depraved, wholly ill-deserving. Partiality respects the treatment of characters, already formed; and not the formation of characters. Consequently, although one be an object of God's election to salvation, and another not; yet both standing on an equal footing, as to character, both being wholly sinful; and election respecting, primarily, salvation from sin, or the formation of a new character; there is evidently, no room, no foundation, in the case, for the exercise of partiality. Although, by the purpose of God, one, who is *dead in trespasses and sins*, be a vessel of mercy,

and another a *vessel of wrath*, yet, * *God is no respecter of persons.*

THE objector is further requested to examine, with candour, those passages in the records of truth which treat of the divine conduct in this matter. The result of examination will be, that the character of those who are the vessels of mercy is not the motive, by which the divine mind is influenced, in their election to salvation. There is, doubtless, perfect reason and propriety in the divine conduct; but the particular motives for his choosing one, and not another are, by us, inscrutable. That which our Saviour hath taught us to say, in the case, is, † *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

LET all these considerations be laid together, and viewed with an attentive mind, and, it is presumed, no one can, with a clear conscience, say that the doctrine of election represents God to be a respecter of persons. Who, among the disputers of this world, can have the confidence to say that God is a respecter of persons, because Paul is in heaven, and Judas in hell? None but such as have atheistical hearts, which say, † *There is no God*, or deistical heads, which deny divine revelation.

III. THE subject supports the doctrine of God's immutability.

IT is generally granted that immutability is essential to Deity. Every one, indeed, who believes in the existence and perfection of God, must believe in his immutability. But to hold, as many do, that God is immutable, and yet, deny his eternal decree and ordination of events, is a scheme, embarrassed with inexplicable difficulties. The divine purpose, and divine immutability, mutually

* Acts x. 34.

† Matt. xi. 26.

‡ Psalm xiv. 1.

and necessarily, imply each other. Immutability implies that all the knowledge and purposes of God are eternal. If God have any knowledge and choice respecting all events, and be immutable, he certainly hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass. Those who deny the doctrine of God's eternal election and pre-ordination of events, have formed ideas of a God, who is imperfect in knowledge, and subject to continual change and alteration. If a scheme of religious sentiments be formed upon such ideas of God, it will be, not only inconsistent with that which is revealed in the oracles of truth, but, also, absurd in the eye of reason. If God be not unchangeable, he is imperfect; and if imperfect, then not the true God. If there be a God, he is immutably perfect, and his purposes are eternal. Those, therefore, who deny the eternity of his purposes, deny his immutability and perfection, which is, implicitly, denying the being of God.

LET such, therefore, as oppose these doctrines, consider their prodigious wickedness, and be astonished at the atheism which lurks in their hearts: Let them be humbled under a sense of it and *repent as in dust and ashes*. And let us all be satisfied with that view which God gives us, in his word, of the immutability of his nature; and with every sentiment connected with it. † *He is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doth.* ‡ *For I am the Lord, I change not.* § *With whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

IV. By this subject, we are led to conceive that christianity is not a catholic religion.

If the christian religion be called catholic, because it is a religion, the precepts of which, all

† Job xxiii. 13.

‡ Mal. iii. 6.

§ James i. 17.

mankind are under obligation, immediately and universally, to obey; and the doctrines of which, all are under obligation, wherever they are revealed, immediately to believe; in this sense, it is readily admitted. It is a religion, proper for sinful men, universally. But there are many, undoubtedly, extremely fond of calling christianity a catholic religion, who neither believe its doctrines, nor practise its duties. They pretend great veneration for the *catholic religion*, as they call it; but, at the same time, abuse the character of those who most zealously defend the doctrines, pathetically urge the duties, and distinguishingly explain and inculcate the belief and practice of real christianity. Men of this description are, by them, called bigots, enthusiasts, contracted, ungenerous, void of catholic sentiments; who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Those who reproach the zealous christian in this manner, esteem arguments, in defence of naked truth, to be no better than *babbling*.†

If the system of doctrines contained in the bible be divine, it certainly is a perfect system; and if so, we are under obligation to believe the doctrines, as they are revealed. † *If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him all the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life. "Thus saith the Lord,"* is authority sufficient; and demands our immediate belief of all that the Lord saith. Where then do we find room for catholicism in our faith. Most certainly, for the least deviation from revealed truth, we are criminal.

THE holy scriptures contain, not only a system of doctrines, which we are bound to believe, but

† Acts xvii. 18.

‡ Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

also, a system of duties, which we are bound to practise. Are we at liberty, notwithstanding, to do, or not to do, as we think fit? Or, may we substitute, with impunity, our opinions, in the room of God's precepts? Nothing of this kind is tolerated. We may not vary, alter, add to, or take from the divine precepts, one tittle. Whatever belongs to the worship or service of God, must be done according to divine direction. In building the tabernacle, Moses was allowed, in no particular, to follow his own taste; but, in every thing, he must conform to the divine direction. * *For see (saith he) that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount.* Naaman, the Syrian, supposed that the waters of *Abana* and *Parphar*, were better than the waters of Israel; and, doubtless, there was, in those waters, as much efficacy to cure the leprosy, as in the waters of Jordan. The divine precept made all the difference. Naaman must *go and wash in Jordan, seven times*, or go home with his filthy leprosy about him. There was no room for Naaman to be catholic, and to consult his own opinion.

LIKEWISE, in the terms of salvation, the word of God is pointedly particular. We must have just such a faith, just such a temper of heart, just such a moral character, in nature and kind as God requires or be damned. † *Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* † *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* † *He that believeth not shall be damned.* § *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, let him be accursed.* Where then do we find, in divine revelation, that catholic system of doctrines and duties, of which some are so fond? The bible

* Heb. viii. 5.

† Heb. xii. 14.

‡ Luke xiii. 5.

‖ Mark xvi. 16.

§ 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

admits of no alternative in religion. We must believe and do as the word of God dictates, or suffer a mercilefs, and remedilefs curfe.

LET those, who are on the catholic plan of religion, take heed, lest, in the end, their religion be found to be irreligion.

V. FROM what has been said on this subject, we learn that it is highly important that the ministers of Christ preach the doctrines of the gospel, distinguishingly.

THE doctrines and duties of christianity, essential to be embraced, in order to salvation, lie open, plainly, to the view of the mind, in the holy scriptures: so that the difference of sentiment, among mankind, arises, wholly from the wickedness of their hearts. And, in order to bring into view this wickedness of heart, it is necessary that the sword of the spirit should be unsheathed, and naked truth be presented to the mind. Those doctrines, which are calculated in the best manner to inform the mind, must be explained. When, therefore, the ministers of Christ undertake to exhibit truth publicly, they ought to do it distinguishingly. The priests, under the law, were to *put a difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean.**

AFTER the Jewish church had become exceedingly corrupt, God sharply reprov'd the priests for neglect of duty; and the reproof implied that the degeneracy was owing, in a great measure, to their negligence. † *Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shew'd the difference between the unclean and the clean.* In the same prophecy, the priests duty is again solemnly enjoined. ‡ *They shall*

* Lev. x. 10. † Ezek. xxii. 26. ‡ Ezek. xliv. 23.

teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. The ministers of Christ are, certainly, under equal obligation to distinguish between truth and error, between the religion of the gospel, and the religions of human invention. Many who officiate as public teachers, handle the truths of God's holy word in such a manner, that they discover more fear of the displeasure of man, than of the wrath of the holy One of Israel. Sensible that sinners hate the true character of God, and the doctrines of grace; sensible that depraved human nature abhors the sight of itself; they therefore sew pillows for all armholes. § Such were they of old, who *seduced God's people, saying, peace and, there was no peace: and one builded up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar.* || Oh what a curse, for people to have, among them, such teachers as were, sometimes, among the Jews! ¶ *Her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord, when the Lord hath not spoken.* Such preachers (and many such there are) † *serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and, by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple.* Neither distinguishing between true religion and false; nor holding up, clearly, the depravity of the heart; they flatter sinners, with a half-selfmade righteousness, and thus, *by good words and fair speeches, lull them to sleep in the cradle of selfishness.* The essential doctrines of grace being kept out of view, sinners are, in their own imagination, trained up for heaven, by such preachers, with no better religion than that of a Jew, Mahometan, or Pagan. It is a curse, indeed, for people to have their itch-

§ Ezek. xiii. 18.

† Rom. xvi. 18.

|| Ezek. xiii. 10.

¶ Ezek. xxii 28.

ing ears gratified with such unmeaning, uninstruc-
tive, declamation.

BUT, if we turn our attention to the preaching of the Prophets, of Jesus Christ, and his Apostles; *their discourses* we find levelled at men's consciences. Men *felt* what they said. They held up to view the supremacy of God, the total moral depravity of man, and the doctrines of grace, decidedly in unequivocal terms. They crowded the doctrine of absolute dependence, and made people see that, if ever they were saved, it must be by mere, sovereign grace.

MINISTERS are certainly under obligation, at this day, to imitate the example of preaching, given by inspiration to God's faithful servants; and, especially, the example of Jesus Christ, who spake as *never man spake*; *who preached righteousness in the great congregation*. The command of God to Ezekiel, who was to be an example of the faithful watchman; a command, on sacred record, equally applicable to all the ministers of Christ, is thus, * *THOU SHALT SPEAK MY WORDS UNTO THEM whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*. Ministers must preach God's words and not man's words; and they must preach truth, not in a loose and vague method, keeping at a distance from the heart and duty of man; but they must come home to men's bosoms and business. In a word, they must hold up truth clearly and distinguishingly. All divine, revealed truths must be taught in a manner best calculated to give feelings to the hard hearts of sinners, wound their guilty consciences, and make them tremble like Felix.

VI. By our subject, the doctrine of the certain perseverance of true christians is established.

* Ezek. viii. 30.

SUFFICIENT evidence, it is presumed, may be collected from the scriptures of truth, if not directly from our subject, to prove this doctrine. The language of the Apostle is, † *Whom he did predestinate, them he also called, whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* Here we discover a certain connection between predestination and glorification. All, who are predestinated, are called, are justified, are glorified.

THE question is not, whether it be necessary to salvation, that christians persevere unto the end? This, who denies? But, whether there be not, in the doctrines of grace, full proof, that *all*, who are regenerated, and once exercise holy affection, shall persevere in holiness, and finally obtain eternal life? The affirmative of this question, it is judged, may be established by the following considerations.

1. THE purpose of God respecting the salvation of the elect is immutable. As God is immutable in his nature, so all his purposes are unalterable. Consequently that which respects the salvation of his people is an unchangeable purpose. † *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.* This expresses divine immutability, respecting the very point in question. It is, in other words, by the Apostle expressed thus, § *Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.*

FROM the immutability of God's nature is inferred the immutability of his purpose. All, therefore, who are *called with an holy calling*, pursuant to his eternal purpose, will, unfailingly, inherit eternal life.

2. WHEN the Lord Jesus Christ undertook the work of redemption, he had assurance of success.

† Rom. viii. 30. † Rom. xi. 29. § 2 Tim. ii. 19.

There was a firm promise. * *A seed SHALL serve him.* If God's promise be true; if he be a faithful God, there will always be christians in the world. But if those, who are now the seed of Christ, may apostatize, and become the seed of the serpent, subjects of the Devil's kingdom, it is possible that Christ may at length, not have a seed. One christian may fall as well as another; and if apostacy be possible in one instance, it is possible in every instance. Upon this supposition, it is possible that a positive declaration of God may prove false. This idea is too shocking for a friend of God to entertain a single moment.

THE promises made to Jesus Christ, in the covenant of redemption, are expressed in very strong language. † *He SHALL see his seed—The pleasure of the Lord SHALL prosper in his hands—He SHALL see of the travail of his soul—By his knowledge SHALL my righteous servant justify many.* These promises are expressed in the most positive terms. But if those who belong to the kingdom of Christ, to day, may fall into the Devil's kingdom, to-morrow, these promises were no evidence to Christ, that he should succeed in the work of redemption. If one may revolt from Christ, it is evident that all may revolt, and the whole plan of salvation be frustrated and come to nothing. This absurdity is connected with a denial of the doctrine of saints' perseverance: on this plan, Jesus Christ had no evidence, from the promises, in the covenant of redemption, that he should bring one soul to glory.

3. FROM the promises of God concerning the perpetuity of the church, we learn the doctrine of the infallible perseverance of all true christians. Our Lord, speaking of his church, says, † *The*

* Psal. xxii. 30. † Isai. liii. 10, 11. † Mat. xvi. 18.

gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The church shall not be destroyed. But if all christians may apostatize; on what ground may we depend for the accomplishment of this promise? God promises the church by the prophet Isaiah, † *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.* But if Satan be liable to prosper against individuals, he may against all believers; and, in this way, the church may become extinct. According to this principle, we ask, to whom was the promise of Christ applied. § *Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world?* Not to any man, or number of men; because *none can continue, by reason of death*: not to any order, or society of christians, because there is no certainty that a christian society or individual will remain in all this world. But if we admit the promises of God, respecting the perpetuity of his church, as liable to no defeat, we ought, on the same ground, to admit the doctrine of the certain perseverance of all true christians.

4. OTHER promises we find, in the word of God, which prove the perseverance of all true christians.

WE may now attend to some promises which express the personal safety of every true christian. || *All that the Father giveth me, SHALL come to me; and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out—And this is the will of him that sent me, that EVERY ONE which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.* * *I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* † *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come*

† *Isai. liv. 17.* § *Mat. xxviii. 20.* || *John vi. 37, 40.*
* *John x. 20, 29.* † *John v. 24.*

into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Can any thing be more certain from scripture, than that every christian shall persevere to eternal life? What the Apostle observes, † though it be not, strictly, a promise, is pertinent to the present purpose. Believers have *obtained an inheritance* in Christ; to which they were predestinated by the purpose of God. They are *sealed with that holy spirit of promise*. SEALED; the title to the inheritance is made sure. The spirit of promise, by which they are sealed, is *the earnest of their inheritance*. An earnest is part of payment, in advance, designed as security for the payment of the full sum. Heaven is called *the purchased possession*; because it is made absolutely sure to all believers. Nothing shall separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord. §

5. THE holiness of life, the good fruit which God, in his promises, connects with regenerating grace, is an evidence of perseverance. God promises to give his people a new heart, and represents that the fruit of this shall be, infallibly, good. || *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you—And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and YE SHALL KEEP MY JUDGMENTS AND DO THEM.* The promise of our Saviour is to the same purpose: * *Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* The fruits of grace shall continue: *grace shall be in exercise, shall spring up into everlasting life.* In the same sense, we are to understand the words of the Apostle. † *Whosoever is born of God doth not com-*

† Eph. i. 11, 13, 14. § Rom. viii. 39. || Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

* John iv. 14. † I John iii. 9.

mit sin : for his seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. His seed remaineth in him : that which the Holy Ghost implanted abides, and flourisheth. He cannot apostatize.— The same Apostle had before, † given the reason of all seeming apostacies. *They went out from us, but they were not of us : for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us. If they had ever experienced the holy calling, and become of the number of the faithful, they would, no doubt, have continued : They would have persevered in holiness, unto eternal life.*

6. As a conclusion of the observations, under this inference, we may notice a distinction between that which gives assurance of perseverance, and the cause of perseverance. The assurance is from divine declarations ; but the operation of divine, sovereign power and grace *alone* is the cause of perseverance. The Apostle, emphatically expresses the cause of the perseverance of all the regenerate. § *Who are kept, by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.* The power of God being employed as a cause, we need not wonder at the strong confidence of the perseverance of all saints, expressed by the Apostle. || *Being CONFIDENT OF THIS VERY THING, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

VII. THE doctrines of divine supremacy, and of total heart depravity in man, appear to be essential to religion.

ALL men, who appear to have religion, equally appear to exercise it, on this general plan.—Some men, we find, who, in conversation, are disposed to question the truth of these doctrines, in their extent : but, when they address them-

† Chap. ii. 19.

§ 1 Pet. i. 5.

|| Phil. i. 6.

selves to God in prayer, they make use of the strongest expressions, in giving to God the glory of his sovereignty, and of his universal agency, in the providential and spiritual kingdom: acknowledging his right to do as he pleaseth in both.— They also express, in strong terms, with great propriety of language, with apparent sensibility and humbleness of heart, the total wickedness of their hearts and lives, and their absolute dependence on the sovereign grace and mercy of God for salvation. Such persons would do well to lay aside the prejudices of education, and the modes of conversing on revealed doctrines, to which they are accustomed, and conform, rather, to the sentiments and feelings of an honest, upright, and humble heart. *O Lord God, most high*, is an expression frequently made use of, both in public and private prayer. This expression involves in it all that has been urged, in this discourse, respecting divine sovereignty. And whoever acknowledges himself *dead in trespasses and sins*, acknowledges all that has been insisted on with regard to heart depravity and the necessity of divine efficiency to renew the heart. Whoever acknowledges that he is a creature, acknowledges his absolute dependence on God. How common it is for men to pray over those very sentiments, which they oppose in conversation! And, indeed, the exercise of repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and all external exercises of christian piety, in walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, are so many expressions of the glory and supremacy of God, of the universal, and total apostacy of the human heart, and of the doctrine of absolute dependence, on mere, sovereign, infinite, grace and mercy, through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, for salvation.

THUS it appears that true religion stands on no other ground but this, which the foregoing subject exhibits.

VIII. THE doctrine of election is exceedingly profitable and instructive.

THERE are those who say that this doctrine, though true, ought not to be preached, because it is one of those *secret things* which belong to God, and are unprofitable to mankind. The answer is, what is revealed is not secret: and nothing is more plainly revealed than the doctrine of election. To prove this assertion, it is needless to quote any more texts of scripture. Enough have already come into view to establish the point. The doctrine being revealed, it is a doctrine which *must* be preached, and *must* be believed.

THE doctrine of election is very profitable and instructive, because,

1. IT unfolds the astonishing love of God to sinners. * *We love him because he first loved us.* The eternal purpose, the electing love of God, is the foundation of sinners' salvation: it is the cause of their love to God. The fruit of election is special grace; the fruit of this, love to God; the fruit of this will be eternal salvation. Now consider, what was the character of the elect? Their hearts were all enmity, their conduct, all rebellion. What was their state? A state of condemnation by law, and exposedness to a merciless and remediless curse. How surprising the love of God towards hell-deserving sinners!

2. IN this doctrine, the glory of God's mercy, and the riches of his grace appear illustrious. There is no way, in which grace appears so rich, and divine mercy so glorious, as when viewed through the doctrine of election, flowing from

* 1 John iv. 19.

the purpose and grace of God, in Christ Jesus, before the world began. So that, the more firm and uniform the assent of the mind is to this doctrine, the more sensibly will the heart be affected with the triumphs of mercy, and the astonishing displays of divine grace in the salvation of sinners.

3. THIS doctrine gives all the glory and praise, for the salvation of sinners, to God only.

WHEN a person believes the doctrine of election, he feels his dependence: but if he believe not this doctrine, he feels independent, and unprepared to have an affecting sense of divine grace. When the sinner, under lively views of his depraved and dependent state, has experience of special grace, in the renovation of his heart, he is then prepared to give all the glory to God. Under such impressions of mind, when sinners experience *an holy calling*, they can heartily repeat the scripture declarations. † *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. (By grace are ye saved.)* It is God who predestinates, calls, justifies, glorifies. † As all is from God, to the sinner, in a way of sovereign grace; so all must be to God, from the sinner, in humble and thankful praise. § *Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*

4. THE doctrine of election is calculated to humble the pride of man: it is, therefore a profitable doctrine.

MEN hate God; therefore, hate to give up the throne and sceptre to him. Nothing but selfishness, abominable pride and wickedness of heart, quarrels about the unchangeable purpose, the u-

† Eph. ii. 4, 5.

‡ Rom. viii. 29, 30.

§ Col. i. 12.

niversal dominion and supremacy of Jehovah. If men loved God with all the heart, nothing would more delight and ravish all the soul, than to meditate on the absolute sovereignty, the unlimited dominion and government of him whose *kingdom ruleth over all.*

It was a view of the majesty and supremacy of God, which was a mean of humbling Job. God rehearsed a lecture to him upon the subject of his dominion : Job began to feel. ¶ *Behold I am vile.* But though he had feelings, yet he did not feel sufficiently. God, therefore, proceeded, and in a series of interrogations, called up Job's mind to a close view of his greatness, majesty, and sovereign dominion in the kingdom of providence. † Upon this view of God, Job was effectually humbled before the Most High. ‡ *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

5. THE doctrine of God's unchangeable election and purpose is calculated to afford comfort and support under trouble and affliction.

No truth will compose and comfort the mind, under heart-sinking afflictions, like this ; *The Lord reigneth.* At such a time, if we realize that all things which take place, even the most minute circumstances of them, are wholly under the management of an infinitely wise Being, we may rest assured that all will issue well : the most benevolent purposes will be effected. With such views of the governing providence of God, but with no other, may we sit down under afflictions, calm and satisfied. Oh what a happy consideration, that the divine government is so good, so perfect, and so absolute, that we have reason to

¶ Job xl. 4.

† Job xl. 41.

‡ Job xlii. 5, 6.

rejoice in it at all times ! * *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 flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

6. IN the immutable election and purpose of God, we see the safety of the church in this world. The church, amidst all the storms which beat upon it, amidst numerous and powerful enemies, bent on its destruction, is safe and secure. † *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The Lord of heaven and earth, by his eternal election and decree, hath given assurance of the protection and salvation of his church. Therefore, ‡ Let Israel rejoice in him that made him, let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.*

7. THIS doctrine is calculated to exalt God : it is, therefore, profitable.

No other plan but this, which is founded in divine sovereignty, is calculated to exalt God ; because no other plan gives him the throne and sceptre ; no other plan gives him all the glory. He is the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, in the kingdom of providence and grace. He is *Lord* of heaven and earth, and doth as pleaseth him in both : he doth as pleaseth him in the hearts of men.

To suppose, as some do, that, if man will do his part, God will do his ; that real holiness exists in unregenerate sinners ; or, that, in a view of foreseen holiness, the sinner is regenerated, and consequent upon his regeneration, elected, on condition of his perseverance, to salvation, is a plan which represents the eternal and unchangeable God absolutely dependent, in his operations, on the volitions of his creatures ; and totally igno-

* Hab. iii. 17, 18. † Mat. xvi. 18. ‡ Psal. cxlix. 2.

rant of the future series of events in his own dominions. A system this, Oh how unworthy the majesty of him, who is *King of Kings and Lord of Lords!* How doth it fully and depress the character of him, who is the MOST HIGH!

BUT regeneration and salvation are of divine operation. To God will be ascribed all the glory of the whole work of salvation, in every step of it, from first to last; to him, to him only, and to him forever and ever; and thus will the church sing, § *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.*

8. THE doctrine of election is very profitable, because it has a tendency to promote morality. It is calculated to dispose the minds of people to seriousness and sobriety.

SOME there are, either so grossly ignorant or else have hearts so fixed in enmity against God and revealed truth, that they boldly deny the doctrine of election. To such, no reply will here be made. They are requested, however, to read the Bible through, ONCE, with an honest and candid heart.

OTHERS admit this to be a revealed doctrine, and that it belongs to the christian system of doctrines; but yet urge that it is not *profitable for instruction in righteousness*. It is attended with dangerous consequences: it leads to carelessness and immorality. Such objectors may attend to the following replies.

1. How can this objection be reconciled with the infinite wisdom of the author of revelation? Has an infinitely wise and good being made a revelation, solely for us, a part of which is not profitable for our instruction? Has God revealed to

man things, which, in themselves, are of dangerous tendency—which tend to corrupt his mind and morals? Here, then, is a truth, a truth revealed by God, most abundantly; revealed to men in particular: and yet this truth has no instruction in it for mankind. Not only so, but it is *a truth* attended with the most dangerous consequences. Alas! How absurdly will men talk, to gratify their wicked hearts? They would rather give up their Bibles; yea, would rather give up their God, and charge him foolishly, than part with their proud, selfish, wicked, hearts. Let such an objection never be thought of more, except to repent of it.

2. If this doctrine may not be urged, because the wicked make a bad use of it, it follows that no doctrine in natural or revealed religion, may be urged; because a bad use may be made of any doctrine; and, probably, all the doctrines of truth have been improved, often, to the worst of purposes. If no truth may be discoursed upon, but such as it is impossible for the wicked heart to abuse, it follows that no one truth, in the whole compass of divine revelation, may be a subject of discourse. On the same ground, we may argue, that because some make a bad use of knowledge in general, therefore it is dangerous and wrong to diffuse knowledge in general. A most inconclusive mode of reasoning! By reasoning in this manner, men shew their weakness and inconsistency, as much as if they should reason thus; People in some instances, have made a bad use of light: it is best, therefore, that the sun should never shine. People sometimes drown themselves: it is best, therefore, that there should be no water. Some people are gluttonous: it is, therefore, best that there should be no food. Men would be ashamed to reason thus, about these things; and ashamed

they ought to be, when they argue against spreading, and vindicating the doctrines of grace, because some men improve them to bad purposes.

3. THE most virtuous, humble and inoffensive characters among mankind have been those who believed the doctrines of divine supremacy. The prophets, who were called *holy men of God*, believed and taught these doctrines. Jesus Christ, who was *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*, believed and taught them. The same was the belief and instruction of the Apostles.— Were they men of libertine principles, and immoral lives? The contrary is evident: the doctrine of election had no such effect on them.— With respect to Paul, in particular, the reader may judge, at what time his character appeared most odious; whether before, or after his belief of these doctrines: when he was *haling men and women, and committing them to prison*, or when he believed and taught, that *God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion*. This Apostle plainly testified, not only by his own conduct, but in writing, that the doctrines of grace do not favour libertinism, or, in the least degree, promote immorality, but the reverse. * *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*. This is the genuine influence of the doctrines of grace, as well as the effect of the exercises of the grace of God, in the conversion of sinners.

IX. IN the view of human depravity, as stated in this discourse, we learn that it is consistent for God to require of unregenerate sinners the immediate practice of duty.

* Tit. ii. 11, 12.

As long as sinners are under the power of *the carnal mind*, they are wholly inimical to God: but their supreme hatred to God doth not release them from obligation to love him supremely.— If it did, the very idea of moral obligation would be annihilated. Those who are public instructors in religion, *must* describe the human character, according to scripture representation: and having done this, they *must* urge and direct sinners, even in a view and consideration of the wickedness of their hearts to immediate repentance, and immediate compliance with the divine precepts. Sinners must be treated as moral agents.

BUT some, perhaps, will reply, that this is inconsistent. To tell unregenerate sinners that they are spiritually dead, and yet call upon them to repent and believe, and immediately become spiritually alive; to tell them that they hate God perfectly, and yet that they ought, immediately to love God with all the heart; to tell them that they cannot come to Christ, except the Father draw them; and yet that they must come, immediately, must come or be damned, is said to be very inconsistent. To which we reply,

I. WHEN the ministers of Christ treat sinners in this manner, they exactly imitate the example of Jesus Christ.

JESUS CHRIST, when preaching to sinners, said, ** No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.* We cannot believe, unless we are the subjects of special grace. Yet the same divine teacher urges the obligation to believe; and calls upon sinners to come to him immediately. † *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst,*

* John vi. 44.

† John vii. 37.

let him come unto me and drink. The impenitent sinner is called upon by God to repent. † Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die? § Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon. God now commandeth all men, every where, to repent; and his first commandment, addressed to all men, consequently to sinners, is; Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart.

PASSAGES of scripture to this purpose, in which God requires of sinners immediate penitence and holiness are almost numberless. Those faithful ministers, therefore, who direct and urge sinners to repent and believe, to love and obey God, immediately, are imitators of that mode of instruction which is found in the word of God. They give the same directions which God gives, and to persons of the same character. Say not, therefore, that it is inconsistent, to urge unregenerate sinners to the practice of virtue immediately.

2. RIGHTLY to understand how to treat those who are under the power of spiritual death, it is necessary to understand in what that death consists. Spiritual death consists in something, for which, we are either blameworthy or not blameworthy. If we be not blameworthy for being in a state of spiritual death, we are not blameworthy for any of the fruits and effects of such a state. The innumerable sins, which are acted out against God and man, are nothing more than different operations and fruits of that same temper of heart,

† Ezek. xviii. 30, 31. § Isai. lv. 7.

in which human depravity, or spiritual death consists. So that, if we be not blameworthy for that, in which spiritual death consists, it follows, that none of those actions which men call *crimes* deserve this odious epithet—men *cannot* do an act which is sinful—no one *can be* justly blamed, let him do what he may.

BUT God, in his word, represents the character of unregenerate sinners to be exceedingly vile and criminal, because it is altogether sinful. This is an evidence that human depravity, or spiritual death consists in something, for which man is wholly blameworthy.

ALL virtue, or holiness, is summed up in love to God; all vice, or sin, in selfishness, or hatred to God. Love and hatred are acts of the will. An act, or exercise of opposition to God is as truly an act of choice, or inclination of the will; as an act or exercise of supreme love to God is an act of choice, or inclination of the will. Every exercise of love to God is a voluntary act of the creature who loves; and every exercise of hatred to God is a voluntary act of the creature who hates: and by these voluntary exercises, moral beings form their moral character. Wherever supreme regard to God exists, there exists a holy character; and wherever supreme regard to self exists, there exists a sinful character. In whatever person gracious affections exist, they are the person's *own* affections; and, in whatever person selfish affections exist, they are the person's *own* affections. By this, it appears that the character of every person is according to the temper of his heart; and his conduct is good or bad, praiseworthy or blameworthy, as the temper of his heart is. * *A good man, out of the good treasure of*

* Luke vi. 45.

his heart, bringeth forth that which is good ; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil : for of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaketh.

IF, therefore, mankind form a character by mental exercise, if the voluntary choice or exercise of heart which takes place be the person's *own* choice or exercise, hence will appear the propriety of God's commanding sinners, in his word, and by his ministers, immediately to repent, to believe, to be obedient and holy. The reason is because spiritual death consists in voluntary exercise or choice—in present opposition of heart to God. Nor is there any thing, but only present, heart opposition, which lies in the way of the sinner's exercising *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* * *And ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.* This being the only obstacle, if sinners should be finally damned, their spiritual death, their opposition of heart to God, will be the cause of their damnation. It is this only which will merit it. The sinner is, therefore, under obligation to cease from his enmity, and to love God with all his heart. He is under obligation to do this immediately, on pain of damnation.

CONSEQUENTLY, when the preachers of the gospel invite, direct, urge, and, in the name of the Lord, command, sinners, who are spiritually dead, immediately, to be reconciled to God, immediately, to repent and believe, immediately, to become holy in heart and life ; they are not only justified by the divine example ; by the example of Christ and the Apostles ; but they evidently act consistently. † *O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.*

* John v. 40.

† Ezek. xxxvii. 4.

X. CHRISTIANS are taught from a view of this subject, the propriety of being humble.

As the following observations respect immediately, those who have *tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious*, it is hoped that no objection will lie against them, in the minds of unregenerate sinners. Christians, from a view of the doctrines of grace, from a sense of what they have been, and have experienced, live in the exercise of contrition and brokenness of heart. They feel the suitability of such a temper. * *For who maketh thee to differ (distinguisheth thee) from another? or what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* Here the Apostle urges the propriety of humbleness of mind, in christians, from the consideration of the mere grace of God, by which they have been *made to differ* from others. God maketh you (christians) to differ: therefore, glory not, but be humble. You were, once, in a state of absolute dependence on God, for regenerating grace. || *It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth; but of God that sheweth mercy.* You have been the subjects of the special grace of God, by which you are raised from spiritual death to spiritual life. Review this manifestation of sovereign grace, and be humble. You are, even now, absolutely dependent on God, for preservation in a state of grace. † *For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.* You are as dependent on efficacious grace to preserve you in a state of holiness, as you were to form you to a state of holiness. Your perseverance is a fruit of divine operation. ‡ *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*

* 1 Cor. iv. 7. || Rom. ix. 16. † Phil. ii. 13. ‡ Jer. x. 23.

† *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves—but our sufficiency is of God.* Consider your weakness, and the preserving power of God, and be humble.

CONSIDER further, that you are yet sinning, constantly sinning against God. † *There is no man that sinneth not.* § *There is not a just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not.* And you sin against peculiar light and love: your criminality is, therefore, exceedingly aggravated. In view of your present astonishing wickedness, how suitable that you be humble and contrite! *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* And when you come into full possession of the inheritance of the saints in light, and receive your crown of righteousness, among the redeemed in glory, you will feel, that all the honour, to which you are advanced, all the glory and happiness, in which you participate, is a gift of God through Jesus Christ. *I give unto them eternal life.* There, in token of deep humility and reverence, you will *cast your crowns before the throne*: || and, in concert with the *ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands*, you will say, with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*

You will always feel humble, in a view of your own unworthiness, and of the power and triumph of divine, sovereign, rich mercy, displayed towards you, *not according to your works, but according to God's own purpose and grace which was given you, in Christ Jesus, before the world began.*

XI. WE have abundant reason to rejoice, that all creatures, and all events, are wholly at the disposal, and under the government of God.

† 2 Cor. iii. 5.
§ Eccl. vii. 20.

† 1 Kings viii. 46.
|| Rev. iv. 10.

WHEN we look round this world, and behold the wickedness which reigns in it; when we behold the triumphs of grace, in the kingdom of grace; when we consider the vast number of creatures, all under the divine government, all subservient to the glory of God and the general good; when we contemplate the almost infinite number and variety of events in the universe, constantly taking place, by all which the infinitely holy, wise, and powerful JEHOVAH is effecting his own purposes, and accomplishing his most perfect plan of government; we discover the most ample ground of joy. It is matter of universal joy, that *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. * The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.* A being of infinite power, infinite wisdom, infinite goodness, and infinite patience, is at the head of the system, and governs all things, without control.

THAT the plan he hath laid is infinitely wise and benevolent, and the execution of it, in all its parts, infallible, we may have assurance. He, who sitteth on the throne of the universe, hath all creatures and all events at his disposal; and he can, and doth, make use of angels, men, and devils, sin and holiness, mercies and judgments, to effect his benevolent purposes, to secure and promote the good of the great whole. So that whatever may be our final state of existence, happy or miserable; wherever it may be, in heaven, or in hell; whoever should be saved, or whoever should be damned, yet the angels, men and devils; all holy, and all unholy beings, in the realms of glory, in this world, or in the doleful shades of hell; all, *all* the system of intelligences will have reason, and will be under infinite obligation, in

* Psalm xcvi. 1.

time, and in eternity, to rejoice in the reign of JEHOVAH. They will have reason, and be under obligation to rejoice in the language of the heavenly choir. † *Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory, and honour, and power ; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* AMEN. HALLELUJAH.

† Rev. iv. 11.

*The Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, a Motive to
Morality ;*

Illustrated in a SERMON, by JACOB CATLIN,
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PSALM XXXiii. 8, 9, 10, 11.

LET all the earth fear the LORD ; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast. The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought ; he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the LORD standeth forever ; the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

THESE words express a solemn exhortation to morality, and a motive to enforce the exhortation. The text is addressed to mankind of every character and description : to the aged and youth, learned and unlearned, virtuous and vicious—to *all the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world.*

It is, also, worthy of observation, that the exhortation has respect to moral virtue in general. *The fear of the Lord* is a phrase in the sacred scriptures, designed, emphatically, to express a dutiful

temper. Job xxviii. 28. *The fear of the LORD, that is wisdom.* By *wisdom*, we are to understand moral virtue. Psal. cxlvii. 11. *The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him.* But he taketh pleasure in those, *only*, who love him and keep his commandments. Prov. xvi. 16. *By the fear of the LORD, men depart from evil.* The summary of that vile character, predicated of both Jews and Gentiles, by the Apostle, is, Rom. iii. 18. *There is no fear of GOD before their eyes.* From this view of the scriptures, it appears, that the fear of the LORD implies moral virtue in general.

To *stand in awe* of GOD implies the same. Hence the exhortation of the Psalmist, *stand in awe, and sin not.*

THE argument, or motive, to enforce the exhortation in the text, is the absolute sovereignty of God. *For he spake and it was done—the counsel of the LORD standeth forever.*

THE words of the text clearly suggest the following doctrinal PROPOSITION.

A consideration of the absolute sovereignty of God is a proper motive to moral virtue.

THIS is a truth, which, at the present day, demands peculiar attention—a truth, by many, violently opposed; and the popular objection against the vindication or belief of the doctrine of divine sovereignty is, that it saps the foundation of morality, and tends to promote licentiousness.

IN order, therefore, to discuss, with clearness, the subject before us, I propose to attend to the ideas of divine sovereignty which are *expressed* in the text—then to those which are *implied* in the text—then to illustrate and prove the doctrinal proposition, as above stated.

THE ideas of divine sovereignty, which are *expressed* in the text, are very intelligible. *He spake and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast.*

Speaking and commanding, here, imply nothing more than an exercise of will or choice: and nothing, more efficacious than this, is necessary in God, to produce any effect, which is, in the nature of things, possible. It was thus that the LORD produced the light, the firmament, and all things in the material creation.

As we proceed in the text, we find the efficacious and commanding effort of the divine will to have a large extent. *The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the LORD standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.* This part of our text clearly expresses the stability of God's counsel, and the unfailing efficacy of the thoughts, or purposes, of his heart. By the *counsel* of the LORD, and the *thoughts* of his heart, are evidently meant his designs, purposes, or decrees. These stand forever; and, invariably frustrate, bring to nought, and confound all the opposing designs and purposes of his enemies. It is, therefore, clearly expressed in the text, that, as far as God's counsel, purposes, or decrees extend, so far, they are efficacious, and liable to no embarrassment.

WE now proceed to enquire what ideas of divine sovereignty are *implied* in the text? And, in answer to this, we may observe, that it would be impossible for us to conceive how God could be a sovereign, in the sense expressed in the text, unless we suppose that his counsel and decrees extend to all events. If there be any event in the universe, concerning which, God has no counsel or decree; such event may interfere with his plan, and frustrate some of his designs. If his enemies order and produce some events, in opposition to his counsel and decrees, it is, of course, a clear

case that his counsel cannot stand forever. If there be any events, which are not comprehended in the plan of divine providence, such events will most certainly interfere with it: and if there be an interference of events with the plan of divine providence, it will, doubtless, be defeated and subverted. But, according to our text, *The counsel of the LORD standeth forever*. Consequently, the counsel of the LORD, the sovereign will, or decree of God orders and establishes the whole system of events in the universe. So much is implied in our text, respecting the sovereignty of the infinitely great and glorious JEHOVAH. If we prescribe any limits to the divine government, or conceive of any events, to which his providence doth not extend, we must give up the declarations in our text. For it must, at least, be a matter of great *uncertainty*, on such a hypothesis, whether the counsel of the LORD will stand forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

THUS it appears, that the words of our text fairly imply the exercise of the divine counsel and will, respecting the existence of all events. The words, undoubtedly, imply the same ideas of divine sovereignty, which, in other passages of scripture, are expressed more decisively. One passage which I have in view is the following: Eph. i. 11. *In whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* In this passage, it is plain, that christians obtain an inheritance in Christ, in consequence of a predestination of God; and it is added that the same God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. The Apostles were careful to keep up this idea, when they mentioned salvation by sovereign grace. 2 Cor. v. 17, 18. *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things*

are passed away; behold, all things are become new. AND ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD. Jesus Christ when he was teaching his disciples the fear of the LORD, as the Psalmist taught all mankind in our text, urged it by the same motive. He observed to them, that God ordered the minutest events. Luke xii. 6, 7. *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

IN the old Testament and new, we are abundantly taught, that God, in the exercise of infinite wisdom and benevolence, hath purposed and determined the existence of all events; not even excepting those, which are attended with the highest degrees of wickedness. Joseph testified, notwithstanding the wicked conduct of his brethren, that it was God who sent him into Egypt. Gen. xlv. 7, 8. *God sent me before you, to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives, by a great deliverance. So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God.* It was God, who sent the Assyrian to destroy Jerusalem; though the Assyrian was very criminal in his conduct. Isai. x. 6, 7. *I will send him against an hypocritical nation—Howbeit, he meaneth not so in his heart. It was, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, that Jesus Christ was delivered, and taken, by wicked hands, crucified, and slain.* Act ii. 23.

IN our text, is implied an idea of divine sovereignty as extensive as we find expressed, in any passage of divine revelation. But, to manifest the truth and reasonableness of the idea, we may attend to an argument from the divine perfections; and attempt an answer to the principal objection.

IT is, by all parties, granted, that the eternal Jehovah is infinitely *wise*. His intellectual wisdom or knowledge is boundless. He compre-

hends, in one view, all events in eternity. Heb. iv. 13. *All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* He comprehends all *possible* existence, and cannot be in doubt, which, among all possible systems of events, is best; most for his glory, and most conducive to the general good. It is, also, granted, that God is infinite in *power*. His power is such, that, by the mere effort of his will, he can give existence to any system of events, which is, in the nature of things, possible. These things being granted, nothing more can be necessary, in the divine character, but only *goodness*, to fix, and render inflexible, the whole system of events in the universe. But, it is granted that God is infinitely good. Consequently he orders, in the best manner, on the whole, all events in the universe. Infinite goodness is exercised, in the best possible desires: infinite wisdom perceives what is, all things considered, most desirable: and infinite power accomplishes whatever is preferred, and perceived to be, on the whole, most desirable. Hence appears the truth and reasonableness, also the great desirableness of that idea of divine sovereignty, which is implied in our text, and expressed in various parts of the holy scriptures: especially, as it appears to be the exercise of self-moved, eternal, immutable, infinite goodness, aided by infinite wisdom, and executed by infinite power. To object, understandingly, to this, seems to imply an objection to every thing morally good, and an attachment to every thing morally evil. We are necessitated, however, to meet an objection.

ON this plan, it is urged, "God has no reason to blame, or condemn his creatures for their moral conduct; because they do nothing but what he has determined, in his eternal counsel;

and so much they must, of necessity, do ; for *the counsel of the Lord standeth forever.*"

THIS is, doubtless, the principal objection : for it is the only one noticed by the Apostle, in his treatment of the doctrine of divine sovereignty. Rom. ix. 19. *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?* It appears, from the Apostle's answer, in the next words, that he did not give up the doctrine asserted ; but considered the objector as opposing the real character of God. *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?* The reply being against God, implies that God is a sovereign, and that the objection is not merely against a mistaken idea of the subject. The Apostle subjoins a number of interrogations, expressing the absurdity and wickedness of this reply against God. *Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?* In other words ; hath not the potter a right to do thus ? And, from the interrogations, we learn that our criminality consists not in our being made sinners, if the fact should be admitted : nor does it consist in any thing else, in which we are passive, and wholly void of agency. It consists, wholly, in our voluntary sinful exercises, after we are in existence. If the objection have any force, it must depend on affirming and proving, that God cannot create a voluntary agent, possessed of moral qualities, which shall be worthy of praise or blame ; or for which the agent may be a fit subject of reward or punishment. The question, by which Paul opposes the objection, is, *Hath not the potter power?* Hath not God as full power, and as good a right, to produce a variety of moral agents ; as the potter, to produce

a variety of earthen vessels. To insist on this objection, in the face of the inspired Apostle, is bold and arrogant—To give it up, is mortifying to the proud heart; because it implies, that God is incomprehensible, and we absolutely dependent. But what do we suffer, by admitting these things? Is not the Deity, on any other plan, equally incomprehensible? On the contrary, are we not gainers? and have we not, on this plan, a foundation for comfort and happiness? On this plan, we have assurance that the all-wise and holy ONE reigns, without control. Consequently, that all events are ordered, in the wisest and best manner. The perfect sovereignty of God, we have found to be inseparably connected with his perfect goodness. Consequently, we see that his agency, respecting the sinful conduct of creatures, is of a nature totally contrary to the agency of sinners. His agency is holy, benevolent; their agency unholy, malevolent. This important distinction is marked, in the words of Joseph to his brethren. Gen. l. 20. *As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good.* By our subject, therefore, which exhibits the absolute sovereignty of God, as the result and operation of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, we gain light and consolation respecting God's having vessels of wrath, as well as vessels of mercy: *The end is good*: it is the result of a plan, laid by infinite wisdom and benevolence. We, therefore, easily see that objections against divine sovereignty are, as the Apostle urges, *replies against God*: and especially against his infinite goodness. They express opposition to the existence and operation of infinite benevolence.

As to the interference of divine sovereignty with human liberty, the Apostle is silent; realizing, as all candid minds must realize, that this

objection is in opposition to common sense, and universal experience. All that can be urged, with candour, on this ground, is, that the ways of the Lord, the modes of his operation, are incomprehensible.

AFTER all, it is urged, with great solicitude, that divine sovereignty is a very dangerous and mischievous doctrine. "It breaks down the barriers of virtue and morality; destroys all the motives to serious exertion in religion: it opens the floodgates of licentiousness." With a view to this popular objection, we are now led to an examination of the evidence of the doctrinal proposition, from the text, which is as follows.

A consideration of the absolute sovereignty of God is a proper motive to moral virtue.

1. WITH regard to the doctrine before us, let us bear in mind how plainly it is suggested by our text. In that, we find the sovereignty of God to be the only motive used, to persuade *all the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world to fear the Lord, and to stand in awe of him.* And we have found evidence that the fear and awe of the Lord, which are required, imply moral virtue in general. Our text is not the only passage in support of the doctrine. The bible, in general, holds up the idea of divine sovereignty, as a motive to godly fear. A few, out of many passages, are the following. Eccle. iii. 14. *I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it; nor any thing taken from it: and God doth it, that men should fear before him.* Job xxiii. 13, 14, 15, 16. *But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with him. Therefore I am troubled at his presence; when I consider, I am afraid of him. For God ma-*

keeth my heart soft; and the Almighty troubleth me. It is worthy of special notice that Job's view of the absolute sovereignty of God was a mean of softening his heart, and of exciting in him godly fear. Had he disbelieved the doctrine of divine sovereignty, and viewed his afflictions as the effects of chance, or of some uncontrolled, finite agency; he might have been full of terror and despair; but such a view of things would have had no tendency to produce that reverence and fear of God, which is properly denominated *softness of heart*. But *softness of heart* is peculiarly expressive of moral virtue. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. This, being the natural effect of a consideration of the absolute sovereignty of God, gives support to our doctrine.

THE psalms of David, could we be indulged in a lengthy detail, would afford abundant testimony of its truth. Only for a specimen, attend to Psalm xcvi. 9, 10. *O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established, that it shall not be moved.* The purport of the passage is plainly this; beware of suppressing this important and salutary truth, that *the Lord reigneth*: but say and testify it *among the heathen*, among all sorts of people, to excite in them, a proper reverence and fear of God. Maintain it, as an interesting truth, against all opposition, that the Lord is so absolute that the world, even the whole universe, shall be established—a certain system of events, chosen by the infinitely wise and holy ONE, shall be accomplished; and shall terminate in the richest displays of the divine perfections; as well as in the highest felicity of the righteous, and misery of the wicked. In the view, and by the strength of this motive, exhort all men to worship the Lord in the beauty

of holiness ; and *all the earth to fear before him*. If, to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and to fear before him, can be admitted in the list of moral virtues, then it is clear, from the last mentioned passage, that *a consideration of the absolute sovereignty of God is a proper motive to moral virtue*.

THE last chapter of Habakkuk affords a most solemn, and sublime witness of the truth of our doctrine ; but passing over, at present, all that is further said in the Old Testament, we may conclude the quotation of parallels to our text, with one passage from the epistle to the Philipians, ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*. This is a moral precept. The motive follows. *For, it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure*. Here, as plainly as in our text, that fear of God, which is the essence of virtue, and is essential to salvation, is urged, by a consideration of the absolute sovereignty of God. Thus it appears to be a very clear and common sentiment, in the Bible, that the doctrine of divine sovereignty has a tendency to excite that fear of God which is the sum and substance of true moral virtue.

IN connection with scripture testimony, we may appeal to that of common sense and observation, to support the point under consideration. Common sense declares, that pride and haughtiness are directly opposed, by the doctrine of divine sovereignty. Consequently, the tendency of it is to produce meekness, humility, and godly fear. The testimony of universal observation is, that men of the proudest feelings are most liable to break out in opposition to this doctrine. They claim it as their prerogative to comprehend the divine government : or, at least, to disbelieve and

oppose every doctrine which is incomprehensible, by their own understandings. Hold up, to such people, demonstration of the absolute sovereignty of God, and of its consistency with their own moral agency, liberty, and accountableness; and the tendency is, to confound their pride, and to make them fear and tremble before the eternal Majesty. It is, in fact, by a display of God's sovereignty, and the glory of his majesty, that *The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted.* Isai. ii. 10, 11.

THUS we find, by an appeal to common sense and observation, that the doctrine of divine sovereignty is a proper motive to humility and godly fear; and this amounts to a proof of our doctrine.

BUT, in order to make the proof more clear; and, at the same time, to illustrate the importance of realizing the sovereignty of God, allow me to add,

2. THE doctrine of divine sovereignty is a proper motive to moral virtue; because, the most important moral virtues depend on a belief of it: they are grounded on it; and cannot be exercised in a denial of it. This is true as hath appeared respecting humility.

FAITH is, also, one of these virtues. It will be granted, I suppose, by those who profess to believe in divine revelation, that we ought to have a lively faith and confidence in all the promises and testimonies of God. Faith appears to be considered, in the scriptures, as the summary of moral duty. John vi. 29. *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.* Jam. ii. 23. *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.* Heb. xi. 1, 2. *Now faith is the substance*

of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. For, by it, the elders obtained a good report. Finally. He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. Mark xvi. 16. It is generally granted, that faith has respect to the promises and threatenings of God; as well as to the character of Christ, and the doctrine of his atonement. But faith, as it respects the promises and threatenings of God, would be groundless, were it not for the absolute sovereignty of God. If this be denied it could neither be rationally believed that the glorious things, which are spoken of the church of God, will have a complete accomplishment; nor, that the enemies of pure religion will ever be finally suppressed, duly punished, and made subservient to the glory of God, and the general good. The drift of human exertions is opposed to the promises and threatenings of God; and the opposition appears, often, to be very successful. The vast increase of sin and evil, and the success of the empire of wickedness, in all past ages, cut off all prospect of that just and happy result of things, which is the subject of the promises and threatenings of God, unless we have recourse to his absolute sovereignty, in the disposal of all things. It cannot be rationally believed, and depended on, that God will accomplish what he hath promised, if we deny that he hath any fixed plan or decree, respecting the course, and system of events. We may indeed, if we please, *see the sovereignty of God displayed*, in the accomplishment of many divine promises. Many of God's promises are accomplished, by the wickedness of men; as well as by other means. This is not the natural tendency of wickedness. Of course, the good effects must depend on the sovereignty of God. These displays of divine sovereignty are seen in the history

of Joseph, and in all parts of Bible history : especially in the account of the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We often see that good is brought out of evil, even in the private walks of life; but, more especially, in the affairs of nations and empires. Few are so heterodox, at the present day, but that they expect important good to be the consequence of all the pride and cruelty which are exercised in the *French Revolution*. It is believed that God is about to make a marvellous accomplishment of his threatenings, and of his promises. But such a faith depends on the belief of the sovereignty of God—that he “*Worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.*”

DENY divine sovereignty, and you reject the only ground of faith in the promises or threatenings of God.

FAITH, as it respects the character of Christ, and the doctrine of his atonement, stands on the same ground. Sovereignty is displayed in the plan of salvation by the Redeemer. Even the greatest opposers of divine sovereignty will hardly dare affirm, that the plan of redemption is a *novelty* in the divine mind—a new invention to remedy previous, unavoidable evils. It will be granted that God is unchangeable ; and the consequence is, that the work of redemption is the effect of an eternal plan and decree, which comprehended the apostacy, and all the concomitant circumstances of it ; together with the atonement by Christ’s death, and the whole dispensation of grace, or whatever are to be the effects of the atonement, in time, and to all eternity. Now if we exclude the idea of divine sovereignty, and of God’s eternal decree, respecting all things ; it would be impossible that such a character as the Redeemer, or such a plan as redemption, should

have that existence and operation which the Bible declares them to have. Of course, there could be no ground of obligation to believe or confide in any such things. No one could ever feel it to be his duty to believe, and trust in God, as manifested by the Mediator, unless he first embrace the doctrine of his absolute, eternal, immutable, and uncontrollable sovereignty.

As, therefore, faith in the promises and threatenings of God, and in the doctrine of redemption by Jesus Christ, as well as faith in all the divine testimonies, is allowed to be the duty of man, and an essential part of moral virtue, it is clear that *a consideration of the absolute sovereignty of God is a proper motive to moral virtue.*

IN proceeding thus far, we have found, that a consideration of the sovereignty of God, is a proper motive, and has a strong tendency to produce, true humility, or *godly fear*, and *evangelical faith*: and, according to the Bible, the sum of true virtue is comprized in "*Repentance toward God, which is humility, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,*"

BUT still, to show that we are under no mistake, respecting the influence of this great and wonderful doctrine, let it be observed,

3. A consideration of the absolute sovereignty of God is a proper motive and inducement to *obedience*. In order to feel obligation to obey the commands of God, we must be convinced that God and his commands are holy, just, and good. In the illustration and proof of the sovereignty of God, under the first proposition, it was found that his goodness and sovereignty were inseparably connected. It was observed, that the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God would imply his decree and determination of every event. For, on no other plan, could the general good

be secure. If, therefore, God be infinitely good or benevolent, he is an absolute sovereign; and if his sovereignty be denied, it implies a denial of his goodness. A want of sovereignty, in God, implies that he is unholy, and if so, then his commands are unholy. But, there can be no reasonable motive to yield obedience to the law of God, unless he appear to be a holy and good law-giver. Consequently, no reasonable motive to yield obedience, unless he be a sovereign. The motive to moral virtue, as true virtue consists in a conformity to the law of God, depends upon the consideration of his absolute sovereignty.

But, lest this argument should be rejected as a metaphysical quibble, let us appeal to the scriptures. It will be granted that to *hearken unto God*, in the Bible sense of the words, is to obey his commands. But, we find God exhorting the most vicious, the *stout-hearted*, to hearken unto him, by a consideration of his absolute sovereignty. Isa. xlvi. 9, 10, 11, 12. *Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is none else, I am God and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my pleasure from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it; I will also do it. Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. The excellency of God's law, or testimonies; and the obligation to holy obedience, are inferred from divine sovereignty in Psalm xciii. 1, 2, 5. The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty, the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world, also, is established, that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is established of old: thou*

art from everlasting. Thy testimonies are very sure : holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever.

IN the xcvi. Psalm, which celebrates the sovereignty of Jehovah, in the most lively manner, the inspired penman uses the following expressions, by way of inference. Verse 6. *The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people shall see his glory.* Verse 12. *Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness*—intimating, that the righteousness, glory, and holiness of God are discovered, in a peculiar manner, by his absolute sovereignty. It is admitted, verse 2, that *clouds and darkness are round about him* : but yet, from his absolute reign, expressed, verse 1, it is inferred with a joyful assurance, that, *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.* We, therefore, find the motive to obedience urged, with energy. Verse 7. *Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols : worship him, all ye gods, i. e. all ye angels.* Heb. i. 6. Thus we find that the Bible holds up the sovereignty of God as the test of his holiness, and as a proper motive to obedience. This argument supports our doctrine.

4. *HUMILITY, faith, and obedience,* we have found to be virtues which a consideration of the absolute sovereignty of God hath a strong tendency to produce. And it is evident, from what has been said, that neither of these moral virtues can be exercised, with a different and contrary view of the divine character.

5. *PRAYER* is a duty, which can be performed, properly, only in view of the sovereignty of God. If prayer have, for its object, an alteration in the divine plan, it is a high and wicked insult offered to Jehovah. All, who pretend to pray, appear to be, in some measure, conscious of this.

They, accordingly, use expressions, which imply the absolute sovereignty of God. This is a presumptive argument that prayer would be groundless, upon any other supposition but this, that God orders all events. It is, indeed, evidently absurd to pray to any other but a sovereign God; because no other would be able to help, were he ever so well disposed; and the praying would be *unto a God that cannot save*. *Isai. xlv. 20.* Accordingly, our Lord, when he taught his disciples to pray, led them to the idea of divine sovereignty, as the ground of prayer. He taught them several petitions: *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors: and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.*—Thus far, the petitions. The prayer is concluded, by stating the ground and motive of prayer. *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.* *Mat. vi. 10, 11, 12, 13.* If the question now be asked, what is the most rational motive and encouragement to pray? The answer is clear: it is a consideration of divine sovereignty. But, prayer is a part of morality, as all will grant. It follows, that a consideration of the sovereignty of God is a proper motive to moral virtue.

6. A CONSIDERATION of the absolute sovereignty of God is a proper motive to moral virtue, because sovereignty is, in reality, an essential part of the character of God.

THOSE, who have proceeded so far, in the contemplation of the divine character, as to be convinced, that sovereignty is an essential part, must, on sober and candid reflection, be sensible, that a firm belief and acquiescence in it is essential to moral virtue. We cannot *glorify God, as God*, while we reject, or feel dissatisfied with, the essen-

tial glories of his character. That there is a wide difference of sentiments, of feelings, and of moral character, between those who cordially believe, and those who obstinately reject, the doctrine of divine sovereignty, will be generally granted. Some, indeed, who profess to believe the doctrine, but are bitterly opposed to the preaching of it, will concede as much as this. They will acknowledge, that embracing error, on this point, is inconsistent with real christianity. And yet, say they, the absolute sovereignty of God ought not to be preached, except, perhaps, by implication. It ought not to be insisted on, and demonstrated. What an inconsistency! A firm belief and acquiescence, in this part of the divine character, is essential to the existence of moral virtue, or of real christianity—even essential to salvation: and yet this part of the divine character ought not to come into view; or if it be suggested at all, it ought to be done, *by implication, obscurely, and sparingly!* Otherwise, corrupt minds will be disturbed; by such, the doctrine will be perverted, and ill consequences to society will inevitably follow. The same frightful things may be urged against supporting the doctrine of divine justice, purity, holiness, or the doctrine of atonement, by the blood of Christ. Christ crucified was, to the Jews, a *stumbling block*, and, to the Greeks, *foolishness*. But all these essential glories of the divine character ought to be illustrated; Christ crucified ought to be preached, these ill consequences notwithstanding. On the same ground, the sovereignty of God ought to be explained and vindicated, and to come fully into view. It is an essential, and glorious part of the divine character: and though, like the rest, often perverted, yet the contemplation of it tends to promote moral virtue.

This doctrine is an essential article of every good man's faith. If, in the denial, or dislike of it, we pretend to perform our duty to God, it is idolatry; and, to us, maybe applied the words of God. Psalm l. 21. *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.* On the whole, I think the doctrinal proposition to be clear, that *a consideration of the absolute sovereignty of God is a proper motive to moral virtue.*

. IMPROVEMENT.

I. By the foregoing view of the sovereignty of God, and of its happy tendency to promote moral virtue, we are led to remark, that, on the consideration of this part of the divine character, all manner of christian consolation very much depends.

DIVINE sovereignty is the principal ground of *hope.* On no other ground but this, could any future, promised good be secure. Consequently, none could be reasonably hoped for, or expected. Were any absurd enough to believe in the moral perfection of Deity, exclusive of his sovereignty, they might hope, that he would do the best he could to fulfil his promises, and to advance the general good: but, it might be justly suspected, that very little good would ever be accomplished. Human wickedness and misery appear, hitherto, to be increasing: and if God have no way to withstand the growing evil, or to overrule it for the promotion of good, but only to repeat those seeming efforts, which, to human view, have, as yet, appeared to be ineffectual; in other words, if he be not the sovereign disposer of all events, guiding all to a fixed and determinate issue; then the prospect of futurity is veiled by an impenetrable gloom. We might, on this supposi-

tion, reasonably expect that the universe would, at length, become a scene of perfect, endless misery.

ON the contrary, in a belief of the sovereignty of God, his people have a ground of hope, and pleasing consolation. This hope, together with the ground of it, and the consolation which it affords, we find explained in Psalm cxlvi. 5, 6, 10. *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God: which made heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is; which keepeth truth forever. The Lord shall reign forever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord.*

WE are, also, to observe that a religious joy and delight in God arise from the consideration of his sovereignty. The reign of Jehovah, however mysterious, is mentioned, by the Psalmist, as the proper ground of universal joy. Psalm xcvi. 1, 2, 8, 9. *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Zion heard, and WAS GLAD, and the daughters of Judah rejoiced, because of thy judgments, O Lord. For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all Gods.*

NEBUCHADNEZZAR, when restored from his madness, and from his affliction; when led to a just view of the Deity, and to some correspondent feelings, gave an ample description of the absolute sovereignty of God, and concluded with the highest expressions of joy and delight. Dan. iv. 37. *Now I, Nebuchadnezzar praise, and extol, and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.*

To rejoice in the sovereignty of Jehovah, is an exercise, common to all his friends; the highest

and brightest example of which is given us, by the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke x. 21. *In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, 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: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* On this important consideration, that events do not take place at random; but are guided, and ordered, by infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, is grounded the chief joy and consolation of all true christians. In this view, we may the more fully realize the importance of understanding, and embracing the doctrine of divine sovereignty.

II. HAVING made proof of the doctrinal proposition; and having, in addition, by way of remark, observed, that christian consolation, as well as moral virtue, depends very much on a belief of the sovereignty of God; we have now advantage to see the unfaithfulness of those ministers of the gospel, who, while they profess to believe this great doctrine, withhold it from their hearers.

THIS withholding is said to be a matter of prudence, and the effect of tenderness to the hearers, whose hearts are bitterly opposed to such a doctrine. Why should we not, on the same principle, avoid the doctrine of atonement, the doctrine of justification by faith, the doctrine of self-denial, and impartial benevolence? All these, and Bible doctrines in general, as well as that of divine sovereignty, if equally understood, are about equally, one as another, mortifying to human pride. The hearts of mankind are naturally in perfect opposition to all the doctrines of christianity. But, shall this be admitted, as a reasonable excuse for those, who are sacredly bound to preach nothing else but christianity, to conceal its fundamental doctrines? Is there any prohibition laid, by Christ, or by his Apostles, on the

ministers of the gospel, respecting the preaching of doctrines which are mortifying to the pride of the human heart? Does not the whole gospel come forth, openly, and professedly, in direct opposition to all the wisdom, and to all the sentiments, desires, and feelings of the men of this world? Is not the wisdom of the wise to be *destroyed*, and the understanding of the prudent to be *brought to nothing*? Is it not to be shown that *the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*? and is not the whole drift of instruction in the Bible, levelled pointedly at the pride, the lusts, the prejudices, the errors, and delusions which reign in the human heart? It is seriously to be doubted, whether a truly benevolent tenderness can ever induce a minister of Christ to withhold, or conceal, a single doctrine of divine revelation.

It is, however, conceded, that prudence ought to be used, in preaching doctrines, crossing to the feelings of mankind. But, how is prudence to be exercised? Not by suppressing the most important part, in order to glide smoothly, with the rest, in the gale of popularity: not by expressing sentiments, with so much ambiguity, that the hearer may understand as he pleases: but, by making the clearest possible illustration, and the most pointed demonstration of every doctrinal, or practical idea. This, I humbly conceive, is the proper exercise of *clerical prudence*: but, in all the scriptures, we find no liberty to withhold, or to disguise, a single revealed doctrine. The injunctions are to publish and insist on the whole.— Deut. xxix. 29. *Those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever.* Ezek. ii. 7. *And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, for they are most rebellious.* Acts xx. 26, 27. *Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shun-*

ned to declare unto you all the counsel of God, meaning the whole plan of revealed truth.

BUT if, indeed, many things revealed ought to be suppressed, yet, from this subject, it is manifest, that the doctrine of divine sovereignty cannot be one of those things; because we have found this to be a main pillar of true virtue and christian consolation.

III. THE subject affords a heavy reproof to all people who oppose and revile the ministers of the gospel, on account of their preaching the doctrine of divine sovereignty.

IF the foregoing reasonings be just, it clearly follows, that such opposition, whether by design or not, is really against all religion and morality; and strikes at the foundation of all christian consolation. It is pretended, as a ground of opposition, that this doctrine stupifies the conscience, renders vain and nugatory all exertions in religion, and promotes licentiousness. But the reverse of all this has been proved from scripture and reason.

AND NOW, to leave no means untried, which are calculated to give conviction to the weakest mind, on this important point, suffer me to make a brief appeal to the general state of facts. Is it not agreeable to common observation, notwithstanding the frightful things so generally advanced against the preaching of divine sovereignty, that a true fear of God, and zeal for his glory, evangelical faith, and vital piety, are most conspicuous in those, who most firmly believe the doctrine? Is it not agreeable to common observation, that the general body of unbelievers, and of impenitent sinners, and especially the most vicious, the most profane, and licentious are found in opposition to this doctrine? Is it not a fact, that religion and morality flourish most, in those parts of the country and world; and even in those

towns and parishes, where this great doctrine is clearly and solemnly vindicated? Are not these the places, in which we, most frequently, observe the revival of pure and undefiled religion? Is it not found, invariably, that a rational and solemn conviction of sin, and a proper sense of divine justice, are attended with an equally clear conviction of the absolute sovereignty of God? And is not this the very thing, to which the proud, unhumbled heart is most violently opposed? And, further. Whenever the heart is truly humbled, and a genuine conversion takes place; do we not, evidently, discover, in such a person, the most sweet and cordial delight in this, that God is an absolute sovereign? This is an idea, without which, the truly contrite could have no God, no comfort, no hope of their own, or of the general good. These, I trust, are facts of general notoriety. How inconsiderate, how presumptuous, how criminal, therefore must be the conduct of those, who oppose the preachers of this doctrine, and vilify their characters! And since, in the light of scripture, of reason and common observation, this doctrine, so much opposed, has the most excellent tendency; it is evident that even the most *sincere* and *conscientious* opposition to the preaching of it is sinful; and must be considered as opposition to the cause of true religion.

THE sovereignty of God is not a small, indifferent article of faith. It is a point of infinite magnitude and importance. With what propriety, therefore, can the preaching of it be opposed? Would christians wish to have the true character of God concealed? Can it be expected, that people will glorify the true God, by ignorantly attempting to worship an *unknown God*? Is it not the wish of all, who profess faith in this great doctrine, that proud, rebellious, impenitent sinners might be converted to the same faith? How is

this to be expected? Not by concealing the doctrine from their view; but by disclosing, explaining, and enforcing the doctrine.

LET those, therefore, who have used their influence to prevent the preaching of this doctrine, stand reproved by this subject. Let it be remembered, that God, in all parts of the Bible, is proclaiming himself a sovereign; and that the Patriarchs, Prophets, and holy Kings, Jesus Christ, and the Apostles have, with one accord, celebrated the important idea. It has, from the beginning, been taught by the messengers of God. And, certainly, in this age of light, every objection to the preaching of it must afford, at least, a strong suspicion of inveteracy of heart against it.

IV. LET the subject be concluded by exhortation.

THE drift of it has been to show, that the doctrine of divine sovereignty, however dreaded, abhorred and opposed, has a tendency to promote moral virtue, or true religion. An attempt has been made to exhibit this doctrine in an important point of view, as it respects both practical religion, and christian enjoyment. If what has been offered be admitted as truth, then let it have its natural influence to humble our hearts, to enliven our faith, to reclaim us from vicious conduct, and to afford us rational consolation. Impiety and wickedness consist, very much, in that pride and haughtiness of heart, which oppose the supremacy of God; and the natural effects of a just view of the supremacy of God are humility and piety, hope and joy. But, in the course of the subject, even in the text, it appears that God is supreme—He is all in all—He certainly is above control. Although, as we read, Prov. xix. 21. *There are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord that shall stand.* There is good and substantial reason to be assured, that

this is the character of Jehovah. Consequently, good reason to be filled with holy veneration, and godly fear—good reason to be convinced, that God is possessed of infinite power, wisdom and goodness; and therefore, as in duty bound, to feel cheerfully devoted to his service, and submissive to his will—the utmost reason to feel joyful in our God and King.

WE have the highest evidence, not only, of the absolute supremacy of God, and that opposition against him cannot be supported: but, also, that his supremacy is perfectly desirable. We have, therefore, the highest reason to be satisfied with such a view of the Deity; and to honour and glorify him as he is. In this view, we see the all-sufficiency of God, and are exhorted to seek unto him, to trust in him, and to depend upon him, in all our exigences. Only in this view, can we see that God will, inevitably, vindicate his infinite holiness, and perfectly support his law. Of course, in no other light, can we be fully convinced that “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.” In no other light, can we have assurance, that every promise and threatening of God shall take place. In short, it has appeared, in the course of the subject, that all the motives to virtue, and restraints from vice derive their strength from this source. The exhortation to be holy, grounded on this subject, is, therefore, urged by the united force of all conceivable motives. By the doctrine of divine sovereignty, it appears to be a matter of certainty that, “He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned”—and that, “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted; but he that exalteth himself shall be abased.” By this doctrine, we are led to some just views of ourselves,

and to have a just idea of our relation to God—that we are not independent equals ; but finite, dependent creatures.

We are led to see that God is not a being, the manner of whose existence, and whose ways and modes of operation can be comprehended by us : consequently, that he is a being worthy of supreme honor, and humble obedience.

WE are led, also, to see the propriety of attending, diligently, to all God's positive precepts and institutions ; and to see the necessity of divine revelation, and the importance of attending to it, as obedient children to the dictates and instructions of a wise and benevolent father. Indeed, the whole christian temper and demeanour, "*Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,*" are strongly inculcated, by a consideration of divine sovereignty.

LET the present consideration of it be attended with these happy fruits, and glory will redound to God, peace and salvation to ourselves, and good to our fellow men.

BUT, if we stubbornly oppose this glorious doctrine, or embrace it, in profession, only for the purpose of making absurd, antisciptural inferences, in favor of the corrupt lusts of our own hearts, we shall prove ourselves enemies to that God, and that law, which the scriptures reveal ; and, as certainly as God is a holy sovereign, we shall be " Vessels of his wrath, fitted to destruction."

Now may the sovereign Lord, of his mere mercy, grant that we may see the glories of his character, humbly rejoice in his infinite dignity, and yield obedience to his commands ; and to him shall be the glory, forever. AMEN.

On the first Promise of the Saviour in the Scriptures.

A SERMON, by EPHRAIM JUDSON, A. M.
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GENESIS iii. 15.

*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman,
and between thy seed and her seed: it shall
bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

I. **I**N this passage, God revealed his gracious design of giving a Saviour to man. In this light it is understood by all, who believe that the Bible is a revelation from God. This revelation of God's gracious design respected, not only Adam and Eve, but also their posterity.

II. **T**HIS was the first time that God promised a Saviour to mankind. It was very soon after their apostacy. How soon our first parents sinned, after they were created, and how soon the Saviour was revealed, after they sinned, we cannot determine. Probably very soon: because, both of these events took place before the birth, or even the conception of their first born.

III. **T**HE Saviour was revealed in a critical and distressing moment. After they had transgressed, they found that they were naked: that

is, they were guilty, and exposed to evil, which gave them uneasiness. They did not feel themselves in that state of felicity, which they enjoyed in innocency. They heard God in the garden; and knowing that they had transgressed, were afraid, and endeavored to hide themselves among the trees. God called to them, *Adam, where art thou?* This, doubtless, increased their terror and distress. God then put the question; *Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldest not eat?* This again increased their fear and distress. They immediately confessed that they had, and said, they were tempted by the serpent. God then denounced a curse on the serpent. This added to their terror: for seeing Satan cursed, they had reason to expect that their doom would follow.

IN that awful moment, while trembling before the Majesty of heaven, God graciously promised them a Saviour. What feelings must those miserable sinners have had who, in a most tremendous moment, saw a foundation laid for hope!

IV. BEFORE God ushered into the world the news of a Saviour, he had done several things to prepare the way for it.

THE covenant of redemption had been entered into, by the Triune God. God, from all eternity, had a design to give a Saviour to man. The terms had been stipulated between the Father and the Son, from everlasting. The Son was to make atonement, and have an elect, as the reward of his work. Promising the Saviour, as in our text, was beginning to execute the covenant of redemption.

ANOTHER thing which God did to prepare the way for the promise of the Saviour, was the creation of the world. It was necessary that there should be a place for Christ, where he

might execute the design of his appointment, as Saviour. The world was, therefore, made for a stage, upon which, he might act the character of Redeemer of sinners.

ANOTHER thing that was done, was the creation of the sun, moon, and stars. The earth needs these heavenly bodies, for light, warmth, and many other necessary purposes. Without them, the earth could not have been a place of residence for Christ and his people. Eventually, therefore, they serve the purposes of the Saviour. For this end they were created; and this was one thing done, to prepare the way for the coming of Christ into the world.

ANOTHER thing done to prepare for the coming of the Son of God, was the creation of heaven. Heaven was needful for his people, that they might have a place of abode, when they should leave this world; and it was needful for Christ, that he might ascend into it, when he should finish the work of atonement. God, therefore, prepared a heaven, at the time of the creation of the world. *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.* Mat. xxv. 34. Heaven is a real place, somewhere in the universe. When Enoch was translated, he went to it: so did Elijah, and Jesus Christ. They all now dwell there bodily. At the day of judgment, all the faints will enter into heaven, and there will their souls and bodies dwell to all eternity.

To have a place ready for man, God created the earth, before he created him; so God created heaven, before he sent his Son to redeem his people, that they might have some place to live in, after they leave this world.

ANOTHER thing, which God did, to prepare the way for giving his Son, was the creation of angels, to minister to Christ and to the redeemed. As they were designed to be servants to Christ, and to be ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, God made them, and had them ready to serve these great purposes, as soon as he gave the Son to begin his work of saving lost men.

V. SEVERAL ends were to be answered by giving a Saviour to man.—Some will be mentioned.

I. HE was given that he might defeat Satan. Soon after the creation, Satan entered upon evil designs. He exalted himself against the Most High—he led mankind to sin against God, and meant to ruin them forever.—He attempted to rob God of that glory, which was to arise from his creature, man. For God's glory, man was made, and all creation was for man. Satan struck at the head, ruined man, and, of consequence, thought that the grand design of creation was frustrated. And when he had ruined man, he doubtless thought that he had robbed God of the glory, which he meant to derive from his creatures, and thus, had gained his point. The Saviour was sent to subdue him, and defeat his evil designs.

1 John iii. 8. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* 1 Cor. xv. 25. *He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.* The devil is one enemy: and Christ was manifested to be the Saviour and to reign, till he hath put him under his feet, and completely defeated him. He was given to bruise and to break the very head of the old serpent, the great dragon, called the devil and Satan: that is, to conquer, destroy and defeat his wicked purposes, as effectually, as a serpent is destroyed, when his head is broken. *It shall bruise thy head.*

2. CHRIST was given that he might triumph over death. Sin brought death on all mankind, which sweeps away one generation after another, and carries them to the dust. Death swallows up all mortals—the grave receives thousands, every hour. Jesus was given to raise them all from the dead : and as a pledge and surety that he will do it, he raised from the dead three in Israel, three while he was in the flesh, and many at the time of his own resurrection.

3. HE was given to subdue the impenitent, incorrigible enemies of God, among mankind.

THE people of God have many enemies, who reproach, hate and persecute them, even unto bonds and death. They, as it were, make themselves drunk with the blood of the saints. Seas of blood lie at the door of enemies, calling for vengeance.

GOD hath a vast many enemies, stout hearted and incorrigible. All over the world, men rise up, and exalt themselves against him. They rally to the standard of the great enemy, oppose the Most High, and seek to destroy his cause. They blacken his character, bid defiance to his omnipotency, transgress his laws, spurn at his grace, and even join with the devil against him. They would kill God, if they could ; as they have killed his Son, and the followers of his Son, in innumerable instances. They will not be won, by the tender mercies of God ; nor be terrified by the tremendous thunder of the law from mount Sinai.

Now God gave a Saviour, to destroy these incorrigible enemies of himself and his people—to cut them off, and treat them as they deserve. It is needful to cut off impenitent rebels, to promote his own glory and the good of his people.

4. A SAVIOUR was given to bring together in one, both angels and saints ; and unite them together under one head, even Jesus Christ. Eph. i. 10. *That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together, in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.*

5. THE SAVIOUR was given to conquer the sins of God's people. Sin has risen to a great degree among men. It has taken deep root in the heart. It is stubborn and perverse. It fortifies the soul against conviction. It makes men as dead to holiness, as the grave is to life. *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* Eph. ii. 1. Sin makes men sleep as soundly, in a moral sense, as the bodies of the dead, in a natural sense, sleep in the dust. It gives them a stupor, which broods death eternal. It charms them into the broad road of ruin. It courts and flatters, deceives and entices ; and then insults their miseries. It takes fast hold of all mankind, and makes them its prey ; swallowing all up, like a devouring monster. Like a mighty conqueror, it glories over the whole human race ; and men have no heart to flee from it.

A SAVIOUR was given to subdue this dreadful enemy of God's people—to conquer and root it out of the heart, and to deliver the wretched captive from its dominion.

6. THE SAVIOUR was given to bring mankind to the enjoyment of God. While man remained in innocency, he had joy in God. His soul felt the sweet excellencies of his Creator. Every surrounding object manifested to him the Deity, and filled his heart with sweet delight. His wondering eye saw God displayed in the heavens, and his mind was filled with the purest pleasures. By the fall he lost all this entertainment. Every joy-

ful sensation in God fled from the human race, and left all in rebellion and total darkness. Torment usurped the place of happiness; and restlessness the seat, where felicity, like a prince, sat swaying the mind.

THE Saviour was given to bring the people of God back to the enjoyment of himself—to renew and sanctify, and in that way, give them joy in the great triune Jehovah.

7. MAY it be added, that he was given to increase the felicity of the Angels. Increase of happiness is not inconsistent with the perfect happiness of a creature.

FOR the mind of a creature, which is full of happiness, may be enlarged by knowledge; and as his mind thus enlarges, may be capable of an increase of happiness. In all the steps, in which, Christ, the gift to man, proceeds, he unfolds the character of God to angels, as well as to men.—To this sentiment, we have the testimony of an Apostle. Eph. iii. 10. *To the intent, that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.* By what Christ does, in the dispensation of his grace toward the church, the Angels see God. They learn more and more of his character; and this lays a foundation for increasing felicity.

8. THE Saviour was given to show God's regard to the law. God knew that his law was good; or he never would have given it. Man said it was not good. Great complaints have been made, verbally, against the law of God; but especially, in practice. The import of sin is, that the law is not just. Christ was given to obey it in man's room: and his obedience and sufferings are the most open and forcible representation,

that, in the divine estimation, the law is holy, just and good.

9. A SAVIOUR was given to glorify God. I shall mention, here, how God is glorified by his Son. In doing this, it will, perhaps, be best to show how the divine perfections, and the Trinity, are glorified. By being glorified, is meant, that they are manifested, or made to appear. In this way, God's *truth* is glorified by Christ. God said, that if man sinned he should die. It became requisite for God to fulfil what he had said: otherwise, he would have appeared to violate his word. When Christ took upon himself human nature, and died in the room of sinners, God fulfilled that early threatening, *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* The truth of God was then manifested. It appeared, that God was true to his word: and thus his truth was glorified.

God's *justice* is glorified by Jesus Christ. The import of God's conduct toward his Son, when he stood sponsor for man, was, "Justice shall be satisfied, although it cost my Son his precious blood. He shall bleed, agonize, and die upon the cross, rather than one mite of the debt, which justice demands, be abated. He shall drink the bitter cup, to satisfy the demands of justice." Thus hath God glorified his justice, or made it appear, by Jesus Christ.

God's *grace* is glorified by Christ. He magnifies it above the heavens. *Thy mercy, is great above the heavens.* Psalm cviii. 4. Grace is displayed, in granting good things to the ill-deserving: and in no other way. Mankind are exceedingly ill-deserving; and in giving his Son to die for them, God glorifies the riches of his grace. Every step, in the great work of man's salvation, shows the grace of God. The death of Christ,

the revelation of his gospel, common blessings, conviction of conscience, regeneration of heart, sanctification and eternal life, manifest the grace of God.

IF we consider the greatness of man's guilt, the greatness of the gift to man, and the greatness of his salvation, we shall see that God's grace is most glorious.

As to the greatness of man's guilt ; it is inexpressible. It swallows up our thoughts. His sins are innumerable, and come from the very heart. They are against the infinite Majesty of heaven : against God Almighty—opposed to the glorious Jehovah. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,* said David, when he had a sense of his transgression.

As to the greatness of the gift ; God himself could not have given a greater : it being his Son, his eternal Son, equal to the Father, and infinitely worthy, and infinitely dear to the Father. It was, without comparison, the greatest gift he could bestow. It was infinitely more than to have given millions of angels, and millions of worlds of men to have died for us.

As to the greatness of salvation ; it is doubly infinite : it being deliverance from everlasting misery ; which is, with respect to duration, infinite ; and restoration to everlasting happiness, which is, in the same respect, infinite. Salvation is, therefore, strictly speaking, doubly infinite.

IN this light, we see grace exalted to the height of the Godhead. How wonderful, that so great salvation should be granted to those who are infinitely vile ! Thus God glorifies his grace.

God's power is also glorified, by Jesus Christ. This appears in conquering his enemies. Christ was given, it hath been observed, for this purpose. It requires great power to conquer devils, those

subtle, powerful foes, and break the head of the serpent. It requires power to subdue the numerous host of incorrigible enemies among men. It requires power, and that very great too, to conquer the proud and stubborn hearts of his people, and make them his willing and faithful subjects. He shall make his people willing, *in the day of his power*. Plalm cx. 3. *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power*. Eph. i. 19. It requires almighty power to dispossess the devils, who like a strong man, arm themselves against God, when he undertakes to convert a sinner. It requires the same power to raise the dead to life, and exalt them to heaven. Christ, who was given to man, does all this; and herein, divine power is glorified.

THE *wisdom* of God is glorified by the gift of Christ. Wisdom is manifested, in all the steps of this great affair. It appears in finding a proper person to be given as a Saviour. It was needful that the Saviour should have almighty power: because the work was too great for a being of finite power to accomplish. Christ hath almighty power, and is, therefore, qualified as to power, to act as Saviour.

It was requisite that the Saviour should have infinite love, to carry him through all his dreadful sufferings; and to incline him to overlook and forgive the horrid abuses of men. We have reason to think, that the best of finite beings would have shrunk at the horrors of the cross, and would not have put up with the affronts of his enemies. Christ, being God, hath infinite love; and this qualified him for the arduous work of redemption, enabled him to surmount all difficulties, and overlook infinite abuses. In point of love, he was qualified to act as a Saviour.

IT was requisite, that he should be an infinite person. For it required one, able to make an infinite atonement for sin. Man had rendered himself infinitely criminal; which required an infinite satisfaction. Christ, being God, could do this; and, in this respect, was accomplished for the work.

It was requisite, that the Saviour should be infinitely wise. The work he had to do was above the wisdom of men and angels. The Saviour had before him the management of the church, thro' all generations; and the government of the world, that all things might be turned to the advantage of good beings, and to the glory of God. He had to make atonement, and to hold the helm of the government of the universe. He had, in the system of salvation, to conduct things so as to bring about the eternal purposes of God. To do this, required infinite wisdom. Christ is God, and therefore, in this respect, is accomplished to act as a Saviour.

It was requisite that men should have an almighty Saviour. They needed one of infinite power, to root up the sin of their hearts. When they see how deeply they are wounded by sin, and how fast hold sin hath gotten; they see that nothing but almighty power can heal the wound, and deliver them from the dominion of sin. They needed an almighty Saviour to conquer their enemies. The devil hath great power over men. He leads them captive at his will. Satan is subtle, crafty and malicious. To conquer this enemy, they needed one of more power than men or angels have. They wanted an almighty Saviour to defend and uphold their naked souls, when they go into eternity. What could a dependent, naked soul do, when it hovers in eternity, without a *God Saviour*? They needed an almighty Sav-

our, to raise their dead bodies from the grave. Who could gather their dust, organize and animate them, but one of infinite power? Christ, being almighty, is able to do all these things for his people: and, in these respects, is accomplished to act as a Saviour.

AND, in finding this proper person, the wisdom of God appears. No finite person would ever have thought of him, and appointed him to be a Saviour. Wisdom appears, in putting him in the place of man. No finite being would have thought how this could be done. Would the wisest intelligent creature have imagined that the eternal Son of God could be in the place of a sinner, under that very law, which was violated, and even satisfy it, by bearing the curse, which was due to sin? The wisdom of God saw how all this could be done, by a union of the human and divine natures, in one person. In this, wisdom appears most illustriously.

WISDOM appears in appointing this person to suffer and die, to answer glorious ends. When God had pitched upon his Son, and, in this wonderful way, united the two natures, and put the person in the sad place of sinners, had he asked men and angels what should be done next; they would not have thought that it would be proper for him, painfully to suffer on a cross, the miseries due to transgressors; and to be reproached by men and devils. Had he said; "But it is my determination, that he shall agonize on a cross, like a vile malefactor;" would an angel, would any man have dreamed, that any good ends could be answered by it? Would they not rather have thought that it would be followed by infinitely bad consequences? Would they not have said, as Peter did, when Christ told his disciples, that the son of man should suffer and die; *Be it far from*

thee, Lord ; this shall not be unto thee. The wisdom of God saw, that glorious ends would be answered by his death—that Satan would be defeated, guilty sinners saved, and God glorified.

THE wisdom of God appears, in defeating Satan with his own weapon. This evil spirit stirred up the people to put Christ to death ; he entered into the heart of Judas, and tempted him to betray the Saviour ; he excited cruel hearts to nail him to the cross ; and when the legions of hell saw the Lord of glory expiring, they exulted, and thought the day their own. But this was the very way, in which, they and wicked men, were defeated. Devils, as it were, raised the cross ; and by the cross, Satan's head is bruised. How wise does God appear in this ! His wisdom is wonderfully displayed.

THE TRINITY is glorified, that is, displayed, by the gift of Christ. This is the only way, in which, it does appear. The works of nature manifest a God ; but not a Triune God. This was done by the Saviour, who was given to man. The mysterious union of three persons in one God, is taught us by what is done, in the great affair of giving Christ. The mystery itself is not unfolded. It holds a place among a thousand other mysteries. But, that there *is* a Trinity, is a truth made known ; and the office of each one is revealed. The Father holds the rights of the God-head, and sees that justice is done. He appointed and sent the Son to die. This is his office work. The Son took upon him the government of the world, made atonement, and will judge all in the last day. This is his office work. The Holy Ghost inspired the writers of the scriptures, gave the spirit of prophecy, regenerates and sanctifies the hearts of Christ's people. This is his office work.

THUS, in the affair of the gift of the Saviour, the perfections of God, and his Trinity, are glorified.

WHEN our meditations begin to enter into this sublime subject, the field opens, and displays a wider and wider prospect. This must be an apology, if one be needed, for the many thoughts, which have been suggested.

AN IMPROVEMENT will now close the subject.

I. FROM what has been said, it appears, that the plan of redemption is not a deceitful contrivance of wicked beings.

THE ends answered, by giving a Saviour, are so contrary to all the feelings of depraved minds, and so expressive of the divine perfections, as to show, that the whole affair, relative to the Saviour, was contrived by the infinitely pure, wise God. Had it been a false scheme of sinful beings, it would have been a different thing from what it now is.

DEVILS and wicked men would not have contrived a scheme of religion, calculated to bruise their own heads, blast all their designs, and plunge themselves into ruin and everlasting contempt.

WICKED men, in a plan of their own, would not have taken care to have kept up the dignity of that law, which dooms every sinner to endless pain. Depraved creatures wish to depreciate the law of God. They think it requires too much, and damns with too great severity. And had the plan of redemption been a deceitful device of the wicked, care would not have been taken to have the Saviour given the highest testimony of the goodness of the law.

WICKED men would not have attempted to lay a plan to introduce among mankind that affection, which consists in loving God, for what he is in himself, and our fellow-men, as really, and as

much, as we do ourselves. It is hardly probable that they would have ever thought of the principle of true love. All that have gotten the idea of true love, have gotten it from the word of God, either by reading it themselves, or from those, who had read it. True love is too good to grow out of the heart of a depraved creature, or to be invented by depraved reason. The consideration, therefore, that the plan, relative to the gift of a Saviour, contains the idea of love, and a Saviour to implant it in the hearts of God's people, carries a degree of evidence, that the gift of a Saviour is not a lie of designing men.

EVIL beings would not have laid a plan of religion calculated to glorify God. Sinful beings think and speak like themselves. They calculate their religious plans, in such a manner, as to get to themselves a name and a praise. Universal experience witnesses the truth of the maxims of Christ, John iii. 31. *He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth.* John viii. 44. *When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar.* Men of the world have worldly schemes in view. The objects, after which they seek, are wealth, honour and applause. And when they attempt to promote false schemes, the glory of Him, who is Lord of all, is not the object, at which they aim: but it is the honour of themselves. All evil beings have lying hearts; that is, hearts opposed to God and the truth. They have a reigning desire to promote themselves. Therefore, had the plan of salvation been a lie of wicked men, it would not have set up the glory of God as its grand object.

BUT the ends, answered by Christ, are not only contrary to the feelings of mankind, but they manifest wisdom, infinitely superior to the wisdom

of finite beings. Finite beings have not wisdom, nor power, nor goodness enough to contrive such a plan, and carry its several parts into effect.

THEY would not have entertained the most distant idea of the Sacred Trinity. They may have some ideas of it, seeing Christ hath revealed it. But the greatest mind, by the power of its own reason, would never have entered into the secrets of the eternal God, and penetrated so deeply into the mode of his existence, as to have seen, that he exists in three persons. Neither the learned Philosopher, nor venerable Priest, would have found out the office of each person of the Trinity. The intended incarnation of Christ, lay wholly beyond the knowledge of men and angels. The death of Christ, in the room of sinners, would never have entered their minds. No one would have conceived, that dying on a cross, amidst the insults of thousands, would atone for sin, defeat Satan with all his legions of hell, save multitudes of our fallen race from sin, and carry them to eternal glory, to be for a name, and for a praise to Him, who lives for ever and ever. Admirable affair! How do all divine perfections shine; surely this great affair was contrived by the wisdom of the eternal God.

IT carries such marks of a divine hand, that we may as well deny that God contrived and reared the stupendous universe, as deny that he contrived, and is effectuating the work of salvation. This Earth, the Sun, Moon and Stars show us that God made them. Finite beings could not create worlds. The plan of salvation, by the promised seed, shows us that it is God's work. Man could not contrive it. Man has not power, nor wisdom, nor goodness enough to lay out, and carry into effect such a work.

LET me carry the idea further, there is more evidence, that the plan, of redeeming men by the Saviour, was laid by God, than that the world was made by him; because his perfections are more clearly expressed in the work of redemption, than in the work of creation.

II. MAN, after the fall, was in a sinful, helpless, ruined state.

WE have abundant evidence of this observation. We see it verified in the conduct and state of others. We see it in ourselves. But that which is in point, is the evidence which arises from the work of redemption. The eternal determination of God to give a Saviour, the preparations that were made for his coming, the promise, the accomplishment of the promise, the death of Christ and its happy effects, are testimonials of the sinful, helpless, ruined state of man.

IF this be not the state of mankind, why did God entertain thoughts of giving a Saviour? Why did he descend from his glorious mansion above to the garden, where our first Parents dwelt, and reveal his gracious intention of sending a deliverer? What need of a Saviour to atone for sin, if we can atone for it? A man in good health does not want a physician to cure him of a burning fever. *They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.* Matt. ix. 12. What need of a Saviour to overcome the rebellious heart, and give an obedient spirit, if there be not rebellion in the heart? Why should the Saviour descend, and agonize, and bleed, and die, to take away enmity, and give love, if man has an heart to do it for himself? When we seriously contemplate the promise, and its connections, and the vast chain of consequences; and consider the mighty power of the promised seed, in snatching millions of souls from the jaws of Satan, we feel our minds led into a belief

that we are in a fallen state, helpless and wretched, most vile and unable to atone for transgression. Whenever we go to calvary, and lift up our eyes, and behold the Redeemer bleeding on the cross, a tear drops, the heart is pierced with the sight, and the question insensibly steals its way into the mind. "Why this awful tragedy, if we be not in an undone state?"

III. THOSE, who live under the gospel and reject it, are unwise.

WILL Satan, and those who join with him, be destroyed, sinners are foolish to an extreme, in espousing the cause of that old adversary. In a future day, the poor sinner will see Satan totally defeated, and find himself sharing with him in his punishment. Matt. xxv. 41. *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* In the day, when the Lord from heaven will pass this dreadful sentence, which will be to the heart of the sinner, like ten thousand daggers, Satan and impenitent men will be defeated, the Lord will triumph, and his justice shine in the punishment of his enemies. Then will the folly and madness of sinners appear in the most conspicuous light.

THE men of pleasure and vice call those, who renounce the ways of Satan, unwise. But the man of the world is the fool. For the sake of the uncertain, momentary pleasures of time, he sells his soul to Satan, and goes with him to endless destruction. Hear ye! The sinner bemoaning his case, and making reflections on himself, as he is going to the judgment seat to receive his trial. "I have spent my short life in the cause of Satan. I laughed at all seriousness. I called the man of piety a fool. But I was the fool. Like a mad man, who plunges into devouring flames, I have

plunged myself into ruin. I took a side which is compleatly destroyed." And, when he is going from the judgment seat to endless flames, he reflects. "My case is truly deplorable. I rejected the God, that the Saviour brought to my view. I despised his character, and hated religion. I pursued the shadows of the world, as though they could give me happiness. I rejected all warnings. I spent my days in the cause of Satan. Now I go with him to endless despair. My folly and distress drink up my spirits. The most eloquent seraph cannot describe my madness. Yonder are persons, at whom I laughed; because they would not take a part with me, on the side of Satan. They are ascending the mansions of eternal joy, and I am going down to hell." My hearer! Do you not fear, that you shall be one of those unhappy people, who will make such painful reflections? I speak to each one of you. I speak to myself.

IV. THOSE, who live under the gospel and reject it, are highly criminal; because in rejecting the gospel, they reject God.

WE have heard, that the Saviour glorifies God, and that God gave him for this very purpose. Christ said, at the approach of his death, *I have glorified thee on the earth.* John xvii. 4. That is, he brings out the true and real character of God, into view. And we may see it. And we do see it, unless we wilfully shut our eyes, and refuse to see. *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.* John xv. 24. We are criminal, other things being equal, in proportion to the clearness of the manifestation of God, which is made by the Saviour.

To hate the infinitely best of all characters, is a sin, that hath not a parallel. No exercise of the heart of a man can be so bad. Robbery on the highway, wilful murder, torturing of innocent christians, throwing whole nations into the flames of war, are less offences, than that of rejecting God. The character of the most high is infinitely excellent and demands the highest esteem and veneration. His character in all its beauty is set before the sinner. Christ makes it shine, like the sun in its meridian brightness.— The vile heart rises against his true and glorious character. If this be not sinful, there is no such thing as sin. There are several sorts of men, that reject God.

THE whole class of pagans, of all denominations, reject Him. Their hearts are sinful, they bow the knee to idols, and cast off the only true God. But our business is with those under the gospel. Under the gospel are some infidels.— This class reject God. They suppose that the whole account relative to the promised seed is forged by enthusiasts, or by weak, or designing men; consequently that the representation given of God is unjust. They are not only Deists, but Atheists. For a denial of the true God is Atheism.

THAT which leads the infidel to these conclusions, is not the want of light, nor the want of mental capacity. Light is exhibited. The mind is capable of seeing it. But it is owing to the want of a heart. He has such an aversion to God, that he will not soberly attend to the manifestation that Christ gives of him; nor to the evidence that shows, that the representation is just. His evil heart takes the lead, and carries him away into infidelity. Therefore, his being an infidel does not excuse him. He rejects God.

And on that very account he is sinful. And as such, God will treat him.

LET me expostulate with the infidel. Have you no suspicion that you are deceived by an evil heart? By what rule do you determine, that you are right? Not by what the Saviour declares; for him you deny. You are above instruction from the Lord of life. Will your depraved mind see its way to happiness through the clouds of ignorance? What have mankind done, who have not had that revelation of God, which is given by the Saviour? Have they obtained just notions of God? All nations, in every age, who have not had revelations of Christ, have been bewildered. The unlearned and the learned have wandered in darkness, and never found out the character of the Most High. They have had most wild and extravagant ideas of the Holy One, and impiously cast him off, and chosen idols made by wicked hands in the shape of men, fourfooted beasts and creeping things. They have bowed down before altars erected to serpents and devils. They have multiplied their gods, a catalogue of which would make a volume. They have called vice virtue, and virtue they have called vice.— And what to some may appear strange and almost incredible, the learned have exceeded the common people in ignorance of God and superstitious notions of religion, as much as they have exceeded them in learning. And what rule have you, that they have not had? They have not had the Bible, which reveals the Saviour, who shows you the true God. And you reject the God revealed by the Saviour, and endeavour to throw yourself into the same dark state, in which they have always been. Do you wish to tread their path? And try the strength of depraved reason? But you say, it is an enlightened age, and that you know more than the hea-

then. This is granted, and also that you have more just notions of the Deity, than they. Let me query; have you not gotten your more just ideas from the Bible? Had you never gotten any ideas from that book, or from those, who had read it, what reason have you to think, that your depraved mind would have acquired better ideas of God, than Pagans? You say, it is an enlightened age. But where do we find the light? We find it not among the heathen nations; but among those who sit under the gospel. Those who do not live in christian countries are as ignorant as Pagans were in former ages. Before you proceed any further, be intreated to make a pause, and take into serious consideration the work of the Saviour, and see if you do not find evidence of its being contrived and carried into effect by heaven. And you, who feel inclined to the side of infidelity, before you take the dreadful leap from gospel light, into the depth of darkness, consider most seriously the infinite difference between the light of the gospel and depraved reason. Will you depend on the ability of your own treacherous mind? Are you able by the mere help of nature to find the way to future glory and happiness? Millions before you have made the attempt, and have failed. Some of the most wise and learned among the heathen have acknowledged, that a revelation from God, besides that which is given in the works of nature, was necessary to enlighten and reform mankind.

THERE is another sort, who give themselves but very little concern about the character of Jehovah. His glorious perfections and the promised seed appear to them to be of no great consequence. They eat and drink, sport and play, and seek after the pleasures of the world. If God will give them the desire of their hearts in

this life, they do not care what he does with them in the next. This class really reject the God, that the Saviour offers. If they loved the Lord God, they would attend to his glorious character. Their hearts would be charmed with his perfections. They would not go after the vanities of time and sense. They would be awake to divine things. Consider, that you may be roused from your sinful carelessness before you die. You may be filled with most gloomy and distressing apprehensions on a dying bed. But if you should not be alarmed while you live, you will be most terribly shocked, when you leap into eternity, where you will have nothing to do, but to think on these things forever. There you will be made sensible of the dreadful opposition of the heart to God. There you will feel yourselves in the hands of an angry God. There you will be filled with amazement. Why do you indulge these careless sensations, and reject your glorious Creator, while he shines all around you? Can you vindicate yourselves? Are you innocent in despising infinite perfection? Your crimes rise and ascend to the throne of the Eternal, and loudly call for the execution of his justice. Nothing but an unreasonable attachedness to the world, and an opposition to divine things make you indifferent to the astonishing and most glorious work of the Saviour.

THERE is another class of people under the gospel, who are sometimes under conviction.—The terrors of the Lord take hold of their guilty souls. They fear, that, when they have spent a few days more in life, they shall be undone forever. These distressing fears wake up their attention. They enquire. They attend. They get just speculative ideas of God. But alas!

their hearts reject him. They know God's character, but will not love it. They act like perverse children, who know that their Father is right, yet will not be friendly to him. This class of people reject God, and are highly criminal.— With you let me expostulate. Why will you render yourselves criminal, by rejecting God? If you continue in this state of mind, future consequences will be most terrible. You will be eternally ruined. And the pain, that you will suffer will be proportionable to your guilt. The glory of God shines from the cross. You see it. You have a degree of right doctrinal knowledge of it. God impresses a sense of the truths concerning himself upon your minds. While you are beholding the great God, your hearts rise and spurn at his Majesty. You reject Him, against the light that is in your own minds. There is no just reason for this. God is good; his ways are just and wise, he has never injured you, your minds are capable of seeing him. And now what is it, that makes you reject him, but an unreasonable hatred of the heart?

THERE is another class of people, which includes various denominations, and some of all denominations of professing christians, who deny and reject the true God. To this class belong such as really have wrong notions of the true moral character of God. Perhaps the most numerous of this class are those, who believe that all which God does in his works, is solely with a view to the good of his creatures; and not with a view to his own glory. To people of this belief the real character of God is odious. Represent God as sovereign, and to be loved for what he is in himself, aside from the consideration of his kindnesses to us, such people will demur, and reject him. Show them God as one, who fore-

knows and foredetermines all events, and who treats his creature man, as being in a totally depraved state, and absolutely dependent on his grace for regeneration, and they will utterly reject him. If there be any of this character present be intreated to consider, whether you are not really opposing the very God, revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ. If you are of this character your profession and love will do you no good, when you go from hence to the world of spirits.

ANOTHER class may be mentioned who reject God. It is the profane class of mankind. They take God's name in vain, openly despise his laws, treat religion with contempt, cheat their neighbours, and treat the sabbath, prayer and all christian duties with neglect.

It is needless to offer a single argument to prove, that this sort of people reject the eternal God. They carry the marks of rebellion in their foreheads. They are unwise as to the present time, and unwise as to eternity. Poor unhappy man! Will you always laugh at religion? In the agonies of death will you curse and swear, and call on God to damn your soul? Will you bid defiance to Omnipotency, when your naked soul hovers before God in eternity? Rather will not your soul sink into an infinite gloom. It is God, the living God, that you contemn. The Lord Jesus, the promised seed, holds up the character of his Father before you. From the cross it shines in all its glory. You reject him. In this you are highly criminal.—In a word, all, who are not real christians, cast off God. Every man is either a friend or an enemy to him.

V. THE subject of the promised seed leads to the best knowledge.

EVERY branch of science is a cypher, compared to this. *Languages* show us how men express

their ideas ; *Mathematics* teach us the use of numbers and measures ; *Philosophy* explains the works of nature, and connections between causes and effects ; *Astronomy* leads us among suns and stars ; *Agriculture* shows us how we are to provide food and clothing for the body ; *Geometry* how to measure the earth and other things ; *Navigation* how to go to foreign countries on the seas and oceans ; *Rhetoric* how to please ; *History* informs us what has taken place in past ages ; *Law* explains our duty as citizens ; *War* how to kill and destroy one another ; but the subject of the promised seed leads us to see the glorious displays of Jehovah. It lays open all his perfections, and states his designs. It carries the mind from earth to Heaven, and shows us the eternal Trinity and the office of each person in the Trinity. It brings our minds from Heaven to calvary, and there shows us justice and mercy shining more illustriously than the meridian sun. It shows us what God Almighty has been doing, and what he will do in future time. And how all kingdoms and nations, all worlds, all events in Heaven, earth and hell, are connected, and conspire to exhibit the glory of God, and advance the work of redemption. It carries the mind into the great field of the universe, and shows us the moral char- of the intellectual world. It teaches us our duty as citizens of the universe, brings a remedy for our sick and wounded souls, points out the way, which leads to happiness, and opens the brightest prospects beyond death.

IT is a most sublime subject. No one, who studies it, has reason to regret his labour. The trite observation made by empty minds, that the study of religion is below a man of genius and business, is without the least foundation. It enlarges the mind, more than any other study. It is a

field in which, fruit is always to be found. A subject, which can never be exhausted. It charms the pious heart ; fills it with the purest pleasure ; smooths the rugged path of life ; administers a cordial to the dying man ; and opens the door into the bright mansions above, where he will contemplate with the sweetest delight on the character of God, which is brought into view by the promised Saviour.

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*THE Necessity of ATONEMENT for Sin, in order to
the Pardon of the Sinner ;*

Illustrated in a Discourse, by STEPHEN WEST,
D. D. Pastor of the Church in Stockbridge.

ROMANS iv. 25.

*Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised
again for our justification.*

FEW doctrines of the holy scriptures are more offensive to the world than that of the atonement :—It connects with it a train of ideas which are painful to the human heart. For this reason it is that Christ crucified was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks. “What need was there” say some, “that a person sustaining so infinitely high and exalted a character as Christ is represented to possess, should die for the sins of men? The Apostle, it is true, saith that *without shedding of blood is no remission,** and, that *it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*† He also saith that *Christ hath redeemed us from the*

* Heb. ix. 22.

† Heb. x. 4.

“ *curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* † He,
 “ likewise, tells us that *God commendeth his love*
 “ *towards us, in that while we were yet sinners*
 “ *Christ died for us ; and, that when we were en-*
 “ *emies we were reconciled by the death of his Son.* §
 “ But, must it not be that these expressions are
 “ figurative, designed to convey something very
 “ different from their literal import ? Is not God
 “ in himself infinitely good ? And, doth not a
 “ disposition to forgive, make an essential part of
 “ goodness, and necessarily enter into the very
 “ nature of it ?”

THESE are important inquiries ; and, need careful examination. We observe, then,

I. THAT the exercise of forgiveness is an important branch of goodness ; and, goodness never appears more glorious than in proper exercises of mercy. Accordingly, Christ directs his disciples to be merciful, as their Father also is merciful. || It cannot be denied, however, that *goodness*, which always regards ultimately the good of the whole, may itself with propriety, and as the case may be, *must of necessity*, set some bounds to the exercise of forgiveness. A total suspension of all punishments, and an unlimited exercise of forgiveness, it is easily seen, may be destructive of the general good. This being the case we are compelled to acknowledge that the exercise of forgiveness is not so essential a part of goodness, as that it would, in all cases, be in the least degree inconsistent with the most true and perfect goodness to inflict punishment. Every one is sensible there *may be* such a suspension of punishments as to embolden wicked men, and give encouragement to crimes ; and, thereby subvert all law and government. In this, the universal sense of mankind most fully concurs, and all human governments agree.

† Gal. iii. 13.

§ Rom. v. 8, 10.

|| Luke vi. 36.

STILL, many seem to imagine that the *Divine Being*, the governor of all worlds, ought never to punish—that, be it as it may as to *human* governments, the *divine*, may be supported without punishments, whatever rebellions may take place. But, have *men* a sufficiently clear and extensive view of the vast kingdom and government of God, and of its various relations and connexions, to determine with certainty that it may be supported, its interest secured, and its most valuable ends answered, without punishments? Or, is the wisdom of man sufficient to decide when, and how far, and on what consideration, *divine goodness* may be most beneficially exercised, and appear to greatest advantage, in pardoning offences? These are discoveries with respect even to *human* governments, which the wisdom of man hath never yet made. We therefore observe,

2. THAT it is manifest offences *may* be so overlooked as to destroy government, and render it contemptible. Therefore, speaking to the children of Israel, by the prophet, God saith, “How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor’s wife. *Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*” To suppose that punishments are never necessary to the general good, where wickedness is committed, is to suppose both law and government unnecessary. Government cannot exist without law: Nor can there be law without penalty. All the authority of the law lies in

its penalties. It is penalties only that make laws respectable, and create a fear of offending: And, as the public peace and good are secured and defended only by the law, it is of proportionable importance that the law should never lose its restraining influence and respectability. If sanctions and penalties are essential to laws, an entire neglect to execute renders them entirely useless. And, if an entire neglect, in the supreme Ruler, to execute the penalties of the law, when they are incurred would be subversive of government; a partial neglect, would have a proportionable influence to unhinge and weaken it. If penalty be essential to law, the execution of it when incurred is essential to government; because, a penalty never executed, loseth all its influence and can be of no use.

THAT the good of God's moral kingdom cannot be promoted and secured without law and government, is what will not be denied. If we believe in the perfection and goodness of the divine moral character, we shall believe that God has annexed such penalties to his laws as are most wisely calculated to guard the interest, and secure the welfare, of the great community over which he presideth. The only rule by which we are to judge of the justness and suitableness of any penalty by which a law is sanctioned, is the proportion it bears to the evil which will naturally accrue to the community from a violation of it, and the estimate it contains of the evil of transgression. That the supreme Lawgiver should guard the good of his kingdom by laws sanctioned by such penalties as are most exactly proportioned to the evils which would naturally accrue to the community from transgression, may naturally be inferred from the absolute perfection of his moral character:—Goodness, and the perfect

regard which God hath to the happiness and welfare of his moral kingdom, would necessarily require such an adjustment of penalties.

BUT, if goodness in God, and a regard to the best interest and happiness of his kingdom, require that that he exercise moral government over his creatures; and, if moral government cannot be exercised without laws sanctioned by proper penalties; how can it be inferred from the *goodness of God* that the transgressor shall go unpunished? If goodness, and a regard to the public good, annex the penalty; why will not the same goodness, and regard to the public good, require its execution? Nothing is more absurd than to suppose that we might infer from *divine goodness* the remission of a penalty by which that same *divine goodness* had sanctioned the law. If goodness *annex* the penalty, by what rule can it be concluded that goodness will *remit* it? To suppose that *goodness* should, both *annex*, and yet *remit*, is to set goodness at variance with itself. Hence it appears self-contradictory to suppose that divine goodness should annex penalties to laws, and then, when incurred, should, without a consideration unknown to the law, remit them.

FURTHER, if the penalties of the law exhibit no higher a degree of displeasure against the sinner than necessarily ariseth from the most perfect benevolence of the Deity to his creatures, and the highest regard to the happiness of his kingdom; every degree of disregard, in the supreme Ruler, to the penalty, must of necessity manifest a proportionable want of most perfect good-will to his creatures. If, therefore, the Deity do not, in every instance manifest that displeasure against the sinner which the penalties of his law represent him to possess; the law is necessarily so far given up; and, ceaseth to be an exhibition of

goodness, and of the true moral character of God. If goodness, in the Deity, will guard the interest and happiness of his moral kingdom, it must necessarily do it by laws established with proper sanctions. Hence, it must be as absurd to infer from the *goodness* of God that he will pardon sinners, without any thing being done as effectually to establish the law, as the execution of the penalty; as it would be to suppose that he would abandon the good, and renounce the interest, of his kingdom at large. So little reason is there to infer, from the necessary and essential goodness of God, that he will pardon sinners without any consideration of atonement.

“BUT,” it is urged, “if the sinner repent, condemn himself, and take the side of government, why is not this a sufficient reason for his being pardoned? Why is it not manifest that divine goodness may, on that condition, be exercised to the greatest advantage in forgiving the transgressor?” We reply,

i. If the law of God be just, and a regard to the penalty of it, in the Supreme Ruler, be essential to government; the sinner cannot become a penitent, condemn himself, and take the side of government, any further than he feels the necessity of a strict regard being had, in the administration, to the sanctions and penalty of the law. If the sinner repent, the divine law is the rule by which he judgeth and condemneth himself: No repentance can be sincere and genuine, any further than it leads the subject to see the perfect righteousness and goodness of the law; and, feel the importance and absolute necessity of its being supported in government. That repentance, therefore, which brings the sinner to condemn himself, and take the side of government, will necessarily bring him to feel the inconsistency and

utter impropriety of his receiving a pardon, unless something be done as effectually to support the authority of the law, as the execution of the penalty. That repentance which brings the sinner to take the side of law and government, brings him equally to feel the absolute necessity of the execution of the penalty, where it is incurred, in order to the support of government. This is manifest, if the execution of law be necessary to the support of its authority. To suppose *repentance*, therefore, to be a sufficient reason for pardon *because it brings the subject to take the side of law and government*, is an absurdity. It implies that the law ought to be given up *with respect to the penitent, because he is brought to see and feel the high and absolute importance that its authority should be supported*. Hence it appears that nothing can be more effectual to convince the sinner of the indispensable necessity of atonement, in order to the remission of sin, than that repentance which brings him to take the side of government, and make the law of God the rule by which he judgeth and condemneth himself.

2. IF repentance be a reason for pardon, it must be, either that repentance is itself the penalty of the law, or the penalty is given up. One, or the other, of these must be true: there is no medium—no middle way between them. If the penalty of a law be not executed when incurred, it is given up. Therefore, if the penitent be pardoned in consideration of his repentance, it must of necessity be, either that repentance itself is the penalty of the law, or that the penalty of the law in his case is given up. Where the law is transgressed, the penalty of it is, in fact, incurred;—and that equally whether the subject be a penitent, or not. When the law is transgressed, the subject is brought under condemnation. Consequently, he

must be condemned, either to repentance, or to some punishment. If no punishment be executed *because he repents*, it must of necessity be, either that repentance is the penalty of the law, or that the law is never put in execution.

3. To suppose repentance a sufficient reason why the penalty of the law should not be executed upon the transgressor, implies that repentance is a full and sufficient reparation of all the injury done by the sinner to the great community to which he belongeth. If repentance do not fully repair all the injury done to the government of God by the rebellion of the sinner, it is manifest that the good of God's kingdom requires something more, as a sufficient reason for remitting the penalty of the law. But he who, himself, repairs all the injury which he has ever committed upon a government, is in the same predicament with respect to government as he would have been, had he never injured it: Nor, would there be any more justice in treating him as an injurer of the community, than if he had never transgressed. If it would be unjust to punish one as an offender who never injured the community; it would be equally unjust to punish one for an injury to the community which he had repaired. If, therefore, repentance be a reparation of the injury done to the divine government, justice and the good of government require that the penitent should go unpunished. And, if *justice* require that the penitent should go unpunished, there is no room left for his receiving a *pardon*. To suppose there should be a *pardon* where justice forbids a *punishment*, is an absurdity. Therefore is it equally absurd to suppose the *repentance of a transgressor*, to be a sufficient reason for a *pardon*.

BESIDES; if the repentance of a sinner be a sufficient reason why no punishment should be ex-

executed upon him, all laws which threaten punishments for crimes upon any other condition than that they are never repented of, are manifestly unreasonable and unjust. Yet, this is evidently the case with all the laws of God. They make no exception in favor of the penitent. Their language is, *The soul that sinneth, it shall die—cursed be every one that continueth not in ALL things written in the book of the law to do them.* But, if the law threatened punishment only on condition that the transgressor did not repent, it would effectually prevent the execution of all punishments whatever; and, therefore, utterly invalidate and take away *all law.* On this hypothesis the time would never come when punishments could legally be inflicted; because it would never be too late for the sinner to repent, and in that way remove the ground of punishment; and, *never appear* that the sinner will not repent. Again,

4. IF the repentance of a sinner be a sufficient reason why no future punishment should be executed upon him, it must be that the good of God's moral kingdom requires no further testimony of his displeasure against the transgressor than those pains and evils which universally accompany the commission of sin. If the good of God's government require any greater evil to be inflicted as a testimony of divine displeasure, than necessarily and universally accompanies the commission of sin; it is plain that repentance, or ceasing to commit sin, would not, of itself, be a sufficient reason for the suspension of punishment: And therefore, that the remission of punishment simply on this consideration, would be detrimental to the good of God's kingdom.

IF there be no need of any further *evidence* of God's hatred of iniquity, than the natural evil and pain which are made to accompany transgression;

there is no need that any greater hatred of sin should *exist in the divine mind*, than is expressed in these evils. And, if this be the case, it is easy to see that every motive which can operate on the sinner's mind to induce him to repent, is utterly taken away. For, it is obvious that the pleasures of sin, notwithstanding all the pain which is made to accompany the indulgence, are, in his view, preferable to all others. On this principle there would not be the least prospect that any sinner ever would repent: because, all would prefer the pleasures of sin, with every inconvenience attending them, before all other enjoyments of which they have any knowledge: these pleasures being the greatest which the sinner, in his present temper of mind, is capable of enjoying. This is evident from the choice which sinners actually make, notwithstanding the apprehensions they, very frequently, have of far greater evils to come, if they do not repent and turn from their evil ways.

THUS manifest is it that the supposition, that the good of God's moral government requires no other testimony of his anger with the sinner than is contained in those natural evils which are universally attendant on the practice of iniquity; throws the reins on the sinner's neck, gives free scope to sinful indulgence, and is utterly subversive of all rule and order whatever.

5. If repentance be a sufficient reason for the remission of punishment in one case, it must be so in all. That which will be a sufficient reason why no punishment should be executed, in one instance; will be a sufficient reason why no punishments should be executed, in all similar instances. But, should it be made a universal rule of law, that no punishment should be inflicted for any crime whatever, excepting in cases of final impenitence; all government would, at once, be at an

end. Besides that, by a mere rule of law, on this hypothesis, it never could be determined when the sinner shall be deemed, and in fact is, a *final* impenitent; *the principle* would suppose that no crime is, in itself simply, injurious to the community at large: For, if it be, it requires punishment, for the same reason that final impenitence requires it. But, if no single crime be, of itself, injurious to the community at large; no *one crime* ought to be prohibited on any penalty. The supposition under consideration admits no more than that final perseverance in wickedness would be detrimental to the public. Therefore no crime which has been committed by *the penitent* ought ever to be punished. But, if single instances of transgression are not to be punished, why are a series of transgressions? And, why is final perseverance in wickedness to be punished? A *repetition* of those acts which are not injurious to the public, can no more merit punishment than any *individual* of those acts which are repeated. If the beginning of a course of conduct be not hurtful to the public, a persistence in it cannot be hurtful.—Consequently, if there be no reason for punishing *single acts* of wickedness; neither is there, for punishing perseverance in it. Invert the order of the argument, and it will stand thus: If the good of government require that *final perseverance* in wickedness be punished; it requires, also, that *single acts* of wickedness be punished. And, if it require that single acts of wickedness be punished, repentance cannot be a reason for the remission of punishment.

BESIDES; on the principle, that the good of government requires that they only, who persevere in wickedness, shall be punished; how shall it be determined what this perseverance is,

which merits punishment? How long the sinner must persevere, to render it requisite to the public good that punishment should be actually inflicted? If the perseverance is to be eternal it is readily seen that the sinner never can be punished: If it be only for any limited time, his repentance, even though it then take place, is no reason for the remission of punishment. Thus evident is it that if only impenitence and perseverance in wickedness are ever to be punished, *all punishment* must be excluded from the divine government. Nor is it less evident that, if there be a propriety in God's inflicting punishment on sinners in any case whatever, repentance is no reason, in itself, why punishment should be remitted.

BUT, it is objected, further,

“ THAT it is a beauty in civil governments to bestow pardon without any other consideration than that of repentance; why not, then, in the divine?”

WE reply, that the objector, it is presumed, will not urge that a pardon of offences against the civil community ought *in all cases* to be bestowed where there is repentance. That this should be a rule, respecting the execution of punishments, in civil communities, would be as absurd, and as subversive of all order and authority, as the same would be, in the divine government. Accordingly, the wisdom and propriety of such a rule has never, yet, been discovered, nor ever will be, by civil legislators. Were such a rule as this to be established in civil communities, law would lose its authority, and all government at once be at an end. Every criminal, as danger approached, would become a penitent; and the terror of punishment, that great restraint from crimes, at once be removed. And if, in civil governments, penitence will not *universally* be a reason for the re-

mission of punishment ; why should it be *in any case* whatever ? Any pardon *on this consideration simply*, would have a degree of the same influence on government, as universal pardons on the same consideration. If it would be detrimental to civil government to establish it as a universal rule, that penitence should avert punishment ; it would be proportionably detrimental, to make it a rule that it should, in any case. But, we observe,

1. THAT there is a vast disparity, in many respects, between the government of God, and that of men. Human laws, and human legislators are, all, imperfect :—hence we find the codes of human laws continually varying. The judicial, and executive, parts of government, are imperfect : as, also, is evidence with respect to facts. Hence, human governments may, in many instances, do injustice to individuals.—Therefore,

2. WHEN pardons are bestowed, in civil governments, it is usually on an apprehension that the sentence of the law may be too severe—that it may bear too hard upon the criminal—or, that there may be palliatives respecting his crime which the law could not foresee and mark out.—Pardons are, also, sometimes bestowed through favor and partiality ; at others, on account of the weakness of government. But, there appears no manner of evidence that it would be wise, or for the good of civil government, ever, in any instance, to grant a pardon to a criminal, on the simple consideration of repentance. Nor, doth it appear that pardons ever are, in fact, bestowed on this consideration. The supposition that pardons ought to be granted, in consideration of repentance, either universally, or in any instance, would involve all the evils to *civil government*,

which it has been before shown the same rule of administration would, to the *divine*. But,

3. THE divine government is, every way, absolutely and infinitely perfect. That code of laws which is contained in the holy scriptures, hath not, from the first, been altered: and, never will admit an alteration for the better. An argument this, of the absolute and infinite perfection of its author! The divine laws are perfect, and reach to every possible case: the command being exceeding broad. The penalties are such as tend, in the best manner *as penalties*, to secure and maintain the authority of government, and promote the general good:—being most exactly proportioned, in every supposable instance, to the injury which would accrue to the public, to the universe, from a violation of the law. The judge, too, is omniscient, almighty, and infinitely just and good. Where, then, can we conceive there should be any ground for a pardon, unless something at the same time be done, which shall as effectually support the authority of the law, as the execution of the penalty? How can the good of God's government, and of the community at large, in that case be secured, unless the Deity in some way exhibit a displeasure against the sinner, which will as effectually deter from transgression, as the execution of punishment? A pardon bestowed in such a way as should diminish, in the least degree, in the mind of the creature, the idea of the infinite hatefulness of sin, in the sight of God; would necessarily abate the terror of the penalties of the law: and, would, therefore, evidently be inconsistent with the character of the great governor of the world, and the good of his moral kingdom and government.

THE following conclusions, therefore, seem clear and obvious, viz.

1. THAT government cannot be exercised without law; and, law cannot exist without penalty. All the authority of law, and all that gives it any commanding influence beyond that of mere advice, is its penalty; or, the fear it begets in the mind of the subject that transgression will be punished. A law (if it might be so termed) without a penalty, it is easy to see, could have no such influence: as it leaves the subject to obey, or disobey, at his option, without fear of any ill consequences to himself.

2. THAT, a total neglect, in the Supreme Ruler, to execute the penalties of the law, where they may be incurred, would totally destroy the authority of the law; and, therefore, be utterly subversive of all government. And, if this would be the certain and necessary consequence of a total neglect of the penalties of the law; it certainly follows that every degree of inattention to the penalties of the law, and disregard of them, in the administration, would, to a proportionable degree, diminish the authority of the law, and weaken government.

3. THAT, in a perfect moral government, the penalty of the law, when incurred, cannot be remitted consistently with a full and perfect support of the authority of government, unless as high a regard be, in some way, shown by the Supreme Ruler, to the penalty of the law, as would appear in the execution of it. This will certainly follow, upon its being admitted that the penalty is such as is best adapted to secure the obedience of the subject, guard the rights of the community, and promote the peace and welfare of God's kingdom. Such a regard to the penalties of the law appears to be necessary, in order to prevent the ill effects which pardons would otherwise have on government. That goodness, therefore, in the Deity,

which disposeth him to secure the obedience of his creatures, guard the rights of his subjects, and promote the welfare and happiness of the great community over which he presideth, will certainly refrain from the bestowment of a pardon in any instance whatever, unless as high a regard be, in some way, exhibited to the sanctions of the law, as would appear in the execution of the penalty.

FROM the preceding reasonings it appears that, for God to forgive sinners without exhibiting, in some way or other, a displeasure against them, which would tend as effectually to deter from transgression, as the execution of the penalty of the law; would be so far to disregard the penalty and set it aside: Consequently, it would so far take away the use of penalties, and thereby destroy the authority of law. But, every thing which diminisheth the authority of the law, is so far injurious to government; as, it naturally impresseth the mind of the subject with unfavorable ideas of the law itself; and, leads him to suppose that the government established by the Lawgiver is imperfect.

HENCE it follows that, consistently with the honor of his law, the support of his authority and government, and the good of his moral kingdom; we can see no way in which it can be consistent with the perfection and goodness of the Deity, to pardon sinners without an atonement.

BUT, what else do we mean by an atonement than a manifestation of the divine abhorrence of transgression, even though the sinner be pardoned, which shall tend as much to the honor of the law, the establishment of the divine authority, and the discouragement of vice by keeping up the fear and terror of punishment, as the execution of the penalty upon the offender? If this be done, the authority of government will not be injured by

exercises of mercy. Then it may appear, as the Apostle expresseth it, that “ God’s *righteousness* is “ declared ; and, he may be *just*, and the justifier “ of him which believeth in Jesus.”* The holy scriptures accordingly teach us, as in our text, that *Christ* “ was delivered for our offences, and “ was raised again for our justification—that he “ hath once suffered, the just for the unjust†— “ that, his own self bare our sins in his own body “ on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should “ live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye “ were healed‡—that now once in the end of the “ world, he hath appeared to put away sin by the “ sacrifice of himself§—that *Christ* our passover “ is sacrificed for us ;|| and, that he hath redeemed “ us from the curse of the law, being made a “ curse for us.”¶

IMPROVEMENT.

1. IT may be inferred from what hath been said on this subject, that the atonement made by the death of *Christ* is the ground-work of the gospel of peace. In this, and in this only, is a proper foundation laid for the exercise of divine mercy and grace in the pardon and recovery of sinners:—There appearing no other way in which a regard to *God’s* great kingdom, and to the welfare of the community over which he presideth, would permit a remission of the penalties of the law.

WE may, therefore, rationally conclude that they who reject this doctrine, and deny the necessity of it, entertain very different apprehensions of the moral character of *God*, the nature of his goodness, the object of his government, and of the nature of the glorious gospel of *Christ*, from

* Rom. iii. 26.

† 1 Peter iii. 18.

‡ 1 Peter ii. 24.

§ Heb. ix. 26.

|| 1 Cor. v. 7.

¶ Gal. iii. 13.

what this doctrine manifestly importeth. Too many, in contemplating the character of God, his dealings with men, and his designs towards them; do really leave out the ideas of a *moral government*. They seem to imagine that God will bring all rational, intelligent creatures to happiness by an administration similar to that by which the order and beauty of the *natural system* are preserved. And, because *men* are equally dependent on God as *inanimate nature*, they leave out almost every idea of the moral evil of any human actions; and, thereby remove all ground of much displeasure, in the divine mind, against men for any of their conduct be it what it may:—in this way setting wholly aside the necessity of any atonement. But, if the ideas of a *moral government* exercised by the Deity, over the world, be sufficiently preserved; and, proper apprehensions of the *morality* of human actions, and the destructive nature and tendency of violating the laws and contemning the authority of God, be maintained; the doctrine of atonement made by the death of Christ will appear most important and glorious—every way fitted to establish that authority and government of God which are absolutely essential to the good of the universe—leaving on the minds of sinners, notwithstanding the richest exercises of mercy, through Christ, to believers, all that fear and terror of punishment which the penalties of the law naturally excite.

2. It must appear, further, from what hath been said on this subject, that the denial of the necessity of atonement in order to the remission of sin, must arise from an apprehension that punishments are unnecessary in the government of God: and, that the peace and order of God's kingdom may be preserved, and the good of it secured, without the exercises of punitive justice.

For, if it be necessary that there be a manifestation of the punitive justice of God in *any instance* where a proper subject of it may be found; why is it not necessary there should be a like manifestation in *every instance* of transgression? If God be offended with *one* of his creatures for rebelling against him; why not with *all* who do rebel? And, if it be necessary to the peace and good of his government, that he express and testify his displeasure against *one transgressor*; why is it not necessary, by the same rule, that he express and testify it against every transgressor? One sin is as really of a destructive nature and tendency to government, as another. And, if one instance of rebellion may go unpunished, why not another? Again; if the *goodness* of God, as is urged by those who reject the doctrine of atonement, be a sufficient security against the punishment of *some* transgressions; by what rule can it be determined that *divine goodness* will not equally secure *all* transgressors from punishment? They who suppose that it would be inconsistent with divine goodness that there should be expressions of anger against *every act of wickedness*; must, certainly, entertain limited ideas of the goodness of God, to suppose it necessary there should be expressions of his anger against *any*? For, that same goodness, which forbids an expression of anger in *one case*, carried to a sufficient height, would forbid it in *all cases*. A denial, therefore, of the necessity of manifestations of divine anger against *every transgression*, evidently sets aside the necessity of such manifestations in *any case whatever*.

ACCORDINGLY, they who reject the doctrine of atonement do, more generally, deny that any *punishments* are, or ever will be, made use of in the administration of divine government. The

natural evils to which God subjecteth his creatures at present, or ever will subject them, they suppose are no other than *wholesome corrections*, designed for the personal good of the subject, and suited in the best manner to convince and reclaim him, without any regard being had in administering them, to the real demerit and magnitude of his crimes.

BUT, if the utmost exertions of divine contrivance and power to bring every intelligent creature to a willing obedience, and in that way produce universal happiness, be the only rule of divine administration; nothing is more manifest than that *law*, properly so termed, is given up, or doth not exist; and, the ideas of a *moral government* exercised over the world, are wholly without foundation. For, as has been before observed, *government* cannot be exercised without *law*, nor can law exist without *penalty*. If, therefore, offenders against God will never be subjected to any evils but such as are necessary to their own personal good, and therefore are a fruit of divine kindness towards them: the penalty of the law, however frequently incurred, will never, in any instance, or on any condition, be inflicted,—unless the penalty of the law, for offending against God, be *the greatest kindness God can do us*. For, it is supposed by those who deny the necessity of atonement, and of the exercises of vindictive justice, that no sinner will ever be subjected to any other natural evil than is essential, and best adapted, to his personal good. And, that a subjection to all *such evils* is, and must be, a fruit of the *greatest kindness* that can be shown him, cannot be denied. Consequently, on this hypothesis, there neither are, nor ever will be, in the system, however full at present of rebellion and wickedness, any exercises of vindictive, or punitive justice;

this being entirely aliened from the nature of divine administration :—an opinion utterly subversive of every idea of a *moral government* exercised, by the Deity, over the world!

3. WHAT hath been said on this subject may, not only assist us in understanding what is meant by *atonement*, but give us to see that atonement, for sin, in order to its remission, doth not, in the least degree, diminish the *mercy* of the sinner's pardon. Atonement is that which exhibits the Deity, to the view of his creatures, as that same infinite hater of iniquity which the penalties of the law would naturally lead us to consider him. And, our ideas of the freeness and richness of divine *mercy*, in the pardon of a sinner, will ever be in proportion to the apprehensions we entertain of the *purity* of God and his *abhorrence of iniquity*. Should a pardon be bestowed on the sinner in such a way as should, in any degree, cloud the divine hatred of sin; it would so far eclipse the *mercy* of the remission. Should a sinner be released from the penalty of the law without any such exhibition of the divine abhorrence of his sin as is made in the atonement; instead of its being a display of *mercy*, it would, for ought we can see, be an act of *partiality*.

THE design of the atonement is, to make a display of that same divine hatred of iniquity which the penalties of the law import; and this, that *mercy* and *truth* might meet together; and, God be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth on Jesus. This manifestation of the divine character, therefore, above every thing else prepares the way for it to appear to all to be a fruit of the richest and most pure mercy to receive to favor the penitent believing sinner.

How unreasonable is it, then, to object, as some do, that the doctrine of the *atonement* represents

the divine goodness, as not being sufficiently free to flow out, *unless it be purchased!* That God should, himself, be at such infinite expense to open a way for mercy to sinners in which the rights of government might be secured, and in that way the good of the whole be guarded and promoted; exhibits the most striking view, and incontestible evidence, of the perfect and infinite freeness of divine good-will; and, of the most pure and unmixed mercy. The *mercy*, therefore, (if it may be so termed) which the opposers of the doctrine of atonement so much urge and extol, is so far from having any thing of the nature of true goodness in it, that it would evidently be subversive of the divine government, and destructive to the general good. The exercises of it would necessarily take away, from the minds of sinners, the terror of punishment; and would, therefore, accommodate the administration of government to those perverse feelings of the human mind which abhor a *punishing* God. The *atonement* therefore, instead of detracting any thing from the pure and perfect freeness of the divine good-will in pardoning sinners, serves, above every thing else, to evince that they who are saved by Christ, will be *to the praise of the glory of divine grace.*

THERE is no way in which we can conceive the true, genuine goodness and love of God can be so conspicuous, as in the gift and work of Christ, the sacrifice he has made of himself for sin, and the consequent exercises of pardoning and sanctifying grace. That view of the high regard which God hath to the rights of government, and therein to the happiness and welfare of his great kingdom at large, which is exhibited in the atonement, on one hand; and, of the exceedingly evil nature, and hatefulness of sin, in the sight of God,

on the other; abundantly prepares the way for us to see the glory and wonderfulness of that love which God manifests in giving his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Here we can see how "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* Here, too, appear in very strong and lively colours, the astonishing condescension and grace of Christ in becoming poor for our sakes, that we through his poverty might be made rich; and, how transcendent that love is, which induced him to become a curse for us. Here, also, we see how *mercy* and *truth* meet together in the work of Christ; and, therefore, that God can be *just*, and yet *the justifier of him who believeth on Jesus*.

BUT if we leave out of our creed the doctrine of atonement, and suppose God to forgive *absolutely* without any measures to support the authority of his law, and to make it appear that he holds every transgression in that same infinite abhorrence which the penalty of the law importeth; we immediately lose sight of the evil of sin, as it is estimated by the judge of all—our ideas of a divine moral government sink into little, or nothing—the awe which would otherwise be upon our minds of the great, and just, and holy God, is exceedingly taken off; and, the goodness which is exercised in the salvation of men, instead of being the richest and most undeserved mercy, sinks down almost into a debt to the creature. For, how shall we be convinced that the Deity entertains that infinite hatred of sin universally which the penalties of the law import, unless this universal hatred of sin be exhibited in his administration of government, even though the penalty

* Rom. v. 8.

be remitted to the penitent, believing sinner? Should not the government of God over the world be such as to exhibit incontestible proof of this hatred of *all* iniquity, how soon would his creatures lose that fear and awe of the eternal Majesty which it becomes them to entertain; and, without which the divine government must sink into contempt!

4. WE have reason, therefore, to believe that the denial of the doctrine of atonement by Christ, and, of the necessity of it, ariseth from an apprehension of undue severity in that law which is contained in the holy scriptures, and, consequently, an opinion that men, neither do, nor can, deserve that punishment with which the sinner is there evidently threatened. Men, too hastily, conclude that it cannot be that the good God really feels that high and awful displeasure against every transgressor which the threatenings of his word most clearly and evidently intimate. Of offences of *so high a degree*, crimes of *so deep a dye*, as men are charged with *in the scriptures*, it seems to be supposed that they are not really guilty; and, consequently, that of *such* they cannot stand in need of a pardon. Of those *frailties and imperfections* which, all acknowledge, are found in human nature, it is confessed *in words* that men need a pardon. But then, these are so light and trivial, especially as being *against God*, that they merit but a low degree of punishment:—And, it is much better that the sinner himself should suffer this; and, in that way, make the little amends that are needed; than for God to be at that *infinite expense* which *the scriptures* speak of, in opening a way by the death of his own Son, for pardon and mercy to sinners. Such a way as this would the *wisdom of man* devise for the recovery and happiness of a fallen world!

BUT, as God seeth not as man sees, *his wisdom* hath devised a way infinitely diverse from this, for the recovery of ruined men :—a way in which the pride of every heart shall be abased, and the Lord alone shall be exalted. The rejection of the doctrine of atonement, it is therefore evident, is, in effect, a rejection of divine revelation. And, he who denies the necessity of it, puts himself upon the same ground on which they who *stile themselves deists* professedly take their stand and risk their *all* :—Yea, even risking their eternal state, either on the supposition that the Deity exerciseth no *moral government* over the world ; or, that, to the support and honor of such a government, whatever rebellions have taken place, the execution of punishments is *almost* if not *wholly* unnecessary.

5. WHAT hath been said upon this subject gives us reason to conclude, that the different apprehensions which men entertain of the moral character of God, from those representations which are evidently made of it in the holy scriptures, are not only the ground, of the different sentiments which are entertained of christianity in general, but the true reason why so many *reject* the holy scriptures, and deny their divine authority. Would men agree respecting the *divine moral character*, they would, of course, be united in their apprehensions respecting the nature and import of the moral law ; and, easily see what was necessary to the support and honor of God's moral government : while a disagreement respecting *this*, leads to a different construction of every important subject and leading sentiment of divine revelation. The construction which Jesus put upon the moral law, the representation he made of the nature and end of the divine moral government, together with the character which he hereby gave, both to

God, and to man; were the occasion of his being rejected and crucified by the Jews. The character which Christ's construction of the law naturally bestowed on the supreme governor of the world, gave it an exceedingly unfavorable aspect upon the proud and selfish views of men; and, therefore, at once confounded the hopes, and baffled the expectations, of vain men. On this, men rose up in arms against him: and, the general cry was, *away with such a fellow from the earth.* The construction which Christ put upon the law, and the representation which he gave of the moral character, both of the Deity, and of man; and, in this, of the design and import of his own death upon the cross; awakened all the principles of opposition, there are in the hearts of men to God, into action and life. And, for the same reason it is that Christ hath been opposed, by others, ever since. Men reject Christ now, for the same reason, and on the same ground, as the Jews rejected and crucified him, when he was upon earth. The controversy, therefore, respecting the truth of divine revelation, and the nature and necessity of the atonement by Christ, ariseth much more from the different sentiments men entertain of the moral character of God, and of their own; than from any want of clearness and plenitude of external evidence respecting these important subjects. Were there no false biases and prejudices in the human heart, the evidence of the truth and divinity of the sacred scriptures, would strike with irresistible force. And, did men entertain those views of themselves, and of their own guilt and vileness, which are evidently held up in the word of God; Christ crucified would appear to them to be the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Hence it must appear that the darkness of the human understanding

respecting these important and fundamental points; ariseth from the *blindness and badness of the hearts of men*: agreeably with what the Apostle saith, “having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, *because of the blindness of their heart.*”*

6. THIS, then, gives us to see the consistency of the holy scriptures in teaching the necessity of that work of the Holy Spirit whereby men are convinced of sin; and, the harmony of the glorious work of redemption in it. Without this work of the blessed Spirit on the hearts of men, all that hath been done by Christ to open the way of recovery for men, would be utterly ineffectual to the salvation of one sinner: for, without this, Christ crucified will ever remain, as hitherto he ever hath been, a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks.

WITHOUT being the subjects of this blessed work, men will blind themselves so as never to see the true beauty and glory of the character of Christ; or, the real necessity of his shedding his own precious blood upon the cross, in order to open such a way for the pardon of sinners, as shall be for the honor and security of the divine government, and the peace and happiness of God’s moral kingdom. But, no sooner are the natural prejudices of the heart, against that character and government of Jehovah which are really taught in the holy scriptures, removed; than men, both see, and feel, their need of the merit and intercession of Christ; and, of his precious blood to cleanse them from sin. Then they begin to entertain some proper apprehensions of their own

* Eph. iv. 18.

unspeakable vileness and wretchedness : and, the character of Christ, and the atonement he hath made, rise to their view in their infinite glory and importance. Henceforward, abhorring and condemning themselves they place all their hope and confidence in the free mercy of God through the blood of atonement. By this, and in this way, are they prepared to join the song of the redeemed of the Lord, “ Saying, Thou art worthy to “ take the book, and to open the seals thereof : “ *for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God* “ *by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue,* “ and people, and nation.”*

* Rev. v. 9.

*THE Purpose of GOD displayed in abasing the Pride
of Nations.*

A SERMON, by ALVAN HYDE, A. M. Pastor of the Church in Lee, *Massachusetts.*

ISAIAH xxiii. 9.

*THE LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the
pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all
the honorable of the earth.*

THE particular event, to which reference was had in these words, was the destruction of Tyre. It appears both from sacred and profane history, that Tyre was a place of great note, and that it was resorted to, by people of every nation. Situated in the centre of the *then* inhabited parts of the earth, and also on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, it was a most favorable place for trade.

THE prophet Ezekiel gave a more particular account of the extensiveness of its commerce, than what we find in Isaiah; though in the context, it is called the *mart of nations*. It was the same

Tyre over which Hiram was king, by whose aid, the magnificent house of the LORD was built at Jerusalem, in the days of Solomon. This place had arrived to the pinnacle of human greatness and grandeur, and was the *boast* of nations.— But, as the foundation of all its greatness was laid with things corruptible, and, as its superstructure was reared by the fruits of wickedness, mortality and destruction were stamped on its very *base*. To use the words of the prophet, *It committed fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth.** The prophets, Isaiah and Ezekiel, foretold evil things concerning this place. The former predicted a miserable, though temporary overthrow, the latter expressly foretold its utter and irrecoverable ruin. Ezekiel's prophecy has had a most remarkable and striking accomplishment; which is now a standing proof of the truth of prophecy, as well as of the absolute vanity of worldly grandeur. Modern historians and travellers uniformly assert, that the place where renowned Tyre was situated is now nothing but a barren rock, on which the fishermen, who resort to its coast, spread and dry their nets.— This is its present condition. Ezekiel's prophecy was the following:—“ *And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea.†* How exactly does its present condition correspond with what was foretold concerning it, many centuries ago!—and what striking, irresistible proof does this afford of the truth of prophecy!

BUT, to return to the words of Isaiah, whose prophecy concerning Tyre is brought up particu-

* Isaiah xxiii. 17.

† Ezek. xxvi. 4, 5.

larly for our meditation at this time:—"As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre. Pass ye over to Tarshish, howl, ye inhabitants of the isle. Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn. Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth?" In this last verse the prophet inquired into the *cause* of this great ruin, or by whose *arm* and *agency* it was effected. To which inquiry he makes answer, as in the *text*, and adds a reason, why such a ruin was produced. *The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth.* Here, the true *cause* and *reason* of the destruction brought on Tyre are assigned. For the same cause and reason all kingdoms are pulled down, and worldly greatness levelled with the dust.

In illustrating the ideas contained, in the passage under consideration, it is proposed,

I. To make some observations on the phrase, *The LORD of hosts.*

II. *SHOW* that the destruction brought on kingdoms and capital cities is always effected by *his hand.*

III. *ATTEND* to the *reason* of his doing this.

It is proposed, in the first place, to make some observations on the phrase, *The LORD of hosts.*

THIS is an appellation, by which the governor of the world is frequently distinguished in the Bible, especially in the writings of the prophets. It distinguishes him, in a peculiar manner, from all other beings in the universe. Besides God, there is no other being in the universe, who had not a beginning, and whose existence was not derived. Every creature, from the lowest reptile

on earth, to the most dignified and exalted angel in heaven, was made by the hand of God, and belongs to the number of his *hosts*. The army of the King of heaven is immensely large, and is composed of creatures of various ranks and orders. These he employs to execute his purposes and designs. Sometimes, he hath an expedition most suitable to be performed, by some of the *angelic host*, instances of which frequently occur in sacred history. Sometimes he raises an army from among the *rational inhabitants* of this world, and, sometimes he collects a formidable host from among the *brutal creation*, and even from among the lowest animals, such as *insects*, and *reptiles*. From any or all of these, the king of heaven can, at pleasure, raise an army, which will be every way adequate to the particular purposes of his government. Probably it is on the account of his having all creatures, whether in heaven, or on the earth, or in the sea, entirely at his command, and under his *control*, that he is so often stiled, in scripture, *the LORD of hosts*. The place which God holds in the universe is peculiar to *himself*, for no other being can be mentioned, even if we suppose any *super-angelic*, which does not belong to the number of his *hosts*. Such is the character of that Being, who is mentioned in the text.

II. BY the *hand of this Being*, the destruction brought on kingdoms and capital cities is always effected.

THE truth of this proposition appears both from scripture facts, and scripture declarations.

WE will first attend to the evidence from *scripture facts*.

THE first occurrence of a general destruction, with which we meet in sacred history, is that which was occasioned by the flood. On the circumstances and origin of this, let us, for a mo-

ment, reflect. By whose agency was this awful destruction effected? Shall we say, that any powerful monarch on *earth* brought down the torrents of rain from heaven, and caused the waters of the great deep to burst forth? Certainly not; for there were none of the great ones of the earth, who were not swallowed up in the general catastrophe. But, so explicit is the scripture account of the general deluge, as to preclude all necessity for any conjecture concerning its origin. This event was foretold by the Spirit of the LORD more than a hundred years before its accomplishment, and, when effected, it was directly ascribed to the LORD of hosts. GOD did not appear backward to show himself to be the *cause* of that great event, for he expressly declared to Noah, Gen. vi. 17. “*Behold, I, even I do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life from under heaven.*” There is no room for a doubt, therefore, that this great destruction was brought about by the agency of the LORD of hosts.

LEAVING this, let us take a view of what befel the land of Sodom and Gomorrah. Upon these wicked places fire and brimstone were rained down, which brought on them an awful and total destruction. But, where shall we look for the *origin*, or *cause* of their ruin? The history of their overthrow, recorded in scripture, informs us. Gen. xix. 24. *Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven.* The hand of the LORD of hosts, therefore, was as much concerned in bringing about this event, as that of the general deluge.

FROM the destruction of Sodom let us pass on to take a view of the overthrow of the Canaanites. Their ruin is as particularly ascribed to GOD, as that of the others just mentioned, though different means were used by him. He did not collect

a flood of waters, or cause fire and brimstone to be rained down to destroy them ; but, the army which he raised for that purpose was the children of Israel. They were the sword, but, the hand which wielded it, and directed its blow, was the LORD's. Therefore, GOD often said to the children of Israel, *I drove out the Canaanites from before you.*

THE destruction of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon, and afterwards by TITUS, were particularly foretold by the Spirit of prophecy, and expressly ascribed to the agency of GOD, though men were the instruments in his hands.

WERE a further elucidation of our subject, from scripture facts, necessary, we might instance the overthrow of Babylon, Egypt, Nineveh, and many others, all of which afford indubitable evidence in support of the point before us. In short, the destruction of every kingdom, or city, of which a particular record is made in sacred history, is expressly ascribed to the *agency* of the LORD of hosts. Had we no other evidence, that the destruction of kingdoms and cities is brought about by the hand of GOD, than what sacred history affords us, we might rest in a belief of the truth.

BUT, it has been observed, that this truth appears not only from *scripture facts*, but, from *scripture declarations*.

OF this complexion many passages may be found in the word of GOD. The first which I shall notice is the words of the text, which are very full to our purpose. After foretelling and particularly describing the destruction which was soon to be brought on Tyre, the prophet inquires into the *cause* of it, or by whose *counsel* and *agency* it was effected. *Who* (saith he) *hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose mer-*

chants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth? To which inquiry he makes answer in positive terms, as in the text. *The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth.*

THE ruin, brought on the property and family of Job, was particularly ascribed, by that servant of the Most High, to the agency of GOD. After hearing of the loss which he sustained, he did not say, the Sabeans, the Chaldeans, the fire and the wind have taken away; but, he looked beyond the instruments to the *cause*, and said, *The LORD hath taken away.* A similar declaration may we find in the xly. chapter of Isaiah, made by GOD himself. *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.* The declaration, in this passage, is seemingly as full and decided, as it could have been. The recital of one more shall suffice, which is that recorded in the book of Amos. *Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?* So that we have many scripture declarations to support the sentiment, that the destruction brought on kingdoms and cities is always effected, by the agency of the LORD of hosts. It is He, who raiseth up, and pulleth down, who exalteth, and who abaseth.

BUT, it may be of importance to make some observations on the *means* of which GOD makes use, in bringing destruction on the kingdoms of this world. These are various, even too many for enumeration. His being stiled the *LORD of hosts*, shows us, that, in bringing about his purposes, he hath many instruments at command. Much the greatest part of the effects, produced in this world, are brought about by some *means*, or,

as it is sometimes expressed, by *secondary causes*. Fire may be the cause of the destruction of a whole city, and a contagious distemper the ruin of a whole kingdom; but these are nothing more than *secondary causes*, or *instruments* in the hands of GOD. They are as completely *instruments*, as the axe is, in the hands of the feller of timber.

NOTWITHSTANDING the instruments of which GOD maketh use are innumerable, they may all be comprised under two classes; viz. such as have *rationality* and *accountability*, and such as are *destitute* of these. Of the former class are angels, men and devils; of the latter are the brutal creation, and also fire, wind, tempests, earthquakes, and every kind of malady. In bringing ruin upon the kingdoms of this world, God maketh use of any, or all, of these instruments, at his own pleasure.

WHEN *men* are the instruments in the hands of GOD of bringing destruction upon the kingdoms of this world, they are accountable for every thing they do. It is easy to conceive, that GOD may make use of them as *instruments* of bringing about his purposes, when at the same time, they may be exceedingly wicked in his sight, and, by every step they take, may be treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD. Though this is a plain truth, some, at first view, may be backward to admit it. Let such see it illustrated, in the affair of Joseph's being sold into Egypt, by his brethren. Will it not be readily acknowledged, that GOD's hand was concerned in the bringing about of this event, and that he had a great plan to be answered by it? This must be granted, for it is expressly asserted by Joseph himself. Will it not be acknowledged, that the brethren of Joseph were instrumental in accomplishing this plan, by

selling him into Egypt? This must be granted, for it appears from the *fact*. Will it not also be acknowledged, that the sons of Jacob were envious, and malicious towards their brother, Joseph, and, that they were guilty of an awful, and unnatural crime, in selling him to the Ishmaelites to be carried, as a slave, into Egypt? This is as evident as any wicked conduct expressed in the word of GOD, and must of necessity, therefore, be granted. What need is there of any further acknowledgments in this affair? And what can be more plain than all this? It is granting the very things, which Joseph afterwards asserted to his brethren. “*But, as for you, ye thought evil against me; but, GOD meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive.*”* Whoever acknowledges these truths, must grant, that GOD may make use of men as instruments of bringing about his purposes, when, at the same time, they may be exceedingly wicked in his sight. The instance now brought up for illustration contains all the real difficulty, which could be started in any other case. GOD may make use of instruments which are *accountable*, to execute his purposes on earth, as well as those which are *not accountable*. It is a fact, that he now does, and ever has. He raises up an army from the brutal creation, such as insects and reptiles, to scourge one nation, and he sendeth wasting pestilence to punish another. Some cities and populous places are destroyed by earthquakes, and others by the sword. Human blood is caused to run in the streets of some cities, by the sword of *foreign enemies*, and in the streets of others it flows with equal abundance, by the deadly weapons, which they carry in their *own bosom*. We need no other proof of

* Gen. 1. 20.

this than what recent facts afford. But, by whatever means, kingdoms and cities are destroyed, the LORD of hosts purposeth and effecteth their ruin. Tyre was laid waste, and destroyed by the sword of the *Babylonians*, yet it is expressly asserted in the text, that the LORD of hosts purposed it. Babylon was overthrown by the sword of the Persians, and Persia by the sword of the Grecians, and Greece by that of the Romans; and yet the LORD of hosts purposed all this, and revealed it to his servant Daniel. So that it is sufficiently evident, that the destruction, brought on kingdoms and capital cities, is always effected by the agency of the LORD of hosts.

THE way is now prepared to show,

III. The *reason* of his doing these things.

THE reason is brought out to view, in what was said concerning Tyre in the text. *The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth.* An important reason is here assigned for the destruction of the kingdoms of this world; a brief illustration of which will now be attempted. Since the apostacy of the human race, this world, and every thing in it, have been subject to constant changes. It is plain to be seen, that vanity is stamped upon every thing terrestrial. Riches are as fluctuating as the waves of the sea. Honors are as fading and temporary as the flowers in the spring. The pleasures of the world are as short-lived, as the beautiful prospect afforded by the morning-sun. Mirth is soon succeeded by sorrow. Riches are often quickly followed by poverty, and honor by disgrace. A little time for experience convinces every person of the truth of these remarks. Kings, as well as the meanest men, are obliged to lay aside their crowns and royal robes, and to be dressed for the tomb. De-

minion rests not long in any one man's hand, nor does it stay long to honor any nation. Of this the frequency of revolutions in the world is a proof. Kingdoms have arisen, extended their conquests, and flourished for a season, and at last have met their overthrow, and final destruction. Others have succeeded, followed their steps, and met the same fate. Where is now all the glory of Solomon, who once attracted the attention, and excited the admiration, of the remotest realms? It is buried in the dust, and nothing but his real virtue, stript of all external show, remains. Where is now the greatness of Alexander, who was the conqueror of the world, and was, in his day, ranked by adoring mortals, among the gods?—It is buried in the dust, without any marks of distinction. What has become of Babylon the great, once the mistress, and terror of the world?—It now affords a habitation for venomous and doleful animals, untrodden by human feet, unless by those who go to search where it was. What has become of Nineveh, that exceedingly great city, of three days journey, to which Jonah went to preach?—It is completely levelled with the dust, and, as historians and travellers assert, no traces of its situation can be discovered. Indeed, different opinions are now entertained, in regard to the place where it stood.—What mortifying reflections are these to such as covet the riches, the grandeur, and the honors, of this world! How vain and worthless does the recital of such changes make every thing appear, below the sun!—But, why are all these things? We have been looking into the *cause* of them, and have seen, that all such changes are brought about by God. But, why is it, that he causeth such melancholy things to take place? *It is to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the*

honorable of the earth. Since the lapse of the human race, the world has been buried in wickedness, GOD hath been forsaken, and earthly things have been preferred to those which are divine. This is unreasonable, and exceedingly abusive to GOD.

IDOLATRY, which is setting the heart and affections on something more than on GOD, has spread all over the world. It has been common, in every age. The bulk of mankind have always been so foolish as to lay up their treasures on earth. In regard to this practice, fact proves, that the experience of one age, or of one man, does not answer for another. Every age, and every person will go through the experiment. All must make a thorough trial of this world for themselves, and if the hearts of none were touched by the Holy Spirit, all would inevitably perish, in making the trial. Since mankind have manifested so much fondness for this world, unwearyed have been the pains, taken by GOD, to show them its absolute vanity. Considering what mankind are, it appears altogether suitable and reasonable that he should do this. It is for his honor, and their own good, that he should often demonstrate, before their eyes, the corruptibleness and vanity of those objects, on which they set their affections.

THE great destructions brought on kingdoms and capital cities, viewed in themselves, are melancholy; but, viewed in the instructions which they are calculated to afford, they are of great importance. Any attainments, in the honors and riches of this world, puff up the children of men with pride and haughtiness. Left to themselves, they would willingly confine all their views to worldly honors, and look no further than the praise of men. In these things would they glory

and boast, while a future world, and the praise of God would be left out of question. But, in great mercy to them, GOD cuts short their prospects, and embitters the objects of their carnal affections, by inscribing *vanity* on them. Viewed in this light, it is well, that *the pride of all glory is stained*, by the revolutions, the changes, and the complete destructions which take place among the cities and kingdoms of this world. It is well, that great Babylon is now a habitation for venomous and doleful animals—that the place, where extensive and magnificent Nineveh was, cannot now be found, and that Tyre, once the mart of nations, is now a barren rock, and improved for fishermen to spread and dry their nets upon. It is well, that the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and actually does bring into contempt the honorable of the earth. Important are the instructions, which these events, melancholy in themselves, afford to the children of men;—and happy would it be for them, if they would learn wisdom by them. In all these things, GOD doth no more than to teach mankind what this world is, and to manifest his disapprobation of their conduct, in placing their hearts upon such objects. Without giving such testimonies to this rebellious world, where would be the divine faithfulness? Were it not for these things, whence would appear, in this world, GOD's great displeasure against the sinful practices of mankind? It is by these things, that the LORD of hosts demonstrates, before the eyes of mankind, the folly of loving this world, and the importance of laying up a treasure in heaven, where no changes take place, where no corruption dwells, and where no disappointment ever enters. To stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth, is a sufficient, and an important reason, why

God brings ruin and destruction on the kingdoms and cities of this world.

It is proper that we now attend to some practical and instructive *inferences*, suggested by this subject.

1. IF all destructions, calamities and disappointments, evidence the hand of God, it is unfitable to complain, when they are experienced, or, when we are under any frowns, to indulge or express a wish, that such events had not taken place. An inference, expressive of this sentiment, will, no doubt, administer reproof to many. When disappointments are experienced by mankind, words of complaint are frequently heard. Nothing is more usual than for persons to express a wish, that this, and the other event, interfering with their plans, had not taken place. It is the common language of mankind; or at least, the use of words, which seem most naturally to convey such an idea, is very frequent. To look upon an event as being a *frown*, and to have suitable feelings of humility in a view of it, is very different from wishing it had never taken place. It is not the *former*, but the *latter* idea, which the present subject leads us to reprobate; and, from a persuasion that these ideas are, by many, confusedly viewed, and often blended together, the importance of keeping up a distinction between them is now urged. Without this distinction is perceived by us, our feelings, under frowns, may be reproachful to God, and our language may be darkness to others. The mode of talking, now reprobated, is adopted not only when public judgments and calamities are experienced, but, under crosses which are comparatively trifling. How often do we hear it said, *I wish it had not rained,—I wish it had not been so hot,—I am sorry it was so cold*, and the like?—But, by

whose agency are the varying seasons produced? Who causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth? Who maketh the rain, and heat? And, who bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures? If, as we have seen, the LORD of hosts purposeth and effecteth all these things, his righteous providence, in them, ought ever to be acknowledged; and, therefore, to harbour or express a wish, that the seasons, when unfavorable to our plans, had been different, must be altogether unfuitable and improper. Language of this sort does not correspond with a belief of the universality and righteousness of God's government. Followed in its extent, it will be found to favour of atheism, the least appearance of which, among christians in a special manner, should be abhorred and avoided. By a little attention, every one will see, that such a mode of talking does not correspond with the language of the *Bible*. The smallest events are there represented as being under the control, and brought about by the agency, of GOD. *Not a sparrow* (saith the Saviour) *shall fall to the ground without your Father*. To wish that those calamities and disappointments had not been brought on us, which we have actually been made to experience, is, to find *fault* with the government of GOD. In doing this, no person, of a feeling mind, can rise up in his justification.

BUT, it may be said, by some, that although they use expressions of *this kind*, they mean no such things as have been mentioned: they are merely words of course, and used without any bad meaning, or ill effect.

BUT, however innocent persons may be in their *intention*, in the use of such language they are not wholly to be exculpated; for they are in danger of

conveying wrong ideas to others. Others will judge of their feelings, by their words and modes of talking, and, perhaps, will be led astray by them. Nor is this all;—the use of such language, is calculated insensibly to shut out the idea of God's government from our own minds. These are sufficient reasons for avoiding all words which favour of complaining and discontentedness, at the taking place of calamitous events. Our language should always correspond, as nearly as possible, with *truth*. In regard to this, we should study to be consistent, lest we influence others to dishonour God.

LET it be remembered, however, that what has now been advanced, under this head of improvement, is far from discountenancing all mourning under calamities and frowns. It is suitable to mourn, when relatives and friends are removed from our sight by death, or when we experience frowns of any kind. But, that mourning, under afflicting providences, which becometh rational creatures, is very different from *complaining*, or from indulging a *wish* that such events had not taken place. It is important, that the distinction between these ideas should exist in the view of our minds. True mourning never implies the least disposition to find fault with the disposals of God. The essential and principal ingredient of it is humility; and it partakes of nothing in opposition to the prayer, *Not my will, but thine, O LORD, be done*. While persons mourn, they should be careful to shut out all complaining, and to countenance no desires that the afflicting providences brought on them, had not taken place, because all frowns and calamities evidence the hand of God. Had it not been altogether *best*, such events would not have taken place. Since a holy God is at the head of the

universe, and since all events, even the *smallest*, are brought about by his hand, it argues unbelief, and a want of subjection, to complain and find fault, let what calamities soever be sent upon us. Complaining *thoughts*, when providences are against us, are wrong, because they are really reproachful to God; and all *expressions*, which convey any such ideas to *others*, are to be reprobated, because they are atheistical and calculated to lead them astray.

LET us, therefore, receive instruction from our subject, and be on our guard, that we may avoid dishonoring the righteous government of God. Let us be excited to watch over our *feelings*, that rebellion be not cherished in our *breasts*, and over our *expressions*, that we be not found opposing God in the sight of others, and that our example may not lead them astray. And, that our conduct may appear consistent with truth, and all of a piece, let us be watchful under *small frowns*, as well as those which are great. To do these things is the way to acknowledge, honor, and glorify God, in all things, and under all circumstances.

2. It is improper, under our varying circumstances and conditions, to talk of *luck* and *chance*.

WHILE passing through this world, it is the portion of all mankind to experience a variety of changes. The honorable are brought into disgrace, the rich into a state of dependence, and the healthy and robust into bodily weakness and infirmity. Nothing terrestrial has any marks of stability and permanency. When a person is called to experience a series of disappointments and frowns, it is a common expression to say, *It is his luck*. But, such an expression evidently favours of barbarity. Whatever may be the views of persons, when they use such an expression, it is certainly calculated to convey a wrong idea. If mis-

fortunes are to be attributed to *chance*, the providence of God is, at once, excluded. A moment's candid attention will convince every rational person, that he cannot believe the idea, which his words convey, when he talks of *luck* and *chance*, without denying the being and providence of God. Such expressions can be consistently used by none, but *atheists*. For heathen creeds were they formed, from thence are they derived, and with no others do they comport.

THE subject, to which we have been attending, shows us, that all calamities and frowns are produced by the hand of God. The Lord of hosts purposeth these things, as much as he did the fall and destruction of *Tyre*. For a person to say, therefore, that it is his *luck* to meet with disappointments, to have unfavorable weather and seasons to prosecute his plans, and the like, is to convey a very *wrong idea*. It is an atheistical mode of talking, which should not be heard, in a land of gospel light.

BUT, it may be said, that it is difficult to convey our ideas, in every instance, without having recourse to such expressions.

IN answer to such a suggestion, it is sufficient to observe, that if we are in the number of those, who believe in the universal reign and dominion of God, the expressions alluded to, do not convey our ideas, in any case. We are inconsistent with ourselves, whenever we use them. It is no more difficult to adopt language which necessarily *implies*, than that which necessarily *excludes* a providence. The phrases, *We have been favored*, *we have been frowned upon*, and the like, imply a providence, and are calculated to bring God into view; but, the words, *luck* and *chance*, do not imply an overruling hand, and are, therefore, calculated to keep God out of sight.

SOME of the professed friends of God may have indulged themselves in the use of the expressions now reprobated, though they may have adopted them, as words of course, without any bad intention. But, great care should be used that we do not deny God in the sight of others. If we believe there is a God, and that his providence is universal, let us adopt language, which will be consistent with such a belief. Our conversation at all times, and in all places, should correspond with the truths we embrace. This is one way for us to manifest light and truth to others.

3. IF every judgment and calamity evidence the hand of God, we should always look beyond *secondary causes*.

IT has been observed, that the most of the events, which God produceth in this world, are brought about by some *means*, or as it is sometimes expressed, by *secondary causes*. We often see a cause for *sickness*, a cause for *wars*, and for the various *disappointments* experienced by us; but, the causes we see are only *secondary*. They are as much under the control of the Supreme Being, as the effects we attribute to them. In fact, they are themselves nothing but *effects*, and, therefore, we ought to look beyond them to the great *First Cause*. Besides God, there is nothing in the universe, which may not be properly denominated an *effect*; for, besides Him, there is nothing which was not produced. Between what are called secondary causes, or instruments, and effects, there is no ground for any distinction. Every secondary cause is an effect, and every effect is a secondary cause. It is true, there are different kinds of secondary causes, if any thing beside *volitions* may thus be denominated, and there are different kinds of effects; but, we see nothing which was not produced, neither do we see any

effect which is not instrumental or the occasion of producing something else.

To assign secondary causes for the events which take place, without extending the mind any further is a rejection of God. Mankind, by looking no further than secondary causes, under frowns and disappointments, are very apt to complain and be angry, especially if these causes are any of their fellow creatures, as is often the case. They think they do not deserve such treatment from their hands, and will go about to revenge, forgetting they are mere *instruments*, and that the things which have come upon them, were purposed by the Lord of hosts. This opens a door for the commission of much wickedness. If it were always real to the minds of men, that God's hand is particularly concerned in bringing all their crosses and disappointments on them, they would see the great impropriety of being angry, of complaining, and of seeking revenge. A conviction of this truth prevented David from taking away the life of a cursing Shimei, when so importunately requested to do it, by Abishai, one of his captains. *Let him alone, (said he) and let him curse: for the Lord hath bidden him.** When destruction was brought on the children and property of Job by the Sabeans, the Chaldeans, the fire and the wind, a conviction of the same truth led him to look beyond the instruments to the *cause*, and to say, *The Lord hath taken away.†* From these instances we may see, a belief, that all secondary causes are under the control, and are mere effects, of the great First Cause, would have a happy influence on the feelings and conduct of mankind.

4. FROM our subject, we may learn, that the disturbances which are abroad in the earth, at this

* 2 Sam. xvi. 11. † Job i. 21.

day, evidence the hand of the Lord of hosts. The events which are taking place among the nations and kingdoms of the earth, at this day, are truly *striking*. The hand of God is no less visible in them, than it was in the destruction of Tyre, Babylon, or Jerusalem. We now hear that great and capital cities are entirely demolished, as was the case in former days. It manifestly appears, that the period of the world, in which we live, is interesting and important. Revolution succeeds revolution. We see the pride of all glory stained, and the honorable of the earth brought into contempt. The Lord of hosts is now accomplishing his purposes, as he did in the destruction of Tyre. It is true, he works by *means*, and has his instruments; and it is probable, that the bulk of mankind look no further than the instruments. To look into the rapid changes, which are now taking place, is very instructive. By all these things, the vanity of this world is strikingly demonstrated. The clearest evidence is manifested, that God is abroad in the earth, showing the children of men the corruptibleness and vanity of every thing below the sun. The lofty looks of tyrants are brought low, and their boasted honors and titles are trampled to the dust. Riches make themselves wings and fly away, leaving their fond possessors naked, defenceless, and ashamed.—Who can be so stupid, as to be a spectator of what is taking place, at this day, and make the honors and riches of this world the objects of his affections? Our subject teaches us how to improve the events of providence now taking place. It leads us to consider the hand of God in all these things and calls upon us to fear before him.

5. We are further taught from our subject, that the disturbances, now abroad in the earth, evidence the abounding of *wickedness*.

IT was for great wickedness ; for idolatry and rebellion, that Tyre, Babylon, and Jerusalem, were destroyed. Their iniquity had become full, before the hand of God was stretched out in their destruction. The history of their overthrow leads us to consider them as peculiarly wicked.— For any other reason than this, it doth not appear, that God hath ever brought ruin on any nation or kingdom. It is the *disobedient*, and *they only*, on whom the righteous governor of the universe inflicts evil. Since the present is a day in which God stains the pride of all glory, and brings into contempt the honorable of the earth, we have reason to think, that wickedness abounds.

WE are called upon, in this land, to see, that we do not indulge ourselves in idolatry and rebellion. Though image-worship may not be practised among us, yet this does not prevent our committing idolatry. If we prefer any thing before God, we are guilty of this sin. The Apostle Paul assures us, that *covetousness is idolatry* ;* and from this, perhaps, we cannot pronounce ourselves free. That many kingdoms in the world have provoked the Lord of hosts to anger, and that his patience is almost worn out with their long continued, and increasing abominations, is manifest from the manner in which he hath come out against them. The rod of his holy anger is stretched over them, and they begin already to feel the smart. We, in this land, have been, and still are, threatened with similar evils, which is a loud call for us to look well to our conduct, to speedily repent of our sins, and to forsake them. Had we not wickedly departed from God, we should not have been thus threatened. Let us, therefore, learn from our subject, how to improve

* Col. iii. 5.

the revolutions, changes, and destructions, now taking place, lest God be in the midst of us, and we not know it.

6. SINCE an infinitely wise and powerful God is at the head of the universe, we may know that all the changes and commotions, in the world, will issue in some important good.

IN this world, a continued series of events, melancholy in themselves, have been taking place, ever since the apostacy; but, they all were purposed, and brought about by the Lord of hosts. He is the only independent agent, in the universe: and he hath assured us, that *He declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, that his counsel shall stand, and that he will do all his pleasure.** Though we see infidelity spreading its baneful influence, the adversaries of religion triumphing, and the cause of christianity despised and persecuted; though nations are spilling the blood of each other, and the kingdoms of the world are plunging into wars, and confusion, yet we may confide in the thought, that all these things are designed to answer, and that they will certainly answer, some *important ends*. The evils introduced into the system will not terminate in the disgrace of God's reign, but the wrath of man shall surely praise him, and the remainder of it he will restrain. If all events are under the control, and brought about by the agency of God, it is certain that the changes and revolutions which take place in the world, will, in some way or other, advance the Redeemer's kingdom. Since Zion's God reigneth, we may rest assured that Zion will be built up. Therefore,

7. WE have found an ample source of consolation for God's children in the day of adversity.

* Isai. xlvi. 10.

THE sentiment that God governs the world, and that all events are under his control, is the great support of the friends of the Redeemer, of those who are godly. It is calculated to keep religion *alive* in them. Were it not for their belief of this truth, they would sink into a state of despondency. This world is full of evils. The righteous are often persecuted, the cause of religion is despised, and the number, who dare stand up for the truth, is very small, and when these things appear, consolation is administered to the friends of the Redeemer from the thought, that Zion's God reigneth. This ensures the salvation of all the righteous. It ensures the final prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the safety, and greatest happiness of the system. Though iniquity abound, and the love of many wax cold—though infidelity lift up its head in triumph, and apostacies be frequent—though the kingdoms of the world plunge into wars and confusion, and the nations of the earth unsheathe the sword to spill each others blood, yet christians are supported, under all these appearances, from a belief in the universal reign and dominion of the Lord of hosts. This is their *refuge*, their *strong-hold*, in the day of adversity. While the wicked see all the sources of their comfort fail, there is one left to the righteous which is permanent, unshaken, and satisfying. To this source of comfort all are exhorted to repair, that they may be carried through the trials which are before them, particularly, that they may be prepared to meet their Judge, and may be enabled to give up their account to him with joy and not with grief.

THE DIVINE SINCERITY, in the free and indiscriminate Offer of Salvation to Sinners, together with their moral Liberty and Accountableness, consistent with distinguishing, efficacious Grace :

Illustrated in a SERMON, by ASAHEL HOOKER, Pastor of the Church, in Goshen, State of Connecticut.

REVELATIONS xxii. 17.

WHOSOEVER will, let him take the water of life freely.

ROMANS ix. 16.

So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth but of God, that sheweth mercy.

THE holy scriptures being given by inspiration of God, the passages here selected, though apparently contradictory, are perfectly harmonious and consistent, in their real meaning. The former of them expresses the universal and indiscriminate freeness, with which salvation is

offered to sinners. *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* The latter most explicitly declares men's dependence on God, for salvation. *So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*—From the two passages, thus briefly explained, we derive the following sentiments: That the salvation of the gospel is freely offered to fallen men;—That, nevertheless, their acceptance and final enjoyment of it depend essentially on God;—That such dependence is consistent with their moral liberty and accountableness; and with sincerity in the offer.

I. It is to be shown, that the salvation of the gospel is freely offered to fallen men.

THIS, however, is not meant to be asserted, or proved, respecting all mankind. Immense numbers are involved in clouds and thick darkness, in respect to the knowledge of revelation. Of these, some have never heard the name of Jesus, from one, who could give any just ideas of his character and work. By those, therefore, to whom an offer of salvation is made, such are specially intended, as enjoy the gospel of Christ. To all these it is made, properly, and indiscriminately. Nothing, to this purpose, can be more express, than the text, with the whole verse, from which it is taken. *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.*

ACCEPTING this divine invitation, is freely receiving the blessings of the covenant of grace.—Men are directed to bring no price, or reward, as a term of obtaining salvation; for it is bestowed *without money and without price.** Said Christ, *If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.†*

* *Isai. lv. 1.*

† *John vii. 37.*

There is no hint of a single exception, among those, who relish the good proposed. The word *thirst* is probably used, in speaking of this subject, because remarkably significant of real, unfeigned desire. The reason why *water of life* is taken, to designate the good to be received, is, that water excels every thing, for satiating the vigorous cravings of thirst.

THAT the gospel makes a free, and impartial offer of salvation, to all who hear it, appears, not only from the plain meaning of scripture expressions, used for that purpose; but, from this important fact, that men, considered as rational and moral beings, without respect to their temper of heart, are fully capable of accepting the blessings proposed. Were not this true, no offer of salvation would be properly made to fallen men.— Nothing is offered, fairly to any man, in whom something more is needful, to his accepting it, than a willingness, properly expressed, to comply with the terms of receiving. No offer is fairly made to the man, who is under the same incapacity, for accepting it, which the blind are, to see; the deaf, to hear; the lame, to walk; or a man of very weak understanding to investigate the most difficult subjects. Hence, the manner, in which divine blessings are proposed to men, in the gospel, is not as if one man should promise another, a large sum of money, on the express condition of receiving it, with his own hands, when both these were cut off; or, of walking to a certain distance, to take possession of it, when both his legs were broken: or, of seeing, so as to describe a curious object, when both his eyes were put out. This, so far from being an act of kindness, or offer of any thing, would be cruelly insulting his impotency and wretchedness. But, the offer of the gospel is, as if one man

should freely propose to another, in extreme want and misery, every thing requisite, for his relief and happiness, on the sole condition of properly signifying his readiness to accept of it, on the most generous terms. Accordingly, fallen men are capable, if disposed, of accepting the great salvation, by performing the appointed conditions. In case of such as hear the gospel, nothing farther is needful, if there be first a willing mind. Nor is the case altered, at all, by men's natural unwillingness. It is obvious, at first view, that this can be no good reason why divine mercy is not offered to men, because they have no mind to receive it.

AGREEING with what has been said there is no material change, in the faculty of understanding, on men's becoming christians. Hence, they are not, on this account, and for this reason, any better capable of pursuing their several occupations, or of performing those things, which depend on the strength of natural abilities, than before. The mind may be enlarged, with the acquisition of new sentiments; yet there is no *essential* alteration, except in the temper of heart. This is agreeable to sound reason, as well as christian experience; and is, evidently, the doctrine of the holy scriptures. Men's choice is the turning point, between receiving, and not receiving, the blessings of the gospel. The awful question, therefore, respecting the salvation of the soul, has their decision, according as they approve, or disapprove, the gracious terms of forgiveness and life. Accordingly, the gospel makes a free offer of eternal mercy, to all who hear it: which is made, in this view, with all possible fairness and propriety, that it is addressed to beings, fully capable, if well disposed, of accepting it, in compliance with the conditions required. Yet,

II. IT is to be shown, that men's acceptance, and final enjoyment, of the blessings offered in the gospel, depend essentially on God.

THIS sentiment is very fully expressed, in the last part of the text; *So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* This is an inference made by the Apostle, from what God said to Moses, and immediately follows the citation of it;—*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.* This is, doubtless, extremely crossing to the natural bias of the human heart. But, suppose the fact were reversed, and that God do not act in the matter, agreeably to the good pleasure of his will. On this plan, the state of fallen men would be unspeakably worse, than it now is; for no flesh would be saved. Disposed, with one consent, to make excuse, all would do this, till their eyes were lifted up in torments.

BUT, the salvation of sinners, or any number of them, depended, *originally, and from everlasting,* upon God. He hath made the needful provision, for supporting that government, which secures the happiness of his kingdom, consistently with the exercise of mercy, towards guilty men. Hence saith Jehovah, *Behold I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.** This intends the divine Mediator, the Son of God, of whom it is written, *Other foundation, can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.†* When man had sinned, which was from everlasting, in his view, to whom all things, from beginning to end, are naked and open, the question depended absolutely on him, whether the whole, or any part of mankind should

* Isai. xxviii. 16.

† I Cor. iii. 11.

be saved, or lost. But, because it seemed good to him, *whose nature is love*, he determined on a scheme of saving mercy. This was *from the beginning*, before men were created, or had done good or ill. It was not a part of divine proceeding, undertaken in consequence of an actual apostacy, or, of an humble petition, preferred by fallen creatures; on finding themselves involved in guilt and ruin. The word of God teaches us to believe, that he blesteth the subjects of his saving goodness, *with all spiritual blessings, in Christ, according as he had chosen them in him, to this end, that they should be holy and without blame, before him in love*, and in this way, *having predestinated them unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made them accepted, in the beloved.* † Thus was originated the divine scheme of saving sinners. It was conceived, in the astonishing mercy of God, from everlasting. God, therefore, sent his Son into the world, that men through him might be saved; and to this end, *to bear our sins in his own body on the tree.* §

BUT, dependence on him, who sheweth mercy, cannot be described, in its full extent, without adding, That such universally, is the moral state of men's hearts, by nature, that those rational faculties, which render them fit subjects of moral government, and capable, in this view, of whatsoever is commanded, do not secure their acceptance of divine mercy, or render their salvation, at all hopeful. Such is their moral depravity, that no measure of hope of eternal life arises, merely, from their capacity of coming *if they will*, or, of yielding that obedience, which has the prom-

† Eph. i. 4, 5, 6.

§ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

ise of God in Christ. Though ever so capable, considered as rational and moral beings, of whatever is conditional of salvation, *there is not such an heart in them.* In the act of proceeding, with one consent, to make excuse, is implied a total unwillingness to obey the gospel. Hence, we must go some where else, for a place of dependance, and of hope, for the salvation of men. Such is their opposition to peace with God, that their case being ultimately decided by them, they will have made their destruction sure. The sentiment is verified, beyond reasonable doubt, by the example of immense numbers, who live and die, evidently contemning the light and grace of the gospel. A serious and impartial view of these must force an acknowledgement, that in them is exemplified the sentiment intended by Christ, in a parable on this subject; that, when the invitation comes, and men are assured, *that the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things ready, they make light of it and go their way.** Unless, therefore, he who hath mercy *compel them to come in,†* they will neither be guests at the wedding, nor taste of his upper. Hence, the necessity of a merciful divine influence, to apply the Christian redemption to the souls of men. By this the vessels of mercy are prepared unto glory. Human nature being what it is, the mighty power of God, renewing and sanctifying the heart, is no less essential, in the gospel way of salvation, than the coming and death of a divine Mediator. It appears, from no evidence, that *some* of mankind return to God, *of their own accord,* and that others very differently from them, are indebted, for the same thing, to the power, by which Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.‡ This latter, however, is the account;

* Matt. xxii. 4, 5.

† Luke xiv. 23.

‡ Eph. i. 19.

expressly given by Saint Paul, of men's restoration to spiritual life, and the divine favor. Indeed, the point is settled, by the plain declaration of Christ, *No man can come unto me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.** The meaning of this must be learnt from other passages, which speak of the same subject. Of this sort is the text, which says, *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely:* and those words of Christ to the unbelieving Jews, *Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.†* It hence appears, that his saying, No man can come, &c. was intended to express men's unwillingness to obey the gospel, as sufficiently great and invincible, to be overcome by nothing, short of divine power, specially manifested, in forming their hearts to evangelical obedience.

NOR less does perseverance, in the Christian faith, depend on a merciful God. Though secured by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, still it depends, at every moment, on his grace and influence. Believers are spoken of, in the scriptures, as insufficient, of themselves, to think any thing‡ and therefore, as kept by the power of God.§ And though kept, through fighting the good fight of faith, yet is their sufficiency for this derived from him, *who giveth them the victory, through Jesus Christ.¶* Yea having finished their course and kept the faith, it still depends on *the Lord, the righteous judge to deliver them the crown of life in the day of his appearing.¶¶* Thus, the salvation of men is of God, from the origin, to the consummation. Yet,

III. SUCH dependence is consistent with the moral liberty and accountableness of men.

* John vi. 44. † John v. 40. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 5. § 1 Peter i. 5.
 ¶ 1 Cor. xv. 57. ¶¶ 2 Tim. iv. 8.

IT may be, that some have quite mistaken the meaning of the text, which says, *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* Numbers have probably thought it to mean, that men might *will*, and *run*, in the sense here intended, and still not obtain mercy. But this can not be true; for *willing* and *running* are the obedience of real Christians.* However such are well assured of eternal life, it is not of themselves, but of God. With this, which is pretty evidently the true construction, the words are put for no more than the adequate expression of men's dependence on the operation and mercy of God, *That no flesh should glory in his presence.*†

THE word of God is more explicit, on no point, than in ascribing the salvation of believers to *distinguishing, efficacious grace*: Still it considers men of all characters, as ever acting, with the highest degree of moral liberty. In this light the divine Legislator and Judge considereth them, in his commands, promises, threatenings, rewards and punishments.

IT is agreeable to sound reason, as well as a more sure word of prophecy, to believe, that men have so much moral liberty, as is needful, to their being fairly accountable, for all their voluntary actions. But these include all, for which God will call them to account. Being of this sort, they are necessarily free. The moral freedom of them consists in their being voluntary. Nothing can be more free than choice, or volition. On this ground, men's voluntary actions are fit objects of approbation, or reproof, according as they proceed from benevolent motives, or the contrary.

BUT, it may be usefully insisted on, as a distinct idea, that the impenitently guilty are moral-

* 1 Cor. ix. 24. Heb. xii. 1. † 1 Cor. i. 29.

ly free, in whatever they do, as such. This is sufficiently evident from their actions being chosen. That they are, and as such are criminal, is perfectly agreeable to the common sense of mankind. Hence their resentment of injuries, and those penalties, which are annexed, by human laws, for such actions, as are grossly prejudicial to society, or individuals. So that common sense is decidedly in favor of the holy scriptures, in respect to this subject. Accordingly, wicked men are free and accountable, in all their evil deeds; and more so in none of them, than in rejecting Christ and the blessings of the gospel. In respect to them, therefore, its being true, that believers are saved, by the distinguishing grace of God, does, in no measure, infringe their liberty of moral action. Nor does it lessen, in any degree, the propriety of their being called to account, and punished, for every deviation from perfect moral rectitude. Its being of God, that some of mankind were, from the beginning, predestinated unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, and, in due time, are called by his grace, is no infringement of *other* men's liberty of doing, as they choose: nor hence, can it diminish the fitness of their being strictly accountable. Accordingly, they are justly condemned already, because they will not come to Christ for life, nor have him to reign over them, as their Prince and Saviour. If, therefore, any difficulty remain, it must be in the case of those, who are made to differ from others, by the grace of God. But there is none, in respect to these. However disposed, by divine influence, to peace with God, and to all the duties of an holy life, it is sufficiently evident, that they act voluntarily, and hence freely; for, in respect to these very things, *it is God, who*

*worketh in them to will and to do.** And though they act thus dependently, it is just according as they are willing and obedient. Hence, men of all descriptions of character are morally free, and therefore, justly accountable, and praise, or blame worthy, according as they do well or ill; notwithstanding that dependence, by which the sentiment seems, at first, subverted.

IV. THAT dependence, which has been described, is consistent with the divine sincerity, in the offer of saving mercy to all, who hear the gospel.

THIS, which naturally follows, as an inference, from the foregoing sentiments, will doubtless be admitted, as involving no difficulty, in respect to such, as are saved. Hence the question is, how can the fact be true, and consistent, in relation to those, who perish?

THE point being conceded, as proved, that the salvation of believers is wholly of God, this can be no ground of objection to the *sincerity*, with which the offer is made to others. We have no authority for saying, that God cannot sincerely offer that to men, which they will certainly reject; and even abuse, to their greater condemnation. If the reason of their not accepting the grace of the gospel, and the only reason, fairly assignable by them, be mere unwillingness, the offer may be equally sincere, and benevolent, as if ever so thankfully, and universally accepted. On the supposition, that all, who hear the gospel, should believe, to the saving of the soul, nobody would think of complaining, or find any manner of difficulty, in seeing the truth and sincerity, with which it is said, *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* And what, in the present state of things, is the difficulty? Plainly this;

* Philip. ii. 13.

many will not hear, that their souls may live.— But, is it reasoning conclusively, hence to infer, that the offer of salvation is not sincere, to all who hear it? The case, in this regard, is not altered, because some make light of it; or, because God distinguisheth *others*, by his grace, *making them willing in the day of his power*. The moral liberty of some men cannot be infringed, or at all lessened, by the grace, which, without effecting them, directly, or indirectly, captivates others into the obedience of Christ. Indeed, their case, in regard to the things mentioned, is just what it would have been, had those, who are now saved, been left to perish, with hypocrites and unbelievers.

It is the glory of God, to display the astonishing benevolence of his heart. This is done, in the gospel offer of mercy to poor sinners. Nor is the case altered a whit, in this regard, by their making light of it. It were indeed an evil and very hard case, if the God of mercy after giving his son to die, *the just, for the unjust*, might not offer them life and favor, and have the glory of doing it sincerely, and from motives of infinite benevolence, because, sad to be told! men are universally vile enough, by nature, to despise the whole, and pervert it to their greater damnation; so that, if *any* are saved, it must be *through the riches of his grace, according as he had chosen them in Christ, from the beginning*. For ought, which comes within the reach of finite discernment, God may be sincerely benevolent, in offering that to men, which it would not be for his glory, and the happiness of his kingdom, and consequently, not consistent with infinite rectitude, to impose on them, making them willing to receive it, if otherwise unwilling. Punishing them, for their obstinacy and ingratitude, would evidently

be doing them personal justice. Nor is any but a mind, which comprehends all things possible, capable of deciding, whether it would not be an act of justice, or even the only way of doing justice to the universe, for Him, who governeth all, to treat them as vessels of wrath, instead of making them vessels of mercy. And because their own choice, if suffered to fix an ultimate decision, will infallibly secure their eternal punishment, can no offer of divine mercy be made them, consistently with sincerity? To admit this, would be taking that for granted which is not true; that the good of the persons, to whom the offer is made, must be the object chiefly aimed at. But this is so far from being the case, that manifesting the infinite glory of Jehovah, as the source of all rational and benevolent happiness, is in this, as in every thing, to be supremely regarded. And since the divine goodness and mercy are exceedingly manifested, in the offer of salvation to guilty men, whether it be accepted, or rejected, it would be very unfair, to question the divine sincerity in the matter; either because multitudes cut themselves off from enjoying the blessings offered, or, because God distinguisheth others by his grace.

IF God so loved the world, as to give his Son to die, that the guilty might be redeemed from the curse of the law, and this were demonstrated, by the coming and work of the Mediator, we have all the evidence of sincerity, which ought to be desired. Men are treated, as rational beings, capable of understanding the essential truths of revealed religion, and in no difficulty of obeying, but what consists in *an evil heart*. Hence, the case of those, who reject the water of life, and have their portion, where the fire is not quenched, is precisely that of the persons, represented by Christ in the parable. These, when invited to

an excellent entertainment, would not come. The master of the feast was angry therefore, and said, none of those men who were bidden shall taste of my supper.†

A REVIEW of this subject will lead to several important inferences.

I. THE divine goodness is no less apparent, in the provision, and offer of salvation to sinful men, than if all, who hear the gospel, should believe and be saved. The love of God, to a lost world, was great enough, to give his only begotten Son, that none, who believe on him, should perish.— And is this love diminished, or rendered less wonderful, by the returns, which it meets from those, who perish, in impenitency and unbelief? God forbid! Was the beneficence of the man, who made a great supper and bade many, really less, than if all, who were invited, had accepted the invitation? Ought he to be esteemed the less beneficent, because all with one consent, began to make excuse, so that none were guests, but those who were compelled to come in? Every candid mind will answer, no.

BUT, the love of God, in the Christian redemption, appears, in some respects, more wonderful, than if men, on hearing the gospel, should universally believe, to the saving of the soul. It is true, there are some, who seem to imagine, that the doctrine of a partial salvation is reproachful of infinite divine goodness, and therefore, not consistent with it. These persons, however, have quite mistaken the true system of Christianity, with the divine character and purposes, there brought to light. We may argue, with as much plausibility, that *any* evil, consequently, that the existence of *present* evils, is inconsistent with the

† Luke xiv. 16.

infinite goodness of God, as that this can be the case, in respect to the *final misery* of the impenitent. Creatures need be equal with God, in point of wisdom, to determine what measure, or duration, of evil may consist with the goodness of Jehovah, or be requisite, to the most happy display of his perfections.

THE love of God is specially commended, in giving his son, to die for men, *while they were yet sinners*; and appears great and marvellous, in proportion to the unworthiness of the beings, towards whom it is exercised. Should all obey the gospel, immediately on hearing it, or even finally, the human heart would not have discovered the half of its present vileness. In this case, it would not be seen, by any part of creation, of how much impiety, ingratitude and baseness, fallen men might be actually guilty. Creatures would never get those justly humiliating ideas of depraved human nature, which, at present, crowd upon the mind, from every quarter. Hence, neither men, nor angels could duly estimate the riches of God's saving mercy. The desperately evil nature of sin appears, no where, with such palpable and glaring evidence, as in men's finally rejecting Christ and his salvation.—It were easy to realize, that the love of God was great, in the gift of his Son, should men receive him, as their Prince and Saviour, with one consent. But spend a serious thought, on the vile contempt, which millions cast upon him, as well dying, as living. Having done this, your hearts must be emphatically blind to what is supremely excellent, on the one hand, and to what is completely deformed, on the other, not to behold, with astonishment, that love, which was great enough, to provide a Saviour of infinite dignity

and worthiness, for beings, who were sufficient monsters of pride and ingratitude, to treat him with scorn.

HAD the decision been left to us, we might have pronounced, that there would be the most entire and glorious display of the Creator's love, in his so ordering things, that none should despise his grace, and be lost. Yet as things are, at present, while vast numbers are subjected to the awful wages of sin, there is, probably, a far more convincing and glorious discovery of the length, and breadth, and height, and depth of the love of God, in Christ, than if all, who hear the good news of life, should turn and live.

II. WE learn, from what has been said, that there is nothing objectionable, or ground of just complaint, in God's saving some of mankind, while he punisheth others. If God had sent the gospel to the heathen nations, and left them to make such use of it, as they pleased; it would have been accounted by them, *as a strange thing*, and have done them no spiritual good. But, they have no reason to complain, at not enjoying that, which they had an heart only to abuse, to their greater ruin. Men, under the gospel, have a price in their hands, to get wisdom, but no heart to improve it. They are invited, to forsake the foolish and live, but alas! They will not hearken. Their foolish heart is darkened, and set in them to do evil; so that, their case is desperately sad, as to any hope arising from themselves, or their doings. Nor is there any but what depends on an interposition of distinguishing mercy. And is it desirable, that all should be irrecoverably lost? Is it not rather to be wished, that some of mankind should be saved, than their whole number should have judgment without mercy? It is evident enough, that in God's view of it, the former

is infinitely desirable. This is sufficiently proved, from his word, and from answerable works of saving mercy. He, therefore, not only sendeth the gospel to multitudes, but, it is productive of such effects, as are represented by Christ, in the parable of the sower; in which, some seed fell by the way-side, on stony places, and among thorns, so as finally to be lost; while some fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit.*

IN proportion as happiness is preferable to misery, it is desirable, that a part of mankind should be made trophies of the Saviour's victory over death and hell, rather than all should be lost, without remedy. And since men implicitly choose death, rather than life, it is answerably desirable, and matter of rejoicing, to benevolent minds, that God should interpose, and have mercy on whom he will. This, so far from being objectionable, is a glorious part of divine administration; because notwithstanding the atonement, and free offer of mercy, men would go on, to fill up the measure of their sins, 'till the wrath came upon them, to the uttermost.

III. It appears, with great clearness, on a review of the preceding discourse, that there is nothing fairly objectionable, in the scripture doctrine of election. The main objections, which are offered against this doctrine, imply a gross mistake of the leading sentiments, in the preceding discourse.

It is urged, that, if some of mankind be chosen to salvation, while others are not, the latter are infringed, and even cut off, in respect to the liberty of choosing for themselves. But, if God's actually distinguishing some, by his saving power, do not have the effect, which is objected, as is clear-

* Math. xiii. 18.

ly proved; then such effect may not be ascribed to his having before determined to do accordingly. It is important to be remembered, that divine purpose has no effect, farther, or sooner, than divine operation is answerable to it. Hence, neither of them infringes men's liberty, as moral and accountable beings.

THIS answer is sufficient for those, who object, that, if the doctrine of election be true, no offer of salvation is properly and sincerely made, to such, as are not divinely chosen to life eternal. It has been shown, that men are so dependent on HIM, who showeth mercy, as fixes the absolute certainty, that none will be saved, without an act of his sovereign and effectual grace. And hence, an answerable and eternal purpose of God is equally consistent with a real, and sincere offer of mercy, to such, as are finally vessels of wrath.

THOSE, likewise, mistake an essential point, who urge, that, if the doctrine of election were out of the way, such as are not, at present, chosen to life eternal, might at some time or other, be persuaded to obey the gospel, so as to enjoy its blessings, without a special, divine influence, to make them willing. But we have already seen the absolute necessity of such divine influence, and may hence see clearly, the equal necessity of an answerable divine purpose.

THE SUPREME DISPOSER of all things, who is infinitely wise and good, will never do that, in a matter of such vast importance, which he never intended. It appears, in the foregoing discourse, to be fully consistent with the moral liberty of mankind, and with the free and sincere offer of salvation, that God should distinguish some, by an act of saving grace; yea, to be eminently desirable. To this, therefore, there can be no reasonable objection. But, if all objections to his *doing*

thus be obviated, there can none remain, to his having *so decreed*. Nay, so far from objectionable, such decree was a most glorious act of divine goodness and mercy. It is not only consistent, but matter of fact; which admits the most conclusive evidence, that HE, who worketh all things, after the counsel of his own will, must previously, and from everlasting, have chosen the plan, which is herein executed.

WHATEVER be desirable for God to do, he must have purposed; or, which is the same thing, have been unchangeably disposed to do, from the beginning. It could not consist with his infinite wisdom and benevolence, not to have eternally chosen those measures, which are most wise and benevolent, and therefore, most fit to have been chosen, when carried into effect. It is a glorious part of divine administration, to pluck this, that, and the other poor sinner, as brands from the burning, though many go on and receive their just punishment, in unquenchable fire. Nor was it any less merciful and glorious, for God, to have been of the same mind, from everlasting.

ELECTION, in the sense of the scriptures, is not an arbitrary act of will, by which the Divine Disposer, without good and sufficient reasons for so doing, predestinated some of mankind to salvation, when he might, as well, have saved their whole number. But, it is the infinite goodness of JEHOVAH, determining, for the best possible reasons, to save so many of fallen men, as may consist with a most glorious display of his perfections, and the highest happiness of his moral kingdom.

IN respect to this, God hath been the same, with no variableness, or even shadow of turning, so as, at all times, and even from eternity, to have had the same infinitely gracious design, of saving

a glorious church, from the ruins of the apostacy; though, with impartial justice to their doings, all men might have been punished, with remediless destruction. We are to conceive of divine purpose, as eternally preceding the event designed, only in relation to creatures, who view things, by succession. In respect to THE HIGH AND LOFTY ONE, WHO INHABITETH ETERNITY, there is neither past, nor future. All things are continually present before him. In his view, there is none of that amazing distance, which is naturally conceived by creatures, between his determinate counsel and operation. Hence, to the all-extended view of JEHOVAH, his purpose, as the primary cause, and the salvation of his chosen, as the effect, have been absolutely present, and indivisible, from everlasting. As those, who are subjects of this gracious purpose, in the manner, and for the reasons pointed out, are, accordingly, distinguished and sanctified, so it is impossible, but the omniscient disposer should have determined their persons, and exact number. In their actual salvation, the purpose of God, according to election, is productive of its glorious fruits. Hence said the God of Israel to his people of old, *I have loved thee, with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee.**

ACCORDINGLY, it is, in every view, consistent, and most desirable, that God should distinguish such number and persons of mankind, by his saving mercy, as he pleaseth, rather than all should be lost, as they would have been, otherwise, notwithstanding the coming of Christ, and the offer of salvation. Hence, it is equally so, that the whole should have been rendered certain, and inevitable, by *divine decree, before the world began.* Thus

* Jer. xxxi. 3.

the doctrine of election, as maintained by the holy scriptures, is most benevolent, consistent, and free from reasonable objection. Hence,

IV. THE scripture doctrines of election and efficacious grace furnish no reasonable objection, to attending on instituted means of instruction. It is a gross mistake, and wholly inconclusive, to infer from these, as many have done, that the prospect of salvation is as hopeful, on the side of neglecting, as of attending them. Accordingly, saith the Apostle to the Romans, *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*† The excellency of the power is not of God, in such sort, as precludes the propriety, and even necessity, of instituted means. Men, after all, are not more dependent for salvation, than in respect to various other things, where objection, to the use of means, is never thought of. It is certain, that the man, whose ground is neither tilled nor sown, would be very inconsistent, and foolish, to expect an harvest. But what encouragement has he to use means, for obtaining it? After every exertion, he is, from first to last, as much dependent, for the object sought, as creation was for existence, millions of ages before any thing was made. The husbandman, after tilling and sowing, is unable to give heat, or cold, or showers of rain. And could he send these, at pleasure, the fruits of the earth would not grow, without God. His power, beyond what any thing short of it could effect, must operate, at every moment, from seed time till harvest, or the reaper would not find where-with, to fill his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves, his bosom. But such dependence, in matters of temporal concern, has never suggested a thought of objecting, to the use of means. And though

† Rom. x. 17.

equally dependent, for salvation, this can be no better reason, for men's refusing to attend upon those means of instruction, which are divinely appointed, than that the husbandman should neglect his farm, because he cannot give showers of rain, and fruitful seasons, and *cause* the earth, to yield its increase. That divine influence, which causeth the fruits of the earth to grow, is as much the result of divine wisdom and design, as any thing, which takes place, in the moral world. But men are not any more, or less, dependent on God, for the salvation of their souls, because what he doth, in this regard, is the result of his eternal purpose. They would be equally dependent for the thing done, were it possible, that God should do, as he now doth, without any previous determination.

ACCORDINGLY, the doctrines of divine election, and of answerable divine influence, renewing men's hearts, and fitting them for glory, furnish no objection to the use of instituted means. Indeed, we here find the whole ground of encouragement for using them, in expectation of profit, to any of mankind. The divine commission, for preaching the gospel, to every creature, implies a divine purpose, to make it effectual, for saving some. The fact has been long maintained, by the word of God, and exemplified, by the conduct of men, that, pursuing their natural bias of heart, all would be infallibly lost. Hence were there no ground of dependence, beyond what is human, the state of fallen men would be absolutely hopeless. Its being certain, that God hath interposed, in times past, and rendered the gospel a favour of life to some, is far from being all the ground of hope and encouragement, which is needful, in a case of such high importance. What God will do, in time to come, can not be inferred, with certainty, from what he hath done already.

Hence, something more than this well attested fact, that the Most High hath made his word quick and powerful, in very numerous instances, for the salvation of sinners, is desirable, and infinitely important, if true, as ground of encouragement, in respect to the momentous objects of the gospel dispensation. Such encouragement is found, in the gracious and eternal purpose of God, as revealed, and made plain, in his word. It thence appears, that he hath chosen some of fallen men to life eternal, even an innumerable multitude, out of every kindred and tongue and people. They were thus chosen, not whether they should remain in ignorance and unbelief, or otherwise; but *through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth*. Said Jesus, *All that the Father hath given me shall come to me*. On such, we are assured, the preaching of Christ crucified will be made the wisdom, and power of God, unto salvation. Thus are secured the invaluable ends of the coming and work of a divine Mediator. As, therefore, it respects the work of saving mercy, that now described, which alone is supported by truth, is ample ground of encouragement, for the gospel to be preached to those, who dwell on the earth, and fallen men to come within hearing of its joyful tidings.

V. NOTWITHSTANDING what a partial attention to this subject might have suggested, the view, which has now been taken of it teaches the utter inexcusableness of those, who hear, but do not obey the gospel. Men very naturally invent something, to extenuate their guilt, and even justify themselves, in remaining enemies to the cross of Christ. But in doing this, they are acting the most unreasonable and delusive part. The gospel of Christ makes proclamation of the best tidings.

It sincerely invites, and most affectionately urges men, to receive its inestimable blessings. The sincerity of the offer cannot be fairly questioned. The Mighty God is in earnest, and speaketh the meaning of his heart, when treating with men, through his Son, the Mediator. As the terms of peace and salvation are most reasonable, and as such are proposed sincerely, mankind are under no inability, in respect to a full compliance, but what is voluntary, and of their own making. This, therefore, furnishes no excuse. So far otherwise, indeed, the more incapable men are, in this view, the greater is their criminality, and the more awful their deserved punishment. Agreeably to this, as their dependence on God is consistent with the most perfect moral liberty and accountableness, it can furnish no cloak for their sins. They are not dependent, in such sort, as at all precludes the propriety of beseeching them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. There must be, on their part, an active and sincere compliance, with the unalterable conditions of life and peace, or iniquity must prove their ruin. Such is the true statement of facts. Ere long, the Son of God will be revealed, to avenge the contempt of his gospel, on all the finally impenitent. The brightness of his appearing will disclose the falacy of all excuses. Every mouth will be stopped. And when the judgment is set and the books are opened, *every man will receive according to his works.*

RELIGION the one Thing needful.

Two SERMONS, by JEREMIAH DAY, A. M.
Pastor of the Church in New-Preston, *State of*
Connecticut.

LUKE X. 42.

ONE thing is needful.

ONE thing needful?—So are a thousand things needful. On every day, and every hour, a multitude of objects occur, which demand our attention, and urge us on to action. So numerous are the occupations of life, and so great are their variety, that 'tis with vast difficulty we can keep them in such arrangement, as to prevent confusion and loss. Our wants are countless. We must have food and raiment; houses and lands; flocks and herds, and we have families to provide for, with innumerable other things: and to secure all these is no easy task. Such a multiplicity of objects spur us on to continual activity, and we can find but very little leisure in this busy world, where we are called so

many different ways. How then can it, with propriety, be said, that *one thing is needful*; intimating, that nothing else is so? This inquiry will lead us to consider,

I. WHAT is implied in this one thing.

II. How it appears to be needful.

I. I shall attempt to show what is implied in this one thing which Christ calls needful.

THE words which are the topic of our discourse, are a declaration of Christ. Our Lord, in the course of his travels, was passing by a certain house, in which dwelt two pious sisters. Their names were *Martha* and *Mary*. They had a cordial friendship for Christ, and kindly invited him into their hospitable dwelling; expecting, without doubt, much entertainment and profit, from his agreeable conversation. Christ readily complies with their request. He enters their little mansion, and improves the short time he expected to tarry there, to a valuable purpose. He enters upon some useful subject of discourse, calculated for the most important instruction, and edification. The two sisters, on this occasion, manifested a disposition somewhat different, though both were hopefully pious. *Mary*, eager to get as much benefit as possible from his conversation, placed herself at his feet, and was all attention to his heavenly discourse. *Martha* was more solicitous about her domestic affairs. *She was cumbered about much serving*: and appears, to be not a little piqued at *Mary*, that she did not lend her assisting hand. They had company that evening; provision must be made for their entertainment—supper must be made ready, and many things were to be done, that they might be disposed in that order, which was agreeable to her wishes: and being alone in her business, she was put into a great hurry and perplex-

ity. Therefore she addresses Christ in a manner, which throws some fault on Mary, if not on Christ himself. Says she, *Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.* Jesus replies in such a manner as to justify Mary, and cast a gentle rebuke upon Martha. These are his words, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” As if he had said, “O Martha, you are too anxious about matters of inferior concern, to the neglect of what is more necessary. You are all in a hurry to furnish superfluities, and make things convenient for bodily comfort; which prevents your attention to spiritual instruction, and the good of your soul. You need not make so much parade about outward things, as preparing a variety of dishes, and setting every thing in the nicest order. What is barely sufficient to answer the demands of nature is enough: and having done this, rest easy, and imitate Mary in improving the present moment, in attending to my doctrines and directions; for this is a business of such importance, as that nothing is needful in comparison with it.” Thus may we conceive our Lord as addressing the busy Martha. And what are we to suppose was meant by the one thing needful? And what better general term can we express it by, than that of *religion*? Religion, then, we may consider as the one thing which alone Christ calls needful. But what is religion, you ask me? To tell you, merely, that religion is the one thing needful, is to leave you as much in the dark as before. For the question occurs, what is religion? Are there not numberless opinions about it? And can it be expected, that what has been the subject of dis-

pute for ages can be settled in an hour? An answer to this question will lead me into somewhat of a particular detail of the most essential things which belong to religion: But a bare summary only, is what can be expected in a single discourse. Religion in general implies in it certain doctrines or truths, relative to the kingdom of God, which are to be believed: and certain duties to be practised—or, in a word, religion consists in faith and practice. Let us glance at each of these, viz. the doctrines which are the objects of our faith, and the duties which we are to perform in the discharge of religion. And here a few sketches may suffice for the present, where there is scope for a treatise.

I. THAT there is a God existing in the universe, is a doctrine of primary importance in religion. This indeed lies at the foundation of religion. Discard the existence of Deity, and the very basis of religion is subverted. It has nothing to support it. It is a mere chimera.—Well, can we entertain any doubt about the existence of God? Is any truth more demonstrable? Look around you, and wherever you turn your eyes, you will discover traces of almighty power and infinite wisdom. Who made *you*? Who formed your bodies with all those members and organs, so curiously adapted to the uses for which they were evidently designed? Who framed your spirits, with those noble faculties of understanding and will? Are you not constrained to acknowledge with Elihu, “That there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the almighty giveth him understanding?” Look around this world, and take a survey of its stupendous greatness, its utility, its subserviency to the accommodation of its inhabitants. How regular in its perpetual motions and revolutions? Take an expanded view of the heavens, and there

“ See worlds on worlds compose one universe.”

How amazingly great are these celestial bodies ? How countless their number ? How perfect their order ? How exact their revolutions ? Are not all these sufficient proofs of a Deity ? Can any but a fool have the impudence to say, “ There is no God.” Well if there be a God, this is a great point in religion. If fully believed and realized, in its whole import, it will, of course, lead us into the very bowels of religion ; especially if viewed in connection with the next article, which demands our notice.

2. NOT only is it a fundamental doctrine of religion, that there is a God ; but that he is a being of all possible perfection, both natural and moral.

IF there be a God, he must have existed from eternity—He had no beginning, and consequently must have existed from a necessity of nature ; and what exists *necessarily*, must be infinite, not only as to duration ; but also, as to *greatness*, or as to the quantity of existence which he possesseth. A being, existing *necessarily*, can be subject to no limitation, in any attribute or property which he possesseth : Because if *necessity* requireth one degree of perfection, for the same reason it requireth two, or ten, and so on to infinity. If then, from God’s stupendous works, it be manifest, that he is possessed of any perfections, those perfections must be in him to an infinite degree : Because those perfections existing in him *necessarily*, must be infinite, in as much as necessity of existence can be restricted to no bounds. If, therefore, it be evident, from the works of God in creation and providence, that there is any degree of power wisdom or goodness in God, these perfections must be exalted to absolute infinity ; or in a

word, God is as great and as good, as it is possible for an infinite Being to be. No weakness, insufficiency, or imperfection can be ascribed to God. There is not the least defect in his character. It is not possible for a Being of his boundless capacity, to be better or more excellent than he is. Whatever is most glorious, most excellent and perfect, exists in him to an infinite degree. Reason and revelation conspire to evince, that God is such a Being. All the most amiable perfections, of which all created Beings are possessed, are nothing, compared to the transcendent excellencies of the divine nature. This is a capital article in the system of religion: For if there be any defect in the divine character, it proportionably diminishes our obligations to respect God; and of course, saps the foundation of religion, which essentially has respect to God for its object.

3. RELIGION supposeth, that God, acting in character as the great moral Governor of the world, hath given a law to his rational creatures, to which he requires their perfect obedience; and hath guarded this law, with the most awful sanctions, by annexing proper penalties to the breach of it.

If there be a God of infinite perfection, who hath made creatures capable of moral government, it is rational to suppose, that such a Being would institute government amongst his creatures. It is certain, if he be a Being of perfect moral character, he cannot be indifferent to the moral conduct of his creatures. He must delight in order—in that virtuous affection, and regular course of conduct, which tends to the general good of his rational creatures. Moral virtue or holiness, therefore, must be pleasing to him; and the contrary must be displeasing. It is rational to suppose, therefore, that God would require of moral

beings such a disposition and conduct, as is necessary to preserve amongst them the most perfect order, harmony and felicity. And if any should presume to depart from such a perfect rule of duty, to frown upon them, and punish them, according to the hatred which he bears to such wickedness.

THAT God should thus put his creatures under such a salutary law, is agreeable to the dictates of impartial reason ; and it is a case very clear from the holy scriptures. And let it be observed, that the sum of what this law requireth is, that we should love God with all our heart, soul and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves : That is, that we should exercise a kind and benevolent affection towards all beings according to what they are. Such a disposition would comprize in it the sum of all morally good qualities ; it would lead to all right conduct in every instance ; and it would tend to universal good amongst the whole society of moral beings. It would promote peace, harmony and all those kind offices, which would conduce to the undisturbed repose and happiness of the whole system. And any departure from this rule, would interrupt the common felicity. This law, therefore, which God hath established amongst his rational creatures, is an excellently good law. For it is such as that the general good cannot be secured and enjoyed without it. And we must all come to a perfect conformity to this rule, before we can be perfectly happy.

MOREOVER ; it is to be considered, that to the breach of this law there is a penalty threatened, in proportion to the evil merited, which, in a word, is eternal death. This also, is founded in reason. For if it is best that a law should exist, it is best that it should be guarded by proper sanctions. This is even necessary for the general good ; that

all might be sensible how important a thing it is, that all should render a strict conformity to God's excellent laws, and be deterred from apostacy. Now this idea of the divine law is what essentially belongs to religion. Really, this spirit, which the law requires, is the very soul of religion. And let us have this temper reigning in our hearts, and I am persuaded it would immediately settle all our material disputes about religion.—But to proceed,

4. LET it be observed, that we have all broken this most excellent law; yea, have become enemies against it.

THIS is an awful truth, abundantly taught us in the holy scriptures, in such places where it is asserted, *That there is no man who liveth and sinneth not. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* And indeed, this is a doctrine, which is supposed from one end of the Bible to the other. It is also evident from our own constant experience, if we will only attend to our own hearts and conduct. Where is there one, who is bold enough to say, I am conscious to myself, that, from the first moment of my existence, I have constantly and invariably loved God with all my heart, or to the utmost extent of my natural capacity—That no affliction hath for one moment taken place in my heart, which is inconsistent with such a disposition. Never was I chargeable with the least degree of pride, malice, revenge, envy, covetousness, lust, &c.? None can think this, without the grossest delusion. But on the contrary, it is glaringly manifest, “That the wickedness of man is great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil, continually.” Now this being the case, what must be our state with relation to that good law which we

have described? This is the language of the law, to all those who have transgressed it. "Curfed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." This being the case, that we are all finners, and transgressors of the law; we, of course, are subjected to its curse. This curse implies eternal damnation. To this deplorable state, then, are the whole human race reduced.—They are all exposed to eternal damnation, without any possibility of help or relief from themselves; for all mankind being finners, might justly be subjected to the wrath and curse of God forever. But here let it be observed,

5. THAT God, of his sovereign grace, hath provided a new method of life and salvation, by giving his own Son to die in our room and stead, bearing the curse of the law, being made a sacrifice for sin, and so opening a way for our reconciliation to God.

THIS brings us to a consideration of the gospel; a thing of the utmost importance to be understood by every Christian. What then is the gospel? It is useful here to observe, that God, acting in character, as the great moral governor of the world; having given a law to man, as the rule of his duty, and man having broken this law; it became the Supreme Magistrate of the universe to maintain the honor of this law, and save it from sinking into contempt. If it be best to have law in any government, it is best it should be obeyed, or if transgressed, that the criminal should be punished. Laws answer no purpose at all, if they may be broken and trampled upon, without the offender's incurring any punishment; or without the legislature's manifesting any displeasure at such conduct. To act in such a manner, is to destroy all government at once, and it is equivalent to letting every man do what is right in his

own eyes, or just as he pleases, with impunity.— This never can be tolerated in any kind of government ; much less in the divine. God, therefore, having set up government, must support it —must punish rebellion, and the violations of his law. But how can God support his government, when it is opposed by any of his creatures? *If every transgression and disobedience receive a just recompence of reward*, God will bear a sufficient testimony against sin, rebellion will be discountenanced, and the dignity of government will be maintained. But is there no way whereby the offender may escape punishment without any injury to government? Yes, this has been done by the atonement of Christ. And this was the very thing for which the atonement was necessary. What Christ did and suffered, answered the same ends as would have been answered by the eternal punishment of the sinner himself. It vindicated the honor of God's law and government. Christ "hath magnified the law and made it honorable." "He hath declared God's righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." God "hath made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." This substitution of Christ for us, in magnifying and honoring the law, declaring God's righteousness, in the remission of our sins, bearing the curse, and in this way, making atonement for the sins of men, I conceive to be the essence of the gospel, and the foundation of Christianity. What Christ did, and underwent in this affair vindicated the honor of God's law and government, as much as if those who were saved by him had themselves suffered the curse of the law to the utmost of their demerit.

It may be well to observe here, that what Christ did, in the affair of our salvation, was not to eradicate any implacable disposition which there was in the heart of God the Father, and to render him more benevolently inclined; but it was to open the way for the exercise of that infinite fountain of goodness, and grace, which there eternally was in God, consistently with the established rules of his government. Christ did not work upon the father to render him more kind and gracious; but to make it consistent with justice, and the rectitude of his government to exercise his goodness and grace towards those who had broken his most excellent law. Christ having supported God's authority, and the honor of his law, by making atonement, grace may now reign through righteousness, and in perfect harmony with it. It is a desirable thing in a moral as well as a political state, that the dignity of government be maintained, and that a supreme magistrate appear to be just, as well as gracious in his administrations; and it was in this view that the sacrifice of Christ was necessary. This was the design of the atonement. Christ having thus opened the way for the honorable exercise of grace towards the ill-deserving; the next step is, as follows:

6. GOD now calls upon sinful men to repent and believe the gospel, as the only way to escape eternal ruin, and obtain everlasting life and salvation.

THESE invitations and calls to "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," are abundantly scattered through the word of God. These are all founded on the supposition of the atonement exhibited in the gospel. And it is worthy of special notice in this place, that, without faith in Christ, and a genuine turn-

ing to God, and dedication of ourselves to his service, there is no rational hope of salvation, notwithstanding the provision which is made in the gospel, by the sacrifice of Christ. Altho' Christ hath wrought out redemption for us, and the door of mercy hath been opened, yet such as continue to reject the Saviour—will not come to him that they might have life, and persevere in their impenitency and unbelief, are as much excluded from salvation, as if Christ had never died. But he, who hearing the report of the gospel, gives credit to it, casts himself on the mercy of God through Christ, and leads a life of evangelical obedience, trusting in the merits of the Redeemer for acceptance with God, he shall not be cast out; but be entitled to all the blessings of the covenant of grace; and shall finally enjoy eternal life, in a future world.

7. THE believer having his peace made with God through faith in Christ, henceforth devotes himself to a life of holiness. The divine image, which he had lost by his apostacy from God, is restored in regeneration. He now receives a taste to perceive the beauties of holiness. The divine character, as exhibited in the law and gospel, appears glorious. His heart is united to God in a spirit of disinterested affection: and he feels a benevolent regard for his fellow-men.—He even wishes well to his enemies; and he bears a peculiar affection for his Christian brethren.

HE forakes that course of sin in which he formerly indulged himself. He denies himself, takes up his cross and follows Christ. Whatever he does, he aims to do all to the glory of God. He exercises himself in prayer to God, and pours forth his heart in praise to God—attends on divine worship—reads the word of God—gives attendance to the ministry of it; and attends on the

ordinances which God hath appointed in his word. "He exerciseth himself to keep a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." He aims to act justly in all his dealings with his fellow-men. He is ready to shew mercy to such as are in distress. In a word, he makes a business of living in the performance of all the duties of religion; and thus becomes prepared for the eternal inheritance, of which he lives in humble expectation at the conclusion of this transitory life.

THIS life of holiness, in a candidate for eternal glory, is an important article of religion.— "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." This work of sanctification is progressively carried on, during the continuance of this life though it doth not reach to perfection, 'till the believer shall arrive to the state of just men made perfect, in the future heavenly world.

BEFORE I dismiss this head, I feel myself constrained to mention one doctrine more, of distinguished importance in religion—which is,

8. THE doctrine of divine providence as extending to all events which ever exist. This is inseparably connected with the religion of the Bible.

THE doctrine of providence implies God's overruling hand, and direction of all things, which ever come to pass, agreeable to his eternal purpose, and a plan laid in his own mind from the foundation of the world. "God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." He sitteth at the head of the universe—hath his plan perfectly in view—superintends, manages and conducts, all the affairs in the universe, in infinite wisdom. Things which to us appear the most casual, are at his disposal. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of

the Lord." Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his direction, and the very hairs of our heads are all numbered. It is rational to suppose, that if God made a world, he would take the supreme government of it into his own hands : and that he would suffer no event to come to pass, but what he foresaw would answer some valuable purpose. We have reason to think, that not the most minute affairs can take place without his permission and disposal : much less may we think, that matters of greater consequence, such as relate to the moral world and the everlasting state of moral beings, should be neglected by him, and be left to the decision of capricious chance. God's almighty power renders him able to overrule all events, and his infinite wisdom and goodness would induce him to do it. This certainly is a comfortable thought, that God reigns, directs and regulates all the affairs of his kingdom. Under his administrations, all things shall move on in such an order, as shall finally issue in the greatest good of the whole. God is supreme, and hath at his control, devils, tyrants, sin, fate, chance, or whatever can be supposed to be the most powerful to oppose his government. He can render them all subservient to his providential will. " The wrath of man shall praise him, the remainder of wrath will he restrain."

THE doctrine of providence, as the fruit of an infinitely wise plan, affords matter of pleasing contemplation : and with pleasure might we expatiate upon it, would the prescribed limits of my discourse admit. It is a doctrine, very intimately involved in the system of religion, taught in the holy scriptures. It lays the foundation of an implicit trust in God, amidst his most mysterious dispensations—a cheerful submission to his will—exultation under his government ; comfort and sup-

port in adversity, and all the dark scenes, through which the people of God are called to pass—and an assurance, of a happy issue to all events, within the extensive sphere of God's dominions. “The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.”

WE have now been led to contemplate on the leading and most important doctrines of religion, together with the practical duties of it. The outlines are all that can be exhibited in so small a compass. These are connected with various other branches of religion, which are implied or dependent on these principal heads, and which naturally flow from them; and which I must now pass over in silence, or but barely mention in a general way.—Such as the primitive rectitude of man—The first father of our race acting as the representative of his posterity—The subsistence of three persons in one God—The incarnation of Christ in union with the divine and human nature—The necessity of regeneration—The institution of a church, furnished with proper officers, as bishops and deacons; and the ordinances of the Gospel, viz. Baptism and the Lord's Supper—The resurrection of the body; a future judgment—Heaven and Hell. Thus have I endeavored to present to your view, very briefly indeed, what is implied in the one thing needful.

T t

RELIGION the one Thing needful.

S E R M O N II.

LUKE X. 42.

ONE thing is needful.

HAVING, in the former discourse on this subject, shewn what is implied in the one thing, which our Lord suggested to Martha as being *needful*, in such a manner as imported, that nothing else was needful in comparison with this; and having observed, that religion was the grand thing intended by this phrase; and having given a particular detail of the main articles of religion, both as to faith and practice, we now proceed, as was proposed,

II. To show how this one thing appears to be needful; or so infinitely important, as to have the pre-eminence before any thing else.

I. RELIGION appears to be in the highest sense needful; and as it were the only thing that is so, if we consider the greatness and excellency of that Being, who is the grand object of religion.

It has been observed already, that religion, essentially consists in a regard to the Deity. From him it receives its foundation. Without the supposition of his existence and perfections, it intirely vanisheth, and with him is excluded from the universe. Religion, as it is founded in the being and perfections of God, its importance must bear proportion to him who is the grand object of it. If the God you are bound to serve, be a little insignificant Being, you are under no very great obligations to regard him and pay him religious veneration. Your religion may sink, in proportion as the object of it sinks. God and religion ought to be measured on the same scale. They are both so interwoven, as that their greatness and importance are exactly commensurate. They rise and fall together. A great God, can comport with nothing short of a great and most important religion. And now let me ask you, how great and glorious that being is, who is the object of your religion? If you say there are no bounds to be set to him; he is absolutely infinite as to greatness, dignity and excellency; it follows of course, that religion which has its principal respect to him, must be infinitely important; and this is to say, it is the one thing needful. If you say religion is but of little consequence—a mere needless, trifling affair, and which may be attended to only in subordination to your temporal interest, and humour; you must, to be consistent, say, that your God is a little inferior being, so little and insignificant, as that to pay him much religious homage is a thing quite unnecessary and improper. But notwithstanding men are apt to entertain mean and unworthy thoughts of the incomprehensibly great Jehovah, yet it is a clear case, that, in point of dignity and excellency, he transcends all bounds, “His glory is set above the

heavens." Now if God be a Being of such transcendent greatness and glory, it follows that religion, which hath him for its object, must be infinitely important; and if so, it is the one thing needful.

2. THE importance of religion appears if we consider, that it is the proper use of our intellectual and moral powers. The powers of reason, understanding and moral agency, are necessary to the exercise of religion. Without them, we can neither know what it is, nor practice it when known. And the exercise and practice of this seem to be the principal purpose for which we were made rational creatures. If we were made chiefly with a view to sensual enjoyments, what need was there, that we should be indued with such noble intellectual faculties? Why were we not made like the brutes, if like them we are to live without religion. They who are devoid of reason, and have only the organs of sense, can enjoy animal delights. Why men were made superior to them, as to moral powers, was doubtless, that they might apply these powers to the exercises of religion, to which in a suitable direction, they are so properly adapted. The survey of our frame and constitution, indicates the end for which we were made, which must have been religion; this being the only suitable use of such rational faculties. In this view of the matter, religion appears, at least, to be as needful and important as the intellectual powers of our nature.

3. THE importance of religion, so as to be esteemed, the one thing needful, appears, if it be considered, that it is only in the knowledge and practice of it, that we can escape everlasting misery and attain unto everlasting felicity in the future world. The religion of the Bible supposes a future state, of everlasting rewards and punishments.

These are things of infinite importance. They are so, if realized, in the view of all sensible beings. We all dread misery. The very term implies in it an idea of something abhorrent to nature. And eternal pain is something shocking beyond description. Even the least degree of pain continued in an eternal duration, exceeds in quantity, the greatest possible degree of pain, which is only finite. One soul subjected to misery, to endless ages, will undergo more pain than what the whole creation could endure in millions of millions of years: for what is infinite in quantity must exceed the greatest degree imaginable of what is finite. Now imagine yourselves to be cast into the midst of a glowing furnace, and to be kept alive there, for a year, a day, or even an hour, susceptible of pain as you are at present, and how shocking would be the thought! But this would be nothing compared with being consigned over to endless misery—in a lake of fire and brimstone, the smoke of which ascendeth up forever and ever. If you only realize the abhorrence which your natures bear to pain, especially when it is very intense, and of very long continuance; the eternal sufferings of the wicked in a future world must appear amazingly dreadful. Who can dwell with devouring fire! Who with everlasting burnings! If we give credit to the scriptures, we must believe the pains of hell to be extremely great, as to degree; and they are infinite, as to duration. This thought, properly adverted to, would fill the sinner with terrors, like those of the jailor, and make him cry out, in his striking language, “What must I do to be saved?” This is a question of the greatest importance; and how can it be answered? Surely no otherwise than in the words of Paul, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

There can be no escape from this dreadful state of future punishment, but by embracing religion. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment. This is to be the deplorable condition of all those who neglect religion till their state of probation be finished; but such as become the hearty friends of religion, shall escape all the horrors of eternal damnation. Doth not this thought emphatically proclaim the importance of religion, and prove it to be the one thing needful? Moreover consider, that it is only in the way of becoming friends to religion, we can rationally expect to arrive to the mansions of the blessed in heaven. Heaven is a place of supreme felicity. Its joys and honors are inconceivably great, and of endless duration. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them who love him." In heaven, every evil shall be removed, moral and penal. There is no pain sorrow or grief in those celestial regions. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat: for the lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Inconceivably great are the honors which shall be conferred upon the saints, in the world of glory. They shall reign as kings and priests with Christ. How great shall be their joy and blessedness, when they shall be admitted into "God's presence where there is fulness of joy, and placed at his right hand, where there are pleasures forevermore!" How magnificent and splendid is the representation, which St. John gives of the new Jerusalem! Which is designed to be the place of habitation for the

righteous. It is probable, that the saints in heaven will enjoy a degree of happiness, equal to their capacities, and as they improve in knowledge, their powers and enjoyments will be progressively increasing forever. And is this state of supreme felicity and glory attainable by such worthless creatures as we are? Yes it is; but it is so, only in the knowledge and practice of religion. The wicked, impenitent, and unbelievers are excluded from the kingdom of heaven—the new Jerusalem. There shall in no wise enter into it, any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh an abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the lamb's book of life. Now in this view, which we have taken of the heavenly world, can we lightly esteem it? Is it not a thing of infinite worth? Are all the honors and treasures of this world, in any measure, to be compared with it? Doth not this bespeak the superlative importance of religion, which alone, through the grace of God in Christ, can advance us to this exalted state of perfection and blessedness? Especially considering the horrors of eternal punishment, in connection with the joys of the heavenly world, and that religion alone is available to exempt us from the one, and advance us to the other, it must appear with incontestible evidence, that it is the one thing needful; in comparison with which, all other things are worthy of no consideration.

4. RELIGION is the one thing needful, as it is *universally* needful; that is, it is needful for every body. There are many things thought to be of very considerable importance for some persons in certain stations, callings, or conditions of life; which, however, are not necessary for others. But religion is a thing indispensibly necessary for all. It is needful for high and low, rich and poor, old

and young, wise or simple, bond or free, black or white ; be their rank or condition in life what it may. Every one who is a rational creature, is a moral agent, and has an immortal soul, is bound to be religious—Men of every description, class or occupation, are under indispensable obligations to glorify God, and to live in the practice of all religious duties. Some who move in a high sphere of life, think themselves above religion ; they scorn to be under its bonds ; it is too vulgar for them ; they look down upon it with contempt. But this is a false conceit. Religion is not degrading ; but ennobling ; it pours a lustre on men in the most exalted stations of life. Besides, let such consider, that God is able to abase the proud, and will do it ; and punishment inflicted on them will be as grievous, as on those in the lower ranks of life. Some, by reason of their meanness and obscurity, think themselves exempted from the laws of religion, and are free from its restraints ; but this is also a mistake : for religion is too excellent to be undervalued by any ; nor can such, better than others, endure the miseries which arise from their neglect. Some are ready to imagine, that religion might suit well enough some orders and characters of men ; such, for instance, as ministers, deacons, and perhaps church-members ; but, as for the body of the people, it is very little needful for them—They are free from its shackles, and they may be allowed to live in the neglect of it. But this too, is a great mistake. All who undervalue religion, and live without the practice of it, must suffer the terrible consequences of their neglect—They must be banished from the beatific presence of God, and suffer the curse of his broken law ; and to endure this, must be as dreadful for them as for others,

Extreme pain must be intolerable to all beings, who have any feeling. To all persons, therefore, capable of pleasure or pain, joy or sorrow, religion is needful, let their situation in the world be what it will. This thought serves to show the great importance of religion, and demonstrates it to be the one thing needful; especially, taken in conjunction with all the former considerations, which have been brought into view. The way is now prepared for the

APPLICATION.

I. It is pertinent to remark, that religion is a rational thing. Both the doctrines, and the duties of religion are such as must be approved of, by the dictates of impartial reason. There is a beautiful symmetry and coherence, throughout the whole system of religion. There may, indeed, be mysteries in it, which surpass the comprehension of finite minds: Nor is this strange, since religion bears such a peculiar relation to God, who is an infinite and incomprehensible Being. An infinitely great omniscient, omnipresent and eternal Being, is full of mystery to finite understandings: And yet, not to acknowledge the existence of such a Being, is the grossest absurdity, and repugnant to the clearest demonstration, on principles of unbiassed reason. Many things in religion, may be above reason to comprehend; but not inconsistent with it.

To satisfy ourselves that religion is a thing rational, let us take a summary review of the principal heads of it. In the first place, is it not perfectly agreeable to reason to suppose that there is a God existing, and that he is a Being of infinite perfection and excellency? So far, we go on sure ground: The threshold of religion is supported

by reason. And in the next place ; that such a Being is worthy of supreme regard, veneration and love, is evidently not absurd but entirely consonant with reason. Consider once what is the most proper object of love. What can be so, if infinite amiableness be not ? If there be no defect or blemish in the divine character, but, on the contrary, if he be great, glorious and excellent, to the highest possible degree ; if he be the creator, preserver and benefactor of mankind ; he must be a being worthy of the highest esteem and love. Is not this sentiment founded in reason ? What ought we to esteem, and love, if not the perfection of excellency, and the fountain of all blessings ? And if it be reasonable, that such a Being should be loved according to his amiableness ; then God's moral law is a reasonable and good law, which requireth us to love the Lord with all our hearts, souls and strength. The law of God is reasonable in proportion to his worthiness of love, which is great in proportion to his perfection and excellency. God's law, therefore, the sum of which is, that we love God with all the heart, has its foundation in reason. It is reasonable also, in this view, as the love which it requires, is the great band of union amongst all moral beings. Love attracts all intelligent beings towards one another, it cements them together and excites each individual to seek the good of the whole ; it is, therefore, conducive to universal happiness : And when this love is extinguished, the bands are broken, the union is dissolved, and therefore individuals are opposed to one another, and instead of aiming at mutual good, are disposed to seek their own private interest, at the expense of the public weal. Now a law, in the keeping of which, general confusion and misery is guarded against ; and the general peace and

happiness secured, must be a reasonable and good law. And it may here be observed, that a perfect conformity to this law implies in it such a temper, as will lead to all the various, particular branches of moral virtue. So that if the law be reasonable, the whole circle of duties belonging to religion are so. So far then, all appears to be agreeable to right reason. There is a God—He is possessed of absolute perfection and glory; he is therefore to be loved with all the heart; of consequence, God's law which requires this is reasonable. It appears also to be reasonable that God, as he is by underived right, the supreme Legislator to his creatures, should affix penalties to the breach of his law. This is essential to law; and in no other way can government be supported. And these penalties ought to be great, in proportion to the evil of sin; which as committed against a God of infinite greatness and dignity, must be infinite. This being the case, as mankind are all sinners, they are exposed to endless punishment.

So far as this, is what is contained in the religion of nature; and so far, all appears to be founded in reason. And if, in the next place, the Christian scheme be brought into view, this also appears to be agreeable to reason; although, to have investigated it, without the aid of revelation, would have been beyond the power of man. If God entertained thoughts of mercy towards fallen man, was it not most suitable and agreeable to reason, that this mercy should be exercised in such a way, as should be consistent with his justice and other perfections? And with the rectitude of his government? Therefore the doctrine of the atonement, which was designed to support the honor of God's law and government, whilst he exempted sinners from that punishment which he

had threatened them with, is agreeable to reason. And it is rational to suppose, that the person making atonement, should be of dignity, equal to the demerit of sin. He ought, therefore, to be a person of infinite dignity. Furthermore ; as God's law, which was given for the rule of our obedience, was an excellently good law, so we ought forever to have conformed to it ; and our having departed from it, was wrong and criminal in us. It is, therefore, our duty *to repent*, and return to our obedience : therefore, the doctrine of *repentance*, so abundantly urged in the scriptures, is highly reasonable. So also is the doctrine of *faith* in Christ ; since he hath made atonement for sin, and opened a way for our reconciliation with God.

WE have now glanced at some of the chief and fundamental heads of both natural and revealed religion ; the whole of which appear to be perfectly reasonable. And if so, doubtless, all the other particular branches of religion, deducible from, or inseparably connected with, these principal heads, must also appear in a rational light. Especially will they have this appearance, if all the parts be viewed in their joint connection, forming one entire system. The whole is the result of superlative wisdom—worthy of God—most illustriously displaying his glory, and conducive to the general good—and how emphatically may it be called *the one thing needful* ?

2. FROM the view which we have taken of religion, we infer how grossly mistaken mankind are, in general, in their apprehensions concerning it. Religion, instead of being the most necessary thing of any with which we are concerned, is commonly thought to be a matter of trifling moment. Other things are considered as necessary, and deserving the attention and ardent pursuit of

men—such as the riches, the honors and the pleasures of the world; these engage their incessant activity: And their practice declares what their opinion is concerning these things; it bespeaks the sense which they have of their importance. Whilst, on the other hand, religion is neglected, treated with indifference, if not with abhorrence and virulent contempt. This is a full proof, that, in their view, religion is a needless, if not an odious thing. But how extremely erroneous must such a sentiment be? How depraved, how perverse must the disposition of men be, to admit and foster such a sentiment in their hearts? It is an entire perversion of the order of nature. It estimates that to be the most needful, which is the least so: and that which is the ultimate end of man's existence, and ought to be the grand, and most noble employment of life, is undervalued, and viewed as being useless and impertinent. How is this monstrously to invert the order of things! And what an argument of the deluded apprehensions of mankind?

3. WE infer the amazing folly, and stupidity of the greater part of mankind, in undervaluing and neglecting the one thing needful. Is religion so important and interesting to every individual of mankind?—Are its consequences infinitely momentous? Is it the grand end, for which we were created, and furnished with such noble intellectual endowments? Then ought it to be prized above all things; and to treat it with contempt, argues the most sottish infatuation. What folly can be equal to this? And yet we see it to be the common case of mortals: it is commonly the last thing which engages the attention of men. Few are striving, with impartiality and earnestness, to investigate the nature of it. Where shall we find those happy sons of wisdom, “Who cry after

knowledge, and lift up their voice for understanding; who seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures?" Few manifest a friendly attachment to it. Few there are, who make it the grand pursuit of their lives, and uniformly devote themselves to the practice of it. What can be a greater argument of stupidity than this? Did we profusely throw away immense treasures of the most valuable worldly property, and plunge ourselves into the greatest temporal poverty and wretchedness, it would, in no measure, be an instance of imprudence, comparable to this. If we live without religion, we are undone forever, and can never retrieve our loss. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The time allotted us to become acquainted with religion, and secure its blessings, is very short; it is only during the term of human life, which with rapid speed, is urging its flight, and will presently hurry us off from this stage of action, and settle our condition for eternity. Now doth our everlasting all depend on this momentary space of time?—Must we, in order to avoid everlasting perdition, and obtain eternal life, come to a competent understanding of religion; embrace it from our hearts, and live in the diligent practice of it? Then what folly is it, to live without it?

4. Is religion the one thing needful? Then be persuaded to realize the importance of it, and live in the constant practice of it. To this, there are the strongest excitements. To fit you for this, and to render you capable of it, you were made rational creatures, and endued with immortal souls: For this, you are favored with a revelation from God; in which, the doctrines and duties of religion are clearly unfolded—For this, the Son of

God came down from heaven, led a suffering life, and expired on the cross—For this, God hath sent his Prophets, his Apostles, and hath instituted a gospel ministry. *With* this, you shall enjoy the favor and friendship of God, and be eternally happy in his blissful presence—*Without* this, you are liable to the wrath of God, and must expect to be miserable forever. Awake then, and attend to this one thing needful. Let every thing yield to this cardinal point. “Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.” “Strive to enter into the strait gate.” Be pressing into the kingdom of heaven. Spare not your utmost efforts: “For the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” You ought to begrudge no pains in a matter of so great importance. Consider, that religion, to one who has a good taste, instead of being a tedious business, is a source of the most sublime enjoyment. “Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” “Christ’s yoke is easy and his burden light.” Those who follow Christ, “shall in this life enjoy an hundred fold;” such are its present rewards, arising from the refined pleasures, which it yields, notwithstanding the mortifications, tribulations and persecutions of this world: And, in a future state, eternal life is the exceedingly great reward of all the true followers of the Lamb. There is such a systematic connection and harmony in the doctrines of religion, as that a clear insight into them, will afford the most exquisite satisfaction, to a contemplative mind; much superior to that of any other science. And the practical part of religion is such, as not only conduceth to the benefit of him who liveth in the practice of it; but it diffuseth its blessings all around—it tends to the greatest happiness of mankind in the present state. And if people in gen-

eral were under the salutary influence of it, this world would be stript of its greatest calamities. Cordial love, peace and friendship, would subsist amongst mankind; and all those evils, which proceed from the malignant passions of men, such as malice, envy, revenge, pride, covetousness, and the like, would be exterminated from the face of the earth. The general good would be the object of pursuit. What a happiness then, would it be to mankind, if religion universally prevailed in the earth? The curse would, at least, be half taken off, and a sort of paradisaical state would be restored. Why then, should any have objections against religion? Is it not the most noble employment of intelligent beings?—It certainly advances men to the highest honor and the most sublime enjoyments of any thing whatever. Therefore lay aside all your prejudices against it. Awaken up all the powers of your souls in search after it. Ask of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, that he would replenish your minds with this heavenly wisdom. Let it have a governing influence on your hearts, and with *Mary* be solicitous to choose that good part which shall never be taken away from you. AMEN.

W w

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been admitted to the membership of the Society since the last meeting of the Council. The names are arranged in alphabetical order of their surnames. The names of the persons who have been admitted to the membership of the Society since the last meeting of the Council are as follows: [The text is extremely faint and illegible, but appears to be a list of names.]

TRUE Obedience to the Gospel, harmonious and entire.

A SERMON by SAMUEL AUSTIN, A. M.
Pastor of a Church in Worcester, *Massachusetts.*

JAMES ii. 10.

FOR whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

IT is a matter of great importance, my brethren, to possess just ideas of true religion, with respect to its extent, as well as its distinguishing nature. Among that small proportion of mankind, who pay serious attention to it, in any measure correspondent to its momentous concerns, it is evident, that there are many who circumscribe its duties within a very narrow compass; accommodating its claims to their own sinister views, humors, and lusts. Like the ancient hypocrites, condemned by our Saviour, they substitute some particular external observances, of easy practice, in the place of that consistent, and beautiful whole, which the scriptures enjoin. Those readily "paid tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin;

but omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." These assume some partial form of godliness, but deny its power, or place the whole of Christianity in the preservation of a visible morality, while they injuriously trample on the rights of God. Such semi-christians, it appears that St. James had in his eye, while writing the chapter, from which our text is taken. There were, it seems, at that time, some nominal believers, who, instead of exercising, and expressing, in universal obedience, the condescending, and impartial spirit of the gospel, manifested an unkind partiality in their treatment of their fellow professors; which indicated the reign of affections very different from those of genuine religion. "My brethren, saith the Apostle, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" He then charges them with this unchristian partiality. "But ye have despised the poor." And to show the enormity of the sin, he asks "Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" He then proceeds to point out what is, and what is not a genuine compliance with the gospel; and particularly insists, that it is an impartial, and universal subjection to the law. "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scriptures, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well. But if ye have

respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." Then he adds by way of argument in the words of the text, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." By the law it is obvious the Apostle intends the moral law, that comprehensive system which comprises all duty, as it is expressed in all the distinct precepts of the Bible. Whosoever he says offends this law in a single point, whatever other observances he may exhibit, is really a transgressor of the whole law, i. e. he is wholly disobedient. He is characteristically a transgressor. He is not, whatever his professions may be, a child of God, but is really, in the midst of his sanguine hopes, an heir of hell. For he had said before, "If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin." What then? "and are convinced of the law as transgressors." The subject is therefore of great importance, and reasonably solicits your attention. In my attempt to explain, and improve it to your edification, I will take the following method.

I. SHEW what is to be understood by keeping the whole law, and yet offending in one point.

II. How the person to whom this applies is guilty of all.

III. I WILL suggest some things to evince the truth and propriety of this general theory. And

IV. SUGGEST several inferences by way of improvement.

I. THEN we are to consider, what is to be understood by keeping the whole law, and yet offending in one point. This, evidently, must be understood with some qualifications. For it cannot escape your notice, that taking the matter strictly and literally, without any qualification at all, no such case can possibly occur. For if a man, in strictness, and without any limitation,

keep the whole law he complies with all its demands, and it is impossible that he should be, in any degree, a transgressor. To suppose a man, literally and strictly, an observer of the whole law, and, at the same time, an offender, is to make obedience and disobedience undistinguishably the same. Indeed, according to the assertion of St. James, it is to suppose a man, even while he is perfectly holy, in obedience to the whole law, a transgressor of the whole law. Neither can it, I apprehend, be consistently supposed, that the Apostle, by keeping the whole law, intended a *spiritual* or *cordial* compliance with the law, distinctly considered. For the law, as it respects the heart, distinct from the overt action, is not properly distinguishable into several points. Nor can the compliance of the heart with the law be properly distinguishable into several points. This compliance of the heart is a simple uncompounded affection. It is love. Hence the scriptures expressly assure us, that “*love* is the fulfilling of the law.” It may take different names, as it is exercised towards different objects. But the affection in its nature, is one simple, undistinguishable, uniform thing. Hence, to speak of a man’s keeping the whole law, and yet offending in one point, supposing it to respect the *heart merely*, would be perfectly unintelligible. Moreover; in opposition to this construction, it is to be considered, that as the first and great commandment is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” it is evident, that he who is the subject of a *cordial* conformity to the law, is possessed of supreme love to God; and therefore, in no sense, particularly with respect to the heart, can he be said to be a transgressor of the whole law. The words then must be understood to have immediate respect to what is external and visible to the hu-

man eye.* This is denominated obedience in the scriptures : not because it is such abstractly considered ; but because a cordial compliance with the requirements of the law, is always supposed to have necessarily attached to it, an external compliance with those requirements, as its proper expression and fruit. According to the scripture theory, and in the nature of things, cordial obedience will always express itself in a correspondent external obedience ; and the latter is the natural fruit of the former. This idea Christ expressly supports when he says “ a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things ; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things. This external obedience or disobedience, is the only thing which properly falls under the cognizance of men, and it is this which forms the character of a man in the estimate of his fellow men. Now it is this about which the Apostle James is discouraging. He is speaking respecting a matter, which took place visibly, under the eye of observers, viz. a wicked partiality which some professing Christians, at that time manifested ; by which, the poor members of Christ’s body were despised and trampled under feet. He charges them, herein, with having respect to persons, as thereby committing sin, and being convinced of the law as transgressors. But all this was a visible affair. When, therefore, in the text he says, “ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, the sentiment manifestly is ; though a man exhibit ever so scrupulous a

* And this understanding, as it is the only consistent one which can be put on the words, may be admitted, without any prejudice to that doctrine which, on the most accurate estimation of human action, placeth virtue and vice exclusively in the heart. For the reasons suggested above.

respect to the divine law, in all other particulars, yet if he, knowingly and habitually, allow himself to transgress, in a single point, either of omission, or commission, he is guilty of all. He is convinced of the law as a transgressor. Though he be very uniformly upright in his commercial dealings, maintaining an inviolable honesty; though he multiply outward acts of generosity; abstain carefully from all profaneness, lasciviousness, intemperance, oppression, and cruelty; though he be visibly a strict, and punctilious observer of all institutions of divine worship; though he carefully keep fasts and feasts, whether of human or divine appointment; yet if he habitually allow himself to offend, in one point of known duty, of whatever description, be it a wicked partial putting down of the poor of Christ's kingdom, or an habitual breach of the Sabbath, or lying, or whatever else is an explicit disobedience to Christ's plain commandment, he is guilty of all. In short to appeal to an example, for the sake of illustration, the case seems to be parallel with that of Naaman the Syrian, on whom the prophet Elisha wrought a miraculous cure." 2 Kings, v. 17, 18. "And Naaman said, shall there not, I pray thee be given to thy servant, two mules burden of earth for thy servant, for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering, nor sacrifice, unto other Gods but unto the Lord. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon, to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." It is a species of compounding matters with the infinite Governor of the world. It is an effort to escape his vengeance by some shadows of a partial obedience, directly contrary to the views of the Psalm-

ist, as expressed in the 119th Psalm. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to *all* thy commandments." We will now consider,

II. How the person to whom this character applies is guilty of all. By this must be understood, not only that he is actuated by a spirit opposite to that which the law requires, (for this is true in the commission of every sin and in every degree of it) but that he is actually chargeable with transgression, of the whole law, even when it is drawn out into all its distinct requirements.* For this is the very explanation which the Apostle himself gives of his own assertion. For he proceeds thus, "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." Of what law? Certainly of the seventh commandment, which prohibits adultery, as well, as of the sixth which prohibits murder. This must be the idea of the Apostle. For, otherwise; his reasoning would be perfectly futile and inconclusive.—When he says, "Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law, to suppose that by the law he means the sixth commandment would be to suppose him to say nothing but what is involved in the very idea of breaking that commandment. To kill is undoubtedly a violation of the sixth commandment. But this idea merely would not be at all to the Apostle's purpose to prove, that by

* If any should suppose that the Apostle means no more, than that he is actuated by a spirit opposed to the whole law, it may be observed that this is true of the smallest degree of imperfection. So that on this supposition, his assertion amounts to no more than this "he is an imperfect man, or doth wrong." But this would be tautology. It would be merely saying, "He who sins, sins."

breaking the sixth commandment, he was guilty of all, even the seventh as well as the sixth.— This, however, is the very thing he was asserting and proving. But how, you will ask, can a man be said to violate the seventh, when he does that, only, which is forbidden in the sixth commandment. The Apostle furnishes to our hands the distinction, which is the proper explanation of the subject. He violates not the seventh commandment, in the overt act, so that, in his external conduct, and with respect to men, he is chargeable with committing adultery. For this is the supposition, on which the Apostle proceeds. “ Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou *kill.*” But with respect to that, in which obedience and disobedience properly consist, i. e. the governing spirit by which he is actuated, he properly breaks the seventh commandment, and the whole law, as much as the sixth. And, that it is so, must be obvious to every one who considers the matter impartially. But this brings us to the next head of our discourse, in which

III. I WAS to suggest some things to illustrate and evince the truth of this general theory. And I would observe,

1. THAT this statement, which the Apostle makes, supposes that the man is insincere, or is actuated by a criminal spirit, even while he externally refrains from violating the other commandments. For if, in the proper spirit of obedience he really kept the other commandments, he could not be guilty of all. The truth is, an allowed habitual transgressing, in one known point of duty, is an unequivocal evidence of a wicked spirit which reigns, even while, in other respects, an external conformity to the law is exhibited. It is an infallible evidence of a heart totally destitute of that holy sincerity, in which all the obedience, which

the law requires, properly consists. A man may indeed be imperfect in his external life. He may come short of his duty. Nay, in an hour of violent temptation, when some remaining lust rages with uncommon strength, it is possible, that a man may grossly backslide; of which we have a few awful examples, recorded in sacred history, and yet be, on the whole, a sincere servant of the Redeemer. But a transgression in a single point, which is deliberate and habitual, cannot be the fruit of any other heart, than one, totally destitute of holy affection. For, not partial and maimed, but uniform, and universal obedience is the proper expression of christian sincerity. This is abundantly taught in the scriptures. Mat. xii. 33. "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit." Again, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." James i. 26. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." How explicitly to the point is this? If a man seem to be religious, in all other respects, but yet transgresseth in this one point, bridleth not his tongue, he deceiveth his own heart, if he entertain a good opinion of himself. His religion is vain. All the christianity he appears to wear, is mere hypocrisy. Agreeably to which he questions in the 3d chap. "Doth a fountain send forth, at the same place, sweet waters and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? Either a vine figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh." On this ground our Saviour addressed to his disciples and others this solemn charge. "If thy foot offend thee cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having

two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out : it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire." This charge obviously implies, that to neglect to cut off the foot when it offends, or to pluck out the eye, is to become obnoxious to hell-fire, and that, in the divine government, they are connected. But if the deliberate and habitual indulgence of any lust be consistent with christian sincerity, there is no foundation for this alliance. For on this hypothesis, a man may escape hell, and yet deliberately allow his right foot to offend. It is, evidently, on the ground of this irreconcilableness between allowed sin and holy sincerity, that the Psalmist says, " Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments." But if an allowed offending, in one point, involve total insincerity, or imply that the offender is entirely actuated by a spirit opposite to that which the divine law requires ; most certainly, he who thus offends, is guilty of all. He properly yields no obedience to any part of the divine law, and is, consequently, a transgressor of the whole of it. For between obedience and disobedience there is no medium. The matter will appear still more clear, if we duly consider, what is most certainly true, and what has been before suggested,

2. THAT all obedience and disobedience have their seat properly in the heart. The overt action is not, in strictness, or by itself, virtuous or vicious, obedience or disobedience. If it were, a physician would deserve your gratitude, who gave you a medicine, which operated, in fact, to your advantage, when his sole design in giving it to you was, that it might effectuate your death. Hence

we are told expressly, that, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh on the heart." The sixth commandment says, "Thou shalt not kill;" not because there is any thing criminal in the mere overt action; for sometimes men are killed lawfully, yea often it is an indispensable duty to kill, "For he that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." But because malice is opposed to the general good, or to the universal law of benevolence. And malice is supposed, by the supreme Legislator, and by all civil magistrates, to be exercised in the violation of the sixth commandment. In order to convict a person, before a civil tribunal, of murder, it is necessary to be made appear, from competent evidence, that, in the overt act of killing, the prisoner at the bar was actuated by malice prepense. Hence the proper idea of that commandment is, "Thou shalt not kill, *murderously*, or *maliciously*." It is not necessary in the divine account, for a man to proceed to the overt act of killing, in order to become guilty of murder, or a violation of the sixth commandment. For the Apostle John expressly says, in his first Epistle, iii ch. 15 ver. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." This clearly demonstrates, that the exercise of a spirit, opposite to the commandment, is properly the violation of that commandment; and that the violation of the commandment, is properly a matter of the heart. But if this be true of the sixth commandment, it is most certainly true of all the other commandments in the Bible. Hence Christ says Matt. v. 28. "But whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already, in his heart." Hence also, even covetousness is said to be idolatry. But if a transgressing in one point be an infallible, visible

evidence of a wicked heart, a heart actuated by no other affection than what is opposed to the divine requirement, and if it be also true, that obedience and disobedience have, properly, their seat in the heart; both which have been proved; then it is evident, that no obedience is properly rendered to any divine law; nay, that all that, which every divine law properly requires is voluntarily refused; consequently, that he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all. This will receive further support, if we consider,

3. THAT the same temper of mind, which is opposed to the sixth commandment, is at the same time, opposed also to the seventh, and to the eighth, and to all the laws of the decalogue. For they are all of the same general nature. They are all founded on the general law of benevolence, or disinterested love to God and man; and respect the proper direction and expression of that love, in all circumstances, and with respect to all objects. We are forbidden to kill, murderously, because to kill is to act the part of malice, and is opposed to the general law of benevolence, binding us to seek the good, and not the injury of our fellow creatures. So we are forbidden to commit adultery, because, to preserve an inviolable chastity, is to act in conformity to the general law of benevolence. And to commit adultery is to infringe, injuriously and maliciously, the rights of others. Consequently that temper of mind, which leads to killing, and is therefore, opposed to the sixth commandment, is just as much opposed to the proper spirit of the seventh commandment, and to the whole law. For as was observed the whole law is founded on one general basis. The distinct precepts all support the same interest, and are sanctioned by the same authority. Were the distinct precepts founded on totally opposite

principles, and did they imply the requirement of an opposite spirit, the one from the other, for instance, were there two laws, one of them constructed on a benevolent, and the other on a malicious principle, the one forbidding murder, and the other requiring theft, the case would be different. Then, that temper of mind, which would be opposition to the one, would be conformity to the other. But as all the laws of God are founded on the same basis, viz. the perfect exercise of benevolent affection to all beings, and therefore, comprehended in one general law of love, it is evident, that opposition to, or which implies the same thing, an habitual breach of, any one, distinct law, is, really, warfare with the whole, is a thrust at the whole fabrick. It is moreover, a virtual approbation of the conduct of all, who in their overt actions, break other distinct precepts; and is, therefore, in truth, a becoming guilty of all. Further; it must be readily seen, that a known and habitual violation of any particular point of commanded duty, being a voluntary withstanding of the law, which requires it, and consequently, enmity to the law in the proper spirit of it; must be an habitual, chosen opposition to the government, an explicit trampling on the authority of that government, and an open setting at nought the being, who is vested with the administration of that government. It is impossible to violate a law, from a spirit of friendship to the government which enacted it. For a friendly affection to a government, will always lead to a uniform obedience to that government; as the only way in which its interests can be consulted. But opposition to a government, must be opposition to its laws. For in the laws are deposited the strength, energy and dignity of the government. If the government be destroyed, the laws must become a nullity; and if the laws are prostrated, the

government must terminate. Of course, he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. WE may learn the infinite evil, or ill desert of the sin of the impenitent sinner. Every impenitent sinner offends not only in one but in several, most in a multitude of points. But he who offendeth, in *one* point, is guilty of all. And he is guilty of all, as hath been proved, in that he is totally destitute of that holy affection, which is the only proper obedience to the divine law, and is actuated, solely, by a spirit, which is hostile to the whole law, to the whole government, authority, and being of the infinite Legislator. His sin is, therefore, in its nature, directed to the destruction of infinite good, all the good which the being and government of God comprehend. And if sin may be estimated, at all, by the greatness of the good it opposes, and the greatness of the mischief it contemplates, and tends to effectuate; as is taught even in the terms of the text, and which cannot be denied without denying all distinction in crimes; then the sin of the impenitent sinner is infinitely evil, or deserves a punishment commensurate with the mischief it contemplates, which, because it cannot be infinite in any other sense, must be endless in its duration.

2. It is a natural and unavoidable consequence from this subject, that the doctrine, which teaches the total depravity of the human heart, must be true. This doctrine is explicitly taught in sundry passages in the holy scriptures. And it is necessarily involved in this subject. No man, of the most liberal sentiments, will deny that mankind are exceedingly wicked. Arminians, unexceptionably unite in this acknowledgement. They will, at least, admit that degree of wickedness, of

which St. James, speaks that they are so far characteristically transgressors, as that they offend, at least, in one point. But this is to be guilty of all. It is to be actuated by no other spirit, than that, which is opposition to the whole law, the whole government, and the whole character of God; yea to his very being. It necessarily involves, as hath been shewn, that in those outward restraints, to which the sinner may be subject, he is influenced by no holy sincerity: and, consequently, yields no proper obedience to any divine law. But this is a depravity, which is certainly total; i. e. exclusive of all true goodness.

3. WE infer from what has been said, that the moral change which, in the scriptures, is denominated a being born again, and in which, the life of faith commences, must be a very great change. Till a man is regenerated, he is, characteristically, a transgressor. Otherwise there can be no proper moral distinction between saints and sinners. He is, of course, guilty of all. He is totally opposed to the whole law of God. He yields not the least portion of obedience to its requirements. He is at habitual variance with the will, authority and government of God. So that he does nothing but sin. When he becomes the subject of regenerating grace, his character and state are so essentially altered, that he henceforth offends not in one point. He allows himself in no one sin, either of omission or commission. He has a holy, predominant attachment of heart to God, his government and will; which expresses itself, in a conscientious respect to all the divine requirements. The change, therefore, must, in its nature, be very great. Hence the propriety and import of those comparisons and allusions, which the Holy Spirit has made use of, in representing the nature of this change. It is compared to the

resurrection of the body from the dead, the production of light by the Fiat of the Almighty, and the creation of the material system. Eph. i. 19. "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power, to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places." 2 Cor. iv. 6. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

4. WE may learn from what has been said on this subject, that it is totally irrational, and infinitely hazardous to calculate for acceptance with God, and eternal life, on the ground of any outward supposed goodness, while we are careless of what spirit we are actuated by, and allow ourselves to live in any known sin. It is evident that we may be the subjects of great external restraints, exhibit a tolerably fair morality, and pass, in the estimate of most of our fellow men, for good characters; and yet, in fact, be in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. We may keep the whole law, and yet, offending in one point, may be guilty of all. Allowing ourselves to live, habitually, in a single known sin, we may give explicit evidence, that our hearts are wholly removed from subjection to the divine will; that we are actuated by no other spirit than an obstinate aversion to the divine service; that we are guilty, in fact, of an habitual rejection of the claims, and salvation of the gospel; and are, consequently, children of wrath. From what has been said it is evident, that unless we are actuated by a supreme attachment of heart to God and his government, we do not in truth, let us be subject to what external restraints, and assume what ap-

pearances we may, yield any proper obedience to a single divine law. But "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." How irrational then, to rest our hopes for eternity, on a mere visible morality, or on partial observances! On any thing, indeed, short of a holy union of heart to God, and a conscientious uniform respect to all the divine requirements! And how infinitely pernicious it must be, to flatter men with assurances of acceptance with God, on a ground so fallacious. Every hope, reared on such a basis must be that of the hypocrite, which perisheth when God taketh away the soul.

5. To come to a close, be pleased, my dear hearers, to make a serious and impartial application of the truths of this subject to your own particular cases. You observe that experimental, saving religion, that religion which only, will bear the examination of the last great day, is a harmonious, consistent, and beautiful whole. It does not, indeed, insist, on absolute perfection, or exclude all sinful deficiencies. But it has its seat in the heart, has there a predominant influence, and, like a potent monarch, exercising government over every district in his dominions, extends its sacred control over the whole man, and at all times. It will not allow him to live in the commission of any species of known sin, be the temptation to it ever so strong. Nothing short of this is obedience to the gospel. Nothing short of this will meet with the approbation of the supreme Judge, in the day of final account. For he who, allowedly, offends in one point, is guilty of all. He acts a part, perfectly inconsistent with friendship to the Redeemer, and exclusive of every mite of obedience. He is, therefore, convinced of the law as a transgressor. If you say, this is making the path to

heaven a very narrow one indeed ; and are ready to cry, “ Who then can be saved ? ” we admit the pertinency of the suggestion ; but observe, that when truth speaks at all, it speaks an uncorrupted language. It is mighty, and will prevail. And to the standard of truth we must all be reduced, or perish forever. To bring it down to the feelings and humors of a depraved world, would be infamously to betray it. We would not be, therefore, “ as many which corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, would we speak in Christ.” The consideration of the narrowness of the path, should operate as a most powerful inducement to us to take heed that we do not swerve from it. Suffer me to ask, then, is this impartial all-controlling religion the matter of your experience and practice ? Do you deny all ungodliness and every worldly lust ? Is it a point of conscientious and scrupulous endeavour to die to *all* sin and live to *all* righteousness ? Or do you not rather, many of you at least, live from day to day, and from year to year, in the deliberate, allowed omission of some known duty, or commission of something which God has expressly forbidden ? Do you not allow yourselves to live in the disrespect of Christ’s poor members, or in prayerlessness, social and secret, or in the wanton neglect of the instituted worship of God, and the ordinances of the gospel, or in the breach of the sabbath, or in falsehood or in dishonesty, or intemperance, or uncleanness, or perjury, or slander, or breach of Christian covenant, or in general, known impenitence and unbelief ? I appeal to your consciences. Let truth be heard. My brethren, “ be not deceived. God is not mocked.” “ If we sow to the flesh we shall of the flesh reap corruption. But if we sow to the spirit, we shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.” A.

MEN.

*THE Nature and Importance of covenanting with
God.*

Illustrated in a SERMON by PETER STARR,
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JEREMIAH 1. 5.

*COME and let us join ourselves unto the Lord in a
perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.*

THE words, which immediately precede the text, contain a prophecy of the return of the Jews from their state of captivity in Babylon, to their own land.—V. 4. *In those days and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go and seek the Lord their God.—They shall go and ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, come and let us join ourselves unto the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.* These words are doubtless the language of the pious Jews, on their return from captivity to their own land.

COVENANTING with God had been long in use, in the Jewish church. Never was a time more proper for this, than when they were about to set up their temple worship, and attend upon the instituted rites of their religion. It was now their devout and ardent wish, to bind themselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant.

God hath still a church in the world which will be continued to the end of time. He is unchangeably the same, yesterday, to day and forever. Mankind are the same they always were. They stand in the same relation to God, as their Creator, Preserver and Redeemer.—Hence they are under special obligations to come and join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant.

In farther attending to these words, it is proposed,

I. To consider the nature of this covenant, into which we are invited to enter.

II. To show what is implied, in joining ourselves unto the Lord in this covenant.

III. To offer arguments and motives, for persuading all to join themselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant.

I. THE nature of this covenant is to be considered. A covenant is a certain compact or agreement, between two or more parties, wherein certain conditions are proposed, with which there is a mutual compliance. Thus men often covenant one with another. The infinite Jehovah hath been pleased to treat with men, in a covenant way ; in which he promiseth the bestowment of favors, on condition of certain things to be performed on their part. The two covenants, which God hath made with mankind, are distinguished, by the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. That which our first parents were under in paradise, is called the covenant of works ; the

tenor of which was, *do and live*.—It required perfect obedience, and threatened death, in case of transgression.—As the test of their obedience, he forbade their eating of a certain tree which was in the midst of the garden. *For in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*; implying that they should live in case of their not eating.—Accordingly that covenant being broken, by the first of our race, every favor from God was forfeited, while they and their sinful posterity became exposed to the threatened curse.

BUT, in consequence of a covenant, between the Father and the Son, (which is sometimes called the covenant of redemption,) it hath pleased God to enter into another covenant with man, called the covenant of grace. In consequence of Christ's freely undertaking, and actually obeying the law, and suffering its penalty, God the Father can have mercy on whom he will, consistently with the honorable support of his government, and the happiness of his moral kingdom. *Repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ* accompanied by a life of new obedience, are the conditions of the gospel offer of salvation, to guilty men.—All who repent and believe in Christ, are entitled to new covenant blessings. *He who believeth shall be saved.—Repent that your sins may be blotted out.—Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

II. It was proposed to show what is implied in joining ourselves to the Lord in this covenant.

By the Lord, in this place we may understand, God the Father, or Jesus Christ the Son, who is called *The LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*. Christ, as mediator and redeemer, is exalted to be God over all. He rules and governs, and is to reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet and fully accomplished the work of redemption.—All

mankind having rebelled against God, and thus joined with Satan, he was leading them captive at his will.—None of the human race could make an atonement for sin.—No one could redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him. Christ undertook to redeem an innumerable multitude of mankind unto God, by his own blood.—He undertook to defeat the enemy of souls, who was engaged to accomplish the destruction of the whole human race.—Christ undertook to set up a kingdom, in this world, by which the kingdom and designs of Satan should be subverted. Having made satisfaction to divine justice, by his sufferings and death, and having perfectly obeyed the law, he hath opened a new way, for our return to, and acceptance with God. In the gospel he now calls and invites men to come and join themselves to him; to renounce the cause and interest of Satan, and espouse the cause and interest of Jehovah; to forsake the camp of the enemy, and resort to the standard of the prince of peace; to enlist under his banner, and take him for the captain of their salvation.

FURTHER, Christ not only calls and invites sinners, to come and join themselves to him, but he effectually inclines and persuades some to accept the invitation. When this is brought to them by means of the gospel, *they all with one consent begin to make excuses*, and will not come, unless drawn by the Father. Hence those who truly come and join themselves to Christ, in this covenant, are made willing in the day of his power.—They experience a real change of heart:—*Are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

THE word translated join, signifies, to cleave or adhere to; so that to join ourselves to the Lord, is the same as to be spiritually united to

Christ, so as to become one with him. The scriptures represent a peculiar oneness between Christ and believers.—They are called his members.—*For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.* This union to Christ, according to the constitution of grace, is by faith in him, which is a chearful and hearty acceptance of him, in all his offices, as Prophet, Priest and King. A true justifying faith is that which works by love.—It is an exercise of heart, which includes love, supreme love to God, and a cordial approbation of his law. In faith, there is an actual choice of God to be our God.—The language of the believer's heart is, "The Lord shall be my God." In faith, Christ is chosen and preferred before all others, as the chief among ten thousands and the one altogether lovely. The subject of this faith gives himself away to Christ, to be his forever; cleaves to, and trusts in him, as his only Saviour.—He hates and forsakes sin, and renounces all dependence upon his own righteousness, having nothing of his own in which to glory, *he glories in the cross of Christ, and counts all other things but dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord; that he may be found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* Upon thus cleaving to, and trusting in Christ the believer becomes one with him.—They are united as the branch and the vine.—*I am the vine ye are the branches.*—Christ becomes the believer's federal head and he a member of Christ's mystical body. The head and members of the natural body are closely joined together: so are Christ and the believer. The relation between the head and members of the natural body is mutual. Hence, to illustrate

the relation between Christ and believers, saith the Apostle, *But speaking the truth in love; may grow into him, in all things, who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted, by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.* To be joined to the Lord, in this covenant, is to be one with Christ in sentiment, in affection, and interest.—It is to believe the doctrines and perform the duties of his religion.—*Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? If a man love me he will keep my words.* We may be sure, therefore, that he who is thus joined unto the Lord, is a person of a very different character, from what he once was, and from what all are still, whose hearts are unreconciled to God. He really loves a crucified Saviour, and the humbling terms of the gospel.—He is pleased with the wonderful œconomy of redemption, and chooses to be dependent on the riches of free and sovereign grace.—He is pleased with the beauty of holiness, and consecrates himself to the service of Christ in a life of new obedience.

ONCE more, in joining ourselves to the Lord, in this covenant, there is implied, a public profession of faith in Christ. This implies a covenant union with his visible church, and attendance on the public institutions of the gospel. By professing Christ before men, and covenanting one with another, to walk in his ordinances, we are to manifest our friendship and loyal subjection to the king of Zion.

THE Jewish nation, who were formerly chosen to be God's covenant people, were required publicly to avouch the Lord Jehovah to be their God, or, as in the text, *To join themselves unto the Lord*

in solemn covenant.—Thou hast avouched the Lord, this day, to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee, this day, to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments. Again: Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the stranger, who is in the camp, from the hewer of thy wood, unto the drawer of thy water: That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into the oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day: That he may establish thee, to day, for a People unto himself: And that he may be a God unto thee, as he hath said, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.

THE church of Christ is essentially the same now, which it was under the former dispensation.—The gospel church was grafted on that, which was anciently established, in the family of Abraham.—The qualifications, requisite to a standing in either, were essentially the same.—Christ declared expressly, *Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny, before my Father which is in heaven.* Again, *Whosoever, therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

NEGLECTING to confess Christ before men is a practical denial of him. We are required to choose immediately, whom we will serve, and in doing this, to take a decided part in the cause of the Redeemer; while we suffer no delay in ratifying our engagements, to be his, by openly pro-

nessing our faith in him and becoming united to his visible church and kingdom.

III. IT was proposed to offer motives and arguments, for persuading all to join themselves unto the Lord, in a perpetual covenant.

1. THIS is a most reasonable service. Christ is infinitely worthy of supreme love and confidence. Possessed of all divine perfections, he is the sum of blessedness ; an all sufficient portion.— In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead. He is our creator, preserver, and redeemer.— He hath distinguished us, from all the visible creation ; made us but a little lower than the angels, and rendered us capable of moral virtue and the highest happiness.—When our rebellion had rendered us obnoxious to his awful displeasure, he provided a glorious way for our deliverance from sin and punishment *by the sacrifice of himself*.—He now promiseth pardon and salvation, with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; on terms, which are dictated, by infinite wisdom and mercy.—On our compliance with these he is ready to grant us a covenant title, to all the blessings of his kingdom ; to make us joint heirs with himself to an incorruptible, undefiled and unfading inheritance.—Our souls could not be *redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, or with thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil*.—The precious blood of Christ was the only adequate ransom. Hence how highly reasonable, that we relinquish the controversy with our rightful sovereign, and accept his pardoning and saving mercy ; that we present our souls and bodies a living sacrifice unto him ; and that we always seek first his kingdom and glory.

2. ALL this is required of us without delay.— This is implied, in the divine command which is no less binding on us, than on the people of Israel,

to whom it was first given, *choose you this day whom ye will serve.* It was not intended in this to relinquish the divine claims, and give liberty for choosing any other, than the service of Jehovah.—The case is not here, as in the choice of civil rulers, where we may choose, whom we think fit to rule over us.—Jesus, the King of Glory, has an underived and unalienable right, to challenge our entire obedience, and to reign over us forever.—For him to relinquish his claims, would be to deny himself, and to give up his right to the throne of his kingdom.—He says with infinite right and authority, *My Son give me thine heart.* Refusing to do this, is incurring the guilt of that stubbornness and rebellion, which are as the sin of witchcraft.

3. THOSE, therefore, who refuse to covenant with Christ, are justly considered as in league with his enemies.—The point in question is such, as admits of no neutrality.—Where obedience is refused, rebellion is the only alternative.—If this be doubted, let the question be decided by an appeal to divine testimony.—Christ saith, *He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.* This is intended to fix the impossibility of men's remaining neuters, so as to be accounted on neither side.—*No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.—Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

4. IT is worthy of serious consideration, that such, as refuse to comply with the conditions of this covenant, and thus become interested in its blessings, must inevitably perish. As the divine law is perfect, the guilty must remain obnoxious to its penalty, and finally suffer the fearful execution of it, unless they heartily approve of the

divine scheme of saving mercy. This is the result of infinite wisdom and goodness. Hence it must be infinitely wise and good. It provides for the honorable support of the divine government, consistently with the glorious display of mercy in the salvation of guilty men.—In this view, it is worthy of all acceptation.—It is not possible that men should reject it, but from a vile disposition of heart. On the other hand, if possessed of right tempers, it is equally impossible that they should fail to view it with the highest approbation and delight. It is reasonable, therefore, that such as refuse a compliance with the conditions of this gracious covenant, should have judgment without mercy. In this case, for God to suffer them to escape with impunity, would be inconsistent with his absolute righteousness. Hence he hath clearly taught us, on what to depend; that such as *will not have Christ to reign over them, shall be brought and slain before him.* Accordingly they will be treated, as incorrigible enemies in the day of his glorious appearing. We are assured *that when he shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, he will take vengeance on those, who obey not the gospel, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

5. IT is worthy of notice, that the covenant relation between Christ and believers shall never be dissolved.—It is called in the text *a perpetual covenant which shall not be forgotten.*—Hence it is called *an everlasting covenant.* *Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your souls shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you even the sure mercies of David.* Very different from this was the first covenant made with man. Under that, usually called, the covenant of works, one act of disobedience cut off the transgressor, from

the favor of God, and subjected him to death.—But in this *gracious* covenant, provision is made, that believers, though not without sin, may be treated as if perfectly righteous. *Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to every one who believeth.*—Hence such are not rejected, though in many things they all offend. *There is not a just man who liveth and sinneth not.* Still though the righteous fall, they shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholdeth them with his hand. Christ tells us, that his sheep hear his voice and follow him; that he will give unto them eternal life; that they shall never perish, nor any be able to pluck them out of his hand. Hence he is said to be the mediator of a better covenant. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.—For finding fault with them, he saith, behold the days come (saith the Lord) when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day, when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.—For this is the covenant, that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.—For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

COVENANTS among men are frequently broken.—They are precarious and uncertain, and will, sooner or later, be dissolved; but this between Christ and believers, will never cease.—*And I will*

make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts; and they shall not depart from me.—For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord who hath mercy on thee.—

This covenant therefore is perpetual, and will never be forgotten.—THE AMEN, THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS hath secured the promised blessings to his people, by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for him to lie. Hence when he shall come in his glory, he will receive them to himself, and to the enjoyment of the kingdom, prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

IN view of the foregoing observations, the following things may be remarked.

1. THE present religious state of mankind is matter of great lamentation. It is obviously such, when our views are extended only to those who enjoy the gospel.

THERE probably are grounds to hope that some are really in covenant with Christ, who are not members of his visible church. The number of these, however, must be small. Indeed, the number of those, who have visibly joined themselves unto the Lord, is comparatively small.—But here and there one of those, who hear the glad tidings of salvation through a crucified Saviour, have seen fit to confess him before men. If all these were true disciples, it would be far better than our well grounded fears; yea better than charity itself can hope. It is obvious, that numbers have named the name of Jesus, who ought to regard those words of his, as spoken to them, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* Their conduct bears testimony which nothing can gainsay, that they have not

the spirit of Christ, and are none of his. On comparing their lives with the laws of Christ, and with their solemn engagements to *depart from iniquity*, it is no breach of charity, to fix on them the charge which was brought against the faithless Jews.—*Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongue, for their heart was not right with him; neither were they stedfast in his covenant.* Such are hypocritical mockers, having a form of godliness, but denying the power. By their means, Christ is wounded in the house of his friends.—A reproach is brought on the Christian name, while its enemies are emboldened to blaspheme. This is a lamentation and must be for a lamentation. Fearfulness will one day surprize the hypocrites. When Christ shall come to judge the world in righteousness, he will say to them, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.

BESIDE; of the multitudes, who do not confess Christ before men, how many have made a covenant with death, and agreement with hell! Numbers, abhorring the restraints of real Christianity, and recoiling from the fearful prospect of those evils, which await the impenitent, have sealed their stupid preference of darkness to light, by becoming the blind disciples of downright infidelity. Others are halting between two opinions; unwilling to decide, in favor of Christianity, and yet afraid of the awful consequences of rejecting it. Multitudes, who are not exactly in either of these predicaments, but are persuaded that the gospel is divine, and must be obeyed, as the only condition of eternal life, are still manifestly *enemies to the cross of Christ*. By their contempt of him, and his salvation, together with numerous violations of his commandments they are

fitting to be vessels of wrath, and bringing on themselves a swift destruction.

2. THOSE must be inexcusably criminal, who will not enter into covenant with Jesus Christ. Where there are contending parties and interests, among men, it may sometimes be doubtful, whose is the righteous cause. In this case, it is acting consistently, to take a decided part with neither. But it is far otherwise, in the case before us. When we consider either the character of Christ, or the blessings offered, in his gracious covenant; there can be no reasonable doubt, either in point of duty or expediency.—Christ is infinitely worthy of all that love and confidence, which are implied in covenanting with him. His demands are most reasonable: his promises are precious and unfailing, and his rewards exceedingly great. To hesitate or be indifferent in the matter, must involve the extreme of impiety, baseness, and ingratitude. It can be no other than the fruit of a heart, which is full of vice and even of madness.

INDEED, there is, in ordinary cases, no reason which will serve as an excuse, for neglecting to covenant with Christ before men, and becoming subjects of his visible kingdom. It is true, this being a duty, which becomes such, by divine institution, and always, when rightly performed, implying a previous union of heart to Christ, is not *so immediately* binding on others, as on those, who are already prepared to act consistently, in avouching Jesus to be their Prince and Saviour.—Still, others are far from being blameless, in this matter. Is it plead, in excuse, by these, that they are not Christians, at heart, and therefore, that making profession of friendship to Christ, would be setting their hand and seal to a falsehood? Let such consider the following answer.—

Is it so, that you are not the disciples of Jesus? Then you are his enemies. Therefore, your not being his disciples is your greatest crime; that for which you are condemned already, and liable to perish. But will your greatest crime, serve as an excuse for that, which would, otherwise, be an obvious duty? In other words will one sin serve as a cloak for another? But to place the matter in a still more serious as well as convincing point of view; suppose death finds you in your present situation; and when Christ, according to his threatening to those who have denied him before men, is about denying you before his Father and the holy angels:—suppose in this situation you offer your present excuse, and tell the *King of glory*, plainly, that the reason, why you did not confess him before men, was, that you were not his disciples, at heart; would he, for this saying, excuse and own, instead of denying you? Would he not rather say, and that with awful propriety, *Out of your own mouths shall ye be condemned, ye wicked servants?* But to tell you the truth; it is your first and indispensable duty, to be reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ; thus embracing the terms of his gracious covenant, and with all convenient haste, to seal your engagements to be the Lord's, by publicly avouching him to be your Prince and Saviour, and attending on all the institutions of his holy religion.

3. LET each one be exhorted and persuaded to join himself to the Lord in this covenant.—The question can be answered, immediately, whether you are visibly in covenant with Christ and his people?—The serious enquiry, therefore, is, whether the matter in question have ever been settled, between Christ and your soul? If not, your duty has already been told you—your immediate compliance is indispensibly and infinitely impor-

tant. The least delay may be attended with the most serious and dreadful consequences. You have now an opportunity to unite with Christ, and be on the Lord's side : but soon the opportunity will be past, and the present offers of mercy will cease. None can tell how soon, or suddenly, your accounts, as they stand with God, may be closed and sealed up to the judgment of the great day. It is obvious, therefore, that you have no time to lose, or to waste, in delaying, while things of vast and eternal weight are trifled with.

BUT, suppose you have hope of being already united to Christ, in the covenant of mercy, but have neglected a visible union with his church and people. If in this case, you can give proper evidence of your hope, and circumstances permit, it is highly important that you confess Christ before men, and let it be understood on whose side you are to be reckoned. The Saviour's command is, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* The light here intended, is the religion of Christ—Letting it shine, in the manner required, is exemplifying it before the world.—The argument by Christ is, *that a candle is not lighted to be put under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all who are in the house.* Hath God illuminated you, by his grace, that your light might remain in obscurity? Hath he qualified you for acting consistently, in taking his covenant into your lips, and for exemplifying the peculiar religion of Jesus, with a design, that you should implicitly deny what he hath wrought—that you should keep your light hidden—or in circumstances, where it can shine to comparatively no good, or even to a bad purpose? Those who are unfriendly to Christ, and the reputation of his religion, will not fail to

count those on their side, who are not the open and avowed disciples of Emmanuel. Especially will they do this, if the persons in question are of such characters as would do honor to the Christian name. By these means the enemies of Christ are furnished with a *seeming* proof of what they wish to have true, that the goodness of men's characters does not depend on their being Christians. Hence the weight of your example, so far as agreeable to the rules of Christianity, is placed in the opposite scale, and used as an argument against it.

BESIDE; there is another way in which your example, if otherwise agreeable to the rules of the gospel, is like to have an unfavorable influence, while you neglect to take a visible standing in the covenant and church of Christ. There probably are others, in like circumstances with you, who may consistently hope that they are Christians, but are hesitating, as to the expediency of openly professing their faith in the Redeemer. It being natural for the real disciples of Jesus, to scruple their own sincerity, the hearts of such are discouraged from coming forward, to own their Saviour before the world, through the influence of your example. Thus to do, instead of being laid in the balance, in favor of the religion and cause of Christ, is fondly placed with yours in the opposite scale. Hence, the great and evident importance of your taking the earliest opportunity for joining yourself unto the Lord in a visible covenant with him and his people.

AGAIN; suppose you are a parent, or head of a family. There is no prospect of your being faithful, in this important relation, unless you be a real, and a visible disciple of Christ. Your fidelity, however, in this relation, is of the highest moment. If neglected by you, it is not to be ex-

pected that your dear offspring, or others committed to your care, will be trained up in the way they should go. But there is no room to hope, that you will be in any measure faithful in this matter, unless faithful to God and your own soul. You will not be apt to teach others, however dear to you, the way, in which you still refuse to walk. Hence, to the neglect of all proper instruction, you will join the prevalent influence of your own example, for leading them in the way to destruction. How shocking the thought? Alas! can you still incur the guilt of such inhuman wickedness? Do you not, by this time, feel the conviction, irresistibly fastened upon your conscience, that there is no other possible way, of acting consistently, in this matter, but to join yourself, immediately, unto the Lord, by taking hold of his covenant; by witnessing a good confession of Christ before men, and thus uniting the weight of your example, with the best parental instructions, that you may, not only glorify God and the Redeemer, and be ready for his coming and kingdom; but be the happy instruments of salvation to the dear members of your own family. Even to *hesitate*, in this matter, is to betray an heart full of ingratitude, impiety and *unbelief, which departs from the living God*. Hereby you announce your unworthiness of eternal life, and your eminent danger of remediless ruin. To day, therefore, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

IN a word, let all accept the word of exhortation, and be persuaded to come and join themselves unto the LORD.—*Incline your ear and come unto him; hear and your souls shall live; and he will make with you an everlasting covenant, which shall never be forgotten.*

CALAMITY coming on the Wicked.

A SERMON, by AMMI R. ROBBINS, A. M.
Pastor of the Church in Norfolk, State of Con-
necticut.

DEUTERONOMY xxxii. 35.

For the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

NOTHING appears to be more unpopular and disagreeable to many among us, at the present day, than the scripture doctrine of *future punishments*. The very mention of the word *Hell*, or *Damnation*, is esteemed exceedingly unpolite, and the *Preacher* is either despised as unworthy of notice, or esteemed as morose and malevolent towards mankind. While on the other hand, the man, who calls himself a Christian-teacher, and in his discourses, keeps these harsh expressions and disagreeable ideas out of sight, and smoothly dwells on the great salvation, purchased for fallen sinners of mankind, and represents it as easily attainable; and probable, if not *certain*, that all will finally be saved; is, by many, carested as an ingenious, charming speaker.

NOTHING is more obvious than that mankind love to be flattered—to have smooth things prophesied to them; they choose to be entertained with subjects that will not disturb their consciences nor alarm their fears about futurity. Men love to have their teachers cry “Peace and safety,” although “Sudden destruction is coming.” But after all, it is certain, that “Wide is the gate and broad the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be, which go in thereat.” And notwithstanding all the self-flattery, and vain delusions of many bold and careless sinners, they will find, that they cannot escape the just judgment of God—that the awful threatenings recorded in his word are true, and that, what he hath spoken he will surely perform.

THE design of the following discourse, from these words, is, humbly to attempt to strike the minds of *some*, with conviction of their sin and danger, and excite in them a solicitude to escape, while there is yet opportunity, those dreadful calamities, which we are assured, from God’s declarations, are certainly coming on the enemies of God—the impenitent and ungodly.

IN this most remarkable song of *Moses*, is exhibited the character of the God of Israel, as perfect and glorious. ver. 4. “He is the Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment, a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He.” So also is exhibited the character of his people Israel, in contradistinction to this: ver. 5, 6. “They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children; they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?” Moses then proceeds to remind them of the great goodness of Jehovah towards them, his tender care for them and distinguishing mercies confer-

red on them. ver. 10th “ He found him (Israel) in a desert land &c.” to ver. 15th which you are desired to read. He then from ver. 15, describes their horrid ingratitude, and daring impiety.— And then, in God’s name, declares, “ To me belongeth vengeance and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time,” and then ushers in the awful words of the text. “ For the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.”

MAY I now be indulged with your serious and candid attention to a plain and practical discourse from these words, in the method following, viz.

I. LET us consider the character of those, on whom, great *calamity* is coming.

II. In what this *calamity* consists. And,

III. THAT these things *make haste*.

I. WE are to attend to the character of those, on whom great calamity is coming.

1. THE open infidel. Those who affect to despise all revealed religion. There are many, and it is to be feared the number is increasing, who openly reject christianity—who deny that there is any written revelation from God to mankind. It does, indeed, appear somewhat strange and wonderful, that men, in this enlightened age and country, should reject the only sure guide they have to happiness—That they should extinguish the torch; in the midst of a wilderness, and be left in the darkness of mere conjecture, to search now here, and now there, for the road. It appears truly unaccountable, that persons of sense and information, should be willing to be ignorant of what is the *Cause*, the *Order* and the *End* of this world—who is its *Author* and what is to be the conclusion of it—To be left in the field of wild conjecture about a future state—the

way in which a sinner may become reconciled to his Maker, and come to the enjoyment of God. Yet thus it is with many.— They renounce and despise the only sure guide, and are left in darkness, notwithstanding all their boasted reason and philosophy. All of this description, of whatever rank or class in life, are such on whom great calamity is coming. For, “There is none other name under heaven given among men, by which we can be saved, but the name of Christ.”

2. THE more secret unbeliever; or such, who, from motives of honor or profit, would not be esteemed enemies to the Christian religion; yet in their hearts and practice, despise and disregard it; are those, on whom, great calamity is coming. It is hardly become popular, in this part of the country, as yet, for men openly to renounce Christianity. There are those, who in their hearts despise and reject it; who yet would not be thought to be men of such a character; lest it should hurt their credit and embarrass their prospects of promotion and applause among men. We may, therefore, hear them speak freely of the *utility* and *advantage* of the christian religion, and the importance of integrity and virtuous conduct among mankind: But, as they set light by the duties of *piety*, and appear, habitually, to neglect God and the Saviour; they must be considered among those, on whom great calamity is coming. For they cannot escape, while they thus neglect their God, their Saviour, and the great salvation by him.

3. SUCH as live in a habitual neglect of divine institutions, and the means of grace—who disregard the holy Sabbath and the worship of God. The Psalmist seems to fix the character of the truly pious, when he expresses himself thus “It is good for me to draw near unto God—How ami-

able are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ; my soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." And again, " A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." " We will go into his tabernacles, we will worship at his footstool."

God hath been pleased to appoint public worship, and requires that his people should assemble together for the express purpose. In this way, he will be acknowledged and honored by his people. He hath appointed this as an open and external, visible manifestation, which dependent creatures ought to exhibit, of their love, reverence and supreme regard to God, and their total and absolute dependence on him. Besides, he hath been pleased to make use of this, as a mean for the edification, comfort, and establishment of those who fear and love him ; and a mean of awakening and conviction to those, who are unreconciled to God—who are yet in their sins. Abundant proof of the truth of these assertions might be adduced from the express commands, and the many examples, recorded in the holy scriptures: But they are so plain and obvious, that it is unnecessary. Now for persons habitually, or for the most part, to neglect and disregard these things, is a glaring proof of their impiety ; that they are not in the way of the knowledge of God and the Redeemer, and of the dispensations of his mercy and grace ; but evidently in the way of death and ruin—that evil is coming upon them, and the day of their calamity is at hand.

4. THE *profane* and *immoral* of every description, are those, on whom calamity is coming.

MANY indulge in known sin and open iniquity. Such as, intemperance and dissipation, profanation of the holy name of God and his word. Many deal in curses and imprecations, making

light of imprecating damnation on themselves, and on their fellow-men; with little or no provocation, and on the slightest occasions. Many deal in fraud and injustice, taking the advantage of others to cheat wrong and oppress them. Many riot in their lusts, in uncleanness and debauchery—in chambering and wantonness, in idleness and dissipation; as if born for epicurean sensuality, carnal ease and self-gratification. Many indulge in malice and envy, slander and detraction: Many in covetousness, making this world their God—being wrapt up in selfishness, and a most fordid love of gain and worldly pelf. Such like impieties and horrid iniquities are frequently to be seen or heard: and that, where the light of God's word shines—where are the clear manifestations of his will—where the precepts and threatenings of the law and the gospel come.

MEN of these descriptions, however they may put far off the evil day—"eat and drink with the drunken" and solace themselves in their pleasures; may remember, that their joys are but for a moment—their triumphs are short, and the day of their calamity is at hand.

5. THE hypocrite, and false pretender to religion; who makes an appearance and profession of piety, and virtue, but builds his hope on a sandy foundation.

It is exceedingly agreeable to the proud and selfish heart, to wish and hope for *happiness* without *holiness*. Some flatter themselves, that they shall be happy on the unscriptural and unavailing doctrine, that the great Redeemer came to save all men; and that therefore their salvation is secure. Others place religion in external morality, and those things which they can perform, consistent with the reigning pride of their unsubdued hearts. Others seem to think that religion con-

sists in the external observance of the duties of the second table of the moral law; that is, to treat mankind well: But wholly neglect piety towards God. Others build their hopes of heaven on some supposed religious experience of terrors and comforts, without real spiritual conviction of sin, true repentance and submission to God, or any love to, or delight in, the true character of the Redeemer, or in divine truth. And hence it comes to pass, that all such pretended Christians are barren and fruitless; or rather fruitful in pride, vain-glory and all the evils of hypocrisy and delusion. Persons of this description, although they may entertain high hopes and expectations of the divine favor, and of heaven; are indeed such, on whom, great calamity is coming.

6. THE impenitent rejector of CHRIST and the grace of the gospel. Those whose hearts oppose the soul-humbling and Christ-exalting doctrines of salvation—who were never subdued to God; but hate his law, dislike his administrations, and will not bow to his sovereignty, nor love and approve of the character and work of Christ; but with their whole hearts reject it, are exposed to great calamity.

IN fine, all the enemies of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will not have him to reign over them; but are influenced by pride and selfishness, and whose conduct speaks this language concerning GOD and the REDEEMER, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," ought to look out for a day of great calamity.

THUS some of the outlines of the character of those, on whom calamity is coming, have been briefly attempted. This brings us,

II. To show, in what this calamity consists. And here you are desired seriously to attend, and diligently to compare with the word of God; and

carefully to see whether the things mentioned, be ill-founded—the effects of long tradition, and the gloomy imagination of a melancholy distempered brain: Or whether, on the other hand, they be not agreeable to the oracles of eternal truth, and according to the revealed and declared will of the unchangeable GOD.

1. IN the first place then, DEATH, with all its attending terrors and concomitant evils, is coming. Persons of the above description and character must die. However fond they may be of this world, however strongly attached to its honors, profits or pleasures, however unwilling to part with these, and however loth they may be to bid them a final adieu: yet they must, and that soon, be summoned by death. The awful messenger is at hand and when he makes his approach, they must go. However unprepared, however reluctant, they must submit to the awful arrest. A few dying gasps and deathful groans conclude the scene of life, and they are *dead*. Not the tears, not the earnest prayers of near and agonizing *friends*; nor the greatest efforts and exertions of *physicians* can prevent; nor even procrastinate a minute—All are unavailing, they must give up the ghost and depart. Their dead *remains* be dressed for the grave, and that they may be forever hid from this world, must be urned in its solitary bosom. And the *soul*—the immortal part, appear in the invisible, the unknown world. Which leads us to observe,

2. THAT another thing, in which their calamity consists, is a state of absolute, total despair of all *good* and of all *hope*. In a kind of awful prison, they must be reserved to the judgment of the great day. Some suppose, that the soul sleeps with the body, or is in an unconscious, dormant state, from the death of the body, until the gene-

eral resurrection. But this appears to have no foundation in the scriptures. On the other hand, we have sufficient evidence from them, that the souls of the *wicked*, as well the *righteous*, are perfectly awake and fully conscious of their state and condition. The *rich man*, mentioned by our Saviour (Luke xvi.) was in a state of torment, as really as *Lazarus* was in a state of happiness and joy.

YES, the dying impenitent will plunge into a state of hopeless despair, of conscious guilt and unutterable anguish; with the awful judgment in view, and the overwhelming prospects of an eternity of sorrow and wo, that cannot be described. This, my hearers, is among the calamities which are coming,

3. THE solemn *judgment*, with all the insupportable terrors of that dreadful day.

COULD persons of the foregoing description and character escape the judgment and the consequences of it, they might go on in the way they do, with, apparently, less infatuation and folly. They might solace themselves with those of a similar character mentioned by the Apostle *Peter* who said, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were." But they must be brought to judgment—must all appear at the awful bar of Christ the supreme Judge.

THE doctrine of a general judgment, wherein will be exhibited the whole character and conduct of moral beings, appears to be exceedingly clear and express, from the holy scriptures. *They* declare, that "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." And this is called, "A day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Character and conduct will

be brought up into the open light of that *revealing* day. There, must impenitent finners, of every class, be brought, and all their conduct be laid open to the view of a whole assembled universe. Their sins and impieties all be made manifest, with all their attending aggravations, and none to plead for them. Light and conviction will flash upon their consciences; their mouths be shut—not a word to say: But they must stand guilty and condemned before the awful throne of God.

4. THEY will be filled with overwhelming shame and contempt: when all the sins of their past life are brought up to view—all their folly and wickedness in rejecting Christ and christianity—the slight and contempt they poured upon the Redeemer, whom they shall then behold, as their impartial judge. All their immoralities secret and open—all their hypocrisy and delusions, and all the fruits of their continued impenitence and multiplied transgressions will be exposed. And all this, not only in the view of innumerable holy beings, both saints and angels,—in the view of wicked men and Devils; but in the clear view of their own consciences, and of the judge himself. This will indeed be, what is expressed by the *Prophet Daniel* “ Arising to shame and everlasting contempt.”

5. THE final sentence will be pronounced on them, of which our Saviour hath expressly informed us (Mat. xxv. 41.) “ Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his Angels.” This sentence, of all others, will be infinitely the most terrible. Criminals, at earthly tribunals, sometimes with trembling, hear a doom to a gloomy prison, for life—to a distant and doleful exile—to the gibbet or fatal ax; which is soon to put an end to their existence

and connections with this world. But all this, is lighter, when compared with that sentence, than a wandering mote that floats in air, compared with the whole globe, or all the material system. In this sentence, every word is emphatical. The word "*depart*" when it comes from Christ, the adorable judge, whose eyes are a flame of fire; how insupportable! The attending circumstances "*accursed*"—The place where—"*into fire!*" The duration "*everlasting!*" The company and associates—"*the devil and his angels!*"

6. INSUPPORTABLE anguish and pain under the intolerable weight of the wrath of an omnipotent God, will be a heavy ingredient, in the calamity which is coming on the wicked. A little apprehension of the anger and wrath of God, mixed with conscious guilt, even in this world, will arrest the boldest sinner in his career, cause him to tremble with dismay, and as it were, absorb all his spirits and fortitude. What then will it be, to sink under the vindictive wrath of almighty God, in a state of hopeless despair and increasing pain!

7. AND what completes their unspeakable calamity is, that it will be absolutely *without end*.

MUCH has been said, and considerable written, to attempt to explain away the plain scripture doctrine of the endless punishment of the finally impenitent; or to prove, that the Bible contains no such doctrine; but that the punishments there threatened, are infinitely short of it. And indeed, they are *infinitely* short of it, if they be not endless. For ages of ages, or any given period, can bear no proportion to eternal or endless duration: Thus, it may be observed, many flatter themselves, and try to persuade others into the fatal delusion, that future punishment will not be endless; but that

all will be happy in the final issue of things. And that there is no such thing, especially for any of the *human-kind*, as punishment that is never to have an end. But they will find, after all, that it is idle and vain—That, notwithstanding all the “devices in the heart of man, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand”—and that He will surely accomplish the word that is gone out of his mouth. God’s word declares, in the most express and unequivocal terms, that those who are found at the left hand of Christ in the judgment; that is, all the wicked and impenitent from this world, “shall go away into everlasting punishment” that they “shall be punished with *everlasting* destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power;” and that “their worm shall not die nor their fire be quenched,” but that “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.”

THUS some of the principal things in which that calamity consists, which is coming on the wicked, have been suggested; and it is presumed, according to the plain scriptural account of them. This prepares the way for the last thing proposed.

III. THAT the things which shall come upon them, *make haste*.

By the expression in the text, may be understood, the *certainty* of them—that they are unavoidable. And also, that they are not *far distant*; but, some of them at least, *near at hand*. The expression suggests, that they are certain and inevitable—that God hath spoken and declared it.

GOD is peculiarly angry with such sinners. He is highly provoked with their daring crimes—their horrid impieties. They hereby very rapidly fill up the measure of their iniquities, and as it were, exhaust the patience of a long-suffering God. They “treasure up wrath against the

day of wrath." And though God endure, with much long-suffering; yet "to him belongeth vengeance and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."

MANY are disposed to flatter themselves, saying, "We shall have peace though we walk in the imagination of our heart." They are inclined to think, "God is altogether such an one as themselves;" And say, with the slothful servant, "My Lord delayeth his coming." But in very deed, "Behold the Lord cometh, even God with a recompence." And though it may seem long; yet their calamity lingereth not, "and their damnation slumbereth not." Nothing can keep it off. It is not in the power of men or angels to arrest the progress—to retard and hinder the speedy approach of their fearful calamities, a moment. The things that shall come upon them hasten, as fast as the seasons can roll on—as swiftly as their days fly. A few turns more—a few more rising and setting suns, bring them to a full period of all the enjoyments, diversions, or busy amusements of this life—this vain and empty world; and then their fearful calamities begin. The things that shall come upon them *hasten*, as they will come unlooked for—unexpected. People of this description do not look for them—do not believe they are coming—do not expect them. "The Lord of that servant came in an hour when he looked not for him, in a time when he was not aware." Our Saviour pronounces "blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find watching." But these do not watch nor look for his coming; but are like the people before the flood. "They were eating and drinking, marry-

ing and giving in marriage ; and knew not until the flood came and took them all away."

In fine ; the things that shall come upon them make haste, as they will come *suddenly*. "He that being often reprov'd and hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." The moment is just at hand, when the awful scene of their unutterable woes will commence, and never end.

IMPROVEMENT.

AND of what use may this melancholy discourse be to us ? What improvement are we to make of it ? A number of serious things have been said. A number of solemn thoughts suggested. But whom do they concern ? Who are interested in the truths here delivered ? Let us then, my hearers, make this use of what has now been said, viz.

1. LET us seriously and faithfully examine and enquire : whether we are not of the character, or come not within the description of those, on whom such fearful calamities are coming ? Persons may sit and hear wicked characters described, destructive principles and conduct pointed out, and the dreadful evils that are approaching on such ; and view them in a very dangerous situation : But never once think whether, or not, it may be all applied to themselves. May we not with propriety enquire, as the disciples did, in another case, " Lord is it I ?" Am not I the person, who comes within the description drawn in this discourse ? Am not I one of those who, openly or secretly, despise and reject all revealed religion ?—Who make light of divine revelation—disbelieving and disregarding the doctrines and precepts therein contained ? Am not I the vile neglecter of the holy *Sabbath*, and institutions of

Christ—profaning and despising those means, which God hath appointed for his people to acknowledge him—those very means which God is pleased to bless for the salvation of such sinners as I? Am not I the impious wretch, who lives in open and scandalous immoralities—profaning the name of God—dealing in impious imprecations and anathemas in the dialect of Hell? Am not I the intemperate, unclean voluptuary, a slave to my lusts? Doth not my conscience witness, that I have been devoted to my pleasures, and placed my happiness in sensual gratifications; while God and my soul have been totally neglected? Have not I indulged myself in malice and envy, in slander and detraction? Have I not lived in known dishonesty and fraud, oppressing and artfully taking advantage of my neighbour, to make gain to myself at his expense, and by secretly robbing him of his property? Have not I purposely shut my eyes and deafened my ears to the express command of Christ, “as ye would that men should do to you; do ye even so to them.” Am not I that fordid soul who have made this world my God, and the gains and profits of it my grand and chief pursuit? Are none of these things descriptive of my character and conduct? Furthermore enquire: Am not I the vain, hypocritical pretender to a religion, which my heart never loved? Do I not inwardly hate the doctrines and precepts of Christ Jesus? dislike the religious sentiments which he taught, and feel uneasy when they are clearly preached? And doth not my whole soul oppose the christian system, considered in itself, and aside from all political and worldly considerations? Doth not my conscience witness that I love and seek my own honor and profit, or the applause of men, rather than the honor of God? And notwithstanding my hopes and pretensions;

is not my life as unproductive of christian fruit—as destitute of holy practice, as those who make no pretensions to religion? Do I not live, for the most part, a prayerless life, and seldom attempt to call on God? Am I not destitute of real gospel benevolence—making *myself* the great and ultimate object? Do I not, after all, reject Christ, and live in a state of impenitence—from my heart opposing the real character of the Redeemer—being disaffected to the holy law of God—hating his sovereignty, and disliking his administration? Thus let us, closely and impartially, examine our temper and conduct, and see if none of the forementioned descriptions belong to us: and whether we have not reason, at least to fear, lest those awful calamities, already described, should fall on many of us. Nor let any one be indifferent and careless, in these inquiries. For it is the same as to ask yourself, what will be your portion in eternity; whether unspeakable joys, or unutterable sorrows.

2 LET us seriously reflect on those awful calamities which are coming, and which must be the portion of all the enemies of God and Jesus Christ—the impenitent and ungodly who live and die in that character.

SAY not, it is too gloomy a subject to think upon—too dreadful to contemplate. Better is it, a thousand times better, to look and think—to take the warning in season to flee from, than to go on a few days in careless stupidity and self-flattery; and then plunge into them, when there will be no remedy. You may be asked, as John the Baptist did those who came to hear him, “Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” If the feelings of any, are too delicate and sensible to hear and contemplate the awful truths of God’s word, which so plainly denounce

the dreadful calamities coming on the wicked; what will it be to feel them in the execution! Whose "hands will be strong, and whose heart endure?" Wherefore, seriously consider and reflect on them. Think of the evil, the gloomy day, when you are to die—when you must bid adieu, an everlasting adieu to this world, and open into an unseen, an untried state of existence. Many put this far away. And indeed if they did not, they could not go on in their presumptuous and wild career. But you may observe, people are always serious when they die. This world, with all its pleasures and flattering prospects, then appear perfectly insipid and vain. Reflect on this serious hour now, and do not laugh it away. Trifle not with these gloomy these solemn scenes which are so near at hand, and which are so interesting to *you*—your ghastly countenance—your fluttering pulse—your fixed eye—your struggling breath—dying groan and deathful gasp. Think on your winding sheet, your muffler and shroud—your coffin and solitary grave. Reflect on what will be the state of your soul, immediately after death. Look forward to the judgment, and realize the certain the insupportable guilt, shame, remorse and confusion which will then overwhelm every impenitent sinner. Reflect on the awful sentence, then to be pronounced, and the unspeakable calamities which are to follow: And not a ray of hope to mitigate the despair and anguish, to the endless ages of ETERNITY. Thus reflect seriously and deliberately on these things.

3. If these calamities, which are coming on the impenitent and ungodly, do *make haste*—If they swiftly approach; this consideration should remove the delusion, in the minds of many, that, if they come at all, they are at a great distance; and thus are viewed as comparatively light and

uncertain. People are very apt, especially young people, to view life as being much longer than it is. Allow me to ask—finner—How long do you expect to live in this world? How many years before you will be dead? Suppose thirty or forty, or possibly fifty years. Now only step to a man of sixty, and ask him, how long that appears to have been to him. Will he not, at once tell you, it is very short?—will not all those in advanced life, with one accord, and with a serious countenance, declare, “It is but a few days—a dream—a vapor.” Besides; although you may hope for and expect a series of years to come; may you not be disappointed? It is, at least very possible, that those words of the prophet to *Hananiah*, may be verified with respect to you. “This year thou shalt die.” Nay “this night thy soul may be required of thee.” “Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” It is indeed a gross delusion—a most groundless, and oftentimes, fatal mistake, when people flatter themselves and imagine, that the scenes of death and the unseen world are at a great distance. For, in reality, they are near—they make haste—they are even at the door.—Some say in their heart, “Let me have my pleasures unmolested—let me pursue my earthly objects undisturbed—my dear delights, a few years longer; and I will risk the consequences.” But O, the madness—the infatuation—the criminal, the more than brutal stupidity of such souls! Can this be the language, or these the feelings of a rational intelligent—of one who believes a future state—the immortality of the soul, and his accountability to God? Surely they cannot. But if he do not believe them; he is not the man that is addressed in this discourse. Nor will any thing God hath revealed be regarded by him. He

must be left—he must take his own way. But he may be told, with little variation, as *Micaiah* the prophet told *Abab* : “ If he at all, find peace in the world to come, then the Lord hath not spoken by me.”

4. THE discourse will now be closed with a use of *Exhortation*.

WHEREFORE, let all impenitent, christless sinners, of whatever character or class, whether they come within the foregoing descriptions or any other description, be warned and exhorted to escape, if it be possible, those calamities which are coming on such, and speedily to flee from the wrath to come.

IT is acknowledged there are many gloomy and awful things here declared ; both as to the character, and the consequent evils coming on such. Are there not many of such characters to be found at this day ? Will there not appear to be multitudes of these descriptions in the day of general Judgment ? Are not these gloomy and awful things declared in God’s word, which testifies plainly what will be the portion of such sinners ? Have you not reason to fear you are of this character ? Continue in this condition, then, but a little longer ; and all these awful, these unspeakably dreadful evils will fall on you. Receive the exhortation, then ; and if there be any possibility of escape, flee from this wrath that is coming, immediately, and without any delay.

HERE you are desired to consider a few things.

I. You are now in your sins, in a state of opposition to, and enmity against GOD. This is taken for granted : For the exhortation is only to such. You are then, imminently exposed to his wrath. God is angry with you every day. You have rebelled against his authority—trampled

upon his laws, and, in a most aggravated manner, abused his grace. You are totally unable to make atonement for your sins. And besides, you have no heart, no disposition to repent and submit to God. "*Ye will not come unto me.*"

2. YOUR danger of falling into the hands of an angry, unreconciled God, is exceedingly great. God is under no obligation to keep you alive another day—another hour. But you cannot live a moment without him. If he withdraw his upholding hand, you instantly fall in death, and plunge into despair. You have no right to promise yourself to-morrow, or continuance another day in a world of hope. It is owing to the mere good pleasure of that God whom you have highly incensed, that you are upheld any longer. How extremely dangerous then is your situation?

3. CONSIDER further ; There is a *door of hope* opened for such sinners as you. God is, in Christ, reconciling sinners to himself. Jesus has bled and died for some of the chief. Pardon and peace are proclaimed to the penitent, who will return through him. The grace of God in the gospel, is boundless. Multitudes in glory, some now on earth, have experienced this grace, by returning to God through Jesus Christ. You are called. You are seriously and earnestly invited to return. "Whosoever will, let him come." Now you have a gracious offer—a fair opportunity. You are required to make no atonement, to bring no recommendatory qualifications of your own : Only to forsake your sins—your worst enemies—your former idols : Only to submit to God, and come penitently to the banner of the *Prince of Peace*,—give up yourself to him—choose the Lord for your portion ; and pardon, grace and glory are yours.

4. ONCE more, consider the comforts and pleasures which will result from your repentance and reconciliation, both in this world, the little time you have to live in this veil of tears, and eternally, when you die. It is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. How sweet are the pleasures which flow from submission to, and reconciliation with, the blessed God?—To be suited and pleased with the divine character and government—to have the spirit and temper of Christ? How pleasant to live in the exercise of love—holy divine love?—love to God—complacency with all God's people, and benevolent affection to all men? How comfortable, to have a good *hope* of eternal life—to be free from guilt and condemnation—to exercise repentance and draw near to God in prayer, with the spirit of adoption? How pleasant and safe, to enter into the chambers of the divine attributes, in days of indignation manifested on a wicked world; that is, to trust in God, confide in his wisdom, power and grace. Who will notwithstanding all the evils which take place—all the gloomy aspects which appear; order, dispose and conduct all things in the best manner—will magnify his name, exalt the King of Zion, and cause his church and kingdom to rise and triumph gloriously, and make all his enemies ashamed.

And then also, when you are dismissed from this world, and your warfare is accomplished, you will be admitted to a state of perfect holiness and peace—be everlastingly freed from all sin and sorrow. No more tears nor crying, nor any more pain; but be perfectly happy in the company, society and employments of heaven. And all this, to the never-ending ages of eternity.

THESE, and such as these, are the pleasures, which will flow from, and be consequent on your

obeying this exhortation, and being reconciled to God.

I ONLY add ; that if you slight and reject this grace—this glorious gospel offer ; the aggravated ingratitude, folly and impiety that attend it, are great beyond description, they are without a name. And in a little time, you must fall under the weight of the displeasure of God, and must be treated, not only as a transgressor of his laws—a rebel against his authority and government ; but as a wilful despiser of his infinite *grace* and *mercy*. Then must you lament too late, alas ! forever too late, in doleful accents—How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof !

ON the Judgment of the Great Day.

A SERMON by EPHRAIM JUDSON, A. M.
Pastor of the Church in Sheffield, *State of*
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JUDE, verse 6.

UNTO the judgment of the great day.

THIS text calls the attention, to the day, on which, the Judge of the world hath appointed a tribunal for the trial of mankind. In treating upon it, I shall offer some considerations to show, that God will judge mankind—that when he judges them, he will gather them together—and that the day, on which he will judge them, will be a great day.

I. SOME considerations are to be offered to show, that God will judge mankind. And,

1. PEOPLE, who have had the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, have universally, except a very few, believed, that they contain the doctrine, that God will judge the world. It was a prevalent belief among the Israelites, who had the writings of Moses and the prophets. It has been

the general opinion of all classes of people in the christian world, ever since the gospel was published. The sober, honest class of people have believed it. The wicked, though they perceive that it is pointed against themselves, feel as if it were a scriptural truth. Even infidels allow, that it is taught in the Bible. The abandoned, in a dying moment, tremble at the prospect of appearing before their judge. That class of men, of whom there has ever been a goodly number in the christian world, who have been more wise, learned and civilized—more free from enthusiasm and superstition, than infidels and the most learned pagans, have entertained an unshaken belief, that they must appear at the tribunal of God. Wherever the Bible has been received among the nations, people have learnt that God is a judge, and that they are accountable to him.

THIS general belief, that God will judge the world, is contrary to every natural bias of fallen creatures. The human heart spurns at the idea. It abhors the heaven, which the Judge will give the righteous. With pain it reflects on the punishment, that he will inflict on the wicked. It is deeply wounded, when it considers itself in the hands of an almighty sovereign, who will come arrayed in all the majesty of a judge to try mankind, and doom impenitent sinners to everlasting woe.

SENTIMENTS, thus abhorrent to the feelings of the wicked heart, are seldom, perhaps never, invented and propagated by mankind. When depraved minds invent false principles, and explain scripture in a wrong sense, with a view to support their principles, they invent such, and give such explanations, as are agreeable to the evil heart.

HENCE, it is highly probable, that the doctrine of a day of judgment is not an invention of men. They would not have invented a sentiment so disagreeable to the vile heart. However, if a few enthusiasts or designing men, had invented it, and endeavoured to impose it on the world, the feelings of mankind would have prevented its gaining general credit. It seems incredible, that human invention should give rise, support and prevalency, in all ages, among all people who have the Bible, to a sentiment, so utterly averse to the depraved heart; provided it is not contained in scripture.

2. WE are accountable to ourselves and to others.

WE erect a kind of tribunal in our own breasts, before which we summon our actions; and justify and condemn ourselves, according as our actions appear to us right or wrong. Self-justification and self-condemnation give us mental pleasure and pain. In this sense we act as judges of ourselves—we try, and reward ourselves with pleasure, and punish ourselves with pain. Whether our principles be just or most vile, we do this.

WE likewise feel accountable to others. Their eyes are upon us; they inspect our conduct; and judge of the merit and demerit of our actions. And, if our actions appear to be good, we have their approbation and esteem: but if our actions appear base, they despise us. Their esteem gives us a degree of pleasure. Their abhorrence gives us a degree of pain. In this sense we stand at the bar of our fellow men who try, reward and punish us. Every man stands before the public, and is treated, in a measure, according to his character. Besides, tribunals are appointed in all human governments, to which the subjects are accountable, and before which they are tried, acquitted or condemned.

AND shall we object against being accountable to God ; and of being judged by him? Are we not his creatures? Are we not dependent on him? Has he not a right to inspect the work of his own hands, and call his rational beings to an account? Can we object to this, since we do the same ourselves? If it be proper for us, it is proper for God to inspect characters, try and judge them. If so, we may expect that he will; for he will conduct with propriety.

3. God displays his character as judge, in this world, which is an argument, that he will act as a judge, in the world to come. He judged all the children of men in the days of Noah. He is represented as casting his eye upon the earth to examine the moral state of the sons of men. *God looked upon the earth and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.*† But concerning Noah God said: *For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.*‡ Having examined their conduct, he passed sentence in the following words: *I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth.*§ *But with thee, that is with Noah, will I establish my covenant and thou shalt come into the ark.*|| In a proper time, he executed the sentence. He commanded, and the rain fell from above, the seas forsook their beds, and took their station on the land, carrying ruin and death in every place. In the ark, God carried Noah in safety through the horrid tempest, on the top of the foaming waters.

God acted as a judge towards the cities of Sodom. He is represented as coming down from heaven to examine the Sodomites. *I will go down now and see, whether they have done altogether*

† Gen. vi. 12.

§ Gen. vi. 7.

‡ Gen. vii. 1.

|| Gen. vi. 13.

according to the cry of it which is come unto me if not, I will know. † Having examined their characters, and found them guilty, the sentence of destruction followed, which was executed; at the rising of the morning sun, while all felt secure, a tremendous storm of fire and brimstone fell from the Lord out of heaven, which consumed the people, and burnt up their cities.

God acted as a judge towards Egypt, towards the Israelites in the wilderness, and the inhabitants of Canaan. He passed a sentence of destruction against Pharaoh and his armies, against the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness, against the idolatrous nations of Canaan; because they were finners. And he executed the sentence. He reached forth his arm, and smote all those wicked people with ruin and death. Among those vile rebels, were some, who feared God; as Moses, Caleb, Joshua, Rahab and others. His sentence, concerning those good people, was, that he would save them. And he put his decree in execution, by making them the subjects of his favor.

He acted as a judge towards the Jews. Because they killed wise men and prophets, and put his son to death, he fated them to more dreadful evils, than ever befel any nation. But because Christ's disciples were not partakers in the vile deeds of their countrymen, a token was given, by which they might know, when the ruin of Jerusalem would be near, that they might escape the approaching calamity. The sentence, that God passed, was executed. He raised up the Roman enemy, and sent them against the Jews, who destroyed their cities, slew multitudes of people, carried the rest into captivity. The christians

† Gen. xviii. 21.

saw the devouring enemy approaching with the ensign of an eagle, viewed it as the token, which Christ had given ; accordingly fled from Jerusalem to Pella, and escaped the calamities of the city.

THIS conduct of the most high is similar to that, which he will display in the day of Judgment. He will then act, as a judge. He will examine characters. He will pass sentence. And he will execute it. Which will be doing, just as he does in this world. We cannot, therefore, object to his judging us in a future state, without virtually objecting to what he does in the present state.

SOME say, it is inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God to treat his creatures, as is represented, that he will, in judging them in a future state. Therefore, they believe, that he never will. But they may as well say, that it is inconsistent with his justice and goodness to treat his creatures, as he does in this world. They may with the same reason say, that a just and good Being would not deluge a world, and save Noah ; commit the Sodomites to the fire, and rescue Lot ; fate Jerusalem to the sword, faction, famine, and fire, and deliver the disciples of Christ ; and on the same principle infer, that those, and a multitude of other well authenticated events of the same complexion, never did take place. But it is evident from scripture, that they did. Hence, we cannot object to a day of judgment on account of the manner in which God will treat us, at that time.

BUT his judging us in this world does something more, than obviate the above objection. It proves that God will judge us in the world to come.

ACTING as a judge shows, that the character of a judge belongs to him. To complete the character, and make it appear just, he must finally

treat every one, as he deserves. This he doth not do in this life. So far as he judges, he judges righteously. But he doth not finish the work. He gives to his people but a small part of the reward of grace. He punishes sinners here infinitely less, than they deserve. An exact distribution of rewards and punishments is not observed, in the administration of his government, among men here below. Sinners are not treated alike. Some, of most vile characters, are punished less, than some, who are less vile. A tyrant lives in ease and pleasure; millions suffer extreme distress from his cruel sword, and wide ravages. An hard master enjoys health, and lives luxuriously on the effects of the labor of wretched slaves; the servant, a better man than his master, is in want of all things, and finally dies under the whip. Some good men have an harder lot, than some wicked men. A persecuting monster of cruelty, who feasts a malicious eye on the tortures of the persecuted, enjoys himself in a palace: the humble benevolent christian perishes in a filthy dungeon, or on the rack, or at the stake. A Dives was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day :† A Lazarus, covered with sores, lay at his gate, on the damp earth, cold and hungry, unpitied, unless by dogs. No doctrine is more apparently true, than that, which announces, that there is not an equal distribution of rewards and punishments in this life. Our Lord gave his testimony to the truth of it, in that part of his parable concerning Dives and Lazarus, which represents Abraham, as saying to the rich man in Hell, *thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus likewise evil things.** Hence it may be inferred, that he will act, as man's judge

† Luke xvi. 19.

* Luke xvi. 25.

in a future state, and give every one a due reward, that he may be, and appear, a righteous judge.

FROM the judicial acts of God, the holy spirit argues the certainty of a day of judgment. Let us recite two passages, which contain this mode of arguing. One is in an epistle of Peter's. It is expressed thus: *For if God spared not the angels, that sinned but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment. And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person—and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly. And delivered just Lot—The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.** The other passage is in Jude. And is as follows. *I will therefore put you in remembrance though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.†* The obvious sense of these passages is this. Since God did doom the sinning angels to a state of despair, and holds them in his power with a determination to judge them in the great day; and poured out his judgments on the old world, Sodom, and the unbelieving Israelites; and saved Noah and Lot from the evils, that fell on those

* 2 Peter ii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 9. † Jude, verses 5, 6, 7.

sinners; he will judge all in the great day, and execute his vengeance on the ungodly, and save the righteous. By these instances God hath told us, that a day is appointed for our trial, and what the event will be.

4. God hath given laws to mankind. This is not disputed. All agree that he hath not left his rational creatures to live as they list without regard to right or wrong. Should one plead that God hath given us licence to blaspheme his holy name, and liberty to injure and abuse one another, people would think he ought to be confined in a mad house. The laws of God contain the following things.

FIRST, They point out man's duty, and require him to do it. If we exclude the idea of duty, we exclude the idea of law. For that cannot be law, which does not require any thing of us.

SECONDLY, The laws of God are sanctioned with promises of blessings to those, who obey them, and with threatenings of evil to those, who disobey. For instance, the law of faith promises eternal life to believers, and threatens the unbeliever with everlasting punishment. If no promises and threatenings were annexed to the laws of God, there would be no motive to obey them. Consequently, there would be no force in his laws. It would answer no good end to issue precepts unattended with motives. There are no motives, but what are contained in the promises and threats. They hold up evil and good as excitements to fear and hope, to induce us to avoid sin and serve God. They show the tendency, that holiness and sin have to promote public happiness and misery, to excite action upon the principle of benevolence. Promises and threats exhibit the true and glorious character of the Most

High, whose character is a proper motive, or object of friendly affection to him. These are motives contained in the sanctions of the laws of God. Besides these, there is not a motive.— Without these, there would be no motive to excite obedience. Therefore, they are necessary, and what in our ideas are involved in divine laws.

THIRDLY, The promises and threatenings will take place. In this view they have influence. For it is the expectation, that the threats will be realized, which makes them a terror to evil doers. It is the prospect, that promised blessing will be granted, which excites hope, and puts us in pursuit of future promised good. It is the prospect, that God will bless his people, and punish his enemies, that his truth, grace and justice appear, which are objects, that excite proper sensations of heart towards him. Were the promises and threatenings never to take place, all the motives, which they contain would be a nullity. Instead of exciting reverence for the laws, they would excite contempt. Hence it appears necessary, that his laws should be executed. Every good thing promised to the believer must be granted, according to the genuine import of the promises. And all the terrible things denounced against the wicked must be inflicted, according to the spirit, and true sense of the threatenings.

BUT in this life, the promises and threats are not fulfilled. He does not give his people all the blessings promised. Infinitely the greatest are yet to be granted. Neither does he inflict all the evil threatened. The infinite evil of sin, and inequality of inflicted punishments in this life, are indubitable evidences, that threatenings are not completely executed here. Therefore, mankind must be judged hereafter in a future state, that the promises and threatening may take place.

5. IN plain and positive language the scriptures teach us, that God will judge mankind; and that a day is appointed for that purpose.

For the works of man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.† God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.‡ For thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.§ For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.|| In the day when he shall judge the secrets of men.¶ Because he hath appointed a day in the which, he will judge the world in righteousness.***

CHRIST frequently spake of the day of judgment. And whenever he did, he considered it as an event, that would infallibly take place. The instances are too many to be mentioned now. Let one suffice.

ON a certain time, when circumstances gave him a favorable opportunity, he introduced it, by delivering a parable. The substance may be expressed in the following words. A man, being about to go a long journey, called his servants together, and delivered to each one a sum of money, and ordered them to improve it well, that he might reap profit from it on his return. He went his journey, and after long absence returned, and reckoned with the servants. He found, that two of them had been faithful. Those he received

* Job xxxiv. 11.

§ Jer. xxxii. 19.

* † Acts xvii. 31.

† Ecc. xi. 9.

|| Rom. xiv. 10.

‡ Ecc. xii. 14.

¶ Rom. ii. 16.

into his favor. He found, that one had been unfaithful. Him he cast off, and gave him up to the tormenters.

By the parable he signified, that he was about to go away; but would return after a long time. "I shall leave the world soon, and go to my Father, and dwell with him a long time; then I will come to the earth again, and reckon with mankind to see what improvement, they have made of the privileges and abilities, which I have given them. Those who are faithful, I will admit to my favor; but those, who are not, shall be cast off, and given up to suffer extreme sorrow and pain."

WHEN he had thus introduced the subject, he proceeded to a particular information of what he would do, when he, the son of man, should come. *When the son of man shall come—then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.** If language can communicate sentiments, the certainty of a day of judgment is expressed by Christ in these words.

II. ON that day, all mankind will be collected together.

WHEN Saint John had the day of judgment represented to him in a vision, he *saw the dead small and great stand before God.†* Saint Paul testified, that, *we shall all stand before the judgment*

* Mat. xxv. 31, 32, 33, 34, 41. † Rev. xx. 12.

seat of Christ. Our Lord, you recollect, said, that *before him* all nations should *be gathered*. Several things may be offered to show why, they will be summoned to appear together before Christ's tribunal.

1. IN instances of judging people in this life, God has made his judicial proceedings public. That which respected Adam, has been known in every age, since it took place. Those relative to Egypt, Assyria, the Jews, and a multitude of others, too well known to need a recital, were public at the times, in which they took place, and ever since; and will be to all in future time, who will be acquainted with the bible. Hence it is rational to conclude, that in judging the world, he will do it in such a manner, as that his proceedings, in that great affair, will be publicly known. Instances of judging people, and nations here, though in themselves vastly important, and answering many wise ends; yet compared with judging the world, and ends to be answered by it, become cyphers. Are these comparatively inconsiderable judicial acts exhibited to public view; we may conclude, that God will act in the most public manner in an affair of such infinite magnitude, as that of completing his judicial proceedings, by judging a whole world. And we may add, angels and devils. For they will be judged at that time. The inference from his judging in that public manner, which we have reason to think that he will, is, that all will be called together to give an opportunity to make his proceedings known.

2. By making his judicial acts public, he glorifies himself. *I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, upon all his host, upon his chariots and horsemen.**

* Exod. xiv 17.

For this same purpose have I raised thee up that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.† The song, that Israel sang at the overthrow of that haughty monarch, hath for its leading idea the glory which God displayed in the terrible judgments, which were inflicted on him. When God judged Israel in the wilderness, and doomed them to death and ruin, he testified, that, by that act, he would give a most illustrious display of himself. § *As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.* When he shall judge all mankind, which will be a work, that will infinitely transcend all his past works of this nature, it may be expected, that he will make most illustrious displays of himself. But we have more evidence of this, than what rises from inference. The doxology, that will be sung, in the day, when God shall pass sentence upon all, is expressive of the great glory, that he will get by it. “Alleluia : salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgments, and again they said, Alleluia.” “And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.” To see the display that God will make of himself, there is the utmost propriety of his assembling all mankind before his tribunal. For how will his glory appear, unless mankind be called together to see it.

By being present, they will have an opportunity of seeing the difficulties and objections removed, which they have against the manner of his government of the world. Now they blame God. They think, he might have made a better world, and wonder why he did not. They think things might have been adjusted more wisely.

† Rom. ix. 17.

§ Num. xiv. 21.

They think it is unjust, that poor mortals should suffer a burden of afflictions in life, then die and go to hell. They think, it is hard, that some should be left to perish, while others are saved. They cannot see, why God should blame them for not loving him with all the heart, when they think they are unable to do it. *I know thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.** Is language expressive of the feelings of the sinful heart towards God. And good people have sometimes a degree of the same wicked sensations. In the day of judgment God will show that he acted wisely, in governing the world as he did, which will give full satisfaction to holy beings, and excite the highest exercises of joy, and stop the mouths of sinners. By being present they will be under advantage of seeing a glorious display of divine grace and justice. The holy sovereign of the world saves believers and punishes the wicked. Against this conduct many bitter complaints are made. The human heart rises against it. God will look into this matter, in the solemn day of trial, and show on which side the blame lies. *He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart.†* Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.‡ He will expose the sins of every one to public view. How exceedingly vile will men appear. They will appear so hateful and ill-deserving, that the riches of God's grace in saving Christ's people, will be magnified beyond conception; and the punishment of impenitent sinners will appear so perfectly right, that they will be convicted of the impropriety and sin of all their hard speeches against God.

* Mat. xxv. 24.

† 1 Cor. iv. 5.

‡ Mat. xii. 36.

By being together in the presence of their Judge, they will have an opportunity of seeing in clear light, why God separates sinners and saints. They live together in this world. *Let both grow together until the harvest.** They have connections with one another here. Some of which are interesting, and some very dear. Such are those between the partners of each other's joys and sorrows in the conjugal state—between parents and children—between ministers and people, and between members in church fellowship. At death connections are dissolved between the righteous and the wicked. Until the day of judgment they will live apart. And so they will forever after that great day. Though apart, and in infinitely different states, they will be in sight of each other. Abraham could cast his eye towards hell, and see the rich man in torment. That same rich man could lift up a painful eye, and see Abraham and Lazarus. *The righteous shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men, that have transgressed against me. For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.†* To be thus separated requires a weighty reason. And to reconcile the righteous to it, and convict sinners of the propriety of it, and stop their cavilings against God, the reason must be seen. In the great day he will make the reason known. He tells us now, why he separates them. But then he will do it more clearly, by laying open the character of every one. When he does, the contrast of characters will appear so great, that all will see abundant reason for the wide separation.

THAT God may have an opportunity of exhibiting himself; and all mankind have opportunity of learning more fully, that he acts wisely in

* Mat. xiii. 30.

† Isai. lxvi. 24.

his government of the world ; and that they may behold his grace and justice shine in his treatment of mankind, and see the reason of his separating his friends and enemies, are reasons, why all should be assembled at the august court of heaven ; and reasons also, why such an event may be expected.

3. THEIR connections seem to require, that they should be together at the trial.

THERE are a multitude of things, which take place between the children of men in this life to be settled then ; and many kindneses expressed among saints toward one another to be rewarded, the nature of which, is such, as will require their attendance together.

THERE are many things between parties, which are never settled in this life, that will be settled in the day of judgment. We often hear it said concerning people at variance, who cannot, or will not settle their quarrels, "their affairs must be left to be settled in the day of judgment." If matters between parties are to be settled at that time, both parties must be present. And those parties may have difficulties with other parties to be settled. And those other parties with others. In this sense the connection may be general ; and of consequence all must be present. But there are many affairs among mankind of extensive connection, which are to be settled then ; such as those that are national. A tyrant may abuse millions of his subjects, and do infinite mischief to other nations. The cruel sword of Alexander brought millions to an untimely end, and entailed wretchedness to posterity. A king may be the wicked cause of rivers of blood among his subjects, and by influential connection be the unjust cause of the same horrid calamity among many

nations. And those nations may be the instruments of spreading the calamity to others. In this way, it may extend over all the nations of the earth. Further the present nations may be instrumental of carrying the calamities of war down to posterity, And posterity still further down. We can conceive, and doubtless it is true, that this kind of connection extends itself through the earth, and through all ages. If so all mankind must be together, in the day of judgment, when God will settle all national affairs, expose the tyrant, and vindicate the innocent.

Good people have their connections. They assist one another in the journey of life towards heaven. The benevolent man loves his christian brethren. He watches their conduct, prays for their spiritual good, and shows them kindness, by imparting to them such things as they need. For every thing that he does, for his brethren in the exercise of love, he will be rewarded. A cup of cold water, given to a disciple of Christ, will not be forgotten. A reward is in store for the christian, who gives it. And no inconsiderable part of the reward, will be the joy, that their presence will give him in the day of Judgment. The Apostle Paul was instrumental of converting many, and of building them up in the faith, and order of the gospel. He is to be rewarded in the day of judgment for all his labor for their spiritual good. And his reward will be the joy, that it will give him to see them standing before the tribunal, as monuments of the victorious grace of God. *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.*† If the reward of Paul is to consist in the joy that he will have in seeing

† 1 Theff. ii. 19.

his converts at the day of judgment, they must be present, or he will not have his reward.

IF the converts of Paul must be present, Timothy must be there ; for he was one of the converts of St. Paul. And the converts of Timothy must be there also, that Timothy may have his reward for his labors for their spiritual good. The converts of Timothy, some of whom, were probably instrumental of converting others, and they of others, all for the reason just given, must be there on the solemn day of rewards and punishments. The connection in this sense may, and probably does exist through the great body of the people of God, in all ages, which shows that all must be together, when God judges the world.

The first part of the book is devoted to a general history of the world, from the beginning of time to the present day. The author discusses the various civilizations that have flourished on the earth, and the progress of human knowledge and industry. He also touches upon the political and social changes that have shaped the course of history.

The second part of the book is a detailed account of the life and times of the great men of the world. The author describes the lives of the philosophers, the statesmen, the warriors, and the artists who have made their names immortal. He also discusses the various religions and sects that have sprung up in different parts of the world, and the influence they have had upon the human mind.

On the Judgment of the Great Day.

S E R M O N II.

JUDE, verse 6.

Unto the judgment of the great day.

IN treating upon these words, it was proposed to show, that God will judge mankind—that when he judges them, he will gather them together—and that the day, on which he will do it, will be a great day. We have considered the two first; let us now consider the

III. The day of judgment will be a great day.

A DAY may be called great on account of the great things, which are done upon it. The fourth of July is esteemed a great day; because on that day of the month, we declared ourselves free independent states. That was a great day, when God promised to give a Saviour to fallen man. That was a great day, when the rain began to fall, which destroyed the world. That also, on which fire fell from heaven, and consumed the people of Sodom. That was a great day, in

which God gave the law from Sinai. That likewise on which the Saviour was born, and that on which he hung upon the cross. All these have been great days. But were not so great as that, in which God will judge mankind, except that, on which the Lord of life, cried out upon the cross, "*It is finished.*" Grand scenes, and infinitely interesting events will then take place. Such as will attract the attention of heaven, earth and hell. Some of which, I shall now mention with a view to show, that it will be a great day.

I. It will be a great day; because Christ will appear again to our world.

ALMOST eighteen hundred years ago he appeared among mankind, lived to the age of thirty and three years, and then suffered death on the cross, was buried, arose and ascended into heaven to tarry there until the end of the world. Then he will come again to our earth. That same Jesus, who lived a term of time in the land of Israel, and who was taken up into heaven, will open the heavens, descend, and come again to this world. He tarries to get things ready for his coming, as he did for his coming in the flesh. He then tarries to get things ready for his appearance. He now tarries to get things ready to come to judge the world. When all things were ready, he came down, and died to make atonement. When all things are ready, he will come down a second time, and then judge the world. He now upholds the world; he raises up nations and empires, and casts them down; he sends forth the heralds of his gospel to call in the elect from the four winds of heaven; he diffuses light round this blind world, and by his almighty power opens the eyes of his chosen to see it; he calls away generations and lays them in the dust, and brings forward others in their room; he shakes

the heavens and the earth; that is, civil and ecclesiastical powers, to prepare things for his second appearance. And when all things are ready, he will appear.

2. IT will be a great day; because the appearance of Christ will be most public.

WHEN he appeared in the flesh but a very few people, compared with the great body of mankind, saw him. He confined himself to the land of Palestine. And altho he went into many places in that land, he did not go over the whole country. Multitudes of the people never saw him. None of the people of other nations ever saw him; except some, who either resided in the land of Israel, or occasionally came there, during his residence in the flesh. But when he shall appear in the day of judgment, he will be seen by all mankind. *Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.** All that will be alive on the earth at his appearance, will see him. The people of the present day, and all that have lived before, and that will live in future days, will behold him.

3. IT will be a great day; because he will appear in his glory. When Christ spoke of his coming in the day of judgment, he said, *when the son of man shall come in his glory*; † plainly signifying that when he should appear to judge the world, he should appear in his glory.

By his glory, which he spake of, is meant, that bright appearance, which was often seen to attend him, and which was a token of his majesty and of his presence. When he spake to Moses from the bush in Horeb, he appeared in a light, that appeared like fire. When he conducted Israel from Egypt to Canaan, a bright cloud hung over them by day and by night. When the people set up the

* Rev. i. 7.

† Matt. xxv. 31.

tabernacle in the wilderness, that brightness hovered over it, and part of it entered into the tabernacle, filling it with the appearance of light and fire, and collected into a small body in the most holy place, over the mercy seat and ark, under the wings of the cherubim. This bright appearance was called the glory of the Lord. It tarried in the most holy place, until the days of Eli, the High Priest and then, because of the wickedness of Israel, it forsook the tabernacle and appeared no more till the days of King Solomon. When Solomon had completed the building of the temple, it returned and entered in at the door, and filled the whole house; and then collected in a small body, in the most Holy Place, in the manner it had done in the tabernacle. In the temple it tarried, till about the time of the great captivity of the people of the kingdom of Judah, among the Babylonians, and other nations subject to the Babylonish King; and was seen no more, till the God of Israel appeared in the flesh to redeem a lost world.

THEN it appeared several times. Probably this glory was the star, which appeared to the wise men of the east, and conducted them to Judea to the place, where the Saviour was. This bright appearance, called a bright cloud, overshadowed Christ and the three disciples, who were with him in the mount. And when he ascended into heaven, he went up in a bright cloud. And when he appears in the day of judgment, he will be surrounded with the same appearance. Thus testified the angels, who appeared and spake to those, who stood gazing on Christ, as he was going from earth to heaven. *And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from*

*you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven.** “He is gone up from you to take his residence in the mansions of glory; but he will return again and visit your world. He went up in a bright cloud; and when he comes again he will come in a bright cloud.” To this declaration of the angels, agree the words of John. *Behold he cometh with clouds.†* John doubtless alludes to the manner of his appearance in instances before, signifying that he would come in the same brightness, called the glory of the Lord. That glory, in which he will appear, will be brighter than the meridian sun. It will illuminate the world. May it be not said the universe. What a magnificent appearance will the Lord Jesus make.

4. THE angels will come with him. Heaven will pour forth its legions of angels, who will attend on Christ, when he shall come to our world again.

ANGELS were made to attend on Christ.—Two angels attended him, when he came to Abraham at Mamre. Jacob in a vision saw angels descending from heaven and ascending, while the angel of the covenant, who was Christ, was renewing the covenant with him, which the Lord had made before with Abraham. When Christ gave the Law to Moses on mount Sinai, he did it by the disposition of angels. An angel announced to the shepherds his birth. When he was tempted by Satan, angels descended and administered unto him. When he agonized in the garden, in the deepest sorrow, an angel was dispatched from heaven to strengthen him. An angel came down and rolled away the stone, that lay on the mouth of his sepulchre, that when he awoke into life he might have opportunity to

* Acts i. 10, 11.

Rev. i. 7.

come from his grave. Mary saw two angels in his grave, after he had risen, one sitting at the head, and the other at the place, where his head and feet had lain. When he ascended, two angels appeared at the same time to those, who saw him go up into heaven. When he shall clothe himself in majesty, open the heavens, and come down again, all the holy angels will come with him. Legions of bright seraphs will attend him down the skies, and shout his praises in the most sublime songs. His appearance will be very different from that, which he made when he appeared to take away sin. A few men from the east presented their gifts, and paid homage to him: when he shall appear again all men will bow to to him, some willingly, others against their wills. Then a few poor people frequently attended him, and his very disciples were not men, who made a figure in life: when he shall come again, all the hosts of angels will be his attendants. Then a few poor mortals lisped his praise: when he comes the second time, millions of angels will sound his praises aloud.

5. THE day of judgment will be a great day; because Christ will come in the character of a judge. *Because he; that is, God, hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.† And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he; that is Christ, which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead.‡* Agreeable to these texts are his own words. *The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the son.‖* *When the son of man shall*

† Acts xvii. 31.

‡ Acts x. 42.

‖ John v. 22.

come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. § To represent himself as sitting on a throne in the day of judgment, is representing himself as one that would act as king and judge. For a throne is a token of royalty and judgment.

WHEN he appeared in the flesh, he acted as a Saviour. He opened the way of life to mankind. He stated the terms of salvation, and invited sinners to return to the Lord in his name. He preached. He wept over sinners. He died on the cross to atone for their sins. After his resurrection, he sent his Heralds abroad among the nations to inform people, that they were sinful, helpless and ruined, and going to endless destruction; and inform them, who he was, and invite them to believe in him, and live for ever. He holds out the golden scepter, and invites us to arise, touch it and live. He will continue to offer salvation to mankind to the end of the world. Then he will cease to offer mercy to sinners; for then he will appear as a judge to call mankind to his tribunal, to examine, and pass sentence, according to each one's character. Now he offers pardon and life; he will then treat them as they treat his offer. Now he proposes eternal life, speaks with sinners by his word, and most kindly asks them to accept his glorious offer of mercy; then he will ask how they treated his offer. And all those, who, now in the day of grace, accept the proposal, he will sentence to eternal life, and those, who do not, he will cast into eternal misery. Thus his appearance will be for a very different purpose from what it was, when he came as Saviour.

6. It will be a great day, because Christ will judge all moral beings, of which we have any account.

HE will judge every one of mankind. Adam with his numerous offspring will be present. Not a man will escape trial. The most worthless and respectable, the sinner and the righteous, must appear before Christ.

HE will judge the fallen angels. When God created the angels, it is supposed by some Divines, that it was revealed in heaven, that one would be born of man, whom the angels would be commanded to worship; that many of the angels disdained the idea; that this pride in their hearts was their sin, and that which made them devils. Be this as it may. It is evident, that vast numbers of the angels turned rebels to God, and became devils. All these evil beings will be judged in the great day. Not an individual will escape the penetrating eye of the judge. None can hide themselves in the dark regions. All must come forth and give their attendance at the tribunal of Christ. *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.* If God spared not the angels which sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment.†*

HE will judge the holy angels. They will all be present. He will lay open their amiable character to the assembled universe of intellectual beings; and will most publicly approve of them as his friends, and faithful servants.

THUS three worlds, heaven, earth and hell will be judged. This will be an event infinitely great. If one poor mortal is taken from a prison, and carried before a civil judicature, and tried for the life of his body, it engages the attention of many

* Jude, verse 6. † 2 Petet ii. 4.

people, and renders the day of his trial memorable and great in his family and among his connections. But how much greater will that day be, when all mankind, and all good and bad spirits, shall appear before Christ, and be tried, and be sentenced some to eternal happiness, and others to eternal misery.

7. IT will be a great day ; because all the dead will be raised.

THAT the body must die, and be put into the ground, to be devoured by worms, is a most serious consideration. To day you live ; to-morrow you die, next day you are carried away, and laid in the cold earth. The heart of the vain, and the heart of the infidel, may laugh at the idea ; but both of them will feel distressed, beyond what human tongue can describe, when death comes to call them away.

BUT the time approaches when the dead will be raised. Elijah, a great Prophet in Israel, raised to life the son of the widow of Zarephath. Elisha, his successor, raised the son of the Shunamite. When Elisha was dead, and lay in his sepulchre, a dead corpse, which was let down into the same grave, revived, as soon as it touched the bones of Elisha. Those Prophets were a type of Christ. Their raising the dead, a type that Christ would raise the dead. At least, it shows that such an event is possible.

WE have passages of scripture, which expressly declare, that the dead shall be raised. *Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame, and everlasting contempt.*† These words were spoken by the prophet Daniel, and pretty

† Dan. xii. 2.

fully declare, that men will awake from their slumber in the grave. "The moment, that I was writing this sentence, struck the clock nine, in a few moments more said I, I shall retire to rest on my pillow, but may awake and arise in the morning. After a few days, at most, I shall retire to the cold earth, where my dust will remain till the day of judgment. Then I shall awake and come forth; for Christ says;" *Verily verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.*||

CHRIST delivered these words in the days of his incarnation. "The hour is coming, when those, who are dead and in the grave shall hear my voice and shall live. And now is, the hour now is; that is, in this time, while I am among you the dead hear my voice and rise." He raised three in the time he was executing his commission as Saviour. Some were raised at his resurrection. At the end of the world he will raise every one. The venerable gray hair and blooming youth, the parent and child, will come forth out of the ground. That power, which quickened Lazarus, will be able to collect the dust of men, and call back their souls to take possession of their bodies. The multitudes of unhappy mortals, who have been buried in the seas, will be called into life. Vast plains, where dead bodies, slain in battle, have been left to putrify above ground, without the honor of a decent interment, will be covered with living men, whose dust now lies mingled with the common dust of the earth. Every plat of ground, devoted to receive the dead, will open its graves and send forth all that have been buried in them.

8. THE vast number of rational beings, that will be together, will make the day great.

Now angels live in heaven ; devils in hell ; mankind live in different ages of the world, and scattered all over the earth. Even people of the same family are separated ; some in the grave ; and some among the living. Then angels, men and devils will be collected before the judgment seat of Christ. What an amazing number will be together. Xerxes collected an army of five millions. But what was that number, compared with the present inhabitants of the earth ? Still less, compared with all the generations before the flood ; and from the flood to Christ ; and from the days of Christ to this time ; and from this time down to the end of the world. And less yet, if we add, as we must, the whole host of angels, and all the fallen spirits. Truly the collection of the inhabitants of three worlds, of heaven, earth and hell, at the judgment seat of Christ, will make the day great.

9. It will be a great day ; because every one will be attentive.

ANGELS are now attentive to things of eternity. Their attention is employed in pleasing thoughts on God, and the things of religion. Devils attend to the things of eternity. They live in eternity ; and cannot help attending to everlasting things. The souls of all good people, that are dead, attend to nothing else, but the things of religion. Perhaps, some of our departed christian friends are this day delightfully conversing together on the temptations, trials and dangers, through which they passed on their journey to heaven. Departed souls of wicked people attend to eternal things. They have no pleasing amusements ; no hours of merriment ; no ambitious prospects ; no hopes of deliverance.

To them all is eternity. And they have nothing, to which they attend, but eternal things. A few, in this world, attend. They wake up out of the sleep of security, attend, inquire, and feel concerned. But the great body of people will not attend. They know that they must die, but it gives them no trouble. To die, and appear before God, and be given up to eternal happiness, or misery, are matters of so little importance in their view, that they do not give them a serious thought, or one painful reflection. They are so stupid, that the most alarming considerations will not excite their fear, or put them upon serious inquiry, "what they shall do?"

BUT in the day of judgment, all men will be roused into attention. There will not be a careless spectator among the whole. The call to come forward to the tribunal will excite the attention of every one. Who, when he sees the judge on his throne, surrounded with his resplendent glory, can feel indifferent and unconcerned? Who, when he sees worlds in flames, and all moral beings waiting the final decision of the judge, can be inattentive? When a town or society of people are awakened, and are under conviction of sin, it excites their attention to eternal things. They hear with solicitude; they converse, and are inquisitive. Such a day becomes memorable, and is esteemed a great day. But what is this compared to the day in which all intellectual existences will be awake to matters of the first magnitude. To see a few people awakened is really a great affair; but to see worlds awakened, is infinitely greater.

10. IT will be a great day on account of the joys and sorrows that will fill all hearts, at that time. Those that will weep, will weep most bit-

terly. And those that will rejoice, will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

THE day will present the most brilliant scenes to all good beings. They will see the divine perfections shine most conspicuously, which will excite, in their joyful breasts, the highest happiness. Divine justice and sovereignty, mercy and wisdom, which they will clearly see, will charm their souls, and fill them with the purest pleasure. They will see the wisdom of many providences, which now appear dark and mysterious. They will understand the end, God has in view, in governing the world as he does. This will give them admiration and delight. Even God, himself, will take infinite delight in showing his true character in a clear light; and he will take infinite pleasure in seeing the displays of himself; and he will take pleasure in that pleasure, which good beings will take in beholding him. Thus there will be happiness in the breasts of all good beings.

WICKED beings will be filled with the deepest distress. A view of God gives pain to a sinner. In the day of judgment, sinners will have clear views of God, which will put them to the most distressing pain. The day will be a day of lamentation and woe. When sinners will be called forward for trial, they will not expect to be acquitted. As soon as their souls depart from this world, they know that they must be eternally miserable. And this idea will abide by them forever. When they go forward to the judgment seat for trial, they will know that the judge will not acquit them; but expose all their sins to the assembled universe of intellectual beings; that their badness may appear to all; that the sentence, which dooms to everlasting misery, may appear just. What horror will this give them! What shame and remorse will they feel! when reflecting that they are going

before a judge, who will show what hateful, ill-deserving creatures they are, and that he will be just in punishing them for ever.

II. IT will be a great day; because of the conviction that will take place in the minds of sinners.

ONE great end of the day of judgment is to convict the wicked of their sins. *Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.**

SINNERS do many things now, which they think are right, who will be convinced, in the day of judgment, that they are wrong. Now sinners think it no sin to give themselves up to pleasure: then they will be convinced, that instead of pursuing their pleasures, they ought to have spent the time in prayer, reading and meditation. Now they think it is no sin to take advantage of others, and get good bargains for themselves, and cheat if they have an opportunity; and some carry it so far as to say, it is no hurt to lie, if they can get something by it: then they will be convinced that such conduct is sinful, and that they ought to have regarded the good of others, as they did their own good. Now they think it well enough to recreate themselves upon the sabbath, and neglect the worship and ordinances of God: then they will be convinced of the sin of this conduct. Of the sin of these, and of all their other ungodly deeds, they will be convinced.

* Jude, verses 14, 15.

AND they will be convicted of the sin of all their hard speeches against God. Sinners say a great deal against God. Volumes are written to find fault with his sacred truths. Some pulpits sound loud with such things as, at least, imply complaints against the Most High. Sinners complain of the peculiar, distinguishing doctrines of the gospel. In the day of judgment they will be convinced that it is wicked to talk about God as they do. Now they say "God is an hard master:" then they will be convinced, that it is a sin to talk in this manner. Now they say, "that if he acts as a sovereign he is unjust:" then they will be convinced, that it is sinful to talk thus. Now they say, "it is unjust to be called upon to love God with all the heart, to repent of sin, and believe in the Lord Jesus, when," as they say, "they cannot:" then sinners will be led to see, that it was nothing but an evil heart, which kept them from loving, repenting and believing; and that to excuse themselves on account of a wicked heart is really criminal. Now they find fault with the way of life by Christ. "Must we," say they, "renounce our righteousness, heartily confess that we deserve to be cast into hell, and look to Jesus for salvation, and believe in him on pain of eternal ruin. This is hard. This is cruel." In the day of Judgment, they will be convicted of the sin of talking in this manner. Now sinners ridicule religion, call sober conscientious people whimsical. And the man, who abides by the doctrines, which he professes, and pleads for the cause of religion, they call superstitious. Of the sin of all these hard speeches, which are in effect against God, they will be convinced in the day, when they appear before God. For Christ is *to convince all that are ungodly of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

It will be really a great event to convince a world of sinful men, of all their vile deeds, and of all the hard things, which they say of God.

12. It will be a great day; because there will be an end to the means of grace, an end to the world, and all things in it.

No more warnings will be given to sinners. Every saint will then go home to rest from trials and afflictions. Sabbaths will be swallowed up in one eternal sabbath in heaven. The heralds of the Lord Jesus will go forth no more to preach the terrors of the Law, and administer the balm of the gospel. No more opportunities for prayer will be granted to poor sinners; neither will the saints lift up one cry to the God of mercies in their behalf. The great work of redemption, as it relates to what is done in this world will be finished.

CHRIST will then have no further use for this earth, and worlds subservient to it. He will, therefore, destroy it and them. He will put in his sickle, reap the harvest, and give up the field to fire. *The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men.* The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.†* Fields and vineyards will be destroyed, and cultivated no more. The sun will forget to rise and set. The moon will not know her place. The horrors of war, and the songs of the gay will totally cease. Like noble structures and lofty piles tumbling down in a city consuming in flames of fire, material worlds will tumble from their magnificence, and perish in one

* 2 Pet. iii. 7.

† 2 Pet. iii. 10.

general conflagration. How tremendous the scene! How great the day!

13. OTHER things, which will make the day of judgment great, will be the separation that the judge will make between the righteous and the wicked, and the sentence that he will pass.

*HE shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.** In ancient days when people were tried by civil courts, the innocent were ordered by the judge to go over on the right hand; the guilty on the left. In allusion to this practice, our Saviour speaks of placing the righteous on the right hand, the wicked on the left.

HE will separate families. He will set the pious parent on the right, and his wicked children on the left. The pious brother and sister on the right hand, the wicked parent, brethren and sisters on the left. On the right hand will stand Enoch, Moses and all the saints, who lived before Christ. Also all, who belong to the society of believers in the days of the gospel. Our christian friends, who belonged to this town, who are departed, you will see on the right hand of the judge. On the left you see Judas, who sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Judas, wouldst thou not give more than that goodly price to be delivered from thy Judge! There stands Pilate with pale face, and trembling limbs, who passed sentence, that Christ should be crucified. Wouldst thou not give worlds and all the equipage that once adorned thy court to be saved from the sentence, that Jesus is about to pass on thee. And what great multitude is that, which we behold? It is

* Matt. xxv. 32, 33.

that, which is composed of Jews, who insulted Christ on the cross, and all unbelievers, waiting to hear the dreadful sentence from him, whom in this life they despised.

WHEN the trial is finished, and the separation made, the judge will pass sentence. *Come, ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.** Songs of praise will burst from the vast host of the righteous, expressive of their joyful feelings, and of their admiration of the grace of God in their salvation. All become silent, the whole multitude of good and evil beings solemn and attentive. The judge with a voice, that will be heard through the vast host, passes sentence against the wicked. *Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.†* They sink under the sentence down to eternal woe. The righteous ascend in triumph to eternal joys.

LET US NOW close this interesting and solemn subject with a very brief application.

I. CHRIST hath a great character.

WE often judge of characters by what they do. In this way, we may judge of the character of Christ. Will he raise the dead, and judge every moral being in heaven, earth and hell, he will do a great work, that infinitely transcends the ability of any finite being. Can any being, that is not infinitely powerful, wise and just, do such a great work? The work is so great, that it gives the most exalted thoughts of him, and compels us into a belief, that he is God.

II. ARE we to be judged for what we do in this life, and to be treated according to the character, which we form here, the time of life is important.

* Mat. xxv. 34.

† Mat. xxv. 41.

WE live but a short time. The oldest person can say, that his days are few. But a few live to old age. Some die in youth. Others are cut off in the midst of their days. In this short life, every one of us are forming characters, in which we shall appear in the great day of trial. How important then is the time of life.

III. ARE we to appear before Christ to be judged, it highly concerns us to secure an interest in his favor.

His smiles will be life. His frowns will be death. Who, in his senses, wishes to spend his short life in sin, provoke Christ, and receive the sentence : *Depart ye cursed.*

IV. WE have a most interesting scene before us.

A SICK bed is interesting. Death is interesting. But the day of judgment is more interesting; for each one of us must be present, and have a part in the transactions of the day. We now realize life. We shall realize death. We shall realize the solemn things of the day of judgment. It is certain that the offers of mercy are made to us. But not more certain, than that we shall be judged. The day being distant does not lessen its interesting nature. When the time comes, it will be as important to us, as if it should begin to day. It was as interesting to Pilate, who lived seventeen hundred years ago, as it is to a man, who lives in this age. You will, dear friends, feel the truth of this observation, when you meet Christ in judgment. Delays, objections and unbelief will not save you from the trial, Rocks and mountains cannot cover you from the knowledge of the judge. Be you, where you may, his summons will arrest, and carry you to the tribunal. AMEN.

On the endless torments of the finally impenitent.

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A DISCOURSE, by DAVID PORTER, A. M.
Pastor of the Church in Spencertown.

MATTHEW XXV. 46.

AND these shall go away into everlasting punishment.

AS a foundation for the present discourse, I have chosen one of the most unpopular subjects in the Bible; but I shall speak, only a very few minutes and then close. If you will give me a hearing ear, and Christ your hearts, you will give all I ask or desire.

THE paragraph, of which the text is a concluding declaration, unfolds in definite terms, a scene infinitely interesting to man. Christ has an allusion to the solemn period, when he should come in the clouds of heaven, with the holy angels, wrap this earth in flames, and summon all nations to the bar of God. He speaks in figurative and very expressive language, respecting the righteous and the wicked, and asserts, that *these he shall separate one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.* Christ then addresses the

righteous in the most perfect cordiality, and with an approving smile, welcomes them to mansions of immortal felicity : *Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Having thus spoken he recapitulates their fidelity in his service, their fervent love and their uniform attachment to his person and interest while on earth ; to which they reply, in words becoming creatures rescued from sin and utter ruin. Immediately afterward, he turns to the wicked, and with a look betokening the just anger of an incensed God, and in words descriptive of every thing terrible, assigns them their portion in the lake of unquenchable fire ; *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* Upon this he announces to them their evil deeds, their contempt of his person and religion, and their wilful neglect of every thing important and reasonable. They answer Christ in terms of self-justification, as might be expected from enemies of all righteousness. The whole is concluded thus ; and these shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal.

THE first part of the verse is to engage attention. In the explication of it, I shall be led,

I. To show, that the finally impenitent shall be punished after death.

MANY have endeavoured, with great art, to make it appear that there will be no suffering after death. Indeed every power of the mind has been exerted to explain the scriptures into a consistency with the scheme. Undoubtedly the plan is the result of selfishness. An earnest wish to escape misery and obtain happiness, has prompted them, if possible, to warp the oracles of God, to speak in justification of their principles.

FROM the perfect atonement of Christ, they have drawn a conclusion, that none can suffer after death. If this argument be of any weight, it has an equal degree of weight against suffering in the present state. If because Christ has made satisfaction to the law for the sins of the whole world, none can suffer after death, the same satisfaction to the law must utterly exclude punishment in this life. The perfect atonement of Christ does not exclude punishment in this life; and hence the above argument looses its force. It is true, the atonement of Christ renders it consistent for God to save whom he pleases; but it neither supposes him indebted to any man, nor that any man, simply on this account, can be assured of eternal life. All whom Christ has redeemed he will infallibly bring to glory; but his redemption and atonement are not of the same import. The atonement is that which renders it consistent for God to shew favor to the sinner. Redemption respects only those to whom the saving benefits of the atonement are applied. By Christ's atonement man is not made morally the better; neither is the debt contracted by sin rendered the less; so that as to any claim on God, through this medium, he can make not the least pretension. The redemption of Christ is rather a fruit of the atonement, referring to those who were given to him in the covenant made between him and the Father, as the reward of his sufferings. In allusion to these it is written; *When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed.* And again; *All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* Christ being a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, proves the atonement to be adequate to the offences of all men; and yet without a work of special grace on the heart, not

one of the human race can escape everlasting punishment. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Let it be kept in mind, an atonement could never have been made for some men, and yet be inadequate to the exigences of all; because such is the malignity of sin in its nature, that not an instance of it, can be righteously pardoned, but through an atonement of infinite merit; and an atonement of infinite merit is capable of no accession, by which it can better apply to the whole. From this consideration, it appears, that had it been God's design to extend salvation only to one man, in order to render it consistent with justice to save that one, an atonement must be made, in all respects, the same, as if his design had been to confer eternal life on all. And hence a conclusion drawn from the perfect atonement of Christ in favor of Universalism, is without weight.

THE general scope of God's word, with the concurring voice of reason, informs us, that God, who is infinitely just, will make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked in the world to come. Is it rational to suppose, that that spirit, which leaves the body while in the full career of vice, will immediately, on its departure, mingle with the blessed society of heaven, and partake of the rivers of pleasure which flow from the paradise of God? But without depending on our own reason, let us look to the declarations of scripture. On these the Universalist professedly builds his faith. It is said of God, "who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, up-

on every soul of man that doth evil ; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." Christ's parable of the rich man and Lazarus evinces the same truth. Abraham said, son remember, that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. The text also and a multitude of other passages are directly to the point. Hence if we look to the scripture for light, and depend on its declarations, we may rely upon it, that they who die in their sins shall be punished after death.

2. I SHALL show from scripture, that the punishment of the finally impenitent, will be eternal.

SOME, who admit a future punishment, deny it to be eternal. They profess to believe, that the impenitent will suffer for ages, they know not how many ; and yet suppose that all will finally be admitted to heaven. Many who espouse this scheme, hold that the sinner will suffer as much as he deserves, in the coming world ; and that after a period of time, the debt will be discharged, he be loosed from prison, and received to heaven. Their reasoning goes on this ground, that sin is not an infinite evil. Sin is undoubtedly an infinite evil, if by infinite evil be meant an object deserving endless punishment. Otherwise an atonement, effected by a divine person, would not have been requisite for a consistent exercise of pardon. Sin is a crime committed against an infinite being, and hence must be infinite in its demerit.

BUT allowing for the present, that sin is not an infinite evil, the argument for universal salvation, gains no strength. For however small criminality may be, suffering will do nothing toward removing it. And hence the suffering of the wicked in a future state will never restore them to in-

nocence. The thief who has been punished for his theft, is not purified from guilt, by undergoing the penalty. Blameworthiness being not diminished by suffering, the least degree of it, aside from Christ, must subject to everlasting punishment. If any one now deserves evil, suffering one year, or two years, or ten million of ages can never make him deserve it less. So that if we go so far as to give up the infinite evil of sin, nothing is given up, which can afford the least color of plausibility in favor of universalism.

THEY who would maintain, that the infinite goodness and mercy of God, are better supported upon the scheme of the universalists than upon any other, perhaps labor under a mistake. Let it be remarked, that goodness and mercy are not to be measured by the number saved; but by the degrees of natural good conferred. If more natural good can exist in God's universe, on the whole, if some suffer eternally, than though all be saved, then it will follow, that the everlasting misery of some is no infringement on God's infinite mercy; but essential to its existence. It must be admitted, if God be infinite in power, wisdom and goodness, his plan will terminate in the greatest general good of the universe. Matter of fact evinces, there is some natural evil in existence, of course some natural evil is for the greatest general good. If then some natural evil, or pain in this world, be conducive to the highest welfare of the whole, collectively considered, it will be impossible to make it appear, but that some natural evil in the future world, may conduce to the same important end. Thus if we candidly attend to the matter, the infinite mercy and goodness of God are found to be as well supported, on the principle, that some shall suffer forever, as upon the plan, that all shall be saved.

AFTER all, our chief dependence must be on scripture declaration. And here let it be candidly queried; had God designed to inform us that the punishment of the wicked would come to a close, would he have made use of the terms found in the scripture? Speaking of the duration of the torments of the damned, would he have uttered expressions denoting endless duration, when he perfectly well knew, the sufferings of the vilest monster who ever lived, would be limited to a very short period of time? Is this supposable? And if it be, where shall we find the end of conjecture? Are we to entertain ideas of God so low and contemptible, as to suppose him necessitated to frighten his creatures with a false picture of evils to come, in order to keep them under any tolerable subjection? Has God been driven to such straits? Is Jehovah to be brought beneath a level with the unskilful parent, who having lost the reins of parental authority, substitutes empty threats, which he means not to execute? and which the child spells out to be only bugbears to frighten him into his duty? The thought is infinitely derogatory to God, and even blasphemous. It being impossible for God to lie, every word he has spoken is according to the most perfect veracity.

LET us then impartially attend to several texts of scripture. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from

thee: it is better for thee to enter into life, halt or maimed, rather than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.

LET such as deny the doctrine of the eternity of future punishment, seriously question with themselves; whether if it had been God's design to reveal to us, that the punishment of the finally impenitent, would never come to a close, could he have made use of stronger and more definite terms to convey the sentiment, than those before us?

THE text is very explicit. *These shall go away into everlasting punishment.* The word in the original, here translated *everlasting*, is the same as that, which, in the clause following, is rendered *eternal*. The English word *eternal* is used to express the duration of the happiness of the saints; and if we admit, that it denotes never-ending enjoyment, we must also admit, that the word *everlasting* denotes the never-ending torments of the damned. We are necessitated from the words of Christ, to view them exactly commensurate with each other. For if Christ had known, that the happiness of his people would continue, after the misery of the wicked, should come to an end, he would not have expressed the duration of each, by one single term; but he would have varied the expression, as he did the sentiment. On the principle of universalism, the idea is infinitely various; but Christ, who is the true light, hath made no variation in the expression. Neither can we, without doing the most direct violence to Christ's words, make a distinction in the idea expressed.

3. I SHALL speak of the greatness of the punishment, and mention some of the chief things in which it will consist.

SOMETHING here crowds upon the mind exceedingly solemn and affecting. And is it not

strange, we can feel so little, when we think and speak of the portion of ungodly sinners? Were we this day to be the spectators of a person burning at the stake, or torn in pieces by wild beasts; how should we shudder at the prospect! Every countenance would turn pale; neither could our utmost art suppress the keen sensation, which the dreadful spectacle, when exhibited, would excite. Could the sinner but once open his eyes, and take a single glance of that hell, toward which he is hastening, such horror would seize the soul, that he would wish for immediate annihilation, rather than remain a moment longer on the precipice of impending ruin. A certain person, whom I once knew, was suddenly seized with a disorder, which proved fatal. He was in the bloom and vigor of youth, and in the fashionable amusements, to which the gay and sprightly are peculiarly addicted, he was one of the foremost. Upon being informed by the physicians who attended him, that his case was now desperate, he expressed himself nearly in the following manner; that if his life might be spared, for so many days, mentioning the number, ten thousand worlds like this, he would most freely give, for such a little space of repentance. But he added, it is too late; I must die, and go away into everlasting punishment. He soon expired, without giving any evidence of a change of heart. Distressing indeed must be despair like this, on a dying bed; but it is as nothing, compared to the horror of the lost sinner, going away from the *bar of God*, into everlasting punishment.

THE heart-rending word, *depart*, will proceed from the Lion of the tribe of Judah. His eyes will flash devouring fire. Then will be realized by sinners, the truth contained in these words; All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be

weak as water. No sooner will they hear their doom, than they will sink down, and in an instant be ingulphed in the bottomless pit. Now they will really be in the place, which all the means of grace could not make them shun: Now they will believe the divine threatenings, which they had once considered as an idle tale. Henceforth there will be no hesitation among them, whether there be a hell, however positive they might have been, in maintaining the contrary opinion.

THE greatness of the punishment of the finally impenitent, is manifest, from the greatness and goodness of God, and the infinite evil of sin. We have at once brought to view in the character of the sinner, total ill-desert; and at the same time, we may behold God, angry, just, holy and omnipotent, pouring down all the vials of his wrath upon the guilty object. The knowledge of the damned sinner, will be vastly extensive. He will see just what a being God is. The divine law, in its full demand, will stand unclouded before the eyes of the mind, and the fountain of corruption, which, through this probationary life, had been latent in the heart, will show itself without a veil. Every sin will be set in order before him. Each transgression will appear against him, as a swift witness, and press the conscience, with the most poignant and cutting conviction.

SENSIBILITY instead of being in the least blunted, will be awake, with a keenness which is without a parallel, in the most feeling person upon the face of the earth. The soul being progressive in the improvement of its faculties, the capacity for suffering, will be forever enlarging. It will never arrive to its meridian in this respect. Beside, the damned by suffering, will never loose their relish for sin. They will roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongues. They will be in a perfect rage a-

gainst God, and were it in their power, they would strike him out of existence; and yet for these very feelings, they will experience anguish, which will make them wish they had never been born. A remorse and horror far more dreadful and painful to be endured, than to be broken on the wheel, or to fry in a furnace seven times heated, each one will know, and feel, and be assured must continue to all eternity. Every look of Almighty God the Father, every frown of Christ the Son, every accusation of the Holy Spirit, will sink them lower and lower in misery. The eye of God will be, as constantly and intently, fixed on each damned sinner, as if there were no other object in the universe. They will have nothing to screen themselves a moment from the blaze of divine wrath. In vain will they say to the mountains and rocks fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. At the same time, will the almighty agency of God keep the suffering objects alive, with all the keen sensibility, both of soul and body. Not a nerve or one of the fibres will loose its suffering capacity, nor undergo the least diminution in this respect.

WHAT will give edge to the torment of the damned, above every thing beside, will be the remorse arising from their treatment of Christ. Every word of Christ will be like an arrow piercing them through and through; and even those kind intreaties, which must have charmed every mind, but the totally obstinate, will be a dreadful sound in their ears.

COMPANIONS in guilt and misery will prey on each other, as do the vultures on the objects of their attack. All holy beings in the universe, will give judgment against them. As moral obligation is violated, sources of torment will be

growing more numerous. Their bodies being in a flaming fire, the smoke of their torment shall ascend, accompanied with a constant roar of cursing, shrieks of horror, self-condemnation, fearful cries, and notes of complete despair. The most miserable situation, that ever a forlorn wretch experienced upon earth, would be a paradise in comparison with it. One cries, O, for a drop of water to cool my parched tongue! Another, O, for one moment's mitigation of what I now feel! Another, O, that it might end, after millions and millions of ages shall have elapsed! But eternity! eternity! that fatal word! Through endless duration, must I endure the vindictive wrath of God, grinding me to powder, and breaking me like a potter's vessel! Am I forever to be kept alive, in that lake, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched? Yes, here I am to burn as long as there is a God of justice to support the laws of eternal rectitude, and take vengeance on his enemies. But I forbear, and proceed to make an improvement of the discourse.

I. **WHAT** an unfeeling, hardened wretch is that preacher, who will, for the sake of filthy lucre, or empty fame, prophesy smooth things to sinners? Instead of making use of the terror of the Lord to persuade sinners, he will hunt their souls by sewing pillows to their arm-holes, and lulling them to sleep, by the enchanting voice of peace. He will deafen their ears against the thundering of Sinai, and give the children's bread to dogs, even though the storm should burst upon them the next moment. Not like this, was the preaching of Christ, and his holy Apostles and Prophets. They did not heal the wound slightly; but probed it to the bottom. They did not allow the unhallowed feet of the unclean to ascend the sacred mount, lest they should perish in

the attempt; but urged them to immediate reconciliation to God, as their only safety.

AND verily, if one of your dear children blindfolded, was just about to fall into a flaming furnace, should you not deem him exceedingly cruel, if he should insist upon it, in the child's hearing, that there was no more danger attending him, than though he were about to fall upon a bed of down? And yet the cruelty in this case, is not capable of being compared, with that of speaking peace to sinners. Such preachers, are the blind guides, mentioned by Christ, who, with their attached hearers, are in the greatest danger of falling into hell. Beware of their doctrine as you would of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, lest it be to you as bitter as wormwood, and sharp as a two edged sword.

If the foregoing remarks be according to truth, how important it is for the ambassadors of Christ to have a feeling sense of the worth of souls? They should give the stupid world no rest; but realizing their exposedness to endless destruction, they should preach with all possible earnestness, and exhort and entreat them to escape to the mountain, lest they be consumed. For surely, every ungodly sinner is in a situation hazardous, which is faintly pictured by a man asleep in a flaming building, or on the top of a mast.

2. WE infer the unkindness of those parents, who do not speak to their children, and warn them of the evil day, which must issue in the everlasting punishment of the ungodly. They have been instrumental in bringing children into the world, and are not wanting in making provision wherewithal they may be fed and clothed. They will rise up early and set up late for them, and eat the bread of carefulness; and yet fail in the

great affair of promoting their eternal salvation. Their children are looking to them for counsel, and relying much on their judgment. Every day presents favorable opportunities to speak to their children on the great subjects of religion, and yet with these advantages, how many parents are totally neglectful! They will not tell their children there is a hell, and that this must be their portion unless it be prevented by repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And is there any unkindness which can compare with this? Is savage barbarity as unkind? Do you feel for your children? Do you believe they have souls to save or lose? Then be concerned for their immortal interest. Guard them against sinful pleasures, as against the poison of the soul. Pray earnestly to God for them.

3. WE infer the importance of repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. You who are in your sins, delay not a moment to make your peace with God. You are in danger every instant of falling into hell. Before another hour, you may be sealed to everlasting punishment. And who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

TRUE Christianity the Safety of this World.

A SERMON, by ALEXANDER GILLET,
A. M. Pastor of the Church in Torrington,
State of Connecticut.

MATTHEW V. 13.

YE are the salt of the earth ; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

EVERY one, who has read the history of our Saviour, cannot but remark how exceedingly careful he was, in all his ministry, to state the truths, respecting the kingdom of God, in their genuine light ; assigning to every agent, whether God or the creature, his proper station and rights. He took care, especially, to hold up the divine character in a high, holy and honorable point of light, and to bear testimony against hypocrisy and selfishness in creatures.

BUT what may particularly attract our attention, in this discourse, is, the special pains, and

variety of figures, which this divine prophet used, to characterize his true disciples ; and to represent, of what serious importance they are to this world.—*Ye are the salt of the earth*—Ye, christians, are like salt to preserve this world from putrefaction, and destruction. If ye, therefore, who are my professed followers, lose your favour, or proper character, what would you be fit for ? Nothing, but to be cast out with the wicked, and to sink down together in the common mass of pollution, corruption and ruin. It hence appears, that true believers are of great importance to preserve this world from destruction ; and it is of high importance that they act in character.

HERE, therefore, are two ideas to be illustrated and proved ;

I. THAT true believers, as the salt of the earth, are of great importance to preserve this world from destruction ; and,

II. THAT it is of high importance that professors of faith act in character.

I. It is to be shown that true believers, as the salt of the earth, are of great importance to preserve this world from destruction. To illustrate and establish this truth, it may be necessary to turn our attention to the following considerations,

I. WE may attend to the propriety of true christians being figuratively called salt. This, indeed, when applied to the present subject, will be sufficient for our purpose. We therefore observe, that salt is a substance which has virtues of the most important service to our food and nourishment. It is a perpetual preservative of those kinds of food, which are liable to putrefaction. It is not only durable in itself, but it tends to purify other substances, and render them durable. There is something, in most kinds of provision, which tends to dissolution. Indeed, dissolution is

written on every thing under the sun. But experience teaches, that salt has a remarkable tendency to counteract this dissolving, putrescent quality in things, and to render them both fit for use and durable: so that salt is a perpetual preservative.

Just so it is, with respect to the true believer, who supports the christian character. The world lies in wickedness, and has a dreadful tendency to sink in dissolution. The wicked are full of those awful qualities, which incline strongly to destruction. Sin has a direct tendency to the ruin of mankind, even to the ruin of society, and to plunge every thing headlong into a state of dissolution. Let sin have its natural course, and the earth would soon be overspread with the most wasting abominations. Violence and devastation would soon pervade the human race.

BUT this religion, which is taught by the Lord from heaven, has a special tendency to counteract these various abominations. The practice of it, by true believers, tends to remove the ignorance, and wake up the consciences of sinful men; and to give them just ideas of the divine character, law and government. It leads men to a knowledge of themselves, of their criminal, condemned and deplorable state. This may naturally persuade men, as moral agents, to quit their vile abominations, and turn to the living God. At least, they may be convinced, that nothing prevents this turning, but the corruption of their own hearts; and the overt acts of wickedness may be greatly restrained. That these are the effects of the true believer's acting in character, is evident from all experience. It is always found, that sinners, left to themselves, forsake God and every thing consistent and becoming, and run directly to ruin. But where God has sent this holy

religion, and his people inculcate it and act it out, the happy effects of it are always seen. The *embassadors* of the Lord of hosts, in particular, are means of revealing and explaining the mind and will of God to sinful men. They are the *light of the world*; and cordially embracing the gospel themselves, they serve to enforce it on others. Hence the memorable words of Christ which follow the text. *Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel; but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* The servants of Christ preach those important truths, which tend to counteract the lusts of men; which renders it emphatically proper for them to be termed the salt of the earth. By their instructions, counsels, warnings and reproofs, and by their holy walk and conversation, they may be, and often are, instrumental in rooting out the seeds and plants of sin, and in replanting and cultivating the seeds and plants of holiness. The same is true of all the christian brethren, so far as their station and influence may extend. *They* also, are greatly instrumental of spreading and propagating the pure and holy religion of the gospel, by their heavenly counsels and examples; and thus it appears that true believers are, with great propriety called the salt of the earth, as they are instrumental of saving and delivering mankind from the corruptions and pollutions of iniquity.

2. THE word of God represents, that it is on account of the righteous, or true believers, that divine wrath is often suspended from being put in execution on those people who are, in other respects, ripe for ruin. Of this, we find a most

striking instance, in the case of Sodom and Gomorrha. Those cities, however full of the grossest wickedness, would have been spared, had ten righteous persons been found in them. How remarkable, to the same purpose, is the passage of the prophet concerning Jerusalem, when sentenced, for her wickedness, to a long captivity. Jer. v. 1. "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find *a man*, if there be *any* that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it." That is, I will pardon Jerusalem; I will save the city from desolation. The Lord would have spared that idolatrous and bloody city, could but one person, that executed judgment, at that time, have been found in it. How often did Israel escape the threatened storm, by the intercession of Moses! How often by the prayers of David; Samuel and the prophets! Good king Josiah must be gathered unto his people, before the wrath of God might fall on the rebellious and incorrigible Jews. The prophet Ezekiel xiv. 13, 14, offers another passage, full of instruction on this point. "Son of man, when the land sinneth against me, by *trespassing grievously*—though these three men, Noah; Daniel and Job, were in it, they should deliver, but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord;" plainly intimating, that God is wont to deliver many, even a whole nation for the sake of a few righteous. In confirmation of this point, we find that Jerusalem was spared, at last, till all the followers of Christ had retired to a place of safety. In this sense, the wicked world is saved by the righteous, as corruptible things are saved by salt. For their sakes the world stands; and when they shall be all finally removed from the earth, to meet the Lord in the air, at the last day;

then the earth itself is to be burnt up; and the whole material system, which has long been a scene of wickedness, is to be dissolved with fervent heat.

WHAT adds greatly to our point is, that when the righteous are removed to a place of safety, then destruction will not tarry. As when Noah and his family were safely housed in the ark, then the earth was overwhelmed in a deluge of water; and as when Lot had retired from Sodom, then the city was wrapped in a flame of fire and brimstone; and as when the followers of Christ had all escaped from Jerusalem, the remnant fell a prey to divine vengeance by the Roman arms; so, when God shall finally take away all true believers, who are the salt of the earth, then shall the earth, and all the works that are therein, be burnt up, and all the wicked inhabitants be banished into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. In this sense, true believers are the salt of the earth, and are of great importance to preserve this world from destruction.

II. WE are to observe, that it is of high importance, that professors of faith act in character. It is evident, from what has been said, that there is no other way, in which they can operate as the salt of the earth. *If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.* If salt have lost its virtue, what end can it answer for use? Certainly, it will never answer the end, for which good salt is used. It is good for nothing, and worse than nothing. It may deceive mankind, much to their loss and damage, by having some of the appearances of true salt.

JUST so it is with pretenders to religion, who do not possess the favour of faith and holiness. Such are no way calculated to save the world from

sin, or from the storms of divine vengeance. It will not be pretended that open, barefaced hypocrisy has any tendency to reform the world, or save it from destruction. But on the contrary, it tends to transform the world into its own horrid likeness, which is seven fold worse than no pretension to religion. That I am not too censorious, will appear from our Saviour's declared sentiments respecting the scribes, pharisees and hypocrites. "Woe unto you, scribes, and pharisees, hypocrites: for ye compass sea and land, to make one profelyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." Christ stigmatizes such characters, as neither going into the kingdom of heaven themselves, nor suffering those that are entering to go in—He calls them *serpents and a generation of vipers*.

AGAIN; secret hypocrisy is not well calculated to purify and save this world. Hypocrisy is the most heinous of all sins, in the sight of God.—The old and new testaments condemn it, in the strongest terms: the Lord Jesus Christ gives it no countenance at all; but denounces the heaviest woes against it. And since God searches the heart, and tries the reins, though professors may deceive men, they cannot deceive him. Consequently, he will treat them according to their deserts, and suffer them to corrupt and destroy themselves and others, by their base influence. This is the judgment of hypocrites, from the Lord. *The hypocrites in heart heap up wrath.* Job xxxvi. 13.

FURTHER. Hypocritical religion will soon fade. *Will he delight himself in the almighty? Will he always call upon God?* Job xxvii. 10. No. The stony-ground hearers will not, as to the visibility, continue long on the side of true religion.

Every doctrine and precept of the gospel is galling to the proud heart of hypocrites; and it appears to be the divine plan and design, that religious professors, in general, should have a trial of their faith, to see whether it will stand—*That they who are approved may be made manifest.* When the faith of hypocrites fails, it has a most mischievous tendency upon others. Their whole influence, which has become, perhaps, tenfold greater than that of the open enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ, is turned to the disadvantage of the cause of God. Thus it appears that the hypocrite is the most vile and mischievous of all characters—*good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.* The prophet Ezekiel gives us this humiliating description of the apostatized people of God, under the figure of a fruitless vine. Ezek. xv. 2—5. “Son of man, what is the vine-tree, more than any tree?—Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it, to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel”—Israel was called a vine, a plant, when fruitful, of the greatest importance; but when barren, the most useless and contemptible. It is a mere cumbrance of the ground. Even so fruitless professors are utterly worthless, and very pernicious. We hence see that it is of the highest importance, that professors of faith act in character, as the true salt of the earth.

IMPROVEMENT.

I. WE are taught, by this subject, to consider the christian religion as a reality, attended with the most serious and interesting circumstances. It is of divine original; and evidently designed to be the only medium of blessing to this sinful and wretched world. The effects of it, on the particular subjects, are excellent, as salt

on flesh exposed to putrefaction: and the peculiarity of it is, that it renders the subjects of it *the salt of the earth*—the preservative of the world from speedy destruction. This honor have the followers of the Lamb of God! What an important reality is the religion of Jesus Christ!

2. WE learn how impious and self-ruinous are the temper and conduct of those, who set light by the gospel, defaming and abusing all its faithful adherents. Such must, surely, have no proper idea of their own moral character and situation. They do not realize, that they are seeking their own destruction; and pursuing a course, which naturally tends to the destruction of the human race. They do not realize, that, were the people of God removed, this world would soon fall, under the weight of its own enormities. Nor do they consider that the gospel is the only possible plan of safety for themselves and others. The truth is, as the Apostle says, *Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace, they have not known.*

3. WHAT has been offered on this subject urges the strongest obligation on christians, to live and act according to their profession. Our text puts on christians, who act in character, the greatest honor—an honor, to which, no other class of men can make any pretensions. They are *the salt of the earth*—instrumentally, and as active instruments, they are the builders of Christ's church, which is the temple of the living God. For their sakes also, the wicked world is blessed, and spared of God; and the day of probation, in general, lengthened out. All this honor and usefulness depend, however, upon the fidelity of christians. If they be christians, only in name and profession, if they be not living active members of Christ, they are *good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot.* Unfruitfulness is an evidence

that, instead of being saviours of themselves and others, they are spoilers and corrupters, and *shall utterly perish in their own corruptions. Woe unto you—for ye neither enter into the kingdom of heaven yourselves, nor suffer those that are entering to go in.* How solemn is the motive, to all christian professors, to act in character! *To let their speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt!*

4. ARE these things so? We therefore infer the absurdity and rashness of the sentiments of many, who would make impenitent formalists in religion fit members of Christ's visible body, and partakers of the special ordinances of his house. Surely that which disqualifies a person to be the salt of the earth, according to our text, equally disqualifies for a place in his family, and for the special ordinances of his house. The text is plain on the point; that such are *good for nothing*; and if they happen to be found among those who are the salt of the earth, they must be *cast out*, and rejected as unprofitable.

THERE are a variety of figures used to represent the proper qualifications for the church of Christ. When the church is called a *temple*, the members are considered as *stones* in the building; and of what kind the stones of the building must be, the Apostles clearly inform us, in the following words. *Ye also, as LIVING STONES, are built up a spiritual house. Again, in these words, And are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. The qualifications for this temple of God are, to become lively stones, and to be fitly framed together, or conformed to the chief corner stone, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. These figures, as well as that in the text, fix and establish the point, that real christianity, or the manifestation of it, in the judg-*

ment of candour and charity, is the only qualification for a visible standing in Christ's church. All are friends or enemies to Jesus Christ. *He that is not with me is against me*: And can it be supposed that an enemy to Christ, from whom the christian name is derived, is fit for a nominal christian? Are the enemies of Christ fit members of the family and household of God? Are they invited, as such, to crowd themselves into his family? Christ says, in the text, they are good for nothing, but to be cast out; and let it be remembered, that he and the Father are one.

5. THE subject teaches us that the churches of Christ ought to admit none to their christian communion, and to reject all from their communion, unless they appear to be the cordial friends of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Put away from among yourselves that wicked person, if he be called a brother, saith the Apostle*; and if he be not yet called a brother, by no means adopt him as such, unless he appear firmly and cordially to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. When the eunuch was desirous to be introduced, by baptism, into the church of Christ, the reply was, *If thou believest, with all thine heart, thou mayest*. When these divine rules are sacredly regarded, and not till then, may we hope that the churches will have rest, and be edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, be multiplied.

6. THE foregoing view of the nature and effects of christianity, as constituting true believers the salt of the earth, compared with the aspects of the present day, leads us to conclude that true religion is very rare. The present is certainly a time of great degeneracy. True believers are the salt of the earth: but the greater part of professors, at present, evidently appear not to be, at all, seasoned with such a salt. How rarely do we find, in this day of declension, those who are, evidently,

the salt of the earth! How few are found to be professors, of any stamp! And how small is the proportion of professors, whose *speech* appears to be always with grace, seasoned with salt! Have we not awfully degenerated? Has not the cry of our pride, covetousness, hypocrisy, licentiousness and infidelity reached the very heavens, and called for divine vengeance? Is there not a growing liberality of sentiment, which implies a contempt of the real sentiments of the gospel? Are not efforts made to build up christian societies, so called, upon a basis broad enough to comprehend, even the open enemies to divine revelation? What is wanting in pure salt, is made up, in bulk, with the most corrupt materials. How strangely insensible is the multitude, that *iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold!—their salt hath lost its savour!* How many, at this day, can discern the face of the sky, and even philosophize upon it; but how few can discern the *signs of the times!* The humiliating religion of Jesus is sinking in the estimation of the multitude, of every description. *Any thing* is a favorite, rather than this heaven born guest, procured by the blood of the Son of God.

ON the whole; how many professing christians are there, who will turn every way, and make all imaginable shifts, to excuse themselves from vital christianity! So that, were the inquisition made for blood, in this land, a land of professed light and purity; where would the *ten righteous* be found?—Where the necessary number to screen us from the most aggravated destruction? Our moral state is truly alarming, beyond conception; and our subject is calculated to awaken the greatest solicitude to *have salt in ourselves, and thus to prepare to meet our God.*

7. I MAY now close with a word of exhortation.

If such be our character, and such our lamentable state, as a people; how ought all to look

down, with blushing and trembling, into their own hearts, and examine and judge themselves. We must bear in mind, that God will not be mocked. His terrors stand ready to vindicate his long injured name and honor. To escape the threatened storm, there must be a sincere reformation. We must learn righteousness, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

ARE there any true friends of God and the Lord Jesus? Let such be clothed in their proper character, as *the salt of the earth*, and *come to the help of the Lord*. Such of all men, must lament the sad aspect respecting religion, both in themselves and others. Ye dear disciples of the Lamb, can ye sleep, when immortal souls lie so thick around you, dead in trespasses and sins? Must your Lord be wounded by profanity and infidelity; and shall he, also, be more signally *wounded in the house of his friends*? If you design, not to be hypocrites, who crucify the son of God afresh; but to be the salt of the earth; why are you not a thousand times more active in the cause of your Saviour? Why not more watchful, more prayerful, more vigorous, more distinguished from the world? *Ye are the salt of the earth*: and what if the earth, or the wicked inhabitants, perish in multitudes, through your indifferency, sloth and unfaithfulness? Awful would be the consideration! Rouse up, therefore, to zeal and fidelity: spare no pains in promoting those purposes for which your dear Lord came down from heaven, and died on the cross. Lament the growth of impiety, mourn over perishing sinners, and pray without ceasing, that God, in the midst of these years, would make known, and in wrath, remember mercy. Should you awake to righteousness, zeal and fidelity, who can tell but God will be gracious?

THE impenitent and unbelievers may now accept a word of exhortation, though the text be addressed to christian professors. The text if realized, will found fearfully in the ears of sinners. The followers of Christ *are* the salt of the earth : what then are you, O sinners, and enemies to the Saviour ! You reject the gospel, and this is rejecting your own salvation. You are opposed, in heart, to all true believers ; and what is this, but aiming a blow at those, who, in one sense, are your protectors ? Do the impenitent know and realize what they are about ? Do they consider, that *They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy ?* It certainly becomes such to awake immediately, to put on Christ, to engage, heartily, in his cause ; that they, also, may be the salt of the earth.

FINALLY. I have now delivered my message, and I trust, in some measure as a servant of the Lord Jesus. Some things suggested, are very interesting ; and attended with the most serious consequences. They will follow us down to the day of judgment, and into the eternal world. How exceedingly desirable is it, that the subject testify in our favor, at the great day of accounts ! that then it be said to us, *Ye have been the salt of the earth. Well done good and faithful servants ; enter ye into the joys of your Lord.*

BUT, how tremendous, should this rise against us in the great day, that we have been *corrupters of the earth !* For this, we must be hurled down to the lowest hell, to the regions of horror, shame and everlasting contempt. It is worthy of notice, here, that all have their choice. All are, therefore intreated and admonished to make a wise choice ; lest they bear the folly of their own aggravated destruction. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. AMEN.*

THE Character and Claims of Christ vindicated.

✓
A SERMON, by JACOB CATLIN, A. M. Pastor of the first Church of Christ in New-Marlborough, State of Massachusetts.

JOHN vii. 18.

He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory : but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

THESE words were spoken by Jesus Christ, in the presence of a numerous concourse of cavilling Jews, at the feast of tabernacles. The controversy then, as well as now, ran very high, on a point of infinite importance. The point was, and now is, whether Jesus were, as he claimed to be, the true *Messiah*, the *Lord from heaven*, the *Son of God*, and *Saviour of sinners*. Such, according to the gospel, he claimed to be, and for these claims he was opposed, and persecuted to the most ignominious death.

He was opposed, indeed, on account of the doctrines and precepts which he taught ; but not

principally on this account. For the Jews had been so far accustomed to divine revelation, as to be sensible, that if he were the true Messiah, his doctrines, however incomprehensible, would be supported. All their advantage against him depended, therefore, on disputing his *high claims*. The main point of allegation against him was, that he *spake of himself—He being a man, maketh himself God*. The Jews sought the more to kill him, because he said that God was his Father, *making himself equal with God*. When Jesus said, *Before Abraham was, I am*, they took stones to cast at him; and when he said, *I and my Father are one*, then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Also, in his trial before Pontius Pilate, their plea was this, *We have a law, and by our law, he ought to die; because he made himself the Son of God*. These were, indeed, the claims which Jesus Christ made; and in connection with our text, we find a close debate, running through several chapters; the subject of which is, whether Jesus were what he claimed to be, the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners; or whether he were a selfish impostor, who deceived the people.

JESUS used several arguments in vindication of his divine mission; but none, in my apprehension, more decisive than the one stated in our text. Or rather, in our text is stated a rule, by which it might be determined, whether he spake of himself, as a mere selfish impostor, or spake and taught the truth, with divine power and authority. *He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him*. As if he had said, "He who is a vile impostor, as you alledge that I am; he who is not a true messenger of God, but a wicked pretender to high

prerogatives, *seeketh his own glory* : he is a selfish being, and will act a selfish part. He will not knowingly proceed any further, or in any other manner, than is consistent with his plan for private honour and emolument. But he who seeketh his glory who sent him, who regardeth an interest abstracted from his own, who seeketh the glory of *another*, and that, evidently, the divine glory ; who acts the part of a disinterested and faithful embassador, who is perfectly upright in the character of a messenger and servant, in the name and for the interest of the Holy One ; *the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.*"

THIS is, perhaps, an unexceptionable rule for the trial of a moral character. It is at least, a rule, stated by Jesus Christ, in our text, as being, in his case, infallible.

LET the rule be well understood, and if it be infallible, let it receive the approbation of all, before we apply it in vindication of the character and claims of Jesus Christ. The rule, as stated in our text is, briefly, this ; *He who is selfish will act for himself, and seek his own private good supremely ; but he who exercises self-denial, and seeks the glory of God supremely, the same is honest and true, and is no impostor.*

WE now proceed to try the character of Jesus Christ by this rule. The question is, did Jesus act the part of a selfish man, who sought to head a party for his own private advantage ? On this ground, he ventured a trial of his character. He did it publicly, in the temple, before the great body of the Jews, who were assembled from all quarters. And *they* were the people, who had the best advantage to scan his character ; and who wanted not a disposition to do it, with the greatest severity. Indeed, at the very instant of their murmurings against him, he as it were, bid

a public challenge; as if he had said, *Men and brethren, if you can find, by the strictest examination, that I am actuated by selfish motives, condemn me as an impostor.* How did the Jews succeed in their controversy with Jesus Christ? Did they ever discover in him one symptom of that contracted spirit of selfishness, which marks the character of every false pretender to high prerogatives? Not the least. They condemned him for his high claims; because he *being a man, made himself God.* He never denied, but always supported this claim. *I and the Father are one.* He required, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. This was a main point to be decided, by the rule of trial stated in the text. The Jews were never able to alledge and prove any facts against him, inconsistent with his sustaining the high and holy character of Deity. They were very apprehensive of danger to their state, from his mighty power, and spreading influence. The chief priests and pharisees said, "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." But do we find one fact mentioned, which indicated a disposition to promote the Roman tyranny; or to be placed at the head of the Roman empire? Do we find that he was ever disposed to assume *any* civil power? On the other hand, do we not find, in our context, that *when Jesus perceived, by his growing popularity, that the people would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone?* He totally avoided worldly promotion and honors. On some occasions, he discovered power sufficient to conquer and destroy empires, by a single effort of his will: but, in no instance, did he employ any of his power to accomplish the purposes of a proud, carnal,

selfish heart. He submitted to poverty, perils and reproaches—*had not where to lay his head*—held no worldly possessions or honors ; and though he professed to be a great king ; yet he declared, and his conduct witnessed the truth of his declaration, that *his kingdom was not of this world*. He discovered no ambition to head a powerful party, or to decoy any one, by craft or subtlety, into any secret plot or scheme. The testimony of Jesus before the high priest was literally true ; John xviii. 19, 20. “ The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world : I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort ; and in secret have I said nothing.”

JESUS was perfectly frank and honest in all his treatment of mankind. There is not, in the whole history of his life, the least appearance of his using flattery or being flattered. Attempts were made to flatter him ; but made in vain. A certain young man, a man of fortune, came running and kneeling down before him, said, “ *Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life ?*” Jesus Christ treated him with the utmost frankness and fidelity. Instead of humouring his pride, in order to get a bounty of him, *who had great possessions*, he made a close attack on his covetous heart. “ *Go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me.*” The young man went away sorrowful.

NICODEMUS also came to Jesus by night, and addressed him in a very humble and friendly style. “ *Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God ; for no man can do these miracles which thou dost, except God be with him.*” He was a man of eminence—a ruler of the Jews :

and came with all imaginable appearance of sincerity. He doubtless was sincere. If, therefore, Jesus had been a mere, selfish man, endeavoring to raise himself to worldly importance, he would certainly have embraced the opportunity to make a partizan of this ruler of the Jews. He would have taken measures to secure his friendship, on a selfish plan. But instead of this, he immediately espoused the cause of God, and crowded this ruler with the doctrine of *regeneration*, the doctrine of the *divinity of the Saviour*, intimating himself to be the person, and doctrine of the *necessity* of his death on the cross to make atonement for sin. He introduced all these, briefly, and with great emphasis. John iii. 3, 13, 14, 15. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.— And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

THIS was the method, in which Jesus Christ treated mankind : a method totally diverse from all, which were ever adopted by any proud impostor, or by any usurper of worldly good.

IT is further observable, that proud impostors, who act on selfish principles, always choose the most subtle *aids and ministers* in their causes. Jesus chose twelve, very plain, simple, obscure illiterate men, to be his companions. They evidently possessed neither power nor policy, to afford their master the least assistance, in accomplishing any scheme for private, temporal emolument. If Jesus were a mere man, *who sought his own glory*, in a selfish manner, he must have been extremely foolish, in his choice of aids and

means, to carry his plan into execution. But, that he was not an ignorant or foolish man, is very evident; because, on all occasions, he was perfectly able, by argument, to confound his most learned and subtle adversaries. It is evident, that Jesus Christ had wisdom, equal to all his undertakings; but he was not disposed to employ it, in promoting any selfish plan, for private, temporal glory.

THAT he did not, as an impostor, seek his own glory, appears further, from his reluctance to having the fame of his miraculous works spread abroad. He did not appear, like the false pretenders in the church of Rome, disposed to work miracles, *only* in secret. He wrought, both publicly and privately. But when a miracle was private, the charge was added, "*See thou tell no man.*" "*Neither go into the city, nor tell it to any one in the city.*" He was very cautious, lest there should be some exaggeration, in the reports of his mighty works done in secret. We find, in the context, that some of his brethren did not believe in him; and their objection was, that he was not disposed to make a display of his mighty works. "His brethren therefore said unto him, depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou dost. For there is no man that doth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things shew thyself to the world." The testimony of these unbelieving brethren, concerning human nature, was very true. Proud, selfish men, who *seek their own glory*, do not feel fond of doing mighty works in secret. They *seek to be known openly*. We have, therefore, the testimony of Christ's enemies, that he was diverse from all selfish men, with regard to ostentation, and the love of fame.

AGAIN. In the manner of Christ's treatment of his proud and potent enemies, the great men, and the heads of his own nation, he evidently acted the part of a real friend to truth and righteousness, and not the part of a wicked subverter of the truth, who sought his own temporal glory. He kept the law of Moses, and treated all legal authority with respect. He yielded submission to the Roman government, and paid tribute to Cæsar, when demanded, rather than incur, even *unjust* censure, in a matter of property. But when the moral law of God came under consideration, with what frankness, plainness, and undaunted zeal, do we find him explaining and vindicating those points, which he knew had long been exploded! With what God-like zeal, with what firmness and pathos, he withstood and testified against their most darling errors! What a close, honest, faithful reprove of all the vicious and erroneous, whether great or small! "*Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites!*" "*Woe unto you also, ye lawyers—Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! How can ye escape the damnation of hell?*" What an honest, alarming preacher! How bold in the cause of Jehovah! He thundered terrors, like the thunders of Sinai, in the ears of the first characters of the nation.

ALL this he must have done, were he a mere impostor, without the least prospect of carrying any point; yea, without the least means of self-defence; and with the most certain expectation of being baffled and destroyed. Does this appear like selfishness? Is it thus, that men seek their own glory? Certainly not. Had Jesus been a mere man, engaged in a selfish scheme, he must have been conscious of it in his own mind; and, with the surprizing wisdom he discovered, on many occasions, he must have been sensible, that such

a reprimanding treatment of the leaders of the nation would have been fatal to his cause. This, therefore, would not have been his method of proceeding. Kingdom and dominion can never be usurped among men, nor can they be made subject to wicked imposition, except by force, by subtilty or flatteries. None of these were used by Jesus Christ. From subtilty and flatteries, he was perfectly free; and he used no force, but that of truth. He, therefore, was not a usurper, he was not an impostor; but was what he claimed to be, the true Messiah, the Lord from heaven.

STILL further evidence appears, that Christ did not seek his own glory, as a selfish impostor, from the motives which he always held up to his followers. They, for a long time, contrary to all his instructions, had expectations of a temporal kingdom. He was always industrious to check these proud expectations; and, indeed, to cut off from his followers all prospects of worldly good. "My kingdom is not of this world."—"He that loveth his life shall lose it."—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself."—"Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake."—"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."—"If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" He reproved those who followed him, *because they did eat of the loaves, and were filled.* He was uniformly opposed to selfishness in his followers; and gave them to understand, that, in order to be his disciples, they must *take up the cross.* He told them, indeed, that he had *appointed to them a kingdom,* and great felicity; but that it was beyond the grave, beyond the utmost limits of worldly good. Nor was the good which he promised, calculated, in any meas-

ure, to gratify a selfish, carnal heart. The earnest of it, in this world, which must resemble the full possession, he made to consist in the enjoyment of the invisible God, by the exercises of self-denial, humility and faith in him as the great sacrifice for their sins. Had he sought his own glory, like the proud leaders of worldly sects and parties, like them he would have flattered his followers with the prospect of some good, either present or future, which would have gratified proud and ambitious minds. Nothing of this kind appears; but the reverse, altogether. He never proposed to his followers one selfish motive. Consequently, it appears, that he did not, like a wicked impostor, seek his own glory. He was uniformly opposed to selfishness.

ON the whole, if we take ever so particular view of all the conduct of Jesus Christ, both in the public and private walks of life, we shall find, in every action, an expression of pure benevolence. On all occasions, the honor of God, and of his law and government appear to have been predominant. To show, in every particular, *how* his benevolence appeared, would exceed my present limits; nor is it incumbent on me, in order to a sufficient defence of the character of Christ. Let those who rail at christianity, and consider it as a scheme of selfish impostors, headed by the great impostor, Jesus Christ, be challenged to point out a single instance, in which he deviated from perfect benevolence.

FINALLY: The last trial of Jesus Christ, whether, as a selfish impostor, he sought his own glory, was in his death. By all that can be learnt from history respecting his death, it was an event which he expected, and often particularly foretold. To die, the just for the unjust, he ever considered as a principal design of his coming into the world.

“ I lay down my life for the sheep.”—“ I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” If Christ had been a mere man, who sought his own glory, he must have been conscious of it; and he could have had no end at all to answer for himself, by dying as he did, in the character of an impostor. This would, at once, have terminated all his selfish prospects.

BESIDES : it is evident, that, if he had chosen it, he could easily have avoided crucifixion. He could, with perfect ease, baffle all his accusers, and convince the judges of his innocence. His death was manifestly voluntary; and had he been a selfish man, he would have avoided the impending death, and in this way, have enjoyed *some* good. But in dying, a real impostor, there was certainly an end of all selfish good. It is, indeed, impossible to conceive of any selfish motive, which Jesus could have had to die as he died.

THUS, in the life, and in the death of Christ, there is evidence, abundant evidence, that he did not, as a proud and corrupt leader of a selfish party, *seek his own glory*. He sought the glory of God, and the best good of men; and was, therefore, what he claimed to be, the true Messiah, the Lord from heaven.

IMPROVEMENT.

I. FROM the subject we clearly infer, that there is but one alternative for the unbeliever of the gospel : Either there never was, on earth, such a person as Jesus Christ; or else the gospel is from God, and all the solemn things, which it contains, are realities. The allegation of the Jews against Jesus, that he was a wicked impostor, a deceiver of the people, and an arrogant blasphemer, on account of his high claims, we find to

be groundless. The whole history of his life and death is a confutation of their opinion. Even the unbeliever admits, that the Jews wholly mistook the character of Jesus, and treated him with injustice and cruelty. But certainly, if there ever was such a person as Jesus Christ is said to be, the *Jews* and not modern unbelievers, have been consistent in their reasonings respecting his character. They very justly concluded, that he was, either the Lord from heaven, or else, one of the vilest, and most arrogant blasphemers. There is, to us, the same evidence of his claiming divine perfection, as there is of his having had existence on earth, or of his being crucified. The gospel as clearly informs us, that Jesus made such claims, as that he was born, and lived, and was crucified in Judea. Let it, therefore, now be asserted, with all confidence, that Jesus was a mere man, simple, ignorant and obscure; a good moralist, but no prophet; let it be said, peremptorily, that Jesus never pretended to work miracles, and did not claim divine honors; that he did not voluntarily give his life a ransom for sinners; but was taken by surprize and crucified; yet there is no degree of weight in these assertions; because they are attended with no degree of evidence. They are *foolish* cavils against the Saviour, in comparison with those raised by the Jews; and yet we find the cavils of the Jews to be utterly groundless.

It is said, however, that the life, the character, the high claims, and miraculous works of Christ were recorded, not by himself, but by his disciples; and that *they* have been the forgers of what are called the *doctrines* of Christ; but that Jesus never pretended to any such things. The believer of the gospel humbly demands the evidence of all this wicked forgery. How came any

modern unbeliever to know, that Jesus was a simple, obscure man, and not such a being as the gospel represents him to be? Is any man furnished with an infallible history of Jesus Christ, which contradicts the whole tenor of the gospel? Why is not that history produced, and the matter rendered indisputable? Why do men of sense presume to say, that there was such a man as Jesus, and to give a particular account his character, without the least evidence of the truth of a word which they say on the subject? It is very evident to all, who have candidly examined the most ancient records of the life and character of Jesus Christ, that even his enemies, who were cotemporary, and witnesses of what he said and did, could not deny the facts related of him in the gospel. All the authentic history of him, which is to be found in the world, concurs to prove that the gospel account is strictly honest and true. If such a person as Jesus ever lived on earth, we have a true history of his character and claims, in the new testament. It is, therefore, incumbent on the unbeliever of the gospel, if he would feel any degree of safety, to make it appear, that all the history of Jesus Christ is false: and that no such person ever lived in Judea. If he fail in this attempt, and will suffer his mind to lie open to conviction, he must admit, that the gospel is from God, and, that all the solemn things, which it contains, are realities.

II. MUCH, therefore, depends on realizing, that there was, in the Augustan age, such a person in Judea as Jesus Christ. Several things may now come into view, and concur to prove this important fact; as,

I. THE very complexion of the history of Christ, in the gospel, affords evident marks of authenticity. The history is a plain, simple nar-

ration of facts, without any appearance of that embellishment, pomp and ostentation, which are peculiar to all fictitious performances. We have a brief and unaffected account of the conception, birth, life, doctrines, miracles, prophecies, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. He is considered as the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners. The subjects are infinitely more sublime, than ever employed the pens of heathen poets, historians or philosophers; but the history is totally unlike all the elaborate works of men. The majesty and sublimity lie wholly in the subjects; and no appearance of that pride and pomp, which mark all human fictions, is to be found in the whole gospel. If there never had been such a person as Jesus Christ, I think it perfectly contrary to all the operations of mankind, to produce such a history as that contained in the gospel: Especially, when we take into view the moral character of Jesus, which is given in the gospel, and the moral precepts enjoined on his followers. The gospel sets up a character as head of the church, which is low and contemptible, in the view of all proud and selfish beings. Christ is represented as never seeking his own glory, in a worldly, selfish view, or the glory and advancement of any of his followers. Abstractedness from the world, and all its allurements is the leading trait in the character of Christ, and of all his followers. Self-denial, and supreme regard to the glory of God, humility, meekness, patience, submission to God, and faith in a crucified Saviour, are the virtues inculcated on mankind in the gospel—virtues, which could not have been so honestly, and so perseveringly urged, by a gang of proud forgers and impostors. The observation of all must evince the truth of these assertions. Thus it appears, as it might in a greater variety

of respects, that the very complexion of the history of Christ in the gospel carries evidence of authenticity.

2. THAT there was such a person and character in the world, as the gospel represents Jesus Christ to have been, is evident, by his having been, for so many ages, firmly believed on, by the best judges of the matter, and often against every temporal advantage of those who believed. The Apostles were eye-witnesses; and they sacrificed every thing dear in this life; they even renounced life itself, in vindication of their lively faith in Jesus Christ, as THEIR LORD, AND THEIR GOD. They knew, with certainty, whether they had seen Jesus Christ, and been well acquainted with his character, doctrines and works: they testified that they had, and were competent witnesses, as appears by their sober and judicious writings. They urged the importance of faith in Christ, even in circumstances most desperate. All the power and policy of the world was against them; and it was utterly impossible, that they should have any worldly motives to urge the cause of Christ, or even any prospect of success, except on the assurance, that he was as he claimed to be, the Lord from heaven. And, that the Apostles were the writers of the gospel, is found to be as evident, by a multitude of witnesses of the same age, as that any other books of the same antiquity, were written by any other particular men.

AFTER the Apostles, if we may give credit to the whole current of history, there appeared, all over Judea, and indeed, throughout the Roman empire vast multitudes of the most enlightened people in the world, and people of the most sober and upright character, who firmly believed in Jesus Christ. It was obvious, in the first ages

of christianity, that believers were the candid, the virtuous, and patient party; and that unbelievers were the proud, malicious and persecuting. Many appeared to apostatize from the profession of faith; but no one was found to be the better for his apostacy. And I trust every one knows, that there have been, in all ages since, many of the best character, and under the best advantages to judge in the matter, who have most firmly believed, that such a person as Jesus is said to have been, did appear, did do, teach and suffer the things spoken of him in the gospel. If all this be a mere delusion, and no such character ever appeared in the world, we may now challenge the unbeliever to show us how it happens, that the wisest and best of men, in every age, have been taken in the delusion. How happens it, that civilization, literature, good government, and every laudable improvement, have always risen and fallen, in proportion to the progress or decline of christianity? If, in truth, there never was such a person as Jesus Christ, how came a faith so extraordinary, and, at the same time, so *salutary*, to spring up in opposition to all iniquity; and though more opposed than any thing else, yet never to be confuted or destroyed? The matter must be very unaccountable and perplexing to those who deny the existence of Jesus Christ. To say the least, the probability is strongly against them; and if they are deceived, the deception is fatal: For they *deny the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.*

3. THAT there was, indeed, such a person as Jesus Christ in the world, is evident, from every branch of history. The history of Jews, pagans, infidels and apostates, as well as of christians, all concur in this, that a wonderful personage, Jesus,

who was called *the Christ*, appeared, at a certain time in Judea, correspondent with Jewish predictions, and claimed to be the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners. Indeed, the facts which supported his claims were generally acknowledged. According to history, it was, on all hands, conceded, that in consequence of his appearing, and setting up his religion, there was the greatest revolution, with respect to religion, that ever took place in any age; and all this, without any revolution in civil government. It is granted, even by the mortal enemies of Christ, who lived in the same age, that paganism, which had been established from time immemorial, received an irreparable shock—heathen oracles were struck dumb—communication with devils seemed, in a measure, to be cut off—ancient magical arts came into disrepute, and the worship of God, in a rational and spiritual manner was set up and established, in all parts of the civilized world. Indeed, at that time, civilization took a wonderful spread, and received a marvellous increase. The mists of pagan darkness vanished and were dissipated, by the glorious light of the sun of righteousness.

If there be, at this day, any dependence at all to be placed on the concurrent testimony of all kinds of history, this was, in fact, the state of things, in that age of the world; and Jesus Christ was, in fact, the first cause of this great and wonderful revolution. It is hence clear, that such a person and character has existence, and has appeared in the world, as the gospel informs us.

4. It is sufficiently evident, that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, from the existence of his church in the world. If the church were not

founded by Christ, according to gospel history, who was the founder of it? Where else do we find the origin of christianity? It is believed, without hesitation, that Mahomet was the founder of the sect called *Mahometans*; and that all other sects and parties, except the christian, were founded by those, whose names are mentioned in all history, as founders. But christianity is said to be a system of *priestcraft*, the invention of a set of vicious and tyrannical impostors, for their own profit, and to subjugate vulgar minds. Why should men confide in historical testimony, respecting all other sects; but renounce it, as far as it respects christianity? The christian church has been one of the greatest parties among mankind; the most public and conspicuous, the most known and scrutinized; at the same time, the most enlightened, the most learned, and has kept the most authentic records, of any party which ever had existence. If there never was any Christ, such as the gospel represents, why cannot the origin of this most enlightened and wonderful party be traced out? Why is it not *proved*, as well as *roundly asserted*, that a certain set of wicked impostors, at a certain time, forged what is called the gospel, and imposed it upon mankind? The proof of this is so difficult, that no man, as I can learn, ever yet made the attempt. It may, therefore, be presumed, that such ridiculous speeches, concerning the origin of the gospel, are groundless.

It is rational to believe, that there is such a person as the Lord Jesus Christ, who actually appeared, in the time and manner which the gospel relates; and that his disciples wrote a true and faithful history of the origin of the church. If they erred or dissembled, in any point, there were learned enemies, both among the Jews and Ro-

mans, who were able and disposed to detect their errors and falsehoods. But no such detection was ever made. The church was, therefore, originated by Jesus Christ; and by him it has been supported, in a miraculous manner, through all kinds and degrees of opposition, from that to the present day. The church is a *sect, every where spoken against*. It could not arise, by man's influence, because all men are naturally disposed to put it down. If there never was such a character as Jesus Christ, it is impossible to account for the origin and perpetuity of the christian church.

THUS I think it very evident, that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who was the founder of the christian church. The consequence is, therefore, clear, that the gospel is from God, and all the solemn things, which it contains, are realities. We have the same evidence of the high claims of Jesus Christ, that we have of the existence of his person; and, by a careful examination of his character, by the rule of trial, given in our text, we have found, that *he was true, and no unrighteousness was in him*. Every part of his moral conduct, and every doctrine or precept which he delivered, gave evidence, that *he sought not his own glory, pleased not himself*, as all corrupt impostors are found to do; but he sought the glory of God, and the general good. If so, it follows, that he is what he claims to be, the supreme Lord of all, who is to be acknowledged by us, as the only Saviour.

III. THE subject will now be concluded with a serious reflection on some of the important things, which are implied, in *believing* the truth of the gospel of Christ. We are too apt to imagine, that we believe the gospel, indeed to glory in our faith and orthodoxy, and make a righteousness of it; while, in reality, we *do not* believe; and are little if at all

better, even in point of sentiment, than downright, professed infidels.

To believe the gospel, as we ought to believe, and so as to be essentially distinguished from open infidels, implies a full conviction, and cordial approbation of all the doctrines, precepts and testimonies of it; and especially, of all that is implied in the work of redemption by the blood of Christ. To be particular; do we *believe* the gospel of Christ? If so, we really believe in the universal and total apostacy of all mankind from the true God; and that all, unless they are united to Christ, by a living faith, are exposed to endless punishment. And further; a belief of the gospel implies a sense of the necessity of regenerating grace, to save us from our sins, and to prepare us for the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

STILL further; a belief of the gospel implies a sense of our total incapacity to redeem or save ourselves from the just punishment of past iniquity; and this, even on supposition that we were ever so humble and penitent. It implies a sense of intire dependence on the merit of Christ's atoning blood, to redeem and save us, even on condition of true faith in him. John iii. 14, 15. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up, that *whosoever believeth in him* should not perish, but have eternal life." The Apostle, (Rom. iii.) represents, that Christ was set forth for a propitiation, that, through faith in his blood, the righteousness, or *justice* of God, *might be declared*, in the remission of sins that are past.

AGAIN; a belief of the gospel implies a sense of infinite obligation to be holy, both in heart and life. It is exceedingly manifest to all true be-

lievers of the gospel, that the grand business of Jesus Christ in this world was, to set up a kingdom of righteousness. "For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." He hath made it evident, especially by his sufferings for sin, to redeem us from the curse of the law, that sin is infinitely malignant, and that we are under infinite obligation to hate, abhor, and turn from it, as a most deadly evil; and to be holy, as Christ is holy. "As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of conversation." We must prove our fidelity to Christ, and the genuineness of our faith, in the same manner, in which Christ proved his divinity, by *not seeking our own glory, but the glory of God*. This is holiness—this is moral duty. And as this was necessary, to designate and prove, that Jesus was what he claimed to be; so it is equally necessary to designate and prove that we are true believers in his gospel, and heirs of his kingdom.

FINALLY; to believe the gospel, savingly, implies full confidence, and a humble acquiescence in all the promises and threatenings of it. It implies a realizing sense of the great solemnities of death and a separate state—that we shall soon appear, unbodied, to exist in happiness or misery, till the day of judgment—that we shall then be raised from the dead, by the voice of the archangel (who is Jesus Christ) and by the trump of God, to appear once more in the body, before his dread tribunal, with the whole assembled universe, then to receive a public and final adjudication. All who truly believe the gospel, are sensible that by it, *life and immortality are brought to light*. They live and act, daily, under an affecting sense of these great, approaching solemnities. They as really expect, that all

these things will take place ; that they shall see the supreme judge descend in glory, with all the holy angels ; see all the dead arisen, and arraigned before his bar of justice ; see this world in flames, and see themselves with all their fellow men, according to the character formed in this life, receive their final destination to endless felicity or endless torments ; as *really*, as any one ever expected the most infallible events in this world. They, accordingly, make it their business to be in readiness ; and have recourse to the gospel for all their instructions respecting a due preparation to stand in judgment before the Son of God.

NOT only are all these things expected, by true believers ; but they are expected with tranquillity and joy. They “*look for and hasten unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt ; and the earth, with the works that are therein shall be burnt up.*” At this time, they, according to the promise of God, “*look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*” True believers *comfort one another*, with the prospects of the day of judgment ; because it is the day in which their Redeemer shall be glorified, and thenceforward they shall be complete in glory, *forever with the Lord.*

THESE things, and all things solemn, interesting and joyful, are implied in a true belief of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We, therefore, see the truth, the weight and force of that solemn declaration of our Lord, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; and he that believeth not shall be damned.*” AMEN.

THE wicked, on account of worldly prosperity, and unbelief of a future state, openly reject and despise the Almighty.

A SERMON by JACOB CATLIN, A. M. Pastor of the first Church in New-Marlborough, State of Massachusetts.

JOB xxi. 13, 14, 15.

THEY spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?

IT is vain to pretend, as many do, that the Bible is a foolish book, and does not give us a just and true representation of men and things. Every man, who has the least acquaintance with human nature, must be sensible, that, in our text, is contained a perfect representation of the improvement, which the wicked make of the kind and liberal dealings of the Almighty. The ways

of providence are marvellous—especially in liberality to the wicked. God's ways would be inexplicable by us, were it not for the light of divine revelation; but this leads us forward to a future world, and solves our difficulties.

THE light of nature, indeed, if we were perfectly candid, would teach us that God is just and good; and would teach us that there is a future state, in which his justice and goodness are to be fully and perfectly displayed. But, with our present darkness and prejudice, we should never, without a revelation, make these discoveries. Of course, we should discover no benefit arising from the knowledge, love, and service of God.

THE wicked are represented in our text, as discarding the true God, rejecting the knowledge of his ways, refusing to serve him and pray unto him; because they find, that the wicked *spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave*—That is; they see nothing very dreadful in a life of wickedness. They who scorn the service of God, and devote themselves to iniquity, are as happy, to all appearance, as others. This emboldens mankind to commit iniquity with greediness. The Psalmist was very full, and was even perplexed with the the same idea. Psalm lxxiii. 3, 4, 5. "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain: violence covereth them as a garment." With the same ideas our text is introduced, and Job appears to be, not a little perplexed. "*Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight—their houses are safe from fear; neither is the rod of God upon*

them—They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth,” or *mirth*, as it is in the margin of the Bible, “and in a moment go down to the grave.” When they die, the scene of distress is short, and they are soon out of sight and forgotten. This is the last that is heard of them. Sometimes, it is true, they die in the agonies of despair, and give awful forebodings of future, eternal wretchedness; but this is called, either cowardice or delirium. The living and surviving companions in wickedness conclude, in general, that there is no danger. Thus they slide along, crying, *peace, peace. Therefore they say unto God, depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.*

THE DOCTRINE, suggested by the text, is this; That the wicked, in general, from their absurd view of the divine dispensations, conduct very much as they would, if they knew, that this was their only state of existence, and worldly pleasures the only happiness.

JOB was not alone, in expressing this idea of human nature. We find the same in the Ecclesiastes, viii. 10, 11. “And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This is also vanity. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Many more passages of scripture might be adduced, in direct proof of the doctrine; but this is not the plan of proof, now proposed. The proof from scripture is already clear; and what I now propose, as being more convictive and solemnizing, to those who

are accustomed to disregard the scriptures, is a proof of the doctrine, from naked and obvious facts. There are two or three things, mentioned in the text, which the wicked are said to do. These we shall attend to; and if they appear to be facts, it may, by them, be evident, that our doctrine is true.

1. *THEY say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* The knowledge of God's ways consists in understanding the nature and ends of his moral government; and what he designs to do, in particular, with respect to mankind; whether he designs to put them all out of existence, when they die; or to continue them in existence forever; and whether, if he continue them in existence, he designs to reward and punish them, in the future state, according to the character they form in this world; whether he designs to make all happy, in the future world, of his mere mercy; or to make all miserable, as a just punishment for their iniquities. Or, finally, whether his plan is, to save some, with an everlasting salvation, and to punish others, with everlasting misery, according to the part they act in this life, with respect to a Mediator. There is no doubt but that God hath some way, some fixed plan of operation, respecting the sinful children of men. If this were realized, it is reasonable to conclude that mankind ought to be, and, indeed, *must* be anxious to know something about God's ways. If mankind realize, that God hath a plan of government respecting their final state, they must feel themselves infinitely concerned to know what it is. If they have no desire to know any thing of this kind, it must be, either because they do not believe, or else because they do not realize any thing of this nature.

IF we lived under the government of a great and powerful monarch, and had been, for a long time, in a state of rebellion; if he had, hitherto, exercised forbearance; but had a fixed plan and design, respecting the method of treating us, finally; should we not be very anxious to know what his plan and design was? Should we not look forward, with fear and trembling, to find out what would be the result of his administration? How much more anxious might we justly be, with regard to the knowledge of God's ways, which respect our final and eternal state? If, therefore, we are unconcerned, with respect to God's ways, it must be, that we are either perfectly absurd and foolish, or else do not believe that he exercises any providential government over us. But our text is clear in affirming, that the wicked do reject God, and *desire not the knowledge of his ways*. If the text be true, the doctrine is also true. The wicked, in general, conduct as they would do, if they knew, that God had no plan of government, and that worldly, sensual pleasures were the whole of human happiness.

It remains, therefore, to enquire whether the wicked ever do act the part, which our text describes; or whether the text be a libel against mankind? And here let it be observed, in general terms, that, whenever mankind engage in any thing, which is unjust, vain or criminal in any respect, *they say unto God, depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*. It is painful to think of God, of his holy law and government, when engaged in criminal pursuits, or even in criminal thoughts and meditations. People try to convince themselves, in such cases, that it is not required of them, always to be in the fear of the Lord, and always to have a sense of his pres-

ence. They sometimes try to convince themselves, that the temptations to vicious conduct are so great, notwithstanding they court temptation, that God will excuse them, on this account. On the whole, they would be glad to have conscience asleep, and to have God and his ways wholly out of view. Every one, I conclude, who was ever conscious of committing a crime, was conscious, for the time being, that the language of his heart was, "depart from me, O Lord, I do not now desire the knowledge of thy ways."

I now pass on to notice some particular cases, in which mankind verify, in fact, this declaration in our text. When mankind pursue the business of irregular trading, jockeying, or *speculating*, with a design, by a little exertion of their own, to enrich themselves on the earnings of others; all their views and feelings are inconsistent with any delight in God's presence, or with any desire to understand his ways. If they happen to think of God or his ways, the language of their hearts is, "depart from us, our minds are pre-engaged." People always abhor to think of God, when they are endeavouring to overreach their fellow men.

It may be further observed, on this head, that all people, who are eagerly employed to get riches, and make this a principal object, are continually saying unto God, *depart from us*. They may be just in dealings, where injustice would ruin their characters, or too much gall their consciences; they may read the Bible, attend public worship, profess religion, and pass the external round of religious duties. These things do not interfere with the highest attention to riches. They may all be done, without any proper sense of God or his government, and indeed, without making any progress in the knowledge of God's ways.

AGAIN ; when people devote their time to vicious company, to drinking at taverns, to vain buffooneries, profane swearing and blasphemy ; the case is clear, that they say unto God, “ depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” These evils are, more or less, prevalent in every place. Sometimes, however, the minds of people, in certain places, are solemnized, by divine influences, and they feel afraid to assemble together for the purposes of reveling, rioting, and blaspheming the name of the Almighty. But, in general, there is a large proportion of people, who will often assemble, and, from appearances, we are led to think, that the main object is to unite in casting reproach upon the name of the everblessed God. They swear by his name, not in truth and righteousness, not with fear and reverence ; but with proud arrogance and contempt. They drink largely, as if on purpose to stimulate all their faculties, and to make them eloquent in reproaching God, and in profane babblings. In such assemblies, the whole language, both of the lips and conduct, agrees with that under consideration ; “ depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.”

It seems a little mysterious, that those who hate to think of God, should be so fond of using his name. Perhaps, as they have no just sense of his character and government, they use his name, with the same proud contempt, as they use the name of some scandalous character among men.

WE observe further ; the common fruit and consequence of such wicked assembling to reproach God, and to gratify the pride of the heart, is playing at cards and *chance games*. For some reason or other, it is always the case, that those who discard and scorn the moral government of

Jehovah, are fond of chance-gaming. If they realized, that when *the lot is cast into the lap, the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD*, they would feel uncomfortably. They do not choose to think of God, and *desire not the knowledge of his ways*, when eagerly looking for the decisions of chance, over a gaming table. Could people fully convince themselves, that chance orders events, and not the heart-searching God, this would relieve their consciences, in every vile and abominable gratification. Perhaps this is what makes people so intense, and distracted, in their application to cards, and to every thing, in which they suppose, that chance, and not divine providence is concerned. The secret desire of the heart is, to get free from a sense of Deity, and the divine law and government. "The fool hath said in his heart, *No God*"—let there be nothing but chance to govern the world. It is distressing to the wicked to think of accountability, and to realize the commands and threatenings of the holy scriptures. They exert themselves, therefore, as if it were a matter of importance to build up the system of chance, instead of divine providence. This, perhaps, is what principally engages mankind in card-playing, chance-games and lotteries of every kind.

PEOPLE pretend to follow things of this kind, for diversion. But no man, perhaps, was ever yet found foolish enough to pretend that such things are as innocent and profitable, even for diversion, as the reading of valuable books, or conversation upon important and entertaining subjects. All, that can be supposed to render such things desirable, is simply this; *they divert the mind from God and his ways*. They stupify a troubled conscience, and tend to make the road to destruction smooth and easy. On these accounts, they are infinitely abominable, in their nature and

tendency, and those who pursue, or even countenance such things, say unto God, emphatically, “depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.”

ANOTHER fact may be noticed, as a proof of our doctrine. When people assemble together for balls, with music and dancing; when they spend their property, and their precious time and strength, in high and jovial mirth, and in wanton gesticulations; they know by experience, that the language of their hearts is the language of our text. *They say unto God, depart from us.* A proper sense of the divine presence would totally abolish all such exercises. They are inconsistent with a conviction of sin; or with any just view of our own true characters. They are inconsistent with any realizing sense of death and the judgment, or of the solemnities of the eternal state. They are wounding to the consciences of many, who are foolishly persuaded to follow the multitude. It is always found that balls, as well as card-playing, and all vain amusements and follies, are under the influence of the most licentious, profane and debauched characters. The leaders are sensible, that they have no fear of God before their eyes; and all, who are persuaded to follow them, find by experience, that they can have no peace or joy, till they are divested of the fear of God.

WHEN such matters are proposed they are talked of as a civil recreation; but when they are executed, they become, generally, a tedious, midnight slavery, in the service of Satan. Some pleas are made, to justify such an improvement of time; but no one ever yet pretended that it was a *duty*, either to God or man. On the contrary, should the professors of religion be found to be leaders and promoters of such things, the very ad-

vocates for games and balls would pronounce them hypocrites. They know that such things are inconsistent with real christianity, and calculated to banish religion out of the world—even calculated to banish from the mind, all sense of Deity, and to fix mankind down in atheism. And yet, *they are necessary*. Why so? Because they are fashionable among sinful men, who say unto God, *depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*. Is it our duty to follow the multitude to do evil? This doctrine is not of God. What if, instead of this folly and dissipation, we should spend our leisure hours in reading the most valuable books, and a natural consequence would be, that the conversation, in all companies, would be on the various branches of useful knowledge—What if the immense sums, expended in balls, games and other foolish vanities, were employed in public libraries; and what if we should amply support our schools, and give encouragement to more able instructors? All this might be done, with far less expense of time and property, than the fashion requires for the support of dancing and gaming. Is it probable, that in the course of seven years, we should find occasion to regret the misimprovement of the ball-room and gaming table? Every one knows that we should not. Every conscience must witness the folly and madness of following these vain customs of the enemies of God. Every one, who allows himself to think soberly, knows that they debase and degrade human nature, as well as reproach the everblessed God. There is scarcely need of an argument on this occasion. All who have a conscience, feel the truth of the case, on a bare statement. Hence we find, that death, which brings out the real dictates of conscience, generally produces a solemn testimony against these vile customs of the world.

Death is a detector of the heart, and even the threatening symptoms of it, often check the vanity which appears in a gale of health and prosperity. And is it not suitable, that we should have those views and sentiments in the course of life, which we expect to have in death? The fact is, we have, in general, a secret consciousness of the same things. There is not, perhaps, one person present, who, if he should now be sensibly struck with death, would not, in a moment acknowledge, that all these fashionable diversions, which bid the Almighty depart from us, are abominations. I think it a plain case, that, in order to gratify the raging lusts of the heart, people will violate the clearest dictates of conscience.

FINALLY; From lamentable experience, we learn the pernicious fruits and effects of balls and midnight revellings. They dissipate the mind, harden the heart, greatly promote lewdness and debauchery, by stimulating lascivious affections. They destroy the earnings of industry, consume the mercies of God on wicked lusts, and often ruin delicate constitutions. They are, for the time being, perfectly inconsistent with all the duty we owe to God, and every step, taken in these pursuits, is virtually saying unto God, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.*

OTHER cases might now be mentioned and enlarged upon, as proofs of our doctrine; such as slander, contention, and all the wicked indulgences of passion, prejudice and revenge—the indulgence of wicked lusts, and the contempt of the laws and ordinances of God. In all these cases, mankind act as if there were no God or future state. *They say unto God, depart from us.* Thus, in one respect, it appears, that mankind conduct as our text represents: they take pains to banish

all thoughts of God, and they succeed so far as to be able to act, with freedom, very much as they would, if they knew that this world was the only state of existence, and worldly pleasures the only happiness.

II. THE text represents the wicked as saying, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him.* This language is like that of Pharaoh, when challenged to release the Israelites from their servitude; "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Here we have the conduct of one man, exactly answering the description of the wicked in our text. If the impenitent, at this day, feel unwilling to take rank with Pharaoh, then it becomes them to conduct better than he, and to treat the commands of God with more respect; and this in proportion to the greater light which they enjoy. Pharaoh had real doubts, whether the God of Israel were the true God. He was challenged to renounce the gods of his country, whom he had been taught to revere; and to acknowledge the God of Israel, whom he had been taught to despise. He had far less evidence than we have of his being the true God. Yet he was guilty of great wickedness, in rejecting the true God. Moses wrought miracles before him, by which he ought to have been convinced of the power and authority of the God of Israel: and Pharaoh, for the hardness of his heart, was condemned and destroyed. Pharaoh was a little more audacious than some sinners are. He was a proud monarch, like other sinners in elevated stations. But he did nothing more than disobey the commands of God; and this every impenitent sinner does continually, with all his heart. We read of the disobedience of mankind, in almost every page of the Bible, and we see it

acted out; indeed, the greater part of us act it out, every day and hour of life.

FEW, indeed, will own that they *ought* to have more regard to God than to themselves: and surely, those who regard themselves as objects of supreme affection, scorn to be God's servants. But few are found, who feel any obligation to obey the positive precepts of God, unless they can see them to be the dictates of the light of nature; and in no case, do they feel obligation to self-denial for the sake of the honor of God. In no case, do the greater part of people feel the least obligation to take up any cross, or to bear any reproach for Christ's sake. The ministers of the gospel are often wondered at; sometimes censured, called unwise and imprudent, because they preach hard and unpopular doctrines for Christ's sake. It is the general opinion of mankind, and indeed of too many professors of christianity, that no cross, no reproach, no self-denial is necessary, in order to be sufficiently religious. But if there be any regard due to the scriptures, if the ancient prophets and good men, if Jesus Christ, his Apostles and followers have set any examples of the service of God, it is a clear case, that those who bear no cross, and wholly escape the reproaches of the wicked, are of the number of those who, in their hearts, say, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?* The apostle says, *All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* It hence follows, that all professors of religion, who make it a point to avoid the cross, are those who scorn the service of God.

THERE are many who scorn to make a pretence of serving God. They choose to have it known that they despise the service of God. This is evidently the case with all the openly vicious. They say, in all their vicious practices, *What is the*

Almighty, that we should serve him? “ We are able to profane his name, his word, his sabbaths, his laws and institutions. We fare as well as those who fear and serve him. We can spend our days in wealth, in mirth and pleasures, and in a moment, go down to the grave and be no more. *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* This world contains all the good to be hoped for. Let us, therefore, take our fill of worldly pleasure. If there be any God who disapproves of this, we scorn his service.” The practice of thousands, and the language of some convey such ideas as these. On the whole, it is no rare thing for people to express this language of our text. The scriptures abundantly represent the wicked as proud scorers of the service of God. A few sketches, out of many passages in the Psalms, are the following. *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us—The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek God; God is not in all his thoughts—Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God?—With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?* In the prophecy of Malachi, we find the following charge against the wicked. *Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord; yet ye say, what have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, it is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?* Thus mankind are represented as proud scorers of the service of God; and the Bible descriptions of the pride and scornfulness of the wicked agree with our own observations. We often find those (and it is well if some of us are not the persons) who

scorn the restraints of divine and human laws ; and even trample over all the rules of decency. Mankind conduct, in various respects, as if they knew that this world was the only state of existence, and temporal gratifications the only felicity.

III. THE last branch of the text represents the wicked as discarding the idea of prayer to God. *And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him.* Prayer is the expression of dependence on God ; and is therefore, a very irksome business to a proud heart. Pride finds many excuses for the neglect of prayer. The words before us fall in with the general language of the wicked respecting prayer. *What profit shall we have ? Will God reward us for praying ? Or if he does, in what will the reward consist ? Will he vary his plan of providential government, to conform to our desires, when put into the form of prayer ? No.* All the reward to be expected is to consist in high and transporting views of his infinite supremacy, and the most abasing views of ourselves as poor, dependant, vile and hell-deserving, rebels against God, and prone to all evil. Is there any profit in this ? No, says the sinner. If, by praying, I could be liberated from the law and government of God, and could rise to independence ; if I could persuade the Almighty to give me the free indulgence of all my heart's desires, I would pray, most fervently. But to stand and pray, with a supreme regard to the honor of God ; to say, from the heart, *Hallowed be thy name ; thy kingdom come, thy will be done*, instead of being profitable, is giving up every thing. It is making God superior to ourselves, and giving him all honor and glory. This surely is an unprofitable business : the proud heart rejects it, *casts off fear and restrains prayer before God.* The hours, suitable

for prayer, are generally employed in the labors of avarice or the amusements of folly.

THUS God is rejected, scorned and despised by the wicked, because he holds himself superior to them. *What profit should we have, if we pray unto him?* It would answer none of our selfish ends; but, on the contrary, tend to mortify our feelings, and make us realize our dependence.—Therefore, say the wicked, we will not pray unto him.

I HAVE NOW attempted, briefly, to illustrate the character and conduct of the wicked, as set forth in our text. I have brought forward the scriptures which concur with the text, and appealed to facts under common observation. It appears, I think, sufficiently evident, as was stated doctrinally, that *the wicked, in general, from their absurd view of the divine dispensations, conduct very much as they would, if they knew, that this was their only state of existence, and worldly pleasures the only happiness.* They, doubtless, have some intervals of serious thoughtfulness, and some concern about a future state. It is impossible to avoid a degree of conviction, at some times, that licentiousness leads to final misery. There is a degree of painful remorse, which often follows the greatest excesses and enormities. *Even in laughter, says Solomon, the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.* The restraints on the licentious are very great—*The way of transgressors is hard;* and yet we find, that mankind will conduct as if there was no God or future state. They seek a portion in this life, and carefully endeavour to shun all thoughts of God, and of the eternal world.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. THIS subject brings into view the exceeding perverseness of the human heart. It appears from our text, and it appears from facts innumerable, that, because the final punishment of iniquity is out of sight, because sinners do not see the awful state of those who die in iniquity, they presume to despise the Almighty, to bid him depart, to scorn his service, to cast off fear and restrain prayer; and in short, to lead a life of unbridled licentiousness.

It is certainly very probable, from the light of nature, that there is a future state, a just judge, and a dreadful punishment for the wicked. If we had no instruction from the scriptures, on these points, there would be ground of apprehension, and solemn concern respecting a future state. It would be suitable, that mankind should *pass the time of their sojourning here in fear*. It would be suitable for them to live soberly and prayerfully. It would be the duty of all to seek the Lord, and make it their great concern to know and do his will. But, instead of being thus in the dark, respecting a future state, God hath informed us most plainly and solemnly. He hath given us so much evidence of the reality of those things related in the scriptures, concerning the world to come, that, in general, we profess to believe the relation. We profess to believe, that, when sinners go down to the grave, they also go down to hell, to a place of remediless sorrow and pain—that their *end* is destruction—that they go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal. Such things even sinners profess to believe; and yet, as we find, they live and act the part of atheists. Does it not from hence appear, that they have very perverse

hearts? Are not the wicked *stout-hearted and far from righteousness*? How can we conceive of greater perverseness of heart, than is expressed, in bidding defiance to God, scorning his service, and refusing to pray unto him, merely to follow the custom of the times; while we own that there is a just judge, and a future state of rewards and punishments.

MANY are unwilling to believe, that there is much depravity in the human heart. But if the heart were, in any measure, well disposed, mankind would, naturally, conduct soberly, righteously, and even devoutly, aside from all considerations of a future state of rewards and punishments. A humble, devout, and holy life is the spontaneous fruit of a virtuous heart, even aside from all the motives arising from terror or from interest. If, therefore, with these additional motives, mankind cannot be persuaded to be serious, or even, at all times, to be civil and decent; if they will, as we find they do, in the face of the greatest conceivable motives to religion, run wild in the career of iniquity, we must conclude that the heart is totally sinful and perverse. Thus saith the inspired prophet; *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?* Our subject exhibits a dreadful character of the *inner man*: it leads us into ourselves, and there it discovers a sink of moral pollution. It manifests the infinite importance of being washed in the blood of the Redeemer.

2. By the picture of human nature, which our text exhibits, we find that sinners are very foolish as well as perverse. Suppose it to be, as they wish, that there is no state of punishment after the present life; can it be thought the part of wisdom, to run on in the career of vanity, levity, pride and perverseness? Surely it is the part of

wisdom, whether there be a future state or not, to live soberly, honestly and devoutly in the present state. That temper of heart, and that line of conduct, which God requires in his word, are essential to happiness; and happiness was never found in any other way. But wisdom consists in pursuing the road to happiness. We may, therefore, conclude, that the wicked act a very foolish part. It is on this account, that sin is denominated folly, and that sinners are called fools in the scriptures. Psalm liii. 1. The *fool* hath said in his heart, there is no God: corrupt are they, they have done abominable *iniquity*. The wise man uses the terms, *fool* and *sinner*, synonymously, "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a *fool* to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?"

ON the whole, when we see people engaged in what we call sinful, we pronounce them foolish. Sinners mutually call each other fools. When the liberal and generous profligate sees the avaricious miser, wearing out himself and defrauding others to increase his wealth, he pronounces him a fool. The miser is equally severe upon the profligate. When the temperate and sober see the drunkard staggering over his cups, and retiring to his filthy lodging in the streets, they pronounce him a fool. When the industrious and prudent see the company of sharpers, mutually picking each other's pockets, and consuming their time and money, in contentious lawsuits, they stigmatize them as fools. The civil and polite think the clownish buffoon to be a fool; and the most profane buffoon can see abundance of folly in the conceited fop. Mankind, in many cases, mutually charge each other with folly; and, in general, the charge is well founded. Wickedness, though it be ever so refined, and though it be esteemed

decent and respectable, is the most consummate folly. Those who idolize their gold, and those who idolize their lusts have different idols; but who can tell which is the greatest fool? Both despise the Almighty; both deprive themselves of all solid comfort and happiness, and expose themselves to the same eternal ruin. As certain, therefore, as our text gives us a just representation of human nature, we must conclude, that all the wicked act a very foolish, as well as a very criminal part.

3. SINCE matters are thus, it becomes all to examine themselves, and see whether they do not sustain the character of the wicked, as described in our text. Wickedness certainly abounds, and it appears, in fact, and operates as our text describes. The consequences are dreadful in the present state, and will be infinitely more so in the future. Who then are the wicked. Every one ought to enquire, *Is it I?* Let each one ask himself, honestly, whether he do not, in some way, say unto God, *depart from me*—whether he do not scorn to be the *servant* of God—and finally whether he do not excuse himself from *prayer* to God?

WE have here such a plain, striking description of the very heart of impenitent sinners, that, with a little pains, every one may form a conclusion respecting himself. Self-knowledge is certainly important, and not to be obtained, without serious examination. And if, on examination, any find themselves in a state of alienation from the true God, and are deliberately fixed in it, that they will reject him and scorn his service; let them reject, and let them scorn. We cannot compel sinners to become virtuous and wise. But, perhaps, many would be alarmed, and would reform externally; perhaps, through divine grace, many would really turn to God, and embrace the Sav-

iour, did they but know themselves. Therefore, let all examine themselves, not in the light of their own vain imaginations; but in the light of the holy scriptures; and let their future conduct be influenced by a reverential fear of God, and not by the intemperate lusts of a wicked and deceitful heart.

FINALLY. Let all be admonished to consider that they live in a world full of temptations. There are enchanting objects, adapted to the temper and circumstances of all mankind; and every heart is, in some way or other, prone to the evils, to which it is exposed. All have nearly equal need of circumspection: all have sinned, and are full of vicious propensities. All are, more or less, *drawn away of their own lusts and enticed*. All have, therefore, occasion to humble themselves, and continually to exercise *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*. All have reason enough to feel dependence on divine grace, instead of proudly despising the law and government of God, and the plan of salvation by the cross. There is nothing in the pursuits of the wicked, which affords the least prospect of salvation. All their pursuits evidently lead to death and destruction. Therefore, let them accept an exhortation, not to act inconsiderately—not to rush on to destruction.

If any feel unwilling to be admonished by man, let them receive the admonition from God, as it immediately follows our text—"Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me. How oft is the candle of the wicked put out? And how oft cometh their destruction upon them? God distributeth sorrows in his anger. They are as stubble before the wind; and as chaff which the storm carrieth away—His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of

the wrath of the Almighty—The wicked is reserved unto the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.” These are the testimonies of the Almighty; and if any feel disposed to trifle with them, they will do it at their own expense. “*If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.*” AMEN.

The work of the Academy—The work is done
by the way of deterring the public
institutions to the use of arms. The
the testimony of the Academy, and it
disposed to give the same. It is
from our own experience. It is
to be the result of the Academy, and
the work of the Academy.

