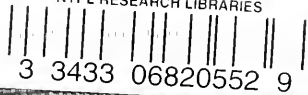


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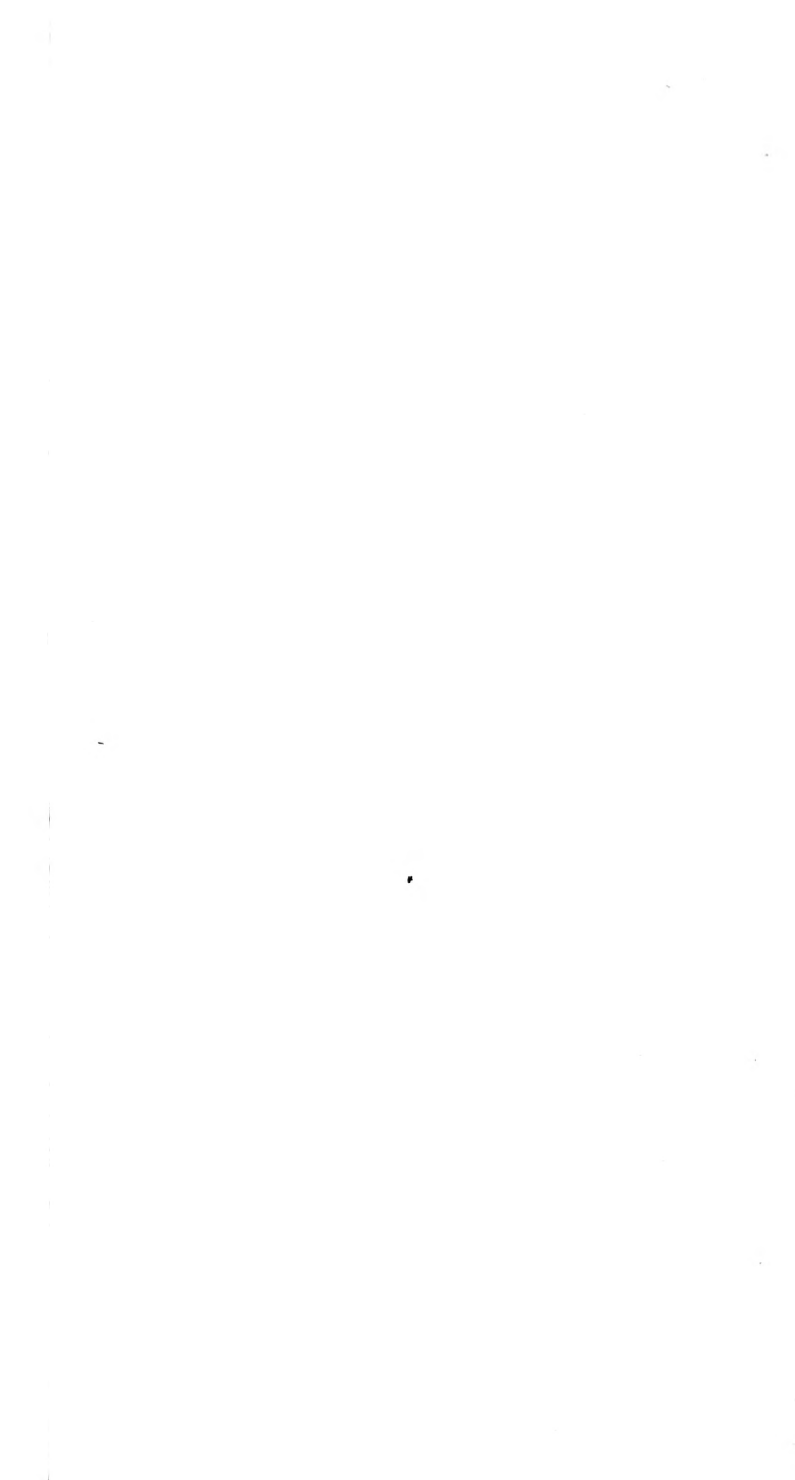


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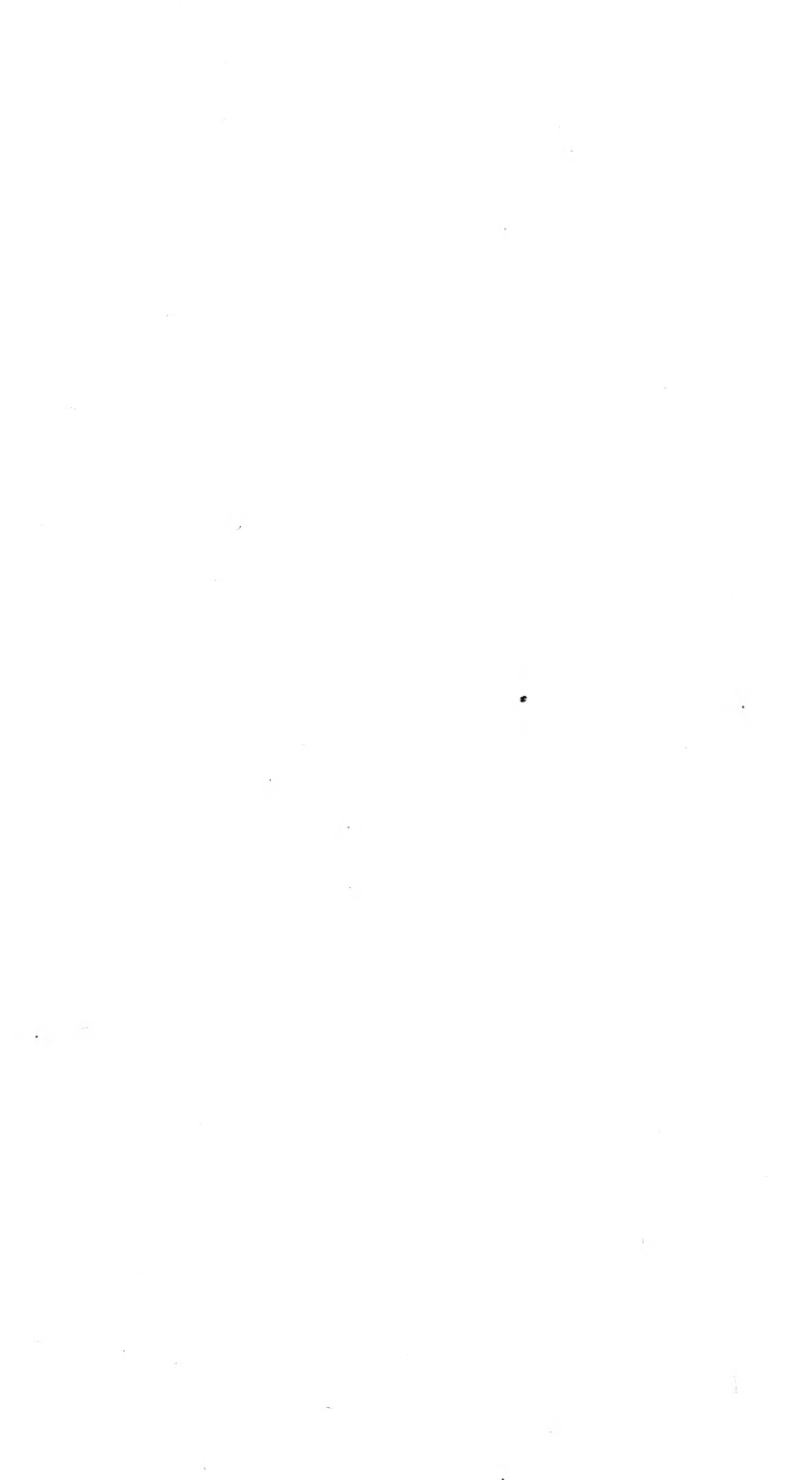
THEOLOGICAL WORKS,

PUBLISHED AT DIFFERENT TIMES,

AND NOW COLLECTED INTO VOLUMES.



VOL. II.



THEOLOGICAL WORKS,

PUBLISHED AT DIFFERENT TIMES,

AND NOW COLLECTED INTO VOLUMES.



BY THOMAS SCOTT,

RECTOR OF ASTON SANDFORD, BUCKS.



VOL. II.

SERMONS PREACHED ON PARTICULAR OCCASIONS.



FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

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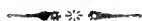


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SERMON I.*



LUKE, ii. 13, 14.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying; Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.

ST. Paul, having said, “ Without controversy, “ great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh,” adds among other things, that he “ was seen of angels.” These heavenly worshippers saw the Lord of glory, their Creator and Sovereign, clothed with human flesh, and laid as an infant in a manger; they saw him tempted by the devil in the wilderness, and ministered to him when he had overcome the enemy; they were spectators of his transfiguration on the mount, and of his agony in the garden; they beheld him expire on the cross; they attended his glorious resurrection and ascension; and when he was exalted in human nature to the mediatorial throne, they did him homage, and joined the redeemed in singing, “ Worthy is the Lamb that was

* Preached on Christmas Day, 1795.

“ slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*” For when the Father “ bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.†” Finally they will be attendant and ministering servants, when Christ shall come to raise the dead and judge the world.

In taking occasion from the present festival to discourse on a subject, with which we should be conversant at every season of the year, I shall,

I. Make some remarks on the event celebrated by the heavenly host.

II. Explain their song of exalted praise and adoration.

III. Endeavour to bring the matter home to ourselves by some practical deductions.

And may the Lord himself direct and bless our meditations; that we may be animated and assisted, in “ keeping a day unto the Lord,” after a holy and heavenly manner; and not in conformity to the corrupt and carnal fashion of those, who turn a Christian solemnity into a bacchanalian carnival!

I. Let us reflect on the event, which was celebrated by the heavenly host.

A poor woman named Mary, of the family of David, espoused to a carpenter residing at Nazareth, a place branded with infamy, came with her husband to Bethlehem, in obedience to a decree of Cæsar Augustus: and there being “ no room *for them* in the inn,” which was occupied by superior people, they were

* Rev. v 9—14.

† Heb i. 6.

lodged in a stable. In this situation Mary was delivered of a son, whom she wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.—Nothing at first sight appears remarkable in this event, except the extremely mean and inconvenient accommodation made for the poor woman and her infant; and the unfeeling neglect shewn to a person in her circumstances by the inhabitants of Bethlehem. Indeed the affair seems scarcely to have been noticed in that city: and we do not find that it was heard of at Jerusalem, till the child was presented at the temple according to the law of Moses; when a few persons of eminent piety were made acquainted with it. The rulers, scribes, and priests in general knew nothing of these transactions; till wise men from the east came to enquire after the new-born King, and to do him homage. Then indeed a considerable degree of attention was excited; and the tyrant Herod caused the infants about Bethlehem to be cruelly murdered, in hopes of destroying one, whom he dreaded as the rival of his authority. Soon after, however, the report seems to have been forgotten. The child born at Bethlehem was brought up at Nazareth with Joseph the carpenter, and doubtless earned his bread at that laborious trade; till at length he entered on his publick ministry, which he closed by an ignominious death upon a cross. Thus “he grew up before the
“ Lord as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry
“ ground; he had no form or comeliness; and when
“ the people saw him, there was no beauty that they
“ should desire him: he was despised and rejected of
“ men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*”

* Isa. liii. 2, 3.

And if the Jews knew little of the infant at Bethlehem, and the carpenter's son at Nazareth; the gentile rulers, conquerors, and philosophers were entirely unacquainted with him. All over the earth, which he came to bless, he was disregarded or despised: yet angels witnessed and celebrated his birth with admiring songs of praise!

These blessed spirits, free from guilt, and perfect in holiness, want not a Saviour. "They excel in strength, and do the Lord's commandments, hearkening to the voice of his words.*" Their capacities for wisdom and understanding are very great; their judgment and taste, for what is beautiful and glorious, are exactly conformable to those of the holy God whom they adore: and the hope of being at length made like them, and equal to them, should excite a noble ambition and emulation in every human heart. But the event which had taken place at Bethlehem, and which we this day commemorate, appeared to them of the greatest possible importance, and worthy to be celebrated with their most rapturous adorations.

In the infant laid in a manger they recognized the "Seed of the woman," the spotless offspring of a virgin-mother, who was to come and "bruise the Serpent's head:" and "the Seed of Abraham, in whom all nations should be blessed." They knew, that Mary was come to Bethlehem, according to the purpose of God, that the ancient prophecy might be fulfilled. "But thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah; yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to

* Ps. ciii. 20.

“ be ruler in Israel ; whose goings forth have been
 “ from of old, from everlasting. * ” They saw “ the
 “ Desire of all nations,” actually come ; † and they
 celebrated the accomplishment of Isaiah’s prediction,
 “ Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given ;
 “ and the government shall be upon his shoulder ; and
 “ his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
 “ The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The
 “ Prince of Peace. ‡ ” One of the company therefore
 said to the poor shepherds, “ Fear not, for behold I
 “ bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be
 “ to all people : for unto you is born this day, in the
 “ city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord.”
 They could not say, “ *Unto us* a child is born, *unto*
us a Son is “ given : ” “ for verily he took not on him
 “ the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of
 “ Abraham. § ” He came into the world to be a Sa-
 viour : he was the Christ, the promised Messiah, the
 anointed Prophet, Priest, and King ; yea, he was
 “ The LORD,” “ The second man is the LORD from
 “ heaven.” “ His name is Emmanuel : ” for “ God
 “ is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.”

“ The WORD, who was in the beginning with
 “ God, and who was God, by whom all things were
 “ made, and without whom was not any thing made
 “ that was made,” “ was now made flesh and dwelt
 “ among us ; ” and angels first beheld “ his glory,
 “ the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father. || ”
 They saw him, “ who being in the form of God,
 “ thought it not robbery to be equal with God,”
 “ make himself of no reputation, take upon him the

* Mic. v. 2. † Hag. ii. 7. ‡ Isa. ix. 6. § Heb. ii. 14—16.

|| John, i. 1—14.

“ form of a servant, and the likeness of man ; that being found in fashion as a man, he might become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*” With astonishment, they witnessed him, “ by whom all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ;—for whom all things are created ;—and by whom all things consist ;” they witnessed this glorious Creator and Lord of all “ come in the flesh ;” that he might be the visible “ Image of the invisible God ;” and as Head of the church, inherit all things, and have “ in all things the pre-eminence : for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. †”

Into “ these things the angels desire to look :” here they contemplate with fixed attention and unwearyed admiration ; for they behold “ in the church the manifold wisdom of God.” The heavenly host knew who the infant in the manger was, and for what ends he came : they were ready to adore the Child born as the mighty God : they recognized their Creator and Lord, under this disguise ; and with good old Simeon they viewed him as “ the Light of the Gentiles and the Glory of his people Israel.”

In this humble scene they saw the opening of that grand design, which had been shadowed forth by the ceremonies of the law, and of which the prophets from the beginning had excited the highest expectations : that design which had been obscurely intimated when Adam sinned, and gradually unfolding for about four thousand years. “ The great mystery of godliness,

* Phil. ii. 6—8. † Col. i. 15—19. Heb. i. 1—3.

“God manifested in the flesh,” now actually realized, called forth the amazement, and enlivened the affections of these heavenly worshippers; and dictated that zealous song of adoring praise, which is the subject of our present meditation.

II. Then, we proceed to explain the song itself. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to men.” The angels celebrated the praises of God, and congratulated the happiness of man, with most fervent love and joy. “To you,” O ye sons of men, “is born a Saviour, who is Christ, the Lord:” we exult in your felicity, “we rejoice over one sinner that repenteth:” ‘how much greater then, must be our joy and gladness at the nativity of Him who is come to stoop, suffer, and die, that he may “be exalted as a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins?”

It is very affecting to compare the conduct of the heavenly host, in this respect, with that of men in general, who neglect or oppose the message of salvation, and despise the glorious Redeemer. But angels know our real character and condition: while we are blinded with pride and prejudice, and are extremely unwilling to be convinced that we deserve destruction! or so taken up with “the world, and the things that are in the world,” that we disregard the important interests of eternity!

In considering the hymn of praise before us, we may perhaps begin to best advantage with the concluding sentence, “Good-will to men.”—The blessed angels had witnessed the creation of the earth, “when these morning-stars sang together, and all the

“ sons of God shouted for joy ; * ” for in that august transaction they saw the immensity of their Creator’s power, wisdom, and goodness. With astonishment and awe they beheld also the fall of their compeers ; and when “ 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, † ” they adored his righteous severity against the rebellious, and his holy abhorrence of sin ; and they received instruction of inestimable value from the impressive solemn scene. They saw too the fall of man ; and probably expected that vengeance would, with unabated vehemence, seize in like manner upon him ; not conceiving that a God of infinite purity and justice could possibly shew mercy and kindness to rebels and apostates. No doubt they heard the first intimation of favour to our offending parents, mixed with the solemn denunciation of death, and all the woes that preceded it : and this must have excited a peculiar attention to so new and interesting a discovery of the divine perfections.

From that crisis, they had been witnesses and messengers, both of the Lord’s mercy and of his indignation, towards the human race. Numerous opportunities had been afforded them, in the history of mankind, of learning the fatal effects of transgression, and the power of divine wrath. The deluge ; the tremendous doom of Sodom and Gomorrah ; the desolations of Egypt ; the severities inflicted on the devoted Canaanites ; the judgments executed even on offending Israel, in the wilderness and Canaan, and by the

* Job, xxxviii. 7.

† 2 Pet. ii. 4.

Babylonish captivity; were so many illustrations of the justice of God, and his holy abhorrence of iniquity. But at the same time his patience and bounty towards sinful men, his gracious interpositions in behalf of his people, the intimations and predictions of a Saviour, the promises given to believers, and the actual salvation of numbers, shewed his good-will to mankind; and his readiness to pity, help, and relieve them, as far as could consist with the honour of his name, and the interest of his universal and everlasting kingdom.

Yet in the infant lying in the manger at Bethlehem, the angels had such a discovery of the Lord's *good-will to men*, connected with his detestation of their sins, as had never hitherto attracted their notice or raised their expectations. They no doubt, before this, had some general conception of the plan formed by infinite wisdom and everlasting love: perhaps the whole had been fully notified to them. Yet when the stupendous design was thus far accomplished; their previous admiration of the ineffable condescension, compassion, and love of the holy and glorious Lord God towards lost sinners, whose multiplied and heinous crimes had so long called loudly for vengeance, was far exceeded, and as it were swallowed up in inexpressible astonishment. Good-will to man! to guilty, polluted, ungrateful man! to idolatrous, impious, and blaspheming man! This overwhelmed the blessed angels with amazement, and tuned their hearts to adoring praises: and these reflections must have the same effect on all, who have just views of the majesty and glorious holiness of God, the nature

and desert of sin, and the wonderful plan of redemption.—“ God commendeth his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” “ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*”

This good-will of God to men is mere compassion and benevolence, not approbation or complacency. The crimes, dispositions, and characters of the creatures, thus beloved, were unspeakably hateful in his holy eyes: and none of his protestations against sin are so decided and energetick, as that which principally declares his love to sinners. The compassion and tenderness, which induce virtuous and pious persons, at great expence, to relieve those pitiable objects whose crimes have rendered them miserable; in order that an attempt may be made to rescue them from temporal and eternal ruin, is a very distant imitation of the love shewn by our God to sinners, in giving his Son to be their Saviour, even while he declares them to be deserving of his everlasting wrath and abhorrence. The heinousness of our crimes, the contrariety of our dispositions to the divine purity, the great things he hath done to make way for our salvation, and the inestimable blessings prepared for us, combine to illustrate the riches of his mercy and the immensity of his goodness. The love of the Father, in giving his only-begotten and well-beloved Son; the love of the Son in most willingly assuming our nature, that he might give himself a sacrifice for our sins; and the love of

* Rom. v. 6—10. 1 John, iv. 10.

the Spirit, in preparing our hearts to receive this salvation, and in making us meet for the heavenly inheritance, demand our warmest gratitude and most fervent praises; while we give "glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit," into whose name we were baptized.

Before the coming of Christ, the special tokens of the Lord's good-will to men were principally confined to the people of Israel; and he had suffered all other nations to walk in their own ways. But in the child born at Bethlehem the angels saw him, who was appointed for "Salvation to the ends of the earth." The partition-wall was about to be removed; the good tidings of a Saviour, even Christ the Lord, were speedily to be proclaimed to all people without distinction; and thus a proposal of mercy and every blessing, "without money and without price," would be made to persons of all characters and descriptions, not excepting the vilest. Nay, all men every where would be commanded to repent: and the ambassadors of Christ would, in his stead, and as if God besought them by their mouth, beseech them to be reconciled to God. The fullest assurances were thus about to be given, that the loving Saviour would reject none, on any account whatever, who came to him for life and godliness; and exceedingly great and precious promises, together with the institution of sacred ordinances as *means of grace*, would concur in encouraging sinners of every nation to seek the blessings of eternal life, without fearing a denial or disappointment.—All this doubtless and far more was perceived by the heavenly host, when they proclaimed

“ Good-will to men,” in celebrating the nativity of our Emmanuel !

They sang also “ Peace on earth.” They had witnessed the fatal effects of the creature’s venturing to oppose the Creator’s will, and become his enemies. They had seen angels, as it were, declare war against the Almighty ; and even when cast out of heaven, employing all their liberty in carrying on the same desperate and ruinous hostilities. They beheld man seduced to join the apostate rebels, and become enemies to God by wicked works ; and then, instigated by enmity to increasing iniquity. The earth filled with tears, groans, and miseries ; the universal victory and triumph of death and the grave, and the subsequent doom of impenitent and unreconciled sinners, were the consequences which angels had witnessed of man’s infatuated contest against his omnipotent Creator.—They had been spectators likewise of all the cruel wars, which men in every age had waged against each other : and of all the dire effects of ambition, envy, revenge, and insatiable rapacity or cruelty, from the day when Cain, the first murderer, embrued his hands in his brother’s blood. What then must have been the sentiments and feelings of these benevolent spirits, while witnessing the murders, massacres, battles, sieges, and persecutions, which have wasted the human species, and increased the miseries of the world to a degree that exceeds all calculation ? What did they think of the lavish encomiums, bestowed, almost unanimously, on the most skilful, prosperous, and unfeeling of these butchers of mankind ? What estimate did they form of man’s heart,

and of the vaunted dignity of human nature, the milk of human kindness, and the sufficiency of reason to guide us to virtue and happiness? Beholding incessantly these horrid spectacles, what could holy angels think of man, but that he was, as it were, a younger brother of the original murderer, delighting in the same work, and deeming no other employment so honourable? What could they think of the earth, but that it was in many respects a counterpart of hell; and that it would have been so more entirely, had it not been for the good-will of God to men?

I mean not, my brethren, to declaim against the profession of arms, or to condemn all rulers and nations that engage in war. Some soldiers have been, and some are, Christians: but their profession is their cross, and its duties their self-denial; they would not willingly engage in any war of ambition, rapacity, or revenge; but they readily face danger, and endure hardship, in defence of their country. The more we hate war and long for peace, the greater are our obligations to such men, as thus expose themselves to guard us against injurious assailants; and the more fervently we ought to pray for their protection and success. In the present state of the world, war is a necessary evil, and often quite unavoidable: and that not merely when a nation is directly attacked; for there are many other ways, by which the rapacious and ambitious may render a neighbouring country incapable of defending its liberties and possessions; and these can only be counteracted by vigorous opposition. Nor are private individuals generally competent to decide what wars are necessary and justifiable,

or the contrary : in this respect rulers must give an account to God for their conduct. But wars proceed originally from the lusts of men's hearts,* and from the wicked one : God employs them, as he does hurricanes, earthquakes, or pestilences, as executioners of his vengeance on guilty nations : and *ambitious* conquerors, however accomplished or illustrious, are the most hateful and tremendous scourges of our apostate race. We may therefore deprecate and denounce war itself, as the most horrid and atrocious evil, consistently with the obedience and honour due to our rulers, and the most sincere prayers for the success of their measures, as far as they tend to the protection and welfare of our beloved country. But we must also maintain, that all the blood shed in war is *murder*, chargeable on them, whose criminal projects and politics render such dreadful methods of resisting them necessary ; and that it will certainly be required at *their* hands, on which side soever the victims were slaughtered.

But to return from this digression ; when Christ was born, angels sang, " Peace on earth." Peace between God and sinners ; peace between a man and his neighbour ; peace between contending nations ; peace in heart and conscience ; and peace throughout the earth. The Saviour is " the Prince of peace ;" the true " Melchisedeck king of Salem, the King of righteousness, and the King of peace : " " and of his government and peace there shall be no end." The

* James, iv. 1.

gospel is “the word of reconciliation,” ministers are ambassadors of peace, through the great Mediator between God and man. Into whatever house the apostles entered, they were directed to say, “Peace be to this house :” and wherever we are sent, we go “preaching peace by “Jesus Christ.” “He is our Peace, he hath made peace by the blood of his cross;” and he hath pronounced a blessing on “peace-makers, as “the children of God.”

When we embrace his Gospel, “being justified by “faith we have peace with God;” he imputes not to us our trespasses, but admits us into a state of reconciliation, and a covenant of friendship with himself; and, by the Spirit of sanctification and adoption, teaches and inclines us cordially to love him, and delight in his perfections, service, and salvation. Peace is the legacy Christ hath left his disciples. “Peace I “leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as “the world giveth, give I unto you.*” When our hearts are stayed on the Lord in faith and hope, he “keeps them in perfect peace,” and he imparts a “peace of God which passeth all understanding,” to possess and confirm “our hearts and minds by Christ “Jesus.” A stable peace of conscience, in reliance on the immense and everlasting mercy of God, through the all-sufficient atonement and mediation of Christ; which will bear investigation, and flourish in connexion with deep humility, holy abhorrence of sin, and the strictest conscientiousness in all things; and an inward serenity and tranquillity of mind, in submis-

* John, xiv. 27.

sion to the will of God and confidence in him, constitute this inestimable blessing.

The Lord hath also assured us, that “when our ways please him, he maketh even our enemies to be at peace with us:” and his peace ruling in our hearts disposes us to follow peace with all men. The precepts, as well as the promises of Christ, ensure peace to all his true disciples. The most sincere, upright, disinterested, and harmless conduct, united with tender compassion, courteousness, and universal benevolence; a disposition to make concessions and reparations for all injuries, and to forgive and love our enemies in the most unwearied and generous manner, are expressly commanded by the Redeemer; and these are also “the fruits of the Spirit,” who dwells in all true believers. The most exact attention to all relative duties, according to the regular subordination of families and communities, is also effectually provided for. If therefore, all men should at once be made true Christians, answerable to the specimen shewn to the world after the day of Pentecost; nay, according to that lower measure of grace bestowed on thousands in this land at present: the effect upon human affairs would be as stupendous, as that produced on the boisterous winds and stormy waves, when the incarnate Son of God said, “Peace, be still, and there was a great calm!” Wars and all concurrent and similar evils must instantaneously cease; and peace, equity, purity, truth, and love universally prevail; if all men were partakers of the Spirit of Christ, and obedient to his commandments.

But hath not he said, “ Suppose ye that I am come
 “ to give peace on earth? I tell you nay, but ra-
 “ ther division: for from henceforth there shall be
 “ five in one house divided, three against two, and
 “ two against three.*” To this it may be answered,
 that predictions of future events must be distinguish-
 ed from commands, exhortations, and doctrines: and
 the latter, not the former, shew the real nature and
 tendency of the gospel. When a few persons are
 converted, and feel their obligations to love Christ
 more than father or mother, and to obey God rather
 than man; and yet many remain under the influence
 of “ that spirit who worketh in the children of diso-
 bedience:” divisions will necessarily be the conse-
 quence. And when the mad passions of ungodly
 men take occasion, from Christianity, to vent them-
 selves; and the distinction, between real believers,
 and nominal Christians, is overlooked: the tendency
 of the gospel must be mistaken. The opposition
 which the religion of Jesus has met with from the
 world; the wickedness that men have committed,
 under the guise of Christianity; and the inconsisten-
 cies and indiscretions of many pious persons, have
 produced lamentable effects. Hence persecutions and
 religious wars have been excited, by the professed
 disciples of the Prince of peace! *Pious*, or rather
impious, frauds have been practised to subserve the
 cause of superstition or hypocrisy! Acrimonious
 controversies and divisions among professed Chris-
 tians have been multiplied; and even serious persons

* Luke, xii. 51—53.

have been prejudiced against each other by a narrow and absurd bigotry. "Woe be to the world because of offences! it must needs be that offences come; but woe be to that man by whom they come!"

We must not, however, ascribe these things to Christianity, but to the want of it. If men were *real* Christians most of these evils would cease, and all of them would be mitigated: if men were consistent and judicious Christians, they would totally vanish. Even disciples too often "know not what spirit they are of;" and contend for the truths and ordinances of Christ, in a manner contrary to his precepts and example.

But it may also be observed, that all these effects spring from the depravity of the human heart as their native source; and if men had not this occasion of discord and selfishness, they would find some other. After all, the world has seldom been more wicked, in the worst ages and places distinguished by the Christian name, than at other times and in other countries: though unbelievers have bestowed more pains in exhibiting its wickedness. In general, the state of human society has been greatly meliorated by the gospel: for where have Christians habitually diverted themselves by such bloody spectacles, as the gladiatorial shows of the Romans? Where have pagans manifested such humanity to the poor, sick, and destitute; as is displayed in the expensive institutions common in Christian countries? Vices, branded with deepest infamy even in this licentious age, were patronized and avowed among the politest heathens. War itself has assumed a milder aspect since the es-

tablishment of Christianity: and even Deists have learned from the sacred oracles, to denounce ambitious warriors; and to give the palm of glory to those who save men's lives, instead of those that destroy them. These effects have evidently been produced by the gospel, even on the minds of multitudes, who never believed it with a living and obedient faith.

Taking, however, our standard of Christianity from the scriptures; we are confident, that in proportion, as it prevails, it will produce "peace on earth," in all senses and in all places. We are also assured, that ere long the Prince of peace will possess the dominion over all nations as his willing subjects: and then they will beat their swords into plow-shares, and learn war no more. Well, therefore, might angels sing at the Redeemer's nativity, "Peace on earth!" A blessing inestimable in itself, long unknown, or scarcely known, among men: but now about to be vouchsafed by a gradual progress to all the nations of the globe.

For such blessings virtually communicated to sinful men in the person of Emmanuel, angels also ascribed "Glory to God in the highest."—The perfections of God are his essential glory, which is incapable of increase or diminution: but in his works he manifests this glory to his rational creatures, that they may contemplate, admire, and adore it; and he is glorified by them, when they delight to celebrate his praises. "The heavens declare the glory of God:" and his eternal power and Deity are clearly seen in all the works which he made. His providential care of the universe manifests his wisdom, good-

ness, and bounty: his awful justice and holiness are displayed in his perfect law and righteous judgments, and his patience and kindness, even to sinners, may be learned from his dealings with our fallen race in general. These glories the heavenly host had witnessed and celebrated for four thousand years.

But the birth of the infant in the stable, viewed in its causes and consequences, discovered to them glories so resplendent, that in some respects they eclipsed all former displays; and with rapturous joy and admiration they sang "Glory to God in the highest:" in the highest heavens among all its exalted inhabitants, and in the loftiest strains, which they can possibly reach. Here the glories of the divine justice, holiness, truth, wisdom, knowledge, power, love, and mercy, which they had viewed separately in other objects, shone forth with collected beams in most adorable beauty and splendour. The perfections, which before appeared irreconcilable, now harmonized, and reflected glory upon each other. The distinct honours of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, were displayed at once to their admiring view. And as they were always ready, with glowing love, zeal, and gratitude, to celebrate the high praises of God: so they were peculiarly excited to this reasonable and delightful service, on this interesting occasion. Never did JEHOVAH appear in all respects so glorious in holiness, justice, truth, and wisdom, as in his wonderful love to Adam's guilty polluted race. If God so hates sin, that his well-beloved Son shall become man and bear the curse, rather than it shall go unpunished; and yet so loves sinners, as to em-

ploy such an expedient, rather than leave them to perish without remedy: if his wisdom could form such a plan of reconciling justice and merey, and of taking occasion from sin itself to glorify his name in the most distinguished manner: and if his faithfulness accomplishes such a promise, as that relating to the incarnation of his own Son for these most gracious purposes: how transcendantly glorious must He be! How worthy of universal love and adoration! Let all creatures then say “Glory to God in the highest!”

Angels “rejoice over one sinner that repenteth:” because every event of this nature is a new display of the divine glory in the work of redemption; a new trophy of the Redeemer’s beneficent victories; a new worshipper to join the heavenly choir to all eternity; and a new instrument to excite other sinners to seek for the same blessings. — For alas! men are blind, wilfully blind, to the glory of God in all respects. Even the displays of his being and perfections in the works of creation fail of suitably affecting their hearts; “They glorify him not as God, neither are thankful.” But the gospel, professed, adorned, and preached in the world, calls their attention to an interesting subject: and when “God who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, shines into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ,*” that light is reflected, as it were, on every other object; and we learn by degrees to glorify God for all the displays he hath made of himself; and

* 2 Cor. iv. 4—6.

as a "spiritual priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Thus sinners on earth are trained up for the worship of heaven; of which the highest and most delightful strain will be, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God with his blood;" "Salvation to our God that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb." Hallelujah. Amen.—The adoring praises of the heavenly host may therefore be also considered, as an affectionate expression of their longing desire, that by the gospel of Christ, the divine glory might fill the earth as well as heaven; while peace with God and with each other should be enjoyed by all its inhabitants, through the adorable good-will shewn to guilty man.

III. Then, let us endeavour to bring this matter home to ourselves by some practical deductions.

We may learn from this subject how insignificant all earthly distinctions are, in the judgment of the heavenly host. They see no glory in them, nor dishonour in the want of them. The Lord of all descends to dwell on earth, to be a Prince and Saviour: and angels celebrate the august event, the most important that had ever occurred from the beginning of the world. But he appears not in an imperial palace, or with the appendages of royalty; but in a stable, and laid in a manger! And let us not forget, that this was the settled purpose of unchangeable wisdom and everlasting love; in order to pour contempt on all that splendour, which we are prone to idolize.

Not only are *vanity and vexation* inscribed on the pomp, wealth, and luxuries of the world, by this re-

markable appointment; but they are pronounced mean, ensnaring, and polluting. We should therefore enquire, how far our judgment coincides, in this respect, with that of angels and the Lord of angels? The rich and noble should remember that their distinctions are as withering flowers; at the same time that they are talents entrusted to their stewardship, of which a strict account will shortly be demanded. Let them not then “be high-minded, or trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.” “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches.” Yea, “God forbid that” any of us “should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world.*” We should well consider the words of the apostle, “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low.†”—“Mind not then,” my brethren, “high things, but condescend to men of low estate:” cultivate humility, courteousness, indifference about the world, and self-denying beneficence, in the midst of abundance: this will abate envy, secure you from the snares and perils of your situation, and render the talents entrusted to you a blessing to many, and more abundantly to yourselves.—“How hardly,” says our Lord, “shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” But “the things that are impossible with men are possible with him.” Yet this consideration, should

* Jer. ix, 23, 24. Gal. vi. 14.

† James i. 9—11.

excite in you peculiar caution, watchfulness, and prayer, that your riches may not prove the ruin of your immortal souls.

Think, my brethren, of the stable, the carpenter's shop, the feast on barley-bread, and small fishes, the well in Samaria, and of him who had not where to lay his head: that you may learn not to despise the poor, lest you reproach your Maker and disdain the Saviour of the world. Heavenly glory and excellency may be clad in coarse raiment, or lodged in a mean cottage. Learn not to judge of men by outward appearance; but to estimate characters according to their intrinsick worth: and let it not be thought any disparagement to prefer the company of pious Christians, who are almost as poor as their Master chose to be, above that of the most accomplished persons who are strangers to his saving grace.

And, my brethren of low degree, let me exhort you to be contented and patient in your humble condition: watch against envy, repining, coveting, and distrust. Seek the true riches, "the ornament which in the sight of God is of great price," the "honour that cometh from him," and the pure pleasures which he bestows. With these, the meanest accommodations will make your hearts thankful: and if your children be poorly provided for, and you are overlooked in times of difficulty by your neighbours; think of the virgin-mother and her holy infant in the stable; reflect on your sinfulness; and, instead of murmuring, lift up your hearts in joyful thanksgivings: for few of you are so poor as the divine Saviour of sinners was, during the whole of his humiliation.

But, my friends, what do you think of this lowly Redeemer? Do your ideas of his dignity, excellency, love, and salvation, accord to the views of these holy angels? Or do you see in him no form or comeliness; nor any beauty for which you should desire him? Do you heartily sing “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good-will towards men?” Or is there nothing in this great event to excite your attention and admiration? You can never be meet for the joys of heaven, unless you learn on earth to see and admire the glories of redeeming love. The songs of angels would grate in your ears, and discompose your hearts; were it possible for you to enter the mansions of the blessed, without having felt your need of a Saviour, and acquired a disposition to love and adore him. And how will the conduct of angels, who, though they never sinned, and need no pardoning mercy or renewing grace, yet glorify God with all their powers for his love to fallen men, rise up in judgment against the ingratitude and perverseness of perishing sinners; who make the very condescension of Emmanuel the pretence for refusing him the glory due unto his name.

Let us also enquire, how far we resemble these heavenly worshippers in the temper of our minds. Exalted and holy as they are, they despise not sinful worms, dwelling in houses of clay; while they adored the Son of God, as tabernacling in human flesh, and thus “made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death.” They complain not of the special honour shewn to worthless man, by this union of the Deity with our nature, not with their’s: they are not

reluctant to our felicity, and object not to our being made equal with them. Yea, they willingly and joyfully minister to the heirs of salvation, in the meanest cottage, work-house, or dungeon; nor do they deem the poorest believer an unmeet object of their condescending and compassionate services.—This is genuine excellency: but have we been taught to resemble and imitate them? Are we thus attentive to the needy, ready to sympathize with the afflicted, and freed from selfishness, envy, and contempt of inferiors?—Above all, let us remember and imitate “the grace of the Lord Jesus, who though he was rich, for our sakes became poor; that we, through his poverty might be made rich.” He hath said, “The poor ye have always with you; and when ye will ye may do good to them.” He hath appointed his needy disciples to be his representatives and receivers; that in supplying their wants we may express our love and gratitude to him, and copy his most endearing example.

This season is generally attended with an interruption of secular business, and some additional expence: yet the time and money are generally worse than thrown away, while professed Christians, like Israel worshipping the golden calf, “sit down to eat and drink, and rise up to play.” But if we have a spiritual taste, and judge as angels do; we shall rather abridge ourselves of customary indulgences, than “make provision for the flesh,” when commemorating the humble birth of the self-denying Saviour. We shall express our joy, and employ our leisure, in acts of solemn worship and grateful praises: and in-

stead of expensive feasts for the wealthy; we shall abound in hospitality and kindness to the poor, and be glad to contribute to promote the cause, for which the Son of God became incarnate.

The sensual and ungodly mirth of vast multitudes, at this festival, is madness. They abound in the works of the devil, because the Son of God was manifested to destroy them! when the very event thus commemorated will increase the weight of their condemnation, unless they can be persuaded to follow the apostle's counsel; "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double minded; be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."*

But "let the heart of those rejoice that seek the Lord." Let the poor in spirit, the weeping penitent take encouragement, from the astonishing instance of the Lord's good-will to sinful men, this day commemorated. And let all, that have tasted this grace, and can rejoice in the love of God our Saviour, remember that they are subjects to the Prince of peace; that they may be animated, to pray for universal peace, and by all suitable means, to follow after peace, to seek the peace of the church, and the peace of the world; and "by well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

* Jam. iv. 7—10.

SERMON II.*



I SAMUEL, vii. 12.

Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

FROM the calling of Abraham to the time of Samuel, the Lord had shewn peculiar favours of inestimable value to his chosen people. Especially “He shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel: he dealt not so with any nation, and as for his judgments, they had not known them.”† But they had always manifested a perverse and ungrateful disposition, and were continually provoking him with their idolatries and rebellions.—“Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance: and he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and

* Preached January 1, 1796.

† Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20.

“ they were brought in subjection under their hand.
“ Many times did he deliver them ; but they provoked him by their counsel, and were brought low
“ for their iniquity. Nevertheless he regarded their
“ affliction, when he heard their cry.”*

Hophni and Phinehas, the priests, the sons of Eli, had by their wickedness caused a most deplorable prevalence of impiety among the people : this provoked God to deliver them into the hands of the Philistines, who triumphantly carried off the ark of the covenant, which had been presumptuously brought into the field of battle. For the Lord was able to vindicate his own glory, and to honour that symbol of his gracious presence even among his avowed enemies, without countenancing the vain confidence of his hypocritical worshippers. The Philistines were soon constrained to restore the ark ; but while it was neglected in Israel, they retained their superiority. During the space of twenty years, Samuel, who at the beginning of these troubles was very young, seems to have laboured with zealous and unwearied diligence, in bringing the people to repentance, and reviving true religion. At the end of this time it is said, “ All the house of
“ Israel lamented after the LORD.” The narrative of the subsequent reformation is indeed very brief ; yet there is reason to conclude, that it was one of the most signal revivals of vital godliness, that stands upon record : for “ the children of Israel did put away
“ Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.”

* Ps. cvi. 40—44.

A general assembly being convened at Mizpeh, where Samuel was publicly owned as judge of Israel: while they were earnestly seeking the Lord with fasting, prayer, and other religious observances; the Philistines, jealous of their proceedings, marched directly to attack them. But, in answer to the earnest prayers of Samuel and the people, these formidable enemies were entirely defeated. And on this memorable occasion, "Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us." He set up a monument of God's kindness to Israel, (not of Israel's triumph over the Philistines;) to perpetuate the memory of his gracious interposition in their behalf, and to declare their gratitude, to future generations.

The history of Israel may be considered as God's experimental trial of human nature. The experiments of the chemist on an ounce of gold or mercury, when properly repeated and established, authorize general conclusions concerning the properties of all the gold or mercury in the world. Thus the dealings of the Lord with Israel, as a specimen of the human race, when rightly understood, warrant general conclusions concerning the dispositions and propensities of all mankind: for the whole is, as it were, one mass, and has the same nature and properties. It is therefore mere self-flattery to suppose, that we should have acted better than they did, if we had been left to ourselves in exactly the same circumstances: and it is a vulgar prejudice to imagine that the Israelites were more wicked than other nations. Their history was more

impartially written, and their conduct tried by a stricter rule : in all other respects the records of any country tend to establish the same conclusions concerning human nature.

The history of the visible church in every age entirely coincides with that of the Israelites: special mercies conferred; base ingratitude and rebellion; severe chastisements and the triumph of cruel enemies; humiliation and revivals of religion, followed by gracious providential deliverances, form the compendium of the whole : but “ Hitherto hath the LORD “ helped us,” and “ the gates of hell have not prevailed.”—The experience likewise of believers harmonizes in many respects with the records of Israel: and it is peculiarly useful, frequently to review with care and attention, all the Lord’s dealings with us, and our conduct towards him : “ For hitherto hath “ he helped us.”—To assist such a review, at the entrance of another year, will be the object of the present discourse ; in which I shall consider and illustrate,

I. The import of the words “ Hitherto hath “ the LORD helped us.”

II. Enquire what is meant by “ Setting up an “ Eben-ezer,” according to the common, and not improper, use of the expression.

I. The import of the words, “ Hitherto hath the “ LORD helped us.”

1. The Lord hath hitherto helped us all, in his superintending providence. We came into the world indigent and helpless : our wants were numerous and urgent, and we were utterly incapable of making any

provision for them. All these wants the Lord alone supplied ; and others were merely the instruments by which he conferred his bounty. Numbers die in infancy, because they are not properly taken care of and provided for : but we were preserved ; and in the kindness and ability of parents or friends supplying our wants, we experienced, and should acknowledge, the distinguishing goodness of God. The use of our limbs, senses, and faculties ; the measure of our natural abilities ; and the advantages of our education, by which we were severally brought into our present comfortable way of subsistence : as well as our possessions, with all that distinguishes every one's situation in society from that of others, should be traced back to the special kindness of the Lord. We should each of us remember, with good old Jacob, that " God hath fed us all our life long " unto this day.*" He hath given us our temporal provision, whatever it hath been ; and if we have lived thirty, forty, fifty, or more years, without experiencing the want of food or the other necessaries of life ; we have abundant reason to say, " Hitherto " hath the LORD helped us." This has laid us under as deep obligations to gratitude, as if we had been fed by miracle, according to the kindness of the Lord to Israel : and in some respects we have had a decided advantage over them ; for our supply has been more pleasant, in it's nature and variety, than manna from the clouds, and water from the rock would have been. " The earth is the LORD'S and the fulness of it." " He openeth his hand and filleth all things living

* Gen. xlviii. 15.

“with plenteousness;” and he hath put it in our power to obtain a portion of his bounty.

Nor have our *dangers* been fewer than our *wants*. What multitudes are swept away by various sicknesses and disasters, in every stage of human life, even from the earliest infancy! How many have all their days embittered by perpetual disease! What frequent instances do we witness of such as have been deprived of their limbs or senses; or even rendered most pitiable objects by incurable insanity! If then we have been favoured with a comfortable state of health; if violent maladies have not seized on us, or have been removed; if the use of our eyes, ears, senses, limbs, and understandings have been continued, or restored to us; whatever second causes have concurred, we should thankfully say, “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.”

Our lives and comforts are likewise exposed to perpetual dangers from wicked men. If then we have lain down in peace, one night after another, and risen in safety; if we or our dear friends have journeyed from time to time, without having been injured or even alarmed by robbers and murderers; or if, to shew us our danger, and remind us of our invisible Protector; we have been alarmed, and yet preserved from material detriment, how ought we to bless and praise the Lord for his peculiar kindness to us! Every time that we have gone from home, by land or sea; or have parted with our beloved relatives, thus called into distant parts; and on our return have met them in safety, without having experienced fatal disasters, or heart-rending distresses, should excite us to renew

our grateful acknowledgments to the God of our lives.

Some of us can say, ‘ We were never, during all ‘ our past years, disturbed by the midnight alarm of ‘ fire in our habitations ; our property, or part of our ‘ families were never thus tremendously taken from ‘ us.’ Others may indeed have been thus alarmed, and endangered ; but were mercifully preserved, and extricated from the difficulties in which they were involved. And have we not, my friends, abundant cause for gratitude to our kind Protector and Deliverer ?

Let us not on this occasion forget the special mercies we enjoy in this favoured land. The nation has indeed, within our days, been frequently engaged in war, and great complaints have been made : but few of us know any thing experimentally of the horrors attending on actual warfare. We have not been shut up in besieged cities, nor witnessed the dismay, carnage, and devastation of such a scene. Streets flowing with human blood, or strewed with mangled corpses ; the groans of the wounded and dying ; the ruins or smoke of houses made the graves of the inhabitants ; with all the dire effects of places taken by assault, and given up to plunder and massacre, have not been rendered familiar to our senses. We have not beheld the fields ravaged by hostile armies, the labour of the husbandmen destroyed ; towns and villages reduced to ashes ; and the neighbourhood rendered almost a desert ; except as the engines of destruction, the conflicting armies, the moans of the dying, or the more affecting lamentations of surviving

parents, widows, and orphans, give a sad variety to the dreary scene. How few comparatively of the human race have passed so large a portion of their lives, without sharing these sorrows, or having their hearts pained by these woeful spectacles! Is there then no cause on this account to set up our Eben-ezer, and say, “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us?” If any doubt of it; a few months’ residence in a country that is made the seat of war would effectually teach them (provided they be peaceably disposed) to value a land of peace; and to be thankful, if henceforth they may know nothing of war, except from newspapers and taxes.—Many apprehensions have lately been entertained in our land on this account; but during another year we have been preserved. “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”

The same may likewise be observed concerning pestilences, earthquakes, hurricanes, famines, and other dreadful scourges of a guilty world. We have thus far been exempted from them; and our fears of these dire judgments, which desolate other cities and countries, with complicated miseries that baffle all description, should excite us to bless God, who hath hitherto distinguished us by his special protection.

It would occupy too much time, and prove tedious, to enter into further particulars of the deliverances, comforts, and mercies, which a kind Providence hath vouchsafed us. This specimen may suffice to aid the serious enquirer in recollecting the peculiar favours, that he has received during his past life: and this may prove one of the most useful studies in which he can

engage.—It may, however, be proper to ask, whether there has not been some peculiar trial, which you have dreaded more than any other? Now, if you have either been preserved from this; or have, beyond expectation, been supported and carried through it; you can scarcely help considering this as a powerful call on you to say with gratitude, “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.”

But it behoves us also to enquire, in what manner we have received the blessings of a kind Providence, and what returns we have made for them? Alas, we have generally the utmost reason to confess our ungrateful forgetfulness of our Benefactor, our disposition to abuse or idolize his gifts; to undervalue them because not answerable to our exorbitant desires; to ascribe our safety and success to our own prudence and good conduct; or to spend our abundance in gratifying our carnal passions! This subject therefore, if investigated with care, may probably convince us, that we have great cause to admire the Lord’s goodness, in preserving us from *ourselves*, and the consequences of our own vices and follies. If we had been left without restraint, we might, either directly or by excesses, have long since proved our own murderers: we might have been hurried on, by violent passion or resentment, or in prosecution of some favourite project, to murder others, or have provoked them to murder us. We might in various ways have exposed ourselves to the sword of human vengeance: and it is indeed wonderful that God hath borne with our rebellion and perverseness, and hath not cut us off in the midst of our sins. “It is of the LORD’s mercies

“ that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.” We are infinitely indebted to his patience and long-suffering. He spared, protected, and provided for many of us, during a number of years, when we neither asked him to do it, nor thanked him for his kindness. While multitudes were perishing around us, and several of our companions in ungodliness were cut off; while we sinned on amidst repeated warnings and narrow escapes; our offended God would neither destroy us, nor permit others to do it: nay, he prevented the fatal effects of our own madness and folly, and over-ruled many instances of it for our good. Thus he gave us space for repentance: his providential dealings with us had a tendency to excite our attention, and lead us to consider our ways: and every true penitent will perceive that they were actually designed to effect the most gracious purposes. We have been spared by the forbearance of our God, that we might be saved by his mercy!

2. God hath hitherto helped *believers* by his special grace.

Ages before we were brought into existence, He foresaw our wants and miseries, as the descendants of fallen Adam; “ by whom sin entered into the world, and death by sin:” and in infinite mercy he had made all things ready for our salvation, in the person and redemption of his beloved Son. In due season he blessed the land, which was destined to be our residence, with the light of the gospel; and by a variety of wonderful interpositions he hath continued to it that light, while it hath been extinguished or

greatly obscured in other lands. When we found our lot cast in a country thus distinguished; we had, perhaps for a long time, no disposition to attend to the word of salvation; but lived, carelessly or by choice, in Egyptian darkness on the very verge of Goshen. At length we were brought to hear the gospel, by events and circumstances in which we had no willing concurrence, or at least no intention of enquiring the way of life. Many have said, "I will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain." Or 'I will go, and take my fill of pleasure and diversion with my friends and companions:' but they have been disappointed of their aim; and in the very place of their purposed indulgence, gain, or preferment, have been induced to hear the word of God, and been made partakers of blessings inestimably precious. Thus the case of Saul, who went to seek the asses, but found them not, yet met with Samuel, and was anointed king of Israel, has been far exceeded. Secular inducements have led others to remove to places favoured with the faithful preaching of God's word, without the least intention of regarding it: but after a while, curiosity, or persuasion, or some other motive, induced them to give it a hearing, and thus they were made wise unto eternal life. Some, having resided a long time in a situation where little regard was paid to religion, they were at length excited to resist, with all their influence, the introduction of another kind of preaching, and were much chagrined at not being able to carry the point: yet afterwards attachment to a customary place of worship, or some motive of conveniency, brought

them to hear the new doctrine, even the doctrine of Christ crucified; and at length a total change in their views, dispositions, and conduct has filled them with admiring gratitude, and dictated most fervent praises to the Lord. Nay, in some instances, a man's gross misconduct has proved the occasion of bringing him to hear the word of life to the salvation of his soul! Thus Onesimus, dishonestly leaving his master Philemon, fled to Rome, where the ministry of Paul was blessed to his conversion, and he became, as it is generally supposed, an able pastor of the Christian church: and thus, I trust, several, whose vices were the cause of their seeking admission into this hospital,* have here been brought to repentance, faith in Christ, and newness of life; and will admire to all eternity the manifold wisdom and inexpressible mercy of God to them, in this gracious dispensation.

In these, and numberless other ways, the Lord is “found of them that sought him not, and made manifest to them that enquired not after him.†” And the hints now offered may assist the serious Christian, in recollecting the peculiar means, by which God first “opened his eyes, and turned him from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.”

We should however, observe, that numbers have been favoured with the same means, who never obtained the same blessing. It occurs therefore to enquire, “Who made thee to differ from another?” Some of us are conscious, that when we first heard or read the doctrine of Christ, which now is “all our

* The Lock Hospital.

† Rom. x. 20.

“salvation, and all our desire,” we treated it, not merely with indifference, but with decided contempt and aversion. Nay, we opposed and reasoned against it with all our ability, calumniating or ridiculing those who held it. We can remember how strenuously we endeavoured to silence our convictions, and to answer the arguments which almost prevailed over our prejudices: how we tried to quiet our minds, either by reflecting on our supposed virtue; by growing more punctual in a task of religion; or by listening to our own self-complacency and the flattery of our friends, in respect of the imagined superiority of our talents. When baffled on these grounds, we can recollect how we attempted to elude the conviction, by listening to disadvantageous reports concerning those reputedly *enthusiastical* teachers, who maintained the humiliating doctrines of grace; and by charging their principles, on some occasions, with tending to licentiousness, on others, by blaming them as too precise and rigorous in their requirements and example! Nay, perhaps some present, when all these methods failed, have tried to forget the whole in the hurry of business, a succession of company and dissipation, an excess of riot, or even a close application to study. Indeed it would not be wonderful, if some individuals should be conscious, that after all other attempts to quiet their consciences, they have at last had recourse to an antinomian or *enthusiastical* abuse of the gospel, as the last and most desperate expedient for keeping upon good terms with themselves, without parting with their worldly idols.

Not one of these ways of eluding conviction can be mentioned, which hath not been tried by one or another; not one of these snares, in which some of us have not been successively entangled: yet in every one of them, numbers are finally given up to “a strong delusion to believe a lie; that they might all be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*” How is it then, my brethren, that any of us have been “recovered out of the snare of the devil, who had taken us captive at his will?” We can in no other way account for it, than by saying, that God mercifully “gave us repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.†” “God who is rich in mercy, of his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.”—“For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.‡” “The Giver of every good and perfect gift,” not only bestowed the Saviour, and the free pardon and salvation of all that truly believe in him; but he gave us repentance and faith likewise, and “made us willing in the day of his power:” and thus he has a claim upon us for the highest possible gratitude and admiring praise.

Even since the time, when we first were “warned to flee from the wrath to come,” and to “lay hold for refuge on the hope set before us;” how numerous have been our conflicts, difficulties, and dangers? Many, who appeared to the most competent

* 2 Thes. ii. 11, 12. † 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. ‡ Eph. ii. 3-8.

judges far more promising than we were, “in time of temptation have fallen away;” or “they have been choked with cares, and riches, and the lusts of other things, and have brought no fruit to perfection.” Some have evidently returned to “their wallowing in the mire, and their last state is worse than the first.” Others have been “carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Thus they have proved “unstable in all their ways,” have become the zealous propagators of some pestilential heresy, or have “turned aside to vain jangling.” Many have grown lukewarm in the grand essentials of religion, and proportionably fierce and contentious in supporting certain *dogmas*, by which some parts of the truth are pushed to anti-scriptural extremes. In short, in a course of years, if we have accurately observed the affairs of the church, we have witnessed and lamented many astonishing changes, suited to excite our gratitude to God, who “hath hitherto helped us,” and guided us at a distance from those rocks, quick-sands, and whirl-pools, which have proved fatal to numbers.

Our own experience likewise may help us to form a proper judgment of the divine goodness, in thus far protecting and upholding us. If we have for any length of time “fought the good fight of faith,” we must have a consciousness, that in many instances we were “cast down, but not destroyed.” Our enemy has been sometimes ready to rejoice over us as actually vanquished. Outward circumstances gave force to our innate depravity, and our customary or easily

besetting sins : the tempter was permitted “ to sift us
 “ as wheat ;” “ we had the sentence of death in our-
 “ selves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in
 “ God that raiseth the dead.” Perhaps temptation
 prevailed against us ; and a guilty conscience united
 with an unbelieving despondency to bring us into
 deep waters. The insults of enemies, or the censures
 of friends, perhaps concurred with divine rebukes
 and corrections, to dismay our hearts. Yet amidst
 all, we determined, even from the belly of hell, to
 look unto the Lord, and to cry unto him, “ O LORD,
 “ I beseech thee, deliver my soul !” We waited on
 “ him, and he heard our prayer ; he brought us out
 “ of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay ; he set our
 “ feet upon a rock, and established our goings : and
 “ he hath put a new song into our mouth, even praise
 “ unto our God.*” Thus “ he delivered us from so
 “ great a death, and in him we trust that he will yet
 “ deliver us.†” Even if our conflicts have not been
 so severe, if we have not been thus baffled and sham-
 ed, we know to whom we owe our preservation : and
 we have had so many humiliating proofs of our own
 perverseness, weakness, negligence, and relapses into
 idolatrous attachments and various evils ; that we
 cannot but look upon our escapes as marvellous, and
 sometimes stand amazed, that we have not been left
 to renounce or disgrace the gospel ! Every year,
 month, week, or even day, during which we have
 been preserved, and every declension from which we

* Ps. xl. 1—3. cxvi. 1—3. cxxx.

† 2 Cor. i. 9, 10.

have been recovered, is an addition to obligations already great beyond all computation.

Indeed a general view of our situation in this evil world must increase our conviction, that the Lord alone hath kept us, or can keep us, from evil. The countless dangers of our path; the course of the world, with its maxims, fashions, examples, and allurements; the influence of fear, hope, affection, and even gratitude to men, upon our religious conduct; our natural strong desire of honour, friendship, ease, wealth, or indulgence; our aversion to censure, reproach, contempt, and poverty; and the various ways, in which these propensities may be addressed to turn us aside from the direct path, suggest many interesting reflections to the serious mind. The infectious examples even of some zealous preachers and professors of evangelical truth, and the worldly spirit sanctioned by them: with the snares, which are laid in all our employments, connexions, and comforts; in solitude and company, and even in religious duties: the number, power, subtlety, and unwearied malice of our enemies the powers of darkness: the fallibility of our judgment, the scantiness of our knowledge, the weakness of our purposes, and the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our hearts; all remind us, how greatly we are indebted to the Lord, who hath hitherto helped us. It is indeed a marvellous mercy, if we can say, "Having obtained help of God, we continue to this day;" and have neither made a shipwreck of our faith, nor brought a scandal upon the gospel; but still desire with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord.

Much more might profitably be added did time permit, concerning the continued kindness we have received: in the friends raised up for us; and the way in which our heavenly Father hath made up our losses, extricated us out of difficulties, moderated our temptations, renewed our comforts, revived our hopes and earnestness, prolonged our days, and afforded us means of grace and opportunities of usefulness. These, and many more subjects may be thought of, in our private meditations, while we endeavour to enter on another year, with thankfully acknowledging that “Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.”

II. Then we enquire what is meant by “Setting up an Eben-ezer,” according to the common, and not improper, use of the expression.

The nature of the case, and the example before us, concur in proving, that it implies a disposition to give God the glory of all the blessings we have received. We do not ascribe the favourable difference between our situations, prospects, or character, and those of other men, to *our own* wisdom, management, or exertions; but to that God, ‘from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed.’ We pretend not to have merited the divine protection, guidance, and blessings; but feel that all was given us as creatures, without our deserving any thing: and that every good thing bestowed on us as sinners, is contrary to our deserts. We ascribe none of our deliverances or successes to chance, necessity, or second causes: but trace them all to the great First Cause; to him “who doeth all things after the counsel of his own will.” Samuel gave not the honour of

Israel's preservation to any of the servants of God, who had been raised up from the days of Moses, nor did he take it to himself; but ascribed it to the Lord alone. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planted any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*" To set up an Eben-ezer therefore implies a disposition to say, in praise as well as in prayer, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake :†" and to ascribe all our blessings to the everlasting love of the Father, to the atonement and mediation of the Son, and to the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

It implies also an open acknowledgment of our obligations to the Lord; a confession of our own unworthiness; and an endeavour, by all proper means, to perpetuate the memory of his great goodness towards us, in our families, and among all with whom we are connected. An open profession of the truth with a consistent example and conversation, attendance on the ordinances of God, diligence in the instruction of children and domesticks, and the improvement of our several talents to promote true religion, constitute such an avowal of our obligations to the Lord. These things tend to diffuse the knowledge of his abundant kindness, and to preserve the remembrance of it, for the encouragement of our brethren, and an induce-

* 1 Cor. iii. 5—7.

† Ps. cxv. 1

ment to sinners to seek the participation of our privileges.

We must not, however, be satisfied with thankful acknowledgments of the past; but when we set up an Eben-ezer, and say, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us;" we should renew our dedication of ourselves to him in respect of the future. "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 promised thee; that thou shouldest keep all his commandments: and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.*" Having thus far experienced the Lord's faithfulness and mercy, the pleasantness of his ways, and the misery of departing from them; we thank him for the past, and express our purpose and desire of walking with him all the residue of our lives. Our review of the way which we have come invigorates these determinations, increases our simplicity of dependence on his continued grace, and teaches us the necessity of greater vigilance and circumspection; that "whether we eat, or whether we drink, or whatever we do, we may do all to the glory of God."

In these respects the Lord's supper is a stated method of setting up an Eben-ezer. When, with seri-

* Deut. xxvi.

ous recollection and self-examination; with renewed exercises of repentance, faith, and love; with humble confessions, fervent prayers, and thankful praises, we commemorate the sufferings and death of our Redeemer: we then join ourselves to the Lord and his chosen people; we avouch him to be our God; we thank him for the past, and commit ourselves to his keeping for the future; and we declare our determined purpose, by his grace, to walk in his holy ways during the remainder of our lives. It seems therefore peculiarly proper to begin a new year, with this solemn act of adoring praise, this renewed dedication of ourselves to the service of our God and Saviour.

This review should likewise excite us to be “followers of God, as dear children, and to walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.” Our conduct towards others ought to be a constant imitation of the long-suffering, compassion, readiness to forgive and relieve, and persevering goodness, of the Lord towards us; that “we may never be weary of well-doing,” or “be overcome of evil;” but that we may “overcome evil with good.”

Finally, the recollection and thankful acknowledgment that “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us,” should encourage our hearts to run with patience the remainder of “the race set before us.” “The LORD, that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.*” He, that hath preserved and assisted us in so many dangers and dif-

* 1 Sam. xvii. 37.

faculties already, will “never leave us nor forsake us.”
 “He fainteth not, neither is weary.” His understand-
 ing is infinite, his resources inexhaustible, his faith-
 fulness unailing, and his mercy everlasting. We
 should therefore comfort one another with these con-
 siderations, learn “to cast all our care on him who
 “careth for us,” and pour out our hearts before him;
 we should remember that “our Father knoweth what
 “things we have need of,” and that “no good thing
 “will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”
 “Clouds and darkness are about Him,” and gloomy
 prospects may meet our view: but the perfections
 and covenant-engagements of the Lord are unchange-
 able; and “we know that all things work together
 “for good to them that love God, to them who are
 “the called according to his purpose.” “He will
 “never suffer us to be tempted above what we are
 “able: but will with the temptation make a way to
 “escape, that we may be able to bear it:” yea,
 “The Lord shall deliver us from every evil work,
 “and will preserve us to his heavenly kingdom. To
 “whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*”

These are some of the encouragements and instruc-
 tions, which real Christians may receive from the sub-
 ject before us. But how stand matters with our souls?
 Hitherto the Lord hath prolonged our lives, and we
 now enter on another year; while numbers have been
 removed to the regions of darkness and despair, and
 some to the realms of endless day.—Many of our ac-
 quaintance or relatives are gone to their long home;

* 1 Cor. x. 13. 2 Tim. iv. 18.

yet we remain in the land of faith, of hope, of mercy, and of prayer. But “the time is short;” “the end of all things is at hand.”—A little moment, as it were, will terminate our season of probation and preparation for eternity; the continuance of our earthly comforts or trials, and our opportunities of doing good to men, and glorifying God in this world of sin and misery.

Have none of you then entered on this new year, destitute of vital godliness, strangers to repentance and works meet for repentance, and unacquainted with a life of faith in the Son of God, and communion with the Father through him? Are none of you still loitering and procrastinating, loath to part with worldly idols, and averse to diligent piety? Or are you not trying to persuade yourselves, that so much strictness is unnecessary, that by attention to decent forms and moral duties, or an assent to certain doctrines, you may reconcile religion with your worldly spirit and pursuits, and thus serve God and Mammon?—You have indeed been spared to enter on another year, and have great cause, though little heart, for thankfulness: but what assurance have you that you shall live to the close of it? Several who joined with us last year in the service of the day, are now entered on an eternal state; and probably many of us will join them before this year shall terminate. And how terrible will this be to those, who by a perverse abuse of the Lord’s abundant mercies, have increased their own condemnation! Still “the Holy Ghost says, ‘To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.’”—“Seek ye the

“ LORD while he may be found; call ye upon him, while he is near.” And we intreat you, join your prayer for yourselves to our supplications in your behalf, that in the present year you may be “ turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.”

Perhaps some are blessing God, that this has been their happy case, during the preceding year; and are now saying within themselves, ‘ Had I died before the year 1795, I should have perished in my sins, without Christ, and without hope. But the Lord who spared me when others were cut off, and rescued me from numberless dangers seen and unseen, when I habitually trampled on his commandments, and neglected his salvation, hath at length, in boundless mercy, “ granted me repentance,” enabled me to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and taught me by his grace to walk in newness of life.’ “ Bless the LORD, O my soul; and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercy.”—How memorable with you, my brethren, even to eternal ages, will be this “ acceptable year of the LORD,” which to many hath doubtless been “ the day of vengeance of our God!” Oh, endeavour to shew forth his praises, not only with your lips, but in your lives, by giving up yourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all your days.’ Then many will glorify God on your behalf, and you will be in some degree instrumental in bringing others to seek the same

blessings. Abide in Christ ; keep close to the means of grace ; watch against temptation ; “ be not high-minded, but fear,” for your enemies are many, and your hearts deceitful ; yet “ be sober, and hope unto “ the end:” “ For greater is he that is in you, than “ he that is in the world.” Wait on the Lord continually, that he may renew your strength : and take heed, lest an increase of knowledge and maturity of judgment should be attended by an abatement in the fervour of your affections. Be not contented with the low attainments of this lukewarm age ; but follow those, who have most closely followed Christ. And now approach with us to his table, to avow your acceptance of his salvation, and surrender of yourselves to his service ; that, as “ bought with a price, you “ may glorify God with your bodies and spirits which “ are his.”

Some perhaps to this very day, may stand in doubt to what class or company they belong. ‘ May the Lord enable such persons, to begin this new year, with “ giving all diligence to make their calling and “ election sure!” Enquire, my friends, with impartial strictness, into the reasons of your uncertainty and darkness : cast away every idol, break off every entangling pursuit or engagement, return from your backslidings, and seek the Lord with all your hearts : that should this year terminate your lives ; your setting sun may break forth with cheering beams, and gild the dark valley through which you must pass : or should you be spared ; that your walk may be henceforth more close with God, more honourable

and comfortable, and more edifying and encouraging to those around you.

My Christian brethren! let us enter on this new year, by seriously reviewing the one that we have finished: that we may be humbled for the sins, into which we have been betrayed, and rendered more simply dependant and watchful: and that we may be more thankful for the special mercies, personal, social, and publick, with which we have been favoured. Let us earnestly beg a blessing from God on every attempt we have made to sow the seed of truth, to speak a word in season, and to recommend the gospel: beseeching him also to prevent the bad effect of our mistakes and inconsistencies. We should likewise remember that time is short: that we may learn patience in tribulation, joyfulness in hope, indifference about things present, and diligence in our proper work. “Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.*” “Let your loins then be girded, and your lamps burning;” and be habitually expecting the coming of the Lord. Endeavour to recollect what designs of usefulness you had formed, and intended to have executed during the last year, or in any former period; and set about them without delay: persevere in every good work, and Christian course, on which you have entered; and aim to press forward, to grow in grace, and abound more and more in all the fruits of righteousness. Then should this be

* Eccles. ix. 10.

your last year, as it possibly may, and as some have probable reason to expect; death will be your gain: and while the survivors among us may meet together at the return of this season to set up another Ebenezer to our merciful God; others will have joined the company before the throne, and be triumphantly rejoicing and blessing the Lord, that he hath helped them quite through, made them more than conquerors, and placed them for ever out of the reach of dangers and enemies.—May we all, as in succession called out of this world, thus join the heavenly worshippers; till at length,

‘ When all the chosen race
 ‘ Shall meet before the throne,
 ‘ To bless the conduct of his grace,
 ‘ And make his wonders known;’

we may be found of that happy number, and meet once more to set up an Eben-ezer in the world above, and to join in eternal adorations of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the one God of our salvation, to whom be praise and glory for evermore.
 Amen.

SERMON III.*



JOHN, i. 29.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

JOHN BAPTIST, the predicted forerunner of the Messiah, was doubtless well informed of his person, offices, and kingdom. He prepared the way of the Lord, by preaching repentance, as indispensably necessary to a participation of the blessings about to be communicated: and while he baptized the people with water, as an outward emblem of their souls being washed from sin; he declared that the Redeemer would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He bare witness to the Saviour as the Son of God, the Bridegroom of the Church, and “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” He cried, saying, “This was he of whom I spake, “He that cometh after me is preferred before me; “for he was before me: and of his fulness have we

* Preached Good-friday, 1796.

“all received.” He added on another occasion, “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him.*”

It is evident, that this most eminent servant of God laboured to communicate to his disciples exalted apprehensions of the Lord Jesus, and to excite in them large expectations from him. In honouring the Son of God he was willing to abase himself, “as unworthy to loose his shoe-latchet.” He was astonished to think that the Saviour should come to be baptized of him, when he was conscious that as a sinner he stood in need of his spiritual baptism: and when we consider the excellency of John’s character, with the extraordinary things spoken of him in scripture; we shall know what conclusions to draw from his testimony. Certainly he would not have concurred with those, who employ all their abilities in trying to persuade mankind not to think too highly of Christ, not to honour him too much, and not to depend on him too entirely in the great concerns of eternal salvation.—But the words of the text must be exclusively our present subject; and from them we may enquire,

I. On what account Christ is called “The Lamb of God.”

II. The import of the words, “Who taketh away the sin of the world.”

* John, iii. 35, 36.

III. The call to “ Behold the Lamb of God.”

IV. The peculiar instructions to be derived from meditating on this subject.

I. On what account is the Lord Jesus called “ The Lamb of God ?”

We should not forget, my brethren, that the language of scripture was dictated by the Holy Spirit, and demands our most reverent attention on that account. If then we interpret it in a general way, and treat those metaphors under which divine mysteries are revealed, as we would do the language of mere men, who often use pompous words and extravagant figures of speech without much meaning ; we shall be found guilty of despising the sacred oracles. No doubt every metaphor or illustration was selected, in preference to all others, for some wise and holy reasons ; and suggests important instruction to the teachable student. This must especially be the case, with that expression of the text, which engages our present attention : because it frequently occurs with reference to the character, sufferings, and salvation of Christ.

A lamb is a well known emblem of innocence, gentleness, patience, and purity : and no doubt an allusion was made to these things in speaking of the Redeemer as the Lamb of God. Yet we cannot suppose that this was the principal meaning of that appellation, when we duly consider the various passages in which it is used : for in what sense could a lamb *take away sin*, except by becoming an atoning sacrifice ?

The slaughter of innocent animals, and consuming the whole or some part of their bodies upon an altar,

was an essential part of religious worship, from the entrance of sin to the death of Christ.—Those animals alone were used for this purpose, which were the valued and useful property of man, and the most perfect in the kind : but lambs were by far the most common oblation. Thus Abel *by faith* brought the firstlings of his flock as an offering unto the Lord, and was accepted ; but *faith* must have reference to a divine testimony, command, or appointment : this Cain disregarded, “ leaning to his own understanding,” and virtually denying his need of an atonement ; and therefore he was rejected. No sooner was Noah liberated from the ark than he offered burnt-offerings to the Lord :* and doubtless the general opinion, that such sacrifices were proper to appease the anger of the gods, was derived from original tradition ; for it seems to have no ground at all in human reasonings.

When Abraham, at God’s command, went with full purpose of heart to offer his beloved son for a burnt-offering, Isaac, as acquainted with the customary oblations, said, “ My father,—where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?—And Abraham said, My son, “ God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering. †” Under the law, a lamb was the daily sacrifice, morning and evening : and on the sabbath days this was doubled. Thus harmless lambs, free from all spot and blemish, were presented at the altar day by day ; while the priest, as representative of the congregation, laid his hands on the head of the sacrifice, and doubtless confessed over it the sins of Israel, which

* Gen. viii. 20, 21.

† en. Gxxii. 7, 8.

typically were by imputation laid upon it. Then the blood of the lamb was shed; and its body prepared and burnt upon the altar, by the fire which came down from heaven, as an emblem of the divine justice inflicting vengeance on the guilty. And when the blood had been sprinkled and poured out, according to the appointment; the priest went into the sanctuary, and burned incense on the golden altar, while all the people prayed without in the courts of the temple.*

But the paschal lambs, which immensely exceeded in number all other sacrifices that were offered, (when the law was regularly observed,) were most emphatically prefigurative of Christ and his atonement. The unblemished lamb for every family was selected four days before the passover, when it was sacrificed in the presence of the elders and congregation of Israel: its blood was then sprinkled on the lintels and door-posts of their houses: and its body roasted whole was eaten within by all the professed people of God. The feast was celebrated with unleavened bread, and they were directed to eat it with bitter herbs, and with staves in their hands; in remembrance of their affliction in Egypt, their preservation when the first-born were slain, and their marvellous deliverance from bondage. The apostle teaches us how to interpret these things when he says, "Christ, our Pass-
 " over, 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

* Lev. i. 4. xvii. 21. Num. xxvii. 3-10. Luke i. 9, 10.

“bread of sincerity and truth.”* He is the true paschal Lamb, the spotless sacrifice for sin: he was predicted four thousand years before his coming in the flesh: and at length he was crucified for us, at the demand and in the presence of the rulers and people of Israel. His intense sufferings, from the fiery wrath of God against our sins, answered to the prescribed roasting of the paschal lamb.—The profession of faith in his blood externally places the soul under the divine protection, while vengeance is denounced against unbelievers: but the inward experience of true Christians, who secretly ‘feed on Christ in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving,’ corresponds with their avowed dependence on him. In genuine sincerity and simplicity of heart, they exercise repentance, and mourn for their sins; they deny themselves, take up their cross, and bear sanctified afflictions; and, being set at liberty from Satan’s yoke, they set out on their pilgrimage to the heavenly Canaan.

With allusion to these types the apostle says, “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”† And John saw in his vision, “A door opened in heaven.”—“And there stood a Lamb, as it had been slain: and the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down be-

* 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

† 1 Pet. i. 18—20.

“ fore the Lamb,—and they sang a new song, saying,
 “ —Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God
 “ with thy blood.”—The angels also joined these
 representatives of the universal church, “ Saying with
 “ a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,
 “ to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and
 “ strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*”
 On another occasion the apostle “ beheld, and, lo, a
 “ great multitude, which no man could number—
 “ stood before the throne and before the lamb, clothed
 “ with white robes, and palms in their hands; and
 “ cried with a loud voice, Salvation to our God which
 “ sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.”—
 “ These are they, which came out of great tribula-
 “ tion, and have washed their robes, and made them
 “ white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore they
 “ are before the throne of God;—and the Lamb,
 “ which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them,
 “ and lead them unto living fountains of waters.†”

It is evident that the emblem of a Lamb that had been slain, in all these places refers to the death of Christ, as the sacrifice for our sins, and the antitype of all the legal sacrifices. “ Without shedding of blood is no remission;” but, “ it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats,” or lambs, “ should take away sins.‡” As therefore all that were pardoned and saved from the first entrance of sin, were partakers of the benefits arising from the one oblation of Christ once offered; so He is called “ The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.§”

* Rev. iv. 1. v. 6—13. † Rev. vii. 9—17. ‡ Heb. ix. 22. x. 4.
 § Rev. xiii. 8.

It is my design in these citations, to remove every shadow of doubt, and every degree of hesitation from your minds, concerning the meaning of the words "The Lamb of God." The honour of the divine law and government, and the satisfaction of the divine justice in saving sinners, required an atonement of infinite value. The wisdom of God therefore planned this method of redemption, and Christ is the Lamb of God's appointment. "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," in the opening of the roll of scripture, "it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.*" All other methods of expiating guilt and rendering the salvation of sinners honourable to God, were unavailing: but when the Lamb of God came, and offered himself as an atoning sacrifice, the required satisfaction was made, and no further oblations were necessary.

But this appointed atonement was likewise of God's *providing*. The plan of redemption by a sacrifice of infinite value would not have profited us sinners; if everlasting love had not provided such an oblation. The whole universe could not have supplied a single individual, whose dignity and excellency qualified him for such an undertaking; or whose love was so immense, as to influence him to interpose in our behalf. But "God spared not his own Son." He gave him

* Heb. x. 4-10.

to be the propitiation for our sins; he *accepted* the oblation which he had appointed and provided; and in all these respects, Christ is “the Lamb of God.”—
We proceed,

II. To consider the import of the words, “Which taketh away the sin of the world.”

The unblemished harmless lambs, which were sacrificed from the beginning, had no guilt of their own; yet they suffered as if they had been guilty. They were substituted in the place of the criminals; and the guilt or desert of punishment was typically transferred from the sinner to the sacrifice. It was imputed to the animal, who bare the punishment, while the offerer escaped: and it took away his sin by expiating the guilt of it.—Thus the Lord Jesus was substituted in our place; our guilt was transferred to him by imputation. He was sinless himself, and yet suffered as a sinner, in order “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life:” and in this manner he taketh away sin.

We are not, however, left to deduce this conclusion, from types and shadows, or our own reasonings concerning them: for the sacred writers have most explicitly and energetically declared the same great truth. The prophet Isaiah, in his most wonderful prediction of the sufferings and glory of the Redeemer, says, “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.—All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,” “It pleased the LORD to bruise

“him, and to put him to grief: thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin—He shall bear their iniquities. He bare the sin of many.” You see, my brethren, that Christ not only bare our *punishment*, but our *iniquities*: and this can imply nothing less, than actual translation of guilt from the sinner to the sacrifice. ‘It was exacted, and he became answerable.’* He willingly consented to become our Surety, to assume our flesh, and expiate our sins by his own suffering and death upon the cross. He was capable of doing this, and willing to do it. The human nature he assumed was preserved free from all contamination of sin: so that his life was not forfeited, or suffering deserved, by any personal transgression. He had power to lay down his life, and power to take it again, and no mere creature ever was or can be placed in a similar situation. “He loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet smelling savour.”† The imputation of guilt no more implied criminality or pollution, than the sacrificing of the harmless lamb rendered it sinful and defiled: or than a man becomes chargeable with the extravagance and profligacy of the poor insolvent whom he liberates from prison by paying his debt, out of the most generous compassion.

And let us not suppose, that this language concerning Christ bearing our *sins*, was merely that of prophecy or poetry: for the writers of the New Testament, in didactic prose, are equally decisive, or even more so. “He was made sin for us, who knew

* Bishop Lowth on Is. liii. 7.

† Eph. v. 2.

“no sin; that we might be made the righteousness
 “of God in him.*” This certainly implies a recip-
 eral imputation of our sin to Christ, and of his righ-
 teousness to us. “Christ hath redeemed us from the
 “curse of the law, being made a curse for us.†”
 “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body
 “on the tree.”—“He suffered once for sins, the
 “just for the unjust, that he might bring us to
 “God.‡” “Being justified freely by his grace,
 “through the redemption, that is in Christ Jesus,
 “whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation,
 “through faith in his blood, to declare his righteous-
 “ness for the remission of sins—that he might be
 “just and the justifier of him that believeth in Je-
 “sus.§”—These and many similar expressions, as
 connected with the institutions of the ceremonial law,
 and the reasonings of the apostle in his Epistle to the
 Hebrews, are abundantly sufficient, to prove; not
 only that the doctrine of an atonement by the vica-
 rious sufferings of Emmanuel is contained in scrip-
 ture, but that it is the most prominent and central part
 of revelation. This is confirmed by the appointment
 of the Lord’s supper, in perpetual remembrance of
 the death of Christ; and for a constant representation
 of the life of faith, under the figure of “eating the
 “flesh and drinking the blood of Christ.” We may
 therefore confidently affirm, that they who deny or
 explain away this doctrine, prefer their own reason-
 ings to the sure testimony of God, and endeavour to

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

† Gal. iii. 13.

‡ Pet. ii. 24. iii. 18.

§ Rom. iii. 24—26.

remove the key-stone of an arch, the whole of which would at length fall down, if they could succeed. So that mere natural religion, which palliates and flatters human pride, will uniformly be preferred to the religion of the Bible, by all who lose sight of this fundamental doctrine : and facts do fully demonstrate that this has always in process of time been the consequence, when persons have argued themselves and others, out of the ancient and orthodox interpretation of redemption by the Saviour's atoning blood.

But the present occasion admits not a fuller discussion of this important subject. The propitiatory oblation made by the Lamb of God, being of infinite value, was sufficient to take away the original and actual sin of mankind, even as if it had been but one complex transgression. Millions in every age have received the benefit of it ; and if the whole human race should at once apply for pardon and salvation by the blood of Christ ; it would suffice to take away all their sin. The efficacy of the typical sacrifices was confined wholly to the Jewish nation : but that of the one atoning sacrifice of Christ, extends equally to other nations. It is sent to them all without exception : and we can assure any sinner throughout the earth, that if he believe in the Son of God he shall be saved. So that none perish, because there is no help for them ; but because pride, love of sin, and aversion to the spiritual service of God, harden their hearts in unbelief, and they " will not come to Christ, " that they might have life." In this sense " The " Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world."

But he also taketh away guilt from the conscience by the *sprinkling* of his blood.* The atonement made upon the cross eventually profits none but those, who apply it to themselves. This is represented in the Lord's supper, as it was of old by the eating of the paschal lamb, with the sprinkling of its blood. We are not communicants merely by hearing of, or seeing, the emblems of Christ's body and blood, but by eating and drinking them. The Lord Jesus "who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,"† sends his gospel to sinners, and by the powerful convictions of the Holy Spirit, he effectually destroys their self-confidence; then their conscience becomes burdened with the guilt of their former sins; and whatever efforts they use to get relief, all prove ineffectual, till they understand the nature, and see the suitableness and glory of redemption by the blood of Christ. Applying in true repentance and living faith for an interest in this propitiation, they find the load of guilt removed, and obtain stable peace, connected with deep humiliation, hatred of sin, watchfulness against it, acquaintance with the divine law in their own hearts, and great tenderness of conscience. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve

* 1 Pet. i. 2.

† 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

“ the living God? * ” Nothing but this view of the cross, this application to the blood of sprinkling, this washing in “ the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness,” can give that kind of peace and confidence which hath been described : because nothing else can shew the enlightened and humbled heart the divine justice and holiness, in harmony with mercy and truth, glorified in pardoning and saving the chief of sinners. And whenever this peace has been lost through relapses into sin, there is no other way of recovering it, but that in which it was first obtained : nay indeed, it cannot be preserved in the midst of those numberless imperfections and defilements, that accompany our best days and duties, except by continual application to “ the blood of Christ which
“ cleanseth from all sin.”

In consequence of the atonement and intercession of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit destroys in the heart of his disciples, the dominion, love, and pollution of sin ; by means of the motives, encouragements, and ordinances of the gospel. In this sense also, “ the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the
“ world : ” for this is the only method, by which the hearts of men all over the world can be made holy ; and all men in every nation of the earth, who believe in the name of Christ, are thus sanctified by faith in him. † ” — “ Christ also loved the church, and gave
“ himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it
“ with the washing of water by the word ; that he
“ might present it to himself a glorious church, not

* Heb. ix. 13, 14. x. 22.

† Acts xxvi. 18.

“having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that
 “it should be holy and without blemish.”* “You
 “who were—enemies in your minds by wicked
 “works; yet now hath he reconciled; in the body of
 “his flesh through death; to present you holy, and
 “unblameable, and unreprieveable in his sight.”†
 “He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us
 “from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a pe-
 “culiar people, zealous of good works.‡” Thus
 will the Lamb of God continue to take away the sin
 of believers all over the world, till there be no re-
 mains of it left; and till the whole company shall be
 “presented faultless before the presence of his glory
 “with exceeding joy.§”

III. Then we consider the call to “Behold the
 “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the
 “world.”

I shall not confine myself to the exact import of
 the words, as spoken by John; but refer likewise to
 several other scriptures of a similar nature. “There
 “is no God else beside me, a just God and a Sa-
 “viour;—look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends
 “of the earth.||” “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.¶” “Look-
 “ing unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our
 “faith, who for the joy set before him endured the

* Eph. v. 25—27. † Col. i. 21, 22. ‡ Tit. ii. 14.

§ Jude, 24. || Is: xlv. 21, 22. John, iii. 14, 15.

“ cross, despising the shame; and is set down at the
 “ right hand of the throne of God.*” The Baptist
 may be supposed to have addressed his disciples to
 this effect: ‘ You want pardon of your sins, and de-
 liverance from the power and pollution of iniquity:
 “ Behold” then “ the Lamb of God who taketh away
 “ the sin of the world.” He alone can confer these
 blessings; apply to him, become his disciples,
 rely on him entirely, and follow implicitly his di-
 rections; thus you will be saved, and be made
 instrumental to the salvation of your fellow sin-
 ners.’

But we may understand the call in a more compre-
 hensive sense, as an exhortation to meditate seriously
 and frequently on the great doctrines thus revealed;
 to behold and contemplate the person and redemption
 of Christ with fixed attention and humble faith. He
 seems to address us from the cross, and to say, “ Is
 “ it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and
 “ see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow,
 “ which is done unto me; wherewith the LORD hath
 “ afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.†” Let
 us then turn our thoughts from all other subjects, and
 with believing application to ourselves, contemplate
 the interesting scene, which we this day commemo-
 rate.

We cannot well enter on such meditations, with-
 out adverting to the language of the sacred writers,
 concerning the essential and eternal Deity of Christ,

* Heb. xii. 2.

† Lam. i. 12.

One with the Father, the Creator and Upholder of all worlds, the Object of universal worship and adoration. We consider this glorious Person coming in the flesh to be the Saviour of the world, to seek and save the lost, from mere love and compassion to deservedly perishing sinners. The spotless purity of his human nature; the perfection of his obedience to the divine law; the depth of his voluntary humiliation; the poverty and contempt, and the contradiction of sinners, which he endured through life, demand our most serious attention. He effected not his gracious purposes in our behalf, as a Monarch or a Conqueror; he taught not as a Philosopher or a Moralist: "but he took upon him the form of "a servant," and "gave his life a ransom for "many."

We should, however, especially contemplate the variety and intensesness of his sufferings, in the closing scene of his humiliation: the excruciating pain he endured, from the scourge, the thorns, and the nails, and when hanging on the accursed tree; with the anguish of mind he felt when agonizing in the garden, and when on the cross he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is very important for us to reflect on what the Redeemer suffered from *men*; from the base treachery of Judas, the unfaithfulness of Peter, the cowardice of the disciples; the cruel injustice of Caiaphas, the scribes, priests, council, and even their servants; from the contempt and indignity put upon him by Herod and his men of war; the cruelty and scorn of

Pilate's soldiers; the lingering tortures of the cross; the ingratitude of the insulting multitude, and the revilings even of the malefactors. We should recollect likewise, that this was the hour and power of darkness: and what gloomy imaginations, and detested thoughts might be presented to the mind of Christ, by the subtle and energetick influence of evil spirits, may be best conceived by those who "are not ignorant of their devices." "He suffered, being tempted, that he might be able to succour them that are tempted:" and the assaults of Satan in the desert may convince us, that he would do his utmost, when permitted, to bruise the heel of Him, who came to crush his head and destroy his works.

But we are also taught, that "it pleased the LORD to bruise him, and to put him to grief: and to make his soul an offering for sin." Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts; smite the Shepherd.*" "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." And when we compare our Lord's agony in the garden, and his exclamation on the cross, with the conduct of his own disciples under the severest tortures: we must be convinced that his cup was embittered inconceivably more than theirs, and that consolations and supports were vouchsafed them, of which he was wholly left destitute.—We cannot explain this subject.—

* Zech. xiii. 7.

We may be certain, that remorse of conscience, despair, and the prevalence of hateful passions, which will eternally increase the misery of condemned sinners, could have no place in the mind of the holy Jesus: but whatever pain, shame, wrath, curse, agony, or misery, he could possibly endure; whatever the justice of God, the honour of the law, and the instruction of the universe in the evil and desert of sin, required; all this the Redeemer suffered, till he could say with his expiring breath, "It is finished."

It should likewise be remembered, that our Lord most willingly submitted to all these sufferings, from love to our souls and regard to the glory of God. No man had power to take away his life: the prince of this world had no part in him; no personal transgression exposed him to the sentence of death; but "love, that passeth knowledge," moved him to give himself a propitiatory Sacrifice for our sins! The meekness, patience, and persevering fortitude, with which our Lord suffered, should not pass unnoticed. "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered he threatened not.*"

The circumstances attending his crucifixion also form a proper subject of meditation. The sun was

* 1 Pet. ii. 21—23.

miraculously darkened, as a token of the divine displeasure, and an emblem of the gloom which overspread the Sun of righteousness. Yet, in this deep humiliation of the Lord of glory, he rescued one perishing sinner from the jaws of destruction, and took him with him to paradise. When he expired, "the veil of the temple was rent;" the rocks were torn by an earthquake, the graves were opened, and the preparation made for the resurrection of those saints, who were appointed to grace the triumph of the rising and ascending Saviour. For the event of his sufferings in his personal exaltation; and the complete salvation, in body and soul, of all the unnumbered myriads, which ever did or ever shall believe in him, is the last particular, to which our present meditations should be directed.—But it is time for us to proceed,

IV. To consider the peculiar instructions, to be derived from these contemplations.

The worth of our immortal souls is most emphatically taught us by the cross of Christ. "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Could any one literally gain the whole universe, as the price of iniquity, and keep it with every imaginable advantage during the term of human life; it could neither preserve his body from the grave, nor his soul from eternal misery! "It costs more to redeem the soul: that must be let alone for ever." View the Saviour agonizing in Gethsemane, and expiring on the cross! Did he endure these unknown sufferings to preserve men

from temporal poverty, pain, or death? By no means: but to deliver them from the wrath to come; where “their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Who can doubt then, that an immortal soul is man’s principal treasure? It is possessed by the meanest, and it infinitely exceeds in value all the distinctions of the mightiest. He who made the soul knows its worth; and he deemed it so valuable, that he ransomed our souls from ruin, at the price of his own blood. Shall we not then deem the salvation of them our grand concern, and regard all interfering objects as unworthy our notice in the comparison? If we should never succeed in any one thing all our lives, except in this chief concern; our felicity will be congratulated by angels to eternity: if we should prosper in all other respects, and fail here; our folly and misery will be lamented and execrated for ever.

Our children also have immortal souls. Does then our love of them induce us to use every means of providing for their comfort in this world; and shall it not influence us to proportionable earnestness in seeking their salvation? O cruel and infatuated parents, who take excessive care about the bodies of your children, and leave their precious souls to perish everlastingly for want of diligent instruction; or perhaps even help to murder them, by indulging their sinful dispositions, and setting them a bad example! —Nay, let us further learn to consider, that our relatives, neighbours, and enemies, have immortal souls. Because they are so valuable, “He that winneth souls is wise:” let us then think nothing too much to ex-

pend or attempt, in promoting that grand object, for which the Son of God shed his precious blood.

But, viewed in this glass, how vain does the world and all things in it appear! “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.” What are empires, or the loss of them? What renown, or infamy? What affluence or poverty? What the most exquisite pleasure or torturing pain, when put in competition with eternal happiness, or misery? or when viewed in connexion with the cross of Christ? Had he not so loved us, all possible prosperity could not have prevented our everlasting misery: if we believe in him, all possible adversity cannot prevent our everlasting happiness. Let us not then envy the wealthy and successful, but pity and pray for them: let us not covet worldly things, repine for want of them, or lament the loss of them: let us not join in the vain mirth of condemned sinners, or be satisfied with any thing short of the joy of God’s salvation.

By contemplating the cross of Christ, we may learn the perfect justice and holiness of God, the excellency of his law, and the desert of sinners. In the condemnation of fallen angels and wicked men, and in many other awful ways, the Lord hath proclaimed his abhorrence of iniquity, and his determination to magnify his holy law: yet his mercy not being visible in those events, it might have been thought, either that he was incapable of shewing mercy, or that in exercising mercy he would abate from the demands of justice, and connive at transgression. But the subject before us, well understood, confutes all such vain imagina-

tions. When mercy triumphed most illustriously; justice was most gloriously displayed, the law most honoured, and sin most exposed to universal detestation. ‘Rather,’ says the Saviour, ‘will I bear the curse of the divine law, and the punishment of sin, in my own person, and make an expiation of infinite value by my sufferings and death upon the cross; than either leave sinners to perish without help, or allow the law to be dishonoured, and justice to be relaxed for their benefit.’ “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid, yea, we establish the law.”

Here again we may learn repentance, and abhorrence of our iniquities. “They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and mourn.” The more lovely and glorious the divine perfections appear, the more excellent the holy law, and the more hateful and destructive transgression are found to be; the deeper should be our sorrow and remorse, while we recollect and review all our numerous and heinous offences, and all their aggravations: and the more ought we to dread and hate those evil propensities, from which all our crimes proceed, and which continually aim, as it were, to “crucify the Lord afresh, and put him to open shame.” When we view the miseries of the world, and the ravages of death, we may well enquire, “Who slew all these?” And the consideration may help to abase us for sin, and excite us to oppose and crucify our lusts, which are the murderers of the whole human race, and menace our destruction. Yet the cross of Christ, when duly contemplated, suggests far more powerful

motives for contrition and self-abhorrence, and will far more effectually influence us to seek the destruction of those hated enemies, that crucified the Lord of glory.

But the same object will likewise teach us, that neither our repentance or amendment, nor any thing else we can do, will at all serve to expiate our guilt or justify us in the sight of God. “If righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain.” Men set up a variety of reasonings against the express and numerous testimonies of God to this leading truth; and thus vainly “go about to establish their own “righteousness.” But a serious view of the Lamb of God, as taking away the sin of the world, may convince us that every hope they form of escaping condemnation or obtaining life, except by faith in a crucified Saviour, will most surely prove fallacious and ruinous: for if any thing else would as effectually have answered the purposes of God, he would doubtless have spared his own Son, and save sinners in some other way.

On the other hand, we here behold the riches of the divine compassion and tender mercy towards the sinful children of men. “Herein is love, not that we “loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to “be the propitiation for our sins.” If then God so loved us when enemies, what may not those expect from him, who renounce every other plea, and “flee “for refuge to lay hold on this hope set before them?” In every penitent who supplicates mercy for the sake of Christ and his atoning blood, the Redeemer “sees “of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied:” for this

very purpose he suffered and died on the cross, “that he might become the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.” On this ground we say, “Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord :” and “if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all ; how shall he not with him freely give us all things ?”

But while we mingle our tears of godly sorrow with joyful thanksgivings, and glory in Christ Jesus amidst all our tribulations : let us also, my brethren, look to the cross, and learn our obligations to the most self-denying and devoted obedience. Can we, with this object full in view, deem any expence too great, any sacrifice too costly, any cross too heavy, any labour too severe, which his glory, the authority of his command, or the benefit of his purchased flock, call us to undergo ? Surely the constraining love of Christ will render every loss or suffering tolerable, yea, pleasant, to the thankful believer ; while he beholds the Lamb of God, expiring on the cross, to take away that sin, which would otherwise have eternally ruined his soul ; and to purchase for him everlasting and unutterable felicity !

Here too we must look, that we may learn patience, meekness, spirituality, and every part of that holiness to which we are called. Hence we must draw our motives and encouragements ; and here we must view that perfect example, which we are required to copy. Forgiveness of injuries, love of enemies, perseverance

in well-doing amidst insult, contempt, and ingratitude, and compassion to perishing sinners, are best learned by looking to the cross; by witnessing the triumph of divine love in the sufferings of Emmanuel, and hearing him mingle his dying groans, with prayers for his cruel and insulting murderers.

Meditation on this subject may also convince us, that we must expect tribulation in the world, and the enmity or contempt of unbelievers, if we belong to Christ, and bear his image. His wisdom, holiness, and love were perfect: yet no one of our race ever experienced such hatred and insult from all ranks, orders, and descriptions of men, as the spotless Lamb of God! Malefactors commonly meet with some pity amidst their tortures, however merited: but Jews and gentiles, rulers, scribes, priests, soldiers, and the multitude, could unite in cruel mockery of the holy Jesus, when expiring on a cross! Away then with all those flattering sentiments of human nature, which represent it as loving and delighting in genuine excellency: the cross of Christ, and the sufferings of his most faithful servants in every age, form a demonstrative confutation of the proud delusion! And if our hearts have been changed by divine grace; so that we love and imitate the lowly and humble Saviour: let us count our cost, expect scorn and hatred from men, tribulation in the world, and peace and consolation from the Lord alone. Let us also look beyond the cross, and contemplate the glory which followed: “that we may not be wearied and faint in our minds.” We too have a joy set before us: let us then endure

our lighter cross, and despise the shame ; assured that if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him in glory.

But, my fellow sinners, where will you appear at his second coming to judge the world, if you now neglect his great salvation ? If you join his enemies ; and, by cleaving to your sins, prefer Barabbas to Jesus, sell him as Judas did for a few pieces of silver, or determine you “ will not have him to reign over you ? ” Still he invites you to come to him, that you may have life eternal : Oh ! that you would seek to him as a Saviour, who will shortly come to be your Judge.

In fine, contemplating the cross of Christ, teaches us most effectually every lesson contained in the sacred scriptures. Let us then, my brethren, further prosecute our meditations at the Lord’s table : and while we remember the love and sufferings of our Redeemer, let us renew our repentance, and acceptance of his salvation, and give up ourselves to his service ; that, “ as bought with a price, we may glorify him with our bodies and spirits which are his.”

SERMON IV.*



I CORINTHIANS, XV. 20.

Now is Christ risen from the dead.

WE learn from this chapter, that some of the Corinthians had denied the doctrine of a resurrection: probably explaining away the apostolical language on that subject as figurative; and as only meaning conversion, or that change which took place in the world by the introduction of Christianity.† In confuting this dangerous error, the apostle called their attention to the resurrection of Christ, as an undeniable fact: and he shewed, that the denial of a resurrection was equivalent to saying that Christ was not risen; and thus tended to subvert the foundation of Christianity, and to destroy the hopes and comforts of believers. “ If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not
“ Christ risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our
“ preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; yea,
“ and we are found false witnesses of God.—And if

* Easter Sunday, 1796.

† 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.

“ Christ be not raised,—ye are yet in your sins : then
“ they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are per-
“ rished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ,
“ we are of all men most miserable.” All the joys
and supports of Christians are inseparably connected
with future and eternal felicity ; without the hope of
which they would have nothing to counterbalance
their peculiar trials and conflicts.

If Christ were not risen, believers were yet in their
sins, and even the martyrs had finally perished. But
were not the primitive Christians converted from
idols to serve the living and true God ? Did they not
“ repent, and do works meet for repentance ? ” Were
they not exemplary in the practice of all good works ?
And did they not meet death for the sake of a good
conscience towards God ? How then could they be
yet in their sins ?—Because, none of these things
could atone for their transgressions ; and, if Christ
were not risen, no effectual atonement had been made :
they must therefore have still continued under con-
demnation, and exposed to the curse of the law which
they had broken. A most conclusive proof, that the
death of Christ was a vicarious satisfaction for sin ;
and that none can be saved, who are not interested in
that atonement !

It is deemed uncandid to charge men’s doctrines
with the consequences resulting from them ; yet I ap-
prehend we should all consider ourselves bound to
warn people against the consequences of taking a poi-
sonous mixture, even if he who administered it was
not at all aware of its nature : and the apostle has here
set us the example of doing the same, in opposing

those erroneous doctrines by which immortal souls are fatally deceived.

He then adds the words of the text, "Now is Christ risen from the dead," and proceeds to treat very copiously on the doctrine of the resurrection. But I shall confine myself to the subject before us, and attempt,

I. To prove that Christ is risen from the dead.

II. To shew the inferences which may be drawn from that event.

III. To apply the subject to ourselves.

I. I shall prove that Christ is risen.

Though true Christians have "a witness in themselves," which in general satisfies their minds, as to the certainty of the things which they have believed: yet in peculiar seasons of temptation, an acquaintance with the evidences of Christianity would tend greatly to their establishment. And in these times of infidelity and scepticism, all who would "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," should be able to give a reason of their hope to every enquirer or objector: both to defend themselves from the charge of enthusiasm and credulity; to obviate the doubts of those with whom they converse; and to preserve young persons, perhaps their own children, from the fatal contagion. It is therefore greatly to be lamented, that pious persons are in general so little furnished with this sort of knowledge, of which they might make such important use.

It is commonly said, that the new Testament is built upon the foundation of the Old, and must stand or fall along with it : and there is a truth in this sentiment ; though it be somewhat diverse, in its nature and consequences, from that which is generally supposed. Our Lord and his apostles have so frequently quoted the old Testament, and almost every part of it, as the *scripture*, *the word of God*, *the oracles of God*, and *the language of the Holy Ghost* ; that their credit must be connected with the divine inspiration of the books thus repeatedly attested by them.—We are able to prove, that the canon of the old Testament in those days differed very little, if at all, from that which we have at present, yet our Lord referring to different parts of it, says, “ Thus it is written, and thus it “ must be,” “ the scripture cannot be broken,” “ the “ scriptures must needs be fulfilled.” And the apostles say, “ All scripture is given by inspiration from God :” “ Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the “ Holy Ghost.” This single consideration completely establishes the whole of the old Testament as a divine revelation, with all those who duly reverence the words of Christ and his apostles. In all other respects the new Testament stands on its own basis, and is proved to be the word of God by distinct evidence : it affords unspeakably more support to the old Testament than it receives from it ; and the resurrection of Christ alone is sufficient to authenticate the whole sacred volume.

The restoration of a dead body to life is no more difficult to omnipotence, than the production of life at first. The divine operation is in both respects alike

incomprehensible : but as we continually observe life to be communicated in a certain way, we call that the law of nature : though we understand not our own meaning, and cannot explain how causes produce their effects. But dead bodies do not return to life, in the ordinary course of human affairs : we therefore suppose some law of nature to the contrary, the violation of which in any particular instance, we should call a miracle ; that is a divine interposition and operation to produce an effect, above or contrary to the general energy of second causes. Some persons indeed pretend that this is impossible : but “ Why “ should it be thought incredible with you, that God “ should raise the dead ?” The power exerted is no greater, than that by which thousands of infants receive new life every day : and will man presume to say, that God cannot, or shall not, exert his power in any way which they have never before observed? —If a sufficient reason can be assigned for his extraordinary interposition, and the fact be indisputably proved ; it becomes as credible as other well attested events ; many of which do not coincide with our expectations or ideas of probability.

Universal history, observation, and experience prove that “ the world lieth in wickedness.” Idolatry, superstition, impiety, and every kind of vice and misery, have in all ages, covered and desolated the earth. But it hath pleased God, of his infinite mercy, to reveal himself to sinful men ; to make known a way in which they might be reconciled to him and recovered to holiness ; and thus to introduce a religion suited to rectify the disorders of the world, and unite

the honour of his name with the eternal happiness of unnumbered millions. Miracles, and the resurrection of the Redeemer especially, formed a suitable demonstration that this religion came from God, and served to arrest the attention of mankind: for alas! sinners for the most part are too much occupied about the affairs of this life, to notice those things which relate to God and their eternal state.—These are reasons assigned for a divine interposition on this occasion; and more important cannot possibly be conceived.

The Jews, the most inveterate enemies of Christianity, preserve, with profound veneration and scrupulous care, the books of the old Testament, which have been handed down in the same manner from generation to generation, during a long succession of ages. These books evidently contain a system of prophecy, centring in the person and redemption of the Messiah; and, among other particulars, his sufferings and death are circumstantially foretold, with clear intimations of his resurrection and subsequent glorious kingdom.*

We know also, that the gospels were made publick in the earliest ages of Christianity; for they are continually quoted and referred to by those writers, whose works have been preserved: and from them we learn, that our Lord predicted his own death and resurrection on the third day, in so explicit a manner, that the Jewish rulers were aware of it, and took their measures accordingly. Yet when the body of Christ was delivered to Joseph, they were so fully

* Ps ii. xvi. 8—11. Isai. liii. 7—12.

satisfied, by what they saw and heard, of his being really dead, that they made no objection on that ground: but they requested Pilate that the sepulchre might be securely closed, and guarded by Roman soldiers, till the third day was past; lest the disciples should steal his body, and say that he was risen again. After all their precautions, however, the body was gone, and they were never able to shew by whom it was removed, or what became of it.

Here let us pause, that we may consider the credibility of testimony.—One consistent witness, of sound understanding and fair character, who has no apparent interest in deceiving, is often deemed sufficient to determine the sentence of life or death, the most important of all temporal concerns: but if three or four such witnesses should agree in deposing, that they saw such a murder or robbery committed by the prisoner at the bar; no sober man could doubt of the fact, or scruple to pronounce him guilty. Now there were twelve appointed witnesses to the resurrection of Christ, of plain good understanding, and unexceptionable character: for Peter's denial of his Lord, through the force of sudden temptation, forms no impeachment of his integrity; seeing he so honestly confessed his guilt, and so fully proved the sincerity of his repentance by his subsequent conduct: and when Judas by transgression fell, another was chosen in his place. These witnesses had constantly attended Jesus during some years, and must have been competent to know him from all other men. They were remarkably incredulous respecting his re-

urrection; and his crucifixion seems almost to have extinguished their hopes: how then can it be supposed, that they would have attempted to overpower or deceive the vigilant and valiant Roman soldiers, and to steal the body of Jesus? In so desperate an undertaking they must have been sure to excite the combined rage of both the Jewish and Roman rulers: and success itself could only expose them to hatred, persecution, and all kinds of hardships and sufferings. It is manifest, that from the time they began to bear witness to the resurrection of Christ; they renounced all prospects of worldly interest, ease, or greatness; and willingly embraced poverty, labour, contempt, bonds, stripes, and perils as their portion. So that no possible account can be given of their conduct, unless it be ascribed to a principle of conscience: while the strict and exact morality of their writings demonstrates, that they could not be actuated by false principles: for they do not allow men, in any case, to do evil that good may come; and they condemn all kinds of imposition with the most decided severity. Is it then possible for human beings deliberately to choose temporal and eternal misery, and to persevere in decided adherence to a plan, which on their own principles, ensures their damnation in another world, as well as a complication of miseries in this present life?

The witnesses of our Lord's resurrection survived that event for a long time; some of them nearly forty years, and John still more. They were after a while separated into different parts of the world; and seemed to have no common interest, except in the suc-

cess of Christianity: they passed through a series of the severest trials, and almost all of them died martyrs in the cause: but no change of circumstance or situation, no promises or threatenings of men, no repeated tortures or impending dangers, induced one of them in the smallest degree, to waver in his testimony. They declared unanimously, that on the third morning after the crucifixion, a vision of angels told some of their company, at the sepulchre, that their Lord was risen; that afterwards they all saw him repeatedly; that they examined his hands, feet, and side, and were sure it was the same body which had been nailed to the cross; that he ate and drank with them several times; that at length, after giving them particular instructions relative to their future conduct, he ascended from among them, till a cloud intercepted their sight of him; and that two angels appearing to them declared he was gone to heaven. Such an unwavering, persevering testimony of twelve persons, whose holy lives, diligent labours, disinterestedness, and patient sufferings evince their sincerity, forms so complete a proof; that in any other case, he who should not be satisfied with it would be deemed sceptical almost to insanity.

This is, however, but a very small part of the evidence afforded us in this most important concern.—Saul the persecutor was a man endued with superior talents cultivated by education, and possessed of peculiar advantages for rising in the world; of which he was evidently availing himself, while gratifying his implacable enmity to the gospel. Yet was he, all at once, converted into a most zealous preacher of that faith which he had attempted to destroy: and, re-

nouncing all his former principles and worldly prospects, yea, exasperating above measure his powerful patrons and employers; he spent all the remnant of his days in the most self-denying labours, hardships, and sufferings, endured with the greatest alacrity, for the sake of Christ and the gospel: and at length he sealed his testimony with his blood. How can this fact be accounted for, unless we allow the truth of his narrative concerning the manner of his conversion? And if that be allowed, the resurrection of Christ is demonstrated.

In the chapter whence our text is taken, this man declares, that Christ appeared after his resurrection to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remained to that time. This was an appeal to nearly three hundred living witnesses of that event: but no one ever attempted to disprove the truth of his assertion; though false teachers would have concurred with open enemies, in such an attempt, had it been practicable.

The testimony of the apostles, to the resurrection of Jesus, implied a charge of the most complicated wickedness against the rulers of the Jewish nation: these had the power in their hands, and were every way concerned to vindicate their characters, and punish those who thus accused them. This might readily have been done, had they produced the Roman soldiers in court, to testify that the body of Jesus had been stolen, or to state in what way it was removed from the sepulchre.

But in fact they had bribed the soldiers to circulate a self-contradictory report on this subject, which

would not bear investigation: and when St. Matthew soon afterwards charged this publicly upon them, and declared that the story was generally current among the Jews to that time; no one attempted to deny or disprove the charge! In every case of this nature silence must be construed into a confession of guilt: and if the rulers could have accounted for the removal of the body, without either admitting the truth of Matthew's charge, or our Lord's resurrection, no doubt can reasonably be made, but they would have done it in the most publick manner.

Every reflecting person must perceive, that the evidence is completely satisfactory, provided it can be made clear, that these books were published at the time to which they refer. To obviate therefore every doubt on that head, without engaging in an argument far too complicated for this occasion, I would enquire, at what subsequent time it could have been possible to obtain credit to writings of this description? If a manuscript, said to have been long concealed in some library, be produced or published, as the work of an eminent author, who flourished two or three centuries ago; it immediately is subjected to a severe scrutiny, and imposture in such cases seldom escapes detection. But writings which contain a circumstantial narrative of "things not done in a corner," but in the open view of mankind, during several years; and connected with an epistolary correspondence resulting from them; could never have obtained the least credit in the world, if published after the times referred to, with an express appeal to mankind, that they all along had been familiarly acquainted

with them. Such an insolent attempt, to persuade whole nations out of their senses and understandings must have excited universal astonishment and indignation : or had it been possible to convince a few individuals that they had received these books from their ancestors, and been taught from infancy to revere them as the writings of the apostles, when in fact neither they nor any other persons had ever before seen or heard of them ; the effrontery of the deceivers and the credulity of the deceived must have constituted an unprecedented event, and marked the age in which it occurred. As therefore no time can be mentioned, when any attempt of this kind is so much as hinted at, by either Christian, Jewish, or Pagan historians ; we might be confident, that the writings in question were extant, and well known in the church, from the very period in which they are said to have been published ; even had we no other evidence. But no impartial man of learning can be imposed upon by pretences of this kind ; having access to abundant proof of another nature that the books of the New Testament were extant in the early ages of Christianity : and this argument is principally adduced for the benefit of those, who have neither leisure nor advantages for these investigations.

We should also remember, that on the day of Pentecost, immediately following the resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the assembled apostles, with such extraordinary circumstances, as drew together vast multitudes who then resided at Jerusalem. In the presence of all these witnesses they spake, fluently and correctly, in the languages of the

several countries, from which their hearers were collected; though it was certainly known that they had not had the opportunity of learning them: and this stupendous miracle, together with Peter's sermon on the occasion, was made effectual to the conversion of three thousand persons. The gifts of tongues, and of working miracles in the name of Jesus, were ever after continued to them, and were frequently exercised in the most publick and undeniable manner, before numerous witnesses, enemies as well as friends. The same powers were likewise communicated to many others, by the laying on of the apostles' hands. The time, place, occasion, and circumstances of these extraordinary transactions are frequently specified in their writings. Thus the inhabitants of many cities and countries were appealed to; and the enemies of Christianity were challenged to disprove their pretensions. But none ever attempted to do it: for the Jews themselves do not deny that many extraordinary works were performed by Jesus and his disciples: and the way, in which they try to account for them, demonstrates that from the first their ancestors had nothing plausible to object. In this manner the witnesses and proofs of our Lord's resurrection were multiplied, in almost every part of the vast Roman empire: yea, "God also bare them witness, both with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." And can any reasonable man suppose, that a general belief could ever have prevailed, through whole nations, of such publick and extraordinary events, without any person attempting

to deny them; if they had not actually happened, and been so notorious as to be incontrovertible?

The chosen witnesses of our Lord's resurrection were likewise the principal writers of the New Testament, and the whole was doubtless written under their inspection. Now in these books prophecies are inserted, which have been accomplishing ever since to the present day. A sceptick indeed might doubt, whether the predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, were not written after the event: but who can account for other parts of the same prophecy, without allowing that the writer was divinely inspired? "The people shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the gentiles, until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled.*" Has not this been actually the case with the Jews and with Jerusalem, during almost eighteen hundred years? Could human sagacity have foreseen such an unparalleled series of events? Or would God have thus confirmed the testimony of impostors? And does not this prophecy, thus wonderfully accomplished, demonstrate the resurrection of Christ, and the truth of Christianity? The coming of the man of sin, with lying miracles, doctrines of demons, worshipping of angels, prohibitions of marriage, and commands to abstain from meat; the impositions, usurpations and persecutions of the Roman antichrist; with various other particulars, were most exactly and circumstantially predicted by the several witnesses of our Lord's resurrection: and the unde-

* Luke, xxi. 24.

niable accomplishments of these prophecies are so many divine attestations to their testimony, for the satisfaction of all succeeding generations.

The Jewish ritual, or the pagan theology, was intimately connected with the foundations of the several governments then existing in the world : and all the learning, ingenuity, and authority on earth were engaged in their support. Yet a few unarined, obscure, unlettered men, by preaching a crucified and risen Saviour, in the midst of persecution and sufferings, established Christianity on an immoveable basis ; and their successors, following their example, so wonderfully prevailed, that at length Judaism and Paganism, fell before them ; the religion of Jesus was professed by powerful nations ; and, however corrupted or despised, it subsists to this day ! Whatever men may insinuate concerning the ministers of religion : it is an undeniable fact, that plain preaching, fervent prayers, holy lives, and patient sufferings were the only weapons that the primitive preachers of the gospel opposed to all the authority and learning of the world, which were resolutely employed against them : and yet they decidedly triumphed in a contest apparently so unequal ! A wise man will always allow, that every effect is produced by some adequate cause : but what adequate cause of this astonishing effect can be assigned ; unless we allow that Christianity was of God, and man could not overthrow it, or prevent its success and triumph ? I will only add, that every instance which at this day occurs, of notoriously wicked persons, converted by the preaching of the gospel from their evil ways, and afterwards walking in

newness of life, constitutes a proof that Christ is risen ; that he has all power in heaven and earth, and is efficaciously present with his faithful servants, “ al-
“ ways even to the end of the world.”

We may now I trust confidently say, that no other past event was ever proved by such an accumulated body of evidence. Who doubts whether Alexander conquered Darius ? or Julius Cæsar, Pompey ? Yet who can produce the tenth part of the proof in respect of these events, which hath even at this time been stated of our Lord’s resurrection ? But men can believe that Alexander conquered Darius, without either parting with their sins, or feeling uneasiness of conscience : while the truth of the gospel is very alarming to all, who walk according to the course of the world, and neglect the salvation of Christ.

It would be difficult to find out any satisfactory method, of further attesting the Redeemer’s resurrection, which could have possibly been devised. For had he openly appeared to the whole Jewish people ; and had they with one accord embraced Christianity ; the gentiles would naturally have considered it as a concerted plan to aggrandize the nation : and had the Jews, through excessive pride and prejudice, still persisted in unbelief and opposition ; the gospel would have laboured under additional disadvantages in other countries : and future ages could at last have had no other human testimony, than that of the individuals whose writings should have been transmitted to them. —In short, should the Lord grant the presumptuous demand of those, who refuse to believe without the testimony of their own senses ; and should the Saviour

appear to every individual through successive generations; how could men *be sure*, that this was the identical person crucified on mount Calvary? or how *demonstrate* that the transient vision was not an illusion? Universal uncertainty and doubt must therefore be the consequence, of rejecting such unanswerable and multiplied evidences, as the Lord hath mercifully vouchsafed us, of that great event which we this day commemorate.

II. We proceed to shew what inferences may be deduced from the subject before us.

It would be the grossest inconsistency, and the most absurd trifling, to contend earnestly that Christ is risen, and then overlook or deny the peculiar doctrines, which his resurrection was intended to authenticate. We infer therefore from our subject that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, "One with the Father," "God manifest in the flesh." On account of various expressions, which he used in speaking of himself, he was charged with blasphemy, and with making himself *equal with God*. For this crime he was condemned by Caiaphas and the Jewish council; who said before the Roman governor, "We have a law, "and by our law he ought to die, because he made "himself the Son of God.*" The centurion who attended his crucifixion could not but know for what crime he suffered: when therefore he witnessed the miracles which accompanied his death, he cried, "Truly this was the Son of God." "Certainly this

* John xix. 7

“ was a righteous person.” When incredulous Thomas was at length convinced that Christ was risen from the dead ; all that he had before heard, seen, believed, or hoped, seems at once to have rushed into his mind ; and he exclaimed in adoration, “ My Lord, and my God !” Thus was Jesus “ declared to be the Son of God with power,—by the resurrection from the dead.” He was demonstrated to be the promised Messiah, the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, the Son of David, Emmanuel, “ the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace,” “ JEHOVAH our Righteousness ;” and whatever the prophets from the beginning had spoken concerning the expected glorious Redeemer.—All that he had spoken of himself was likewise thus fully proved to be true : it now was manifest, that he was warranted to say, “ I and my Father are One :” “ He that hath seen me hath seen the Father :” “ Before Abraham was I AM :” “ I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life : no man cometh to the Father, but by me :” “ No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him :” “ I am the Light of the world :” “ I am the Resurrection and the Life.” “ If any man thirst let him come unto me, and drink :” “ The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son ; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him.” In short the resurrection of Christ not only demonstrates the truth of Christianity, but the infallible certainty of all its doctrines, and authen-

ticates the whole scripture as *divinely inspired*. His testimony proves it in respect of the Old Testament ; and the New was written by his chosen witnesses, and attested by all the miracles which they wrought in his name. So that the Lord now speaks to us in every part of scripture, as far as it respects our dispensation, and suits our case, with as much authority as he did to Israel from mount Sinai ; but with words of mercy and grace, instead of terror and dismay.

For if Christ be risen from the dead, then is his atonement accepted. “ He died for our sins, and rose
 “ again for our justification.” He was, as it were, arrested for our debt, and cast into the prison of the grave : but as full payment had been made, he was speedily liberated. ‘ Having overcome the sharpness
 ‘ of death, he hath opened the kingdom of heaven to
 ‘ all believers.’ The foundation of our hopes is now surely laid : the way of access to a throne of grace is now made manifest ; for the risen Saviour is also ascended into the heavens to appear in the presence of God for us ; and “ he is able to save to the uttermost
 “ all them that come to God by him ; seeing he ever
 “ liveth to make intercession for them.”

The resurrection of Christ assures us, that “ all
 “ power in heaven and earth are given to him ;” and that “ he is made Head over all things to his church.” “ He both died, and rose again, and revived, that he
 “ might be the Lord both of the living and the dead.” “ Angels, principalities, and powers are made sub-
 “ ject to him ; “ he has the keys of death and hell.” “ He is King of kings, and Lord of lords :” all nature obeys him : all the treasures of wisdom and know-

ledge are laid up in him ; he has unsearchable riches, and invincible power : the fulness of the Spirit resides in him : “ All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily.” “ He is become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him :” and “ he must reign till all his enemies are made his footstool.”—It is therefore no light matter that we are considering. “ Yet,” saith JEHOVAH, “ I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.—Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish.” Every individual must either bow to the sceptre of his grace, or be broken in pieces by the iron rod of his omnipotent indignation.*

We are also taught that true Christians are conformed to Christ, in his death, resurrection, and ascension. By motives and grace derived from their crucified and risen Redeemer, they die to their former hopes, pleasures, and pursuits : their sensibility to temporal things is deadened : carnal self-love, the main-spring of their activity in past times, is broken : “ They are crucified with Christ ; nevertheless they live ; yet not they, but Christ liveth in them.” They “ know him and the power of his resurrection :” new principles, feelings, and actuating motives are communicated. “ They account themselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God ;” “ They live no longer to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again :” “ they are risen with Christ, and seek those things which are above.” “ Their conversation is in heaven ;”

* 2 Thes. i. 8—10.

and in proportion to the degree of their faith and grace, they ascend and reign with Christ, in the nature of their joys and the temper of their hearts. Thus they are prepared, whenever they leave this world, to share that “fulness of joy, and those pleasures, which are
“at God’s right hand for evermore.”

As our risen Redeemer ever liveth and reigneth in heaven, to manage all the concerns of his people, and make all ready for their reception; we may adopt with exulting joy the apostle’s words: “If when we
“were enemies we were reconciled to God by the
“death of his Son; much more being reconciled,
“we shall be saved by his life.*” “Who shall lay
“any thing to the charge of God’s elect? it is God that
“justifieth, who is he that condemneth? it is Christ
“that died, yea, rather, is risen again; who is even
“at the right hand of God; who also maketh inter-
“cession for us.—Who shall separate us from the
“love of Christ?†” Surely our Friend, who died, and rose again for us, will take care that none shall pluck us out of his hands, and will come at death to
“receive us to himself, that where he is, there we
“may be also.”

Finally, as Christ is risen from the dead, he “is
“become the First-fruits of them that slept.”—“The
“hour cometh, when all that are in the graves shall
“hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have
“done good to the resurrection of life: and they that
“have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.”
At that awful period, he will ascend his tribunal, fi-

* v. 10. † Rom. viii. 33—35.

nally to separate his people from his enemies: and “these shall go away into everlasting punishment, “but the righteous into life eternal.” The bodies of the wicked will be rendered incorruptible, and capable of enduring the vengeance reserved for them, “where *their* worm dieth not, and *their* fire is not “quenched.*” And those of the righteous will be raised spiritual and immortal, and fitted to participate the holy joys of heaven. “The Saviour, the Lord Jesus, shall change our vile body, that it may be “fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to “the working whereby he is able even to subdue all “things unto himself.†” In this prospect, the believer, when strong in faith, may adopt the apostle’s words, and say, “O Death, where is thy sting? O “Grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death “is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks “be unto God, who giveth us the victory through “our Lord Jesus Christ.”

III. We conclude with a few hints by way of application.

It may be useful, especially to young persons, to contemplate the prevailing scepticism and infidelity of the age, in connexion with the subject we have been considering. God hath vouchsafed us a revelation of himself, and of his will concerning us, authenticated in the most unanswerable manner, most beneficial in its nature and tendency, and exactly suited to our circumstances: yet this revelation is opposed, reviv-

* Mark, ix. 48—50.

† Phil. iii. 20, 21.

led, or ridiculed, by numbers who pretend to *virtue*; and affirm that unbelief, *at most*, can only be a harmless error, neither very criminal nor dangerous.—But the scripture speaks a very different language. We read of “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from “the living God.” Our Lord says, “How can ye “believe who seek honour one of another?”—“Light “is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” Unbelief therefore is the offspring of ambition, love of sin, and dislike to God and holiness. It rejects the remedy, which everlasting wisdom and mercy have provided for our miseries; it makes God a liar; it despises his grace, and defies his power and justice; and is therefore inseparably connected with eternal damnation.—“Let no man deceive you with vain words.” Men oppose the scripture because it opposes their favourite pursuits; and denounces an awful sentence against all who do not humbly repent, believe the gospel, and become the faithful subjects of the holy Jesus. They do not in reality need more evidence; but a more unprejudiced, teachable, and spiritual mind. “If they believe not Moses and the prophets,” or the apostles and evangelists; “neither would “they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.” Beseech the Lord therefore to remove from you ‘all ‘hardness of heart, and contempt of his word and ‘commandment;’ “to open your understandings “that you may understand the scriptures;” and “to “give you repentance to the acknowledging of the “truth; that you may recover yourselves out of the

“ snare of the devil, who takes sinners captive at his will.”

But beware also of a dead faith; which may keep men in the way of instruction, but is wholly unavailing to salvation. The faith demanded by our Lord is a living active principle: it receives him for all those purposes, which he came into the world to effect; it applies to him, depends on him, and follows his directions: and “ working by love,” “ purifying the heart,” and “ overcoming the world,” it produces unreserved obedience to Christ, and careful imitation of his most perfect example.

The subject before us is peculiarly suited to the burdened conscience and desponding heart of those, who are “ poor and of a contrite spirit, and tremble at God’s word.” Did the Son of God so love and pity proud obstinate rebels and enemies, as to give himself a sacrifice on the cross for their sins? And will he, now on his glorious throne, refuse to stretch forth his powerful arm, to rescue the humble penitent who earnestly supplicates his mercy? No, my brethren, he delights to save. Come to him, wait on him, wait in the appointed means, and you shall soon know the power of his resurrection, the depth of his condescension, and the riches of his grace.

But if we have tasted that the Lord is gracious: and can rejoice in having such a Representative and Advocate, to manage our concerns in heaven: let us remember, that we are honoured to be his representatives on earth; to shew the excellency of his religion by our example; to be useful to his redeemed people, and to promote his cause in the world. Let

us then ask ourselves whether Paul, when constrained by the love of Christ, would have declined any service, as too mean, laborious, self-denying, expensive, or perilous, which the command and honour of his Lord called him to perform? And whether he would not have more fully improved even *our* talents and advantages, than we have hitherto done? Let us review our conduct, and consider what ability or opportunity we have of honouring Christ among men; let us reflect on our obligations and prospects; and see to it, that our lights be burning and our loins girded, that when he cometh we may be found watching, and employed in a proper manner.—And “ may
“ the God of peace, who brought again from the dead
“ the great Shepherd of the sheep; through the blood
“ of the everlasting covenant; make us perfect in
“ every good work to do his will; working in us
“ that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Je-
“ sus Christ. To whom be glory for ever and ever.
“ Amen.”

SERMON V.*



ISAIAH, XXXii. 15.

Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.

IN the beginning of this chapter, the evangelical prophet foretels the auspicious advent and benign government of the Messiah; perhaps with some reference to Hezekiah's equitable and prosperous reign over Judah. He then denounces sentence on the careless, obstinate, and unbelieving Jews, in language aptly descriptive of their condition, ever since the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans: and then he declares, that these desolations would endure, "until the Spirit should be poured upon them from on high;" the happy effects of which gracious dispensation he predicts in the most energetick language. This seems to be the prophetic meaning of the chapter; the concluding verses of which have not hitherto received

* Preached on Whitsunday, 1794.

their accomplishment.—But the present occasion fixes our attention to the words of the text : and I shall endeavour from them,

I. To explain what is meant by “ the pouring
“ out of the Spirit from on high.”

II. To consider more particularly the nature and effects of this promised blessing.

III. To make some remarks on the emphatical word “ Until.”

IV. To point out some instructions more immediately arising from the subject.

I. I would explain the words here used.

The apostle calls Christianity “ the ministration of “ the Spirit :* ” and it is certain, however it may be overlooked, that the promise of the Spirit pervades the New Testament, in the same manner as that of a Messiah does the Old. The language used concerning this subject, evidently implies the *Personality* and *Deity* of the Holy Spirit. He is represented as *hearing, speaking, willing, commanding, forbidding*, and as *receiving, and executing, a commission* : and this not in allegories and parables, but in histories, didactick discussions, laws, and grants, where precision is indispensably necessary, and a literal interpretation peculiarly suitable : yet beyond all doubt these are *personal* actions. At the same time divine perfections and operations are ascribed to him. He is said to dwell in the hearts of all believers, as in his temple, to “ search “ the deep things of God,” to raise the dead, and to

* 2 Cor. iii. 8.

effect a new creation.—He is called, “the Spirit of holiness,” “the Spirit of truth,” “the Spirit of life,” “the Spirit of power,” “the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge,” “the eternal Spirit,” and “the Comforter.” If then the Holy Spirit be a Person possessing divine perfections, and performing divine operations; and if the same be true of the Father, and of the Son also: the ancient doctrine of the Trinity is evidently scriptural, though we can neither explain nor comprehend so deep a mystery.

If we further examine the subject, we shall find, that the scriptures uniformly ascribe all miraculous powers, prophecy, and inspiration to the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit: so that the wonderful works of Christ himself, and the exercise of his mediatorial offices on earth, are spoken of as performed by his anointing: “The Holy Ghost was not given by measure unto him:” and St. Paul particularly describes the diversity of gifts communicated “by the same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he willed.”† The predictions of the prophets concerning the pouring out of the Spirit, in the days of the Messiah,‡ as well as our Lord’s promises to his disciples, may have a special reference to these extraordinary gifts and powers; and to that display of the ascended Redeemer’s glory and majesty, which was made on the day of Pentecost: but it should also be noted, that effects were produced, at that important season, by the same divine Agent, which were

* 1 John iii. 34. Acts i. 2. x. 38. † 1 Cor. xii. ‡ Isai. xlv. 5. Joel ii. 28.

far more valuable to those by whom they were experienced.

If we accurately study the language of the sacred oracles, we shall be convinced that the Holy Spirit is there spoken of, as the immediate Author of all that is holy and excellent in man: and that a spiritual death, and a total incapacity of delighting in God and heavenly things, universally prevail in the human heart; till “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death.” “Except a man be born again—born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see—he cannot enter into, the kingdom of God.” He is “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God, to enlighten the eyes of our understanding, that we may know the hope of our calling.*” He “convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment:” “he glorifies Christ, for he receives of his, and shews it unto us.” It is his office to “teach us all things, and lead us into all truth.” Christians are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit to obedience:” they abound in hope “through the power of the Holy Ghost.” “They pray *in* and *by* the Holy Ghost, who helps their infirmities:” “they are led by the Spirit,” and all their holy tempers and actions are “the fruits of the Spirit.” So that, “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his:” for all his redeemed people are “sealed by the Spirit, who is the earnest of their in-

* Eph. i. 17, 18.

“heritance:” as “the Spirit of adoption, he witnesses with their spirits that they are the children of God:” and thus he becomes their all-sufficient Comforter; “for the kingdom of God is—in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

In these respects we are warranted to expect the pouring out of the Spirit on our souls and congregations: and we are confident that all true Christians are “the temple of the Holy Ghost, an habitation of God through the Spirit;” and we are amazed that any man, who calls himself a disciple of Christ, should be so ignorant, as to deny this fundamental truth of the gospel, or so profane as to turn it into ridicule! “If ye,” says our Lord, “being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*” This accords to the promise of the Lord by his prophet, “I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.†”

Far be it from us to affect equality with prophets and apostles: nor do we expect any new revelations: for the scriptures soberly interpreted are the standard of truth. But we profess, to depend on the Holy Spirit to enable us properly to understand them. We have no other rule of duty, but the commandments of God: but we need the promised teaching and assistance of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to understand this rule, to convince us of our manifold deviations from it, to humble and soften our hearts in true re-

* Luke xi. 13.

† Jer. li. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

pentance, to encourage our hope of mercy and help us to apply for it, and to strengthen us for renewed obedience. We do not pretend to know that our sins are pardoned; except as we are conscious that we hate and abhor them, and humbly trust in Christ to deliver us from them. We infer our interest in the love of God as our heavenly Father, from our love to him as his adopted children; and from an habitual desire of living to his glory, obeying his commandments, and doing good to our brethren for his sake.

Surely no man, who professes to reverence the scriptures will call this enthusiasm! We disclaim all pretensions to predict future events, or to discover things unknown to others by any immediate revelation from God; yea, we protest against them, as derogatory to the holy scriptures and a disgrace to the gospel; and even the incautious language of some well-meaning persons, meets with decided disapprobation from others, who hold most of the same doctrines; because it is capable of being perverted, or misunderstood.

These remarks having been premised, I observe, that as all spiritual religion is produced by the influences of the Holy Spirit, and every degree of success attending the gospel of Christ must be ascribed to a few drops, as it were, of this fertilizing rain; so, there are seasons, in which the Spirit is *poured* from on high in copious showers, upon some favoured spots of the Lord's vineyard. This was most remarkably the case on the day of Pentecost, and for a considerable time afterwards: and though the effects were gradually diminished; yet neither the communication of miraculous gifts, nor the abundant converting and

sanctifying influences accompanying the preaching of the gospel, ceased, till perhaps more than two centuries afterwards. Such an outpouring of the Spirit attended the labours of the reformers, in the time of Luther, and for many years after his death. Nor has our land been left wholly destitute of this special benefit during the present century : and some places seem yet to be favoured with it in a considerable degree. In short, they, who are conversant with the records of the church, ancient or modern, will recollect various seasons, when, in different places, the Spirit of God was poured upon his people from on high : and all these should be considered as earnestness of more abundant blessings, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought into the church ; and the Jews “ shall look to him whom they have pierced,” uniting penitent tears with believing supplications.*

II. We proceed to consider more particularly the nature and effects of this promised blessing.

In order to elucidate the subject, we must advert to the present state of the church and of the world. If we look among the constituted ministers of religion ; we cannot but perceive, that vast numbers consider their profession, in great measure, as a secular employment, and pursue their worldly interests by it, like other orders in the community ; without any proportionable earnestness in seeking the salvation of souls, and the advancement of genuine Christianity. Many indeed are very learned and ingenious : but

* Zech. xii. 10—14.

alas ! they embrace and contend for doctrines, which certainly were deduced from a very different source, than the sacred scriptures. Others preach several of the great truths of the gospel, but seem little concerned to apply them to the hearts and consciences of mankind ; or to excite them by fervent exhortations and a bright example, to “ adorn the doctrine of God our “ Saviour in all things.” A few indeed appear to be honestly and simply engaged in the most useful work of their sacred function : yet perhaps the skillfulness, boldness, self-denial, diligence, zeal, and faithfulness, even of this remnant, fall much beneath the degree which “ men of like passions” have at more favoured seasons been known to display.

These things should not be considered as a censure of modern times : for the case has been nearly the same, in almost every age and part of the church. No external appointment to the ministry, no engagement or mode of worship, can, by its own efficacy, dethrone the selfishness of the human heart ; or induce the carnally-minded to act from pure motives, and to delight in the spiritual service of the Redeemer. But when “ the Spirit shall be poured upon us “ from on high ;” we may expect, that such ministers, as have feebly sought the glory of God in the salvation of souls, will feel their hearts enlarged with more abundant zeal and love ; and that a vast accession will be made to their wisdom, and knowledge of Christ and his holy doctrine. They will probably be to a great degree delivered from the fear of men ; raised above the love of the world ; emancipated from a bigotted regard to systems and parties ; filled with

most tender compassion to perishing sinners, and fervent love to their brethren; occupied with realizing views of eternal things; prepared for perilous and self-denying services; and disposed cordially to unite with their fellow-labourers in promoting the common cause; without regard to competition, personal interest, or reputation.

Those who have preached the truths of the gospel, without application or animation, will then probably feel and insist upon their practical tendency, and manifest it in their own conduct. Some, who have been adverse to the truth, will be won over to preach the faith which once they opposed: loiterers and hirelings will be converted into faithful, diligent, able, and disinterested pastors: many labourers will be sent forth into the vineyard; and every one who partakes of these fertilizing showers, will “take heed to the ministry which he hath received of the Lord, that he fulfil it.”

The change which took place, even in the apostles themselves, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, with the conduct of the primitive ministers of the gospel, and the exhortations addressed to them in the New Testament, abundantly warrant these expectations.

If we next survey the mass of people called Christians, and observe their disposition and conduct: we shall readily understand what effects would be produced by the pouring out of the Spirit upon us. Let us, for instance, consider the inhabitants of this city, and their behaviour in respect of the Lord's day, the public worship, and the preaching of the gospel. We

shall in this review see cause to lament, that vast multitudes retire into the country for irreligious recreation, or employ the holy sabbath in travelling; that crowds assemble in places of intemperate indulgence, or frivolous amusement; and that many spend part of the day in adjusting some worldly business, and the residue in sloth or festivity. A few, compared with the whole immense number, attend at the several places of publick worship; the majority of whom, it is to be feared, having paid their weekly tribute, think no more about it; being “as a man who dreameth that he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty.” Others frequent the places where the word of God is preached, with considerable regularity; but continue hearers only, and not doers. In short, few comparatively seem to receive the “gospel, not as the word of man, but as—the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe;” or “to worship him in spirit and truth:” and even these see cause to lament their want of zeal and fervency; and too often manifest a languor and a defect in earnestness and activity, where the glory of God, and the benefit of mankind are concerned.

But if “the Spirit were poured upon us from on high:” the hearts of such persons would expand with holy affections, and be filled with divine consolations. They would become fervent in every religious duty, and earnest in prayer for their ministers and brethren, and for a blessing on every attempt to propagate the gospel; they would bestow pains to impress the instructions of scripture on the minds of their children, relatives, and servants; to recommend

the truth by their example, and to enforce it in their conversation : They would say to those, with whom they had any influence, “ Come ye, and let us go to the house of God, and he will teach us of his way, and we will walk in his paths.*” And, as Andrew brought Peter, and Philip Nathanael, to an acquaintance with Christ ; they would endeavour by letters, books, and all other means in their power, to lead such as had been unacquainted with the gospel, to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and into the way of life and salvation.

At such a season formal worshippers would find their hearts engaged in a new manner, to attend on the ordinances of God : and many of them would become true believers. Those who had imbibed false doctrines, would perceive that God was of a truth present in our congregations, and be induced to join themselves to us : a general attention and enquiry would be raised ; and “ the Lord would daily add unto the church such as should be saved.”

In this manner, it has frequently been known, that great multitudes, through large districts, have in a short time been brought to consider their ways : the veil that hides God and eternal things from men’s minds, has been apparently rent ; and more done in bringing men to receive the gospel and to walk in newness of life, during a few months, than the very same ministers had been able to accomplish in the course of many preceding years. These effects are also proved to be genuine by their permanency, and by

* Isai. ii. 3.

the holy lives of numbers ; after the first vehement affections, and the remarkable circumstances, of such revivals, have ceased. Thus the thousands that were converted, when the Spirit was poured out on the day of pentecost, “ continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship ;” they “ were of one heart,” they “ had all things in common,” and “ great grace “ was upon them all.” But when a religious commotion arises from enthusiasm, false principles, and selfish affections ; it often leaves men more immoral and ungodly than they were before.

Again, if we consider the more pious part of our congregations ; how often have we reason to lament, there is no more union and affection among them ! and that they are kept at so great a distance from each other, by their stations in life ; their different employments, talents, and dispositions ; or even by trivial resentments, suspicions, and prejudices ! But the blessing, of which we speak, would deliver Christians from such contracted and selfish passions : and they would be ready, without hesitation, cordially to forgive all who had offended them, to make concessions and amends to those whom they had injured, and to seek reconciliation with every one, who had been in any respect alienated from them. An increase of divine illumination and brotherly love would terminate or moderate our differences of opinion ; men would less regard the trivial disparity of outward rank, except as it reminded them of their several duties : they would readily unite in social worship and profitable conversation : and in proportion as these sacred influences rested on their souls, they would abound in

self-denying beneficence, and in active endeavours to supply the wants of the indigent, to sooth the anguish of the afflicted, and to alleviate the miseries of mankind. An attentive meditation on the apostolical exhortations, and the conduct of the primitive Christians, may suffice to convince us, that these must be the effects of the pouring out of the Spirit upon any congregation, city, or country : for indeed “ the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.”

Should we advert to the state of religion more at large ; we should find, that the remnant which professes the leading truths of Christianity, and appears to be influenced by them, is lamentably divided into parties, about subordinate points of doctrine, or matters of discipline and government. So that, if we could collect together the whole company of real believers ; we should find them very discordant in their sentiments, and disposed to magnify the importance of their several particularities : and it would be extremely difficult, if not wholly impossible, to unite them in religious services, or in the same plan for promoting the common cause. On the contrary, it would hardly be practicable, to exclude subjects of doubtful disputation ; or to prevent such contests and mutual censures, as only serve to furnish the enemies of the gospel with plausible objections. Alas, this is an evident proof, that, as the apostle expresses it, “ we are yet carnal,*” however orthodox our creed may be, or

* 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4.

how zealously soever we contend for it! "Hereby," says our Lord, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another."

But when "the Spirit shall be poured upon us from on high," all, "who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity," will "love one another with a pure heart fervently." The pride and selfish passions, which occasion disputes, will be mortified; the minds of Christians will be more fully illuminated; the harmony of scripture will be better understood; the comparative value of every part of religion will be more clearly ascertained; and men will be rendered more humbly sensible of their fallibility, and more disposed to candour and patience. Thus, while a most desirable progress will be made, in regulating every thing according to the standard of truth: Christians will be delivered in great measure from the propensity to judge or despise their brethren; and will learn to "receive one another, even as Christ receiveth them, to the glory of God." The pouring out of the Spirit will effect, what acts of uniformity, conciliatory schemes, or philosophical candour can never accomplish: for it will bring Christians, through whole countries, "with one mind and one mouth to glorify God:" to form one Church, professing the same fundamental doctrines; harmoniously joining in the same worship, and the celebration of the same ordinances; and zealously concurring to promote the conversion of Mahometans, Jews, and Pagans, to scriptural Christianity.

These happy effects are predicted by the prophets, under various significant representations; of which

it may suffice at present to produce a single specimen. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox: and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice-den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*"

These are some of the effects which will proportionably follow, whenever the Spirit is poured out upon the church. Many others might be mentioned, did brevity permit; and some of them will come before us, in the subsequent part of the subject.

III. Then we proceed to make some remarks on the emphatical word, "Until."

A variety of plans are continually proposed and adopted, to meliorate the condition of mankind, and to guard at the same time against tyranny in the rulers, and turbulency in the multitude. No doubt something may be done in this way to render the state of the world more tolerable, than it would otherwise be, for while civil government in general is *God's ordinance*, the peculiar arrangement of it is left in great measure to human prudence; and it may therefore

* Isai. xi, 6—9. xli. 18—20. xliij. 3—5.

be also called *the ordinance of man*.* But, too sanguine expectations are formed, when changes take place, or when supposed improvements are made; and speedy disappointment is the consequence. The world after all, remains full of oppression or sedition: the rulers and people generally continue unchanged in character, whatever external changes take place: and selfishness produces its effects, after all the efforts which are made to counteract it; even as poison retains its destructive efficacy, in whatever form it is administered. This will in great measure continue to be the case, “until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high,” to renew men’s hearts to the divine image in holy love: and then, they will delight in equity, goodness, mercy, and peace, after the example of our holy God; which will render human society as happy, as it is now too often miserable.

Again, the earth hath in every age been a field of blood; and the vast proportion of our race, which has perished by the sword, almost exceeds credibility or calculation: nor can the compassionate mind reflect on the subject without horror and amazement. The causes of this deplorable fact have been sought for, in the different forms of government; and in the ambition of men distinguished by certain titles, or invested with authority in some peculiar manner. Yet the disposition to delight in war seems to have been common to governors of all descriptions: and the sacred writers, characterizing the ungodly, say, “Their feet are swift to shed blood.” Universal history is the best

* Rom. xiii. 2. 1 Pet. ii. 13.

comment on this text: all the genius of mankind, however diversified, has combined to celebrate successful warriors. The original murderer has appeared in this respect especially to be the god of this world: Mars, Bellona, and even Minerva, (the poet's emblem of prudence in war,) are the names under which polite nations have worshipped him: and unnumbered millions of human victims have been immolated at his shrine, by his renowned priests, who have emulated his ambition and malignity, and shared the adoration which he received. Thus it will be in a great measure, "until the Spirit be poured upon us from "on high." Ambition, resentment, rapacity, and interfering interests will continue to excite mankind to war: and both the mighty and the mean will, in general, deem this one of the most honourable and desirable of employments; till those happy times arrive, which are predicted in the scriptures, when "the nations shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and "their spears into pruning-hooks; and they shall "learn war no more." But every degree of that sacred influence will, in the mean while, produce proportionably the same happy consequences.

It is likewise grievous to reflect on the severities, which are necessary to maintain peace and order in the community.—On the numbers deprived of life, immured in dungeons, and banished to remote and desolate regions, that others may live in security: while the silent ravages of licentiousness appear even still more dreadful, to those who have the opportunity, or are under the painful necessity, of investigating them. The wisdom and assiduity of men are well em-

ployed, in attempting to abate these dire mischiefs : but no effectual remedy will be applied, “ until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.” Then the divine law will be written in men’s hearts ; and justice, benevolence, and universal temperance, implanted in the soul, will infallibly rectify these disorders, which are incurable by all other means.

We cannot reflect on the condition, in which the nations remain to this day ; without lamenting, that so large a proportion of the earth is still covered with pagan darkness, Mahometan delusion, or Jewish incredulity. The ignorance, superstition, and wickedness of nominal Christians ; the prevalence of antisciptural tenets even in the protestant churches ; and the rapid progress of impiety, infidelity, and atheism, present a very gloomy prospect to the mind of a true believer. And when we consider the immense difficulties of remedying these evils, and the inadequate effects of the most laudable efforts ; we are ready to sit down in despair. We should, however, remember that every degree of success far more than counterbalances the expence or labour of our exertions : and that we must not expect to make very rapid progress, “ until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.”— But then mountains will flow down at the presence of the Lord ; nations will be born in a day : a new creation will prepare men’s hearts to welcome the gospel : all other difficulties will vanish or be surmounted ; and “ the earth be filled with the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

The various abuses, divisions, scandals, and false doctrines, which prevail among such as shew more

regard to scriptural Christianity, will not be counteracted; nor will that revival of the power of godliness in our congregations, which every friend of evangelical truth must ardently desire, be effectually introduced, "till the Spirit be poured upon us from on high." So that this is the grand *desideratum*: the only adequate remedy for all the evils we witness or hear of, in the church and in the world. Till our prayers, in this respect be answered, we shall see on every side most lamentable disorders, which we cannot rectify; and few in comparison will be found, who have ability or zeal for making such arduous attempts: but this expected event will raise up and qualify instruments for every kind of service; dispose the minds of multitudes cordially to unite in vigorous exertions; and render their endeavours rapidly and extensively successful.

IV. Then I proceed to point out some instructions, more immediately arising from the subject.

How ignorant must they be, as to the very first principles of Christianity, who treat our professed dependence on the Holy Spirit, and experience of his sacred influences, with supercilious contempt! A Jew of old, would not have been more profanely absurd, in ridiculing the expectation of a Messiah as fanaticism. Even if uninspired men could, by their superior talents, improve upon the oracles of God, (as some of them seem arrogantly disposed to think they can) this would no more supersede the necessity of divine influences, than modern improvements in agriculture render the fertilizing showers and the genial warmth

of the sun unnecessary. Even the preaching of Him, "who spake as never man spake," was rendered effectual by the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit; without which, Paul would have planted, and Apollos watered in vain. No wonder then, that such teachers as deny, deride, explain away, or even keep out of sight, the promised influences of the Holy Spirit, harangue the people in weekly lectures, from year to year, without witnessing or even expecting, any great effect. While men depend on their own rationality, ingenuity, or eloquence, and dishonour the divine Spirit; we may be sure that the Lord will frown upon the presumptuous attempt, and blast all their vain endeavours. Indeed no man is warranted to expect success, even in preaching the pure gospel of Christ; except as he simply relies on the Holy Spirit to assist and prosper his labours, uses the proper means of obtaining his powerful co-operation, and explicitly gives him all the glory.

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Unless, therefore, we possess some evidence in our own hearts, that we are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we cannot, without manifest presumption, expect that the Judge of the world will, at the last day, own us as his true disciples: but this cannot be known to us, except by the effects produced on our views, dispositions, affections, and conduct. Humiliation for sin, faith, love of Christ and his people, compassion for sinners, a spiritual mind, and an habitual aim to glorify God and do good to men, are the genuine effects produced by the Spirit of God dwelling in us. Can it then be *rational* to over-

look those scriptures which speak on these subjects? or to expect the eternal felicity promised to Christians, while destitute of those things which are declared essential to Christianity?

Again, would we prosper in our own souls, or succeed in endeavouring to do good in our families, connexions, and situations; we must adhere to the doctrines and precepts of scripture; pray with fervent importunity for the influences of the Spirit; and be very careful not to grieve him, or to quench that sacred fire which he kindles in the believing heart. If we have hitherto been remarkably unsuccessful; we should seriously enquire, on what account the Lord contends with us? And especially we should examine, whether we have not depended on our own supposed abilities, or sought our own honour; instead of relying simply on the Holy Spirit, with a readiness of mind to ascribe to him all the glory of every successful attempt?

They who would enjoy the benefit of an able and faithful ministry, should be instant in prayer for their pastors. If this were more attended to, we should doubtless be enabled to ‘set forth the true and lively word of God, both by our preaching and living,’ with far greater effect; and should be in all respects much more useful.—But our fervent supplications should not be confined to those, with whom we are more immediately connected; for we ought to pray continually for the “pouring out of the Spirit from on high,” upon every part of the visible church, and upon all orders and descriptions of men throughout the world. This should constitute a *prominent* part of

our daily prayers, in our closets and families ; and enter particularly into the various circumstances, in which mankind are placed. We ought to intreat the Lord, to render all his ministers faithful, holy, and successful ; to send forth labourers into his harvest ; to unite all Christians in the bonds of brotherly love ; to prosper all means used for the conversion of Jews, Mahometans, Pagans, or infidels ; and to “ fill the “ earth with truth and righteousness.”

We shall not probably live to witness this glorious scene : yet the Lord may bless some means which we use, in making way for that grand triumph of his cause. Thus David zealously prepared materials for the temple, though assured it would not be built in his day. If we have little else in our power, either to serve our generation, or to sow seed for the good of posterity ; we may perform an important service by our persevering prayers : and whenever the Lord shall “ pour out his Spirit from on high,” to make his gospel victorious over all opposition ; his people will certainly go forth to meet him with their united fervent supplications.

SERMON VI.



ACTS, xi. 18.

Then hath GOD also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

I HAVE taken this text, my brethren, in consequence of a letter which I received from an unknown correspondent, written in a very serious manner, and desiring a publick answer to several interesting questions on the subject of repentance; a subject undoubtedly of great importance, in which we are all most deeply concerned.

The apostles and Christians in Judea, having heard that Peter had associated with Cornelius and other uncircumcised persons, expressed much surprise at his conduct: but when he had related all the circumstances that attended it, “ They held their peace, and glorified GOD, saying, Then hath GOD also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life:” yet it is re-

markable, that there is nothing expressly about repentance, in the account which Peter had given.

On another occasion, when Paul and Silas returned from Asia to Antioch, "They gathered the church together, and rehearsed all that GOD had done with them, and how he had *opened the door of faith* to the Gentiles." Mark now these two expressions, used by the apostles on similar occasions. "GOD hath granted the Gentiles repentance unto life." "GOD hath opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." Much instruction may be derived from comparing them together.—When "God grants repentance unto life," he "opens the door of faith." When "he opens the door of faith," he "grants repentance unto life."—"Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Certainly one way of salvation, and not two different ways, was spoken of in both places.

I design at present to shew,

I. That repentance is a principal part of the LORD'S plan of mercy and grace to sinners in the gospel. And,

II. To enquire into the nature and effects of repentance unto life.

I. Repentance is a principal part of the LORD'S plan of mercy and grace to sinners in the gospel.

I express myself thus, because many suppose that repentance does not properly belong to the gospel; and that when we insist on "repentance, and works meet for repentance," we do not preach evangelically: for they seem to think that salvation by grace is salvation for sinners continuing impenitent; and

they charge us with returning to the law, and bringing them into bondage, when we maintain the contrary. But indeed, if we distinguish, as no doubt we ought, between the law and the gospel; repentance has nothing to do with the law, except as a man repents that he has broken it. The law says, "Do this, and live;" the soul that sinneth, it shall die:" "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." It does not so much as command repentance, by any immediate injunction. It condemns the transgressor, and leaves him under condemnation.

Would it not be thought a strange thing in an act of Parliament, if after death had been decreed as the punishment of the crime specified, a clause should be added, commanding the criminal to repent, and promising pardon to the penitent? The king indeed may extend mercy to the transgressor, if he judge it expedient. But this is *grace*, and not *law*, which does not require repentance; indeed pardons always tend to weaken the authority of the law.

When God delivered the ten commandments from mount Sinai, the people "could not endure the things which were spoken;" but no mention was made of repentance. It was from mount Zion and mount Calvary, that the command to repent was given to mankind. "Grace and truth came by JESUS CHRIST:" and the mercy, revealed through his redemption and mediation, has made way for "repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Every motive or encouragement to repentance is taken from the gospel;

by the grace of which alone is any sinner enabled truly to repent. In every view, and in all respects, repentance belongs entirely to the gospel, and forms an essential part of its glorious and gracious plan.

For what is that plan, my brethren? Is it not the design of GOD to bring sinners into a state of reconciliation and friendship with himself, by a method calculated to display the glory of his own name, and the dreadful nature and effects of sin: and thus to teach them to love him, and glorify him, and find their felicity in his favour? And, if this be the plan of the gospel, can its ends be answered, unless the sinner is brought to repentance?

Look through the whole New Testament. Consider how the gospel was first introduced, and afterwards propagated. John, the forerunner of Christ, came preaching, “ Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” “ Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance, and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our Father. For now is the axe laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

Our LORD himself has told us expressly what he came for; “ I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance:” and his decision surely ought to be final. He has declared that “ there is joy in the presence of the angels of GOD over one sinner that repenteth.” He multiplied parables to illustrate the nature of repentance, to encourage the penitent, and to warn and rebuke the impenitent. And he sent his apostles to “ preach repentance and remission of sins

“ in his name to all nations.” Accordingly, they preached repentance wherever they went:—Hear St. Peter, “ Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”—Hear St. Paul, at Athens, “ The times of this ignorance GOD winked at ; but now commandeth he all men every where to repent : And before Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision ; but shewed first unto them at Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, and turn to GOD, and do works meet for repentance :” And before the Ephesian elders, “ Testifying both to Jews and Greeks, repentance towards GOD, and faith towards our LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

Did the apostle speak of a sin that is never pardoned? he added, “ It is impossible to renew to repentance,” those who have committed it. He exhorts Timothy “ In meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves, if peradventure GOD would give them *repentance to the acknowledging of the truth* ; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”

Without repentance, therefore, it is as plain and clear, as the testimony of CHRIST and his apostles can make it, that there is no salvation. “ Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”—Without repentance, faith is dead, hope is mere presumption, and religious affections are delusive, transient, and inefficacious.

But let it be also remarked, that wherever true repentance is found, there is life eternal—"Then hath GOD also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." He has so arranged the plan of the gospel, that repentance is inseparably connected with forgiveness, righteousness, and complete salvation. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of."—"When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive."—"Repent and turn from all your transgressions; and so iniquity shall not be your ruin."—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our GOD, and he will abundantly pardon." These passages, and many others, are so expressed, and marked with such precision, that if there be any meaning in words, true repentance is inseparable from eternal salvation.

Some, however, object that this does not consist with the doctrine of salvation by grace, and justification by faith alone. But I would ask, Whether the apostles did not use this language, as well as preach that doctrine? And as none can disprove, and few will deny, that they did both, I enquire whether they were inconsistent with themselves, and with each other?

That salvation is by grace, and justification by faith alone, is certainly the doctrine both of the Scriptures and of our church: but if faith be alone, it is *dead*. If alms are offered to a beggar, his hand alone re-

ceives the alms : but a dead hand could not receive them.

None, who understand christianity, doubt, but that repentance, hope, fear, and love, exist in every true believer : yet faith alone justifies him before GOD; because the righteousness and atonement of CHRIST are the sole ground of our justification, and faith alone receives CHRIST, that we may “ be made the “ righteousness of GOD in him.” But this faith is the faith of the penitent, and not of the impenitent : it works by love, and it brings forth holy fruit.

While the poor criminal, who fled for refuge to the altar, laid hold of the horns with his hand alone ; his heart would beat, his blood circulate, and his other limbs and senses perform their proper functions. Thus the sinner, by faith alone lays hold of CHRIST; yet his soul is alive to GOD, and all the graces of the Spirit of life are at the same time exercised according to their proper nature and function. “ Now abideth “ faith, hope, charity, these three : but the greatest “ of these is charity.”

The text suggests yet one more remark ; “ GOD “ grants repentance unto life.” This means more than that he has opened a way for the penitent sinner to come to him and live ; or that he calls on sinners to repent. It implies that repentance is the gift of GOD. “ If peradventure GOD may give them repentance.” “ CHRIST is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to “ give repentance—and forgiveness of sins.”—“ The “ Spirit convinces men of sin, of righteousness, and “ of judgment :” and when the LORD “ pours out

“ the Spirit of grace and supplication, men look on
 “ him whom they have pierced, and mourn.”

How often, in our excellent liturgy do we unite in prayer, that GOD would give us repentance and his Holy Spirit? The language we have been lately using, is very emphatical: ‘ Create and make in us new and
 ‘ contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins,
 ‘ and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain
 ‘ of thee, the GOD of all mercy, perfect remission and
 ‘ forgiveness, through JESUS CHRIST.’*

While we preach repentance, we would pray to GOD, that he may bestow on you the invaluable gift of repentance unto life: and you should pray in behalf of yourselves and each other, for the same blessings. For both true repentance and living faith spring up in that heart, and that alone, which is ‘ quicken-
 ‘ ed from the death of sin unto the life of righteous-
 ‘ ness.’

II. We consider the nature and effects of repentance unto life.

Many distinctions on this subject have been made by divines, which have often tended to perplex, rather than satisfy, anxious enquirers. Doubtless, some exercises of the mind, have the semblance of repentance, which are not genuine. When, for instance, a man has made a bargain, and it turns out worse than he expected, he is sorry that he made it; but he is not humbled under a sense of criminality. And when a sinner finds that his sinful pursuits are likely to cost him much dearer than he imagined; having discovered

* Collect for Ash Wednesday.

that the divine law is very strict, and its sentence very dreadful: he may be greatly alarmed and distressed about the consequences, and secretly quarrel with the command and the sanction; and yet have no genuine repentance; nay, he may be in a state of heart diametrically opposite to it.

Repentance, according to the Scripture, may be stated to begin, or to be introduced, by *consideration*—“ Thus saith the LORD, consider your ways.”
 “ —Because he considereth, and turneth away from
 “ all his transgressions; he shall surely live and not
 “ die.*”

Look into the world around you, my brethren; survey the lives of mankind in general. What total inconsideration must we observe, and how little do men think of the wrath of GOD, of the day of judgment, or the rule prescribed for their conduct! How little do they reflect on their relations and obligations to the great CREATOR and JUDGE of the world! How little do they attend even to their own thoughts, words, and actions! How very little to the motives from which they act! The greatest number live in a perpetual hurry either of business or of pleasure, or of both in succession. Among the superior classes especially, there is a regular system of banishing consideration. All dissipation, whether of a more publick, or retired nature, not only *tends*, but is *intended*, to deliver men from the uneasiness of solitude and serious reflection; and the desire of this deliverance is the source whence vast multitudes derive abundant

* Ezek. xviii. 28.

gains ! In devising amusement, with tolerable ingenuity, they cannot fail of obtaining an ample compensation.

Thus the prodigal son is represented as devoid of consideration, “when wasting his substance in riotous living.” But at length, “He came to himself.” He began to reflect on the past, on the present, and on his future prospects. “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light.”

When the careless sinner thus “comes to himself,” he considers what he has been doing; where he now is; whither he is going; and what is likely to befall him. He now examines his thoughts, his words, and his actions; he studies the rule which GOD hath prescribed; and compares his past and present conduct with it, both in respect of what he has done, and what he has neglected to do; estimating also his advantages, and the uses which he has made of them. And, as he does this, with the great day of account and righteous retribution before his eyes; he also begs of GOD to search and prove him, that he may now judge himself, and not at last be finally condemned, to have his doom with the impenitent and unbelieving.

Consideration will soon make way for *conviction*, increasing conviction, both of criminality in conduct, and depravity of heart; and this, even in respect of those persons who have been more decent and amiable than many others. “I was,” says the apostle, “alive without the law once.” While he had estimated his own character, according to the notions and

traditions of the Pharisees, who only regarded the outward conduct ; he thought his life good, his heart good, his state good. But during his three days solitary fasting and praying at Damascus, he had abundant opportunity for consideration : and “ the commandment,” “ the holy, just, and good law,” came with power and conviction to his conscience ; and then, “ sin revived and he died.” He became deeply sensible, by viewing himself in this glass, that his life, his heart, his state were deplorably bad : and this prepared the way for his understanding and believing the gospel.

The convinced sinner hears “ the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ;” and, instead of his previous favourable opinion of himself, he is ready to adopt the Psalmist’s words, “ Who can understand his errors ? Cleanse thou me from my secret sins.” “ My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head ; my heart faileth me.” When one, who was before careless and inconsiderate, is thus led to make this awful review, with the law of God open before him, and the judgment-seat in full prospect, he then judges himself, not only concerning gross crimes and immoralities ; but he discovers in his whole conduct, base ingratitude to God and contemptuous forgetfulness of him ; idolatrous love of worldly objects ; talents entrusted and abused ; time and life wasted, and worse than wasted ; mischief, irretrievable mischief, done in various ways by his example and influence. Whether he looks back upon his life past, or towards the future reckoning ; whether he looks into

his heart, or unto his GOD, he is amazed to think of his sins, and all the aggravations of them; he continually discovers evil where he before suspected none, nay, even in the virtues on which he prided himself; he daily weighs himself in the balance, and is always found wanting: his best actions are defective; his motives are corrupt, at least, in part; and the more he studies the rule, the fuller is his conviction, that if judged according to it he must be condemned.—He now feels the propriety of the apostle's words “ I “ through the law am dead to the law :” “ for by the “ law is the knowledge of sin.” And whatever was his former character among men, he adopts from his heart the publican's prayer, “ GOD be merciful to “ me, a sinner !”

These convictions cannot be separated from fear, sorrow, and remorse : but if genuine, and produced by the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT, they will always be accompanied by a measure of *hope* in the mercy of GOD.

We may therefore state the next step in true repentance to be *submission*. “ Submit yourselves to GOD.” —We should not think that a disobedient child was really penitent, unless he submitted. The stubborn heart of man stands out against GOD, and perseveres both in excusing sin, and in repeating the offence. The stout-hearted will neither own his guilt, nor acknowledge the justice of the sentence denounced against him; he is averse to be either taught or ruled by the LORD. Self-will, self-wisdom, and self-righteous pride, unite in opposition to unreserved submission; and these principles of proud rebellion of-

ten maintain much influence even under deep and distressing terrors and convictions.

But he, who is brought to real repentance, unreservedly submits to GOD, and is willing both to be taught and ruled by him. "Other lords," says he, "have had dominion over me; but by thee only will I make mention of thy name." He especially becomes willing to be saved in any way, which the word of GOD prescribes. "LORD," says he, "what wouldst thou have have me to do?" He submits to the righteousness of GOD; he owns that he is a sinner, deserving condemnation, and unable to save himself; and thus, a preparation is made, by a *penitent state of heart*, for his understanding the gospel, and most cordially embracing it. For, he now seeks mercy as *mercy*; he comes in the way which GOD has opened, as far as he understands it; and when it is explained to him more fully, it exactly answers all the desires of his heart. This indeed forms the connexion between true repentance and living faith. Every one who repents, pleads guilty, prays to be taught the way of salvation, welcomes the gospel, and thus learns to live by faith in the SON of GOD," to love the SAVIOUR, and to devote himself to his service.

Humiliation before GOD, is indeed implied under the term *submission*. It may, however, be advantageously considered as a distinct exercise of the penitent heart. How different were the views, in this respect, which St. Paul had of his own character, when he considered himself as "the chief of sinners;" as "less than the least of all saints," and not "meet to be called an apostle," to those which he had entertain-

ed when he was a self-sufficient and self-wise Pharisee! Holy Job, when brought to a right state of heart, “abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes.” Few, I apprehend, will expressly say, that they are far better characters than Job was: yet how few can sincerely use his language!—“Then,” saith GOD, “ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight.”

This humiliation makes way for ingenuous confession—“He who covers his sin shall not prosper; but he that confesses and forsakes it, shall obtain mercy.”—“If we say, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, GOD is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”—Thus David, while he kept silence, was deeply distressed; but at last, he said, “I will confess my sins unto the LORD; and so,” he adds, “thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” And thus the returning prodigal, without attempting a palliation of his crimes, says, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.”

This union of submission and humiliation forms, I apprehend, what the Scripture calls the *broken and contrite heart*. “The sacrifices of GOD are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O GOD, thou wilt not despise.”—“Thus saith the high and lofty ONE, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”—“Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.” Pride, stub-

bornness, self-will, and an independent self-confident spirit, are the opposites to this contrite heart: but when submission and humiliation take place; the sinner feels himself a child who needs teaching, a criminal in want of pardon, a leper that desires and longs to be cleansed, a prisoner panting for liberty. These blessings, and all others, are set before him in the gospel: he asks and receives. "LORD JESUS! save me, I perish."—Now hear the words of GOD: "To this man will I look, to him that is poor, and is of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word."

You will no doubt allow, that if we *abhor* ourselves because we have sinned, we must *hate sin*; and if we abhor sin, as transgression of the law of GOD, we must love and approve of that law. If we hate sin, we love its opposite, even holiness: and if we love holiness, we must love the holy perfections of GOD, the holy character of CHRIST, the holiness of his disciples, his truths, his ordinances, and whatever has his stamp upon it. With these views and these affections, how can we do otherwise than admire the plan of redemption, as far as we understand it? seeing it is the grandest display of the divine holiness, and of the evil and desert of sin, which ever was made, or shall be made, connected with the most endearing view imaginable of the love and mercy of GOD to sinners. With these things in our minds, we cannot fail to perceive the force of St. Paul's important question, "How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" If repentance includes conviction of criminality and depravity, submission to GOD, humiliation, hatred of sin and of ourselves for sin, and love to

holiness and to every thing holy ; can such a revolution in our judgment and heart fail of producing a change of conduct?—Will a man live any longer in that which he abhors, and habitually seek pleasure in what he hates? Impossible!—As soon might each animal leave its proper element, and seek satisfaction in that which would prove fatal to it.

True repentance then, consisting in newness of heart, must and will be shewn in newness of life.—A true penitent indeed, being still very imperfect, and surrounded with temptations, may be betrayed into sin: but he cannot sin habitually, or, if I may so speak, upon plan and system.—This forms a grand discrimination between the real christian and the hypocrite. The true christian in this sense, “ cannot commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him ; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” But a hypocrite pleads the examples of imperfection, or the deeply-lamented sins, of real believers, especially those which stand recorded in Scripture, as an excuse for habitual, allowed, and unrepented transgression ; and as a reason for thinking himself, and expecting to be thought by others, a sound character.

But now let me ask you, can any one hate sin and abhor himself for sin ; can he love God and love his neighbour ; and yet keep possession of that property, which, previously to repentance, he had iniquitously acquired?—Surely, if he has the power and the opportunity of making restitution, and hates the *works* of sin, he will abhor its *wages* likewise. He will never consent to perpetuate the injustice of which he really repents : but will certainly make full restitution,

where he can, whatever self-denial it may impose. In numberless instances indeed, it is difficult to know, in what particulars, and to what persons, this restitution is due; but the poor, especially the poor of CHRIST'S flock, we have always with us: and here, if difficulties arise, the conscientious penitent will not only bestow, what he is conscious is not *his own*, and yet knows not to whom to restore it; but even add far more to it, if in his power.

The apostle, however, addresses some, whom he supposes unable to make restitution: and his language is well worthy our attention. "Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Mark the reason: not only that he may honestly support himself and his family: but also, "that he may have to give to him that needeth;" thus gradually making amends to man for injuries done to man; though he can make no compensation to his offended GOD. Here "he hath nothing to pay," and begs a free forgiveness.

In a variety of ways the true penitent, during his daily self-examination, will discover instances, in which he has injured others perhaps in their character, or their principles, by his conversation, or his example: and he will here too endeavour to counteract, or make amends for, his misconduct, by any means in his power, however humiliating and self-denying; and especially by henceforth setting a good example, and trying to "do good to all men, and especially to the household of faith."

To these general outlines of the nature and effects of true repentance, it may be proper to add something more particular, as it relates to the state and inward feelings of the heart. It must be obvious to those who duly consider the subject, that the repentance above described will be attended with great tenderness of conscience, fear of temptation, jealousy of a man's own heart, and dread of being deceived. For it arises from a conviction, that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

If then, thou art a true penitent, and there be any sin to which thou hast been formerly addicted more than to others: here thou wilt keep the strictest watch; all temptations to this evil thou wilt most cautiously shun; against it thou wilt most frequently and earnestly pray; and though thou mayest often feel trouble and alarm from it; yet it will henceforth be more opposed, dreaded, and hated, than any other sin.

This tenderness of conscience, and hatred of sin, (the heart of *flesh* which God hath given instead of the heart of *stone*;) disposes a man to condemn himself in many things, in which he once saw no harm. He now loves the holy rule of the divine law; he loves holiness and hates sin, every kind of sin: and, as a person of delicate cleanliness is disgusted by the least speck of dirt; so the true penitent is more pained by an unguarded word, or an angry temper, than others are, or than he himself used to be, by habitual ungodliness, not to say acts of direct immorality.

"Herein," says the great champion for the doctrines of grace, "Herein do I exercise myself, to

“ have a conscience void of offence towards **GOD** and “ man.” “ He delighted in the law of **GOD**,” in his inmost soul : yet he could not but see and feel that he had not attained full conformity to it ; he admired the standard of holiness, but he could not come up to it ; yet he exercised himself daily in aiming at nearer and nearer conformity. At the same time finding that he “ could not do the thing that he would ;” but that another “ law within him warred against the law of his “ mind,” he groaned and complained, under this conflict, more than under all his persecutions and sufferings. “ Oh wretched man that I am,” says he, “ who “ shall deliver me?”—**LORD**, I love thy law, I hate sin ; it is my grief and burden ; yet it dwells and works within me. O gracious **LORD**, when wilt thou deliver me ?

This is the necessary effect of genuine repentance, in an imperfect state : dissatisfaction with ourselves, must be the consequence of hatred of sin, and humiliation before **GOD**. The deeper the repentance, the more entire the hatred of sin ; the keener the eye of the mind in detecting it, and the conscience in condemning it, the greater will be our self-displacement :

He that daily improves in spiritual discernment, in the knowledge of **GOD** and of himself, in acquaintance with the holy law and its spiritual requirements, in love of **GOD** and holiness, and in tenderness of conscience, is indeed more holy than before, but he is also more humble : for humility is a principal part of holiness. So far therefore from being better pleased with his own character and attainments, he will be more and more abased before **GOD** ; and it is very probable, if his judgment be not exactly formed by

the scripture, he may be often ready to conclude that he cannot be a true convert, seeing he is so far from that holiness, which he longs after and admires.

And now, let me ask you, my friends, whether this was not the nature of St. Paul's progress, from his state of proud pharisaism, to his highest attainments in evangelical holiness? Did not his humility keep pace in its increase, with every other improvement in his character? Assure yourselves there is no danger, lest repentance, either in its nature or its fruits, should take you off from living by faith in the SON of GOD : since the more deeply any one repents, and the greater proficiency he makes in humility, tenderness of conscience, and hatred of sin ; the fuller is his conviction, that " his own righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Good works indeed, as " the fruits of the Spirit," do not deserve this degrading name : but, as they are wrought by us, so much of the evil of our fallen nature mingles with them, that comparing them with the perfect standard of the holy law, we cannot but feel, that they are no more fit to justify us before God, than filthy rags would be for our attire, when called on to appear in the presence of an earthly prince. It is only impenitent pride that induces men to attempt establishing their own righteousness : and the more entirely this is crushed, the more fully will the sinner enter into the apostle's meaning. " I count all things " but loss, that I may win CHRIST, and be found in " him ; not having mine own righteousness, which is " of the law, but the righteousness which is of GOD " by faith." And did any of us feel as deep repentance, and had we made as high attainments in holiness, as

the apostle, we should then more resemble him in the simplicity of our dependence on CHRIST; and with him more feelingly say, “The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the SON of GOD, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

It is well known, that a proud man is not easily made sensible of his obligations, even when great benefits are conferred on him; but the humble think much of every kindness, and are thus disposed to be grateful, and to commend and look up to their benefactors. Is not then the humble penitent peculiarly prepared, for receiving with lively gratitude the blessings of salvation? Will he not, as he becomes more and more acquainted with the person, the love, the sufferings, and the grace of his REDEEMER, be disposed more and more to admire, adore, and praise his name? Will not IMMANUEL be precious to his heart, and glorious in his eyes? It cannot be otherwise; and hence, love of CHRIST will keep its proportion with humility and hatred of sin. “The love of CHRIST constrains us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then *were all dead*: and that he died for all, that they who live, should live no longer to themselves, but to him who died for them, and rose again.” Thus the humble penitent is the most astonished at the SAVIOUR’S love, when he sinks the deepest in self-abhorrence; and the language of his heart is, “What shall I render to the LORD, for all his benefits?” Such a view of these subjects served to form the character of apostles and martyrs; this must form missionaries, ministers, and active christians; and not any idea of merit, any de-

gree of self-complacency, or any mere mercenary aim at reward.

And now consider, my brethren, how these views and affections towards the REDEEMER will influence a man to act towards his fellow christians. He can do nothing to add to the glory or felicity of his beloved BENEFACTOR; but believers are acknowledged by CHRIST as his brethren and dear relations. When the thankful penitent, therefore, sees one whom he considers as of the household of faith; he not only considers him as nearly related to himself, but one who bears the image of his blessed SAVIOUR, who seems thus to address him: "Behold my mother, my sister, my brother:" "Forasmuch as ye did it to these my brethren, ye did it unto me." He cannot therefore, as far as these views and principles prevail, but feel a cordial love for real christians, and take pleasure in their society: he must be interested in their concerns, and delight in being kind to them. "Hereby we know, that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

The same state of mind will excite compassion and benevolence to others. Even the wicked must share in the pity, prayers, and good offices of the true penitent, who will endeavour to bring them acquainted with that SAVIOUR, in whom are all his hopes. Looking to his cross, seeing how he loved and bled for his enemies; the christian's resentment against persecutors is softened into compassion: knowing and feeling his own need of forgiveness, he becomes habitually disposed to forgive; and thus learns to follow

peace with all men, as well as to avoid giving needless offence to any.

The humility and tenderness of conscience, induced by true repentance, teach the christian, in proportion as they prevail, another very hard lesson; namely, “in honour to prefer others to himself; and so to “do nothing from strife and vain glory.” And of how much importance this is, to the peace of the church, the community, and even the family, every one must be aware.

As, after death is the judgment, and to be accepted at that solemn season is the true penitent’s grand concern, and as his views of sin, and of himself, lead him continually to look to CHRIST who was born in a stable, and died on a cross: he cannot but grow more indifferent than he was, or than others are, to the interests, distinctions, and enjoyments of this world; and about the frown or scorn of worldly men. “GOD “forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of our “LORD JESUS; by whom the world is crucified to “me, and I unto the world.”—This not only prepares a man for patience and perseverance under trials and persecution; but it disposes him to active, self-denying, and liberal beneficence, as far as he has opportunity and ability. In a word, there is not a single exercise of christian affections towards GOD or CHRIST, our brethren, our relatives, neighbours; or enemies, in which a truly penitent state of heart has not peculiar influence. In doing, or in suffering, the will of GOD; in receiving favours and commendations, or in sustaining injuries and reproaches, it leads to the proper temper and conduct: it puts life

and fervour into our prayers, praises, thanksgivings, and every act of worship : it is especially the ground requisite to form an acceptable communicant at the LORD'S table : for it has been shewn, that repentance and faith are inseparable concomitants, and aid each other's exercise ; that repentance, or rather the HOLY SPIRIT by means of repentance, leads the soul to CHRIST : and the more he is known, trusted, and loved ; the deeper hatred is felt against sin, and the more humbly we walk with GOD. In this manner I apprehend, the lively christian's character is constantly improved : and though, in heaven, there will be none of the shame, sorrow, and alarm here commonly attending repentance ; yet the penitent's humility and hatred of sin will for ever unite with admiring love of the SAVIOUR, while he sings, " Worthy is " the LAMB that was slain, and hath redeemed us to " GOD with his blood."

And now ask yourselves, my brethren and fellow-sinners, whether you are partakers of this gracious disposition ? Is this your experience, your aim, your view of yourselves, of sin, and of CHRIST and his salvation ? I have a confidence, that if it be so with you, I may glorify GOD on your behalf, and say, " Then " hath GOD to you also granted repentance unto life." " There is joy in heaven, among the angels of GOD " over one sinner that repenteth : " these blessed spirits have rejoiced over you, and do rejoice over you ; and though you perhaps may now sow in tears ; yet you shall at length rejoice with them : yea, GOD himself will rejoice over you to do you good, even for ever and ever. Therefore lift up your hands that hang down :

lift your hearts with hope and gratitude ; and prepare to commemorate his love, who loved you, and gave himself to the death upon the cross for you, and being now exalted on the throne, hath bestowed on you repentance unto life ; and pray always, that you may repent more, and believe more, and bring forth more and more the genuine fruits of repentance and faith.

It may, however, be asked, what is he to do who once thought he repented, but amidst the business and bustle of the world, has lost his convictions and seriousness ; and knows not to which company he belongs, the penitent or the impenitent ? I would answer, that in such a case, no stress whatever should be laid on past experience ; all must be begun anew ; and such a person must come as a sinner to CHRIST for repentance and remission of sins, and all the blessings of salvation, even as if he had now for the first time heard of his name.

In like manner so far as doubts prevail in any one, on whatever ground it may be, whether he have repented or not, he should earnestly beg of God to grant him true repentance ; and to give him to know that his repentance is sincere. Whatever tends to benumb the conscience, to veil eternal things from his view, to lessen his sense of the evil of sin, or to restore him to impenitent self-complacency ; he ought by all means carefully to avoid. Let such a man shun the bustle of company : let him retire into his closet, redeem time for reflection, search the scriptures, pour out his heart in prayer ; and, waiting on the LORD in this manner, he will not wait in vain.

Once more, permit me to add a parting word to some whom, perhaps, I may never more address; who hear the word of GOD, and probably profess to believe it, yet nevertheless are conscious that they live without repentance, or fruits meet for repentance. Let me then once more solemnly testify, that if you live and die without repentance, even without this repentance which I have described; without submission to GOD, humiliation before him, renouncing and hating sin, cordially welcoming salvation by CHRIST, and walking in newness of life; you will most certainly perish, and that for ever. May GOD then, of his abundant mercy, grant unto you also, and to all present, repentance unto life eternal!

SERMON VII.



PSALM li. 4.

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.

THE occasion, on which this Psalm was composed, is well known. The awful fall of David, and the most aggravated crimes which he committed, have attracted very general notice. But many remember his sins, who do not appear properly to consider his humiliation and deep repentance.—Numbers, on this ground, suppose themselves superior characters, because they are exempted from such flagrant criminality; though there are no evidences that they possess any positive excellence. And not a few disgrace the religious opinions which they avow, by evident and habitual misconduct: yet satisfy their own consciences, and expect others to entertain a favourable opinion of them; as the best, say they, have their faults, and even David committed adultery and murder! But if they would have us form the same judgment

of their case, as Nathan did of David's; they must shew the same spirit of deep repentance that he did. A renowned monarch, having given publick scandal by his crimes, composes and publishes this Psalm, and, before his own subjects and the whole world, gives honour to GOD, by proclaiming his own shame!

This Psalm is throughout the language of the deepest contrition; and has been, not improperly, called, 'The portrait of a penitent.' The royal Psalmist's crimes had been of such a nature, that they were both deeply injurious to mankind, and also most scandalous in the eyes of the world: yet his views of the obligations he lay under to GOD, and his most aggravated violation of them, seem to have swallowed up every other consideration. All else in this comparison appeared trivial in his eyes: and the address of Nathan to him shews that, in this respect, his judgment accorded with that of GOD himself. "Thou art the
" man! Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, I anoint-
" ed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out
" of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's
" house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom; and
" gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah: and if
" that had been too little, I would moreover have giv-
" en thee such and such things. Wherefore then hast
" thou *despised the commandment of the LORD to do*
" *evil in his sight?* Thou hast killed Uriah the Hit-
" tite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be
" thy wife.—Therefore the sword shall never de-

“part from thine house; *because thou hast despised me.**”

Observe, my friends, the prophet does not rest the weight of the charge, brought against David, on the injury done to men; but on the ungrateful contempt shewn to GOD, and to his law and authority.

The prophet adds, “Howbeit because by this deed *thou hast caused the enemies of the LORD* to blaspheme; the child also that is born unto thee shall *surely die.†*” Here again the crime of David is aggravated, by the dishonour it had brought on the name of GOD, through the blasphemies of his enemies.

These considerations may throw light on the words of our text, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.” The wrong done to man by our offences is not to be overlooked, or thought slightly of: but our attention must not be so confined to the evil of them in this respect, as to interfere with a sense of those higher obligations to GOD which we have violated.—In what I have further to offer on the subject, I shall

I. Make some introductory remarks.

II. Illustrate the emphatical words here used; “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.”

III. Consider the evil of sin, as committed against GOD, and as violating all our obligations to him. And

IV. Adduce several instances, in which this doctrine brings those in deeply guilty, who other-

* 2 Sam. xii. 7—10.

† 2 Sam. xii. 14.

wise would scarcely appear guilty at all; and thus shew how it cuts up by the very roots a self-justifying spirit.

I. I proceed to make some introductory remarks.

In general, the text clearly proves, that the believing penitent's view of the evil of his sins, is proportioned to the degree, in which he considers the extent of his obligations unto GOD.

In the present age and nation, systems of morality, and discourses on moral virtues, have almost excluded, not only the doctrines of Christianity, but even the preceptive part of Scripture: though they fall vastly below the high standard of the divine law, and are destitute of its sanctions; and of the motives, encouragements, and assistances proposed to us in the gospel. In many of these books *utility to man* is made the test and measure of virtue, and the criminality of vice is supposed to consist in the injury done to our fellow creatures.

And this seems to be one of the most dangerous and ruinous evils of the day: as, if carried to its evident consequences, it would supersede the whole religion of CHRIST, and in fact abrogate the Bible. For it cannot be denied, that the sacred Oracles address us in far different language. The first and great commandment of the Law is, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and mind, and soul, and strength." The first requirement of the Gospel is, "My son, give me thy heart." "Repent and turn to GOD."—"Believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST." And the general rules laid down for a Christian's con-

duct are such as these, “ Whether therefore ye eat,
 “ or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory
 “ of GOD.” “ Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed,
 “ do all in the name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.”
 “ With good will doing service, as to the LORD, and
 “ not unto men.”—

No doubt, such are the holy commands of GOD, and the way in which we are required to glorify him, that the more exactly we fulfil these superior obligations, the greater benefit we shall eventually render to mankind: but to reverse the order of Scripture, is “ turning things upside down”* and placing the glory of the great GOD below the petty interests of sinful man!—Certainly we ought to do good to man for the LORD’S sake; and not to glorify GOD for the sake of man.

But it will soon appear, that these anti-scriptural views in great measure supersede the necessity of the Gospel; and by feeding self-complacency, and the pride of virtue, have had a powerful effect, in producing that disregard to evangelical principles, which forms in many places the peculiar character of the age. “ If righteousness come by the law; then CHRIST
 “ died in vain;” and he, who feels no need of his salvation, is already prepared, not only to neglect, but to reject and oppose the Gospel.

There is in the natural consciences of men a far greater susceptibility of conviction and guilt, in what relates to their conduct towards each other, than in respect to their behaviour towards GOD. For, too com-

* 1s, xxix. 15.

monly "God is not in all their thoughts." And, besides this; the sense of the injury, done to society by several crimes, associates itself with all the ideas on these subjects, which we receive from education, study, and conversation: because the sentiment prevails in the world. Men generally cry shame of those who grossly violate their obligations to their neighbours; and consider them as unfit for society: but they are not thus affected by the conduct of those, who most atrociously and habitually disregard the authority, and are ungrateful for the goodness, of GOD. Hence it becomes natural for us to connect the idea of criminality with all actions of the former kind, but not with those of the latter.

This indeed forms one ground of the opposition, which is every where excited against the doctrines of the Gospel. Men are used to judge themselves and their own characters, as they stand related to one another, and according to the rules and maxims established in their circle of society.—"Weighed in this balance, they are not found wanting." With a little aid from self-flattery, they conclude, that they never did harm to any one, that their hearts are good, and their lives good; and are therefore disposed to take offence, when addressed as sinners needing salvation; and eagerly to dispute against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, as well as against many other truths of christianity. Indeed it might be conceded to some among them, that if they had only to do with their fellow-creatures, and with the interests of men in this present world, their pleas would at least be plausible. But if such persons would consider their

obligations to GOD, and call themselves to account, how far they have or have not fulfilled them; if they were disposed to condemn themselves for all that his word condemns; “Weighed in this balance they must certainly be found wanting;” and would soon be led to cry out, “GOD be merciful to me a sinner!” And then, every part of Christianity would gradually open to their view, as most needful, most gracious, most suitable, and worthy of all acceptance.

The young man, who respectfully addressed our LORD, and enquired “What he must do to inherit eternal life;” having over-looked the first table of the law, and interpreted the several precepts of the second as a mere moralist would do, without hesitation replied, “All these have I kept from my youth.” Yet the event shewed that he loved his riches better than the GOD who made him.

When our LORD, speaking to a lawyer, who asked the same question, enquired of him “What is written in the law? How readest thou?” He replied by quoting the two great commandments. And our LORD said, “Thou hast answered right; this do and thou shalt live.” But “he, *willing to justify himself*, said unto JESUS, and who is my neighbour?” He seemed not conscious of having violated his obligations to GOD, and so made no enquiry about the first and great commandment; but *desiring to justify himself*, he appears to ask for a limitation of the too extensive meaning of the second, without which he could not possibly accomplish his object.

This being the case with men in general, it cannot at all be wonderful, that even serious enquirers after

salvation are for a time in some measure embarrassed by the same mistake ; and find it very difficult to judge of their conduct according to the rules of Scripture, and with respect to their relations and obligations to the Almighty ; and still more so, to be affected with a humbling sense of guilt on this account, answerable to the views and feelings which they hear described by those who preach the Gospel to them.

Indeed, it is probable, that conviction of sin, at first, commonly arises from a consciousness of having acted in certain instances contrary to our views of moral obligation ; rather than from an accurate comparison of our whole conduct and the state of our hearts, with the law of God and our obligations to him. But afterwards, deeper reflection and further enquiry produce a sense of guilt, in those thoughts, words, and actions, which once were considered as entirely innocent.

The intention of these remarks, my brethren, is to impress your minds with the immense importance of the subject before us ; for, the want of duly understanding or adverting to it, often keeps serious persons long in a state of hesitation as to the doctrines of the Gospel, and exposes them to great danger from the artifices of those who continually are starting objections against the truth.

Indeed, even true and established Christians are seldom so deeply affected with a sense of guilt, when betrayed into such sinful inclinations, or actions, as appear *insulated* from all connexion with men, and never likely to injure any one, or to be known except to the omniscient God alone ; as they do for those

evils, which fall under human observation, interfere with the comfort or interest of others, and incur their censure.

But in proportion to the degree in which this erroneous judgment influences us, it must unquestionably militate against the exercise of genuine repentance, humility, and simple faith in the mercy of GOD, and the merits of CHRIST: it must prevent that admiring, adoring love of the divine Redeemer, who shed his blood on the cross as an atonement for our sins; and that glowing ardour of affection for him, which was the grand peculiarity of the primitive Christians, and their all powerful motive to self-denying labours and sufferings for his sake. This, we every where meet with in their writings; alas, how different from the frigid zone of modern Christianity!

II. I would illustrate the emphasis of the Psalmist's words, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned."

David perhaps might mean, that, as a king, he was accountable to none but GOD: but he also, no doubt, intended to confess, that in entire distinction from the enquiry, how far man had been offended or injured by his conduct; he had greatly displeased the Sovereign of the universe, "the King of kings and "Lord of lords." Perhaps some persons at that time might be secretly rejoiced, that such a man as David had thus kept them in countenance. Joab, who had committed murder, for instance, might inwardly exult on so lamentable an occasion. But, however that might be, He who is, "no respecter of persons," and with whom is no difference between the mightiest

monarch and the meanest subject, was deeply offended.

The language of the text, "Against thee, thee only," implies far more than I can express, of the majesty, excellency, and authority of the glorious **GOD**; our relations to him, as the Creator, Governor, and Judge of all; our obligations to him, in general and particular; and the return which we ought to "render for all his benefits."

It is worthy of remark, that no records of antiquity, however admired, (the Scriptures alone excepted,) use language concerning the infinite **GOD**, which is in any measure worthy of his incomprehensible majesty and greatness; nay, which is not exceedingly degrading to his character: and if moderns have at all succeeded better on this subject, it is because they have derived their most adequate ideas from the Bible, though many are unwilling to acknowledge the obligation. Yet, after all, the sublimity of the sacred oracles on this subject is unparalleled.—"Great is the **LORD**, and greatly to be "praised; His greatness is unsearchable. I will "speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of "thy wondrous works; and men shall speak of the "might of thy terrible acts, and I will declare thy "greatness."*—"Who hath measured the waters "in the hollow of his hand, and meted out the heavens with a span, and comprehended the dust of "the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains "in scales, and the hills in a balance?"—"The na-

* Ps. cXLV. 5--6.

" tions are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as
 " the small dust of the balance. Behold, he taketh up
 " the isles as a very little thing ! And Lebanon is not
 " sufficient to burn ; nor the beasts thereof for a burnt
 " offering !—All nations before him are as nothing :
 " and they are counted unto him less than nothing
 " and vanity ! To whom will ye liken GOD ?" *
 Against this Being, of glorious power, and majesty
 unspeakable, a poor worm dares to rise in rebellion !
 " Against *thee* have I sinned !"

When Job, in the heat of controversy, had spoken irreverently concerning God ; his friends accused him of hypocrisy, and crimes of which he was consciously innocent ; and even Elihu bore too hard upon him : so that he was not convinced or humbled on that account. But when " JEHOVAH spoke to him from the whirlwind ;" though he did not deign to argue on the justice of his dispensation, but merely exhibited before him some displays and illustrations of his greatness, power, and majesty ; he soon brought Job to submit, to plead guilty, and to say, " I am vile," " I abhor myself, I repent in dust and ashes."

St. Paul also seems to have taken up this subject in the same manner, when he answers an irreverent caviller against the dealings of GOD with his creatures ; " Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against GOD ?" ' Consider what a frail, short sighted, and erring creature thou art, even in common things ; and darest thou presume to dispute

* Is. xl. 12--18.

‘ against GOD, on such deep subjects as are evidently
 ‘ beyond thy comprehension, or even thy investiga-
 ‘ tion?’ “ Canst thou by searching find out GOD?
 “ Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?
 “ It is higher than heaven, what canst thou do? It
 “ is deeper than hell, what canst thou know?” “ Oh
 “ the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and
 “ knowledge of GOD! How unsearchable are his
 “ judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

Many objections often raised, not without a great mixture of presumption, against the doctrines of Revelation; especially such as respect the first origin of sin and misery, the criminality of our conduct as fallen creatures, and the justice of GOD in the judgments denounced against transgressors, should, in general be silenced in this manner; and not by entering into detailed arguments on each particular, as if GOD was “ even such a one as ourselves.” “ Shall “ not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

It may, however, be observed, that many of these objections press *equally* upon every religious system, and not on any one in particular. It is evident that sin and misery do exist and abound. It is undeniable, that the Almighty could have prevented the existence of these evils, or limited their progress. To argue then, against what he hath done or permitted, because we, blind and ignorant sinners, fancy he might, have done better, is nothing less than blasphemy; and carried to its consequences, directly militates against every kind of religion.

Again, it is evident in fact that man is depraved: and we need only to judge the conduct of the world,

as recorded in history, by the simple rules of loving GOD supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves; and the inference is undeniable.—Now, if depravity proportionably excuses criminal conduct; then the more any creature is depraved, the fuller justification of his actual wickedness he possesses. This excuses all the rebellion and malignity of fallen men and fallen angels, throws all the blame of sin on the Almighty himself, who did not see good to prevent its existence; and of course renders it impossible that “GOD should judge the world.” But, whatever proves too much, by all the rules of fair argument, is allowed to prove nothing.

“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it.” The dictates of conscience and of common sense are in this case far preferable to presumptuous reasonings on things evidently beyond our capacity. “To man he saith, The fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding.” “Secret things belong unto the LORD our GOD: but the things that are revealed belong to us.”

The Psalmist in the context speaks on this subject. “I have done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and clear when thou art judged. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me!” Did the royal penitent mean to urge this as an extenuation of his crimes? Certainly not, but to shew that they were not occasional slips; but the effect of a depraved nature. “As says the proverb of the ancients, wickedness proceedeth from the wicked.” And therefore

he prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and
"renew a right spirit within me."

When we consider the majesty and greatness of GOD, we may well be abashed at the consideration of our rebellions against him: but the discovery of his glorious excellency, the perfection of his loveliness and beauty, are calculated to give us still deeper views of the criminality of our conduct. His Omnipotence, and Omniscience, and Omnipresence, and all his natural attributes, constitute his *greatness*: but his infinite wisdom, justice, truth and love, constitute his *holiness* and *goodness*. The display of his *greatness* should awe us into reverential submission: but that of his *goodness* should win us to admiring, adoring love. "Thy name only is excellent, and thy praise
"is above heaven and earth." And what can be more irrational and perverse, than to neglect, despise, or dislike infinite loveliness and excellence? What more reasonable than the command, "Thou shalt
"love the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart?"

But we should also recollect, that this great and glorious GOD, is the Creator, and consequently the Proprietor, Governor, and Judge of the Universe. Observe the language of Scripture on this subject, "The LORD made all things *for himself*." "For
"thy pleasure they are, and were created." Indeed this is no mean proof of our SAVIOUR'S deity; and it is not only said, "All things were made *by him*," but likewise, "All things were made *for him*."—"Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the
"glory, for ever and ever, Amen." This was David's view of that GOD, against whom he had sinned.

“ THINE, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power,
 “ and the majesty : for all that is in the heaven and
 “ in the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O
 “ LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.”*

Against this great Creator, and universal Proprietor and LORD of all, every one of our sins is committed ; and not merely against our fellow creatures : against one infinitely above us, and not one who is on an equality with us, as partaker of our common nature.

This great CREATOR of all worlds is also the Author of our existence ; the Father of our spirits ; the Giver of all our powers and abilities ; the GOD in whom we live, and move, and are. “ Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, I have nourished and
 “ brought up children, and they have rebelled against
 “ me !” The GOD, against whom every sin is committed, stands at once related to us, as our Creator, Benefactor, Governor, and Judge. The authority of a Sovereign, the kindness of a Parent, and the liberality of a Benefactor, are all here united ; yea, far, far exceeded : and can we but feel the emphasis of the language used in the text, “ Against thee, thee only,
 “ have I sinned ?”

It is possible in human affairs for these different obligations to unite in one case. Thus Absalom, the son, the indulged son, as well as the subject, of David, after manifold favours conferred on him by his affectionate parent, proved a traitor to his prince, and a monster of ingratitude to his benefactor, and inten-

* Chron. xxix. 11.

tionally a murderer of his father! While David felt himself deeply shocked at his son's atrocious violation of such accumulated obligations, what must have been his reflection on his own past conduct against GOD, in the instance before us? Could he help saying to himself, 'Men justly exclaim against the behaviour of Absalom towards his kind father and sovereign: but my heart reproaches me with the violation of far higher and greater obligations to GOD, my Creator, Benefactor, and Judge?'

In this part of our subject, it may be proper to recollect, that all the various differences, by which men in society, or in respect of religious advantages, are distinguished from each other, whatever they may be, should be considered as enhancing the obligation, and aggravating the criminality of violating it. This was the way in which Nathan addressed David, when he recapitulated the special benefits which GOD had conferred on him, in order to bring home conviction to his conscience: and here I shall leave to your consideration the providential benefits, and every advantage, with which you severally have been distinguished, as increasing your peculiar obligations, and aggravating every transgression which you have committed.

The aggravated evil of sin, as committed against GOD, may be shewn by another view of our relation and obligations to him, as transgressors favoured with the discoveries and proposals of the gospel. Having broken the holy law of our Creator, and fallen under his righteous displeasure; instead of leaving us without remedy, to the consequences of our disobedience,

he hath revealed himself to us, as “merciful and “gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and “sin;” as “in CHRIST reconciling the world unto “himself;” as “not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us, that with him he might “freely give us all things” And, in the most urgent manner, he invites even the vilest of sinners to come and partake of this great salvation.

Beyond all doubt, every additional discovery of the excellency, loveliness, and glory of our great Creator and Judge, proportionably shews the baseness and perverseness of our alienation from him: and the more fully the sinner is encouraged to expect forgiveness and reconciliation, the more inexcusable must he be, if he persist in rebellion. Now, the character of God, as revealed in the gospel, comprises such an union of greatness and condescension, justice and mercy, holiness and love, wisdom and truth, as constitutes “the perfection of beauty,” and excites the most fervent adoring and admiring praises of the heavenly worshippers: while at the same time, such a foundation is laid for our hope, that nothing “but “neglecting so great salvation,” can prevent our attaining everlasting felicity, notwithstanding all our crimes, and all our depravity and temptations!

This may lead us to consider a still further aggravation of sin: namely, when it is committed by one, who has experienced the pardoning love and renewing grace of God; who has come to him, and walked with him; who has found him faithful and merciful; who has rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable, and been animated to call on others to share in his satisfac-

tions ; who has glorified in GOD, as his all-sufficient Portion, his Sun, his Shield, and his exceeding great and everlasting Reward ; and who has been favoured with signal deliverances and comforts, in manifest answer to his believing prayers. To sin against such mercy and love as this, to rebel against so gracious a Father and Friend, seems to form the highest aggravation of transgression that can be conceived. Thus the sins of believers, instead of being slight offences, are in fact the most inexcusable of all crimes : and the conviction of this, even in respect to those failures which bring no scandal on religion, powerfully tends to keep the true christian humble before his GOD ; as well as to enhance his admiring gratitude for the riches of pardoning grace.

- This was especially the case with David. He had been taken from the sheep-fold, and raised to the throne. He had been honoured in providence ; made a prophet ; and inspired as “ the sweet singer of Israel,” to compose songs of praise for the use of spiritual worshippers through successive generations. But above all, he had enjoyed such consolation in his own soul, while employed in the worship and service of his GOD ; as dictated language so animated, and even rapturous, that to this day it seems unequalled. And yet after all, this very person had to say “ Against thee, thee only, have I sinned !” For he had despised the commandment of his GOD ; yea, he had even despised GOD himself, who “ had comforted him on every side ;” and who was ready to add still more, and that abundantly, to all his former benefits !

And have not some, here present, had occasion in many instances, though not so awful as this of David, to look back on the LORD'S past kindness, and the comforts they have enjoyed in communion with him: and then to confess, with shame and sorrow, that they have most basely treated their gracious Benefactor with contempt and ingratitude? And can the violation of any other tie, be so heinous, as thus sinning against the LORD?

Take into consideration, then, my brethren, the majesty and authority of GOD; his holiness and excellency; our relations to him as our Creator, Governor, Benefactor, and Judge; and all our obligations to him, as rational creatures, as distinguished in his providence, as favoured with his gospel, and, some of us at least, as having been made joyful in his salvation: and then, form your estimate of the evil of sin, as committed against GOD; and endeavour to enter into the spirit of the emphatick language used in the text, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned."

III. I proceed to consider the evil of sin, as committed against GOD, and as violating all our obligations to him.

After what has been already stated, there is no occasion to be very particular on this part of our subject.—For who does not perceive, that, however moral, amiable, or respectable, he may have been in his conduct among men; yet if he treat GOD with neglect, or set him at defiance, he must be the object of his indignation and abhorrence? If we consult the Scripture, we shall find one crime in particular,

which is constantly called *an abomination*; and treated as the most heinous and provoking of all others, affording the clearest proof of men's hating GOD. Yet it is a crime not directly and necessarily injurious to men, at least in their temporal concerns: I mean *idolatry*. That this should be the highest offence, may be easily understood on our principles: but on those, which make *utility* the standard and test, it is entirely unaccountable. And therefore those pagan moralists, who had some notions concerning the Unity of GOD, and the vanity of the popular theology; not only saw very little evil in the grossest idolatry, but, by precepts and example, shewed that they even thought they did right in conforming to it!

In every government, submission to the supreme authority is the first social duty, and treason the highest crime: nay, other crimes in general are punished, not merely because injurious to individuals, but because they are acts of disobedience against the Sovereign, or the State.

If a person be ever so amiable in private life; if he be punctual in his payments, upright in his dealings, faithful to his engagements, kind to his relations, a good master or a good landlord, compassionate and liberal to the poor, and courteous to all: yet, if he have committed high treason, having failed in his highest obligation, the other parts of his conduct are not considered by his judges; his life is forfeited, and nothing but mercy, even the mercy of the prince against whom he has offended, can deliver him from condign punishment.

The same might be fully shewn by other illustrations. Nothing can make amends for a failure in the leading obligation: nothing can excuse or counter-balance, unfaithfulness in a wife, or disobedience in a son: while the more affectionate and excellent the husband or father, the more aggravated is the offence. And to persist, against repeated pardons and kindnesses, in such conduct, would stamp the offender, as a monster of ingratitude, however moral and well-behaved in other respects.

But many endeavour to excuse themselves, by saying, that they do not *mean* to offend GOD, in this or the other action; for they never thought about him. And thus the very sin, with which they are especially charged, is pleaded in extenuation of other crimes! It is the grand criminality in the conduct of men, that they forget GOD. Every object we behold, proclaims his existence and glory: our own consciousness, nay, reflection on our own bodies and souls, is suited to bring him to our thoughts. We live every hour on his bounty, and are continually upheld by his arm; yet we forget him, and excuse our other sins on the ground of that forgetfulness! But remember, my fellow sinners, that “The wicked shall be turned
“ into hell; and all the people that forget GOD.”— Can there be a more unequivocal proof of ingratitude, contempt, and aversion, than this habitual forgetfulness of our glorious Sovereign, and our daily Benefactor?

If your child loves you, does he forget you? And should a son, whom you had tenderly and carefully educated, and with great expence situated in a very

comfortable manner, and then charged, as he valued your favour and happiness, to avoid this, and to attend to that, particular: should he, I say, persist in a conduct, in all respects diametrically opposite to your will; and then plead, that indeed he did not mean to offend you, for he had forgotten both you, and your kindness, and your counsel; what would you think of his behaviour? Would you not suppose, that he meant to add insult to disobedience? “The carnal mind is enmity against GOD.” This carnal enmity is the source of our forgetfulness; and it is also an aggravation of our guilt.

Ingratitude is generally allowed to be one of the basest and most detestable of crimes, where man only is concerned: but what are our obligations to our best earthly benefactors, compared with those which are hourly conferred on us by our heavenly Father and Friend? yet who can justly say, he has not been ungrateful to GOD?

It is indeed a melancholy truth, that the more benefits GOD bestows in his providence, the greater neglect and ingratitude do men commonly manifest. Hence it is, that the prosperous are far more apt to forget GOD than the afflicted; the rich more in general than the poor; the healthy more than the sick; and we are never in so much danger of impious contempt of him, as when he lavishes so many benefits upon us, that we have every thing according to our own mind, and “more than heart can wish.”

This is not only the case, in respect of different persons placed in more or less prosperous circumstances, but in the same persons: even he that is

truly pious, in general acts better when afflicted than when successful. David behaved more honourably when persecuted by Saul, and when Absalom rose in rebellion against him, than he did, “When the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies round about.”—Religion commonly flourishes most under persecution and affliction; and it seems almost an universal rule, that the more Providence indulges, either individuals or collective bodies, the more negligent and ungrateful they become. “When thy riches increase, and when thy gold and thy silver, and all thou hast are multiplied, then beware lest thou forget the LORD thy GOD.” And is not this undeniable fact an awful demonstration of our extreme depravity? Will any man seriously set himself to excuse such a temper and conduct?

Man’s forgetfulness of GOD arises, in no small degree, from his inordinate love of worldly objects. He *idolatrously* values wealth, pleasure, power, or the honour which cometh from men. I say, *idolatrously*, for covetousness is idolatry, and sensual indulgence is idolatry. They are so called in Scripture. And he who loves either wealth, pleasure, pomp, or any earthly object more than GOD; is as really an idolater, as if he had formed his gold into an image, and prostrated himself before it in stupid adoration. “Ye have forsaken the Fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water.”—“The world and the things of the world,” are put in the place of GOD: and in this way, even innocent and

needful pursuits and employments often become the occasions of great guilt.

Judas sold his LORD for thirty pieces of silver : and the Jews preferred Barabbas, a thief and robber, to CHRIST. We stand astonished at their baseness : but have we not, in some respects, preferred as mean or as vile objects to the infinite GOD, and to the “gracious Saviour of lost sinners?”

In short, if the human heart were not “deceitful above all things,” as well as “desperately wicked,” our conduct in this respect towards GOD would never have been palliated. The criminality of man consists in rebellion against GOD, and in setting his own will in opposition to that of his Maker : every favour which the LORD bestows, aggravates that criminality : and to endeavour to plead any excuse for such complicated guilt, renders us still more criminal in his sight, whose “judgment is according unto truth.”

I proceed therefore,

IV. To prove that this view of the subject brings in many exceedingly guilty, who, on other grounds, would scarcely seem at all so ; and this shews men in general their need of the mercy and grace proposed to them in the gospel.

Acts of gross immorality, evidently injurious to society, are sometimes avoided in the habitual tenour of a man’s conduct, from prudential and worldly motives, and during the whole, or a great proportion, of his life : and, when this is by no means the case, they are *occasional*, and form but a small part of the actual conduct of men in general ; if the most abandoned of the human species be excepted. But neglect and

forgetfulness of GOD, ingratitude, and a will opposed to his will, and a violation of all obligations to him, are, in every ungodly man, *habitual*; they run through every day, and every action of the day; they influence all his thoughts, words, and deeds; they constitute his selected plan of life; they influence him in the spending of his time and money; and they direct the use made of his talents, property, health, spirits, body, and soul. Every thing is by men of this character arranged and conducted, as it were, by a *system* of forgetfulness and neglect of GOD; of ingratitude and rebellion, nay, defiance of him. So that where no gross vice is perpetrated, a degree of guilt is constantly contracted, far greater, in total amount, than that of the most atrocious immorality, considered in any other light: and even where sins are committed, for which the conscience sometimes reproaches a man; the *habitual and systematical enmity against God*, which the immoral, and even the most moral, may be charged with, is unspeakably the greater part of their guilt.

Thus, while in respect of society we would give virtuous characters due respect, and reprobate the vicious: in the sight of GOD, there is far less difference than is generally supposed. For if men were restrained from immorality, by a regard to the divine authority: that principle would influence their whole conduct, and lead them also to every branch of piety.

Criminality is not always the greatest, where we judge it to be so: we are not competent to decide on so complicated a question, as the degrees of men's guilt; but must leave it to him, who searches the

very thoughts of the heart. But, “all have sinned, “and come short of the glory of GOD.” In this respect, “there is no difference;” and as all are involved under one common sentence of condemnation; all should, with one consent, welcome the gospel of grace. For “it is a faithful saying, and worthy of “all acceptation, that JESUS CHRIST came into the “world to save sinners.”

May I not, even now, be addressing some persons, who, if asked, what part of their conduct they would choose to alter, were they persuaded that Christianity was a mere delusion, though not disposed publickly to avow this opinion; would scarcely be able to fix on any particular? Regard to health, character, peace, and interest; the company with which they have been used to associate; and various other considerations, would induce them to persevere nearly in the same tenour of outward conduct, if they were of opinion that no future state of retribution awaited them; if they had in no degree the fear of GOD before their eyes. But the case would be very different, if they attended to even the same things, from a real religious principle.—Surely that must be vastly different from Christianity, which would scarcely be affected, if Christianity were abrogated!

Sins of omission seldom burden the consciences of men in general. If direct violations of some express *prohibition* are not chargeable upon them, they do not often condemn themselves for neglect of duty. They forget, that there are *injunctions* as well as *prohibitions*; and that refusing to hallow the LORD'S

day, or to honour and obey their parents and superiors, is as really disobedience to GOD, as robbery, adultery, or murder. For, unless we consider sin, as committed against GOD, sins of omission will almost always be overlooked.

It has pleased our gracious GOD, to give us the holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto eternal salvation; yet how few love and reverence them, and search them daily! Can any man suppose, that the neglect of the sacred oracles, by those who own them to be the word of GOD, is not contempt of him that inspired them?

The holy sabbath affords the spiritual mind the most important and highly valued opportunity of waiting upon GOD, worshipping him, and learning his will. Yet how few, even among moral men, count this holy day their "delight and honourable!" There are not many, who are convinced, that they ought deeply to repent, and have need of mercy, and of the atoning blood, because they have been used to spend part of the LORD'S own day in business, sloth, worldly company, or dissipation.—"Thou shalt not take my name in vain," says the GOD of infinite majesty and glory: yet how commonly is this great and tremendous name of GOD, used in common conversation, even such as is frivolous or profligate! But, unless we consider sin as committed against GOD, we shall not be struck with the criminality of so irreverent and contemptuous a profanation, of that which should be adored with the profoundest veneration.—This view of the subject is also peculiarly suited to detect the secret enmity of the heart against

GOD, and his holiness and truth, even in such as are called *amiable moral characters*. Habitually desiring to approve themselves to men, as seeking their approbation, they either forget GOD, or they frame a false notion of him, and live in a constant infringement of all obligations to him. Yet when this is set before them, and the holy character and righteous law of GOD are explained, they feel their hearts rise in opposition to the statement, as militating against their self-complacency: the peculiar doctrines of the gospel excite still stronger repugnancy; and their continuance, in neglecting reconciliation to GOD by JESUS CHRIST, manifests a heart deeply alienated from him.

It is impossible, within the compass of a sermon, protracted even beyond the usual limits with which you are used to indulge me, to enter on all the various particulars that belong to this part of the subject. But the principles, which I have endeavoured to establish, will enable such, as seriously desire to reconsider it, to trace it into a vast variety of instances, in which they may find cause to say, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." It is certain that the subject, if duly attended to, brings in all men guilty before GOD. "Every mouth," if these views be scriptural, "must be stopped:" we are "concluded under sin;" and "by the works of the law, shall no flesh be justified before GOD."

If then we are saved, we must be "justified freely by the grace of GOD through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS." We "must be born again,"

and the whole and every part of the Gospel must be to us as "life from the dead." To them, who have deeply entered into the views here given, in a spirit of diligent self-examination, application by the preacher is needless.

All that earnestness, in attending on the word of life and on every means of grace, which some manifest and others object against, arises from this source: and whenever the objectors become equally sensible of the criminality of every sin, as rebellion against GOD; they will imitate that conduct which they now censure; CHRIST will become to them also "the Pearl of great price;" they too will count all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST; nor will they enquire, How often are we bound to pray, or attend the worship of God? but they will say, "I was glad, when it was said to me, let us go into the House of the LORD." This will put earnestness into their enquiries, and fervency into their prayers; and render CHRIST and his salvation glorious in their eyes, and precious to their souls.

But, alas! I fear this is by no means the case of all, even in this congregation. I am persuaded, that many of you, my friends, have never felt this kind and degree of conviction, as to the criminality of your conduct, and the danger of your souls. I cannot impart to you my perceptions of the truths I inculcate: but I would exhort you to search the Scriptures, and beg of GOD, for CHRIST'S sake, to illuminate your minds by his Holy Spirit, to a right understanding of the sacred word, and to a just estimate of your own character and conduct. When

this has been duly attended to, you will be more nearly agreed with me, as to the need of regeneration and repentance, faith in the Son of GOD, and every part of scriptural Christianity, than you have hitherto been.

The subject before us explains a circumstance, which to many appears strange and unaccountable. The same person, who, when careless and inattentive to religion, seemed satisfied with himself; now that he is become earnest about salvation, afraid of all sin, and attentive to every duty, is far removed from self-complacency: so far from it, that he has a lower opinion of himself than he ever had before! In fact, he judges by a new rule; he views his conduct, as considering himself the subject and deeply-indebted creature of GOD. He has new sensibilities: he is far more employed than formerly in reviewing his own thoughts, motives, words, and actions: he sees sin in ten thousand particulars, where before he saw it not. He thinks nothing done, because he is so far from having attained. He judges not by what man takes cognizance of; but by his obligations to that GOD who searches the heart. And thus, in his best duties, he feels the need of mercy; and can in nothing find encouragement, except from “the glorious gospel of GOD our Saviour.”

Thus, deep humility, and a great proficiency in genuine religion, not only go together, but are proportioned to each other, and aid one another's growth. Thus CHRIST JESUS, and his atonement, righteousness, and grace, become more and more valued, as the believer advances in holiness: and thus he daily

ripens for the world above; where perfect purity, humility, gratitude, and admiring love, will dictate the adoration, and enhance the felicity, of the redeemed to all eternity.

But, if hitherto strangers to this salvation and this state of heart, you are still called on to seek “the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the GOD of our salvation;” he is ready to receive and bless all that come to him on his mercy-seat, through the mediation of his Son. “Behold therefore, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.” “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our GOD, and he will abundantly pardon.”

SERMON VIII.



LUKE, XV. 6.

Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

“**T**HEN drew near unto JESUS all the publicans “ and sinners for to hear him.” Persons of bad character, not only in the sight of GOD, but also in the judgment of men, were so impressed by our LORD’S miracles and discourses, that they voluntarily “ drew “ near,” not to cavil or scoff, but “ to hear him.” Yet, while he compassionately regarded and instructed them; the “ Scribes and Pharisees murmured, “ saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth “ with them.”

To repress these proud objectors, to illustrate the propriety of his conduct as the Saviour of sinners, and to encourage the penitent, both at that time and in all future ages; our gracious LORD spoke the three parables which stand recorded in this chapter.

We have lately considered the scriptural view of repentance unto life: and the majesty and glory of that **GOD** against whom we have sinned, with our relations and obligations to him, as aggravating the criminality of our conduct; and have shewn, that we are all thus brought in guilty before **GOD**, of numberless and heinous transgressions, whatever be our character among men. These considerations are suited to shew us our need of repentance, of mercy, of the Saviour's atoning blood, and of sanctification by the Holy Spirit. If then our minds be prepared by a genuine conviction, that this is really our state, and these our urgent wants, to welcome the message of the gospel; the present subject, which leads us to consider the love of **CHRIST**, to lost sinners in general, and to penitents in particular, cannot but be seasonable.

“What man of you,” says the condescending Saviour even to his murmuring opposers, “having an hundred sheep; if he lose one of them, will not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?” The hundred sheep are his valued property: one of them is lost; the rest are safe in the pasture. And his principal care and pains are not employed about the ninety and nine, but about the single sheep that is missing. He leaves the rest as not equally needing his presence, and goes from place to place, with labour and fatigue, to seek after that which is lost: nor does he remit his assiduity, or cease from his anxious search, till at length he finds it. Then he thinks himself well recompensed for his past labour; and

“laying it on his shoulders, rejoicing,” he carries it to the fold: and going home, “he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.”—What then are we to learn from this parable? Our LORD himself answers the enquiry; when he adds, “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”

But who are these “just persons, that need no repentance?” Certainly none on earth have a right to consider themselves as such; but it is equally certain, that numbers do not perceive or feel their need of repentance. The murmurs of the Pharisees, whom our LORD addressed, shewed this to be their proud sentiment: and he often spoke to men, according to their judgment of themselves, and not according to their real character. The chapter before us contains a remarkable instance of this: for in the parable of the prodigal son, the elder brother is introduced, when in a very proud and disobedient spirit, saying, “Lo, these many years do I serve thee; neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment;” and his father is afterwards represented as saying, “Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine:” though it is evident that the parable was intended to rebuke the vain confidence of the proud Pharisees, as well as to encourage humble penitents.

But should any person doubt respecting this interpretation; we may remember that angels in heaven need no repentance: yet the Saviour’s care, and la-

bour, and sufferings, were not employed about them; but in behalf of poor lost sinners on earth: nor does he rejoice over angels, as he does over every sinner that repents.—Even those who have been brought home to his fold, and are walking in his ordinances and commandments, need not that kind and degree of repentance, which they do, who are yet wandering in the broad way: and every new instance of one brought to repentance excites fresh joy in heaven; because the good Shepherd “rejoices that he has found his sheep that was lost;” and calls on all his friends to rejoice with him.

There are publick successes, which make whole nations resound with joyful acclamations: yet we are not taught by the sacred oracles, to think that the angels of God generally unite in rejoicings of this kind. But had we been previously informed, that one event, and but one, frequently occurs on earth, which fills all heaven with joy and praise, our curiosity would have been excited, our imagination would have been earnestly employed, our expectations would have been raised; and probably we should have felt some disappointment, as well as surprise, when we found it was merely, because some poor criminal, perhaps scandalous for his crimes, perhaps neglected because of his low condition or mean abilities, in a cottage, an almshouse, or a prison, was weeping for sin, crying for mercy, and almost overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, and merited dread of condemnation! Yet “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.”

Without entering into a minute interpretation of

the parable, we may, from the text, remark three particulars.

I. The event here referred to; “ I have found
“ my sheep which was lost.”

II. The instruction contained in the representation given, that CHRIST himself rejoices in this event; “ Rejoice *with me.*”

III. The instruction to be derived from the exhortation given to all his friends to rejoice with him.

I. The event, “ I have found my sheep which
“ was lost.”

This leads our reflection back to the consideration of all that hath been previously done, in order to the finding of the lost sheep; and to the “ height, and “ depth, and length, and breadth of the love of “ CHRIST, which passes knowledge;” even his love to sinners, considered as strangers to repentance, and living in allowed and heinous disobedience.

“ We were as sheep going astray, but we have “ returned:” (or have been *brought back* or *converted*,) “ to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.”— “ I have gone astray,” says the Psalmist, “ like a “ sheep that is lost.” Indeed this is the constant emblem in Scripture, of our condition, as estranged from GOD, and seeking happiness from the world.— Other views of our state and character shew our criminality, as apostates and rebels, and enemies to GOD; and are suited to humble us before him: but this especially illustrates our misery and danger.— What more helpless and exposed than a lost sheep?

It can neither flee from its enemies, nor resist them. It is surrounded with dangers of which it has no dread, and against which it can take no precaution : and unless again brought under the tender faithful care of the shepherd, it must at length, in one way or other, be destroyed.

In such a world of temptation as this is, if we believe what the Scripture teaches, that “ our adversary, “ the Devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking “ whom he may devour ;” and that, as “ transformed “ into an angel of light,” he uses, with immense success, a vast variety of artifices to deceive men to their destruction ; we shall readily perceive, that we are exposed like lost sheep to numberless dangers, of which very few are at all aware, and from which none, left to themselves, could possibly escape.

Such is every man’s condition, while living impenitent, having forsaken GOD, and continuing to walk according to the course of this world.

When we consider our criminality ; we may conceive of the Almighty as looking upon us with just and holy abhorrence : but the emblem of lost sheep gives us the idea of his unspeakable condescension and commiseration.

Let us then consider the love of the great and good Shepherd, to us poor lost sheep. He, who, in human nature, could with propriety use the words, by which JEHOVAH distinguished himself when he appeared to Moses, and say, “ Before Abraham was, “ I AM :” He who spake to his disciples, exactly as JEHOVAH had done to Moses ; “ Certainly I will be “ with thee :” “ Lo, I am with you always, even to

“ the end of the world :” He, who could promise to give his disciples “ a mouth and wisdom, which no “ enemy could gainsay or resist :” He, whom “ all “ angels worship,” came into the world, was made in the likeness of men, became flesh, and tabernacled among us. But what brought him down from the realms of light? Love! not to our character or conduct, but love to us as lost sinners!—He pitied our wretchedness, while he abhorred our crimes! He anticipated even our desires, and our consciousness of misery and danger! “ It is a faithful saying, and “ worthy of all acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came “ into the world to save sinners: even the chief of “ sinners.”—“ Ye know the grace of our LORD “ JESUS CHRIST; how that though he was rich, yet “ for your sakes he became poor; that ye, through “ his poverty, might be made rich.”

When he thus assumed “ the form of a servant,” from compassion to the lost and wretched; he did not appear in a state of outward splendour, but in the deepest poverty; and while he refused to act as a Judge, and shunned those who would have made him a King; yet, as the tender Shepherd seeking his lost sheep, he performed, and so dignified, the office of a preacher, by making that his peculiar constant employment.

With weary, toilsome steps, he traversed the whole land of Israel; (a stranger to those accommodations with which the most of us are indulged;) and made it the business of his life to seek out and save the lost. He pitied the ignorant and neglected, “ be- “ cause they were as sheep not having a shepherd;”

and allowed himself no space for rest or refreshment, (often reserving only the nocturnal hours for secret devotion,) that he might lose no opportunity of bringing lost sheep to the fold of GOD. This was his meat, his pleasure, and his joy : and here, especially, he hath left his ministers “an example that they should follow his steps.” This was the business of his life : still more, this was the end of his agony and death. “All we, like sheep,” (says the prophet, above seven hundred years before the Saviour’s birth,) “All we, like sheep, have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”—“He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” In like manner another prophet, in the name of GOD says, “Awake, O sword, against the Shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of Hosts ; smite the Shepherd.” And thus CHRIST, taking these prophecies as belonging to him, says, “I am the good Shepherd ; the good Shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.” View then, the incarnate Word and Son of GOD, IMMANUEL, agonizing in the garden, and expiring on the cross ; not for sinners as already repenting, but to make way for their repentance and salvation !—Oh, the depth of his condescension and compassion ! the riches of his liberality ! the greatness of his self-denying love !—words fail, and even imagination is lost on such a subject.—But can we suppose, that he stooped so low, and laboured and suffered so much, for sinners, while impenitently re-

bellious; and then that he will, after all, reject any of those, who in consequence are brought humbly to seek his salvation? Consider him as stooping, and bleeding, and dying, for the vilest of rebels and enemies: and then conceive him, if you can, sternly rejecting the humble requests of the poor supplicant who with tears and confusion, and deep contrition, intreats his mercy, and determines to know no other hope.

Before we proceed, let us not forget to think of this gracious Saviour, weeping over ungrateful Jerusalem, and the miseries to which it was devoted; and praying when nailed to the cross for his murderers; "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Nor let it be lost sight of, that "JESUS is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

The commission and instruction given to his apostles, when he sent them forth to preach the gospel, were perfectly coincident with these encouraging representations of his personal ministry. "Other sheep," says he, "I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned."*—Indeed, what is the commission of CHRIST to his ministers, in

* John x. 16. xvii. 20. Mark, xvi. 16.

every age, but that expressed in the words of our ordination service? ‘To seek for CHRIST’s sheep ‘ that are dispersed abroad ; and for his children, who ‘ are in the midst of this naughty world, that they ‘ may be saved through CHRIST for ever.’ This we all most solemnly promise to do, when we are admitted to our sacred function ; and this must form one grand object of all our subsequent ministrations, if we would fulfil the vows of GOD that are upon us.

And what are our instructions in this great concern? We are commanded to preach, “ Repentance “ towards GOD, and faith towards our LORD JESUS “ CHRIST :” to assure our hearers, of every character, that “ all things are ready ;” to invite, persuade, expostulate, “ instantly, in season, out of season ;” and even “ to compel them to come in ;” certainly, by no other compulsion, than that of convincing arguments, urgent persuasions, and reiterated exhortations. “ Now then, we are ambassadors for CHRIST ; “ as though GOD did beseech you by us, we pray “ you, in CHRIST’s stead, be ye reconciled to GOD.” —“ We also, as fellow-workers together with him, “ beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of “ GOD in vain.”

We are instructed, not only to inform you of what GOD has done for the salvation of sinners, and of what CHRIST has suffered for sins, and of his prevailing intercession for all “ who come to GOD by “ him ;” not only to propose these blessings to you : but also to urge most earnestly your acceptance of them ; to take no denial ; to renew our invitations and expostulations ; to venture your displeasure and

contempt, in seeking your salvation; and never to remit or cease from our endeavours, till you forsake our ministry, or either you or we are called to the tribunal of GOD.

And what is that peculiar work of the Holy Spirit, of which so much is said in the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament, and of which, alas! so little is heard from many pulpits in this Christian country? “He shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.” “He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”—His first work, as proceeding from the Father and the Son, consists in quickening the dead in sin, bringing the prodigal to himself, humbling the proud heart, subduing the stout spirit, awakening the careless conscience; and shewing the criminal his guilt, the justice of GOD in his condemnation, and the future judgment, with all its solemnities and awful consequences. When this has been effected; and the convinced transgressor is brought to despair of salvation, except through *mercy* by faith in CHRIST JESUS: the same effectual Teacher glorifies the Saviour, shews the suitableness, fulness, and freeness of his salvation; and brings the desponding penitent, to “count all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST, and his atonement and righteousness.

This then is the fact referred to. The sinner hears the gospel, is brought to repentance, to submission, to earnest desires of salvation, to a cordial acceptance of CHRIST, according to the degree of knowledge al-

ready attained ; and to diligent search after more competent instruction in the truth and will of GOD.

The persons, thus humbled and earnest, may have been of divers previous characters, some more and some less moral ; the degrees of their capacity or information may widely differ ; and also their rank and station in society : but they now all understand the apostle's language, which before they either overlooked or disliked, “ There is no difference, for all “ have sinned and come short of the glory of GOD.”

When Peter addressed the Jews, on the day of Pentecost, and thousands embraced the gospel, even of those who had concurred in crucifying the LORD of glory : then this joyful event took place in numerous instances. The good Shepherd found and rejoiced over his lost sheep. When the poor jailor began, trembling, to cry out, “ What must I do to be “ saved?” and gladly welcomed the message of the gospel ; it was a single but illustrious instance of the same kind. We are not favoured with such success as Peter witnessed ; but from time to time, one and another, like the jailor, makes the interesting enquiry, and welcomes the scriptural answer. And whether one obscure person in a cottage, or a prison, is converted, or ten thousand at once are converted ; not a single instance is overlooked : CHRIST rejoices over his lost sheep, and calls on us to rejoice likewise.

II. Then, what do we learn from this expression, “ Rejoice *with me* ?” We may suppose the penitent, not only bowed down by a sense of past guilt, but oppressed by feeling much remaining stoutness of spirit and hardness of heart ; which though not be-

fore aware of, he now begins to perceive and lament. Perhaps he recollects, not merely outward sins; but (which is often the case with moral persons) a proud contempt of the doctrines and ministry of the gospel, and many sarcastical remarks on pious persons, that lie with peculiar weight upon the conscience.—Many things may recur to his mind, of convictions repressed, and prejudices indulged, and resolutions broken, and sins committed against knowledge and conscience, and attempts made to obtain quiet from lax and unscriptural views; inducing a fear, lest something has taken place, which may exclude him from mercy; or lest he should have committed the unpardonable sin.—On this subject, I can only at present say, that they who are most alarmed on that account, are the least likely to be the persons spoken of; that every sin is unpardonable without repentance; and that no sin is unpardonable if repented of.—Now it is here supposed, that this discouraged enquirer earnestly begs of GOD ‘to give him repentance and his Holy Spirit;’ and amidst all difficulties, desires still to believe, and hope, and submit, and rely, and pray, and admit no other confidence. I would therefore add, that even over such a case as this, CHRIST is represented as rejoicing; while the sinner is weeping, trembling, and tempted to despond.

Let us recur to the representation given in the parable.—Suppose a shepherd bestowing pains, and exposing himself to hardship and fatigue, and perhaps to imminent danger, in seeking a lost sheep: would he feel no satisfaction when he had found it, though, through simplicity, it feared and fled from

him as an enemy? Thus, when the sinner is brought to see his guilt and misery: even though his views be darkened, and his hope disturbed, through ignorance and prejudice; “yet the Redeemer sees of the travail
 “of his soul,” (in Gethsemane and on Calvary,)
 “and is satisfied.” This was no small part of “the
 “joy set before him,” when, “he endured the cross
 “and despised the shame.”

Every repenting sinner is a monument of CHRIST'S victory over the powers of darkness, and of the efficacy of his atonement, intercession, and grace. Every one is an immortal soul saved from eternal misery and brought into the way of eternal life. Every one is an example of GOD'S mercy in converting an instrument of Satan, active in doing mischief, into a servant of CHRIST, employed in willingly promoting the cause of truth and righteousness on earth. Thus, in all instances of sinners being brought to true repentance, and seeking salvation by CHRIST, an accession is made to the Redeemer's kingdom, and Satan's is proportionably diminished and enfeebled. “Giving thanks unto the Father—who hath delivered
 “us from the power of darkness, and translated us
 “into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we
 “have redemption through his blood, even the for-
 “giveness of our sins.”*

This then was the great *object* when the plan of salvation was formed; when the Son of GOD became incarnate; when he bled upon the cross; when, risen and ascended, he sent his apostles to preach the gos-

* Col. i. 12-14.

pel ; and when he communicates his Spirit to render it effectual : and can he but rejoice, when the great end of all his labours, sufferings, and counsels, is answered ?

Would a father, who had spared no labour and expence to reclaim a profligate son ; who had retained his paternal affection through a long series of provocations and disappointments ; who had persevered for a long course of time, while the case seemed hopeless : would he, I say, not rejoice, when his endeavours were crowned with full success ? Surely he could not see the repënting rebel a suppliant at his feet, confessing his crimes with all their aggravations, and most submissively imploring forgiveness and reconciliation, though ready to fear a repulse, without the most lively emotions of satisfaction. It is impossible, but he must inwardly rejoice ; unless he, who had the heart of a father while the son was a rebel, could be turned into a monster when his son became a penitent. Prudence indeed might dictate the outward expression of his joy, and that perhaps in a way not quite so pleasing to the suppliant's feelings ; but beyond all doubt, they would be directed to the promoting of his permanent advantage.

We learn then from the expression, “ Rejoice *with me,*” that the penitent sinner is sure to find a cordial welcome from him who “ came to seek and to “ save that which was lost.”

All the love of CHRIST to sinners, which has been before considered ; all the means used, and the divine influence of the Holy Spirit communicated, in order to bring them to a sense of their guilt and danger,

and to render them willing to accept of this salvation ; are so many demonstrations, that no one, however guilty or enslaved by sin, shall be rejected when thus brought to seek mercy and grace as proposed in the gospel. The prodigal is at length induced to say, “ I will go to my father, and say unto him, Father, “ I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and “ am no more worthy to be called thy son :” and will the father now spurn him from him, and leave him at last to perish? No—“ He looketh upon men, and “ if any say, I have sinned, I have perverted that “ which is right, and it profited me not ; he will deliver his soul from going down into the pit, and his “ life shall see the light.” The good Shepherd has regained his lost sheep ; and says to his friends and neighbours, “ rejoice with me, for I have found my “ sheep that was lost.” And if any, like the Pharisees, and the elder brother in the parable, object, and find fault, he will vindicate his own proceedings, and put them to shame and silence.

Certainly this is the view of the subject, which these parables, spoken for that very purpose, are suited to convey. And the general tenour of Scripture accords to it. How emphatical the language of God by his Prophet concerning Ephraim ! “ I have “ surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus : “ Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a “ bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn thou “ me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the LORD “ my GOD.—Is Ephraim my dear son ? Is he a pleasant child ? For since I spake against him, I do “ earnestly remember him still. Therefore my bow-

“ els are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.”*

Indeed, the kindness and condescension of CHRIST, as recorded in the gospel, during his personal ministry, were entirely coincident with these representations. He never despised or frowned on any one who came to him, however mean or vile; but was always accessible and compassionate: and in this, as in all other respects, he “ hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps.”

Simon, the Pharisee, disdained “ the woman that was a sinner,” when, as a weeping penitent, she washed our LORD’S “ feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.” But he graciously noticed the evidences of her faith and love: he declared that “ her sins, though many, were forgiven.” He said to her, “ thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.”

In like manner, when censured for becoming the guest of Zaccheus the publican; having heard his profession of penitent faith, he declared for his encouragement, “ This day is salvation come to this house: for as much as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”—And even to the thief upon the cross, who confessed his guilt, and said, “ LORD, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom;” amidst his own agonizing tortures he replied, “ Verily, I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

* Jer. xxxi. 18—20.

This uniform conduct of our blessed Saviour, towards those who were humbly sensible of their guilt and danger, appeared still more remarkable and instructive, if contrasted with his addresses to the self-sufficient Scribes and Pharisees; in which he uses the strongest language of just severity and authoritative rebuke: “ Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before you.”—“ Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” There is in some men, a sort of indolent easiness of temper, which induces an indiscriminate kindness to persons of all characters, at least as far as words can go: but the marked difference of address, which our LORD made use of, in speaking to the self-righteous, and to the humble penitent, forms such a contrast, that we are sure there must be, *in his judgment*, something essentially different in the state of their hearts, which according to the plan of the gospel requires this marked discrimination.

When Saul of Tarsus, being met with in the way to Damascus, became a humble suppliant, the compassionate Saviour whom he had persecuted, takes notice of it to Ananias, “ Behold he prayeth.” And Ananias, sent expressly to assure him of pardon and peace, and to restore his sight as a pledge of further mercies, accosts this wolf, which had so cruelly destroyed the sheep of CHRIST, with the cordial address, “ Brother, Saul, the LORD, even JESUS, whom thou sawest in the way, hath sent me unto thee.” It is probable that Saul, during his three days’ weeping and fasting, in darkness and distress,

had feared lest he had sinned beyond the reach of mercy : but no objections were made against him on account of his past most atrocious crimes ; and as soon as he began to repent, and was willing to be saved in the way of the gospel, he was heartily welcomed, both by the LORD and by his ministers.

The Old Testament affords an instance no less extraordinary. Manasseh had filled Jerusalem with abominable idolatries, and with innocent blood ; he had persisted and increased in wickedness beyond example, in defiance of warnings sent from GOD by his prophets ; he had used his authority to induce his people to comply with his abominations ; and yet, when, “ in affliction he besought the LORD his GOD, “ and humbled himself greatly before the GOD of his “ fathers ; he was intreated of him, and heard his “ supplication.”

But the parable, in this chapter, of the prodigal son, which has been repeatedly alluded to, is perhaps the most decisive on the subject that can be conceived. It was spoken on purpose to encourage the penitent, and to reprove those who disdained them. No sooner is the prodigal, whose conduct had been most base, brought to himself, and induced to return home : but the father, sees him afar off, runs to meet him, prevents his confessions and intreaties, hastens to speak peace and comfort to his dejected heart, and welcomes him with every token of affection and joy.

The LORD indeed often leaves the awakened sinner, for a time to sow in tears, and tremble at his word ; in order to humble and prove him, and to do him good at the latter end : but, if truly penitent, if

“ he goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed ;
 “ he shall doubtless come again rejoicing, and bring
 “ his sheaves with him.” He may for a season mourn
 in darkness, and fear lest his case be hopeless : but
 ere long he shall say, “ O LORD, I will praise thee ;
 “ though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is
 “ turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold,
 “ GOD is become my Salvation : I will trust and not
 “ be afraid ; for the LORD JEHOVAH is my Strength
 “ and my Song, he also is become my salvation.
 “ Therefore with joy shall ye draw waters out of the
 “ wells of salvation.”*

Whatever then is needful of instruction, pardon, sanctification, strength, liberty, or comfort, shall in due time be vouchsafed : and the LORD himself will rejoice over the poor penitent to do him good, “ to
 “ the praise of the glory of his grace.” For “ where
 sin has abounded, grace much more abounds.”

III. Then I proceed to consider what we may learn
 from the call given us to rejoice with the good “ Shep-
 “ herd, when he has found his sheep that was lost.”

I apprehend this call was not merely intended as
 an additional encouragement to the poor trembling
 and mourning penitent, though it is exceedingly
 suited to answer this end : but also to teach us some
 important parts of our duty, which we are too apt to
 overlook.—If indeed we “ have fled for refuge to lay
 “ hold on the hope set before us” in the gospel ; if we
 have found “ peace and joy in believing,” and “ have
 “ tasted that the LORD is gracious :” it should be one
 grand aim and design of our future lives, by all pro-

* Is. xii.

per means, to induce others to seek a share in the same inestimable blessings. This is by no means *exclusively* the work of ministers; it is the duty of all christians, in their families and neighbourhood; among their relatives and connexions; in their sphere of action, whether contracted or more extended; and according to the talents committed to their stewardship.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in CHRIST JESUS.” Did he stoop so low, so deny himself, and suffer such unknown agonies, from love, not to the holy or to his friends, but to lost sinners, rebels, and enemies; to us when viewed in these characters? Let us imbibe his spirit, let us not be indifferent to the eternal interests of those around us, however vile or injurious. Let us despair of no man, harbour prejudices against none, or indulge resentment on account of any provocations, however many and great. While our foes, perhaps, may even thirst for our blood, let us desire and seek for their salvation.—What language does the apostle use on this subject! “GOD is my record, how greatly I long after you, in the bowels of JESUS CHRIST.” “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, till CHRIST be formed in you.” This was indeed “the mind that was in CHRIST JESUS,” and should be in us all.

There is a way of speaking, concerning the ignorant or immoral, too common even among such as profess to believe the gospel; which seems to imply that they are hopeless characters, and that no good can be done to them: and when this idea prevails, it

is not likely any proper means of doing them good should be attempted with earnestness and perseverance. But whoever duly remembers all the particulars of his own case, and all the patience and mercy which the LORD has shewn to him, will not readily conceive more difficulties or greater unworthiness in another, than have been overcome and pardoned, in bringing him into the liberty and comfort of the gospel.

While therefore, in our several places, we use all such means of bringing sinners to repentance and the knowledge of CHRIST, as consist with our character and situation; and watch for opportunities of dropping some hint, or putting something in the way of those to whom we have access, which may awaken their attention: let us remember all our brethren, who, in different parts of the world, and by various methods, are making similar attempts. The ministers of CHRIST especially, whose constant employment this is, or should be; and who often labour, with a degree of success vastly below their wishes and desires, are entitled to remembrance in your daily prayers. If called on to rejoice with CHRIST, when the lost sheep is found; you must also be required to desire that joyful event. It takes place, at present, alas! but seldom, to what it has done in former times: and how loudly does this call upon you, “to strive together in prayer for us;” both that we may be better qualified for the work, and more prospered in it! Perhaps nothing is less adequately attended to, in general, than the duty of praying for the success of

the gospel, and that “ the LORD of the harvest would
“ send forth labourers into his harvest.”

In the present lamentably divided state of the Christian Church, a temper too generally prevails, not unlike that manifested by the apostles, when “ they saw one casting out devils in CHRIST’S name ;
“ and forbad him, because he followed not with
“ them :” and our LORD’S reply seems to be little thought of ; “ Forbid him not ; for he that is not
“ against us, is for us.”

No doubt, every one ought to be satisfied in his own mind, as to his proper place and work, and should act consistently with his engagements ; not “ doing evil that good may come,” or even causing, by any impropriety, “ his good to be evil spoken of.” But if we candidly look around us, and take a large view of the Christian Church, we shall evidently perceive that GOD brings home lost sheep, and so causes joy in heaven, by persons who are very far from exactly coinciding with us, in those things on which we perhaps lay an undue stress. It is too much for us to assume it, *as fact*, that our views are exclusively scriptural ; for other conscientious men are equally confident in their opinions : and if we were sure that we were right and they mistaken ; yet, as the only wise GOD sees good to execute a part of his counsel by their means ; and as “ there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth ;” it does not become us to manifest the pharisaical spirit of the elder brother ; who was objecting and complaining, when his father and the whole family were feasting,

and rejoicing over “him who had been lost and was found, had been dead and was alive.”

St. Paul was sure that they who preached CHRIST out of envy and strife were wrong, not only in circumstances, but in the radical temper of their hearts: yet, as it seems, they preached the substance of the true gospel among those who had been strangers to it; so that sinners were by their means brought to repentance and faith in CHRIST, he determined to rejoice in their success: doubtless, because the Saviour calls on all his friends to rejoice with him when he finds his lost sheep. As to consequences, he left them with GOD; as also the judgment to be awarded to those, who wanted “to add affliction to his bonds.”

We also learn, from the language of the text, that we should, with caution, encourage every relenting in those, who have hitherto appeared stout-hearted and far from righteousness.—We should meet with kindness and meekness every dawning of light and conviction, and spare no pains in leading forward the newly awakened sinner, notwithstanding his mistakes, prejudices, or ignorance; imitating him, who “did not quench the smoking flax, or break the bruised reed.” It is indeed proper to avoid such encouraging language, as may tend to self-deception: but whatever can inspire the hope which animates to diligence; whatever can tend “to lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees, or make straight paths for the feet; that that which is lame may not be turned out of the way, but rather be healed,” should be perseveringly attempted.

“ Him that is weak in the faith receive ye ; but not
 “ to doubtful disputations.”

We should also be reminded to attend to another apostolical injunction which is often forgotten, “ If a
 “ man be overtaken in a fault, you that are spiritual
 “ restore such an one in the spirit of meekness ; con-
 “ sidering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” For
 the recovery of one, who seemed in our judgment to
 be a believer, is often that very event over which
 angels and the LORD of angels rejoice. “ Brethren,
 “ if any of you do err from the truth, and one con-
 “ vert him ; let him know that he who converteth a
 “ sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul
 “ from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”—
 Let us, in these and all other cases, connected with
 the joyful event referred to in the text, use all the
 means we can, and pray fervently for a blessing on
 every attempt made by others, as well as by ourselves,
 all over the world. Let us expect to receive answers
 to our prayers, and stand prepared to bless and praise
 GOD, whenever we hear of sinners brought to repen-
 tance, and the success of that cause, for which
 CHRIST JESUS came into the world and shed his
 blood upon the cross.

Brethren, you have heard many things concerning
 the love of CHRIST to sinners, in general, and to re-
 penting sinners in particular ; and of his unspeakable
 condescension, compassion, and loving kindness :
 but do not, on this ground, conclude that he cannot,
 or will not punish ; “ Despisest thou the riches of his
 “ goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering, not
 “ knowing that the goodness of GOD leadeth thee to

“repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD; who shall render to every one according to his deeds?”—Notwithstanding the inexpressible love of CHRIST, he will at length “be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not GOD, and that obey not his gospel; who shall be punished with an everlasting destruction from his presence.”—“How shall we then escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” They who are emboldened by the grace of the gospel to continue impenitent, will perish with the most aggravated condemnation. “Seek the LORD,” therefore, “while he may be found; call upon him while he is near:” and beware of trusting in any transient impressions, which leave no abiding effect on your general temper and conduct; for no persons are more hopeless in their impenitence, than they who groundlessly think, that they have repented. Yet, be thankful for any degree of *feeling*, any disposition to relent and submit to GOD: but give diligence, and exercise watchfulness, that these convictions may be rendered deeper, and made more effectual in producing works meet for repentance.

We, who cannot see the heart, must encourage whatever appears right: but you should look to GOD to search and examine you, that you may become acquainted with yourselves, and not be deceived by a repentance which must eventually be repented of. Take care, in this view, of every scheme which tends

to reconcile religion with conformity to the world ; and of all smooth and soothing ways of stating the great truths of Christianity. Whatever your conscience declares should be broken off, given up, or attended to ; obey its dictates promptly and implicitly. And in this way, no doubt, you will be led forward to establishment in the faith and hope of the gospel.

If any have had impressions, that have subsided, without producing a real change, they must begin all over again ; and, here no particular directions seem needful, except not to yield to the discouraging thought, that it is now too late. Still, still it is said, “ To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” “ Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation.” And still CHRIST says, “ Him that cometh unto me, I will *in no wise* cast out.”

But, above all, beware of further procrastination. None can say, “ what shall be on the morrow.” “ The Master of the house may have risen up and “ shut the door ;” and then it will be in vain to “ stand without, and to say, LORD, open to us,” as it was for the inhabitants of the old world, to seek admission into the long-despised Ark of Noah, when the days of the LORD’S long-suffering were ended. Nay, it is impossible to say, whether, even if life be prolonged, GOD may not be provoked to give you up to final obduracy, and to “ swear in his wrath, that “ you shall not enter into his rest.”—In any view of the subject, if not now truly penitent, and seeking diligently salvation through CHRIST our LORD ; you have reason to fear, lest he should at last address you

with these tremendous words: “ Because I called,
 “ and ye refused, I stretched out my hand, and no
 “ man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my
 “ counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also
 “ will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when
 “ your fear cometh.—When your fear cometh as deso-
 “ lation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind;
 “ when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then
 “ shall they call upon me, but I will not answer;
 “ they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.”
 —“ Then will I profess unto them, I never knew
 “ you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Oh! my fellow-sinners, such of you as have been favoured with manifold advantages, and have at times seemed disposed to profit by them; if you should at last die in your sins, what an account will you have to give! What a meeting will you have, even with those who have spoken to you the word of GOD, and watched for your souls; who have faithfully and affectionately warned you, and earnestly persuaded you, by the love of CHRIST, and by the terror of the LORD, “ not to refuse him that speaketh,” not “ to neglect so great salvation!” “ It would have been better for you not to have known the way of righteousness, than to turn at last from the holy commandment delivered unto you.”

Again let me intreat you, to reverence your consciences; and venture not to go on in any thing concerning which your own heart condemns you; for “ GOD is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”—“ Submit yourselves therefore to GOD. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw

“ nigh to **GOD**, and he will draw nigh unto you.
“ Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your
“ hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn,
“ and weep : let your laughter be turned into mourn-
“ ing, and your joy into heaviness. Humble your-
“ selves in the sight of **GOD**, and he shall lift you up.”
Then will the gracious Saviour say of you, to his
friends and servants, “ Rejoice with me ; for I have
“ found my sheep, which was lost :” and you also
shall, ere long, share the joy.

Let me then conclude by again reminding you of
the words of **CHRIST**, “ Him that cometh unto me,
“ I will in no wise cast out.” Imitate him, who of
old cried with tears “ **LORD**, I believe, help thou
“ mine unbelief;” and your sorrow shall in due time
be turned into joy. And may **GOD**, of his infinite
mercy, grant that all present may be found among
those, over whom **Christians** and **Ministers** rejoice ;
over whom **CHRIST** rejoices ; and who shall rejoice
with him, and in his love and presence, to all eter-
nity ! Amen.

SERMON IX.



LUKE, XI. 13.

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

IN the former part of this chapter, our blessed Saviour teaches his disciples to pray; and encourages them, in the most affecting manner, to earnestness and importunity in prayer. With what energy do the illustrations, used on the occasion, address the feelings of our hearts! “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish, give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?”

And while every one, who heard him, must find his heart revolt against a conduct so contrary to parental affection, he added the words of our text: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good

“ gifts unto your children, how much more shall
 “ your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them
 “ that ask him ?” It is not said, to his children, but
 “ to them that ask him ;” that the asking itself might
 be a ground of encouragement to every supplicant.
 In a parallel passage the concluding words are, “ How
 “ much more shall your Father, which is in heaven,
 “ give *good things* to them that ask him ?”* But here
 the Holy Spirit is promised, as the best gift of God
 to those that are favoured with the gospel, and indeed,
 as comprehending all things which are truly and es-
 sentially good for them.

“ GOD made man in his own image, after his own
 “ likeness.” He had before pronounced each part
 of the creation *good*; but when man had been formed,
 and placed in dominion over the other creatures, he
 pronounced the whole to be *very good*. Yet here
 our LORD, addressing his own disciples, speaks of
 them, and of men in general, as evil: “ if then ye
 “ *being evil, &c.*” We are informed in the third of
 Genesis, how “ by one man sin entered into the
 “ world, and death by sin. Thus man became as
 “ clay marred in the hand of the potter :” and soon
 after we read, that “ GOD saw the wickedness of
 “ man was great in the earth; and that every imagi-
 “ nation of the thoughts of his heart was only evil:
 “ continually. And it repented the LORD that he
 “ had made man on the earth; and it grieved him at
 “ his heart.”—“ God looked upon the earth, and
 “ behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted

* Matt. vii. 11.

“his way upon the earth.”* Accordingly he destroyed the whole depraved race, except righteous Noah and his family : yet directly after the deluge, he testified that “the imagination of man’s heart is “evil from his youth.” Undoubtedly then some vast change had taken place in the human character, since the time when “GOD created man in his own “image,” and pronounced him “very good.”

This change, this fallen state of human nature ; this depravity, called in Scripture “death in trespasses and sins,” made way for “the glorious “gospel of GOD our Saviour,” which was predicted in emphatical but obscure language immediately after the fall. For it pleased GOD to take occasion from man’s apostacy, to glorify the riches of his mercy and grace, in harmony with his justice, holiness, and truth, in saving us poor miserable sinners.—Now the promise of the REDEEMER (GOD manifest in the flesh), through whose person, righteousness, atonement, and mediation ; redemption was made and salvation proclaimed, is the grand promise of the Old Testament. “The testimony of JESUS is the Spirit of “prophecy.” In like manner, the atonement being made, the everlasting righteousness brought in, the Redeemer glorified, the way into the holiest manifested, and the gospel published ; the promise of the Holy Spirit may justly be considered as the grand and peculiar promise of the New Testament : for, in fact, what else is wanting to complete our recovery to

* Gen. vi. 5—12.

GOD and holiness?—Thus, in our admirable litany, we have this morning been praying to the divine Saviour, ‘ By the mystery of thy Holy incarnation ; by thy holy nativity and circumcision ; by thy baptism, fasting, and temptation ; by thine agony and bloody sweat ; by thy cross and passion ; by thy precious death and burial ; by thy glorious resurrection and ascension ; and by *the coming of the Holy Ghost* ; Good LORD deliver us.’

I have lately called your attention, my brethren, to the scriptural doctrine of “ repentance unto life ;” to the evil and desert of sin, as committed against GOD ; in order to evince that all men need to repent ; and to the love of CHRIST towards all who do repent : so that the promise of the Holy Spirit, the Author and Giver of life, by whose influences alone either repentance, faith, or any other spiritual grace can be produced in our hearts, and practised in our lives, seems a proper close to the general subject. “ Do not err, my beloved brethren, every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” And, “ if ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children ; how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?”

I. I purpose then to make some introductory remarks on the subject.

II. I shall endeavour to shew what is implied in this encouraging promise ;

III. Shew, in several particulars, how it suits our present condition, and the state of things in this evil world, and,

IV. Make some application of the subject.

I. I shall make some introductory remarks on the subject.

The Holy Spirit is in Scripture spoken of in language appropriate to a personal agent. He is represented as *choosing, willing, commanding,* and “*giving*” “to every man, severally as he will:” and therefore it has in every age been customary to speak of him as a *Person*. The divine perfections and operations are also expressly ascribed to him: he is spoken of as omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent; Christians are temples of GOD, because the Spirit of GOD dwelleth in them; and in various ways, the incommunicable attributes of Deity are ascribed to him. Now there can be but one GOD; and if three distinct personal agents, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are constantly mentioned, in language which implies divine perfections; then, for want of some more adequate words, of which, in our present state, we are devoid; we say that there are three Persons in the unity of the Godhead. We cannot better express ourselves, though we do not comprehend the full import of our own words; and none, in any age of Christianity, have objected to these expressions, but they who have at length manifested an aversion to the mysterious doctrine taught by them, and to the other grand peculiarities of the sacred Scriptures.

This one God in three Persons, is the Object of the Christian’s adoration: into this one “name of the “Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,” we are all baptized: and the mystery which we cannot explain

or comprehend, is yet kept in view, whenever we really exercise faith in the mercy of the Father, the redemption and mediation of the Son, or the grace of the Holy Spirit.—“ The Father loved the world; and “ sent his only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” The ascended Saviour sends the Holy Spirit, to communicate by his powerful agency, that redemption which he purchased on the cross. Thus ‘ the ‘ Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son:’ as St. John in vision saw “ a pure River of water “ of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne “ of God, and of the Lamb.”*

The gift of the Holy Spirit, as stated in Scripture, is twofold: his immediate inspiration made men prophets; his regenerating and sanctifying influences, make men *saints* or holy persons.—These are perfectly distinct endowments. The most of those who have been, and are, made holy persons, have had no prophetic or miraculous gifts bestowed on them: nor can any sober man suppose, that every one, who would pray for the Holy Spirit, should be made a prophet, or enabled to work miracles. On the other hand, some prophets were not saints: they received the Spirit of prophecy, for the use of others, but not that of sanctification to the saving of their own souls.† We therefore entirely disclaim all pretensions to the Holy Spirit, in respect of his miraculous and prophetic gifts: we neither expect, nor teach others to expect,

* Rev. xiii. 1.

† Matt. vii. 21, 22.

any such thing. In this sense the Holy Spirit is not now given, or promised: and if any persons inadvertently use language capable of being understood as a claim of this kind, we would enter a protest against it, as inaccurate, and of bad tendency, however well meant.

We do not expect that the Holy Spirit will be given in answer to our prayers, to inform us immediately, as by a whisper, when either awake or asleep, that we are the children of GOD; or to lead us to this conclusion, by any impression or new revelation; or in any other way, than by enabling us to exercise repentance, and faith, and love to GOD and our neighbour. Here again, we allow, that enthusiasm has often found admission, and has done great mischief.

GOD inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: and, while we would teach you to depend on the same Spirit, to guide you into the true meaning of the Scriptures; we would by no means allow, that he ever reveals any thing contrary to the written word, or more than is contained in it, or through any other medium. Now, should any impression be made on the mind of a covetous man, an adulterer, or any other impenitent sinner, that his sins are pardoned, and that he is a child of GOD and an heir of heaven; it would contradict the Scriptures, which expressly declare, that such characters are in the road to destruction. But the Holy Spirit cannot contradict himself; and therefore such impressions must come from "Satan, transformed into an angel of light."

If any impression lead men from the Scriptures, to form some other ground of hope, or rule of conduct, than is there given; it adds to the word of GOD, and indeed contradicts it, and must therefore be a delusion.

If any one thinks he is led by the Holy Spirit immediately, and in the neglect of the means of grace; or that he has now no longer occasion, as being under a higher influence, to search the Scriptures; or that his views are not to be judged by the oracles of GOD, soberly interpreted as the standard of truth; he is evidently deluded. “To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word; it is because they have no light in them.” Even prophets and apostles searched the Scriptures extant in their days, and uniformly appealed to them; and our LORD, in promising the Holy Spirit to his disciples, “to lead them into all truth,” adds, “He shall bring to your remembrance whatever I have spoken unto you.”*

The Holy Spirit is not promised to render us infallible: and they who, professing a great dependence on his influence, refuse to preach or pray, except as moved by the Spirit, (probably without being aware of it,) advance a claim to infallibility, whenever they thus speak, either to GOD or to man. Whatever is uttered at those times, is actually made the dictates and words of the Holy Spirit, and put upon an equality with the

* John xiv. 26.

language of Scripture! but surely it is more becoming for us to do our best, as opportunities offer, and to ascribe all that is true or good to the Holy Spirit, taking the blame of all that is erroneous or defective upon ourselves! All such claims, however, as imply exemption from mistake or sin, we utterly disallow, as arrogant and enthusiastick; and only desire to have our principles and actions candidly judged of by the Holy Scriptures.

We observe also, that we are incapable of distinguishing the influences of the Holy Spirit, from the exercises of our own faculties, except as every thing holy is considered as coming from his agency, every thing unholy from our evil nature. In fact, there is no actual and entire distinction; except when he acts as a Spirit of prophecy. For, all we are taught to expect is this, that he will dispose and enable us to exercise the understanding and faculties, which God hath given us, in a holy and wise manner. He who is left to himself, or under the influence of that "spirit, which worketh in the children of disobedience," acts freely and without compulsion; his faculties being distempered by sinful passions, as the eye or the ear by disease. And he who is brought under the influence of the Holy Spirit, experiences no compulsion or violence; but the mind, being delivered from the effect of delusion and sinful passions, perceives things in a new light, and most willingly makes a new and holy choice. "I know," says the apostle, "that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."* If then,

* Rom. vii. 18.

humbly examining ourselves by the sacred word, we become conscious of desires and affections, and perform actions, in which there is something truly good; we may conclude that this is effected “by the Spirit which dwelleth in us.” And we may also learn to depend on the promise of the text, in whatever we attempt in obedience to the call of the gospel.

Again, we must not suppose that the Holy Spirit is promised or given, in order that we may do any thing which was not before our duty. We ought always to have loved God with our whole heart, and our neighbour as ourselves; having sinned, we ought to repent; and being favoured with the gospel, we ought to believe, to pray, to submit to God, to return to him, and to walk in all his ordinances and commandments. But we are not of ourselves disposed or able to do this: and the Holy Spirit is promised to “work in us to will and to do” according to these our obligations. So that the dispositions and actions, which are really good in the sight of God, are not called in Scripture moral virtues, but “the fruits of the Spirit.”

If these things be kept in mind, most of the objections, often made to our doctrine in this particular, fall to the ground, and are evidently opposed to opinions which we totally disallow and protest against.

II. Proceed more directly to shew what is implied in the promise before us.

Man, created in the divine image, was alive to God and holiness: but, as his natural life was necessarily

dependent on the providential support of his Creator; so his spiritual life was preserved by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. In the day that he ate of the forbidden fruit, he died; the Holy Spirit quitted his polluted temple, and man became dead in trespasses and sins.

By the fall, he did not lose his rational capacities: though they were no doubt greatly impaired, and rendered far less capable than before of governing his animal propensities: but he lost his spiritual life, his capacity of taking delight in God and heavenly things; and consequently he became an apostate and an idolater, seeking satisfaction in the enjoyment of worldly objects.

This is universally the condition of man, as unregenerate: so that the greatest philosopher is as entire a stranger to the delight, which an angel enjoys in loving and adoring God, as the mere animal is to that pleasure, which the philosopher experiences, whilst successfully investigating the objects of nature.

It is then, the first part of the gracious office performed by the Holy Spirit, to "quicken the dead in sin," to raise fallen man 'from the death of sin to a life of righteousness;' and to restore him to the capacity of loving and delighting in God and his worship and service. And on this account the Holy Spirit, in the Nicene creed, is called, 'The Author and Giver of life.' "Ye must be born again." "Except a man be born again, of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see," "he cannot enter into, the kingdom of God." For the baptism of water is no

more, than ‘an outward and visible sign of an inward
 ‘and spiritual grace;’ and that ‘inward and spiritual
 ‘grace is a death unto sin, and a new birth unto
 ‘righteousness: for, being by nature born in sin, and
 ‘the children of wrath, we are hereby’ (by the new
 birth unto righteousness) ‘made the children of grace.’
 And, to ascribe this change of our condition to the
 outward sign, preserves indeed the form of godliness,
 but denies the power of it. If then we, though natives
 of a christian country, are ‘born in sin and the chil-
 ‘dren of wrath;’ as we are expressly taught by our
 Church-Catechism; we must as much need the quick-
 ening influences of the Holy Spirit, as they did to
 whom CHRIST and his apostles first preached the
 Gospel.

The same divine Agent is spoken of in Scripture
 as the Spirit of truth and wisdom, as the Author and
 Giver of all spiritual knowledge, and as illuminating
 the mind with the light of divine truth. “I will pray
 “the Father, and he shall give you another Comfort-
 “er, that he may abide with you for ever, even the
 “Spirit of truth.” “He shall teach you all things, and
 “bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I
 “said unto you.” “He will guide you into all truth.”*
 Thus St. Paul prays in his epistle to the Ephesians,
 that “the GOD and Father of our LORD JESUS
 “CHRIST, the Father of Glory, may give unto you
 “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the know-

* John xiv. 16—26.

ledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling," &c. He certainly did not mean to pray, that the Spirit of prophecy should be given to them all; but that they might all be enabled by the divine illumination of the Spirit, to understand aright the revelation given them in the Old Testament, and by the preaching of the apostles.

In like manner, our church teaches us to pray not only that the LORD would 'please to illuminate all bishops, priests, and deacons, with the true knowledge and understanding of his holy word;' but that 'he would grant us, by the same Spirit' which was poured out on the apostles, 'to have a right judgment in all things.' And it is remarkable that in the short collects, for the king and royal family and clergy, similar petitions are inserted; 'Replenish him with the grace of thy Holy Spirit.' 'Endue them with thy Holy Spirit;' 'Send down on them the healthful Spirit of thy grace.'

And indeed, if notwithstanding external advantages, "we be by nature the children of wrath even as others." If "our understanding be darkened, being alienated from the life of GOD, through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts;" it is certain that we need this inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, even as much as they did to whom the gospel was first preached; not to reveal new doctrines, but to free our minds from the effects of our various prejudices and corrupt passions, that

we may discern spiritual things, and understand the nature and glory of revealed truth.

“When He,” says our LORD of the promised Comforter, “is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” (John xvi. 8.) These are part of the effects which follow from his divine illumination. When freed from the power of our proud and carnal prejudices, we are led to scriptural views of the perfections, law, and government of GOD, and our relations and obligations to him; we begin to form a right judgment of ourselves, our past conduct, and the present disposition of our hearts. This produces a conviction of our sinful state and character, an enquiry after the way in which man may be justified before GOD, and a serious expectation of the future judgment. And when this conviction is rendered deep and permanent, it prepares the soul for understanding and welcoming the revelation of the gospel, “submitting to the righteousness of GOD,” and “counting all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST” and his salvation. Nay, the want of this conviction is the grand reason why the peculiar doctrines of christianity are so much neglected, despised, or perverted, by men called Christians. If then, the Holy Spirit be given us for this purpose, we shall soon feel and act as they did, at the day of Pentecost, who hearing St. Peter’s discourse, “were pricked in their heart and said,—Men and brethren what shall we do?” And when further instructed in the gospel, “they gladly received the

“ word, and were baptized; and the same day there
 “ were added to them about three thousand souls.”*

Thus our LORD adds, “ He, the Spirit of truth,
 “ shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and
 “ shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father
 “ hath are mine; therefore said I, he shall take of
 “ mine and shall shew it unto you.”† Hence we learn,
 that it is one grand part of the office performed by the
 Holy Spirit, to give us high and honourable apprehensions
 of CHRIST; to render him glorious in our eyes and precious
 to our hearts; to endear to us his person, his love, his
 salvation; to excite in us fervent desires after the
 blessings which he bestows, and to fill us with admiring
 adoring love and gratitude to him.—Now can it be
 questioned whether these views and affections are as
 necessary for us, as for the primitive Christians? And
 are not men’s low thoughts of this glorious Saviour,
 and their scanty expectations from him, and the disrepute
 into which warm affections towards him are fallen,
 evident effects of the neglect, nay, contempt, with
 which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is generally
 treated?

“ I will,” saith the LORD by his prophet, “ pour
 “ upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Je-
 “ rusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication, and
 “ they shall look upon me whom they have pierced
 “ and mourn.”‡ Hence we learn that true repentance,
 faith in a crucified Saviour, and a heart prepared for
 fervent prayer, are the effects of the Spirit being poured

* Acts ii.

† John xvi. 14, 15.

‡ Zech. xii. 10.

out upon any people; and surely it is as necessary that we should mourn over our sins and be humbled for them, and by faith look unto CHRIST, and lift up our hearts in prayer; as it was that the Jews of old should. Indeed the expression "praying by the Spirit," or "praying in the Holy Ghost," is commonly used in the New Testament, however at present, not unfrequently treated with profane ridicule. It certainly does not mean praying *extempore*, (as some imagine;) for men may learn to pray in this manner, without the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; and he very often enables those who use a form to lift up their hearts with fervency unto GOD. In short, whatever words be used, we never pray spiritually, except as the Holy Spirit enables us truly to desire the blessings we implore, and so to exercise faith in the promises of GOD through JESUS CHRIST, as to expect that our prayers will be answered. And when these desires become fervent, and these expectations very lively, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and we pray with groanings which cannot be uttered." Our longings and hopes are greater than any words can express; while the language of the formalist vastly exceeds his real meaning.

"Now the GOD of hope fill you with all peace and joy in believing, that ye may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost."* And "now *abideth*, faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love."† If then these graces are to *abide* in the

* Rom. xv. 13.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

church, when miraculous gifts ceased; surely we need the Holy Spirit to create and preserve them in our hearts, at least as much as the apostles and primitive Christians did. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” His “fruit is in all goodness, and righteousness and truth.” “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.” “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren,” &c. “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”—What are we to understand by this language? Is it all little, or nothing, to us? Is it not necessary, that we should love God and one another? Are meekness and temperance no longer requisite? Or are our natures so much better than those of the primitive Christians, that we are of ourselves inclined and able to perform those things, which they even in an age of miracles could not attain to, except by the Holy Spirit? Let the character of modern Christians at large, compared with that of the ancient church, supply an answer to these questions.

In a word, “If any man have not the Spirit of CHRIST, he is none of his.”* All true believers are “led by the Spirit;” “live in the Spirit;” walk “in the Spirit;” and are “an habitation of God through the Spirit.” “What, know ye not, that ye are the temple of God; and that the Spirit of God

* Rom. viii. 9.

“ dwelleth in you?” Certainly then you are very ignorant of real christianity, and strangers to the distinguishing experience of true Christians.

All genuine consolation likewise is conferred by the Holy Spirit, who is emphatically called “ the Comforter.” As a Spirit of adoption, he “ witnesses “ with our spirits, that we are the children of GOD,” not by any immediate revelation, but by forming our hearts to all holy and filial affections towards GOD, and bringing reverence, confidence, love, gratitude, and zeal for his honour, into lively exercise. And in this view “ the love of the Spirit,” in not only renewing our depraved nature, but coming to dwell in us as a Comforter, and a Spirit of adoption, and as the Seal, Earnest, and First Fruits of our eternal inheritance, demands our highest admiration and most lively gratitude. “ Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of “ uprightness!”*

Whatever “ strength in our souls” we need, in order to “ all long-suffering with joyfulness;” to resist temptation, to overcome the world, and to meet death with cheerful hope, is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Nay, we have ground to think, that the felicity of heaven will not arise independently from external situation, or the state of our minds; but also from the immediate influences of this Holy Comforter. For our LORD, evidently speaking of the Holy Spirit, says, “ The water that I shall give him, shall be in “ him a well of water, springing up into everlasting “ life.”

* Psalm cxliiii. 10.

With these things in our view, let us return to the promise of the text. “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” GOD is far more ready to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him; than any parent is to give bread to a starving supplicating child! as much more ready, as his goodness transcends that of fallen man! as his riches exceed our poverty! Surely human language is incapable of expressing any thing more forcibly. Parents may be destitute of natural affection; paternal kindness may be wearied out by repeated provocations; and often a father must greatly deny himself, while he supplies the wants of his children: yet so strong are the feelings of a parent, that depraved as men are, few can bear to see their children in distress, without relieving them: “How much then more will your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him!” Our LORD illustrates his meaning in this promise, by his address to the woman of Samaria, at that time an immoral character: “If thou hadst known the gift of GOD, and who it is that said unto thee, give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked, and he would have given thee living water.” Had she *asked* he would have *given*; and when she was further instructed, no doubt she asked and received.—His words in another place further explain his meaning; as well as prove, when compared with the text, that “He and the Father are one.” “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, Out of his belly

“ shall flow rivers of living water. But this he spake
“ of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should
“ receive.” And again he saith, “ Let him that is
“ athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of
“ the water of life freely.”—“ How long, ye simple
“ ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in
“ their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn
“ you at my reproof; I will pour out my Spirit unto
“ you.”

This then is the promise, and these are the persons, who are instructed and invited to come and ask that they may have it fulfilled unto them. And what could the largest promises, which the greatest of men could make you, (even if to be depended on,) avail you, compared with this “ exceeding great and precious “ promise” of “ God our Saviour?”

Conceive of a man most guilty, most depraved, most enslaved to bad habits, sunk in the grossest ignorance, or entangled in the most dangerous delusions, and under the greatest terrors and sufferings: yet suppose him to hear, and lay hold of, and plead, this promise, as one in earnest, and ready to follow the dictates of his conscience, as far as convinced, and, according to the evident doctrine of Scripture, which has been set before you; he would certainly be brought to repentance, to the knowledge of CHRIST and faith in him; to hope, rejoice, love, obey, and worship in spirit and truth; and at length to join the worshippers before the throne of God, in their exalted adorations, and ineffable felicity!

II. Then let us consider the suitability of this promise to our condition, and the state of things in this evil world.

Considered without the gospel, in what a deplorable condition are all mankind! We scarcely need look into the Bible to ascertain this, if we attend properly to what passes around and within us. What a strange aversion do we see in others, and feel in ourselves, to the worship and service of GOD, which, it is highly reasonable to conclude, constitute the felicity of heaven!—How constantly, and almost universally, has the grossest idolatry, the most absurd superstition, or the wildest enthusiasm, obtained the preference to the holy character, worship, commandments, and doctrines of the one living and true GOD! How generally has irreligion, or antisciptural religion, prevailed on earth! How powerful the propensity in mankind to idolize the world and the things of the world; and to forget and neglect the GOD of heaven! “The carnal mind is enmity against GOD; for it is not subject to the law of GOD, nor indeed can be.” Who can help seeing, yea, *feeling*, that this is man’s real character?

It is equally evident he is proud of his reasoning faculties, and of all the gifts which GOD hath bestowed on him; of his imagined virtues, nay, of his evident vices, and of such things as should cover him with shame. He is manifestly self-willed and self-sufficient, unwilling to be taught or governed by his Creator. He is averse to submission and dependence, and backward

to gratitude and adoration. In short, *ungodliness* is his undeniable character.

He is also most evidently selfish: and this either leads him to avarice, ambition, or inordinate animal indulgence, so that “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,” the objects we all expressly renounce in baptism, are so universally and idolatrously coveted and pursued, even by nominal Christians, that an unconcerned spectator must suppose they had, by a solemn vow, devoted themselves to them!

The frauds, oppressions, cruelties, licentiousness, and bloody wars, which have, in every age and nation, plagued and desolated the earth, are such enormous and horrid evils; that, if not accustomed to the scene around us, and so, less susceptible of the impressions it would otherwise make, we should be ready to suppose that the actors in the dreadful tragedy were broken loose from the infernal regions! Human beings, in immense multitudes, deliberately preparing to meet, and actually meeting, on purpose to destroy each other, by tens of thousands! Others, growing rich, and rioting in luxury, by trafficking in the groans and blood of their brethren! Others indulging their animal inclinations, not only by sacrificing the peace, comfort, lives, and souls of their fellow-creatures, but even their own also; though far from being insensible of the consequences of their licentiousness!

But does happiness consist in loving God, and en-

joying his favour, and in loving one another and rejoicing in the felicity of all around us? What then is the state of the world? Can the pursuits and dispositions, here described, be conducive to happiness? Can malice, envy, or any corrupt passion? What must be man's prospect after death, if he retain his present evil propensities? What can even the gospel do for him, if his nature be not changed? To render men happy, and blessings to each other, they must be made holy. The need of an atonement and a Redeemer, is not greater and more urgent, than that of a Sanctifier; one who can renovate depraved nature, restore and perfect spiritual life, and prepare fallen man for a holy felicity. In this light, brethren, contemplate the promise before us; and ask yourselves if it be not exactly answerable to our condition and our wants?

Again, various plans have been formed, from age to age, in order to meliorate the state of society, and bring nations to amity and friendship; and some of these plans have done a measure of good, though vastly inadequate to the expectations previously conceived: but others have exceedingly enhanced the mischief they were intended to counteract. None, however, have yet been devised, which could effect the purpose, or reach the sources of the evil. None of them can bring men to love GOD supremely, and to love their neighbours as themselves: nor will any effectual remedy be found, "until the Spirit shall be poured upon us from on high." This, and only this, will reduce the world to order, to peace, love, and happiness.

In the gospel of CHRIST "all things are ready" for the sinner's reconciliation to GOD, and for his complete salvation. The feast is prepared, and we are sent to invite the guests; the provision is most rich and abundant; the invitations most urgent, and again and again renewed: "But all with one consent begin to make excuse:" One must go to his farm, his oxen, his commerce, or estate; another to his pleasures and gratifications; another is so eager in pursuing and courting the praise of men, or the honour of high stations and connexions, that he cannot find time to seek "glory, and honour, and immortality" from GOD.—"LORD, who hath received our report?" This has been the complaint and the distressing enquiry, of the ministers of GOD, in every age; and may peculiarly be so at present. "A price is put into men's hands to get wisdom; but, alas! they have no heart to it!"

Now what is the adequate remedy for this deplorable moral disease? the restorative from this death in sin, this love of the world, which is alienation from GOD? We answer, the life-giving regenerating Spirit of GOD, who is promised to all that ask the Father to bestow upon them this inestimable benefit.

As the ministers of GOD, we exhort and command you in his name, to repent, to forsake sin, to renounce your worldly idols, to break off your evil habits, to separate from ungodly company, to believe in CHRIST, to join yourselves to the LORD, and to walk in newness of life. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the un-

“righteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy on him.” But you find a strong, and what some of you perhaps think an insuperable, reluctancy to all these particulars.—Now, you evidently want both will and power to do that, which yet your own consciences often suggest to you ought to be done. How exactly suited then is the promise of the text to your case! It is by the Holy Spirit that “GOD works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure,” and, depending on his powerful aid, we call on you to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” You can do nothing effectual of yourselves, but you may “do all things through CHRIST thus strengthening you.”

You often find much difficulty and perplexity respecting several doctrines of Christianity, and the controversies which are carried on about them; and you are ready, if seriously enquiring after truth, to wish for an infallible guide. Behold then the Guide you wish for! even the Spirit of truth, whose office it is to guide you into all truth! And will our heavenly Father indeed give this Holy Spirit of truth and wisdom to any, to every one, that asks him? And is not this the very thing you want, that you may understand the truth as it is revealed in Scripture, and be preserved from every delusion?

Even they, who by the grace of GOD, have surmounted these first hindrances, and are seriously endeavouring to walk with GOD, through CHRIST JESUS, in all his holy ways, find great weakness and im-

perfection in their endeavours: sin yet dwells within them; darkness and uncertainty oppress them; they are liable to many discouragements, and harassed by many temptations; in short they feel, painfully feel, their need of more complete sanctification, of clearer views, and a more established judgment; of greater strength against temptation, and of consolation under trials; indeed of every thing for which the Holy Spirit is here promised.

Now, if this be the case with you, I need not endeavour to *prove*, but only to *remind* you, that the promise is exactly what you want; and in proportion, as you experience its accomplishment, your light, and strength, and holiness, and joy will be augmented; you will be endued with wisdom, walk at liberty, obtain victories, abound in hope, and anticipate the felicity of heaven.

And now, in attempting a short application of this important subject, I would observe, that while a man continues hardened in pride, or disposed to scoff at these subjects, or to revile those who speak upon them; it cannot be expected he will pray for the Holy Spirit. Yet we must not limit the exhortations and invitations of the Gospel. We therefore call even on such characters as these, in the words of Wisdom, or of CHRIST, “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love
“simplicity, and scorners delight in your scorning,
“and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof.
“I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make
“known my words unto you.” But take heed that
“you refuse not him that speaketh,” lest he should

be at length provoked to add; "Because I called and ye refused; therefore ye shall eat of the fruit of your own ways, and be filled with your own devices."

Our business, however, my brethren, is to pray for you: and we call on you all to pray for yourselves, for each other, for the unconverted part of the congregation; for your children, servants, relations and neighbours, that "the Spirit of life in CHRIST JESUS may make you free from the power of sin and death."

But suppose a person convinced, that he must be renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit, though not conscious that any change has been begun: for a man's understanding may be convinced by argument, that "without holiness no man shall see the LORD," or enjoy a holy heaven, though he be still entirely destitute of holiness. He may see the doctrine exemplified in some neighbour, friend, or relative; and admire, though he dislikes, the change. And he may also have uneasy apprehensions, that without a similar change he cannot be happy. Let then, I say, such an one not give way to temptation, not indulge prejudice, not smother his convictions, not quench the Spirit who is striving with him by these means: but let him without delay lift up his heart to GOD, and plead the promise of the text: let him go home, retire to his closet, fall low on his knees, and earnestly and importunately renew the same request; beseeching GOD to give him his Holy Spirit, that he may be made wise, holy, and happy, by his new creating grace. Let him persevere in this course, and he will find his mind open, his heart soften, and his dislike to spiritual employments give

place to pleasure and satisfaction in them: for his nature being changed, he will then enjoy that element in which he could not live before.

We cannot go too low, in thus bringing the subject home to the hearts and consciences of sinners. From the first rising desire of knowing the way of salvation, and obtaining the favour of GOD, through all subsequent difficulties, perplexities, and trials; this promise should be depended on, and pleaded in earnest prayer: and we may without hesitation assure you, that thus you will find light and comfort, and relief, in every possible case. “If any man will do the will of GOD, “he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of GOD, “or whether men speak of themselves.” If, therefore, you desire to know and do the will of GOD, but are perplexed by the discordant opinions of those you converse with: practise what you now consider as your duty, and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you “in the midst of the paths of judgment;” and you shall not pray in vain.

Perhaps some of you are convinced, that certain parts of your conduct should be altered; this or the other interest or indulgence given up, or self-denial exercised: but your passions are strong, and habits are not easily conquered; you form resolutions and break them; and at length you are ready to think “repentance, and works meet for repentance,” in your peculiar circumstances, at present impracticable. This, I apprehend, is no uncommon case; and many neglect religion on this ground, waiting perhaps for a more favourable opportunity, or thinking the difficulties in

the way will excuse their conscious and persevering disobedience. But my fellow sinners, instead of thus "giving place to the devil," you should, without delay, avail yourself of that effectual assistance, which is proposed in the words before us; and while you pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit to be given you, and then attempt to follow the dictates of your consciences; though you must still feel how strong your sinful passions and temptations are, how weak your resolutions, how deceitful your hearts, and how painful and difficult it is, at first especially, to deny yourself, to cut off the right hand, to crucify the flesh, and to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well; you will also find that it is practicable by divine grace. "With man it is impossible; but with GOD all things are possible."

If then in general, you are convinced that repentance, faith in the Son of GOD, a new heart and newness of life, are essential to salvation, you must rely upon the Holy Spirit, to enable you to attain unto them. If you are called to resist any particular temptation, you must act in the same dependence. If you would attend on the ordinances of GOD with profit and comfort, and rise superior to the coldness and formality of which we all have too much reason to complain, you must beg of your heavenly Father, for the sake of his beloved Son, to bestow upon you the Holy Spirit of love, and zeal, and gratitude: and if you find difficulty in thus praying, your only effectual way will be to beg of him to teach and enable you to pray as you ought, by the Spirit of grace and supplication helping your infirmities.

Are you disconsolate, either through inward distress or outward trials? Remember the words of the apostle, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be ye filled with the Spirit." Seek not exhilaration and relief from care and sorrow, by such means as must increase the cause, while they afford a momentary suspension to the effects; but earnestly beseech the God of all grace, to give unto you "the Holy Spirit, the Comforter," that you may have "peace and joy in believing, and abound in hope" by his powerful consolations. In the same manner seek fortitude in dangers, assistance in duties, and the assurance and earnest of heaven during life, and at the approach of death.

Whatever be your station in the community, or in the church, as magistrates, senators, ministers of state, or ministers of religion: you ought to seek wisdom and grace to fill up the duties incumbent upon you, to the glory of God and the benefit of mankind, from the same Author and Giver of all good gifts. Whatever be the talents entrusted to your stewardship, you cannot expect to hear with comfort the solemn call, "Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest no longer be steward;" unless you improve them in dependence on the Holy Spirit, and continually pray for his teaching and assistance.

The same is the case with you, my brethren, who occupy the more lowly stations in life. You cannot be "patient in tribulation, joyful in hope;" "contented with such things as you have," thankful for the past, simply dependent for the future, superior to

murmurings, envyings, and covetings; unless the Holy Spirit form your mind and heart to a heavenly taste and judgment, and communicate to you his holy consolations. You cannot properly attend to your relative duties, as parents or children, wives or husbands, masters or servants; or go on cheerfully in the laborious occupations to which you are called; or bear injuries and contempt with meekness and gentleness, except under his influence.

And can we, my brethren, wonder, that there is so little christianity among men called Christians; that the church is so lamentably divided and corrupted; that so small a measure of love, peace, purity, and joy, appear even where, we cannot but hope, there is some vital piety, when we consider how generally this promise is either entirely, or in a great degree, overlooked; and how often the doctrine of the Spirit is even treated with profane ridicule? If all divine life, wisdom, holiness, and joy, come from this source; and men neglect, and quench, and grieve, and resist the Holy Spirit, in whose name they were baptized; can we be surprised that they continue dead in sin, and blinded by the god of this world, and that they rise no higher than mere formality?

Many of you might truly say, 'We have heard many sermons, and hold certain doctrines as evangelical; yet we are conscious that we do not live, as we shall wish we had done, when we come to die.' But in hearing sermons and attending to the external parts of religion, have you been used to pray to our heavenly Father to bestow on you the Holy Spirit of

truth, and wisdom, and power? If not, you know the reason why you have received no real benefit. The seed of the word of God has been sown “by the way-
“side, and the devil has taken it out of your hearts,
“lest you should believe and be saved;” or it has fallen on stony ground, where it could find no root; and so has soon withered; or among “thorns, which have
“sprung up and choked it.” Oh! that you would now begin earnestly to plead the promise given by the prophet, “A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit
“will I put within you; and I will take away the stony
“heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an
“heart of flesh; 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.”* Then you would find, that the seed falling on good ground,
“that receiving the word in an honest and good heart,” you would “keep it and bring forth fruit with pa-
“tience.” “Ask and it shall be given you; seek and
“you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto
“you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that
“seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be
“opened.”

To you who really desire to find and walk in the ways of peace and holiness; it is enough to say, you have an infallible Teacher, an almighty Helper, and an all sufficient Comforter. More than this cannot be expressed in human language, “Happy art thou, O

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

“ Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by
“ the LORD? the Shield of thy help, and the Sword
“ of thine excellency.” “ The eternal GOD is thy
“ Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”
And the blessings he hath bestowed “ shall be in thee
“ a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”
Begin, therefore, and go through, every undertaking
in this confidence and dependence; with prayer and
thanksgiving; and you will soon be made “ more than
“ conquerors, through him that loved you.”

In addressing you thus fully concerning the promise
of the Holy Spirit, I wish it always to be understood,
if not particularly mentioned, that this promise is given
and fulfilled, only through the merits and mediation of
CHRIST. But without the Spirit of CHRIST, we can
have no saving benefit from his mediation.

And now imagine to yourselves a large company,
a whole nation, a continent, all the human race, univer-
sally receiving the gospel under the teaching and in-
fluences of the Holy Spirit; with deep repentance,
lively faith, genuine humility, fervent love, and a hea-
venly mind: would not a large proportion of the mis-
eries, which now desolate the earth, be terminated?
Would not the remaining troubles be alleviated?
Would not peace and harmony, and mutual good of-
fices of every kind, with temperance, purity, and en-
larged benevolence, effectually meliorate the state of
human society? Now from whence can that be, except
from GOD, who is Love, which, if duly attended to,
would fill the earth with holiness and happiness? Can
we shew our philanthropy more effectually, than by

promoting this genuine Christianity? And if we have little else in our power; can we do better than pray continually, “that the Spirit may be poured out upon us “from on high;” and that the gospel may be preached, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,” in every region, which is enlightened by the beams of the sun?

And now, brethren, “May the grace of our LORD “JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, “Amen.”

SERMONS

ON

FAST DAYS.

“Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the

“LORD your God?”

2 Chr. xxviii. 10.



SERMON I.*



ISAIAH V. 4.

What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked, that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

MY brethren, let none of us forget, that humiliation before **GOD** for our sins, as individuals and as a nation, constitutes the great business of this day. We should not have the least reason to doubt of the divine protection against the assaults of all our enemies; did not our manifold offences against **GOD** render us deeply deserving of his righteous indignation.—Instead, therefore, of calling your attention to party-questions, which generally lead men to “fast for strife and debate,” I would attempt to assist your meditations on such subjects, as are connected with the great design of our assembling at this time.

* Preached on the fast day, April 19, 1793, at the Lock Chapel.

The Old Testament is peculiarly useful, in teaching us the grand principles, according to which the LORD dealeth with nations, as such. Individuals will exist in another world, and “after death is the judgment:” so that no exact retribution is awarded to them in this life, for “the wicked are reserved to the day of judgment to be punished:” but collective bodies will have no future subsistence; and, therefore, a recompence is here appointed to them. To ascertain the method of Providence, in this respect, we must mark a very great difference between nations favoured with the light of revelation and the ordinances of GOD, and those that are destitute of them. “Where much is given, much will be required;” and the same degree of impiety and vice, when found in those peculiarly favoured with the means of instruction, is vastly more criminal, and tends to fill up the measure of iniquity much more rapidly, than when found in places destitute of such advantages.

In the passage of Scripture, from which the text is selected, GOD, by his prophet, in a most beautiful parable manifests his peculiar care and favour towards Israel, especially in respect of religious advantages: “He had given to them his statutes and ordinances; he had not dealt so with any nation; neither had the heathen the knowledge of his laws.” And, as the advantage of a parable principally consists in shewing, as in a mirror, the real state of the case, divested of men’s own concern in it; so the LORD appealed to “the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the men of Judah, to decide betwixt him and his vineyard, and to de-

“ termine, whether any thing could have been done in
“ it, which had not been done?” Why then did it bear
only wild or poisonous grapes, when good grapes
might have been expected from it? A similar appeal
will at length be made to every man; and though now
self-love warps the judgment, yet the LORD will at last
condemn none, who will not be constrained to con-
demn themselves, and to justify him in their condem-
nation.

Israel being thus brought in guilty, the LORD next
proceeds to denounce sentence against the nation; de-
claring that he would “ take away the hedge thereof,
“ and it should be eaten up; and break down the walls
“ thereof, and it should be trodden down; that he
“ would lay it waste; that it should not be pruned or
“ digged, but that there should come up briars and
“ thorns; and that he would also command the clouds,
“ that they should rain no rain upon it.” The sen-
tence, here pronounced, was not executed till about
two hundred years afterwards: for Hezekiah, with
Isaiah and other prophets, and afterwards Josiah and
a pious remnant, by their labours and prayers prevail-
ed, for “ the lengthening of their tranquillity;” but at
length such efforts ceased, and then the sentence came
upon the nation, by the Babylonish captivity. Yet it
was more awfully accomplished, after the coming of
CHRIST, and his crucifixion at the instance of the
Jewish rulers, priests, and people, with the subsequent
persecution of christianity: for then the nation was
cast out of the visible church, Jerusalem was given up
into the hands of the Romans, and hath ever since been
trodden under foot of the Gentiles; the Jews have been

scattered into all nations, and the LORD hath indeed “commanded the clouds to rain no rain upon them,” even to this day. Thus they are left to be reluctant preachers to the nations professing christianity, of the truth of their holy religion, and the dreadful consequences of neglecting it.

Now should it be enquired, what people is the Israel of the Christian dispensation? I could not hesitate in answering, Britain, both in respect of advantages, and a rebellious ungrateful abuse of them. This may suffice to introduce our subject, and to warrant an entire application of the passage before us to our own case.

Let us then consider,

I. The peculiar favours with which Providence has distinguished our native land.

II. The improvement which we ought to have made of them.

III. The wild grapes, which the LORD finds in this his vineyard.

IV. The consequence that may be expected, unless something effectual be done to prevent it.

V. To what we may attribute our preservation hitherto. And,

VI. What the duties are, to which we are now called, according to our different stations in the church and the community.

I. Then, We consider the peculiar favours with which Providence hath distinguished our native land.

We have long been exempted from the calamities of war, that tremendous scourge of a righteous God. Few of us know more of war than we have learned from the publick papers, or the page of history. We feel it indeed, but how? Trade suffers a temporary check, and additional taxes are demanded; a number, often of not very useful members of the community, are furnished with a perilous or fatal employment, and a few more valuable persons are exposed to the same dangers.—But we have scarcely any other idea of war, as it respects ourselves: and this has often a very bad effect on the minds of men; for they consider war no otherwise than as it effects their property, and are therefore prone to engage in it too lightly, when it yields a prospect of temporal advantage; without reflecting on its consequences on the lives and souls of their fellow-creatures, or on those regions that are exposed to its tremendous ravages.

Our situation happily renders us incapable even of conceiving those scenes, which are really exhibited on the theatre of war; the devastations of the open country, with all its productions, rendering abortive the labours, and disappointing the expectation, of the husbandman, and destroying the bounty of Providence: the burning of cities; the cries of widows and orphans; the reeking blood and mangled bodies of the slaughtered; the groans, and ghastly appearance of the wounded and dying; the penury and pining want of the survivors; the terrors of the night, and the horrors of the day, must baffle all description. So that the humane mind must weep over, not only the most splen-

did, but even the most needful victories; and war, in every case, must be regarded as the triumph or the harvest of the first great murderer, the devil. How great is our obligation then, for exemption from this dire evil, during a term of years, beyond what has been experienced by almost any other nation!

We have also been equally preserved from the dire judgments of famine, pestilence, earthquakes, and desolating hurricanes: plenty, health, and a serene and temperate climate have been vouchsafed us: a land abounding with all the blessings that we can desire, and exempted from most of the calamities to which other lands are exposed, hath fallen to our lot: and let us not so regard second causes, as to forget the first great Cause of all, who “doeth what he will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.”

We might here enlarge on the blessings of our excellent constitution and equal laws; by which the personal liberty and property of every individual are secured, if not to the greatest degree which is possible in the present state of human nature, yet, at least, beyond what hath hitherto been reduced to practice, for a length of time, in any nation of the earth. A great deal is often said of Grecian and Roman liberty: but it is well known that a very large proportion of the people, in those admired nations, were slaves, the property of their masters; and equal freedom was not possessed among them, in any measure comparable to what it is in Britain.*

* At Athens, when there were no more than twenty thousand citizens and ten thousand strangers; there were four hun-

But these are comparatively inferior considerations: our religious advantages are principally to be valued. When “the Son of God was manifested to destroy “the works of the devil,” this land was involved in the grossest idolatry, barbarity, and ignorance; yet it was not long before the Sun of Righteousness, which arose at so great a distance, visited it with his sacred beams of life and salvation. After a time, the superstitions and usurpations of the Romish church, like a dark cloud, obscured this heavenly light; but the first dawning of the blessed reformation extended its influence into this island, and our progenitors were numbered among those favoured nations which were first emancipated from that slavery, and delivered from that gross darkness that had long oppressed the ten world. Others, after an ineffectual struggle and much bloodshed, were again reduced to bondage, under the persecuting tyranny of the pontiff and his associates; this land, in the reign of bloody Mary, was in peculiar danger of falling again under the same yoke; but God preserved his light among us by removing her, and advancing Elizabeth to the throne; and, after defeating the subtle and powerful machinations of our enemies, in various instances, he at length, by a happy revolution at the close of the last century, established among us a degree of civil and religious

dred thousand slaves! (*Harwood*, p. 19.) It would be as rational to extol West-Indian liberty, as the liberty of Greece; for at Lacedemon, the number of freemen was more disproportionate and the slaves more cruelly used.

liberty, which hath rendered us the admiration or envy of all our neighbours.

Whilst, therefore, the nations, to which the gospel was first vouchsafed, are reduced to the most deplorable ignorance, this distant region is enlightened with the beams of heavenly truth. An excellent translation of the sacred Scriptures into our own language, is put into our hands, and we are allowed, invited, and encouraged to read it. Copies of the Bible are so common and cheap, that almost every person may afford to purchase one; and if any cannot, or will not, spare a penny for this purpose, blessed be God, there are persons disposed to give it to them; nay, if any know how to read the Word of Life; there are those who are ready to pay for their instruction, provided they are willing to learn. So that none can plead that they are wholly destitute of the means of being made partakers unto eternal salvation. At the dawning of the reformation, our ancestors were thankful for a few leaves of the holy Scriptures in an imperfect English translation, and read them with the greatest avidity. When Bibles were first placed in the churches, the people thronged to hear them read, with an eagerness of which we have little conception; and in some parts of Wales, at present, Bibles in the Welsh language are so scarce, that frequently several families jointly possess one, and have it a week at a time in rotation. This should teach us to value our privileges, that scarcity may not make the word of God precious to us. A great variety also of other pious books are circulated at very low prices, and even *gratis*, which are

sued to excite men's attention to the Bible, and to assist them in understanding it. At the same time, no restraint is imposed on the preachers of God's word; nor are any forbidden to attend on their instructions; and numbers, in almost all parts of the land are employed in publishing the glad tidings of salvation, with a clearness and plainness that hath seldom been exceeded. (So that we are peculiarly favoured with every advantage for becoming wise, holy, and happy. This hath been our felicity for a long course of years; and when we consider how scarce in comparison copies of the Scripture were in Israel, and how much darker their dispensation was, than that of the gospel, we shall be constrained to allow, that they did not possess religious privileges, even equal to those of our favoured land. So that the LORD may well demand of us, "What could have been done more for us, that hath not been done," as a proper means of rendering us a religious and a righteous nation? This leads us to enquire,

II. The improvement which we ought to have made of our advantages?

The LORD looks for grapes from this well-cultured vine; he requires righteousness and judgment from a people so highly favoured. It might have been expected that all orders among us, from the highest to the lowest, would, in their publick and private conduct, have manifested a serious regard to the truths, precepts, ordinances, providence, and glory of God. Sobriety, temperance, chastity, justice, truth, peace, and love, should have been observable in our national character,

and in all our transactions. They that come among us, and they among whom we go, should have been constrained to confess, that probity, sincerity, humanity, piety, meekness, and purity, were found in the conduct of Britons more than in any other nation. Impiety and immorality should at least have been discountenanced, driven into corners, put to shame, or dragged out to condign punishment; and it should have been shewn, by all our laws, legislators, magistrates, and publick measures at home and abroad, as well as in the conduct of the inferior orders, and of those employed in the sacred ministry, that we were a nation “fearing GOD and working righteousness;” a wise and understanding people, whom GOD had chosen to himself, for his own inheritance.—Who can deny that this ought to have been our national character? Who can excuse what is contrary to this, without palliating ingratitude, as well as impiety and iniquity? Or who can account for it, without allowing that the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked?

III. Then, We consider the wild, or poisonous grapes, which the LORD finds in his vineyard.

I do not intend at present to descant on such vices as are common to men at all times, and in all places, but rather to select some instances, which may be regarded as peculiar to this age and nation. The LORD requires his servants, on these occasions, “to cry
 “aloud, and not spare, to lift up their voice like a
 “trumpet, whilst they shew his professing people
 “their sins and transgressions;” (as we found it writ-

ten in that chapter, which, with peculiar propriety, was appointed for the first lesson in our morning service)* And let it be remembered, that what will be spoken of national sins, should be applied by each of us to our own particular transgressions. All our violations of the divine law, and all our neglect, contempt, or abuse of the gospel, from our infancy to the present day, constitute a part of that accumulated guilt, for which the LORD hath a controversy with the land; and it is incumbent upon us, as we proceed, to enquire concerning every particular charge, whether we have not committed, or countenanced, the specified iniquity? Whether we have used all our influence to prevent others from committing it? And what our conduct, in these respects, is at this present time? Thus we shall avoid the absurd hypocrisy of pretending to humble ourselves before GOD, whilst we are merely reflecting on the sins of other men, without confessing, mourning over, or forsaking, our own.

1. The daring infidelity, and “damnable heresies,” which prevail, may well be adduced as one of our national sins. I say *damnable heresies*; for this is the language of Scripture: and much mischief has been done, by calling enormous evils by soft names, which seduces men into a forgetfulness of their malignity. I would not, however, be understood to mean every deviation from the system of divine truth. Much hay, straw, stubble may be built on the precious Foundation which GOD hath laid in Zion; and though the builder

* Is. Iviii.

will suffer loss, yet he may be saved, as by fire. "But
" other Foundation can no man lay, than that which is
" laid, even CHRIST JESUS." The truths respecting
his person, as " GOD manifest in the flesh," his sacri-
fice and mediation, and the sanctifying work of his
Spirit, are inseparable from christianity, and stand or
fall with the authority of the Scripture, and our re-
verence for it. I must, therefore, confidently maintain,
that the apostles, if living, would pronounce many
modern dogmas to be " damnable heresies," subver-
sive of the foundation; more plausible indeed, but no
better, than infidelity; to which, by an easy transition,
they evidently tend.

We seem, almost universally, to stand aghast, at
the atheism and daring impiety of that nation, with
which we are at war: and indeed we cannot too much
execrate their principles and practices; which seem to
constitute a new exhibition of the deceitfulness and
desperate wickedness of the human heart. But if we
infer that France is, as a nation, more criminal in the
sight of GOD than Britain, we may perhaps be found
partial in our judgment. We are not competent to de-
cide on such a complicated question, which involves
in it all our advantages and their disadvantages. In one
respect we act more wisely than our opponents; for
they insult the GOD of heaven, set him at defiance,
and, as it were, declare war against him, as well as
against mankind; whereas, we make our appeal to him,
and call publickly on him for assistance, whilst we
confess ourselves deserving of his righteous indigna-
tion.

On the other hand, it must be allowed, that the atheism and impiety of France want many of those aggravations, which are found in our infidelity and impiety. Few among them were previously acquainted with the Scriptures, having been discouraged from reading and examining them. The religion, which they had witnessed, was in general a compound of gross absurdities, unmeaning forms, human inventions, and priestly usurpations or impositions; which, when exposed, must become the objects of contempt and abhorrence. Voltaire, and other ingenious fascinating infidels, were the apostles of their reformation; the ideas of civil liberty and irreligion entered into their minds at the same time, and thus were associated together; there was no one at hand to set before them true christianity, in its genuine beauty and simplicity, when they turned from their old superstition with disgust; and no wonder they greedily imbibed the sentiments of those who had emancipated them from their former abject slavery, and that they even carried their principles further than their teachers had done.

But the partial or total infidelity, which rapidly spreads among us, is of another kind. Men, who have been instructed in the principles of christianity, and who want neither talents, opportunity, liberty, nor encouragement for free enquiry, have deliberately and decidedly given the 'oracles of reason' a preference to the "oracles of God." The deists, who some time back opposed the divine authority of the Scripture, have been completely baffled in the open field of argument; and no man now ventures forth, as an ad-

versary on that ground. Yet their successors persist in opposing revelation, either altogether, or by rejecting as much as is incompatible with their several systems. They start objections, and hold forth scriptural doctrines or facts to derision; by a distorted partial statement; they cavil at them, with a supercilious sneer; they affect the reputation of superior discernment, by treating their forefathers as bigots and fanatics; and by holding in sovereign contempt those contemporaries, whom they dare not face in the open field of calm dispassionate argument. Thus they address the self-sufficiency and love of the world, which predominate in inexperienced young persons; they circulate their objections in periodical publications, mix them up with criticism, history, and other works of genius and erudition; and gild over the mental poison, thus administered in small doses, with every thing that can render it pleasing and unsuspected; they retail, by all possible methods, those objections against the scriptural history, and the principal doctrines of revelation, which have been repeatedly and solidly answered, insinuating more than they choose to *avow*; and they are almost as zealous in disseminating their anti-christian principles, as the primitive preachers were in spreading the gospel of GOD our SAVIOUR.

Thus it hath come to pass, that in a land full of Bibles, and means of understanding them, and greatly favoured with faithful preachers; an increasing multitude affect to speak of revelation with doubt or suspicion, if not with avowed contempt and aversion;

numbers aspire to the reputation of wit and penetration, by ridiculing or railing at the contents of the Scripture; and others study the art of explaining away whatever they dislike. So that the pride of human wisdom and human virtue (connected with “the carnal mind which is enmity against God,”) has almost prevailed to explode the Bible as an antiquated book; or at least to bring it into neglect, as not entitled to much credit, and as having no authority over the consciences and conduct of mankind; whilst the prevailing maxim is, *that it is no matter what men believe, if they behave properly to their fellow creatures.* This has been our unhappy progress, during the last century; though christianity has at the same time been set before us, peculiarly unencumbered with superstition or intolerance (and not remarkably deformed by enthusiasm), in its genuine simplicity and amiableness, as suited to render mankind wise, holy, and happy.—Such is the stamp of modern infidelity in Britain; and we have reason to fear that it will still diffuse its baleful influence more widely among our posterity. As a nation, this seems likely to be our condemnation, “that light is come among us; and we have loved darkness rather than light, because *our deeds are evil.*”

2. We may notice the general neglect of God’s ordinances, and profanation of his holy day.

Not long since, it was customary to insert in advertisements of stage-coaches and waggons, *Sundays excepted*; but this decent regard to that day, which the

LORD JESUS claims as his own,* is now thought superfluous; and *Sundays not excepted*, either in setting out, or proceeding on the journey, is avowedly a part of the present plan; whilst multiplied Sunday newspapers, publicly sold in the streets, furnish employment for those who amuse themselves at home, and supercede the duties of the closet, the family, or the house of GOD. No wonder that legislators and magistrates *care for none of these things*; when the LORD'S day is generally selected by most of them, and of others in the higher ranks of society, (nay, by many who bear a sacred character,) as the most convenient day for travelling! Whilst not a few of them, call together their acquaintance, for every kind of dissipation, nay, even for gaming, on this day of sacred rest! Thus multitudes are permitted, without molestation, to carry on their business; and still greater numbers of the lower orders flock to scenes of riot or diversion, corrupting each other's morals, and wasting that which should maintain their families. The tradesman, (and even the statesman,) makes the LORD'S day his season of relaxation and indulgence; taverns, ale-houses, tea-gardens, are thronged, and no means used to prevent it; the places of worship are deserted; and even the form of religion is growing into disuse, throughout the land, but especially in the metropolis and its vicinity!

At the same time many, who seem to be religious, meet their friends at a place of worship, and go home

* Rev. i. 10.

to feast with them: their converse may be about religion, and they may outwardly attend to some of its duties; but their servants have a double portion of work, to provide for the entertainment: it is to them a day of bustle and fatigue; and they have no time allowed them for the care of their souls, or the duties of religion!

All these things combined together, may well be considered as a plain testimony, how much we have sinned against the light, and how greatly we disrelish the reasonable service of our GOD: for if men will serve the world, the flesh, and the devil, on the LORD'S day, they cannot be expected to serve any other master, during the rest of the week.

3. It is obvious, in the next place, to mention that profanation of the holy name of GOD, which marks the character of our age. I do not mean that profane swearing and taking of GOD'S name in vain, which mingles with the common conversation of vast multitudes. This is indeed an atrocious affront to the Majesty of heaven; but it is not peculiar to any age or nation. I advert to the horrid crime of direct perjury; which perhaps never was so frequent in any age of the world, as it is at present. The extreme impolicy of multiplying oaths on every occasion, that pervades and disgraces the whole of our jurisprudence; and the shameful irreverence, with which they are generally administered, concur in deducting from the solemnity of the transaction; and men are induced to consider an oath as *a matter of course*, rather than an express appeal to the heart-searching GOD, to attest the truth

and sincerity of what is alleged. Thus, not only men of scandalous lives are involved in the guilt of perjury, but multitudes who are, in other respects, of good repute: so that, it may be apprehended, oaths are often taken by parish-officers, by jurymen, by electors, nay, by those who are elected to serve in parliament, and by many other descriptions of men, without any due consideration of their import, or any proper sense of their obligation! And who can compute how many thousands of times, in the course of a single week, the GOD of heaven is called to witness the truth of what is not known to be strictly true, or known to be false! and the sincerity of men in those engagements, which they never intend literally and exactly to fulfil? It is a form, with which they comply, as others do; and when the engagement is violated, the numbers concerned keep one another in countenance. Thus, “because of
“swearing, the land mourneth;” and the perjuries and profanations of the name of the LORD, which abound in every place, loudly call for divine vengeance; especially as no care is taken to bring the offender to justice, or to remove the occasions of such atrocious impiety.*

4. We must not here pass by that trifling with solemn subscriptions and engagements, which often connects with men’s admission into holy orders, or eccle-

* How much more rational, to lay down rules, and punish those who act contrary to them! May not the same be said of subscriptions?

siastical preferments. To subscribe articles which men do not believe in the obvious sense of the words, and which they mean to oppose; to avow themselves, “ moved by the Holy Ghost, to take on them” the sacred ministry, when secular motives alone induce them to choose that line of life; to ratify this equivocating profession, by receiving the LORD’S supper; to read a liturgy, and in their sermons and conversation to contradict what they have uttered on their knees before GOD; and then to palliate and vindicate such a system of prevarication and hypocrisy: this, I say, must constitute a degree of guilt of no common atrocity. And I deem myself the more bound to speak on this subject, because I only describe my own conduct in times past; and I verily believe, that in this respect I added more to the aggregate of our national guilt, than in any other action of my life.*

But, indeed, many other things, which continually are practised and connived at, in men’s entrance into holy orders, and in their obtaining and holding livings and preferments, are utterly incompatible with either piety, truth, or righteousness. Yea, in these respects, “ profaneness goes forth from the priests, to all the inhabitants of the land:” and whilst infidels adduce such facts among their best arguments against religion;

* It may be needful to mention, that I have since been led most cordially to embrace the doctrines I then rejected; or else I should have deemed it my duty to quit the situation which I had surreptitiously obtained in the Church of England.

though we cannot wonder that profligate men will prostitute the ordinance of the LORD'S supper, as a step to preferment; it may well be considered as surprizing, that such a scandal to our church-establishment is allowed to subsist among us.

5. Covetousness, fraud, lying, and oppression of the poor, have hitherto been so general in all ages and nations, and have so connected with the commercial dealings of ungodly men; that it might appear an empty declamation, should I insist upon them on this occasion. One particular, however, must not be omitted; I mean the execrable and execrated slave-trade. Whilst the extreme iniquity and cruelty of this commerce, and its fatal effects on three quarters of the globe at least, but especially throughout the vast continent of Africa, were little known or regarded; it might be considered as the guilt of individuals, and not a national iniquity: but now that the monster has been dragged forth to publick view, and all the world hath been shewn, beyond possibility of palliation, the multiplied murders, cruelties, and enormities that are inseparable from its existence; to set it up, as another Moloch, to be immolated by myriads of human sacrifices every year, merely on a false or dubious persuasion of national emolument, is such a renunciation of all justice, truth, humanity, and mercy, for the sake of filthy lucre, as can hardly be equalled in the annals of mankind! "Blood defileth the land in which it is shed; neither can it be cleansed from it, save by the blood of him that shed it;"* and the case cannot be

* Numbers, xxxv. 33.

altered by the mere circumstance of the blood being shed at a distance, by the inhabitants of this nation. So that the unavenged blood of thousands of poor negroes, cries daily from the earth unto GOD, against the inhabitants of Great Britain; and will continue to do so, more and more, until this atrocious evil be completely terminated; and murder, rapine, and cruelty be no more sanctioned by our legislature: or, till the LORD take the matter into his own hands; and we learn, to our cost, that honesty and mercy are the best policy; and that oppression of the poor and helpless can never enrich, but will certainly sink, the nation that sanctions them.

In vain do we fast and pray, unless we “loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free.”* For whilst lucrative sins are persisted in, our repentance can only resemble that of Pharaoh, who cried out, “I have sinned,” but would not consent to liberate the oppressed Israelites. Without attention to such plain duties, how can we call this a fast, or an acceptable day to the LORD?

After such an overgrown evil and bloodshed, on so large a scale, it may almost seem an approach to trifling, when I proceed to mention the blood shed in duels, and not avenged by the death of the murderer. Whilst so many thieves are put to death, by a policy not authorized in the word of GOD, and evidently not

* Isaiah lviii. 5, 6.

attended with his blessing, almost the worst of murderers are suffered to escape! But let magistrates and jurymen look to it, how they will answer it to GOD; if, under the term of man-slaughter, they liberate the malicious murderer, and so abet duelling, which is one of the greatest outrages against both the law and the gospel of GOD, which can almost be conceived.

6. Among other national sins, it will perhaps excite surprise, that I mention the luxury and extravagance of the age. I mean not, however, to inveigh against all those excesses, which, though indeed very criminal, are not peculiar to the present times. I advert to the prevailing disposition of all orders in the society to emulate their superiors, till all distinction of rank is nearly lost. By a variety of methods, which are useful to a certain degree in a commercial country, credit may be acquired to a very large extent: men therefore, possessed of small property, engage in business disproportionately large; and then launch out in their expenditure, according to their *apparent*, not their *real*, circumstances. They vie with each other, and with persons of real affluence, in their houses, furniture, appearance, attendants, and entertainments; they frequent expensive publick diversions, (which are multiplied beyond the example of former times,) and they join in every fashionable vanity: till at length their accumulated debts weigh them down, and multitudes are ruined along with them. This is come to such a pitch, that it threatens the destruction of credit itself, and commerce with it; and the effect may possibly prove the punishment of our other sins.

The case is similar with the inferior orders: servants emulate their masters; their wages are lavished away in needless expences; so that old age or sickness finds them destitute, or their death leaves families unprovided for. The evils which originate from this source, can scarcely be enumerated; it concurs with other things to produce that spirit of gaming, which ruins numbers, and often terminates in suicide; and it is a principal cause of those varied methods of fraud and robbery, which fill our jails with wretched inhabitants, and make way for so many lamentable executions: whilst the other national sins, that we are about to consider, greatly originate from this prolifick source of vice and misery.

7. Of these we may next mention the venality, which so greatly degrades our national character, and threatens even the subversion of our excellent constitution. Whilst men in general live above what they can afford, they will certainly be tempted to grasp at gain from every quarter; and in general, a sufficient compensation will determine them to any measure or any party. Thus things are now come to that pass, that few of those who elect members to serve in parliament, honestly vote for the wisest and most upright men that are proposed to them, without expecting any other compensation than their faithful endeavours to serve their country; but by far the greatest number, in other places, besides the small boroughs, expect to be paid, in some way or other, for their votes: and so great is the selfish ingenuity, that is exercised in evading the laws, that no method hath yet been found ef-

fectual for preventing such bribery. How then can it be expected that the senate should be uncorrupt? For whilst the people, like Esau, sell their birth-right for a morsel of meat, or other paltry considerations, *they* have scarcely a right to complain, if they find others as venal as themselves; and surely *they* at least must expect that those persons who have purchased the distinction of legislators, at an almost insupportable expence, will endeavour to indemnify themselves, by the use they make of their talents, votes, and influence. This evil spreads so wide, and pervades all orders of men to that degree, that we may enquire with the prophet, “Who is there among you that would shut “the doors for nought?”* And it is a sad proof of the debility which hath seized upon our moral and religious constitution; for “the whole head is sick, and “the whole heart is faint,” through this inveterate disease, which is the genuine offspring of luxury and extravagance, connected with avarice; an insatiable rapacity in getting, and a profuse prodigality in spending.

3. The daring licentiousness that prevails among us, is another most deplorable evil. The unexampled effrontery, with which the trade of prostitution is conducted; the multitudes who yearly, in the prime of life, fall sacrifices to it; the wide spreading effects of it on domestick life; the exceeding frequency of adultery; the encouragement given to ingenious women of profligate character, to publish their infamous me-

* Mal. i. 10.

moirs; with many other particulars that might be adduced, evince, that the licentiousness of the present age, differs from that which must be expected in the general course of human affairs. There will indeed be abandoned men and women, so long as ungodliness prevails: but surely they might be driven out of our streets, into their dark recesses, in some degree at least; and salutary regulations might prevent the morbid part of the community from diffusing the fatal contagion so rapidly as is done at present. It is indeed said, by way of objection, that worse and more fatal effects would probably ensue from such an interposition: but I apprehend the reason to be insufficient, and that it is incumbent on legislators and magistrates to adopt some method of discountenancing such destructive practices, and to leave the event to God. However, the very objection shews the awful state to which we are reduced, and what cause we have to fear, lest we should speedily become like Sodom and Gomorrah; only much more inexcusable, because of our superior advantages.

I shall conclude this part of our enquiry (not because the subject is exhausted, but because want of time requires it,) by mentioning,

9. Lastly. The sad abuse that is made of the gospel, by those who profess to believe it.

If the name of a Christian hath been rendered odious to Pagans and Mahometans throughout the earth, by the crimes of men who bore and disgraced that appellation, the peculiar doctrines of the gospel also have been grievously exposed to contempt and

obloquy, in our land, by the atrocious misconduct of many who have zealously contended for them. "Woe be to the world, because of offences!" Indeed we have all need of humiliation before GOD this day, because we have failed of recommending the doctrine of GOD our Saviour to others, by our example, as we ought to have done; and because, in some respects, we have increased their prejudices by our misconduct. But I more especially advert to the notorious dishonesty and other scandalous crimes, which have been discovered in the habitual conduct of zealous disputers for evangelical tenets; the total disregard for relative duties, which many have manifested; the loose antinomian tenets, by which this laxity of practice has been varnished over; and the bitter, boasting, censorious, and backbiting spirit, with which religious controversies have been conducted. These, and various other abuses of the gospel, have furnished infidels with their most formidable weapons against the truth; have given countenance to those who substitute a decent proud morality, in the place of repentance, faith, and holiness; and have quieted the minds of careless persons with the idea that religion would rather make them worse than better; and led them to conclude, that there is no reality in it, seeing they can detect so much hypocrisy in men's profession of, and zeal for, the gospel.

And now, if we take these things together, comparing them with our national advantages and obligations, will it not be evident, that "when the LORD looked for grapes, he hath found wild grapes?"

We proceed, therefore, to enquire,

IV. What consequences may be expected, notwithstanding the LORD'S long suffering, unless proper means be used to prevent them?

The context expressly answers this question; the LORD himself declares what he will do to his vineyard. "I will," says he, "take away the hedge thereof, and "it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it "waste; it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there "shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it." If we provoke the LORD by our ingratitude to withdraw from us his providential protection, our fleets, our armies, and all the advantages of our situation, will do nothing to prevent our falling under a foreign yoke, or having our land desolated by hostile invasions. We may also be left to learn from experience the sore judgments of famine, pestilence, and other desolate scourges. But it will suffice, if the LORD in anger should leave us to ourselves, and to our mad passions, or infatuated counsels. We should, in that case, soon throw away our mercies with our own hands; every man's sword would be turned against his brother; we should speedily be plunged into the horrors of civil war, and witness such massacres and desolations, as we can scarcely bear to read of, in the accounts we receive from a neighbouring nation. The invasion of Judea by the Chaldeans, the siege, taking, plundering, and destroying of Jerusalem, with the subsequent

Babylonish captivity: and the final ruin of that devoted city by the Romans, whilst eleven hundred thousand persons miserably perished during the siege: together with the calamities which followed the remnant of the Jews in their dispersion through the nations, and their condition to this day, constitute a solemn warning to us, above all people on the face of the whole earth.

But we have most reason to fear, lest we should be deprived of the gospel, which we have so much despised or abused; lest “the kingdom of God should be taken from us, and given to a nation, bringing forth the fruits thereof.”* In this respect our sin may very probably become our punishment: the wide diffusion of infidel and heretical principles, (of which politicks are at present a very convenient vehicle,) may at length be permitted totally to eclipse the light of the gospel, and leave us to sink into heathen impiety and irreligion. This is the more to be dreaded, because these principles get ground so rapidly, in those families, congregations, and seminaries, where the doctrines of the gospel have long been supported. The rising generation is, in many places, apparently disposed to change the religion of their fathers, for modern improvements of the faith; and great pains are taking to train them up accomplished pastors, according to their own hearts. Thus we may reasonably fear, that the LORD’S vineyard will be laid waste, and only bear thorns and briers; and, in that case, he will surely “command the clouds to rain no rain upon it.”†

* Mat. xxi. 43.

† Heb. vi. 7, 8.

Such of us, as are past the meridian of life, may perhaps hope, that the light will not be removed in our days; but we may well tremble for our children, lest they should be left, as a part of this guilty nation, to prefer man's devices to the sure testimony of **GOD**: and lest the candlestick should be removed from this land, after the example of the churches of Asia.* This spiritual judgment is more to be feared than war, famine, or pestilence; than subjection to a foreign conqueror, or a domestick tyrant; nay, than the fury of an ungovernable multitude, the horrors of anarchy, and the cruelties of factions contending with, and by turns prevailing against, and wreaking their vengeance on, each other. But if the **LORD** be provoked to withdraw his gospel, he will depart from us in other respects, and "woe be to us, if he depart from us."

It is vain to say that ministers in former times have dolefully foreboded the same thing, and yet we are preserved and prosper. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed *speedily*; therefore the hearts of the sons of men are wholly set in them to do evil."† Doubtless the unbelieving Israelites would urge the same objection against the messages of the prophets, when the threatened vengeance was mercifully delayed: no wonder then, if, "in these last days, there are scoffers, walking after their own lusts; and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?"‡ "But though the **LORD** be long suffering and slow to anger, he will by no means acquit the wicked:" and

* Rev. ii. iii. † Eccles. viii. 11. ‡ 2 Peter iii. 3, 4.

he will surprise them by his judgments, when they least expect them. If we decide about *the time* when national punishment will be inflicted, we exceed our commission: but if we declare, that “except we repented we shall perish,” as Israel did, we only say what the LORD hath commanded us. Many a time did he deliver his ancient people, when they “provoked him with his counsel, and were brought low by their iniquity;” yet, at length, “wrath came upon them to the uttermost;” and so it will upon us, if we copy their example, and do not use proper means of averting his indignation.—And this leads me to enquire,

V. What withholds these judgments at present, and prolongs our national mercies?

I would not willingly aggravate, or palliate any thing in our national character; but would impartially and simply state the doctrine of GOD’S word on this important question, so far as I am capable of discovering it. We may, therefore, safely allow, that there is a bright, as well as a dark side, belonging to our subject; and it is far more agreeable to discuss this, than some of the preceding topics. Our measure of iniquity, alas! fills apace; but it is not yet full: nay, many favourable circumstances may be described, which give some ground for hope, that we may yet be preserved; if by any means a proper attention to the important concern can be excited in the minds of the inhabitants of our favoured land.

I. Then, we observe with heart felt satisfaction, that persecution of the church of CHRIST is no part of our national guilt: at least should any defects in our laws be called by so harsh a name, we may rejoice, that a blessed inexperience of greater severities occasions our noticing such trivial deviations from the system of complete toleration, which hath been introduced among us.

When GOD hath a number of spiritual worshippers in any country, and they are permitted to live unmolested, and to follow the dictates of their consciences in his service; I apprehend, that something must still be wanting to render that nation ripe for vengeance; and that the prayers offered by believers, for the peace of the land in which they enjoy peace, will continue to prevail, until they be removed from the evil to come; or until a departure from tolerating principles drive them away, or bring them under the yoke of oppression. Herod, to his other crimes, added yet this *above all*, that he shut up John Baptist in prison and put him to death. It was the principal charge brought against the nation of Israel, that they murdered the LORD'S prophets, and persecuted his faithful servants: and the crucifixion of CHRIST, with the violent rage and cruel enmity of the Jews against his disciples, filled up the measure of their iniquity, when wrath came upon them to the uttermost: nay, the abominations of mystick Babylon would not have been complete, had she not been "drunken with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus." We may, therefore, consider the tolerating spirit that at present prevails in our land,

as a very favourable circumstance, and an encouragement and obligation to pray for the continuance of its peace and prosperity.

2. We may remark, that christianity, as it hath of late years been displayed among us has produced great effects in rectifying the judgments, and in some things meliorating the dispositions of vast multitudes, who are very far from being the genuine disciples of the LORD JESUS. Hence it arises, that humanity and philanthropy constitute a part of our national character, *as it is displayed at home*: would to GOD, it were equally manifest and undeniable in all our concerns with other nations, throughout the whole earth!

However, the benevolence and liberality, with which distress in every form obtains relief in Britain, should be noticed with due commendation, and cordial satisfaction: and this benign and friendly spirit hath lately been very honourably exercised, in the hospitable entertainment given to the poor destitute outcasts, who have sought an asylum in this country, and who by nation and religion might have been considered as inimical to us.

We are not indeed authorized to expect, that liberality, when unconnected with repentance, faith, love to CHRIST, and true holiness, will be a man's passport to heaven; for, those acts of kindness, which the Judge will adduce at the great day, as the reason of his people's admission to their inheritance, are evidently such as spring from faith in him, working by love; and manifesting itself by kindness to his disci-

ples for his sake.—Nevertheless we may hope that the LORD will recompense the mercy shewn to the poor in this land, “by the lengthening of our tranquillity,”* for he commonly rewards external services with temporal benefits; even when he disapproves of the motives and principles from which they result.†

3. The infidelity, impiety, perjuries, oppressions, and cruelties, before enumerated, have not been let pass, without a solemn and earnest protest being entered against them, both in the senate, and from the pulpit and the press: and this helps to retard our doom. Men have stood forth, like Phinehas, inspired with zeal for the honour of GOD, and the authority of his law, as well as influenced by the most enlarged philanthropy; and they have spared no pains, ventured all consequences, and persevered amidst reproaches and discouragements, in bearing testimony against inveterate evils, and labouring for their extirpation: and it seems to be the doctrine of Scripture, that whilst a considerable remnant of princes, priests, or prophets, endeavour to stem the torrent of national iniquity, the measure of that people’s sin is not full; at least until it be finally decided, that their efforts were in vain, and did nothing but expose them to publick scorn and hatred. This is at present a favourable symptom in our case; may the LORD increase the number of such witnesses for truth and righteousness in every part of our land! and may he prosper all their endeavours to do good!

* Dan. iv. 27.

† 1 Kings xxi. 29.

4. Notwithstanding the general prevalence of scepticism and infidelity; yet the number of those who preach the "faith once delivered to the saints," is supposed by many competent judges to be upon the increase: now if this be indeed the case, and if they of whom good hopes are formed do not disappoint them, either through the fascinations of the world, the fear of man, or the spirit of error; we may even look for such a revival of pure religion, and reformation of manners, as will not only lengthen our tranquillity, but avert the judgments that we fear.

5. There is no doubt a very considerable number of true christians, dispersed throughout the land: these "are the salt of the earth, and the light of the world;" they are habitually "sighing and mourning for the abominations that prevail;" and are now called forth, as an embodied militia, to unite in prayers, with humiliation and fasting, in behalf of our guilty land. Whatever hypocrisy or formality may, therefore, be found in the service of multitudes, on this occasion, or however still greater numbers may totally neglect it; (one of which must always be the case, where large bodies of men are concerned;) yet very blessed things may be expected in answer to the prayers, and in consequence of the services, of this day.

Moreover these persons are employed, in their several places, to counteract the progress of infidelity, impiety, and vice, and to spread the gospel of Christ. They are indeed "our chariots and horsemen," in whom our chief strength consists: and if ten righteous

persons would have preserved Sodom and the neighbouring cities, had so many been found in them; and if Paul prevailed for all who sailed with him: we may yet hope, that the Lord will spare the land, in which so many thousands of true believers may doubtless be found, who are now uniting their earnest requests in its behalf. In the close of the deplorable American war; when our resources seemed almost exhausted, and four formidable powers combined against us; the Lord answered the prayers of his people, and we were both delivered, and restored to prosperity.—When, some years since, our justly beloved Monarch was afflicted in a very distressing manner, and every serious mind was ready to forbode some fatal consequences, from the divided state of the land; the LORD again heard prayer, graciously restored him, and dispelled our fears: and of late, when our ingratitude again provoked his indignation; there seemed to be just ground of apprehension, that the people, instigated by ignorant or crafty insinuations, would have madly thrown away their invaluable advantages, and plunged us into the most dreadful confusion; but the LORD hath again answered our supplications, and we are hitherto preserved. “Oh that men would, therefore, praise the LORD for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men!”

But we cannot tell how long the case may be thus with us: sin is the only enemy we need fear; the impious principles of our adversaries are in reality more formidable than either their arms or their politicks; and if, to the many evil lessons we have learned from

them, we should copy their example of avowed and general irreligion and infidelity, after having so long enjoyed the full advantage of divine revelation: then our measure of iniquity will be full; the few remaining believers and witnesses for CHRIST will be either removed to heaven, or exposed to persecution; the flood-gates of divine judgments will be opened, and we shall be made a warning to other nations, not to abuse such privileges, or thus to weary out the patience of the LORD of Hosts: which leads me to enquire,

VI. Lastly, What those duties are, to which we are called in the present circumstances, according to our different situations in the church, and the community?

It is requisite in this way to bring the subject home to each of us: otherwise the enumeration of crimes committed by others, and even by some of our superiors, might prove a gratification to a censorious temper, and foster our pride, instead of leading us to humiliation: but if we duly apply it to our own case, it will produce very different effects. For when we recollect that all who concur in, or neglect the proper means of preventing, atrocious crimes, in some degree participate the guilt; we shall be convinced that we all are criminal, as to some or many of those things which have this day been considered; and that we owe a duty to our native land, to which we have not hitherto sufficiently attended.

1. It is incumbent on each of us, to examine every part of our conduct, in order to personal humiliation, repentance, and amendment. In this review, we should particularly reflect upon the whole of our past lives, and all our conduct towards God and our neighbours, according to the various relations that we have sustained, and the transactions in which we have been engaged. All our thoughts, words, and actions, as far as we can recollect them; all our negligences and omissions of duty; our not improving our time and talents; the bad effects of our example and converse; and our most secret sins (as well as the more open and gross,) should be adverted to; and especially we ought to look carefully into every part of our behaviour, and the state of our souls, at the present time. Such a thorough scrutiny, attended by earnest prayer to the heart-searching God, to shew us what our character is in his sight; and conducted according to the perfect rule of his holy word, will convince us that no small share of the national guilt hath been contracted by us; that the whole charge of infidelity, irreligion, and iniquity, does not belong to others only, but in a measure to us also; that we have helped to ripen the nation for divine judgments; and that we have more cause than the beloved prophet had, to confess *our own sins*, as well as the sins of our people.*

This examination, and these discoveries, should be connected with deep self-abasement in the sight of God; ingenuous confession of all our sins, and the ma-

* Dan. iv. 20.

nifold aggravations of them; and acknowledgments that “we are unworthy of the least of his mercies,” and deserving of his indignation: we should solemnly renew our acceptance of his salvation, and surrender of ourselves to his service, (if we have previously been acquainted with that important transaction, between a believing penitent and his merciful GOD and SAVIOUR:) we should earnestly seek to him for grace, to enable us to amend our lives, and to attend to every part of our duty: and we should deprecate his wrath, and beseech him that our native land may not be exposed to his judgments, through our transgressions.

Such seasons of deep humiliation, personal or publick, have, in every age of the church, been accompanied with fasting; an abstinence from animal indulgence, or even from all food, when that will consist with health, and the performance of other duties: and our LORD hath given directions about fasting, as occasionally incumbent on his disciples. We thus emphatically confess, that we have forfeited all right to the gifts of Providence; whilst “we chasten ourselves “with fasting,” we express our humble submission to the justice of GOD, in our condemnation, and our cheerful acceptance of his correction; we mortify our animal nature, and teach our appetites to brook denial even in things lawful, whenever inexpedient; and this favours abstraction from worldly concerns, and marks the season to be appropriated to such superior engagements, that attention to animal recreation should be suspended as much as possible. The acceptance which nations, cities, and individuals, have ever met with, in

thus turning to the LORD with weeping, fasting, and prayer, is a sufficient reason that we should seek him in the same way; and a confutation of those who would represent fasting to be a pharisaical and needless observance.

2. We are called upon to improve our talents, and use our influence, in stemming the torrent of infidelity, impiety, and vice; and suppressing if possible, those enormities, which are the scandal of our nation and holy religion, and in promoting the cause of truth and righteousness.

The ministers of CHRIST, as watchmen and stewards of the *mysteries of God*, have their peculiar line of service: and woe be to them, if they preach not *the gospel*, instantly and faithfully, not pleasing men, and not shunning to declare the whole counsel of GOD. The legislator and magistrate may bear their testimony, and exert their diligence in another way, and in different places. They who are entrusted with superior abilities and learning, should not “bury their talent” in the earth,” but occupy with it, as those who expect the coming of their Judge. The affluent may use their estates, and the influence derived from them, to good purpose; if they consistently endeavour, by every means, to discountenance vice and irreligion, and to recommend piety and righteousness to all around them. The merchant may render commerce subservient to the noble design of propagating christianity, and disseminating the word of GOD in distant regions; thus counteracting the effects of the crimes perpetrated

ed by nominal Christians, among Pagans and Mahometans. They who have families, should, by their example, converse, and instructions, labour to imbue their minds with good principles, and to lead them to holy practice. Every man has his circle, in which he possesses some influence, which may either be abused to bad, or improved to good purpose. Few industrious persons are so poor but they may spare a trifle from needless expence, to promote the gospel, the dispersion of pious books, and such other designs, as counteract the endeavours of those who disseminate error and vice among mankind: nor will the poor widow's two mites be overlooked, when consecrated to such services.

Thus every man, in his proper place and duty, (like officers and soldiers, constituting a well disciplined army,) may contribute to promote that reformation of manners and prevalence of religion, which alone can ensure the continuance of our national prosperity: and, though the attempts of each person, separately considered, may appear trivial, yet the united efforts of a large multitude, engaged in the same cause, as with one heart and soul, may, by the blessing of God, produce extensive and durable effects.—But,

3. They who can do little else, may be helpful by their prayers, for “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” All true believers are righteous before God; none of us think more humbly of ourselves, than they did who prevailed so wonderfully in former ages; and omnipotence can effect

its purposes by second causes, as well as by miracles: if then we pray according to the precepts, doctrines, promises, and examples of Scripture, with a view to the glory of GOD, in dependence on his power, truth, and mercy, with submission to his Providence, and love to our fellow creatures, and with earnest importunity and perseverance, we may be confident that “by the Spirit” we offer that “effectual, fervent prayer, which availeth much.”

“Let me alone,” (said the LORD to Moses, when he pleaded with him in behalf of rebellious Israel,) “that I may destroy them in a moment:” he could not, so to speak, proceed to take vengeance, unless his servant would cease to plead for them. Abraham desisted from asking, before the LORD delayed to grant his supplications for guilty Sodom. Sennacherib’s numerous host was too feeble to withstand the united prayers of Hezekiah and Isaiah: nor could Herod’s prison and guards detain or destroy Peter; when time was given to the church to pour out their prayers for him. Do we then hear of good designs which seem likely to be frustrated, through the artifices of the enemy, and their interference with men’s secular interests? Let us remember that our prayers are appointed and effectual means of removing these impediments: and perhaps the LORD delays the success of such designs, till he be importuned by the whole multitude of his people; that as he alone can send prosperity, or give the blessing, so the whole glory may thus be given to him, whatever instruments he may honour by employing in such beneficial servi-

ces. It is, however, our bounden duty thus to assist all who labour to do good.

We should pray, without ceasing, that the ministers of CHRIST may be faithful, bold, zealous, prudent, and successful; that the LORD would send forth labourers into his vineyard; that pure christianity may be diffused on every side; that the church may become as “a city that is at unity with itself;” that at this time, “when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD may lift up a standard against him;” that irreligion and false religion may be suppressed; that Jews, Pagans, Infidels, and Mahometans, may be converted; that such as are gone, amidst manifold dangers and hardships, to preach the gospel in remote regions, may be protected, supported, comforted, and prospered; and that “the earth may speedily be filled with the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

We should pray, (not only in the service of the church, but in our closets and families,) that the LORD would bless our king, and all his counsellors, ministers, senators, and magistrates, with wisdom and grace; that the best methods may be taken to preserve peace, and promote religion at home; and to extend the same blessings to the nations abroad. We should intreat the LORD, who hath all hearts in his hands, to dispose the contending parties to peace, and thus prevent the further effusion of human blood; to stem that torrent of iniquity and misery, which bears down all before it, in the once flourishing land of our enemies; that so a way may be made for the establishment of

peace, order, and good government, at an equal distance from despotism and anarchy; and that a tolerating system may open a door for the successful preaching of the gospel among them: and, in short, we should beseech him so to over-rule present calamities, that now “his judgments are abroad in the lands, the inhabitants of them may learn righteousness.”

Charity, in all its branches, constitutes an important part of our present duty, as it was emphatically inculcated in the lesson for the morning service. But whilst “we give our bread to the hungry, and bring the poor outcasts to our houses;” we should also remember “to forgive our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to pray for them who despitefully use us; and not to be overcome with evil, but to overcome evil with good.”

These are some of the principal duties incumbent on us: and in vain does any man pretend to be a patriot, who will not practise them: for by his sins he is helping to bring down divine judgment on the land; and he refuses to concur in the proper means of averting them. The preparation for, and subsequent improvement of, such solemn observances, constitute a principal part of their benefit; and, if due attention be paid to these obvious duties, by those in general who apparently keep this day according to the design of it, we may expect important consequences.

I would conclude with observing, that if there should be any present, who have not felt themselves interested in these things, and purpose not to give heed to them; they may perhaps be preserved from national

judgments, by the humble prayers of those whom they despise: but without personal repentance, faith, prayer, and newness of life, they cannot be saved from the wrath to come. On the other hand, the upright believer need not be dismayed, on account of those iniquities, over which he sighs and mourns: for he will be taken care of at all events; should the deluge come in his days, he will be found in the ark, and nothing shall “separate him from the love of GOD, which is in CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.”

And now, O Father of Mercies, we beseech thee to give thy blessing to the word of all thy ministers, this day; that there may be joy in heaven over many sinners brought to repentance; and that thy people may be stirred up to greater diligence in every good work, and more fervent zeal for the glory of thy name. Hear the supplications which, with many thousands of our fellow Christians, we have presented before thee, in behalf of that much favoured, but guilty land, of which we confess ourselves to be guilty inhabitants. Oh that we may indeed shew, by works meet for repentance, that our humiliation this day hath been unfeigned! Avert the judgments which we have deserved; revive thy work in our land, make true religion to prevail over all opposition, and prosper those who labour to do good to men for thy sake! Have mercy upon our fellow creatures in other nations, and bid the avenging sword of bloody war return into its scabbard. Pity our infatuated enemies; bring them to repentance, and incline them also to turn to thee, with weeping, fasting, and prayer; that so their miseries

may be terminated; the wicked devices of such as persist in mischief be finally disappointed; and the blessings with which thou hast long favoured us, be extended to them, and to all other nations; till genuine liberty and peace, as the effects of pure christianity, may fill the earth, and bless the whole world of mankind! These prayers we present before thee, in sole dependence on the merits and mediation of thy Son **JESUS CHRIST.**

Now to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three Persons in one mysterious Deity, be ascribed all glory, praise, and adoration, for evermore. Amen.

SERMON II.

JEREMIAH XIV. 7.

O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake.

THE prophet Jeremiah performed his mournful office, at that crisis when Judah had filled up the measure of his iniquities, and was ripe for national judgments. Having pathetically described, in the preceding verses, a terrible drought with which the land was visited; he broke out in the abrupt and fervent prayer contained in the text; “O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake!” adding, “our backslidings are many, we have sinned against thee.” The LORD had before intimated that he would not grant the prophet's supplications for the land;* and, on this occasion also, he answered, “Pray not unto me for this people for

* Jeremiah xi. 14.

“ good; when they fast, I will not hear their cry; and
 “ when they offer burnt offerings and an oblation, I
 “ will not accept them: but I will consume them by
 “ the sword, and by the famine, and by the pesti-
 “ lence!” “ Though Moses and Samuel stood before
 “ him, yet his mind could not be towards that peo-
 “ ple.” In the lesson appointed for this morning-ser-
 vice,* and in the chapter which precedes it, we find
 that Jehoshaphat having, with great zeal, diligence, and
 prudence, endeavoured to revive true religion, and
 effect reformation in his kingdom, was invaded by a
 vast army of the Moabites and Ammonites, with their
 confederates. In this emergency he proclaimed a fast,
 and with great fervency he aided the devotions of his
 people; and then led them forth to meet the enemy,
 with pious exhortations and songs of praise. The event
 was such as might have been expected: the assailants
 were destroyed by an extraordinary divine interposi-
 tion, and the people of God were enriched by the in-
 vasion.—But the prophecy of Jeremiah (and the chap-
 ter before us in particular,) gives us a different view
 of the same subject: and by comparing them together
 we may learn, that various circumstances require con-
 sideration, before we can determine whether God will
 or will not answer the prayers of his most eminent
 servants, for a guilty nation.—It is probable that our
 land is neither in so good a state, in respect of vital
 godliness, as Judah was in the days of Jehoshaphat;
 nor yet so degenerate as that nation in the time of Je-

* 2 Chron. xix. 1—20.

remiah: we should, therefore, beware of forming too sanguine expectations of success from the one example, and of foreboding approaching desolations from the other.

In order to obtain more distinct views of this interesting subject, both in respect of our situation and duty, I shall apply the text to these nations and to the present occasion, in the following manner;

I. Endeavour to shew, that “our iniquities do indeed testify against us;”

II. Enquire what light the Scriptures afford us, by which we may judge, whether “the LORD, “for his name’s sake,” will hear our prayers for deliverance.

III. Consider what we are encouraged to expect from him, should he be graciously pleased to interpose in our favour: and,

IV. State the duties to which we ought peculiarly to attend, as means of obtaining the blessings for which we pray.

I. “Our iniquities do indeed testify against us.” This may be applied to the nation, and to each of us individually: and it is doubtless true, in respect of both. Had the prophet been asked, in what particulars the iniquities of his people testified against them? He would, we may suppose, have recalled to their minds the abject state of their progenitors in Egypt; the manifold interpositions of GOD in their behalf; and

all his special favours, temporal and spiritual, to the nation, through successive ages to that very day: he would then have enumerated the multiplied evidences, which stood on record, of their ingratitude, rebellion, idolatry, atheistical forgetfulness of GOD; impiety, hypocrisy, licentiousness, iniquity, oppression, murder, and contemptuous cruelty to the servants of the LORD; with the multiplied enormities perpetrated by their princes, priests, and prophets, from age to age.* He would have proved that this load of national guilt, so long accumulating, had been exceedingly increased by the unprecedented criminality of that generation; that they had now filled up the measure of their iniquities; that the calamities, which they dreaded or experienced, were justly merited by them; that they suffered far less than they deserved; and that the only hope which remained for them, arose from the plenteous and everlasting mercy of their offended GOD.

And may not Britain be considered as the Israel of modern ages? Favoured above other nations by a kind Providence, with plenty, liberty, exemption from the dire ravages of war, and with every temporal blessing; we have long enjoyed, and, by many signal interpositions of heaven in our behalf, still enjoy the most distinguished advantages for becoming a wise and religious people. “What could have been done more to” this part of “the vineyard, that the LORD hath not “done in it?” And what have been our returns for such peculiar benefits? “O foolish people and unwise,

* Ezek. xx.

“do you thus requite the LORD?”—Not to mention the accumulating wickedness of preceding years; is not every species of infidelity, impiety, contempt of revelation, or perversion of it, diffused rapidly through the land? Are not solemn oaths and the most sacred obligations, profanely trifled with, and violated without scruple or remorse? Do not all ranks and orders of men concur in treating the name, the ordinances, the day, and the word of GOD, with contemptuous disregard? Do not all kinds of licentiousness and dissipation increase on every side? Is not our extensive and prosperous commerce marked, not only with avarice, fraud, and various oppressions, but with scenes of cruelty which will never be fully known, till “the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain?” Have not these vices and impieties pervaded every order of men, however exalted or sacred? And do they not sufficiently “testify against us?”—The LORD would then be righteous, should he command the sword to pass through the land, or bring upon us the most terrible judgments that our alarmed minds can apprehend: and if he spare us, it will not be for our deserts, but “for his name’s sake;” though a *partial* comparison of our national character with that of a people who never enjoyed the tenth part of our advantages, may deceive multitudes into a contrary opinion.

But what is the character of each person, now assembled, that we should venture to intercede with the LORD in behalf of our guilty land? Do not our personal iniquities also testify against us? Who that knows

the holiness of God and the spirituality of his law, can answer this question in the negative? Let us review our past lives from the beginning: and, considering every advantage of birth, education, and circumstances, as an additional obligation to the service of our Creator and Benefactor; let us compare, with serious recollection, our first thoughts, words, and actions, with his most reasonable commandments: let us proceed in this manner, as it were from stage to stage of our journey, to the present day; and let us contrast the goodness of God to us, with our ungrateful forgetfulness and neglect of him and his service.—Have not we, as well as others in this guilty land, often spent the LORD'S day in dissipation, festive indulgence, worldly pursuits, or criminal excesses? Have none of us violated sacramental engagements, or irreverently trifled with solemn oaths? Have we not, in many instances, taken the sacred name of GOD in vain? Have we not neglected and despised his ordinances, or attended upon them in a formal and hypocritical manner? Do not our mis-spent time, our abused or unimproved talents, our vain and corrupt discourse, and our aversion to pious and edifying company and conversation, bear witness against us? If we have been preserved from more flagrant immorality; can we recollect no instances in which we dishonoured, despised, or defrauded parents or superiors? or in which we infused loose principles into the minds of our companions? Have we not given way, times without number, to pride, excessive anger, or revenge, envy, calumny, deceit, or intemperate indulgence? Have we

not frequently failed of “doing to others, as we would they should do unto us?”—None, but the great Searcher of all hearts, can know what vile imaginations and affections may be concealed under a decent exterior: or what secret abominations are practised by those who are careful to preserve their character among men. It may be apprehended that many present are still living in the commission of known sin, and provoking God by their impenitent neglect or abuse of his gospel. Others, having long opposed or despised this great salvation, are at length made willing thankfully to accept of it. But, alas! how pertinaciously have some of us rebelled against the light! How have we resisted our convictions, and hated the truth that excited them! How desirous were we of finding out some more flattering way of deliverance from the wrath to come! Or how ingenious in our contrivances to form a coalition between religion and the world, between God and Mammon? And what inconsistency, ingratitude, unfruitfulness, if not dishonourable conduct, have been found in us, since we professed to be the redeemed disciples of the divine Saviour! Alas, much evil cleaves even to our best endeavours to serve God; as the devotions in which we have at this time been engaged, sufficiently evince to every tender conscience and watchful heart. Well may we then adopt the words of the beloved Daniel, and say, “We do not present our supplications before thee, for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies;”* or

* Dan. ix. 19.

those of Isaiah, “Woe is me, I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips, &c.” and “we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags:”* or rather those of Job, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”† But should any individual be found disposed to dissent from this humble language of these eminent saints, and to consider himself as “worthy, for whom the LORD should do this;” he must be regarded as an awful instance of that self-exaltation which GOD abhors: and if any prayers, this day offered for our land, be graciously answered, they will not be those of the Pharisee, who says, “GOD, I thank thee, that I am not as other men;” but those of men who, like the poor publican, “smite upon their breast, and say, GOD be merciful to me a sinner.”

Yet the consideration that “our iniquities testify against us,” should not operate to our discouragement: “for the LORD delighteth in mercy;” and he bows down his gracious ear to the prayer of the broken-hearted penitent, who, conscious of his unworthiness, approaches him upon a mercy-seat, in the name, and through the merits of that divine Advocate “in whom he is well-pleased.”—We enquire,

II. What light the Scripture affords us, by which we may judge whether the LORD, “for his name’s sake,” will hear our prayers for deliverance? When he had shewn, by his prophet, that Israel, at divers

* Isaiah vi. 5. lxiv. 6.

† Job xlii. 6.

periods, had deserved the severest vengeance, he repeatedly added, “ Nevertheless I wrought for my name’s sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen.”* And long before, when he threatened to destroy them, Moses pleaded, “ Then the Egyptians will hear—and the nations will say: because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware to them; therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.”† And when, on another occasion, Moses was preparing to intercede for Israel, on the same ground, the LORD said to him, “ Let me alone,—that I may consume them;”‡ which implied, that this plea, as it were, arrested his avenging arm, and he could do nothing, whilst it was properly urged in behalf of the rebellious nation. Thus Joshua also, when he supposed that GOD was about to consign the people to destruction, enquired, with great earnestness, “ And what wilt thou do for thy great name?”§ From these, and many similar instances, we infer that the glory of the LORD may be concerned in the preservation of his professed worshippers, even when their “ iniquities testify against them.” It may be proper for him in this manner to declare “ his eternal power and Godhead,” that he may confute the blasphemies of idolaters and atheists; to shew himself ready to deliver those that trust in him, when despisers ridicule their confidence; to illustrate the plenteousness of his mercy, even when “ sin hath most

* Ezek. xx. 14.

† Numb. xiv. 11—20.

‡ Exod. xxxii. 10—14.

§ Josh. vii. 9.

“abounded;” to evince his faithfulness in performing his promises and his covenant; and even to display his righteousness, when his worshippers are injuriously oppressed: for they who merit GOD’s wrath, may not deserve the usage they meet with from their enemies. Many examples, however, prove that this plea is not universally prevalent, even when urged by the LORD’s most favoured servants; much less when it is presumed upon by hypocrites and formalists. Yet there are certain rules, which throw some light on the subject, and others which warrant a more confident determination. When a people, among whom the truths of christianity are professed, and the ordinances of GOD administered, are attacked by those who avowedly deny his existence or Providence, despise his word and worship, and trample on his laws, in atheistical or idolatrous contempt and defiance of him; and who shew a determined purpose (if they succeed,) to subvert religion, and establish their own principles in the place of it; there is some ground to expect that the LORD, “for his name’s sake,” will defend his worshippers, and silence the impious boastings of his enemies. This expectation seems to be still more reasonable, if the nation, professing the true religion, contrasts the blasphemies of their assailants with solemn and publick acts of religious worship, openly renounce all confidence in themselves, and have recourse to the LORD’s merciful protection, as their only refuge. Yet, even this may be done in so hypocritical a manner, and accompanied with such atrocious crimes, impenitently persisted in, that the honour of GOD may require their

punishment, even by the hands of his avowed despisers. When Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah, thus sought the LORD in their extreme danger, he delivered them, and turned the proud vauntings of their enemies to confusion: yet when Jeremiah, in similar circumstances, pleaded the cause of Judah, the LORD refused to hear his prayers. And though the Jews observed days of fasting; placed great confidence in their relation to GOD, and in his temple and worship, which were among them; and were encouraged by many false prophets, with visions of peace: yet were they given up into the hands of the idolatrous Chaldeans, who pillaged and burned the sanctuary, destroyed the city, desolated the land, and reduced the wretched remains of the people to the most abject state of slavery. Thus the LORD glorified his justice and holiness, in punishing a hypocritical and wicked nation; and secured the honour of his name among the heathen, by the displays of his glory, recorded in the book of Daniel; by reforming and restoring the next generation of the Jews, and by taking signal vengeance on their cruel and impious oppressors.

When the sons of Eli, those children of Belial, presumed to fetch the ark of the covenant into the field of battle, as if that would surely defend them against the Philistines, notwithstanding their crimes, and those of the nation, the LORD saw good to give the victory to their enemies: thirty thousand Israelites, with Hophni and Phinehas, were slain; the ark was carried captive; Eli, who had honoured his sons more than GOD, was cut off by an awful rebuke, and the glory seemed to

depart from Israel. Yet, in reality, the LORD thus magnified his name and his law: whilst the contempt, afterwards poured on Dagon, the judgments executed on the Philistines, and the forced restoration of the ark, glorified his name in the sight of all the surrounding nations. This subject has been expressly insisted on by several of the prophets;* and the vengeance inflicted on the Jewish nation by the Romans, notwithstanding their presumptuous confidence in GOD, their scrupulous zeal against idolatry, and their minute exactness in all the externals of religion; with the condition of their descendants, even to this day, constitutes the best comment on these declarations.—If, therefore, any persons should conclude that our profession of Christianity, the supposed justice of our cause, and our solemn appeal to GOD in the humiliations and services of this day, are sufficient to warrant an unshaken confidence that we shall prevail against our enemies; it is evident that they have not fully weighed the matter in the balance of the sanctuary: for the iniquity of our national conduct and the hypocrisy of our religion, may render the fastings and supplications of the day an abomination to the LORD; and instead of answering the prayers of the accepted remnant, he may say to them, “ Shall not I visit for these things?—shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?”

* Isaiah i. 10—17. lviii. 1—7. lxvi. 3. Amos v. 21—24. Mal. i. 10—14.

But there are some rules which warrant a more confident determination, provided they be applicable to our case. It is not to be expected that, on such occasions, even the majority will be sincere and earnest in the business of the day: multitudes, no doubt, will utterly neglect its important duties; nay, some will perhaps affect the reputation of superior discernment by deriding them! Others will attend the public services with decency; but without any serious preparation, personal humiliation, or purposes of subsequent amendment. No small number, it may be feared, will so far forget the end of the appointment, as to amuse themselves with political speculations, or to vent their anger and spleen in revilings and disputes: and even they who desire to observe “such a fast as the LORD hath chosen,” may fail of their design, through mistake, or for want of proper instruction. This has always hitherto been, *in some measure*, the case on such solemn occasions. — “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it:” and none can duly sustain a part in the national humiliation, who are not humbled for their own sins, as penitent believers in CHRIST. Yet the outward observance publicly honours GOD; the preaching of his word may be the means of bringing sinners to repentance, and of invigorating the holy affections of true Christians; and the union of a large multitude in prayer, at the same time for the same blessing, is a hopeful token of success.

The misconduct of numbers, therefore, though greatly to be lamented, is no peculiar reason for dis-

couragement. For if, in a land replete with crimes and impiety, a considerable proportion of pious persons can be found in the different orders of the community; if these walk worthy of their vocation as “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world;” if they do not resemble Eli, (who was timid, irresolute, and self-indulgent, though not destitute of piety,) but Phinehas the son of Eleazar, and Samuel the prophet, in zeal and activity; if in their several stations they oppose flagrant abuses and national enormities, protest against vice and profaneness in every form, and endeavour with unwearied diligence to revive pure and undefiled religion, and to reform the manners of the people: then we may confidently hope that the LORD will spare us “for his name’s sake, though our iniquities testify against us.” Especially of this remnant, being “men of understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do,” attend in their several places on the important duties of this day, with proper dispositions of mind, and suitable preparation of themselves and their families: if, like Daniel, they humble themselves before GOD, “confessing their own sins, and the sins of the land;” and unite, as with one heart, in beseeching the LORD “to spare his people, and not to give his heritage to reproach, lest the heathen should say, “where is now their GOD? then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people:”* No instance is recorded of his giving up his worshippers into the hands of their enemies, whilst such a remnant was

* Joel ii. 12—19.

found among them to intercede with him; even though he abhorred the iniquity and hypocrisy of the nation at large. Under pious Josiah, when the affairs of Judah were hastening to a crisis, the nation was spared for a season; because some prophets, priests, and princes, were zealously active for reformation: but after Josiah's death the whole mass soon became corrupt; and notwithstanding their fastings and forms, even the prayers of Jeremiah, and a few others, could not preserve them from becoming a prey to their idolatrous, cruel, and insulting invaders.

But in what respect do these rules apply to our land? and can we decide by them how the LORD will deal with us? It does not become us to determine, what will be the event of our present troubles: but perhaps there will be no impropriety in concluding that the religious state of the nation does not warrant us to expect exemption from severe rebukes and humiliating losses; and yet gives us a ground for hoping that we shall not be given up to ruin and desolation. There are, I apprehend, several zealous Christians in the superior orders of the community; a larger, perhaps an increasing, number may be found among the ministers of religion; and a considerable remnant in the middle and lower ranks of society. How far the whole multitude of them are, this day, in their closets, families, and publick congregations, employed in those duties, to which the royal proclamation hath so seasonably called us, can only be known by the heart-searching GOD. But as ten righteous persons would have sufficed for the preservation of Sodom; and as "the LORD

“delighteth in mercy,” we may humbly hope that he will only correct, and not destroy, us.

III. What then may we reasonably expect that the LORD will do “for his name’s sake,” if he graciously accept our prayers in behalf of this guilty land? As the prophet only requested the removal of the visitation under which Judah then groaned: so we should merely expect deliverance from deserved and threatened judgments. But should any man feel a vindictive spirit excited by the enormous crimes and unprovoked injuries of our enemies; should he stand prepared to rejoice in their calamities, and imagine that the LORD will answer prayers suggested by this disposition: let him remember him who said to his disciples, (when they were desirous of avenging his cause on the Samaritans by fire from heaven,) “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them:”^{*} We may indeed beseech the LORD to ‘confound the devices’ of those who seek our ruin; and we may adore his righteous sovereignty, when he executes vengeance on them: but we ought rather to desire, that he would ‘abate their pride, assuage their malice,’ and turn their hearts, and transfer the authority to those among them who are disposed to peace.—Victory is often needful to the termination of war: but as all men, in every land are sinners; and as “after death is the judgment,” and an eternal state of retribution; so

^{*} Luke ix. 52—56.

every soldier, that is slain in either army, is a sinner transmitted to the tribunal of his Judge, and commonly in the worst state of mind that can be imagined; not to speak of the miseries occasioned to the mourning relatives of the dead. In this view the most splendid victory suggests many painful reflections to the pious mind, however actuated by genuine patriotism; and even our thankful praises, for *such* answers to our fervent prayers, must be mingled with tears of commiseration dropt over the miseries of this sinful world.

Should another say in his heart, ‘ If the hostile and rival nation, that now menaces us, be abased; if her resources be exhausted, her wealth drained, her cities and villages depopulated, her trade ruined, and her military prowess enfeebled, this country will derive proportionable advantage from that event: we shall then be advanced in the scale of political importance; our commerce will be more extended than ever; wealth will flow in upon us; we shall be able to hold the balance of power; nay, we may perhaps give law to the surrounding nations.’ Let not, I say, that man presume to infuse this selfish and rapacious spirit into his prayers to Him, who commands us to “ love our neighbour as ourselves.” “ He that rejoiceth at calamities shall not be unpunished.” Tyre of old thus exulted over the desolations of Jerusalem, saying, “ I shall be replenished now she is laid waste:” but “ the LORD heard, and it displeased him;” for this he denounced the doom of Tyre also: and that once flourishing city, now made “ like the top of a

“rock, and a place for the spreading of nets,” remains a perpetual warning to all who regard the bible, not “thus to covet their neighbour’s goods.”*

Or should any one suffer his mind to be inflated with the vain-glorious desire of splendid conquests, the acquisition of cities and provinces, or the renown and spoils of successful war; let him not vainly suppose that the honour of God is concerned in answering prayers to this effect. As “he abhorreth the covetous,” so “the things that are highly esteemed among men, “are abomination in his sight;” and none more than the bloody triumphs, and usurped domination of ambitious conquerors; for whom thousands or millions must bleed, that they may be celebrated and exalted! Nor is this spirit less odious in communities, than in princes: the Roman patriotism, in the most illustrious ages of the republick was, *in this respect*, as contrary to genuine philanthropy, as the projects of the most aspiring monarch that was ever raised up to scourge mankind.

What then should be the objects of our desires and prayers at this time? What does it become a people, whose “iniquities testify against them,” to expect from the LORD, “for his name’s sake?” We may, I apprehend, beseech him “who stilleth the raging of “the sea and the madness of the people” to preserve us from the fatal effects of popular phrensy; from insurrections, revolutions, and civil wars; and from all those

* Prov. xvii. 5. xxiv. 17, 18. Ezek. xxvi. 2—6. &c.

internal convulsions, massacres, and cruel oppressions, which waste the nation that hath declared war against us. We may intreat the LORD to preserve to us the blessings of that free constitution, which has been formed by the wisdom and experience of successive ages, availing themselves of manifold providential interpositions; and which we may reasonably despair of seeing equalled by the combined genius and sagacity of any single generation. Like all other things here on earth, it is doubtless liable to imperfection and abuse; which temperate counsels in peaceful times may remedy and obviate: but it affords more real liberty of every kind to the whole multitude of the people, than was ever yet enjoyed by all the inhabitants of any city or country in the world: and he who undervalues those things which are highly advantageous, because they are not absolutely perfect, is not qualified to live among men on earth.—We may beg of GOD to shower down his blessings on our Sovereign, and all his ministers and counsellors; and to direct them and the parliament to such wise and salutary measures, as he may see good to prosper for the preservation of our domestic tranquillity, protection from foreign invasions, and the restoration of peace to all the contending nations: that he would dispose the hearts of all parties to hearken to moderate and equitable conditions; that further effusion of human blood may be prevented; that he would preserve our favoured land from becoming the seat of horrid war, the desolations of which who can sufficiently deplore? That he would defend us from famine and pestilence; and (whatever he shall appoint, in res-

pect of our excessive and abused wealth and prosperity,) that he would not suffer our commerce and manufactures to be so ruined, as to deprive the poor of employment or provision. Above all, we should “pray without ceasing,” that the light and liberty of our holy religion may be continued to us; that its avowed enemies may not be permitted to destroy, or alienate, the places appropriated to the worship of God; to drive away the ministers and professors of the gospel, by rigorous exactions, oppressions or persecutions; or in any way to deprive us of our invaluable religious privileges.

To these more general supplications, we may subjoin many of a more particular nature: beseeching the **LORD**, “for his name’s sake,” to bless the labours of all faithful pastors and teachers, and to bestow on them an increase of wisdom and grace; to send “forth more labourers into his harvest,” ‘to illuminate with true knowledge and understanding of his word,’ all who sustain that sacred character; and to reform such as are wicked, ignorant, or heretical. We may beg of him to purify the places of public education, that they may indeed be ‘seminaries of sound learning and true religion;’ to prosper every method taken for the religious instruction of the poor, and of their children; and all endeavours of his servants, publick or private, to repress vice, to exterminate national enormities, to promote true religion, to diffuse the light of the gospel, or in any way to relieve misery, and do good to mankind: and we should most earnestly pray, that many active zealous instruments may be raised

up, by whom such effectual remedies shall be applied to the moral and religious distempers of the land, as may prevent the ruin which our iniquities seem ready to bring down upon us. If we add to these supplications for ourselves, our unfeigned and fervent intercession, not only for our friends and allies, but also for our enemies; for every part of the visible church, and for the nations “that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death;” we may confidently expect that “the LORD, for his name’s sake,” will accept us: and either spare our land in answer to them; or, if in his righteous sovereignty he hath determined otherwise, our prayer will return into our own bosoms, and we shall be mercifully regarded in the day of calamity.

IV. To state the duties which are especially required of us on this occasion, as a means of obtaining those blessings, which are the objects of our prayers and desires.—

It is obvious to every one, that self-examination, in respect of our state, character, and every part of our conduct; with personal humiliation, repentance, renewed acceptance of the salvation of the gospel, and serious purposes of devoting ourselves to GOD, “as bought with a price, to glorify him in body and spirit which are his;” forgiveness of injuries, restitution to the injured, charity to our poor brethren, and amendment of life, should accompany such prayers, as we have been this day presenting before the throne of Grace. Various regulations, duties, and endeavours, in our families and in relative life, might

with great propriety be inculcated: one especially should not be omitted.—It is too well known, that many who call themselves Christians, and even appear to be religious in the house of GOD, neglect his worship in their own houses, and *in this respect*, resemble the heathen:* Would it not then be peculiarly suitable to this occasion, should any master of a family, who is consciously criminal in this matter, call together his domesticks, own before them his conviction that his former neglect had been very sinful, and declare that he had now adopted Joshua's resolution, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD;"† and should he, having made this declaration, begin to read the scriptures to them, and join with them in worshipping GOD from that time, in a regular and constant manner? Thus instructing and "commanding his children and household after him, to walk in the ways of the LORD," in imitation of Abraham's example; he might reasonably hope that GOD would regard his prayers for the guilty, as he did those of the Patriarch for Sodom; and that future generations also might in some measure derive benefit from his pious endeavours.‡

It becomes us, on this occasion especially, to enquire seriously, what talents the LORD hath committed to our stewardship? and whether we have duly improved them? This will conduce to our humiliation, and instruction in *our own* duty; for no real advantage

* Jer. x. 25.

† Josh. xxiv. 15.

‡ Gen. xviii. 17—33.

can arise from an acquaintance with other men's faults and duties, or intermeddling "as busy-bodies in other men's matters," whilst our own business is neglected. Such a conduct in domesticks throws a family into confusion, and it can produce no better effects in the community: but when every man studies to know and practise the duty of his station, the whole goes on regularly and is well managed. Numbers, indeed, will continue ignorant or negligent of their proper work; and will be ambitious of attracting the attention of their fellow-citizens, by a clamorous officiousness in matters "too high for them:" but Christians should "be ambitious (*φιλολιμεῖσθαι*) to be quiet, "and to mind their own business."*

The minister of state and the minister of religion, the senator and the magistrate, the gentleman and the merchant, the rich and the poor, the master and the domestick, have their several stations, talents, and employments assigned them by their common LORD, "who is no respecter of persons." Every man should, therefore, conscientiously rectify what hath been amiss, perform what hath been neglected, and improve every advantage of his situation in "doing good to all men, "and especially to the household of faith;" not knowing how soon it may be said unto him. "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest no longer "be steward." Nor can any Christian consistently spend his precious time in animadverting on the faults of others; except his office require him "to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all authority and doctrine;" or un-

* Thes. iv. 11.

less it be his duty to inspect the conduct of some part of the community. By attending to our own business, we may all, in some measure, conduce to a revival of undefiled religion, and help to preserve the peace or improve the morals of the nation; which things are not likely to be effected by those who know every one's duty but their own, quarrel with vice in every body except themselves, and are zealous for a reform any where rather than in their own lives and families. But here alas! their 'charity should begin at home.'

It is also incumbent upon us, brethren, at present to give peculiar attention to the scriptural exhortations "to fear GOD and the king, and not to meddle with those who are given to change:"* The ministers of CHRIST are required to "put you in mind, to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates," and "to honour and obey the king;" "to pay tribute also," and "to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Indeed it is of the greatest importance to the honour of the gospel, especially in these turbulent times, that "all who name the name of CHRIST" and would be deemed his disciples, should set an example of peaceable obedience "to every ordinance of man, for the LORD's sake," in all things not contrary to the commands of GOD; of respect to the persons of rulers, as the ministers of providence, and of regard to the publick peace. Thus should we aim "to put to silence and shame" those false accusers who represent us as "troublers of the city," and

* Prov. xxiv. 21, 22.

as “enemies to princes and provinces:” and we ought likewise by such a conduct to express our gratitude for the religious liberty we enjoy. But should any man object that he disapproves some things in the conduct or measures of our rulers; and that he deems himself on that account liberated, in point of conscience, from the obligation to honour and obey them: let him honestly answer these following questions. Did the apostles see nothing amiss in the characters and administration of the Roman emperors, or of their ministers and deputies? Are not our rulers and government, in many respects, an entire contrast to those under which they delivered these precepts? Did the primitive Christians ever start this objection to the exhortations of their inspired teachers? Do your children and servants see no flaw in your conduct? Or do you deem them justified on that account, in disobeying, reviling, or exposing you? I own I am conscious of so many faults in myself, that I feel no surprise when I am informed that they, who fill the post of temptation and observation, are not found immaculate by their numerous and rigorous judges. We, are, however, answerable only for our own conduct: the crimes of others will not excuse our express disobedience to God; and the more we are abased for our sins, the less shall we be disposed “to despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.”

Among the various evils which prevail in the land, the religious divisions and contentions that subsist among us, are not the most inconsiderable; for by them

CHRIST is “wounded in the house of his friends;” and the enemy of souls now makes a great advantage of political disputes, to alienate the minds of serious people from each other more than ever. We cannot heal these divisions as they exist in the outward state of the church: we allow, that there are persons who do not hold the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and to whom we must not “bid GOD speed;” (though we may feed them when hungry, and relieve their urgent necessities;) and it is our duty “to withdraw “from every brother that walks disorderly:” yet we should be careful not to harbour prejudices against whole bodies of men, because of the faults committed even by a large part of them: Judas was found among the apostles, and Joseph of Arimathea among the rulers of the Jews.—“He that is not against us is on “our part:” we should not “forbid those who cast “out devils in CHRIST’S name, though they follow “not with us;” but “endeavour to keep the unity of “the Spirit in the bond of peace;” “to love as brethren all that are born of GOD,” and pray that “mercy and grace may be with all those who love the “LORD JESUS in sincerity.”—We are commanded to “lift up holy hands” without *wrath* or doubting: and the union of all true Christians, on these solemn occasions, resembles that of an army composed of several nations and distinct battalions; if they forget their personal and national disputes, and vie with each other in courage and zeal for the common cause; they are formidable and effective: but if any malignant influence prevail on them to turn their arms against each

other, their strength is annihilated, and the enemy triumphs. In short, "the fruits of righteousness are sown in peace of those that make peace; the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of GOD;" and "blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the children of GOD." May he then vouchsafe to pour out upon his church the Spirit of illumination and holy love; that all his people may be of one mind and judgment, and love one another with a pure heart fervently! May all Christians "follow after peace," especially with each other; and seek the peace of the church, in which her beauty, her strength, and her prosperity do greatly consist!

From this view of our national situation, and personal duty, we may infer that the true Christian alone can be a real patriot. Others may promote the temporal interests of a nation, with great ability and success, and may be accounted excellent members of the community: but they daily increase the aggregate of the national guilt, by their own conduct, and the effects of their influence, converse, and example; while they use no means to avert the wrath of GOD from us.— To pray continually for their rulers and fellow-citizens, is a debt which they owe them: but they habitually refuse to discharge it. They perhaps censure publick measures, and lament publick calamities; yet neither beseech GOD to give wisdom to those who are in authority, nor to prosper their undertakings; and if the nation be preserved from impending danger, not by fleets and armies, or by human policy and valour, but

by the out-stretched arm of the Almighty; they must allow that, so far from having contributed to this deliverance; they have counteracted the endeavours of those who implore the mercy of GOD in our behalf.

The sacred oracles, on such occasions especially, call upon impenitent sinners “to submit themselves to GOD;”—“to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts; to be afflicted and mourn, and weep;—and to humble themselves under the mighty hand of the LORD.”* Thus they should join the national humiliation with personal repentance and conversion, “that their sins may be blotted out:” or else “the wrath of GOD will abide on them;” even if it be turned away from our guilty land.

We may also observe that the language of the text is equally applicable to the case of individuals, as to that of the community: and the trembling penitent, who has nothing to say in his own behalf, will never be rejected when he humbly beseeches the LORD, “for his name’s sake,” and for the honour of his mercy and grace in JESUS CHRIST: to pardon all his numerous and heinous sins, to subdue his iniquities, and to save his soul.

To those who seriously engage in the important duties of this day, with true repentance and living faith, according to the instructions of the Holy Scriptures, I would speak in the most encouraging and animating language. “Blessed are ye, that mourn now; for ye shall laugh and sing:” “Fear none of those things,

* Jam. iv, 7—10.

“that may come” upon the land, or upon you: “the
“LORD will be your Refuge and Comforter in every
“trouble;” “he will hide you in the secret of his
“presence from the strife of tongues;” “and seal you
“in the forehead before the destroying angels are al-
“lowed to execute their commission.”* Soon will
the troublesome but transient dream of life be over;
then shall you enter into that blessed place, where
sorrow, sin, and discord shall never find admission,
but light, love, and joy shall be perfected for evermore.
“Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, un-
“moveable, always abounding in the work of the
“LORD; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is
“not in vain in the LORD.”

* Ezek. ix.

SERMON III.*



ISAIAH IX. 13.

*For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them;
neither do they seek the LORD of Hosts.*

THE LORD sent a word unto Jacob, and it hath
“lighted upon Israel:” JEHOVAH had denounced
judgments on the nation descended from the patriarchs;
which had begun to be accomplished on the kingdom
of Israel, by the kings of Syria and Assyria: yet
the people disregarded these tokens of his displea-
sure. “And all the people shall know, even Ephraim
“and the inhabitants of Samaria, that say in the pride
“and stoutness of heart; The bricks are fallen down,
“but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores
“are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.
“—Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of
“Rezin against him, and join his enemies together.

* Preached on the ninth of March, 1796, being a day of fast-
ing and humiliation.

“ The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind, and
 “ they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all
 “ this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is
 “ stretched out still.” After all the calamities which
 came on Israel by these numerous enemies; still more
 complicated and tremendous miseries awaited the na-
 tion, which would terminate in their final ruin and
 dispersion. “ For the people turneth not unto him that
 “ smiteth them; neither do they seek the LORD of
 “ Hosts.”—The text thus opened, suggests the fol-
 lowing topicks suited to the present emergency.

I. Under affliction we should remember that the
 LORD smiteth us.

II. It is our duty and wisdom in this case to turn
 unto him.

III. As Israel of old did not, so Great Britain at
 present doth not, properly attend to this duty.

IV. This circumstance may well create most
 serious alarms, concerning the event of our present
 calamities.

V. The admonitions and instructions, which may
 by deduced from these considerations.

I. We observe, that under affliction we should re-
 member that the LORD smiteth us.

A vain philosophy is at present employed, to resolve
 all events into second causes, and impute them to men
 or measures: as if that GOD, who “ doeth according

“to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth,” in fact did nothing; but left the universe to the established laws of nature, or the uncontrouled devices and machinations of his creatures!—I would not be supposed, my brethren, to speak against philosophy; that is, the investigation of the works of GOD, and a sober enquiry into the ordinary rules by which he governs the world: for this conduces to an intelligent perception of his operations, and an admiring sense of this wisdom, power, justice, and goodness. But sceptical reasonings about second causes, and undue attention to instruments, exceedingly tend to make men overlook the First Cause, that great Agent “who worketh all in all.”

In this respect as well as others, we should learn “to speak according to the oracles of God:” for in scripture his hand is acknowledged on every occasion. “By Naaman the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria.” “I inform you,” (says the apostle) “of the grace of GOD bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;” that is their liberality, which was the effect of divine grace.—“Thanks be to GOD who put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus.”* The exercise of faith leads us to view GOD in every object and event, to taste his love in our most common mercies, and to submit to his correction by whatever means it is brought upon us.

The arrogance, blasphemy, rapacity, and ambition

* 2 Kings v. 1. 2 Cor. viii. 1—3. 16, 17.

of Sennacherib can scarcely be exceeded: yet observe what the LORD says of him; “ O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down as the mire of the streets: howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so.”* Hezekiah and his principal assistants in reforming Judah were sincere and zealous:† but many of the princes, priests, and people had been mere dissemblers in their concurrence. The LORD therefore determined to employ Sennacherib, to execute judgment on them for this hypocrisy; and when he had fulfilled that commission he meant to take still more signal vengeance on him. It is vain then for us to expect success against our enemies, merely because they are infidels or atheists, if we are only nominal Christians: for the LORD commonly employs such men to correct or punish his hypocritical worshippers. —Executioners, in general, are not the most respectable characters; and a malefactor would act absurdly, who should hope to escape the sentence denounced against him, because he supposed the person appointed to inflict it, more criminal than himself!

The LORD smote Egypt with desolating plagues; and flies, lice, locusts, and frogs were his instruments,

* Is. x. 5—7.

† 2 Chron. xxxi. 20, 21.

in pouring contempt, as well as vengeance, on haughty Pharaoh. But in smiting the Canaanites, he gave Joshua and Israel a charge against them. These nations deserved their doom; and an express commission, sealed by undeniable miracles, fully warranted all that was done against them. Yet in general, the instruments of punishment are unrighteous, though the LORD is righteous in the judgments they inflict. When the Israelites provoked him, the Philistines, Midianites, Syrians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Greeks, and Romans were successively employed in smiting them: the rod of correction, or sword of vengeance was changed; but the hand that used it was the same. Nay, when domestick usurpers, tyrants, or persecutors, like Ahab, Athaliah, or Manasseh, brought calamities upon them, GOD made use of them as his instruments. “ Shall “ there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done “ it?”* The evil of *sin* is wholly from the creature; but the evil of suffering from the LORD, who thus punishes the transgressions of his offending subjects.— Whether afflictions come immediately from the hand of GOD, as sickness, famine, pestilence, and earthquakes; or by the intervention of men, the case in this respect is not altered. The Chaldeans and Sabeans unjustly seized on Job’s property, and slew his servants; fire from heaven consumed his flocks; and the wind threw down the house upon his children: yet he made no distinction, but said in general, “ The LORD

* Amos, iii. 6.

“ gave, and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be
 “ the name of the LORD.”

Whether, therefore, our present publick distresses and dangers be the natural consequences of providential dispensations; or whether the misconduct of men have been, and is, in any degree the cause of them; we must acknowledge that it is the LORD who smiteth us.—A scarcity and dearness of provisions, decay of trade, and various hardships, are generally complained of: and many imagine that they are occasioned by the mistakes, or crimes of this or the other description of men. Now, in a political sense, it is of great importance to investigate the point, and to use proper methods of counteracting every attempt of this kind: but as a religious concern, it is not in the smallest degree material; for, on every supposition, the hand of GOD should be acknowledged; and as a minister of religion, I must declare, that, till proper methods of discovering and removing the distresses we feel be used and prospered; the righteous LORD continues to smite us, whether *unjust* men be his instruments or not.

“ The LORD’S voice crieth unto the city, and the
 “ man of wisdom shall see thy name.” The power and perfections of GOD are perceived by men of wisdom in all publick calamities. “ Hear ye then the rod,
 “ and who hath appointed it.”* The rod calls us to repentance: but unless we recollect, who it is that appointed it, we shall not hear and obey its voice, however we may smart and groan under its repeated strokes.

* Micah, vi. 9.

—I insist the more fully on this point, because Satan successfully contrives to perplex the minds even of serious persons about it. They are told, and they believe, that this or the other description of men, by their folly or knavery, occasion the publick distresses: and others dispute with them and vindicate men and measures. But in the mean while “the LORD’S hand is lifted up, and they will not see;” he smites, and they refuse to humble themselves before him: being employed in disputing about the rod and the sword.

But if some men be infatuated in their counsels, or others intoxicated by ext avagant projects; if one set of men will be rich at any rate; another try to abuse power in tyranny and oppression; or a third would throw a nation into confusion, civil war, or anarchy, to gratify their own ambition or rapacity: the LORD permits them to practise and prosper, in order by them to scourge an hypocritical or ungodly people. When David was left, in vain-glory, to number Israel, which made way for the desolations of a pestilence; the nation had first provoked GOD by their sins to leave the king to that pernicious project.*

When we recognize the hand of GOD in our sufferings, we must not only view his power, but submit likewise to his justice. “We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled: thou hast set our iniquities before thee, and our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.”† We should not only consider sin, but *our own* sins, as the cause of our af-

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 1.

† Ps. xc. 7, 8.

fictions.—It is a common, but a most absurd mistake, to profess humiliation before GOD for national crimes as the cause of publick judgments; and yet to think only of the sins committed by other men. But “are there not with us sins against the LORD our GOD?” “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search, and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto GOD in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled; thou hast not pardoned.”* Did we thus search and try our ways, and compare our past and present conduct with the law of GOD; we should soon be convinced of our personal criminality, and should both join in the service of the day, and do it heartily and earnestly. No suffering which any man endures, as sharing in national calamities, is more severe than his sins deserve: the criminality therefore of others should not prevent our acknowledging the righteousness of GOD, in his most afflictive dispensations.

His *mercy* indeed should also be noticed in our chastisements. He is very merciful in correcting us for our sins, and not leaving us to be hardened by prosperity. To “fare sumptuously every day,” without warning or rebuke, and then to be cut off at once, and to lift up the eyes in hell amidst hopeless torments, is the most dreadful case imaginable. “LORD loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every

* Lam. iii. 39—42.

“son whom he receiveth:” and all our present sufferings are suited to induce reflection and teach repentance.

We should also be thankful that the LORD chastens us so gently; “for it is of his mercies we are not consumed.” Instead of our present light afflictions, we might justly be left to all the horrors of famine, during which tender mothers have eaten their children; our fields and cities might have been ravaged by fierce invaders; and all our comforts and hopeful prospects might have been removed, and every conceivable distress accumulated. We ought therefore to own the mercy of GOD in exempting us from the most excruciating anguish that can rend the human heart. Nay we should remember the words of the Psalmist, “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.”* Corrections are needful, and are promised as blessings: when we pray for humility, a spiritual mind, increase of faith, and holiness; we in effect pray for chastisement: and we should therefore acknowledge the faithfulness of GOD to his promises, and his wisdom and love in answering our prayers, in a way we did not expect, but which was best suited to promote our most important advantages.

II. We proceed to shew, that it is our duty and wisdom under affliction to turn to GOD and to seek his favour.

If men smite us we may resist or retaliate; we may

* Ps. cxix. 75,

flee, or attempt to hide ourselves: but we cannot resist omnipotence, or conceal ourselves from him who is omniscient. Neither can we stand before him in judgment, or justify our conduct in his sight: so that we have no possible way of escaping his righteous vengeance, except by fleeing for refuge to lay hold of his mercy.—Whether the LORD contend with an individual or a nation, he will overcome; and he will continue to smite till we turn unto him. Obstinate impenitence is therefore a species of insanity: it is a perverseness which prolongs misery, and provokes the LORD to lay aside his chastening rod, and take his avenging sword. “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old
“through my groaning all the day long. For day and
“night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture
“is turned into the drought of summer. I acknow-
“ledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I
“not hid. I said I will confess my transgression unto
“the LORD and thou forgavest the iniquity of my
“sins.”* The LORD still “waiteth to be gracious:” he may be found upon the mercy-seat through JESUS CHRIST by the cry of penitent faith; and he never casts out those who humbly call upon him. Let us hear his words by the prophet. “I will be unto Ephraim as a
“lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even
“I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall
“rescue.—I will go and return to my place; till they
“acknowledge their offence and seek my face: in their

* Ps. xxxii. 3—5.

“affliction they will seek me early. Come and let us
 “return unto the LORD: for he hath torn and he will
 “heal us. He hath smitten and he will bind us up.”*
 Thus he says likewise by the same prophet, “O Israel
 “return unto the LORD thy GOD; for thou hast fallen
 “by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn
 “unto the LORD: say unto him, take away all iniquity
 “and receive us graciously: so will we render the
 “calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us, we will
 “not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more
 “to the work of our hands, ye are our gods; for in
 “thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their
 “backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger
 “is turned away from him.”†

But another prophet more directly inculcates the
 duty of a nation under great distress. “Therefore now
 “also, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all
 “your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and
 “with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your
 “garments, and turn unto the LORD your GOD; for
 “he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of
 “great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.—Blow
 “the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn
 “assembly. Gather the people, sanctify the congre-
 “gation, assemble the elders, gather the children and
 “those that suck the breasts; let the bridegroom go
 “forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.
 “Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep be-

* Hosea. v. 14, 15. vi. 1.

† Hosea, xiv. 1—4.

“tween the porch and the alter; and let them say,
 “Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heri-
 “tage to reproach;—wherefore should they say among
 “the people, where is their God? Then will the
 “LORD be jealous for his land and pity his people.”*
 —You see, my brethren, that the ordinances of this
 day are most perfectly scriptural, and that all orders of
 men are in duty bound to attend on them: nor will the
 misconduct of any persons whatever exculpate those
 who neglect them. Assuredly the LORD will not con-
 demn us, however men may censure us, for complying
 exactly with the proclamation of our sovereign, pro-
 vided our services be not hypocritical.

The passage that hath been read, demands our most
 particular attention: for it teaches us in what manner a
 people should “turn to him that smiteth them.” We
 must return to him with all our heart, with unfeigned
 submission to his righteousness, and repentance of our
 sins; praying earnestly, “Turn thou us, and so shall
 “we be turned:” “Create in us a clean heart, and re-
 “new a right spirit within us.” This should be ac-
 companied with fasting, and other tokens of humilia-
 tion. Abstinence from every animal indulgence, and
 from food as far as health and circumstances will ad-
 mit, is a scriptural acknowledgment, that we have for-
 feited our most common mercies, and that sin hath
 embittered them to us. It implies that our minds are
 too much occupied with matters of the highest import-

* Joel, ii. 12—18.

ance, to attend on such low concerns; that we wish to avoid all interruption of our sacred duties; that we mean to afflict ourselves with fasting, as a token of our submission to the LORD'S correcting hand; and that we would use all means of crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts.

If we be indeed suitably affected with the consideration of our own sins, and the crimes and miseries of our countrymen; we shall turn to the LORD with that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of." Outward expressions, however emphatical, will not suffice; we shall rend our hearts in deep contrition and self-abasement, perceiving that we have no hope but in unmerited mercy, which we shall supplicate with fervency and importunity. And when princes, senators, magistrates, ministers of religion, and the people in general, laying aside all other employments, unite in thus humbly seeking the LORD of Hosts, a crisis may be expected in publick affairs. "Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people."

In this manner the king of Nineveh and his nobles, with all the inhabitants of that immense city, sought the LORD when he threatened to smite them; encouraged merely by a peradventure, "Who can tell, if GOD will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not."* Surely that hea-

* Jonah iii.

then city will rise up in judgment with this Christian land and condemn it; for it repented at the preaching of Jonah; and doubtless our religious advantages are inconceivably greater: yet alas, how little does the observance of a fast in London resemble that proclaimed at Nineveh!

The words of the apostle likewise demand our serious consideration. "Submit yourselves to GOD. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to GOD, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts ye double minded. Be afflicted and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the LORD, and he shall lift you up. Speak not evil one of another, brethren."* Instead of reviling or condemning other men, every individual should be employed in confessing and lamenting his own sin, in humbly deprecating the LORD'S indignation, and in using every means of overcoming evil habits and forsaking sinful courses.

This accords also with the exhortation of the prophet. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy on him."† But without true repentance and works meet for repentance; no appear-

* Jam. iv. 7—11.

† Is. lv. 6, 7.

ances of strictness, humiliation, or grief will constitute such a fast as the LORD hath chosen. "Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?" —Behold in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness.*

The substantial and permanent effects of repentance, and faith in GOD's mercy, must be manifested in our future lives; if we would be thought sincerely to have turned to the LORD and sought him in our distresses. Nor can any nation be considered as having duly regarded the rod and the word of GOD; unless a general reformation and revival of religion take place: or at least till numbers, in the different orders of the community, use the most decided endeavours to restrain and discountenance vice and impiety, to reform inveterate abuses, which have been connived at and sanctioned by a corrupt policy; and to encourage and promote genuine piety and purity of manners.

III. This leads me to observe, that as the people of Israel did not, neither do the inhabitants of Great-Britain, turn unto the LORD that smiteth: an observation which I make with reluctance and unfeigned sorrow.

Our peculiar mercies have been numerous and invaluable, for a long course of years: but our prosperi-

* Is. lviii.

ty seemed at its height, just before the American war; when our iniquities provoked the LORD to smite us. During the calamities attending on that unhappy contest, we were called upon to observe one season of fasting, humiliation, and prayer after another. On these occasions, while numbers employed themselves in political discussions and party-disputes; there were also many ministers from the pulpit, and some from the press, who endeavoured to observe the LORD'S command to the prophet, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."* They alledged, that the nation had been intoxicated with prosperity; was become arrogant and insolent; and had forgotten the LORD, ascribing their success to their own wisdom and prowess, and depending on themselves for its continuance. They shewed, that negligence and lukewarmness in religion had introduced various antisciptural deviations from the gospel, which gaining ground among the superior orders; and even the professed ministers of CHRIST, had opened the door to scepticism and infidelity, which were making rapid progress in the nation. They lamented, that impiety, contempt of GOD'S word, profanation of his holy day in a variety of ways, perjuries multiplied and connived at beyond all former examples; venality among all orders of the community; and shameless prevarication in solemn subscriptions, sacred engagements, and sacramental tests, were notoriously common. They affirmed that systems of fraud, oppres-

* Is. lviii. 1.

sion, and cruelty, especially in foreign parts; unprecedented luxury and dissipation among the higher orders in society; and licentiousness among their inferiors, even beyond the ordinary measures found in pagan or papal countries, together with many other crying iniquities, had provoked the LORD to contend with us. This representation was accompanied with earnest calls to repentance, and exhortations to every one to use his influence in attempting reformation, and promoting the cause of truth, piety, justice, and mercy, in his own sphere, and according to the duties of his station. Yet those warnings and admonitions, repeated from year to year, produced no sensible effects: the same evils continued and increased; and the services of the fast day seemed generally and willingly forgotten, as soon as they were finished. We were, however, at length brought into a very alarming situation: yet the LORD, in answer to the prayers of the pious remnant in the land, remembered us in mercy: the storm was rebuked, and a flattering calm succeeded.

But alas, instead of making suitable returns for such mercies; every one of those evils which had been scripturally proved to be the causes of the LORD'S controversy, still contaminated the land: and all the protests and warnings of ministers and Christians were ridiculed as visionary, enthusiastical, and superstitious. The event, as men supposed, contradicted their forebodings, and increasing prosperity succeeded to the alarm. Yet, while the nation was thus saying "Peace and safety," a dark cloud began again to threaten a most tremendous storm. The violent and extraordinary changes which

took place on the continent, and the spirit manifested by numbers at home, combined to excite most serious apprehensions. After a time this deplorable and eventful war broke out: and though our distresses have not hitherto been worthy to be compared with those calamities which many dreaded; yet they have certainly been very great, and none can say in what manner they will terminate.

Immediately, the same means of averting the divine indignation was resorted to: days of fasting and prayer have repeatedly been observed; and similar warnings and exhortations have been urged from the pulpit and the press. This is now the fourth time we have complied with the royal proclamation: and many zealous efforts have been made to awaken men to a sense both of our situation and our duty. But what effects have been witnessed? Who almost can be found, that manifests a more humble, spiritual, zealous, and conscientious disposition, in consequence of these ordinances? The few instances of this kind, which doubtless have occurred, are scarcely visible in the great mass of those, who outwardly observe the day and then think no more about it. Many who are supposed to concur in its appointment, openly refuse to attend on any of its duties; and this gives others an occasion of representing the observance as a political device, and of turning the whole into profane ridicule!

Some fast, or *pretend* to “fast, for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness:” and while they revile, others pay court to, their superiors; and thus they make a day of fasting and prayer an oppor-

tunity of seeking favour, either from the populace or from the magistrate! In short, the very observance of so important and solemn an occasion, as it is too generally conducted, may be considered as an accession to our national sins: and the spirit discovered by numbers, even of those who in other respects seem to be religious, creates an alarm, lest the proper remedy for our maladies should hasten the death of the enfeebled patient.

In the mean time the most daring and blasphemous infidelity, scarcely distinguishable from atheism, is zealously propagated, and greedily imbibed by a deluded populace and the rising generation: while almost every effort to counteract its progress is marked with feebleness; nay, too often with treachery, the defenders of the outworks betraying the citadel into the hands of the besiegers!—Impiety, profanation of the sabbath, perjury, venality, dissipation, and licentiousness, are rapidly increasing. An unruly spirit disdaining subordination threatens to level all distinctions in society; while alas! few of those, who are thus distinguished, take proper and decided methods of counteracting its inroads, or softening the odium, envy, and contempt, from which it springs! The various species of vice and profaneness, heretofore protested against, are permitted to exist and gather strength; while little is so much as attempted in removing occasions and encouragements to them. Yea that horrid monster, *the slave-trade*, is still sanctioned by the British legislature, and conducted by merchants professing to be the disciples of Him, who said
“ Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you,

“do ye even so unto them.” These are notorious facts and demonstrate that notwithstanding all appearances, “The people turneth not to him that smiteth them, “neither do they seek the LORD of Hosts.” And though the present scarcity seems to have given a temporary check to the excessive luxury that prevailed, and to have called forth a very commendable spirit of humanity to the indigent; yet other symptoms prove this to be merely a partial and occasional effort; and we may still say, that with comparatively a very few exceptions, “the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint.” So that “except the LORD of Hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been like Sodom and Gomorrah.”

IV. Then we observe, that this circumstance may justly excite serious alarms, concerning the event of our present difficulties.

If we were, as a nation, generally united in turning to the LORD, and strenuously seeking a revival of genuine Christianity: neither the number, courage, or violence of our foes; the wavering or dubious conduct of our allies; the weight of taxes and publick encumbrances; nor even the scarcity of provisions, could give alarm in respect of the future, to a mind accustomed to judge according to the scripture. But an opposite conduct, in a nation favoured like Britain with every advantage for religious improvement, must excite serious apprehensions for the consequences. No doubt we stand in the same relation to the LORD, that

Israel did of old, and must expect to be dealt with according to the same measure. Nations, as well as individuals, which have not known the will of God, may be beaten for their crimes with few stripes: but we, who have had the most abundant opportunities of learning his truths and precepts, yet have pertinaciously continued in disobedience, must expect to be beaten more severely. “ You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.”*

Let us attend to the words of the prophet, “ In that day did the LORD GOD of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” Sennacherib’s invasion was a divine call to fasting, mourning, repentance, and prayer: but the people united excessive sensual indulgence, with infidel principles and daring impiety. “ And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of Hosts; surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die.”* Alas, does not the spirit and conduct of men in general, throughout our land, so exactly accord to this description, that a serious mind cannot but dread the denunciation of a like sentence against us?—Thus Amos also warned the Jews and Israelites in his time. —“ Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria.—Ye that put far away

* Amos iii. 2.

† Isai. xxii. 12—14.

“ the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to draw
 “ near. That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch them-
 “ selves upon their couches; that eat the lambs out of
 “ the flock, and calves out of the midst of the stall:
 “ that chaunt to the sound of the viol, and invent to
 “ themselves instruments of musick like David; that
 “ drink wine in bowls, and anoint them with the chief
 “ ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction
 “ of Joseph. Therefore shall they go captive with the
 “ first that go captive: and the banquet of them that
 “ stretched themselves shall be removed. The LORD
 “ GOD hath sworn by himself, I abhor the excellen-
 “ cy of Jacob and hate his palaces: therefore will I
 “ deliver up the city with all that is therein.”* And
 in another place—“ I have given you cleanness of
 “ teeth in your cities, and want of bread in all your
 “ places: yet have ye not returned unto me saith the
 “ LORD. I have withholden the rain,—yet have ye
 “ not returned unto me.—I have smitten you with
 “ blasting and mildew;—I have sent pestilence upon
 “ you.—I have overthrown some of you, as GOD
 “ overthrew Sodom, and ye were as a firebrand pluck-
 “ ed out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto
 “ me saith the LORD. Therefore thus will I do unto
 “ thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee,
 “ prepare to meet thy GOD, O Israel.”† If the peo-
 ple would not return to the LORD, when he corrected
 them as a Father, let them prepare to meet him as an
 avenging Judge.

* Amos vi. 1—8.

† Amos iv. 6—13.

In this case the form of godliness or profession of Christianity, will avail nothing. “To what purpose
 “ is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith
 “ the LORD. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams,
 “ and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the
 “ blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When
 “ ye come to appear before me, who hath required
 “ this at your hands, to tread my courts? Bring no
 “ more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto
 “ me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of as-
 “ semblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the
 “ solemn meeting. Your new moons, and your ap-
 “ pointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble to
 “ me, I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread
 “ forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you:
 “ when ye make many prayers I will not hear. Your
 “ hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean,
 “ put away the evil of your doings from before mine
 “ eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judg-
 “ ment, relieve the oppressed, &c.”* “They seek me
 “ daily and delight to know my ways, as a nation that
 “ did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of
 “ their GOD: they ask of me the ordinances of justice,
 “ they take delight in approaching to GOD. Is not this
 “ the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of
 “ wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let
 “ the oppressed go free; and that ye break every
 “ yoke?”† “Think not to say within yourselves,
 “ We have Abraham to our Father. Now is the axe

* Isai. i.

† Isai. lviii. 2—6.

“ laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree
 “ which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down
 “ and cast into the fire.”*

These scriptures, to which many more might properly be added, abundantly prove that no external humiliation, or publick honour put upon GOD and religion, can procure more than a respite to a guilty nation, unless repentance and works meet for repentance be connected with them. Such an outward shew of contrition Ahab exhibited, and a reprieve was granted him: but the destruction of him and his family was not averted.

We are not authorized to say at what time, or in what manner, the LORD may see good to be avenged on such a nation as this. He deals with collective bodies and with individuals in some respects according to the same rules. Young persons having heard the wrath of GOD denounced against sin, frequently venture upon flagrant vices with considerable apprehensions: but escaping with impunity, they grow bolder in wickedness, and are apt to conclude the threatenings of scripture to be mere empty words. Thus, “ 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.”† But “ He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.”‡ Some are cut off in youth, others are spared, and persist in

* Matt. iii. 7—12

† Eccles. viii. 11.

‡ Prov. xxix. 1.

wickedness till they are grown old: but in general ungodly men are most secure when vengeance is at hand.*

In like manner guilty nations, being often warned, that their iniquities will bring down the judgments of GOD upon them, and finding respite, become hardened in sin; the remonstrances and reproofs of the LORD'S servants are disregarded, or only expose them to reproach, scorn, and ill usage; their measure of wickedness fills up rapidly, but without being observed; and when infidel and impious presumption are at the height, vengeance overtakes them as suddenly, as if they had never been forewarned. Thus it was with Israel and Judah in the Assyrian and Chaldean captivities; and especially this was the case of the Jews, at the time when Jerusalem, the temple, and the whole country was finally desolated by the Romans.

When the LORD has a number of believing servants and faithful ministers in a land, and they enjoy toleration and protection; a hopeful symptom remains. Their example, prayers, and exertions in various ways, prevent a total prevalence of impiety and iniquity. They are "the salt" and "the light" of the land: and for their sakes the LORD delays national judgments, and executes vengeance on the individuals who provoke his indignation. But prevailing divisions among professed believers, attended with lukewarmness, formality, loose principles, extravagant sentiments, and scandalous practice, tend to subvert this bulwark of

* 1 Thes. v. 1, 2.

our country. The gradual but effectual success of those, “ who privily bring in damnable heresies” into congregations and bodies of men, hitherto steadily attached to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel; with the progress of infidelity on every side, are “ signs of the “ times,” which threaten to deprive us of our last ground of confidence.

If the present generation of pious Christians should be taken from the evil to come; and be succeeded by such, “ as have the form of godliness but deny the “ power of it;” and if the number of zealous defenders of the truth should decrease; and timid, feeble advocates be substituted in their room; it is very probable that the LORD may permit the open enemies of Christianity to prevail for a season. In this case persecution may waste, or drive to a distance, the faithful remnant, suppress the testimony of the witnesses, and prevent the publick profession of the gospel; thus the light will be obscured or extinguished, and the candlestick removed, while infidelity and atheism will exult and triumph. Should this take place, no doubt the flood-gates of national judgments will be opened; and the vengeance of the LORD, against our flagrant contempt and defiance of him, be made manifest to all the world. This was the course of events in Judea, especially from the death of Josiah, to the captivity: and when scarcely a man could be found to intercede for the land; the wrath of GOD was poured out upon them like an irresistible deluge. The same was still more remarkable, after the Jews in our LORD’S time had filled up the measure of their iniquities: for the perse-

cuted Christians separated from among them, when the Romans invaded the land, and then wrath came upon them to the uttermost. Something analagous hath been commonly observed in the desolations of countries professing christianity: and when we consider the dire calamities that have befallen a neighbouring nation, (for dire they have been, in what way soever they may terminate,) we may well recollect our LORD'S words, " Think ye that they were sinners " above all men? I tell you nay, but except ye repent, " ye shall all likewise perish." In the mean while the LORD waits to be gracious: and who can tell, but that faith and prayer may prevail, and that a timely repentance and reformation may yet take place, and " so iniquity shall not be our ruin."

V. Then I proceed to deduce some instructions and admonitions, suited to the present emergency.

When Sennacherib invaded Judah, with a powerful army, uttering the most dreadful menaces and blasphemies; the pious king sent to the prophet Isaiah, stating the case to him, and saying, " Wherefore lift " up thy prayer for the remnant that is left:" and he himself spread the haughty Assyrian's letter before the LORD, and earnestly intreated his gracious interposition. Hezekiah indeed desired the prayers of an eminent prophet, who had long been employed in that honourable service: yet I apprehend, that we may properly consider his message to Isaiah, as a divine admonition to us at the present crisis. The providence of GOD hath formed a special relation between us and

the land in which we live, similar to that we bear to our parents or children: we are therefore peculiarly bound to pray for its peace and welfare; as even the captive Jews were commanded to pray for the peace of the country in which they had peace. We have received and still enjoy manifold advantages, temporal and spiritual, in this our favoured land; and we or our descendants shall probably participate the future prosperity or adversity, the blessings or calamities, that await the nation. Our personal transgressions form no small part of that guilt which calls for divine judgments on the land: and our lukewarmness and inconsistent conduct, as Christians, have helped to provoke God, to deprive us of our religious privileges. It would therefore be a foolish hypocrisy in us, on this day of fasting and humiliation, to arraign the conduct of other men, and excuse our own.

On these and many other accounts, it is our undeniable duty "to lift up our prayer for the remnant that is left." There is still a remnant among us of real believers; there is still ground for hope in the LORD'S mercy; "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;" the most eminent believers who prayed with signal success, were men of like passions with us: even Isaiah once cried out, "Woe is me I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips;" yet his prayers were most effectually answered. It is likewise undeniable, that our enemies, like Sennacherib, want to subvert our holy religion, as well as our temporal prosperity: and this suggests a

powerful plea in lifting up our prayer for national deliverance.

But it is confidently asserted by numbers, that prayers, offered on such occasions, are the dictates of revenge, ambition, or avarice. If avowed infidels alone held such language, it would not excite our surprize: but it is indeed most astonishing, that men, pretending to believe the Bible, should condemn a practice approved and commanded in every part of the sacred volume! Let us, however, examine how Hezekiah prayed:—“ O LORD of Hosts, GOD of Israel, who
 “ dwellest between the cherubim, (that is, above the
 “ mercy-seat,) thou art the GOD, even thou alone, of
 “ all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made hea-
 “ ven and earth. Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear;
 “ open thine eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the
 “ words of Sennacherib, who hath sent to reproach the
 “ living GOD. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assy-
 “ ria have laid waste all the nations and their countries:
 “ and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were
 “ no gods, but the work of men’s hand, wood and
 “ stone; therefore they have destroyed them. Now,
 “ therefore, O LORD our GOD, save us from his hand
 “ that all the kings of the earth may know that thou
 “ art the LORD, even thou only.”* Nothing can be more plain, than that zeal for the honour of GOD and the interests of true religion, principally dictated this prayer. The LORD indeed answered it, “ by terrible
 “ things in righteousness:” but Hezekiah had only

* Is. xxxvii. 15—20.

asked deliverance for his people, not destruction on his enemies; and his expanded charity made him earnestly desire that all the kings of the earth might know the difference between the true GOD and worthless idols, and that they might diffuse that knowledge among their subjects.

I would not knowingly offer one prayer on this occasion, which could not be answered consistently with our enemies enjoying peace, security, liberty, good government, and the blessings of true religion; but we may pray that the LORD would ‘abate their pride, as-
‘suage their malice, and confound their devices,’ (that is, their devices against the peace of other lands, or the Christian religion,) in entire consistency with these friendly dispositions towards them: for such things would conduce to their advantage, as well as our own. We may not ask the LORD to aggrandize or enrich our nation, that she may reign over all countries, or engross all the commerce of the world: but surely we may pray that famine, pestilence, hostile invasions, and evil discords may be averted; that there may be employment and food for the poor, peace in our borders, and the continuance of our civil and religious liberties. Above all we should pray for the peace, purity, and enlargement of the church; that it may please the LORD to illuminate all the ministers of religion, ‘with true knowledge and understanding of his word, ‘that both by their preaching and living, they may set ‘it forth and shew it accordingly,’ that “labourers “may be sent forth into the harvest;” “that the Spirit of GOD may lift up a standard” against the tor-

rent of infidelity, impiety, and vice, that inundates the land; and that all ranks and orders of men may be endowed with wisdom and grace, to serve God and their generation faithfully and successfully. Such prayers as these may be branched out into a variety of particulars, without indulging sinful passions, or violating the law of love. And if we pray in faith, depending on the LORD alone, and not on an arm of flesh; and duly considering his almighty power and abundant mercy as fully adequate to all our necessities and difficulties; we may yet hope that he may be intreated for the land, and prolong our tranquillity.

But without personal repentance we cannot offer such supplications as these. It therefore behoves every one of us to consider our ways, to examine our hearts, humbly to confess our sins, to seek forgiveness, and to pray for grace that we may henceforth walk before God in newness of life. If any persons have hitherto continued impenitent and unbelieving; they should on this occasion set about the great concerns of their immortal souls, with peculiar diligence and earnestness. Otherwise, whether the LORD spare the land or not, he will not spare them. "Woe be to the wicked! it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him."*

Even real Christians, at such a time as this, are called upon to review their lives, and renew their humiliation for all their past sins, as a part of the guilt

* Is. iii. 11.

accumulated by the land. They should especially consider their conduct as professors of the gospel, and enquire in what particulars they have dishonoured their profession, misled or weakened their brethren, or given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme. We ought also to examine what fruit hath been produced by the solemnities, professions, instructions, and prayers of the last season of fasting and humiliation. We should ask ourselves whether we have really acted consistently with them, and been more fruitful, zealous, and conscientious than before? Thus we shall be prepared to plead with him as his children and friends, in the manner that Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Jehoshaphat, and others of old did; and prevailing with him we shall prevail with man also.

But we must likewise remember, that we are bound to use our influence and improve our talents, by every exertion, to promote the cause, and obtain the blessings, for which we pray; both in our families and private circles, and in more publick stations. Thus we should *seek*, as well as *pray for*, the peace of the community, the prosperity of the church, the reformation of manners, and removal of every occasion or encouragement given to vice and impiety. If indeed we are decidedly for the LORD, and determined to follow him fully, without regard to men or dread of consequences; our conduct will have a considerable effect: for the example, endeavours, and prayers of his faithful people are the means by which our national

character must be improved, and our privileges continued to us.

Let such as profess to “turn unto him that smiteth” them, take care they do not rest in notions, forms, or external reformation; without true conversion, repentance, faith, and holiness. The prophet took notice of persons answering this description, when he said, “They return but not to the Most High.”* And nothing more effectually prevents the conversion of sinners, than a mistaken idea that they are already converted.

Charity to the poor and afflicted is likewise an essential concomitant of acceptable fasting and humiliation: “Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thine house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning,—then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer.—If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness shall be as the noon-day.”†

Finally, my brethren, if you thus return to the LORD, and seek his face, I am sent to you with encouraging words. “Let the heart of those rejoice that seek the LORD.” “Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.”—“In the time of famine

* Hos. vii. 16.

† Is. lvi. 7—12.

“ they shall have enough.”—“ Though the fig-tree
“ should not blossom,” and every resource should
fail, “ yet they may rejoice in the LORD, and joy in
“ the GOD of their salvation.” Be not therefore
“ afraid of evil tidings; let your heart be fixed trusting
“ in the LORD.” If “ you hear of wars and rumours
“ of wars, see that ye be not troubled.” Should a de-
luge come, the LORD will prepare you an ark, in
which you may be secure and comfortable: and he
will say to you, “ Come, my people, enter thou into
“ thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide
“ thyself, as it were for a little moment, until the in-
“ dignation be over-past. For behold, the LORD
“ cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of
“ the earth for their iniquity. The earth also shall dis-
“ cover her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.”*

* Is. xxvi. 20, 21.

THANKSGIVING SERMONS.


ON THE

CLOSE OF THE AMERICAN WAR.

PREACHED AT

OLNEY, BUCKS,

JULY, 29, 1784.



*Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were
destroyed of the destroyer.—1 Cor. x. 10.*

PREFACE.

MANKIND in general look at the dark side of their circumstances, and the supposed bright side of their character; whence arise pride, discontent, and murmurs, dishonourable to God, and tormenting to themselves. But true religion teaches us to consider the dark side of our character, and the bright side of our circumstances; and, reflecting how many undeserved comforts we enjoy, to exercise humble gratitude and cheerful praise.

But few, however, comparatively, are truly religious; and those few are only in part influenced by their principles: so that they are often repining, when they might be praising: and discontent almost every where prevails, instead of gratitude. Well then might the Psalmist repeatedly say, “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonders to the children of men!”

Many during the late war, joined with seeming earnestness in prayers for deliverance and peace; who, I fear, have not rendered unto the Lord thanks equally cordial now he hath answered their prayers. They forget our deservings, and our dangers; and because we are not that flourishing nation we were; because the peace is not so honourable as they wished; they indulge a spirit of discontent, quarrel with men and measures,

PREFACE.

and have no heart to bless God for the security, liberty, and privileges which we still enjoy.

I was sure, before I had purposely considered the particulars, that the Lord had been very kind to us, and had an undoubted claim upon us for cordial thanksgiving. Under this persuasion, I rejoiced that at length a day of thanksgiving was appointed. Improving the occasion, I meditated on the following subject for the edification of my own congregation, respecting the duty of the day. In preaching, the case appeared to me so plain and uncontrovertible, and I afterwards found it was so convincing to many or most present, that I concluded it might answer some good end, if made publick. It indeed contains nothing to recommend it but plain truths in plain language, originally preached to plain people, and now published for the benefit of such. I have endeavoured not to offend the political principles of any man; and I hope no moderate man of any party will be offended. I would give as little offence as possible on such an occasion to any religious party: but if any expression has escaped me, which may have had that tendency, I hope it will not prejudice a real Christian against the other part. If the Lord be pleased to bless the publication, and to employ it as an instrument of his glory, in exciting true Christians of every denomination to abound more in praise and prayer, I shall have then an ample recompence.

SERMON I.



PSALM CVI. 43, 44.

Many times did he deliver them, but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless, he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry.

THE knowledge of GOD and of ourselves, is beyond all comparison, the most important kind of knowledge: and this is especially communicated to us in the word of GOD; which is indeed a history of GOD and of man, discovering to us the nature and perfections of GOD, and the real character of man. This is done in the plainest and simplest manner by historical relations of the LORD'S conduct towards man in numerous instances, and under a vast variety of circumstances; and on the other hand, of man's conduct towards GOD, under a like variety of circumstances. The result of the whole is this; it appears that GOD is ever disposed, by his own essential excellency, to act with consummate wisdom, justice, holiness, patience, mercy, and truth; and is therefore worthy of all that love and

honour which he demands: that on the other hand, man is ever disposed to rebellion, ingratitude, obstinacy, and enmity; is therefore a very base and odious character, and justly deserving of the abomination and indignation of a holy God.

This trial of mankind was especially made in his dealings with Israel, who being descended from pious ancestors, "planted wholly a right seed," were an unexceptionable specimen of human nature. We have the abstract of it in this psalm, which begins and ends with, "Praise ye the LORD," and contains a history of his persevering kindness to Israel, and Israel's persevering ingratitude to him. The same scene, in some measure, is acted over again in every age of the world, in every nation under heaven, in every man's own experience. Had we a history, equally impartial and faithful of any other people, or any single person, in proportion as that people, or individual, was favoured of God with the favour he shewed to Israel, the base ingratitude of human nature would equally appear; and in proportion would the loveliness of God, and the odiousness of man be illustrated. And he who has best learned to love and admire God, to loathe and abhor himself, and can most sincerely adopt the words of holy Job, "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;" is the greatest proficient in true religion.

The substance of this instructive psalm is compressed in the words that I have read to you; "Many times did he deliver them, but they provoked him

“with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless, he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry.” The historical part of the Old Testament is the best illustration of the words, as spoken of Israel. But as God and his law,* and his measures of government and providence, are the same from generation to generation, and as human nature is the same also, I trust you will easily perceive the propriety of improving them for our edification on the present occasion.

After many former deliverances, the people of Israel were brought low for their iniquity. Nations are brought low, when their numbers are greatly reduced by pestilences, famines, or other desolating judgments: when the inhabitants are detained in captivity, or sold into slavery: when successful armies of hostile invaders spread terror and carnage through the land: and when civil discord excites them to murder one another by unnatural war. A nation is brought low, when, being deprived of the invaluable privilege of a free government according to equitable laws impartially executed, it groans under the yoke of tyranny: while the covetousness or caprice, the ambition or cruelty, the revenge or jealousy of one, or a few, keep millions in perpetual alarm, and expose them to continued oppression and persecution. A nation is brought low, when its wealth is diminished, its resources exhausted, its expences increased, its commerce and trade

* I mean his moral law; the eternal rule of right and wrong, of sin and holiness.

ruined; its poor deprived of employment, burdened with taxes, and left to the fatal necessity of starving, begging, or stealing; and its wealthy traders reduced to indigence and bankruptcy.

In these, and many other respects, nations once flourishing are brought low, they lose the blessings which they enjoyed at home, and the consequence which they possessed abroad, and dwindle into insignificance, dependence and wretchedness.

This premised, I observe,

I. That nations are thus brought low for iniquity, by the righteous judgment of GOD, whom they have provoked by their counsels. Let philosophers and politicians search out the secondary causes of the prosperity and decline of empires: it is allowed they have advanced many things ingenious, rational, and instructive, on the subject: but it is our concern to learn what the word of GOD contains for our instruction and direction in the duty of the day: to this let us confine our attention.—Angels sinned, and by sin were brought low, even from the summit of created exaltation, to the depth of endless contempt and misery.—“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Thus, low even to the grave, hath sin brought our whole human race: lower still we had all sunk, even with fallen angels, into hell, had not the glorious Emmanuel come, and born our sins in his own body on the tree: yet even thus low will sin finally bring

all that live and die impenitent and unbelieving. The same evil brings nations low: when they provoke GOD by their sins, he stirs up enemies against them, he permits discord to prevail, he infatuates their wisest counsellors, he intimidates their most valiant commanders; he disappoints their best concerted projects; he lets them know, “ that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong:” But “ that he doeth what he will in the army of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?”

Not only the dealings of GOD with his own peculiar people; but the prophecies of the Old Testament, denounced against the neighbouring nations for their ungodliness and unrighteousness, and so awfully accomplished in their destruction, one by the sword of another, sufficiently prove and illustrate my observation.

2. I observe, however, that GOD doth more especially deal thus with those nations, who are most highly favoured with the light of divine revelation, and in which the true religion is openly professed. In his conduct towards Israel, he not only considered their behaviour, but also took into the account his written word entrusted to them; his lively ordinances administered among them; the prophets from age to age raised up to admonish, reprove, and instruct them; his former favours to their nation: and his present watchful care over them: “ You only have I known among all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish

“you for all your iniquities.”* Thus will he deal with other nations also; in proportion to the favour shewn them, and the light afforded them, as well as to the sins which they have committed against him.—Where “much is given, much is required;” and every sin is aggravated in proportion to the wilfulness and ingratitude contained in it. “He that knew his LORD’s will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.” And GOD will evermore shew his impartiality, and evince that there is no people in such a sense his favourites, as that he should, on that account connive at sin in them. He hates iniquity in all with perfect hatred, but most abhors it in those who are nearest to him; because it is really in them most hateful, and his judgment is always according to truth. Therefore “Spare not, and begin at my sanctuary,” is his commission to the executioners of his awful vengeance. Thus he precludes all hope of impunity in sin, when he so severely punishes his peculiar people: and thus likewise he, in the wisest manner, fulfils the designs of his love to them. He brings them low to prevent their destruction: by correction he preserves them from being disinherited: his peculiar people, as well nations as individuals, are “chastened of the LORD, that they should not be condemned with the world.” He will not forsake his people, therefore will he visit their offences with the rod. He is slow to anger, and he leaves nations who profess his truth, gradually and, as it were, un-

* Amos iii. 2.

willingly; and therefore he will be sure to bring them low for their iniquity, that he may lead them to repentance.

3. Then, I observe, that GOD hath brought these nations low for their iniquity, by the late calamitous war. Let those, who look no higher than instruments, dispute about the authors of our troubles: you and I, my fellow-christians, should acknowledge GOD's justice ⁱⁿ them, and blame our own sins. Many times GOD ^{has} delivered us. No nation hath ever been more entirely delivered, or repeatedly preserved by the providence of GOD from tyranny and despotism, than Britain. No nation hath been indulged with greater prosperity, or with such long-continued exemptions from famines, pestilences, earthquakes, or the sword of war ravaging our fields. We have been highly favoured with religious light, and liberty: the opportunity, and full freedom of learning and doing the will of GOD, and rejoicing in his salvation. GOD's persevering kindness to Israel has been renewed in his kindness to our land: and, alas! we have re-acted their provocations; so that none but an infidel can be at a loss for the origin of our calamities. "We have provoked
" GOD by our counsel, and are brought low for our
" iniquity." Compare the charges GOD's prophets brought against Israel, with the conduct and character of these nations. If Israel exceeded Britain in gross idolatry, Britain hath exceeded Israel in daring infidelity, and atheism; in perjury, profaneness, and blas-

phemy; in contempt of GOD's word, neglect of his ordinances, violation of his sabbaths; and at least hath equalled Israel's ingratitude and hypocrisy. Including the whole of our appendages, I fear we have immensely out-done them in shedding innocent blood, in oppressing the poor, the fatherless, and the widow; and in every species of detestable injustice, prompted by insatiable avarice, and protected from human vengeance, (as it is greatly suspected) by shameless bribery and venality.* In pride, adultery, luxury, and all debauchery, their guilt bears, I apprehend, no proportion to ours.

But national guilt is only the accumulation of the sins of individuals: the measure fills fast, whilst every one contributes his large proportion: as a nation we all have need to mourn over the whole; but each one should especially be humbled for his own sins. Calling then our attention from objects more distant, let us examine our own hearts and lives. What say your consciences, my brethren? Have you not helped to bring the nation low by iniquity? Have you not provoked GOD by your ungodliness and unrighteousness? Have you not forgotten GOD, been ungrateful for his

* An eminent speaker in the house of commons observed, that God had punished us with the loss of one continent for the oppression exercised on the other. I fear for this, and other horrid scenes of wickedness, God hath much worse punishments in store for us; except national reformation and national justice executed on the culprits, prevent.

mercies, profaned his sabbaths, slighted his ordinances, trampled on his law, despised or abused his gospel? Judge yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the LORD. Personal repentance and humiliation before GOD, on account of our sins, as a part of our national guilt, and earnest prayers in that behalf, is a debt we owe our country, which may suffer in part for our offences, though we as individuals may be pardoned in respect of eternal punishment. God pardoned Mannasseh, yet would not pardon Jerusalem the innocent blood which he had shed.

For our sins then, GOD hath brought us low: by a concurrence of counsels and events, we were engaged in a ruinous war with our American colonies. Our ancient enemies triumphed, hoping the time of our downfall was come, and expecting to share the spoil: four powerful nations in confederacy fought against us; no one was found cordial in friendship, or prompt in bringing assistance. They practised, and prospered; our enterprizes were unsuccessful, our projects disconcerted, our hearts discouraged; the disasters of war wasted our soldiers, enormous expences drained off our riches; debts accumulated, taxes increased; our resources were nearly exhausted, commerce was discouraged, manufactures languished; many of the wealthy were impoverished, the poor were greatly distressed; our consequence was diminished, intestine discord prevailed; invasions were threatened and dreaded; there was no prospect of peace on tolerable terms; the most fatal effects were apprehended to our civil and religious liberties, those best of earthly bless-

sings. Thus low did a righteous GOD bring us for iniquity; yet blessed be his name, in wrath he remembered mercy.

4. Then observe, “that he regarded our affliction when he heard our cry.” Though he hath not restored us to our pristine prosperity, perhaps never may; yet hath he done great things for us in answer to our prayers.—We cried unto the LORD in our distress. We remember when in our national difficulties, from year to year, at the appointment of our governors, we met together to observe a solemn day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer; the old and scriptural way of seeking help of GOD in publick calamities. Doubtless multitudes grossly prevaricated with GOD in this matter, who must one day be called to account for their hypocrisy. On such occasions, I apprehend, it always has been so; never was any whole nation yet sincerely and truly penitent for sin, whatever they may hereafter be. Nevertheless, there was a publick honour put upon GOD and religion all over the land on those days: GOD was justified by us in bringing calamities upon us; we acknowledged that we deserved to be given over into the hands of our enemies: we disclaimed all confidence in an arm of flesh, craved help of GOD, deprecated his vengeance, implored his mercy, the continuance of our national privileges, and the restoration of the blessings of peace. Now *impudence in sinning* is one-symptom of ripeness for destruction. When a nation declares its sin, like Sodom, Sodom’s doom approaches. But publick condemnation of our-

selves, and publick justification of GOD in his severest judgments upon us, accompanied by publick and general supplications to him for undeserved help, seemed to indicate that though our measure of iniquity is large, it is not yet full. He who prolonged his patience toward Ahab, on account of his external humiliation, prolongs his patience towards us, in part on the same account. But now if we relapse, and grow more daring in our wickedness, the measure will soon be full, and there will be no remedy. May GOD avert this awful, this impending doom!

There were, however, on those days, I trust, many tens of thousands of real christians, unanimous, sincere and earnest, in this important business. All are not "men of understanding in the times to know what Israel ought to do;" and all need exciting, instructing and assisting in their duty. A fast proclaimed sounded the alarm; many ministers resounded it from their pulpits; christians were awakened to consider the publick circumstances, with their duty to GOD and their country, and excited and reminded to perform it. Great numbers in publick assemblies, in private families, in secret retirements, were sincerely confessing and bewailing their own sins; sighing and mourning for the abominations of the land; and pleading with GOD for pardon, protection, deliverance, and peace. Many, we may hope, through GOD's blessing on the labours of his ministers, were on those days brought to true repentance; and as true penitents, both then and afterwards joined sincerely in the general cry. Now if but two real disciples of CHRIST agree toge-

ther on earth, touching any thing they shall ask of GOD, through the intercession of JESUS, it shall be done for them: how much more when such multitudes, with one consent, both on those days and at other times, sought deliverance and peace in earnest prayer, might we expect a gracious answer! *Universal wickedness* is another symptom, that a nation is ripe for destruction, when the LORD looketh for some to make intercession, and there are few, or none; but when many present themselves, unanimous and cordial in this blessed work, though he bring that nation low, he will not yet give it up.

For these reasons, I consider it my duty to bless GOD for putting such a thing into the heart of our sovereign, (for “the king’s heart is in the hand of the “LORD,”) and I consider it as every christian’s duty to observe such seasons with all earnestness. We may easily overvalue external religion, if we trust to it, and are proud of it: but it is possible to undervalue it; and we actually do so, if we do not immensely prefer it to open irreligion.

We are now assembled to return publick thanks for the mercies we then sought in publick prayers; and it seemed therefore proper to have at *this* season, a peculiar eye to *those*. It suffices, however, for my purpose, that we cried unto the LORD, and he heard us, whensoever our prayers were made.

For, I. In the very critical time, he gave important success to our arms. Had the event of the sea-fight between our fleet, under admiral Rodney, and the

combined fleets, been as decisive in their favour as it was in ours; and had the Spaniards carried their point at Gibraltar, instead of being so severely repulsed by general Elliott, the consequences might have been fatal. At best, our present low estate must have been much lower, if our existence as an independent kingdom had been preserved; if our civil and religious liberties had not been wrenched from us, or our happy island desolated by the horrors of war, and deluged with the blood of its inhabitants.

Let admirals and generals have their proper honour and reward: far be it from me to depreciate their characters, or envy their emoluments: they are worthy of them all from us, for whose security they expose themselves to danger. But let us not give them the glory which belongs to GOD. He inspires courage, he gives wisdom, he determines victory. Shall we not then render him our warmest thanksgivings for these seasonable and signal interpositions, in answer to the prayers we poured out in the day of our distress? Remember, my brethren, your anxiety, your apprehensions, your despondency, at that time; and ask your hearts, whether you have not cause for thankfulness? And whether you have been thankful? At that stage of the war, we were evidently not struggling for dominion, but for national security and equitable peace; which consideration disposes me more cheerfully to praise the LORD for thus answering our requests. And I think heaven and earth will condemn our ingratitude, if we do not as unanimously join in thanksgiving, as we did in supplication.

II. In consequence of these and other successes, peace was at length concluded. But what sort of a peace? some are ready to answer. Such a peace as is much better than such a war. When we consider our national guilt, our national circumstances, our confederated foes, and exhausted finances, we must surely acknowledge that GOD hath done better by us, than either we deserved, or once expected; and this calls for grateful praise.—But some will say 'tis so humiliating a peace, I cannot be satisfied with it, nor feel thankful for it. 'Tis true, GOD hath brought us low for our iniquity, both in respect of the extent of our dominions, and our national wealth and consequence; but if we be brought no lower, perhaps this very circumstance calls for thankfulness. Bad as the state of religion and morals is amongst us, had our wealth and honour increased, as it had done for some years past, probably matters had even now been much worse. Pride, ungodliness, sensuality, and luxury, had increased with increasing wealth and power, and probably would have increased. Had it been so, our destruction had advanced with hastier steps. Perhaps our being brought low, and deprived in part of that provision we had made for our lusts, is the very means of prolonging our state and delaying our ruin. And shall a christian murmur at this? Shall he refuse to be thankful for peace, and liberty, and security, because he doth not roll in wealth, nor is exalted in honour as heretofore? But to be more particular;

1. We are bound to thank GOD for putting a stop

to the effusion of human blood. The value of man's life is great—of man's soul infinitely greater. He who duly ponders this, must consider war, though in some cases necessary, in all cases horrible: nor can he be other than shocked with reflecting on the thousands of his fellow-creatures slaughtered in battle, and their souls hurried into eternity; many of them, most of them 'tis to be feared, in the full career of unrepented sin. When a victory makes way for peace, I can rejoice in it; though not without melancholy reflections on the fatal consequences perhaps to thousands, mingling with my joy. Otherwise, the life of an American, a Frenchman, a Spaniard, or a Hollander, is, in my estimation, of equal value with the life of a Briton: even successful war excites my lamentation; and the return of peace is matter of thanksgiving, as I am a man and a christian, even though I should not, as an Englishman, approve of the conditions. 'Send peace in our time, O LORD!' — 'That it may please thee to give unity, peace, and concord to all nations,' are requests, which surely no true christian can hesitate in adopting: nor should any christian refuse his tribute of praise and gratitude, when such requests are granted. Many, from selfish motives, wish for war; but can he, who has the law of GOD written in his heart; even this law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," desire the slaughter of his fellow-men, for the sake of his own emolument?

2. We have cause to thank GOD for stopping the effusion of the blood of our friends and relatives. How

many, during the war, mourned over slaughtered fathers, brothers, sons, relatives, and friends! How many weeping eyes for the dead! How many anxious hearts about the living! Ought we not to thank God for relieving us in this respect from grief and anxiety?

3. We are bound to thank God for preserving our land from becoming the seat of war. Many feared it; many of you, my fellow-christians, feared it, and prayed against it. Assuredly, our felicity, in this respect, both heretofore and in this conjuncture, is the gift of God, and demands our gratitude. He spread the protecting ocean around us; he raised us to our present naval power; he gives skill, hardiness, and courage to our seamen; he gives victory to our fleets; he awes our enemies to a distance; he silences popular insurrections, and prevents civil war. For these mercies praise ye the LORD. The loss of men and money we know: but war, horrible war, as a nation we know not, or we could not fail to prize such a distinguishing favour. May we never learn to know its worth, by its loss!

4. We are bound to bless God for breaking the strong confederacy formed against us. Arguing from former events, we had little to fear from any of our enemies separately. When two heretofore have united, we have had countenance and assistance from the others, or they have stood neuter. But in this conjuncture, four powerful nations were confederated against us, and thus excited our just and melancholy apprehen-

sions. GOD hath broken in pieces this formidable combination, and it is not at all probable that it should speedily be renewed. Thus by the peace, though humiliating, the urgent cause of terror is happily removed. The combination is broken, and we are delivered, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. For this, my brethren, praise and bless the LORD, who maketh the counsels of the people to be of none effect.

5. Though reduced, we are still preserved an independent kingdom: our laws and liberties, civil and religious, are still continued to us: we dwell in peace and safety, and may yet meet together to worship GOD according to our conscience. If you love the LORD, if you love his house and ordinances, then praise the LORD; and let not Satan, by tempting you to repine over the remembrance of our diminished grandeur and consequence, prevail with you to withhold the revenue of thanks, so justly due to GOD. Remember, that "it is of the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed." Shall we not then praise him for dealing with us so much better than our deservings?

6. Our trade and manufactures, on which the affluence of the wealthy, and the subsistence of the indigent so much depend, are far from ruined; they revive, and in many places flourish. And, if renewed provocations do not cause the LORD to command fresh judgments, we may hope gradually to recover some part at least of our former prosperity. Indeed, amongst you, and

perhaps in some other places and manufactures,* no remarkable amendment hath taken place: but forget not, that during the war, things grew worse every year.—Had not God answered your prayers in sending peace, how much worse had your trade been ere this? Since the peace it hath some what recovered. Therefore, both on your own account and your countrymen's, forget not to praise the LORD for the past, and that will prove the best means of procuring greater things in future.

7. The exhausting, intolerable expences of the war, are now ceased.—You will say, our taxes still increase, and I feel no relief from the peace, but additional burdens imposed yearly; how then can I be thankful? Yet consider, these very taxes are imposed to pay the interest of the sums borrowed during the war, and of those borrowed since the war, to pay off its heavy arrears.—Had the war still continued, if we had not been overpowered by the united forces of our enemies, the intolerable expence must have ruined us. The present grievous taxes may teach us to bless God for peace: for had the war continued, our present heavy burdens would have been made vastly heavier; therefore, silence your murmurings, and join with me in praising the LORD.

I would now then proceed to make some further improvement of the subject.

1. You may learn from hence, that the LORD is

* The thread lace manufacture.

awfully holy in hating, and impartially just in punishing sin: yet he is good, and ready to forgive, and plentiful in mercy to all them who penitently and heartily call upon him. Tremble then, stout-hearted sinner: that GOD whose law thou hast broken, whose gospel thou hast neglected, whose grace thou despisest, and whose justice thou defiest, is a consuming fire, a jealous GOD, vengeance belongs unto him, and he will repay. He whose justice and power bring nations so low for iniquity, can easily, and will certainly, bring thee low, even into hell, except thou repent, and believe the gospel.

Be encouraged, poor trembling sinner: fear not to call upon this gracious GOD: return to him in his appointed way, who now kindly invites thee; and never did tender parent more cordially and affectionately receive a returning prodigal, than GOD will welcome thee.

2. You see that this harmony of perfect justice and holiness, with rich and plenteous mercy, which is the perfection of beauty, the loveliness of GOD, doth require the interposition of the divine Mediator, and the infinitely valuable satisfaction of his death; otherwise, every exertion of pardoning mercy and love to sinners, would imply a defect of justice, and imperfection of holiness.—It is only in the person of JESUS, Emmanu-el, that this harmonious glory of GOD can be seen. In him the law is magnified, justice satisfied, holiness manifested, and mercy exercised, and GOD appears a

just GOD and a Saviour. Through this Mediator, GOD dwelling in human nature, even sinful nations are dealt with in mercy. And, poor sinner, if thou receive not CHRIST and his atonement, if thou come not into the presence of GOD, through the intercession of his Son, thy dependence on GOD's mercy, but not in his way, will be found unwarranted presumption. God will not dishonour himself by being unjustly merciful to please a rebel. Come then, but remember CHRIST saith, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me."

3. Fear no enemies to our national prosperity but iniquity. God spares us a little longer. If reformation take place we shall be preserved,—otherwise our doom is not far off. Seek, then, by prayer, each of you, for mercy and grace, through the intercession of JESUS, and thus aim at personal reformation. Repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Use your influence and authority in your families, connexions, and dependences, to promote their reformation: pray for those you cannot influence: it is the duty you owe to your country; it is the duty the occasion calls for.—Suffer then the word of exhortation.—As you value your national security and prosperity, as you value your precious souls, be not slothful in this work. Were all, were half, were a tenth, thus minded, glorious effects would follow.—Despise not the day of small things; yield not to discouragement: arise and be doing, and the LORD will be with you.

4. Did you sigh, and mourn, and pray sincerely, during the late calamities? And hath God heard *your* prayers? Then be sure you thank him for it; and admire his condescension that he would notice *your* poor defective prayers. Forget not to pay the vows you made unto him in the day of your distress; but especially take courage to pray more abundantly for the time to come.—Many are tempted to neglect the blessed duty of intercession almost entirely; our prayers, say they, are so weak, we scarcely know how to pray for ourselves; it seems presumption to think our prayers can do any good. One soldier indeed is a feeble defence to the nation; but large armies consist of single soldiers: should each forsake his post, because his single help is inconsiderable, we must fall a prey to our enemies; but when each preserves and maintains his post, we are well protected. Our weapons, my fellow-soldiers, are earnest prayers: that christian who helps not the cause of his church and nation against their enemies by his prayers, deserts his post, and leaves, for his part, the coast defenceless. One has as good a right and reason to desert his post as another: if all desert, if none remain to make intercession, we are defenceless indeed. But if each christian abounds in this duty, our cause shall certainly prosper. Pray then, my brethren, each of you, under this persuasion, that you are one of a numerous army of supplicants dispersed all over the land; and unitedly intreat the LORD to preserve peace, to revive religion, to reform our manners. Intreat him to bless your king and his family, with all the blessings of time and eternity; and

to continue his descendants a blessing to these lands for generations to come. Intreat the LORD to impart his grace to our princes and nobles, that they may improve their greatness, wealth, and influence, to promote and adorn true religion. Pray that magistrates may be indeed “for a terror to evil doers, and for the “praise of them that do well:” that ministers of the gospel may be endowed with knowledge and wisdom, judgment and experience, boldness and faithfulness, humility and holiness, zeal and love. Did you pray more for us, we should live more holy lives, preach more powerfully, and be blessed more abundantly with extensive usefulness. Pray the LORD of the harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest: pray for the conversion of wicked clergymen, those blind leaders of the blind: pray for the rising generation of ministers, that they may be furnished and prepared for the work and charge, that is about to devolve on them: pray for the places of education of our youth, publick and private; that men may thence come forth qualified, and disposed to serve GOD in church and state; and that the rising generation may be trained up to godliness and honesty: pray that bigotry, superstition, error, and *real* enthusiasm, may cease; that offences and divisions may be prevented; that all true christians may love one another with a pure heart, fervently; may adorn the gospel by exemplary lives; be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and strive together for the faith of the gospel. Pray for your children, relations, neighbours, benefactors, and enemies, be sure not to forget them. Pray for the spread of the gospel,

the fall of antichrist, the calling of the Gentiles, the conversion of the Jews, and the universal prevalence of true religion. Finally, my brethren, pray for the unworthy author of this exhortation, that both by his life and doctrine he may set forth the true and lively word of GOD, and when death comes, may be found so doing.

5. Perhaps, at the time alluded to, you did not heartily pray, but have since been taught to pray: well then, you have double cause for thankfulness: you partake of many blessings in answer to prayer, though you never joined in seeking them by prayer. Be not then now negligent in thanksgiving, though you were in praying; and henceforth forget not to unite your requests for national mercies, with those of that army of supplicants, of divers denominations, who are indeed the bulwark of the land.

Finally—Do any continue impenitent and ungodly? I fear I shall exhort you to gratitude in vain: if you neglect prayer, I fear you will have as little heart to praise and thanksgiving, though you have abundant cause. But two hints I will leave with you: though you despise spiritual blessings, you value temporal blessings inordinately. In answer to prayer, these are continued to our land, and to you among the rest. Do not then revile and ill-treat your praying neighbours, to whom under GOD you are indebted for your share of national security. And remember, that although, through the intercession of others, you may escape temporal calamities during life: yet death will come

shortly; and then if you be found impenitent, the most tremendous earthly judgments, in comparison of your eternal portion, will be known to be but light afflictions, and but for a moment. “The hand of the LORD shall find out all his enemies; his right hand shall find out them that hate him. He shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of his anger.”—“Seek then the LORD, while he may be found; call upon him while he is near. 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 to our GOD, and he will abundantly pardon.”

SERMON II.*

EZEKIEL XX. 22.

Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen.

IT is of great importance that christians should possess a distinct and comprehensive knowledge of the doctrine of scripture, in respect of GOD'S providential dealings with nations who enjoy the light of revelation, and of their own duty in this particular. For this would supersede a variety of questions and discussions, which prevent numbers from joining cordially either in prayer for publick mercies, or thanksgiving for them when evidently vouchsafed. It would teach them to consider all creatures as instruments in the hand of him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;" and shew, that humiliation before him for sin, or gratitude for unmerited comforts, has nothing to do with approbation, or disapprobation of men or measures;

* Preached at the Lock Chapel, Nov. 29, 1798.

except as in case of approbation there is additional cause for gratitude, in case of disapprobation for deeper humiliation.*

Let it then be allowed, (and who can deny it?) that this nation has been peculiarly favoured by a merciful Providence: and *waving*, but by no means *yielding*, the question concerning publick measures, I would ask such as continue dissatisfied, whether Elijah was the less bound to thank the LORD for his daily provision, because it was sent him by ravens? whether David did wrong in blessing GOD for seasonable deliverance from the rage of Saul, because he could not approve the conduct of the Philistines, whose sudden invasion called away his persecutor?—or whether the primitive Christians, during three hundred years under pagan emperors, generally of very bad character, and most of them persecutors, were never called on to thank the LORD for their share in publick peace, or exemption from national calamities? Alas, in how few ages and places, if this reserve be admitted, have Christians been so much as required to be thankful for national mercies! How small a tribute of praise must our gracious GOD receive from his whole church in this behalf!

My brethren, we do not meet together at this time to enquire what men have been doing; but what the LORD hath done for us as a guilty nation. ‘He hath not dealt with us according to our sins, neither hath he rewarded us after our iniquities:’ but “he hath

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. 2. Chron. ii. 11.

“ withdrawn his hand, and wrought for his name’s
 “ sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the
 “ heathen.” In prosecuting this subject, I shall,

I. Make some brief observations on the text,
 as illustrated by the LORD’S dealings with the
 nation of Israel.

II. More fully consider the words as applica-
 ble to the present circumstances of this our favour-
 ed land.

1. Then, I shall make some brief observations on the
 text, as illustrated by the LORD’S dealings with the
 nation of Israel.

If we carefully weigh the import of a few remarka-
 ble passages of scripture, we shall find them throw
 much light on the subject, and prepare the way for all
 our subsequent enquiries. When Israel had made and
 worshipped the golden calf, the LORD said to Moses,
 “ Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax
 “ hot against them, and that I may consume them; and
 “ I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses be-
 “ sought the LORD his GOD, and said, Why doth thy
 “ wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast
 “ brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great
 “ power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should
 “ the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he
 “ bring them out to slay them in the mountains? Turn
 “ from thy fierce wrath and repent of this evil against
 “ thy people. Remember Abraham, and Isaac, and
 “ Jacob, thy servants, to whom thou swarest, by thine
 “ own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your

“seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the LORD repented of the evil, which he thought to do unto his people.”* On this occasion, you perceive that he “withdrew his hand and wrought for his name’s sake.”

When the Israelites “despised the pleasant land, and believed not the word of the LORD,” He said to Moses, “I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them.”—And Moses said unto the LORD “Then the Egyptians shall hear of it; for thou broughtest this people by thy might from among them: and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land; for they have heard that thou, LORD, art among this people, that thou, LORD, art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day-time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.—Now if thou shalt kill all this people, as one man; then the nations which have heard the fame of thee, will speak, saying, because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.”† In answer to this supplication “the LORD again withdrew his hand, and wrought for his name’s sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen.”

Joshua also pleaded in the same manner, when some of the people were slain by the men of Ai. “O LORD

* Ex. xxxii. 9—14.

† Numb. xiv. 11—23.

“ what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs be-
 fore their enemies? For the Canaanites, and the in-
 habitants of the land, shall hear of it, and shall envi-
 ron us round, and shall cut off our name from the
 earth; and *what wilt thou do unto thy great name?*”*

The pious and animated address of David to Goliath was made at a time, when the conduct and measures of King Saul could not but be justly disapproved by all pious Israelities: yet he assigned the same reason, why the LORD would deliver Goliath into his hand, and the Philistines into the hands of Israel, namely, “ that all the earth may know that there is a GOD in Israel.”†—Hezekiah’s plea, in prayer for deliverance from Sennacherib and the Assyrians, was this, “ that all the kingdoms of the earth may know, that thou art the LORD GOD, even thou only.”‡

The plea of Jeremiah, during a terrible drought, “ O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for thy name’s sake;”§ and that of Daniel during the Babylonish captivity,|| with very many others which might be adduced, abundantly teach us, that Israel, even when deserving the severest vengeance, was frequently placed in such circumstances, that the honour of GOD was concerned in sparing and delivering them.

The chapter, whence the text is chosen, introduces JEHOVAH recapitulating to the prophet, a variety of

* Josh. vii. 7—9. † 1 Sam. xvii. 45—47. ‡ 2 Kings xix, 15—19. § Jer. xiv. 7. || Dan. ix. 18, 19.

instances of this kind, and repeatedly subjoining, “ But I wrought for my name’s sake, that it should “ not be polluted before the heathen, among whom “ they were.” From this recapitulation we may observe, that GOD had called Abraham; and had engaged to him, by covenant and by oath, to render his posterity exceedingly numerous, to give them the land of Canaan, and to raise up the Messiah from among them: and that he had ratified this engagement in the same manner to Isaac and Jacob. But when the descendants of these patriarchs had been increased to a vast multitude in Egypt, they had so degenerated from the piety of their ancestors, and had become so vile by their iniquities and idolatries, that they justly deserved destruction, at the very time when GOD had purposed their deliverance. Yet if he had cut them off by some tremendous judgment, or left them in Egyptian bondage; the honour of his faithfulness and mercy would have been tarnished; his promise would have been broken, his covenant would have failed, and his whole plan concerning the Messiah have been disconcerted, He therefore, spared and delivered them, though unworthy, for his own name’s sake.

The LORD had sent to Pharaoh, calling Israel his son, yea, his first born, and he demanded of him to “ let his son go that he might serve him:” but Pharaoh haughtily replied, “ Who is JEHOVAH? I know “ not JEHOVAH, neither will I let Israel go.” Thus the contest was begun; and not only the Egyptians, but in a little time all the neighbouring nations waited the event with fixed attention. Now, if the LORD,

provoked by Israel's sin, had desisted from his demand, and had left the people in bondage, Pharaoh would have seemed victorious, and he as well as others would have concluded that JEHOVAH was unable to deliver his people. The honour of his eternal power and Godhead was therefore concerned in effecting their deliverance.

When this had been accomplished by "a mighty hand and an out stretched arm," and the laws, ordinances, and oracles of JEHOVAH had been communicated to them, they renewed their rebellions, and by more aggravated crimes provoked him to keep them forty years in the wilderness, till nearly all that generation was dead. But if he had cut them off entirely, and had not put the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in possession of Canaan; not only would his oath and promise have failed, but the Egyptians, Canaanites, and surrounding nations would have blasphemed his great name, as if he had been unable to fulfil his engagements, and thus they would have been hardened in their idolatry and wickedness.

During a long course of years, after the nation was settled in Canaan, the interest, and almost the existence, of true religion in the world, was, according to the plan of infinite wisdom, inseparable from the preservation of Israel as a distinct people: and how great soever their provocations were, the honour of God was concerned in preventing the complete success of their idolatrous neighbours against them, though they were used as scourges for their frequent and severe chastisement. Nor, till the coming of the promised

Messiah, could it consist with the glory of GOD, to pour out his vengeance upon the nation, and wholly to deprive them of their distinguished advantages. But after that event, his plan no more required their preservation as his visible church; and so “wrath came upon them to the uttermost.”

There was likewise, through every age, a pious remnant in the land, to whom the promises especially belonged, and with whom the covenant was ratified. These persons prayed continually in behalf of the church and nation, according to the examples before adduced: and the honour of GOD required, that such prayers should be answered, and that his promises should be fulfilled to those who thus laid hold on his covenant. On all these accounts JEHOVAH “withdrew his hand, and wrought for his name’s sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen:” otherwise the crimes of Israel were so numerous and heinous, that he would have permitted their insulting enemies to effect their destruction; nay, he would immediately by his own power have made them like unto Sodom and Gomorrah. — We proceed,

II. More particularly to consider the words of the text, as applicable to the present circumstances of these nations. And,

1. I shall take this occasion to recapitulate, in a compendious manner, what GOD hath wrought in our behalf, since the beginning of the present convulsions in Europe: and while the several particulars are noticed, it will, I think, appear evident to every serious

mind, that GOD himself hath graciously interposed in our behalf. “ If it had not been the LORD who was
 “ on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been
 “ the LORD who was on our side when men rose up
 “ against us: then had they swallowed us up quick,
 “ when their wrath was kindled against us. Then the
 “ waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone
 “ over our soul. Blessed be the LORD who hath not
 “ given us over for a prey unto their teeth.”*

It is well known, that soon after the commencement of these bloody contests, which have wasted Europe, and destroyed many millions of her inhabitants, Great Britain was especially marked out as the victim of that power, whom GOD has employed as his scourge among the nations. Our prosperity was envied; our wealth, commerce, and naval prowess were coveted; and bitter resentment for supposed injuries was avowed. Yet while the nations of Europe, with but few exceptions, have witnessed and experienced, in a most tremendous manner, the horrors and miseries of war; we have, during a course of years, had peace in our borders. Doubtless our excessive affluence, the fuel and incentive of as excessive pride and luxury, has been diminished; and many hardships have been felt by numbers, who are entitled to our sympathy and assistance: but our cities have not been reduced to ruinous heaps by dreadful sieges; we have not seen our streets flowing with human blood or strewed with mangled bodies; nor have we heard the piercing groans of the

* Psalm cxxv.

wounded and dying, nor the more durable lamentations of their distressed survivors. We are most of us *happily* unable to form a conception of the terrors and miseries, incident to *the seat of war*; or of the scenes which are witnessed, when an insulting victorious army prescribes scarcely any bounds to rapine, cruelty, and brutal lust. Nor have desolated fields, and the smoking ruins of towns and villages, pained our eyes, when we have had occasion to journey through the country. Oh, my brethren, nothing can give us an adequate idea of the tremendous horrors of this scourge of GOD! Even those, who professedly record the history of battles and sieges, draw a veil over the frightful scenes, from which the imagination would otherwise turn with disgust and terror; or rather they embellish them with the false glitter of military glory, and the splendid achievements of particular warriors. But the attentive enquirer will learn enough from various facts and circumstances, to value a land of peace above all temporal good; and, if piously disposed, to bless GOD for such a privilege, whatever it cost, and whatever loss or burden he sustain in order to preserve it.

That hidden fire also, which unexpectedly burst forth in such tremendous convulsions on the continent, has been clearly proved to have *abounded* at the same period in this country: and many symptoms caused great alarms of insurrections, civil wars, revolutions, and massacres, like those which have been, in some respects, even more horrible than war itself, in a neighbouring country: while the consciousness of in-

gratitude for our peculiar privileges increased our apprehensions concerning the event. Yet during so many years the LORD hath preserved us; and very little indeed hath occurred *in this island*, to cause the shedding of human blood, either by the sword of war, or by that of the executioner. For he that “ stilleth the raging of the sea,” hath hitherto repressed the madness of the people: and great is the debt of gratitude we owe him on that account.

Whatever advantages may eventually arise from the dreadful transactions on the Continent; (for doubtless GOD will over-rule them for some wise and gracious purpose;) all, who love the holy day of the LORD, the ordinances of his courts, and the liberty of attending on them without interruption, must, if properly informed, have felt great anxiety about the event. The legal abolition of the Christian sabbath, the substitution of a heathen decade, and the shutting up, wholly or in part, very many places of worship, on various political pretences, wherever the enemy hath obtained the ascendancy; (when considered as connected with the most avowed infidelity and even atheism, and the determined enmity against Christianity, which distinguished many of the principal actors in those scenes,) had a very dismal aspect on our religious privileges, on the condition in this respect of our posterity, and on the interests of religion in this land, in case our enemies had prevailed in the contest. But hitherto GOD hath preserved us from every kind and degree of persecution, and we have full liberty to worship him according to our consciences, at whatever time

and in whatever place we choose. While this is the case, and our Bibles, our sabbaths, and our religious privileges are continued to us: we must be shamefully *carnal* and *ungrateful*, if merely temporal difficulties or burdens induce us to refuse our tribute of thanksgiving to the Author of all our mercies.

The enemies, with whom we have sustained so long and severe a contest, have been indeed most wonderfully successful in their designs, and in many cases they have prevailed against our forces: yet they have been uniformly baffled in all their attempts against this island, and its essential dependences! Surely then the LORD hath "wrought for his own name's sake," and has a right to our tribute of grateful praise.

At the crisis, when the fleet under Lord Howe gained a most decided victory, the state of things at home, as well as the designs of our foreign enemies, might have rendered such a victory, gained by them, of very dreadful consequence to us: for in all probability an invasion would in that case have been immediately attempted, with vastly greater prospect of success than it could be at present. And we should in every instance remember, that we are called on to be thankful, not only for success and its effects, but for preservation from the consequences of defeat.

Not to dwell on the advantages derived from the victory obtained by Lord St. Vincent, which were very important; let us recollect, that on one occasion, when the enemy made an attempt to land in Ireland, the unfavourable weather and contrary winds rendered it impracticable for our fleets to pursue them, and many

were either dissatisfied or alarmed on that account. Yet by those very winds, and that unfavourable weather, the LORD completely frustrated the design, without our help. He seemed to say to us, ‘ I have employed, and mean to employ, the conduct and valour of your admirals, officers, and seamen, for your preservation; and you are prone to give them the glory, and to confide in them: on this occasion therefore, I preserve you immediately by myself, that you may see and acknowledge my hand, and ascribe to me the honour due to my name.’

Immediately before he was pleased to make use of our fleets, in the most signal manner, for our preservation; he gave us, by the *mutiny among the seamen*, the most convincing demonstration how easily he could have made them the instruments of our destruction. It was indeed a most astonishing interposition of providence, that during that very alarming period, the fleets of the enemy were kept in port; and that the mutineers did not unanimously concur in the design of carrying our vessels to some hostile harbour.

It is, I believe, generally understood, that before the victory gained by Lord DuRoi, the Dutch admiral had embarked troops and stores, in order that he might convey them to Ireland, if the passage were open. But not being able to elude the English fleet, he put back into harbour; and having disembarked the troops, he was sent forth by the ruling powers, to risk a battle, in hopes at least of clearing the way for the purposed invasion. Had he therefore at that time gained as decisive a victory, as God gave our fleet,

he would doubtless have accomplished his design: and subsequent transactions have sufficiently shewn us, how greatly that event was to be dreaded.

The malecontents in Ireland are now known to have held correspondence with the French Directory, and to have received assurances from them of effectual assistance; and the time was fixed when it was supposed the nation would be ripe for open rebellion, and when the promised succours should be sent. But by some means the parties seem to have misunderstood each other; so that the Irish were under the necessity of rising, before their allies were ready to support them. Four squadrons however were actually prepared at different ports, to form one fleet for the invasion of Ireland, in the beginning of this summer: but by various occurrences they were all providentially retarded, till the critical season of probable success was elapsed; and at last they were not able to unite, but sailing separately, were one after another, either taken, dispersed, or driven back without effecting any thing! Who can help seeing the hand of God in these events? For if this armament, at the first breaking out of the Irish rebellion, had landed the officers, troops, and stores which they were intended to convey; the most dreadful consequences might have followed: and the nearness of Ireland to this country might have rendered it like a fire-ship in the centre of a fleet. Nothing, during the whole of these dangers and troubles, appeared to me more alarming than the breaking out of the Irish rebellion; and for no single circumstance have we more cause to be thankful, than that it has been suppressed, with no worse consequences to Great Britain.

The surprising success of the enemy on the Continent, and the disposition of the contending powers, to make the best terms they could with the conquerors; when considered in connexion with the vast preparations that were making, and the boasting menaces thrown out against this country, excited in the spring many serious apprehensions, that an invasion would actually be attempted; and whatever the success had been, various distressing consequences must have followed. Most of us expected a turbulent summer; yet, through the mercy of GOD, we have never enjoyed more tranquillity. Whatever induced the enemy to send so large an armament into Egypt, instead of exerting their whole force against Great Britain and Ireland; we have reason to be very thankful, that they were disposed to take another course, and to leave us in peace and quietness.

I am wholly incompetent to speak of the probable consequences to be expected from the most seasonable and most decisive victory gained by Lord Nelson: but contrasted with the supposition of the French fleet having obtained such a victory over ours, they must be almost incalculable. The diminution of their naval force and the increase of ours, in so great a degree; and the probable disappointment of their plans against our distant commerce, and to deprive us of one great source of that wealth, by which we have been hitherto, by the blessing of GOD, enabled to maintain our national independence, seems to be only a small part of the advantage. The effects produced on the minds of the European powers, on those of our own country-

men, and even on those of the enemy, are doubtless very great; and the prospect of our being able to weather out the dreadful storm is proportionably augmented.

The revolution in France, and the new principles and sentiments circulated on that occasion, excited in most parts of Europe an enthusiastical eagerness for *liberty*, which resembled *intoxication* or the *delirium* of a fever. I would by no means speak against true liberty, and the rational love of it; or the endeavour to improve and secure the measure which we possess by every regular and proper means; or even the sober attempt to communicate the blessing to others. But the liberty, lately contended for, was utterly incompatible with the state of regular society, and the lapsed condition of human nature; it was indeed such a *liberty* as was never *established* in any nation since the beginning of the world, nor ever will be while the earth remains. In this *delirium* multitudes, in different countries, were ready to join the enemy, in violently subverting their ancient governments, and in substituting an untried system, devised by inexperienced speculators, who began by treating the wisdom of former ages with profound contempt. In consequence of these hasty resolves, *the tree of liberty* has been planted very extensively; and now that it has produced very different *fruit* from what men expected, it is too late to root it up, and to *restore the former state of things, with the prospect of a gradual and rational amelioration*. But through the mercy of GOD, we have been preserved, till the *delirium* has in some measure subsided; and till most men have seen quite enough of

the effects of *French principles*, reduced to practice under *French patronage*, to cure them of all predilection for them. I apprehend, that by this time, almost every honest man, however he may disapprove of the state of things here in Britain, would protest against a change, to be effected in that manner, by which some neighbouring nations have been liberated from their former rulers. Now, to be preserved so long in such a destructive storm, and till it begins to subside, is a mercy which should excite abundant gratitude and praise.

That union which at present prevails among us, in a determination to withstand the designs of innovators and invaders, and in bearing the necessary burdens, is a very hopeful symptom, that the LORD will yet prolong our tranquillity at home, and at length restore peace to the nations, in a measure by our means. We are indeed still at a great distance from that state of affairs, which every humane and pious person must long and pray for: yet hitherto the LORD hath preserved us, beyond our expectations, and contrary to the confident predictions of many, who foreboded nothing short of our immediate destruction.

Among our many mercies, we must by no means overlook the very plentiful harvest which the LORD has vouchsafed us, and the reduced price of almost all kinds of provisions. When I travelled through the country in June, I was ready to say, “What a beautiful prospect do the fields present? But who can tell whether we shall reap the harvest, or enjoy the abundance of a bountiful Providence?” The harvest however is safely gathered in, and we are preserved in

peace to enjoy our plenty: and at the same time, we have been exempted from those dreadful pestilential diseases, which have raged with destructive force in some parts of the world. “ Oh, that men would praise
 “ the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful
 “ works to the children of men! And let them sacri-
 “ fice the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and tell out his
 “ works with gladness.”

Each of the circumstances enumerated bears evident marks of the Lord’s merciful interposition in our behalf: but the whole viewed together so conclusively demonstrates it, that I cannot understand how any pious man, whatever his peculiar sentiments may be, can help seeing and owning that God hath wrought these things, and that all parties ought to join in praise and thanksgiving to his holy name.

2. I would next enquire in what sense the Lord hath
 “ *withdrawn his hand, and wrought for his name’s*
 “ *sake,* that it should not be polluted in the sight of
 “ the heathen:” as the words may be applicable to the subject before us.

My brethren, we are here reminded, not to look to instruments and second causes, so as to forget the author of our deliverances. Let admirals, officers, seamen, and all concerned, have due commendation and liberal rewards: but let us not give to them that honour which belongs to God alone. Neither let us ascribe our safety to our insular situation, to our national spirit, the fidelity and loyalty of this or the other order of men, to our powerful fleets, or our naval skill and prowess: for we have had sufficient proof, that these confidences

must have failed us, and hastened our ruin, if the LORD himself had not been our Protector. Let us then acknowledge his goodness, as well in bestowing on us our peculiar advantages, as in making use of them for our preservation in the crisis of danger.

But we must be at least equally careful not to consider our success as in any degree the recompence of our own righteousness: for did the occasion permit, it would be easy for me to lead your attention through a variety of scenes, descriptive of our national character, and exhibiting such ungodliness and wickedness in every rank and order of the community, as would fully prepare your minds for the alarming enquiry, “ Shall “ not I visit for these things? saith the LORD; and shall “ not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” A man must either be very ignorant of the state of things in this country, or he must judge of them by a very different rule than the word of GOD; not to be convinced that, at the very time when each of the mercies before enumerated was bestowed, the LORD might very justly have executed vengeance upon us by the most desolating judgments. My brethren, the ministers of Christ do not mean, on this occasion, to retract the reproofs and warnings, which they have repeatedly given on the days appointed for humiliation, fasting, and prayer; but rather to use the consideration of our national guilt, in order to set off and commend the rich mercy of God in sparing and delivering us. We do not indeed wish to palliate the crimes of our enemies, which have been most enormous: but “ are there not “ with us also sins against the Lord our God,” of a very

aggravated nature? Sins not in the least repented of, but obstinately persisted in, against the fullest conviction, and the most solemn warnings? And, considering all our religious advantages, it is not easy for us to determine which nation has most deeply provoked the anger of Almighty God.—We may indeed adopt the words of Moses to Israel—“ Speak thou not in thine
 “ heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them
 “ out from before thee, saying, for my righteousness
 “ the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land.
 “ But for the wickedness of these nations the LORD
 “ doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy
 “ righteousness, nor for the uprightness of thy heart,
 “ dost thou go in to possess the land; but for the wick-
 “ edness of these nations the LORD thy God doth
 “ drive them out from before thee.”* Many reasons might be assigned, why God should interpose in our behalf, for the honour of his own name: yet our national character and conduct, as in any sense *entitling* us to such a favour, is not one of them: but they are all exactly similar to those assigned in the chapter of our text, why he spared Israel, while their sins called loudly for his vengeance upon them.

It hath pleased our gracious God to send the light of his gospel into this land: and, notwithstanding all our heinous crimes, we have not by any *national ac* renounced the profession of Christianity. On the contrary, the holy scriptures are so far had in honour, that

* Deut. ix. 5—8.

they are by authority read continually in every part of the land; and by various ways copies of them are multiplied, and dispersed among all ranks in the community. Some degree of regard is still paid to the holy day of GOD; and very many instances, in which it is profaned, directly violate the law of the land, as well as break God's commandment; while provision is also made, that publick worship should be every where maintained, and divine ordinances regularly administered. These things, in some circumstances, might avail us very little, if at all; and no doubt they tend exceedingly to aggravate the guilt of multitudes. But we are now contending with an enemy, which hath, by *publick national acts* virtually abrogated the christian sabbath, treated the scriptures with marked contempt, and almost wholly renounced Christianity: while many of the principal actors in these scenes have vented the most daring blasphemies against the Lord Jesus himself; nay have, in the *very senate*, uttered *with general approbation*, the language of the most unqualified atheism! Now if God should permit this people, in such a spirit, to succeed in their designs against our land; they would be emboldened in their impiety, insult over our religion, and consider themselves as prospered in their determination to cast off the yoke of Christ, and subvert his cause in the world. If therefore, the LORD should at length determine to punish us according to our deserts; it seems probable, that he will not employ our present enemies for that purpose; or that he will previously reduce them to another state of mind, and lead those in authority to pro-

test against the blasphemies, and repeal the laws, of their predecessors, against Christ and his holy religion. “ I said I would scatter them into corners, I would “ make the remembrance of them to cease from “ among men: were it not that I feared the wrath of “ the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave “ themselves strangely; and lest they should say, our “ hand is high, and the LORD hath not done all this.”*

The Assyrians not only conquered the surrounding Gentile nations, but likewise the idolatrous kingdom of Israel; and Sennacherib thought he had prevailed against the God of Israel: but when he attacked Judah, where true religion was supported and countenanced by authority; the honour of JEHOVAH was concerned in effectually silencing the boastings and blasphemies of the insulting invader, notwithstanding the hypocrisy and enormous wickedness of great numbers of the Jewish nation.

I cannot on this occasion conceal the satisfaction I felt in comparing the letter of our British admiral, with the dispatches from the French general in Egypt, which arrived about the same time. ‘ It hath pleased ‘ Almighty God to give a great victory to his majesty’s fleet,’ says the victorious Nelson, whose courage and conduct have excited universal admiration; thus rationally ascribing the glory to the Lord of hosts himself: on the other hand, the French commander states, that (*in waging war against superstition,*) he and his soldiers unite in the celebration of *Mahome-*

* Deut. xxxii. 22—28.

van festivals: he throws the blame of the defeat of the French fleet on the *destinies*; yet, speaking of *Fortune* as a real person, he makes her *his deity*, and says, she favoured him as long as it was necessary! So long as God is thus openly acknowledged by us, and despised or defied by our enemies; we may hope, that, “ he
 “ will withdraw his hand, and work for his name’s
 “ sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of
 “ the heathen.”

From the æra of the Reformation to this present time, it hath pleased God to make this nation one principal support of the Protestant religion; which may be considered, with, alas! not many exceptions, as the cause of Christianity itself. On this account likewise his glory hath been concerned in our protection; formerly against the vehement assaults of popish powers, and lately against the designs of infidels and atheists: for could either of these parties have accomplished their avowed designs respecting us; the interests of true religion in Europe would, as far as we can see, have been greatly endangered. The LORD hath indeed frequently made use of these enemies for our severe correction: yet “ he hath not delivered us over
 “ as a prey unto their teeth.” But how long our preservation may be necessary for the accomplishment of his wise and righteous purposes, we cannot tell: and, unless a great change should take place in our national character, he will, when his plan no longer requires us, cast us off; as he did the Jews after the coming of Christ, and the propagation of the gospel among the Gentiles.

There is likewise in these nations, as there was in Israel of old even in the worst of times, a remnant of true believers; and this little flock enjoys security and liberty of conscience. Now it is reasonable to suppose, that the honour of GOD is, in many cases at least, concerned, to defend a country where his people are protected and countenanced. Indeed it may be questioned whether any nation can be said to *have filled up its measure of iniquity*, while a considerable number of true believers remain in it, and are unmolested by persecution. The Christians had long been cruelly persecuted by the Jews, and had separated entirely from them, before the predicted vengeance was poured out upon that devoted nation.

The number of real Christians in Britain, though small in comparison of the inhabitants at large, would, I trust, if collected together, form a very considerable company. All these truly repent of their own sins, and are humbled for them as a part of our national guilt; they all “sigh and mourn for the abominations” that prevail; they protest against them, and endeavour in some measure to counteract them. They are decidedly on the LORD’S part in the midst of the abounding infidelity, iniquity, and impiety of the nation; and, according to the degree of their faith, grace and knowledge of the scriptures, they pray for the peace of the land in which they enjoy peace. They pretend not indeed to intercede with the energy and success of Abraham; or of Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Daniel, or others, who prevailed in prayer for Israel of old: but they use the same plea, both in their own

behalf, and in behalf of the nation; and beseech God to spare and deliver us, for the honour of his name, “that it should not be polluted in the sight of the “heathen.”

Several ministers have united, within the course of the year, to excite their own and each other’s congregations, to pray earnestly for our beloved country, in these perilous and critical times: and, while infidels deride, and mere politicians overlook, such means of national preservation; it is afflictive to observe, that some whom we would consider as brethren, have misunderstood us, and have supposed that we meant to excite people to pray for the *destruction of our enemies, and the gratification of national ambition, rapacity, or resentment, by bloody victories.* But, I think, I may answer for most of those concerned, and probably for every individual; that to be preserved from invasions, civil wars, and persecutions; and to have the invaluable blessing of religious light and liberty continued to us and to our posterity, has formed the substance of our united supplications in this respect. We should have been rejoiced, if the rulers of France would have formed devices, so salutary to themselves and safe to their neighbours, that we could explicitly and cordially have besought God to prosper them: but if they will persist in attempting to make this country the seat of war, to inundate it with blood, to overturn our government, and destroy our religion; we must continue to pray, ‘Abate their pride, assuage their malice, and *confound their devices.*’ We have prayed especially for peace; and it would have gratified every feeling of

our hearts, to have been secured from the dangers which impended over us, without the loss of a single life: but if the LORD GOD of our salvation sees good to answer us, “by terrible things in righteousness,” “who are we that we should reply against God?” Hezekiah and Isaiah doubtless would have chosen the softening, humbling, and changing of Sennacherib’s heart, rather than the destruction of his army: but if he continue to boast, menace, and blaspheme; and the LORD declare, that he will “put a hook in his nose, “and a bridle in his lips, and turn him back by the “way in which he came;” and if it please the Fountain of wisdom and justice to do this, even by the awful destruction of a hundred and eighty-five thousand men: shall the protected and delivered servants of God quarrel with him on this account, or refuse to render him their tribute of grateful praise? I trust, numbers have prayed in the spirit of humble faith, and love, and zeal for the honour of God and the interests of true religion: and verily God hath heard us, he hath hitherto confounded the devices of our enemies, and hath preserved peace in our borders. The honour of his name, we trust, rendered it proper for him to answer the prayers of his people; while with one consent many thousands pleaded, “O LORD, though our “iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name’s “sake.” On all these accounts therefore he hath withdrawn his hand: and notwithstanding our provocations we are preserved, for the same reasons which induced him to spare and protect the nation of Israel during many revolving ages.

III. I proceed therefore, in the last place, to deduce some practical instructions from the preceding view of our national mercies and our present circumstances. In doing this we must particularly advert to the special object of this day, appointed for publick thanksgiving. We are, my brethren, met together, to return thanks to Almighty God, not for the restoration of peace and the prospect of permanent tranquillity; but for preservation in the midst of a most perilous and destructive war: and even this preservation must be ascribed to the LORD's special unmerited mercy shewn to a most guilty land, for the purposes of his own glory. We cannot therefore consistently give the least countenance to that spirit of boasting, exulting, and vaunting ourselves or our countrymen, above others, which is natural to men amidst signal successes. A consistent Christian will be pained to hear even of *Britain's ruling the waves*; for he knows that the LORD alone possesses the sovereign authority over the sea and the dry land; and gives dominion to whom he pleases, and for what term of time he pleases. He cannot listen with *patience*, much less with *pleasure*, to vain glorious declamations on the great things we have done, or the honour and glory of Britain among the nations; for he knows that "Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been like Sodom and Gomorah." "The LORD" indeed, "hath done great things for us, for which we rejoice," with humble gratitude and admiration: and he hath enabled many of our countrymen to fill up their places in a proper manner, and hath

honoured them as his instruments in our preservation. To him therefore belong glory and praise; but to us belong shame and confusion of face, for our numerous and heinous provocations. "It is of the LORD's mercies we are not consumed:" and our mutual congratulations, as well as thanksgivings, should be tempered with deep humility and self-abasement.

A confident spirit too, is peculiarly unsuitable to our character and situation. We have been indeed hitherto preserved from shipwreck in a most tremendous storm, during which many have been dashed on the rocks or sunk in the ocean: but the hurricane still rages, and may soon, for what we *know*, become more furious than ever. The very means, by which GOD hath hitherto preserved us, may easily be turned against us; and we are in all respects entirely in the hands of Him, 'who for our sins is most justly displeased.' "Rejoice with trembling," should therefore be our motto.—Even if peace on the most desirable terms were ratified; the man, who judges according to the Bible, would not think our condition by any means safe; so long as a general reformation of manners and an effectual revival of religion have not taken place, and so long as even sanctioned injustice, oppression, and cruelty, however protested against, still maintain their ground. The *particular call of the day* is to bless and praise the LORD for his mercies: but the *general call of the times* is to "weeping and mourning, and girding with sack-cloth." We may indeed humbly hope, that he who "hath delivered, and doth deliver, "will yet deliver:" but we should beware of self-con-

fidence; or confidence in our national resources, our fleets and armies, our valour and good policy, or in an arm of flesh however exerted. And we ought at least to be equally upon our guard against a presumptuous confidence, like that of the Jews, “The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, are these;” while no care is taken to “amend our ways and our doings:” from a vain imagination that GOD will certainly deliver us, even though we continue to act, as if we thought ourselves delivered, on purpose to proceed in our rebellious courses. For my part, I shall never think the danger over till a general endeavour be manifested among all ranks and orders of men in the land, to promote the cause of genuine Christianity, in *principle and practice*, through their several circles; attended by a conscientious performance of the duties of their several places, and improvement of their various talents, to the honour of GOD and the good of men: and till a general protest be entered against every species of infidelity, impiety, oppression, venality, and profligacy. For the invasion of the land by these spreading evils, is far more formidable to the spiritual mind, than even that of the most numerous and well appointed armies of enraged enemies; and indeed it is now making more dire havock of men’s souls, than the French themselves have hitherto made of their bodies.

It is likewise peculiarly incumbent on us, to watch against all impatience under the pressure of the times. We should compare our burdens, losses, and trials, with those which we have deserved, and which have actually desolated many other countries: and thus,

while we cannot but feel, that the war has greatly impoverished and distressed numbers, and still bears very heavily on us; the spirit of murmuring will give place to that of patience, contentment, and lively gratitude. Indeed this is the grand difficulty, in respect of the service in which we are now engaged. For while pride and love of wordly objects prevail, and the state of things exceedingly impedes men's desired success, and involves them in manifold difficulties and straits; it is vain to expect that they will be truly and durably thankful for the most evident interpositions of a merciful Providence, to preserve them from vastly more dreadful calamities. And as even pious Christians are far from that depth of humility and fervency of spiritual affections, which become their character and situation: the same causes render them proportionably prone to impatience, and backward to the sweet duty of praise and thanksgiving. Hence it arises, that it is more difficult to prevail with men in general, to unite cordially in this *most reasonable service*, than perhaps in any other; and *unfeigned gratitude* to GOD, in some measure proportioned to his unmerited inestimable benefits, is almost, if not absolutely, the most uncommon attainment in the world. But the due consideration of the evil and desert of sin; of our own exceeding sinfulness; of the miseries which a just and merciful GOD is pleased to inflict on our fallen race in this world, and to threaten in another; on the riches of redeeming love, and the sufferings of the divine Saviour; on the privileges and prospects of the real christian, and his infinite obligations to the GOD of his salvation, which

are daily and hourly accumulating; and on the blessed inheritance reserved for him in heaven, after the light and momentary afflictions of this present world: These reflections, I say, are suited to counteract our propensity to ingratitude, to repress our murmurs, and to make us fervent in thankfulness; when otherwise we might repine in proud and sullen discontent.

We should likewise, my brethren, consider how the view which we have taken of the subject, suggests the most powerful motives and encouragements to *persevering importunity in prayer*. Yet it is to be feared, that many, who, in the crisis of danger and alarm, felt the propriety of joining in this important service, are grown slack in wrestling with God for the land, even in consequence of having apparently begun to prevail! But is not this most unreasonable as well as ungrateful? Surely the language of the Psalmist contains the proper sentiment on this occasion; “I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplication; because he hath inclined his ear unto me; *therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.*”* And the words of the apostle form our proper instruction; “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.”† Let us then, my brethren, not only *persist*, in publick, in our families, and our closets, (*daily*, but more copiously if we have opportunity, on the LORD’S *day*,) to beseech God to spare our guilty land, and to avert the calamities that

* Ps. cxvi. 1, 2.

† 2 Col. iv. 2.

still threaten us: but let us also take courage to hope and pray for still more abundant and important blessings; for “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;” and, “if two of you,” (of Christ’s true disciples,) “shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask; it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.”*

It may, perhaps, be useful here to remark, that Isaiah, whose prayer availed so much against the power of the proud blaspheming Sennacherib; when he saw the glory of Israel’s God and witnessed the adorations of the exalted Seraphim, cried out “Woe is me! for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips:” and that before Job was honoured to be the appointed and accepted intercessor for his friends, he was brought to say, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Let none then from conscious and lamented unworthiness yield to discouragement in praying for the land, or in expecting a gracious answer to their feeble supplications. One soldier indeed can do little towards resisting an invading army; but if every soldier, *on that pretence*, should desert his post, the land would be left defenceless: in like manner every Christian, who on this or any other ground, refuses to join his prayers in this emergency, deserts his post; and did all his brethren imitate the example, our land would be left exposed and defenceless indeed.

While some persuade themselves that the obstructions to a safe and desirable peace are few and small;

* Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

others seem to think, that they are, and must for a long time continue, absolutely insurmountable. But, whatever they may be; if the whole company of Christians in Britain could be induced to unite in fervent prayer for this most desirable blessing, in behalf of this land and of the harassed nations on the continent; I am persuaded we should soon be called upon to join in thanksgiving for peace. If we wrestle and prevail with God, as Jacob did, we shall also prevail with men. How effectually did Nehemiah's ejaculation, "O Lord give me favour in the sight of this man," avail to the restoration of the almost hopeless state of Jerusalem and Judah! "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him;" and we have ground from our success hitherto, to expect confidently, that he will hear our supplications in this respect also, and dispose the hearts of our enemies cordially to desire peace; or place those in authority who are desirous of it; or by some other means remove every obstacle, though to us it appear an immoveable mountain. And it would, I own, give me far greater satisfaction to have the prayers of the church of God in Britain considered, as the means of restoring peace to the nations, than as availing for the most brilliant victories. Nay, I feel no hesitation in adding, that I should unspeakably more rejoice, if God would dispose and assist us to pray, and answer our prayers, for poor, oppressed, and almost desolated France, and send to its inhabitants the blessings of peace, true rational liberty, good government, and the gospel of salvation; than to see her prostrate at the

fect of Britain, supplicating peace on the most humiliating terms.

But let us not stop even here, my brethren; Let us also take encouragement from past success, to pray more earnestly and constantly, that “the Spirit may be poured out upon us from on high:” that all the ministers of religion, however distinguished, may ‘be illuminated with the true knowledge and understanding of the holy word of God, and both by their life and doctrine set it forth and shew it accordingly:’ that all who are called Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith, in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life:’ that purity in doctrine and practice may adorn every part of the Christian church; and that every thing, which breaks its harmony, deforms its beauty, or weakens the energy of its testimony to the truth, may be removed; that *labourers* and *faithful* stewards of God’s mysteries may be sent forth and multiplied: that an effectual stand may be made against infidelity, impiety, and every species of Antichristianity: that heavenly wisdom and grace, with every blessing, temporal and spiritual, may be abundantly conferred on our gracious Sovereign, and every branch of the royal family; on our nobles, counsellors, ministers of state, senators, magistrates, and all who possess power and influence; and that each person, in his vocation and ministry, may glorify God, and serve his generation, faithfully and effectually. Let us be very particular, frequent, and importunate in supplications to this effect remembering, from time to time, all the different orders and

descriptions of men in the nation; the seminaries of publick or private education, especially those in which young persons are educated, on whom the charge of supporting true religion, or conducting publick business, will ere long devolve; the plans formed for training up properly the children of the poor, preventing crimes, reforming the vicious, or alleviating misery; and especially every plan for spreading the gospel of salvation in the world.

If, laying aside all party-disputes, Christians in general would cordially unite in prayers to this effect; without any doubt, we should speedily witness a blessed change. In this manner the apostles and disciples, (about one hundred and twenty persons,) continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, from the ascension of Christ to the day of Pentecost, when “the Spirit was poured out upon them from on high:” and then in a short time, their numbers were increased to many tens of thousands, and such a revolution took place in the world, among Jews and Gentiles, as a little while before must have appeared almost impossible.

Again, the preceding statement of our national mercies and situation loudly calls on every one of us to improve our advantages, while they are continued to us. It may be feared, that many join the publick rejoicing for victories and success, and perhaps feel a kind of *transient natural gratitude* for preservation, like that of Israel at the Red Sea, who “soon forgot “the works of God, and waited not for his counsel.”*

* Ps. cvi. 12, 13.

—And am I not even now addressing myself to many individuals, who are very eager for news, warm in disputing about politicks, elated by victories, alarmed and dejected by defeats; but who still continue to trample on the commandments, and neglect the great salvation, of God. To every person of this description I would say, Poor deluded mortal! “Despisest thou the riches
 “of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering;
 “not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee
 “to repentance? but after thy hardness and impeni-
 “tent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath, against
 “the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous
 “judgment of God, who will render to every man ac-
 “cording to his works?”—“The end of all things is
 “at hand.”—“Behold the Judge standeth at the door.”
 —“For what is your life? it is even a vapour which
 “continueth a little while, and then vanisheth away.”
 And what will national deliverances and success avail, when God shall say, “Thou fool, this night thy soul
 “shall be required of thee?”—To persons of this description, (alas, it is most lamentable to observe how they every where abound,) I would with all earnestness and affection say, “Seek ye the LORD while he
 “may be found: Call ye upon him while he is near.
 “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 to our God
 “and he will abundantly pardon.” “Behold, now is
 “the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salva-
 “tion.” Nay, though it is a day of holy joy to believers, I would also add, “Be afflicted, and mourn,

“ and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into heaviness: humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,” that he “ may exalt you in due time.”

Should the Lord give us up to deserved ruin, and deprive us of our invaluable, but alas, greatly despised, religious advantages; the loss would most awfully be felt in the event, not by those who prize and improve them, but by you who neglect them, and who are now the least concerned about their preservation. Hear therefore the words of the Saviour and Judge of the world, “ Yet a little while is the Light with you: walk while ye have the light; lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light believe in the Light, that ye may be the children of light.”

The believer likewise should earnestly be called upon to improve his advantages, while they are continued; not only in “ giving diligence to make his calling and election sure;” but in “ doing good to all men,” as he has opportunity and ability; “ Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” It would be absurd, my brethren, to pray for blessings on our beloved country, without using proper means in order to secure those blessings. An example of quiet and peaceable subjection, and the use of all our influence to promote union and order, should accompany our prayers for preservation from domestick disturbances: and still more important is it that our prayers, for spiritual blessings, should be followed by the improve-

ment of our several talents, to promote the cause of Christianity in our several circles. It seems evident, on scriptural principles, that the company of real believers, who unite in prayer for the land, constitutes its best security in these alarming times; and in proportion as they understand and perform their several parts consistently, the number of them may be expected to increase. While therefore, they to whom the care of *outwardly* providing for our national defence, are sedulously employed, in enlisting and disciplining soldiers, and manning our navy, by which the force of the nation becomes gradually more formidable: it is our concern to use every means of increasing the number of true Christians, and of promoting their edification; that these peaceful warriors may be multiplied, and rendered more expert and prompt in the use of their spiritual armour. If every real believer should, in the course of a few years, be an instrument of adding but one or two to this company; the number would be soon doubled or trebled. If every faithful minister should be prospered, besides his other usefulness, in calling forth one or two to preach the gospel fully and effectually; what a progress might we expect to make in a course of time! And if Christians in general were better acquainted with every part of their holy religion; they would more edify one another, and “let their light shine much more before men.”

Parents, masters of families, and all especially who have influence over others, should diligently study the duties of their several relations, and earnestly pray to

be enabled properly to fulfil them. They should be very assiduous in correcting whatever is faulty in their own conduct and tempers, and in exhibiting genuine Christianity in its native beauty by their examples; while they endeavour, by their conversation and every suitable means to recommend it to others. The effect of such a plan, if generally adopted and cordially entered on by all real Christians, would probably in the course of a few years be immense. This, this, my brethren is the grand thing wanting among us: *the revival of religion must begin in the church*; and when they who preach and profess the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, shall with one consent make it their leading aim to “let their conversation be, as it becometh “the gospel of Christ,” while “they stand fast in one “spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith “of the gospel;” I have no doubt but a general and rapid spread of true religion will be witnessed; notwithstanding all the *conspiracies of infidels*, or the efforts and expectations of such, as sedulously devise to substitute a more *philosophical* system in the room of “the doctrine of God our Saviour.” Indeed, whenever it shall please the LORD to enlarge the boundaries of his church, according to the prophecies of his holy word; he will, we may be confident, previously purify her from all false doctrine, superstition, and iniquity; and rouse his people from lukewarmness; take them off from unprofitable disputes; cure them of their propensity to make some doctrines, that are much controverted but ill understood, and excuse for neglecting

their most evident duties; and excite them to improve their several talents to the glory of his name.

Let me further observe, my brethren, that the principle, on which I have attempted to explain the dealings of Providence in respect of this nation, is no other than *that of Christianity itself*: so that every true believer, reviewing his past experience and conduct, will perceive and thankfully acknowledge, that the LORD "hath wrought," in respect of him, "for his own name's sake;" and will be able to form the sentiment into a powerful plea, in prayer for all that is yet wanting to complete his salvation; and to enable him through life to act consistently with his profession, and to be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the LORD, as knowing that his labour is not in vain in the LORD." Whatever wisdom or ability is necessary to the magistrate, the minister, the parent, the head of a family, or the man possessed of wealth and influence, in order to fill up his station to the honour of the gospel; he may on this ground confidently expect it, in answer to his prayers, notwithstanding his conscious unworthiness: because the *glory of God* is concerned in the conduct of every individual who professes his truth; which will be dishonoured, yea, blasphemed, among unbelievers, if he act inconsistently with his profession.

To conclude, it is not necessary, that I should speak particularly to you my brethren, on the way in which we ought to celebrate a day of publick thanksgiving. The disciple of Christ cannot mistake *carnal mirth for humble gratitude*. My *rejoicing*, for the most seasona-

ble and important victories, must be mingled with sympathetick tears on account of the numbers, whether friends or foes, who are bowed down with a load of sorrow for events connected with our national success. This cannot consist with *boisterous exulting joy*: but it suits with the spirit of *reflecting admiring gratitude*, and tends to preserve the mind from every extreme.

Though unable, from peculiar circumstances, to adopt the same plan; yet I cannot but bear my testimony on this occasion to the conduct of those ministers and congregations, who accompany their grateful tribute of adoring praises to our gracious God, with publick collections for the relief of the widows and orphans of those our defenders who have fallen in battle, or for other charitable purposes. A hint is sufficient: your individual liberality may supply the want of a publick contribution; and the money that numbers spend in intemperate feastings, and other customary expressions of joy; if employed in relieving distress, and making glad the heart of the sorrowful, as the genuine effect of evangelical principles, will be "fruit which shall abound to your own account;" yea, it will be, "a sacrifice, acceptable, well-pleasing unto God," through Christ Jesus our Lord; to whom, with the Father and the eternal Spirit, the One God of our salvation, be ascribed glory and honour, praise and thanksgiving, for ever and ever, Amen.

SERMON III.*

PSALM CXVI. 2.

*Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore
will I call upon him as long as I live.*

THIS Psalm is not expressly ascribed to David: yet it is generally supposed to have been written by him. He is called in scripture “the man after God’s own heart:” and it has often been enquired on what account this high character is given him. Among other reasons, this may be assigned; that in every circumstance of danger and difficulty, he made the Lord his Refuge and Confidence, and sought him by the fervent prayer of faith; and whenever he obtained deliverance and success, he ascribed all the glory to God, and rendered to him the tribute of adoring grateful praise.

I purpose to apply the verse, which I have read, to our concern in the publick affairs of the church and nation.—Not one only, but multitudes in concert, both

* Preached at the close of a series of lectures, on the signs and duties of the times, by a society of clergymen, in or near London, and published at their unanimous request, 1802.

of those now assembled, of others inhabiting this city, and in all the different parts of Great Britain, have united in prayer for the land: and “the LORD hath inclined his ear unto us,” and, beyond our expectations, has granted our requests; therefore “we will call upon him as long as we live.”

Let us then my brethren,

I. Consider the fact, “He hath inclined his ear unto us.”

II. The acknowledgment which we ought publickly to make of this goodness and truth of God to us, according to the subsequent language of the Psalmist. “I will offer to thee, the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call on the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD, now in the presence of all his people; in the courts of the LORD’S house: in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.”

“Oh, that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.”

III. Let us consider the concluding resolution: “Therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.”

I. Let us consider the fact. God hath inclined his ear unto us; he has heard and answered our prayers. It would take me far from my design, should I en-

ter particularly on the nature and effects of those publick convulsions, which during the late years, like a political earthquake, have shaken all Europe. The consequences of the first disturbances were such as exceeded conception; the possible effects defied the powers of calculation; no man could conceive how, or where, or when, the wide spreading desolations would terminate; no man, after a time, could consider his property, his liberty, his family, his very life, secure. The baleful effects of infidel principles, and principles of insubordination and anarchy, menaced awfully the destruction of our holy religion. We could not but mourn over the miseries and destruction of our fellow-creatures in other lands: but we also could not but tremble for ourselves. One year after another the storm gathered force, and the danger became more formidable. Our fears perhaps exceeded our dangers. Even such as had not been used to tremble, at least not greatly to tremble, at the word of God, began to take the alarm: and it became the general sentiment, that the times called for peculiar exertion and decided measures; nay, for humiliation before God and united prayer.

No doubt, before publick affairs wore so threatening an aspect, numbers, in all parts of the land, had secretly, and in their families and social intercourse, poured out their supplications for our beloved country and king, for our constitution, for our holy religion: but still it appeared to some of us, that the times called for more avowed and united efforts in this and in other respects. When conversing together on the

aspect of publick affairs, we remembered those words, "The LORD's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it." We saw or supposed we saw, "his hand lifted up." We considered all creatures and second causes as ordered by him, who permits, limits, over-rules, and works by all, his own wise, righteous, and merciful purposes. We said, "Because of thy wrath are we troubled; for our secret sins are in the light of thy countenance." We were deeply affected by contrasting our national privileges with our national character; the sins of the land and of the church; the infidelity, impiety, profligacy, and cruel iniquity, which prevailed, in some awful instances still sanctioned by professedly Christian legislators. These things alarmed us far more than the power and success of our enemies; and we seriously enquired, 'What can we do, in such circumstances, more than we now do, to stem the torrent, and to turn away the wrath of God from our guilty land?' We had before considered it as our bounden duty to remember, in our daily prayers, the perilous state of the church and nation, and to exhort our congregations to do the same; but still we doubted, as ministers of Christ, whether something did not remain for us to attempt.

While thus reflecting and conversing on these subjects from time to time, with no small anxiety; not only did the annual proclamation of our king, appointing a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, convince us still more, that the LORD God called us to peculiar duties, in this emergency; but our superiors in the

church gave unequivocal intimations, that they were of the same opinion: and it was evident from many declarations, that almost every serious person thought something beyond common efforts ought to be attempted.

At this crisis, the Society, which is this day dissolved, was first formed: a small number of clergymen in the metropolis, in the habits of friendly unrestricted intercourse on such subjects, entered into a resolution to assist each other, in endeavouring to stir up their congregations. 1st. To personal self-examination, repentance, and religious diligence. 2dly. To use their influence in checking the progress of infidelity, impiety, and vice; and promoting scriptural christianity, in their families and among their connexions. 3dly. To pray constantly for the nation, and for the church of God that is among us: and also, as connected with these ends, to strengthen, as far as our little influence would extend, the hands of our governours; and to exhort the people to “fear God and honour the king, and “not to meddle with those who are given to change.”

But, while we confined our exhortations to our own people, it occurred to us, that we might be considered merely as delivering a private opinion, which would be but little regarded: in order therefore to impress the minds of our several congregations more deeply, with the conviction that we were entirely agreed in our opinion on ‘the signs and duties of the times;’ we formed the plan of preaching on the subject at stated seasons for each other. This has been continued for a considerable time; and by private addresses and some

publications, we have endeavoured to stir up our brethren, both in London and through the Land, to join with us in these exertions; especially in constant united prayer for our country, and for the church of God.

It is not easy for us to estimate the degree of success, which hath attended our endeavours: but we may fairly assume, that in consequence, numbers have prayed more frequently, more particularly, more fervently, than they would have done; and that there has been more concert in prayer, than there might otherwise have been. At the same time we remember that our Lord has said, “Where two *agree* on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.” It may also be assumed, that some farther accessions have been made to the number and seriousness of those, “who sigh and mourn for the abominations that prevail;” and who, in various ways, exert themselves to stem the torrent of impiety, and to turn away the indignation of the Lord from our guilty land.

Let us also recollect, that by whatever means or instruments we are preserved, it is God who hath preserved us; and that “he delighteth in the prayer of the upright:” and then we shall be prepared, (without undervaluing the services of men, however employed,) to adopt the language of the text, “The LORD hath inclined his ear unto us.”

Surely it is in answer to the prayers of God’s servants, that, while almost every country in Europe, has

been made the seat of war, deluged with blood, and exposed to dreadful devastations by fire and sword; we have had peace in our borders. Our established government, our civil constitution, (rendered more valuable than ever to reflecting persons, by comparison with its boasted rivals,) are preserved to us. No revolution, no civil bloodshed, no convulsions, have here taken place. Our sabbaths, our churches, our religious establishments, our toleration, are continued. Few, very few comparatively, have lost their lives, in this dreadful struggle, by the sword of justice; (a wonderful proof of the mild and equitable spirit of our constitution!) Our commerce and manufactures, the support of the poor, and the resources of the publick, as well as the wealth of individuals, are not materially injured; nay, in many cases, are unimpaired and improved. We have had scarcity, urgent scarcity: but astonishing supplies from abroad have been vouchsafed, till Providence has favoured us with a harvest plentiful almost beyond example. At length, peace is made, as well as plenty, in good measure, restored; and pleasing prospects open to our view.—Can we remember our prayers, during many years, often accompanied with distressing alarms and sorrows; and then refuse to say, “Verily God hath heard us?” Are not these deliverances and mercies answers to our prayers?

You have often heard, and will no doubt again hear, the particular instances in which a kind and bountiful Providence has interposed in our behalf: but I shall only offer two hints on this subject. It is not likely that truly pious Christians generally unite in prayer, for

the aggrandisement of their own country, and the destruction of their enemies: though they are often accused of it. They would wish, if possible, to prevent the effusion of human blood, and the calamities of their fellow-creatures: but they pray to be defended from invasions and desolations; they pray for the peace of the land in which they enjoy peace; and a blessing on the persons and measures of their rulers, who protect them in the enjoyment of their civil and religious privileges; and they pray for the preservation of those valued privileges, to themselves, their fellow-subjects, and posterity to remote generations. At the same time, however unavoidable and just any war may be, it cannot be reasonably expected, but that human passions will mingle in the prosecution of it; and that motives of ambition, rapacity, resentment, or worldly policy, will dictate some measures; and so, carry men beyond what is necessary for self-defence. Now, my brethren, I would particularly call your attention to this circumstance, in the history of the late war. Every measure, without exception, either more or less immediately connected with our own defence, has been wonderfully successful: but several which had for their object rather the annoyance of our enemies, than our own preservation, though planned in consummate policy, viewed with most sanguine expectation, and conducted with ability and fortitude, have proved unavoidably unprosperous: and, in thus dealing with us, has not God, as it were, said, ‘I answer the prayers of my people, which they offer according to my will, and protect the land; but further than this I do not give success?’

Again, could we about fifteen months ago have foreseen the present state of publick affairs, should we not have considered it, as a wonderful answer to our supplications? The prospect was then very gloomy. Our allies had left us, (perhaps unavoidably,) to sustain alone the apparently unequal contest: the powers of the north combined to deprive us of our naval superiority: even our rulers evidently were not without apprehensions that an invasion would be attempted: a scarcity approximating to famine, pressed upon us: it became doubtful whether supplies from abroad could be procured, to sustain the people till harvest; and what that harvest would be, who could tell? Urged by such distresses, what might not have been feared from the suffering multitudes? what advantages might not the disaffected at home, as well as our foreign enemies, have obtained? No doubt the more we were pressed and alarmed, the greater earnestness in prayer was excited. ‘Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.’ These clouds are all now dispersed! A plentiful harvest has supplied our wants. Our successes and negotiations have quelled the northern storm: peace is made with France: *my* tongue cannot do justice to the change which in little more than a year has taken place. I can only stand astonished, and call on you, my brethren, saying, “Oh magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!”

II. I proceed to shew the acknowledgment, which we are called on to make, to that God “who hath inclined his ear to us,” and “answered us in the day of our distress.”

And here I shall digress a little to advert to several topicks, which I hear advanced; not indeed with a design to shew, that we ought not to be thankful; but yet suited to damp the spirit of grateful joy, which I wish to feel and excite with unabated fervour.

Many entertain an opinion, that a very large proportion of the distresses, to which the lower orders especially in the time of the late pressure, were exposed, was owing to the wickedness of different descriptions of men; and this damps the ardour of their joy and gratitude for deliverance. That human nature is depraved and selfish, we who believe the gospel must maintain: and that selfish men have always taken the advantage of publick difficulties to enrich themselves, though by increasing the distresses of others, cannot be doubted: Yet it is very questionable, whether this have taken place in the late pressure more than usual, or in the way that multitudes have supposed. But, however that may be, let us leave the culprits to the justice of man; and if that fail, to the tribunal of God: one thing is indisputable; that the Lord hath heard the prayers of his worshippers, and in a considerable degree alleviated our pressure; and without considering what our fellow creatures have done, or are doing, let us, my friends, thank God for what He hath done. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his “benefits.”

Again, some augur from the aspect of things, and from the character and situation of those with whom we have made peace, that it will not be permanent;

and this interferes with their grateful joy.—But, my brethren, if God hath, after a tremendous storm, brought us safe to a commodious anchorage, in answer to our prayers; let us trust him, that in answer to our future prayers, he will prevent further storms, or carry us safely through them. “We had, (says the apostle,) the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in him that raised the dead: who hath delivered us,—and doth deliver us,—and in him we trust that he will yet deliver us.”

Experience will warrant us to place some measure of dependence, under God, in the vigilance and firmness of our rulers: but if they were far less worthy of our confidence, he, who hath heard our prayers, hath a right to our acknowledgments for the past, and our affiance for the time to come. We have been taught by late events to expect extraordinary changes. The consequences of the revolution in France far exceeded all expectation; changes, that were never thought of have hitherto succeeded to each other! and the return of peace is an event which a while ago was beyond our hopes. Let us then leave these things with God: He can give a turn to affairs, which shall prevent the consequences that we are apt to fear. And he says to us, “Take no thought for the morrow: let the morrow take thought for the things of itself: sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.”

Again, some persons are so afraid of the infidel and anarchical principles which have prevailed on the continent; that their warmth of gratitude and joy for peace

are deadened, by the apprehension of bad consequences to religion, morality, and civil order. Here indeed, my brethren, we are loudly called upon, to avoid unnecessary intercourse with such as hold these principles. We may "follow peace with all men;" and yet "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." We should also double our diligence in instructing our children, our families, and congregations; and in making them intimately acquainted with the evidences and nature of Christianity, and the duties of submission to God, and to man in all things lawful; and in every other way to promote genuine religion. This will best stop the progress of infidel and pernicious principles. But surely none can think perpetual war and bloodshed needful for this purpose. Let us all use the proper weapons of our warfare, diligently and zealously, and we shall need no other. War may prevent intercourse, and so preclude mischief; but it must also prevent the communication of good. And are we so afraid of error, and so distrustful of the force of truth and the power of God to support it, that we have no hope, but in standing aloof and out of the reach of Satan's hosts? "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." I have no doubt but peace is more favourable to the cause of Christ, than war ever can be. Indeed I am not disposed to dread, what are called *French principles*, so much as some persons do. They have been carried to such extremes of flagrant absurdity, and have produced such horrid effects; that they are become generally odious or suspected; the dreadful paroxysm is

over; and untried plausible delusions are at present far more to be feared.

It should also be considered, that in all cases, prosperity is attended with peculiar dangers to the interests of true religion, both in private and publick life: yet we do not on this account consider ourselves forbidden to rejoice, or excused from being thankful, when favoured with health, domestick comforts, and success in our circumstances: though we may see cause to “rejoice with trembling” and moderation, for such precarious advantages.

But a still deeper cause of regret and even alarm, is mentioned by many very pious persons, and that sometimes in a manner which tends to abate our joy and thankfulness; on account of the special mercies vouchsafed us. They observe, that neither judgments nor deliverances have amended our national character; that iniquity and profaneness abound as much, or more, than ever; that luxury and dissipation seem to increase among us; and that the Lord’s day is more openly profaned, and the gospel more despised, than during any former period.

It is, alas! undeniable, that there is too much ground for these and similar lamentations; and this should excite us to oppose our earnest exertions and fervent prayers to the destructive torrent. Yet after all, bad as things are among us, though not apt to be sanguine in this respect, I am of opinion, that there is in some degree a real amendment in our national character. Had all the other inhabitants of Sodom continued as wicked as ever, or even become still worse, had that been pos-

sible; yet if instead of one Lot, twenty Abrahams had been found in the city; the character of the city would have been improved, and in the way to still further improvement, by the example, conversation, influence, and prayers of such a company, and the care they would bestow in “commanding their children and “households after them, to keep the way of the LORD, “to do justice and judgment.” In like manner, whatever may be the general conduct of the inhabitants of this land: if a considerable increase has of late been made, and is now making, to the number of real Christians, and if the real Christians among us, in general, are growing more and more like “the father of the “faithful;” without doubt, our national character, in the sight of God, is improved. Now, from the increased attention paid in our publick seminaries to the concerns of religion, and the encouragement given to pious young men; from the numbers of such young men who enter into the sacred ministry, and the employment which they find; and from various circumstances of a similar nature, I cannot but hope that there are considerably more true Christians in the land, than there were some time since: and, if the exertions used to edify all this company in their most holy faith, and to form their minds and judgments to a proper union of evangelical truth and holy practice, be rendered successful; we may then confidently trust, that a real *revival* of pure religion is taking place, though we lament that a general *reformation* in the nation at large does not accompany it. For what is a revival of religion, but an increase of the number of

truly religious persons, and their growth in holiness? And can we look for this among those, who are evidently not religious? Magistrates may restrain outward wickedness: and heads of families and others may promote external decency of conduct, apart from vital piety: and it would be well, if all were done in these respects which ought to be done. But in the present state of human nature, it is in vain to entertain high expectations of this kind: our chief dependence must be placed on the gospel of Christ; and our aim and hope should be, the increase of true Christians, and their becoming more and more exemplary in their whole conduct, and “fruitful in all the works of righteousness, which are through Christ Jesus to the
“praise and glory of God.”

There are no more, properly speaking, than three sorts of people in the world; the *openly profane*, the *formal or hypocritical*, and the *truly pious*. Various methods may be used to diminish the number of the first order, and augment that of the second; and many advantages to society may result from this external amendment: yet after all, but little is gained in a religious sense, compared with what results from the number of the *truly pious* multiplying from year to year: and this I hope and trust is, and will be, our case, if we diligently use those means to which our several situations call us. While therefore, we cannot think of “the abominations that prevail,” without sighing and mourning over them; we should not suffer these thoughts to interrupt our joyful praises, at such a time as this; but remember the words of Nehemiah on a

similar occasion. "This day is holy to the LORD, weep not, neither be ye sorry: for the joy of the LORD is your strength."—He now calls us to praise and thanksgiving, and every thing is beautiful in its season.

Another consideration seems to throw a damp on the minds of some serious persons, and to interfere with the sweet service which suits our present circumstances. They observe a bitter and violent spirit against the cause of *spiritual religion*, and *vital godliness*, manifesting itself in various ways; and cannot but apprehend the consequences. The fact is undeniable: but I own that to my mind it affords rather a pleasing reflection. The spirit of the world, and the spirit of Christianity always were, and always must be, opposite to each other. In the present state of things, every church, or society of professed Christians, will, more or less, consist of a sound and a corrupt part; and in proportion as the sound part increases and gathers strength, the enmity and violence of the corrupt part will be excited. Christ and his apostles originally belonged to the same outward church with Caiaphas and the persecuting priests: and in proportion as the cause of true religion prospered, the corrupt part of the Jewish church shewed more and more inveterate malignity.

It has been a serious apprehension in the minds of some among us, that the extreme quietness, which we of late enjoyed, has in great measure arisen from our want of success, and from a too worldly spirit among those who held evangelical truth. The enemy of souls

met with but little disturbance, and judged it more politick to let us alone. Now if this was the case; the testimony of those who avow themselves enemies to our doctrines and proceedings, is a hopeful proof that our cause is getting ground, and our success so great as to excite some alarm and disquietude. They publicly aver, that ‘the number of those who call themselves evangelical ministers is rapidly increasing in ‘the church.’ We trust that it is so, and rejoice in their testimony. They indeed predict many bad consequences; and are ready to exclaim, with the Jews of old, “Men of Israel, help.” But so long, as the ministers of the established church adhere simply to her doctrines and liturgy; act consistently with their character and engagements; are exemplary in their lives, and labour diligently in their several places: we are confident that our rulers, in church and state, know better than to regard the clamours of such men, however vehement and reiterated they may be. Our part, however, is, “to study to be quiet, and mind our own “business;” to rejoice if the cause of Christ prospers in the world; and to leave it to him to protect us against persecution, or to support us under it.

These are the principal, though not the only grounds, on which many seem to hesitate, as to the cause which we now have to rejoice and give thanks: and I trust it has been shewn, that they ought by no means to interrupt our gratitude and damp our ardour.

When national benefits are received, it must be expected, that men will very generally be affected, as

they suppose their own interests to be concerned; so that numbers, who rejoice, do it for selfish reasons, and not from regard to the publick good. And, they who are not habitually influenced by religious principles, will express their satisfaction in a worldly manner. These things we must observe, and in one sense regret: but, except excess or other crimes are committed, we should not be too severe in animadverting upon them; for this tends rather to prejudice than to conciliate men's minds. They, however, who have sought the blessings of peace and plenty, by fervent prayer and supplication, should make their acknowledgment to that God, who has "inclined his ear unto them," by the voice of praise and thanksgiving, both in publick, in their families, and their social intercourse. This should distinguish every thing festive, which they admit of on the occasion; and be accompanied with proportionable liberality to the poor and needy, that their hearts also may rejoice. And, while the people of God 'shew forth his praises from a heart unfeignedly 'thankful, not only with their lips, but in their lives, 'by giving themselves up to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all their, 'days;' they should consider what additional ability and advantages peace may afford them of promoting the cause of Christianity at large, in every part of the world. Many opportunities will, no doubt, be given of doing this, when peace shall be established; and numbers will have increasing ability for availing themselves of such openings. We should then daily ask ourselves, "What shall I render to the LORD for all

“his benefits?” and we shall best shew our gratitude, by employing that time and property in works of piety and charity, which others waste in self-indulgence, or devote to avarice.

We proceed now,

III. To consider the concluding resolution, “Therefore will I call upon thee, as long as I live.” It is, I suppose, understood that this is the closing sermon, on ‘The signs and duties of the present times;’ and that the Society is now dissolved. It has indeed been urged, that there is as much need of the society and its efforts as ever: for if, after God has so graciously delivered us, in answer to the prayers of his people; we, as a nation, go on in accumulating guilt, and ungratefully abusing his goodness; the present deliverance can only be considered as a reprieve, and the vengeance of heaven will fall proportionably heavier in the event. There is besides, great danger, lest the prosperity, that accompanies peace, should still more deeply corrupt us; and even increase the lukewarm and wordly spirit, which, alas! is already too prevalent among those who seem to be religious. Now, as far as this observation relates to the necessity of persevering in prayer, and every zealous exertion, it is perfectly just, and highly important: but if applied to the continuance of this Society, it appears inconclusive. The society originated in a general conviction, that the times were extraordinary, and required extraordinary exertions: and we considered ourselves as justified in this measure by the publick opinion. Yet we live in a day, when all

private associations are regarded with a jealous eye: and in some respects justly; for many very pernicious designs have been cloaked with fair pretences. Even this Society, though our *avowed* and *real* motives and objects were absolutely the same, and undeniably harmless and useful; and though we trust our whole conduct has been consistent with those avowed motives and objects; has not escaped some degree of censure and suspicion. We formed ourselves into a Society, during an alarming crisis, in order to promote a spirit of prayer for the land, and all orders of men in it; to counteract the progress of infidelity, impiety, and vice; and to use our influence to maintain subordination and quiet subjection to our lawful governors. Blessed be God, that awful crisis is now past; the immediate necessity for such a society ceases; should we continue it, our conduct might be misunderstood; and should a new occasion arise, by discontinuing it at present, we should be able to resume it, on this or a similar plan, with greater advantage, and without giving occasion against us to those who seek occasion.

But though these periodical sermons now close, and the Society is no more; as individual ministers, in our several congregations, and occasionally in each other's; we shall still exhort you, my brethren, to attend to the same important duties, which we have thus inculcated; and especially to continue in prayer and supplication for the land, and for the church of God: and we hope that both hearers and ministers will abound yet more and more. We have no less reason to do this, and we have additional encouragement.—“ God hath

“inclined his ear to us; therefore will we call on him
“as long as we live.”

Even natural feelings will dictate a kind of prayer in seasons of great distress or alarm: but when the danger and anguish are over, and prosperity induces security, the same persons say in their conduct, “We
“are lords, we will come no more unto thee.” But the grace of God teaches those who possess it, to pray at all times. “Be careful for nothing; but in every
“thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving,
“let your requests be made known unto God.” Mingle, then, thanksgivings with your prayers in trouble; unite prayers and supplications with your joyful praises in prosperity. “Pray without ceasing, in every thing
“give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ
“Jesus concerning you.”

‘In all times of tribulation, in all times of our
‘*wealth*,—good Lord, deliver us.’ National, as well as private success has its peculiar dangers. “When
“thy riches increase, and thy silver and gold is multiplied;—then beware lest thy heart be lifted up, and
“thou forget the LORD thy God.” Oh! attend to this caution, my affluent brethren; and pray without ceasing to be preserved in your perilous circumstances: and pray every one of you, for yourselves and each other, and all your fellow-christians, and the land; that prosperity may not prove still more fatal to us, than even the late calamitous war. Pray especially, that we may experience and exemplify what we read of in the sacred history: “Then had the churches rest and
“were edified: and walking in the fear of the Lord,

“and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”*
 “ed.”*

Continued prosperity, however, is by no means to be expected in this vale of tears: and, as in life we should daily prepare for death; so in peace and comfort we should be habitually ready for trouble and conflict. The resolution of the text, therefore, while it fairly admits of the use which has been just made of it, especially implies, that having been answered in the late day of distress, we should in every future danger and difficulty, call upon the LORD, even as long as we live.

Wordly men have a great variety of expedients, to which they have recourse, according to the suggestions of political wisdom, or worldly discretion: but the Christian, acting in his proper character, has but one expedient. He may indeed, either in publick or private life, attend to proper measures subordinately: but his grand resort is, that of Jacob, when he wrestled with God and prevailed; that of David, when in his trouble he called on the LORD and he heard him; that of Hezekiah, when he and the prophet Isaiah “lifted up their prayer for the remnant that was left.” We have an omnipotent Father and Friend, who is infinitely kind and faithful: and whatever means we use, our grand concern is to prevail with him by prayer, and then we shall also prevail with man.

We read that Asa sought the LORD in extreme

* Acts ix. 31.

danger, and was mercifully delivered: but afterwards, when he was alarmed by another enemy, he hired the assistance of an idolatrous prince, and tempted him to break his league with the king of Israel, by giving him the consecrated treasures of the temple. How absurd was this conduct! He was rebuked for it, and in consequence died under a cloud, and left his character in obscurity. But David determined to “call on the LORD as long as he lived:” and Hezekiah, it may be supposed, did the same, when he had received so astonishing a deliverance, in answer to prayer, from the power and rage of Sennacherib. After such a signal interposition of his almighty Friend, it must have been very strange indeed, if he ever betook himself to another refuge.

But the answers, vouchsafed to our supplications, not only *encourage* our renewed and persevering prayers; they even *demand* them. When we bless our God for answering us, we make an occasional acknowledgment of his condescending and compassionate love: but while we continue, on every emergency to call upon him, we make a constant and permanent return of gratitude and becoming confidence. It is true, this consideration implies, that “the LORD’S ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts; for as the heavens are higher than the earth; so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts higher than our thoughts.” But this is the very circumstance, which most honours his adorable name. If we apply to any supposed friend, during urgent distress, and meet with a repulse; we are afterwards disheartened

from again having recourse to him: and if we repeatedly have been assisted, we grow ashamed of being so exceedingly troublesome and encroaching. Neither of these difficulties, however, take place in our communion with the infinite God. He is always ‘ more ready to hear than we are to pray:’ and the number, and largeness, and perseverance of our requests, are peculiarly pleasing to him, and honourable to the riches of his power, his grace, his liberality, and compassion. He counts himself glorified by our constant and renewed applications; and is offended, when we do not “ make our requests known unto him.”

Suppose a father, possessed of immense wealth, high in dignity, and eminent for liberality, had a son, whom he had educated with a wise union of affection and authority. He had never denied him any reasonable request; he had readily forgiven many faults into which his child had been betrayed; and he had anticipated and exceeded many of his wishes. Should this son, when in any difficulty, go to inferior persons to beg their assistance; would it not be a degradation of himself, and a dishonour to his parent? Might not his father thus expostulate with him, ‘ Did I ever refuse you any thing proper for you? Was I ever wanting in love and consideration? Am I not sufficiently rich? Why then disgrace yourself and me, by seeking help from others, who will either think I want affection or power to help you? Make me your friend; and you will have no occasion to apply elsewhere; for I shall never refuse, except when your good requires it; and allow me this, that I exceed you in wisdom and expe-

rience.'—Such an address would be conclusive: and though we must not presume to apply the whole absolutely to God; yet surely the case admits of a sober application of this language to the subject before us: “Therefore will I call upon thee, as long as I live.”

Applying these thoughts to our present subject; we remember, that, when peace is made between contending nations, it is common for the military spirit to abate, and the national force to be reduced. A standing army in times of peace would be too expensive, and also dangerous to our liberty. Instead of recruiting our troops, many are disbanded. This might prove dangerous, but that, alas! peace seldom takes place, till all parties are so unable to continue the exertions, that all are alike disposed to lessen the expences and publick burdens: and thus the proportion still remains nearly the same.

But the case is vastly different, as to that warfare, in which, as Christians, we are and must be engaged. The powers of darkness, and their abettors of every description, will keep up, and if possible, increase, their forces, and persevere in their opposition to the cause of Christ and his holy religion. Yet on the other hand, we should, and may, without national expence, danger, or impropriety, keep up our standing army of those who, by their constant prayers and exertions, endeavour to avert the wrath of God from a guilty land: and we may use all proper means of recruiting it by new accessions. Here especially, our safety lies. It has been shewn, what an improvement would have been made in Sodom, if twenty persons like Abraham

had been raised up in that city. Let us then remember, that the increase of such characters is the grand security for our land. And let no peace or prosperity cause us to lose sight of this grand object, the maintaining and improving the religious principle, and adding to the number of pious people, in the nation. This alone can secure us against future contingences. It is not only, or principally, from avowed infidelity, that we are endangered. The able commanders of the opposing army, know, that it will equally answer their purpose, to bring in superstition and popery, enthusiasm and antinomian licentiousness, or pharisaical self-confidence, or dead and notional orthodoxy, or evangelical lukewarmness and formality. We are in danger on every side. May we watch and be sober!

Indeed our chief danger arises from relaxing our vigilance. Let then all, in their families, circles, and congregations, consider what means can be used, to promote the growth of genuine Christianity, which is the best preservative against every species of impiety and false religion.

But especially, my Christian brethren, let us make it a matter of conscience, to offer up our daily prayers, in our families and closets, both for the temporal and the religious interests of our beloved country. Let us pray, that every faithful minister of Christ may, not only be successful in bringing sinners to repentance and the knowledge of salvation, but be instrumental also in raising up others to preach the “glorious gospel of God our Saviour:” that every Christian may both adorn his profession, and bring others to attend

to the word of truth: that all those who are placed as instructors of youth in colleges, and who fear God themselves, may be succeeded in communicating religious principles to the minds of their pupils: and that all pious persons who in any way educate young persons, may be blessed in their endeavours to form their minds to genuine faith and piety. Thus, the salt being cast into the fountains, we may hope that the barren land will be healed; and that ministers of religion, and even ministers of state, senators, magistrates, and persons in every line of life, may be brought forth to serve God and promote evangelical piety by their example, influence, and exertions.—Let us pray also, that all pious parents, and heads of families, may be assisted and prospered in attempting to train up their children in the service of God and the knowledge of Christ.—Let us beseech God, according to our excellent liturgy, to ‘ bless our gracious king, and all his royal family; to endue them with his Holy Spirit, to enrich them with his heavenly grace,’ and guide them in his faith, fear, and love; to help them in all things to seek his honour and glory, and to bring them to his heavenly kingdom.—Let us pray without ceasing for all the ministers of religion in Christendom, that they may be ‘ illuminated in the true knowledge of the Scriptures, and both by their life and doctrine, set them forth and shew them accordingly.’—‘ And that all who call themselves Christians, may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life:’ that all churches may be rendered more exactly conformable

to Scripture, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and practice, and more united with each other: that so we may all soon come to worship our God with one heart and with one mouth.—We should indeed pray for all sorts and conditions of men, in the land and on the earth: but, especially, present circumstances most imperiously call upon us to “beseech the Lord of the “harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest.” Many openings are made by Providence, for propagating Christianity; a spirit of zealous exertion is excited; and British wealth, liberality, and *piety*, (in numbers I trust,) are adequate to any expences in this cause: but alas! the men are wanting. Oh then unite in prayer, that labourers may be sent forth into the harvest.

Many other topicks might be insisted on: and especially we should pray for success to all pious attempts, and support, comfort, and assistance to all concerned in them. But I must desist. The field is large; the subjects for prayer are many and important. Do you not, my brethren, see the propriety of taking encouragement from past answers to call on God as long as you live?

. But while I am addressing you, as a congregation of true Christians, who united in the earnest supplications which have received so remarkable an answer; probably there may be some whose consciences testify that they do not belong to this company. You have perhaps bowed the knee in publick or in social prayer; but without entering into the spirit of these services. You may have had a form of private religion: but it

has been cold and unmeaning. In short, you are conscious, that hitherto, you have been strangers to genuine repentance, to a life of faith in the Son of God, to spiritual religion, and newness of life. Let me beg of you then to recollect, that though you may share in publick mercies and deliverances, in consequence of the prayers offered by others; you cannot escape the wrath of God, or obtain eternal salvation, unless you yourselves “ seek the LORD while he may be found, “ and call on him while he is near.” And consider, without eternal salvation, how little all else will profit the possessor.

There may be also those, who through discouragement, or mistakes, or prejudices, (as we must suppose,) have been kept from joining us in prayer for deliverance from our perilous and calamitous situation. Should this have been your case, we hope, however, you will have no objection to join us in blessing the LORD for his unmerited, and perhaps unexpected, benefits. At least, let us be of one mind and one heart in this service, and in our endeavours to promote the purity, peace, and enlargement of the Redeemer’s kingdom, in our favoured land, and to the ends of the earth.


And if we have prayed, and the LORD has heard, in our publick concerns; let us, my brethren, prize the privilege of coming to the throne of grace; and more love and value him, who has, by his own obedience unto the death upon the cross, opened to us the way of access and acceptance: let us abound more and more in prayer and supplication; let us “ ask and re-

“ ceive that our joy may be full.”—And now to him, that is able to “ do exceeding abundantly above all “ that we can ask or think, according to the power “ which now worketh in us; to him be glory, in the “ church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world “ without end. Amen.”

OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
SIGNS AND DUTIES
OF
THE PRESENT TIMES.

*With some account of a Society of Clergymen in
London, whose object it has been to promote
vital godliness at this alarming period.*

——
DRAWN UP AND PUBLISHED BY THE DESIRE OF THE SOCIETY, 1799.

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N.B. The substance of this Tract was first preached as a Sermon, on 1 Chron. xii. 32, and though afterwards drawn up in another form, it seems proper that it should be added to the preceding Sermons on the same subject.



THE
SIGNS AND DUTIES
OF
THE TIMES, &c.

THE holy Scriptures are represented by the apostle, not only as “able to make us wise unto salvation, “through faith which is in Christ Jesus,” but as sufficient likewise to “furnish us thoroughly unto all good “works.”* Hence we may conclude with certainty, that they contain instructions, cautions, and examples, suitable to our various circumstances; and, if properly attended to, would in all cases be a “light to our feet, “and a lantern to our paths.” On the other hand, the same apostle observes, that “Whatsoever things were “written aforetime, were written *for our learning:*”† so that we may also be sure, that every part of Scripture contains some important lesson, which at one time or other may be peculiarly useful.

These considerations may suffice to prepare the reader for attending carefully to a passage in sacred history, which may hitherto have but little attracted his notice. The principal persons of Issachar, in the days of David, had so well considered the signs and events

* 2 Tim. iii. 15—17.

† Rom. xv. 4.

of the times in which they lived, and so well understood what the Lord was doing, and what he called them to do; that they were enabled to render their influence, in the tribe, subservient to the important good of the country. “The children of Issachar—were
 ‘men that had understanding of the times, to know
 “*what Israel ought to do*: the heads of them were
 “two hundred, and all their brethren were at their
 “commandment.”*—The Lord had promised that David should reign over all Israel: but so long as Ishbosheth the son of Saul was living, the men of Issachar wisely judged, that the time was not arrived for the fulfilment of that promise, and that a premature attempt would only occasion the needless effusion of human blood: but when Ishbosheth was removed, they understood that the time was come, and that it was their duty to afford David all the assistance in their power. Had they moved sooner, or had they waited longer, they would have acted unseasonably: but the timing of the service was as important as the service itself.

We may learn from this instance, that there is a kind of observation and intelligence concerning the circumstances and events of the times, which is intimately connected with the knowledge and performance of our duty: and that this *understanding of the times* is peculiarly needful and useful to those, who in any way have influence over collective bodies. It may indeed at first sight be thought to belong exclusively

* 1 Chron. xii. 32.

to statesmen, senators, magistrates, and others who possess secular distinctions; and it might be supposed that ministers of religion especially have little occasion for it. But this sentiment, when adopted in too general a sense, is evidently erroneous: for though the *political* understanding of the times is principally requisite for those, who are concerned to know what they ought to do *politically*, for the good of the nation; yet every man's duty varies, in some respects, according to circumstances, and cannot properly be performed, if he remain entirely uninformed in these matters.

The understanding of the times, however, which is necessary for ministers or private christians, does not greatly relate to political questions: to be well acquainted with the instructions of the holy Scriptures concerning God's providential government of the world and of the church, and to know how to apply them to events which take place around us, is sufficient. Thus we shall be enabled to form a judgment, from what men have done, or are attempting, concerning what the Lord is doing or about to do; and to determine, from his word, the special duties to which he calls us in our several places.

This knowledge is recommended in the Scriptures, and the want of it is severely reprov'd.—Thus Isaiah says, “In that day did the LORD of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die! And it was revealed in mine ears by

“ the LORD of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be
 “ purged from you, till you die.”* And Micah
 speaks to the same effect, “ The LORD’s voice crieth
 “ unto the city, and *the man of wisdom shall see thy*
 “ *name*; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed
 “ it.”†

Our Lord, reproving the Jews for their unbelief, thus addresses them—“ Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face
 “ of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the
 “ times?”‡ And in predicting the siege and destruction
 of Jerusalem, he particularly describes the signs of those
 times, and emphatically adds, “ Let him that readeth, un-
 “ derstand.” Thus he plainly declares, that the wisdom,
 duty, safety, and comfort, of his disciples, were inseparably
 connected with an attentive observation and an accurate judgment,
 in respect of the events which would take place in the world.—It
 is indeed allowed that the primitive christians were in very different
 circumstances than we are: yet it must also be granted that, in many
 respects, we can neither know nor do our duty, without advert-
 ing to the state of the church and the nation, and forming a
 decided opinion on the dangers which threaten, and the evils which
 weaken and corrupt, both the one and the other. Without some
 measure of this understanding of the times, we shall be at a loss
 to determine, whether we are called to wait in quiet submission,
 knowing that “ our strength is to sit still,” or to engage in
 active services: and whe-

* Is. xxii. 12—14.

† Mic. vi. 9.

‡ Matt. xvi. 3. Luke xiii. 56, 57.

ther mourning and fasting, or joyful praise and thanksgiving, be the business of the day.

Indeed in perilous and disastrous times, it is of great importance that we should know the *source* and *origin* of the evils, which alarm and distress us, and the way in which they may best be counteracted; in order that our exertions may be made, and our supplications presented, in the manner most suitable to the emergency.

This kind of knowledge and discernment is especially needful and useful to ministers of the gospel: for though it must be acquired by a careful observation of Providence, compared with the Scriptures; yet the bulk of christians are generally led into it by means of their pastors. No doubt there are very numerous exceptions: yet ministers possess a variety of advantages, above most in their several congregations, for obtaining information, and coming to a settled judgment on the aspect of publick affairs; and if they do not give a right direction to the thoughts and opinions of the people, others may probably mislead them; or at best, many even of the more conscientious will either wholly neglect, or very slightly attend to, the special duties of the times.

It must therefore be incumbent on the ministers of religion to look about them, to observe what is passing in the world, to mark the *signs of the times*, and as watchmen to warn the people of approaching danger: not in order to engage them in political discussions, but to excite them to perform their several duties, according to the emergency of the case.

It may be supposed, that few well-informed persons will deny, that the present times wear a most extraordinary appearance. They have in fact called forth the energies and activity of men, to a degree almost unparalleled in history: and after every abatement for the feelings of the persons more immediately concerned, we can scarcely doubt, but that distant countries and remote posterity must deem them peculiarly disastrous and dreadful.

The christianity, most prevalent through the greatest part of Europe for ages past, has unquestionably been very corrupt, both in principle and practice; and it has been rendered subservient to the base designs of wicked men: nor can it be denied that arbitrary power, ecclesiastical and civil, has oppressed vast multitudes, and introduced grievances which loudly called for redress. But the speculations of men, arrogating to themselves the title of philosophers, concerning both religion and government, under pretence of remedying these evils, have led by direct consequence to infidelity and anarchy: and these speculations having been, for a considerable time, secretly propagated, with profound sagacity, ardent zeal, and unwearied perseverance, at length produced such convulsions, as scarcely ever shook the world in former ages.

The impetuosity with which the revolution in France was effected; the atrocities attending it; the vast projects of the leaders; the immense resources of that powerful country; the peculiar concurrence of events, which rendered national bankruptcy a source of almost inexhaustible wealth, by giving occasion to the

seizure of the whole property of vast multitudes at home and abroad; the astonishing success of schemes at first deemed rash and chimerical; the revolutions that have followed in other countries; the accumulating force of the impetuous torrent; and the threatening aspect of these stupendous events on the constitution, laws, and liberties of other nations, and on the property and lives of the inhabitants, have caused and must cause many and just alarms.

But the interests of religion should most engage our attention: and here we may assert without exaggeration, that the subversion of christianity, as well as of popery and superstition, has been the express and settled purpose of many agents in these convulsions, and the genuine tendency of the measures adopted by others, who perhaps had no such intention.

It is undeniable, that many late events have the appearance of accomplishing the prophecies concerning the destruction of Antichrist: and here it seems to be our duty to be still, and to wait till it be manifest what God is about to do. We cannot rejoice to see infidelity and atheism supplant even *corrupted* christianity, considering this event as detached from its future consequences: but can we consistently regret the removal in any degree of that permanent mountainous obstruction to the spread of the pure religion of Jesus, except as it involves many other lamentable transactions?—We should however, pray to God, that he would speedily terminate the dominion of the destroyers, and send forth those who may plant genuine christianity in the regions which they have ravaged: and we ought to sympathize with the sufferers of every description;

and afford them our help, as far as we can, without sanctioning their pernicious tenets, or partaking of their evil deeds.

But while we contemplate the distant storm, or make observations on the earthquakes which convulse other regions; we must also feel for ourselves; for the peace and security of Britain, and for the interests of christianity among us. Whatever may be said of our insular situation, our resources, our national spirit, our constitution, or the measures adopted by our rulers; or whatever may appear *probable* according to the general course of human affairs: we must still remember, that “Vain is the help of man,” and that, “Except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”

But further, however favourably we may think concerning the religion of our country, as it is delineated in the authorized books of the established church, or in the creeds and confessions of a large body among the dissenters; or concerning the prevalence of the gospel in the land: yet he who impartially compares *facts* with the *Bible*, and contrasts our national advantages with our national character, will by no means *on this ground* be sanguine in his expectations, as to the event of our present dangers. Nay, rather he will almost be ready to think he hears the alarming enquiry, “Shall not I visit for these things? saith the LORD; and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?”

The more therefore serious persons value our civil and religious privileges, the greater *in this view* will be their apprehensions, on attentively considering the

signs of the times: and the deeper their conviction, that the Lord might justly give us up into the hands of our enraged enemies. On whatever side we turn our eyes, we must witness such atrocious crimes, as tend to dismay our hearts, more than all the menaces of our haughty assailants: and we can find nothing suited to relieve our terrors, except we advert to the remnant of real Christians scattered through the land. In subordination to the Lord's infinite mercies, our hope of preservation rests on this company, and on their supplications and exertions: and this consideration leads us anxiously to enquire, 'What can be done to stir up this whole remnant, to attend as with one soul, regardless of party-distinctions, to the alarming signs and important duties of the times? and what individual or collective efforts may be made, to increase the number of those who are indeed the chariots and horsemen of the nation?'

Some ministers in the metropolis, having frequently conferred together on this subject, at length deliberately entered into a consultation on the best methods of accomplishing these desirable ends, in their several situations, and by their combined endeavours. It was very obvious, that prayer for the church and nation was peculiarly seasonable and obligatory; and we unanimously determined, that, by the help of God, we would ourselves attend to it, in the closet, in the family, and on every proper occasion; and that we would earnestly recommend the same to our several congregations; exhorting them to join their supplications for the land, and to those of their brethren, on every day,

but especially to make this topick a prominent part of their devotions on the Lord's-day-evening, both in their families and in private.

These considerations, however, did not rest here; but produced a general conviction, that the present emergency called us and our people to other duties likewise, and that it would be very useful for us particularly to examine the subject. This appeared the more seasonable, when we reflected, that numbers, aware of the evil of political discussions from the pulpit, and of rendering religious ordinances subservient to the gratification of men's passions and prejudices; are ready to conclude that we have nothing to do with the state of publick affairs, or, in other words, that, *in this respect* we have actually no duties at all! while others seem to take it for granted, that no one, who differs from them in *political* sentiment, can possibly be influenced by religious principles.

It was therefore agreed among a few friends, that a sermon should be preached *weekly*, on the usual lecture-day and hour, in our several churches and chapels by rotation, on *the signs and duties of the times*, by some other of the company than the stated pastor; and that other ministers of the established church should be invited to join us, by giving their pulpits, and employing their labours, in the same cause.

This was begun about a year ago, and is still continued with considerable encouragement; and as we greatly desire to unite our brethren, throughout the land, in similar measures; we have at length determined to publish an account of our designs; both in

order to excite attention, to prevent misapprehension, to obviate prejudice, and to stimulate others to imitate us, as far as our conduct is judged to accord with the principles of sacred Scripture.

We would therefore propose our sentiments on the following subjects to the candid attention of pious Christians, however distinguished, in every part of Great Britain.

I. The duty of intercession for the nation and for the church, in seasons of danger and distress.

II. The nature and special objects of those prayers, which may be supposed availing on such occasions.

III. The prevalency of acceptable prayer, according to the Scriptures.

IV. And lastly, The other duties which are incumbent on us, along with our prayers, in the present emergency.

I. The duty of intercession for the nation and for the church, in seasons of danger and distress.

If we could conceive a number of Christians so circumstanced, that the welfare of the nation, in which they resided, had not the least discoverable connexion with the interests of religion, it would yet, according to the Scriptures, be their duty to pray for the peace of the land, more especially if they were protected and enjoyed peace in it. The captive Jews at Babylon were grievously oppressed by their haughty conquerors, and exposed to persecution on account of their religion:

but as it was the will of God they should sojourn there for a season, they were required, not only to “seek “the peace of the city,” by submission to the rulers in all things lawful, and by a quiet and inoffensive deportment; but also, to “pray to the LORD for it:”* and the false prophets, who inculcated contrary principles, were severely rebuked. Surely then it must be incumbent on us, who enjoy as much liberty and as many privileges, as perhaps any nation ever did for a length of time, to seek and pray for the peace and protection of our country!

It may perhaps be objected, that when the seventy years of captivity were about to expire, and Cyrus, the predicted deliverer of the Jews, approached Babylon; it could not be their duty to pray for the success of Belshazzar against him. We may, however, derive instruction from the very *silence* of Scripture: for it is no where intimated that the Jews were directed to alter their conduct on this emergency, or that they actually did alter it. The more intelligent indeed must have been sensible, that a revolution was at hand: but the Lord seemed to say, “Be still and know that I am God:” “Stand still, and ye shall see the salvation of GOD.” They were not called to take any active part in those transactions: and the truly pious remnant among them would doubtless pray particularly for the restoration of Jerusalem, with the temple and its sacred worship, and for the deliverance of the nation from captivity: and

* Jer. xxix. 7.

probably in other respects they would be more general, as leaving the Lord to accomplish his word in that manner which seemed good in his sight.

It may however, be further observed, that no people can possibly know themselves to be in exactly similar circumstances. The fulfilment of prophecies is not at present so distinctly marked by notes of time and place, as to enable the most discerning to know precisely when any great event may be expected. Nor have we a *prophetical name* given us, by which we may discover any distinguished instrument in the work, as the Jews might know Cyrus with his army of Medes and Persians. It is therefore most evidently the duty of every christian, wherever situated, to pray for the peace of the land according to the general tenour of Scripture; and against the horrors of invasion, carnage, and desolation. The Lord indeed may see good to grant the spirit of such requests, in a manner that does not accord to the letter of them: as when we intercede for the health or life of a beloved relative, the prayer may be accepted, and answered in the best manner, while the special object is not granted. And in both cases we may afterwards discern and adore the wisdom, faithfulness, and love of God in the very dispensation, from which we had previously shrunk with dread and aversion.

If indeed the present events be intended to prepare the way for the destruction of the Roman Antichrist, we are still incompetent to determine what degree of devastation must attend that great catastrophe,

or how far the shock must be felt. We may therefore very consistently beseech the Lord, to terminate those awful judgments, which have for several years convulsed Europe; and to silence the blasphemies of infidels and atheists, that their detestable tenets may not permanently succeed to the idolatrous superstitions and delusions of popery. But especially we should with all earnestness present our supplications to almighty God, intreating him to avert these tremendous calamities from our native country: for whatever be the crimes of Britain, it can scarcely be supposed, we are so infected with the leaven of papal antichristianity, that nothing but revolutions and massacres can extirpate it. On the contrary, there seems a ground of hope, that in this respect we shall be exempted from the more desolating judgments, which we have reason to think will attend those predicted events: especially if with one consent we beseech God to “pour out upon us his spirit from “on high;” that our faith, worship, and character, may better accord to our advantages and profession.

But whatever may be the designs of Providence, we must not neglect any duty; for the commands of God, (not his decrees, predictions, or dispensations,) are the rule of our conduct. Now it is his command, that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving “of thanks, be made for all men; for kings and for all “that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and “peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.”* As this was the duty of Christians, when living under

* Tim. ii. 1, 2.

pagan persecuting emperors; when the prosperity of the government might have been considered as inimical to the peace of the church; we may doubtless conclude that it must be the duty of every inhabitant of Great Britain.

But if a passenger be bound to pray for the safety of the vessel in which he sails, and for all those on board; he certainly ought to redouble his fervency and importunity during a tremendous storm, or when the ship is in imminent danger of being wrecked. This is not the time for idle disputes, concerning the previous conduct of the master, the pilot, or the seamen; for this, in such an emergency, would be little short of madness, especially in persons unskilled in navigation. The circumstances of the vessel demand imperiously that all who are capable of labouring, should labour, and that all who can pray, should arise and "call upon God; if so be God may think upon them, that they may not perish."* In a similar situation, Paul, during his voyage to Rome as a prisoner, prayed and prevailed; and the Lord "gave him all that sailed with him." Yet Paul not only imagined, but was sure, that the persons concerned had acted improperly; and, by rejecting salutary advice, had involved themselves and the whole company in the most extreme danger.

If then our country is indeed threatened with invasion by a fierce and indignant foe, who has already spread devastation through a vast part of Europe, and

* Jon. i. 6.

is at present attempting to convulse both Asia, Africa, and America: if we have had, and still have, reason to dread domestick insurrections: if our sister-kingdom has been rendered a scene of bloodshed and confusion, and is in danger of still more dire calamities, whilst its vicinity may well increase our alarm, as well as excite our sympathy: if we have been preserved beyond expectation, by most extraordinary providential interpositions in our favour: if besieged, plundered, or burning cities and towns; deserted and desolated fields and villages; slaughtered or violated relatives; assassinations, massacres, and scenes, the distant report of which has chilled our hearts and made our ears to tingle, are to be deprecated; if any thing in our constitution, laws, liberties, national independence, peace, and prosperity, be worth preservation: and if there be any thing dreadful in the murder, imprisonment, or banishment of all those in the land, who have *on any account*, been distinguished characters; in the riot, plunder, and atrocities attending publick convulsions; or in the ruin of our commerce and manufactures: we may then confidently maintain, that we are bound by every obligation to unite our ceaseless prayers in behalf of our country. For whatever may be pretended or argued, as far as human foresight can reach, it is indubitable that all these calamities and many others, await us, in case our enemies should prevail, in this tremendous contest.

But if prayer for the land be our undeniable duty, surely few words may suffice to convince every pious person that it is incumbent on us to unite in supplica-

tion for "the church of God which is among us." We would not so far forget ourselves, as to launch out in invective against our enemies; but who can help seeing; that could they accomplish their avowed purposes, they would not only overturn our national establishment, but likewise abolish our sabbaths, and adopt measures subversive of Christianity itself? On former occasions, Britons, in pleading for the land, have been accustomed to consider the protestant interest as the cause of God, and as endangered by the machinations and assaults of papal powers: but is vital christianity at this time less exposed from the efforts of our present enraged enemies? "Let no man," brethren, "deceive you with vain words:" not only our outward advantages, but our religion itself is at stake; and it therefore behoves us to beseech the Lord, that he would, in these troublesome times, "build the walls," and secure the peace "of Jerusalem." Surely no situation, no peculiarity of sentiment, no distinction of any sort, should indispose any pious person, in these circumstances of extreme danger, to join the prayers of his brethren for those interests, which ought to be dearer to us, than property, or liberty, or life itself.

We should therefore, beyond all dispute, in publick, and social, and private worship, continually and fervently beseech the Lord, not to permit his cause in our land to be run down, his sabbaths to be abolished, his sanctuaries profaned, his ministers silenced or banished, his ordinances inhibited or restricted, or his word sunk into neglect and contempt. He might most justly permit all these evils, attended by other dread-

ful calamities, to come upon us; and he could easily render his gospel triumphant in other places, should this favoured land be left in total darkness: but we may beseech him to “work for his own name’s sake, that “it should not be polluted among the heathen.”— This, however, leads us to consider,

II. The nature and special objects of those prayers, which may be supposed availing on such occasions.

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* But of our whole fallen race, “There is none righteous, no not one,” except by the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the grace of the gospel.

We ought not indeed to undervalue the publick honour put on God and religion, by the observance of days set apart for fasting and prayer, through the whole nation: yet we must maintain, that the remnant of penitent believers are the only persons, whose intercessions for the land can properly be considered as effectual and prevailing: and their prayers should not be restricted to any season, but ascend incessantly before the throne of grace. Provided this were indeed the case, though we must lament, that so few in comparison attend in a suitable manner on these occasional services, yet we need not be discouraged. Alas! this has always, in great measure, been the case, even in times of peculiar reformation; as we shall readily perceive, by comparing the records of the most pious kings of

* Jam. v. 16.

Judah, with the testimony of the contemporary prophets, concerning the national character of the Jews.

We must, however, remember, that all the prayers, even of this faithful remnant, are not alike acceptable and prevailing. When James and John had presented a request to the Lord Jesus, he replied, "Ye know not what ye ask." And when they wanted permission to "command fire from heaven to consume" the Samaritans; he rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Even Elijah once impatiently requested to die: yet he "was translated that he should not see death." And on the other hand, the repeated and most earnest intreaty of Moses, that he might enter the promised land, was finally refused. Yet what righteous men ever prayed more effectually and prevalently than they did on other occasions?

It is therefore of great importance for us to understand, with accuracy, the nature and special objects of that prayer, which powerfully and certainly prevails: and while this is stated, according to the oracles of God, some objections, which are groundlessly advanced may likewise be obviated.

When the apostle speaks of "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man," he is supposed by several expositors to intend the powerful suggestions of the Holy Spirit to the minds of the prophets, by which they were inwardly moved to ask, with confidence and earnestness, the miraculous interposition of God, on particular occasions, in support of their testimony: and the prayer of Elijah, by which he illustrates the

subject, was certainly of this kind. Yet this would never have been proposed as an example and encouragement to believers in general, if there had not been something of a similar nature in their acceptable prayers. Through our heavenly Advocate "we all have access by one Spirit unto the Father:" for "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities:" and thus we pray *in* or *by* the Spirit. In order therefore that our supplications may be accepted and answered, they must be dictated to our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

But how shall we know this?—We cannot distinguish between the acting of our own minds and the effect of divine influences, except by considering the nature and tendency of our desires and expectations: but we may conclude, safely and without hesitation, that every prayer, which accords to the Scriptures, is presented by the teaching and assistance of the Holy Spirit. We may premise, therefore, that no formal lifeless prayer, the language of the lips without any corresponding affections or emotions of the heart, can accord with the holy Scriptures: but supposing that we earnestly desire some real or imagined good, and fervently and importunately intreat the Lord to bestow it upon us; we have only to enquire, whether the *motive* and *object* of such desire be *scriptural*, in order to determine the question before us.

To instance in some particulars: We may enquire, Whether the supposed good, which we are earnestly seeking, be expressly promised in the word of God? Can we present our prayer, and pour out our hearts, in the language of the promises? Do we understand them in

their genuine import? And do we seek the fulfilment of them in the due order and manner?

Again: Do our supplications and requests accord to the *precepts* of the holy law of our God, and to the spirit of the blessed gospel? And are they dictated by that *love* to God and man, which the whole Scripture inculcates? The prayers which are presented under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are uniformly of this kind; for “his fruit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.”

This consideration ought particularly to be attended to, in our intercession for the church and nation: for we cannot expect to prevail in these prayers, except we cultivate a compassionate, forgiving, and loving spirit towards our enemies, which no crimes or injuries can overcome or weary out; as well as an expansive benevolence for the whole human race. We should be peculiarly desirous of being preserved, if it be the will of God, in the manner which is most conducive to the general good of mankind, and in particular to that of the nation with which we are now at war. In this respect we have need, very diligently and jealously, to watch over our own hearts; lest any leaven of resentment, or desire of aggrandizement, wealth, or prosperity, should pollute our prayers, and defeat the end of them. For these things must certainly come from our own spirit, and not from the Spirit of truth and love.

A due regard to Providence is another mark, by which acceptable prayer may be distinguished. We should enquire therefore, whether we desire to acknowledge the hand of God, to submit to and adore

his justice, and to thank him for his mercies, in all the events and changes which we witness and experience? Whether we expect protection and success from him alone, whatever instruments or means are employed? And whether we are prepared to give him all the glory?—The subordination likewise of all temporal concerns to the good of our immortal souls, and the best interests of mankind; and the desire of being protected, and assisted, *in order* that we may usefully fill up our stations in the church and in the community with a contented mind, and without “seeking great things for ourselves,” are implied in this regard to Providence. The prayers, which spring from this happy frame of mind, are doubtless dictated by “the Spirit of grace and supplication.” Thus Solomon prayed for wisdom, that he might be qualified to govern in a suitable manner the kingdom to which God had advanced him; but he offered no petition for “long life, riches, or the life of his enemies:” and if his lot had been cast in a humbler station, the same views and desires would have influenced him to request grace sufficient to enable him to discharge the duties of it, in a manner honourable to God and profitable to his brethren; and not to have sought advancement to a higher rank in life. But if discontent, impatience, ambition, or avarice dictate our supplications, the Lord may graciously pardon them, but he will by no means accept or answer them.

The prayers, offered under the influence of the divine Spirit, will also be accompanied with correspondent exertions in the use of all proper means, in order

to obtain the blessings we desire. For instance; he, who prays aright for the conversion and salvation of his children, is sedulous in giving them pious instructions; careful in setting them a good example, punctual in bringing them under the means of grace, and watchful in keeping them out of the way of temptation. Like Abraham “he commands his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the LORD:” and worldly motives do not induce him to place them at a distance from the ordinances of God, or in the midst of bad examples and ensnaring allurements.

Thus our prayers, if spiritual, will influence our conduct in every particular; and the same fervent desire, which dictates the petition, will stimulate the endeavour. That effectual fervent prayer especially, which we are now called on to present in behalf of the church and nation, should be connected with a steady exertion, in our several places, to accomplish the general and particular objects of our supplications.

The holy Scriptures further teach us, that all those, who in former ages prayed with the greatest acceptance and success, had an especial regard to the glory of God in their requests, and were ready to subordinate every other interest to this grand concern; requesting personal and national deliverance and protection, in order that God might be honoured in the open view of mankind, by his interpositions in behalf of his worshippers. And this, in every possible case, furnished them with a never-failing plea. Thus Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Nehemiah, and many others,

supplicated the Lord for Israel, beseeching him to deliver them “for his name’s sake, that it should not be polluted among the heathen:” and that “all the nations of the earth might know, that he was the LORD God, even he only.” Our Lord also most emphatically teaches us the same, by beginning the prayer, which he gave his disciples, with these words, “Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done as it is in heaven, so on earth.” It may therefore be of use to us, in determining how far our prayers are presented in a right spirit, seriously to ask ourselves, whether the glory of God, the success of the gospel, and the peace, purity, and enlargement of the church, be habitually, and at those seasons especially, the leading desires of our hearts.

Finally, the acceptable prayer, of which we speak, is that of a man, who approaches, as a guilty, polluted, helpless sinner, to a God of infinite majesty and holiness, pleading for every blessing, not “for his own righteousness,” or for that of the persons for whom he supplicates, but “for the LORD’s great mercies;” and presenting his requests, in deep humility and lively faith, through the alone meritorious intercession of our great High Priest and Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Let us briefly recapitulate these particulars. . . When our prayers are indeed the fervent desires of our heart; when we request the fulfilment of the Lord’s express promises; when the spirit of them accords to that of the law of love, and to that of the blessed gospel; when

we present them with a due regard to the providence of God, in submission, dependence, and expectation; when we accompany them with a diligent attention to other duties, and especially to the proper means of obtaining the blessings for which we pray; when our leading desire is that God may be glorified, and the cause of true religion promoted: and when we offer such petitions through the mediation of Christ, by faith in his name and his atoning blood, with a deep consciousness of unworthiness, and an entire reliance on the free mercy of God, to pardon our sins and accept our services: then we may be fully assured, that ours is “the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man which availeth much.”

It may, however, be useful to consider briefly the *special objects* of those supplications, which accord to the present circumstances of the nation and of the church. Amidst the perils of these critical times, there are persons of different descriptions who seem to think, that they who pray for their country, must of course *desire the destruction of their enemies, and the gratification of national ambition, rapacity, or resentment, by bloody victories.* But indeed to be preserved from invasions, civil wars, and persecutions; and to have the invaluable blessings of religious light and liberty continued to us and to our posterity, and extended to all around us, ought to form the substance of our united requests in this respect.—We should rejoice to hear that the rulers of France had formed plans so beneficial to that country, and safe to their neighbours; that we could cordially beseech the Lord to prosper them:

but while they persist in their avowed purpose of inundating this land with blood, or subverting our government, and of destroying our religion, we must still pray, ‘ Abate their pride, assuage their malice, ‘ and confound their devices.’ It should be gratifying to every one of our hearts, to be preserved from impending danger without a single individual losing his life: but if it please “ the Lord God of salvation” to “ answer us by terrible things in righteousness;” who are we that we should reply against God? Doubtless Hezekiah and Isaiah would have preferred the humbling and softening of Sennacherib’s heart to the destruction of his army: but as he continued to boast, menace, and blaspheme; and as the Lord declared that he would “ put an hook in his nose, and a bridle in his “ lips, and turn him back by the way in which he “ came,” and at length slew an hundred and eighty five thousand of his men in one night; shall the protected and delivered servants of God quarrel with this awful dispensation, or refuse him their tribute of grateful praise?

We ought, however, more especially to unite in fervent prayer for the restoration of peace: and how many or great soever the obstacles to this most desirable event may seem: we should, in that case, without doubt, before long be called to join in thanksgivings to God, for having “ regarded the voice of our supplications.” In this part of our duty, we should look beyond our own country; and intercede in behalf of the several regions, which have been ravaged, or kept in perpetual alarms, by the late extraordinary commo-

tions: not forgetting poor, oppressed, and almost desolated France; but earnestly beseeching God to send her inhabitants the blessings of peace, good government, rational liberty, and the gospel of salvation.

But above all, it behoves us to pray, with great fervency and constancy, that, “the Spirit may be poured upon us from on high:” that all the ministers of religion, however distinguished, ‘may be illuminated with the true knowledge and understanding of the holy word of God; and both by their life and doctrine set it forth and shew it accordingly:’ that ‘all who are called christians, may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith, in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life:’ that purity in doctrine and practice may adorn every part of the christian church; and that every thing which interrupts its harmony, deforms its beauty, or weakens the energy of its testimony to the truth, may be entirely removed: that *labourers* and *faithful stewards of the mysteries of God* may be sent forth and multiplied: that an effectual stand may be made against infidelity, impiety, and every species of heresy and false religion: that heavenly wisdom, with every blessing spiritual and temporal, may be abundantly conferred on our gracious sovereign, and on all the numerous branches of the royal family; on our nobles, counsellors, ministers of state, senators, and magistrates, and on all who possess power and influence; that each individual, ‘in his vocation and ministry, may faithfully and effectually glorify God,’ and serve his generation: that the seminaries of publick and private education, (especially

those, in which young persons are trained up, on whom the charge of supporting religion, or of conducting publick business, must shortly devolve,) may be so regulated, as best to answer the great ends proposed by them: and that the blessing of God may abundantly attend every plan formed, and attempt made, for the instruction of the children of the poor, for the prevention of crimes, for the reformation of the vicious, for the alleviation of misery, and above all for the propagation of the gospel in every part of the globe.

It seems undeniable that prayers to this effect accord to the scriptures, and may be offered under the special influence of the Holy Spirit: but should some *clauses* in this compendious statement meet with disapprobation, we intreat those who object, to join with us in this season of danger, as far as they can with a clear conscience. *Exact coincidence* is not the object: we only wish to unite the whole body of christians throughout the land, in prayer for our country and for “the church of God that is among us;” according to what each person, after serious and careful deliberation, deems most conducive to our permanent advantage. For we are fully satisfied that such supplications will be answered, not according to the opinions of this or the other class of men, but in the manner which infinite wisdom sees to be the best for us.—We proceed therefore to consider,

III. The prevalency of acceptable prayer, according to the Scriptures.

The speculations of reasoning men have deluded

vast numbers into a persuasion, that God, (if indeed they allow that there is a God!) having established certain regulations, which they call *the laws of nature*, leaves the affairs of the universe, at least in ordinary circumstances, to take their own course, without any special interposition: and consequently that the opinion of religious persons, concerning the prevalency of prayer, implies a vain and groundless expectation; as if God would suspend or change these laws continually, at the desire of his worshippers, and to serve their selfish purposes. Thus, they not only exclude the Creator from the government of the world and the care of his creatures, by a refined species of *practical Atheism*, and bring forward a sentiment diametrically opposite to all revealed religion, as if they vainly expected by a single objection to subvert the whole system; but they likewise perplex many pious persons, and give Satan an opportunity of discouraging their prayers, because they cannot explain in what manner they are availing!

The Scriptures, however, do not call us to *explain*, or *comprehend*, the ways of God, but to believe, adore, and obey. Not a sparrow falls to the ground, not a hair from our heads, without him: and he hath ten thousand ways of influencing and governing the combination and coincidence of causes and effects, without altering by miracle their regular course. “He
“doeth what he will in the armies of heaven and
“among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can
“stay his hand, or say to him, What doest thou?” He is the First Mover in every event, by whatever subor-

dinate agent it is performed. All creatures are his instruments: but he works by them according to the nature of each. He accomplishes his purposes by the instrumentality of voluntary agents, without in the least interfering with their *free agency*; and whilst each follows the inclination of his own heart, they do no more than “ what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done.”* If they act from holy principles, and willingly obey his commandments, he accepts and recompenses their services: but if they be influenced by corrupt passions to break his righteous law, they receive the punishment due to their crimes, while “ his counsel still stands, and he does all his pleasure.”†

When Joshua was appointed to lead the host of Israel against Amalek, Moses engaged in prayer for success in the battle: and the prayer of Moses was at least as efficacious as the courage and conduct of Joshua. In this sense, therefore, “ The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much:” not by inducing the Lord to alter his plan; but as an appointed means of accomplishing that plan, in a way honourable to his name, instructive and encouraging to his people, and convincing to every spectator. For when the Lord thus evidently answers the prayers of his servants, who can but say, “ Truly there is a reward for the righteous! Truly there is a God that judgeth the earth!”

The whole gospel is manifestly suited to excite the expectation of an answer, to all the prayers, which we

* Acts iv. 27, 28.

† Gen. i. 20. Is. x. 5—7. 15—19. xlvi. 9—11.

present before God according to his revealed will. Waiting on him, in the humble posture of supplicants, powerfully tends to bring all holy affections into lively exercise, and to prepare the soul for the suitable reception and due improvement of the blessings thus desired and sought. The answer of prayer likewise exceedingly promotes the increase of faith; it inspires and strengthens hope and patience; it enlivens love, and gratitude, and holy joy; and it excites cheerful diligence in self-denying services. That, which is given in answer to the united and fervent supplications of numbers, “abounds in many thanksgivings unto God:” and when probabilities seem against our success or deliverance, and yet we do succeed, and are delivered according to our earnest and persevering requests; we receive the clearest and deepest conviction imaginable of the reality and importance of true religion.

It is needless to insist particularly on the examples, recorded in Scripture, of the prevalence of prayer. Consider Abraham interceding for Sodom, and closing his petitions before the Lord ceased to grant them. Jacob wrestling, weeping, making supplication, and saying, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me:”* when the Angel (“even the LORD God of Hosts,”) at length answered, “Thy name shall be no more called Jacob but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”†—Moses “standing in the breach” to turn

* Gen. xxxii. 24—30.

† Hos. xii. 4. 5.

away the wrath of God from Israel, while He says, “*Let me alone*, that I may destroy them in a moment.” And David’s short ejaculation, “O LORD, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!”—The time would fail to speak of Samuel, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Elijah, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and of the apostles, and the church in the New Testament. What shall we then say to these things, if we do not unreservedly admit, that the prayer of faith is exceedingly powerful, and that nothing can withstand its efficacy?

But if the prayer of an individual frequently proved so prevalent: what may we not hope from the united, fervent, and persevering supplications of many thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, could the whole body of real christians be excited to concur in the present emergency?—“Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven.” Surely these words of our blessed Saviour, viewed in connexion with the scriptural declarations and examples already considered, authorize us to form great expectations, when we thus agree together in “making our requests known unto God!”

Prayer has indeed already prevailed: and our protection hitherto, in so wonderful a manner, amidst the shock of nations, should be regarded as an encouraging exhortation to “pray always and not faint;” and to be more earnest and enlarged in our petitions. Some, however, may be discouraged from this duty,

by an error in judgment, connected with deep humility. 'Who am I, that *my* prayers should be of any avail, in preserving the nation from desolating judgments, or the church from persecution? My former heinous sins, and my present numerous defilements and distressing conflicts, render me unworthy, and often almost wholly unable, to pray for myself: and my own case so engrosses my thoughts and excites my anxious fears, that when, covered with shame, I approach the throne of grace, I feel myself altogether unfit to intercede in behalf of others, and indeed have little heart to attempt it.' But let such persons recollect, that, after the severest trials and conflicts, conscious guilt had just caused Job to exclaim, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;" when the Lord directed his offending friends to present their sacrifices by his hands: "And," says he, "my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept."* And again, Isaiah had said, "Woe is me, I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips;" before he so effectually united with Hezekiah, in "lifting up his prayer for the remnant that was left." Our supplications indeed could not be accepted, any more than our persons or other services, did not our great High Priest present them with his all-prevailing intercession. But now this provision is made; deep humility prepares us for coming in simple faith and entire reliance on the Lord Jesus, to the throne of grace. And pre-

* Job xlii. 5—9.

senting our supplications, for others, especially for the church and people of God, admirably tends to encourage our hearts, even in the darkest seasons, to make our personal desires and requests known to our heavenly Father. In short, did we abound more in intercessions for our brethren and fellow sinners, and for the church and nation; we should every one of us pray, with more comfort and expectation, for ourselves and for those who are most nearly connected with us.

We cannot indeed be absolutely certain, that our prayers for the land will be answered in the manner which we intend: for we remember, that the Lord once said concerning Judah, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people."* But we have considerable ground of hope, that we are not yet reduced to this awful condition. One thing, however, is certain; our prayers will either prevail for the land, or they will return into our own bosom. "Verily it shall be well with" all those, who thus attend to the duties of the times; and, in one way or other, "they shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger." And we may likewise confidently expect, that our supplications will be answered, in the conversion of many individuals, who, at all events, may be the seed of a future harvest.—But we must proceed to consider,

IV. The other duties which should accompany our prayers, in the present circumstances of the nation.

* Jer. xv. 1.

If Moses stood before God, in behalf of Israel, “to turn away his indignation from them, lest he should destroy them;” he likewise stood before Israel, in the cause of God, by using all his influence and authority to turn the people from idolatry and wickedness: and in both respects, he stemmed the torrent of vengeance, which was about to burst upon the nation. This single instance may suffice to shew the attentive reader, what is meant by *the other duties which should accompany our prayers*.

It is obvious to every one, who seriously and impartially considers the subject, that *national guilt is the aggregate of the sins, committed by the several individuals who constitute the nation*. We have therefore all contributed, and some of us in a very large proportion, to raise that black cloud of divine vengeance, which hangs over the land and threatens our destruction: and consequently we are all required to humble ourselves before God for our own sins; nor can any individual plead an exemption.

The persons indeed, for whom these reflections are principally intended, are habitually penitent: yet it behoves the most eminent christians, according to the examples of beloved Daniel, and Ezra, and Nehemiah, to renew their personal repentance, with every expression of godly sorrow, deep humility, and self-condemnation, while they plead in behalf of our guilty land. They should especially investigate, with care and diligence, the whole of their conduct, since they first made a profession of the gospel, and of devoting themselves to the Lord according to its encouragements and

obligations; confessing, with grief and shame, every instance in which they have acted inconsistently, and by any misconduct excited or increased prejudice in the minds of others; this will make way for a renewed cordial acceptance of God's salvation, and a solemn dedication of body and soul to his service.

It is likewise very useful, in these circumstances, to reflect deeply on the various and horrible abominations which prevail in that collective body, of which we are sinful members: especially such as disgrace Christianity, and harden Jews, Mahometans, Pagans, or infidels, in their prejudices; or which fatally deceive souls almost without number. We should dwell on these subjects with serious reflection, till genuine zeal and love affect our hearts, and cause us to sigh and mourn over these evils, *as our own concern*; instead of indulging the disposition, which is too common, of exposing the crimes of others with apparent satisfaction, or proud self-preference. We know what a gracious charge was given to the destroying angel, concerning that remnant in Jerusalem, who thus “sighed and mourn-
“ed for the abominations that were done in the midst
“of it:”* how the Lord approved the same spirit and conduct in Jeremiah,† in Daniel,‡ and in Ezra,§ and especially in Josiah:¶ and how manifestly this was the disposition, not only of Paul towards his unbelieving countrymen, but of the Lord Jesus himself, who wept over the crimes and approaching miseries of that de-

* Ezek. ix. † Jer. xiii. 17. ‡ Dan. ix, x. § Ezra ix. Neh. ix.
¶ 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27, 28.

voted city, where his blood was about to be shed.

Diligent and impartial self-examination, not only as to the ground of our hope in God, but especially in respect to every part of our present conduct, is a concurrent duty of great importance. This, however, will not answer the desired end, unless it be accompanied with prayer to the great Searcher of hearts to prove and try us: that we may indeed grow more acquainted with our own hearts, and thus be taught to rectify whatever prevents our usefulness; and instructed in attending to duties hitherto neglected or improperly performed; and enabled to bear a decided and honourable testimony to the great truths of Christianity, and that holiness by which they are adorned and recommended.

This is peculiarly needful in these days of prevailing infidelity, heresy, and impiety, as well as of most deplorable immorality. At such a time all, that "love the Lord Jesus in sincerity," should unite in a bold and zealous attachment to the grand doctrines of his glorious gospel, a constant and reverent attendance on his sacred ordinances, a strict but cheerful observance of his holy day, a diligent and unreserved obedience to all his commandments, and a close imitation of his bright example. The revival of pure Christianity should be our object: but in this every one ought to begin at home. As far as this is done a revival will take place: but we are not warranted to expect it in any other way.

In this view the importance of family-religion, and a careful performance of the duties incumbent upon parents, and masters, and other superior relations, must be manifest to every reflecting person. The notice which the Lord took of Abraham's conduct, in this respect, has been mentioned: but we may here remind the reader of its subserviency to the accomplishment of the promises to his posterity. "He will command his children and his household after him: and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment, that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."—In like manner Joshua, when zealously endeavouring to promote true religion among his people, declared without hesitation, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." On the other hand, the indolent, timid, and indulgent conduct of Eli, respecting his sons, brought ruin on his family, and dreadful calamities on Israel: and the misconduct even of Jehoshaphat, in forming an affinity with the family of Ahab, did not fail to produce even still more fatal effects.

It is seriously apprehended, that remissness in family-religion, relaxation of domestick authority and regularity, and the adoption of worldly maxims in the education and disposal of children, constitute a considerable part of the *sins of the church* in the present day, as distinguishable from the sins of the irreligious part of the nation. These evils seem to have made way for the apostacy of great numbers from evangelical principles to heretical systems, nay, to scepticism, infidelity, or open impiety; even from among those who

were educated in religious families. And we may be confident, that nothing short of a very strict and zealous attention to these most important duties, with an ardent desire of perpetuating vital religion in our families and to posterity, will be permanently and decidedly successful, against the bold, and strenuous, and indefatigable attempts of the enemies of our holy religion.

If we prevail by prayer with the Lord to spare us, and to “pour out his Spirit from on high upon us;” this will certainly be one effect of that merciful dispensation: men, professing evangelical godliness, will spare no pains, but will forego every flattering and advantageous prospect, in order to “bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” They will become far more desirous, that their children should be pious Christians, than accomplished, learned, wealthy, or honoured in the world; and will be especially concerned, that they may possess the dispositions and qualifications, requisite for serving their generation, for supporting the interests of religion, and for transmitting this invaluable blessing to posterity.* Finally, every man has his talents. Statesmen, senators, magistrates, ministers of religion; the rich, the learned, the ingenious, should avail themselves of their peculiar advantages and influence, to “serve their generation according to the will of God,” while they continue instant in prayer for the church and nation. They ought to distinguish themselves, by a valiant,

* Ps. lxxviii. 5—7.

decided, and zealous conduct, in countenancing and supporting the cause and the friends of truth and righteousness: and in this course, they may hope, like Moses, to be honoured of God, to “stand in the breach, and to turn away his indignation” from our guilty land.

Even they, who are placed in a more obscure station, and are known only in a narrow circle, have some little influence; and they should be careful not to bury their one talent in the earth: for a pious conversation, an attention to relative duties, and a readiness to every work and labour of love, may accomplish more than they suppose, in promoting the grand object of all our supplications.

These things, as connected with an habitual and manifest endeavour to shew ourselves peaceable and peace-makers, in the church and in the community; steady friends to social order, and to the constitution and government under which a kind Providence has placed us, (yet avoiding all the violence and bitterness of party-disputes;) dutiful and loyal subjects to our king; harmless, blameless, and kind among our neighbours; contented in our station; staying our minds on God, in cheerful and humble confidence, amidst dangers and alarms; and following after meekness, temperance, truth, and righteousness in our whole conduct, seem to constitute our present duties.—And as far as the Lord shall be pleased to bless our endeavours to increase the number of those who thus pray, and who thus aim to act consistently with their prayers, in reliance on the mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;

our hopes may reasonably be encouraged, that "He will work for his own name's sake," and not suffer any enemy to prevail against us.



A

FORM OF PRAYER.

MOST merciful God, who "doest what thou wilt in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth;" and orderest all things in perfect wisdom, righteousness, truth, and love; we desire to look to thee for help and protection in this season of peculiar danger and alarm. We acknowledge, O Lord, that thou mightest most justly leave us in the hands of our enemies, and by them execute deserved vengeance on us.—Thou hast, in a most distinguishing manner, favoured us as a nation with invaluable advantages, both temporal and spiritual, during a long term of years; so that no people on earth has been more highly favoured in thy providence. But alas! we have been most shamefully ungrateful; we have grossly abused our peculiar privileges; we have multiplied our provocations; our own sins and the sins of our land bear witness against us; we blush and are ashamed to look up unto thee, and we fear that we are ripe for thy

heaviest judgments. Yet we humbly pray thee, “in wrath remember mercy:” and while thou correctest us for our multiplied iniquities, do not give up a people, that is called by thy name, to be a reproach to the heathen, lest they should say “Where is now their God?”

“We do not present our supplications before thee, for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies.” We therefore beseech thee, O Lord, to glorify thy mercy in thy dealings with us. Thou art the Protector of all who trust in thee, and without thy almighty aid all human help is vain. O Preserve our country from war and bloodshed: permit no invader to land on our shores: let no domestick dissensions plunge us into those dreadful calamities which other countries have experienced: and suffer no persecutor to deprive us of our religious liberty, and our inestimable privileges.

Thou, O Lord, hast all hearts in thy hand. Turn the thoughts and desires of all parties, to peaceful measures. Say to the destroying Angel, “It is enough, stay now thine hand.” Speak the word, and the storm will subside into a calm. O thou God of peace, stop that desolating torrent which is deluging the nations. Rescue those countries which have so long been visited with the awful scourge of war. Sanctify the calamities to the surviving sufferers: and prevent the further effusion of human blood.

Over-rule, we beseech thee, the astonishing revolutions and convulsions of the past years, that they may prove an opening to the more extensive spread of thy gospel: and let it appear that thou didst permit the tem-

porary success of infidelity and atheism, in order to prepare the way for the peaceful triumphs of pure Christianity, over every kind of irreligion, superstition, and false religion.—Compassionate, O God of mercy, that country, with which we are now engaged in horrid war; whose rulers have been employed as scourges of other nations, but have most of all desolated their own land. Send its inhabitants, O Lord, we pray thee, the blessings of stable peace, good government, rational liberty, and true religion. And may those, who once were distinguished characters, and who, amidst the most distressing and humiliating scenes, still survive, have their calamities sanctified to their everlasting benefit.

We beseech thee, O merciful Lord, to bless thy servant, our gracious King, with thy choicest blessings. Be pleased to defend him, and every branch of the Royal Family, against all dangers and assailants. Supply them with every good and perfect gift: and enable them to glorify thee and to serve their generation, in those exalted stations which thou hast assigned them; and at length bring them to thine everlasting felicity.

Direct and prosper the deliberations of the counsellors, ministers of state, and senators, to whom the affairs of the nation are entrusted. Endue them with wisdom and knowledge; dispose them to such measures, as thou wilt bless for the preservation of order at home, and the speedy restoration of peace abroad; and till thou shalt see good to grant our most earnest prayers for this blessing; defend us in that manner, if it be thy will, which may most conduce to the good of the whole human race.

O Lord, we pray thee protect our soldiers and seamen, and those who lead them forth to battle. Preserve their lives, sanctify their perils and hardships, and save their immortal souls.

We beseech thee, O Lord, to look upon that neighbouring island, nearly connected with us which is now in an alarming and awful state of distraction, and has been the scene of most terrible calamities. Calm, we pray thee, that tempest which now prevails. Direct the persons, to whom publick affairs are committed, to the wisest and most salutary measures; and grant, we earnestly beseech thee, that with returning peace and order, some effectual means may be used to communicate the blessed light of divine truth to all the inhabitants.

Teach and enable, O Lord, we intreat thee, all orders of men in these lands, to seek thy glory and the publick good, by a due improvement of the talents which thou hast committed to their stewardship.

Prosper the labours of all those, whom thou “al-
“ lowest to be put in trust with the gospel.” May they increase continually in wisdom and knowledge, in zeal and love, in simplicity and disinterestedness, and in self-denying diligence and activity; and grant them the sweet consolation of witnessing an abundant success to their labours. Illuminate all who bear the sacred character, ‘with true knowledge and understand-
‘ ing of thy word; and grant that, both by their preach-
‘ ing and living, they may set it forth and shew it ac-
‘ cordingly:’—and send forth many labourers into the harvest.

Bless all those, who in any station, stand in the breach, by their prayers and exertions, to turn away thine indignation from a guilty land. Prosper all means used for the reformation of our manners; the extirpation of national enormities; the revival of pure religion; the pious instruction of the rising generation, and in particular of those who are designed to fill the more important stations in church and state; the alleviation of misery and distress in these calamitous times; and especially sending the gospel of salvation to the dark regions of the earth.

Lift up a standard, we beseech thee, against infidelity, impiety, and profligacy, which at present threaten the destruction of our holy religion. Deliver thy church from whatever corrupts its purity, divides its unity, and weakens the energy of its testimony to thy truth. Grant that ‘ all who are called christians, may be led ‘ into the way of truth; and hold the faith in unity of ‘ spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of ‘ life.’ Extend the boundaries of thy church: and hasten the times, when the poor benighted Jews shall be converted to their long rejected Messiah; when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in; and when “ the “ nations shall beat their swords into plow-shares and “ learn war no more.”

O Lord, we intreat thee, hear and answer these our supplications; bless our endeavours; and fill our land with truth and righteousness: that it may for be thy glory, not only to preserve us from every enemy, and to continue our privileges to the latest posterity; but also to

honour us, as thy instruments, to convey thy gospel, as the richest of all treasures, along with our extensive commerce, to the utmost borders of the earth. These and all mercies, we, poor sinful creatures, most humbly beseech thee to bestow upon us, of thy abundant goodness and mercy, through the mediation of thy well beloved Son our Saviour, who is with thyself and the eternal Spirit, One God over all, blessed for evermore. Amen.

*The Doctrines of ELECTION and FINAL PERSE-
VERANCE stated from Scripture, and shewn consist-
ent with exhortatory and practical Preaching, and con-
ducive to Holiness of Life.*

A

SERMON,

PREACHED

AT THE LOCK CHAPEL,

NOVEMBER 26th, 1765

Fourth Edition.

PREFACE

THE Sermon, originally published under this title, was composed on a very particular occasion, and in too great haste for the difficulty and importance of the subject. The author's mind likewise was agitated at the time by the circumstances in which he was placed: yet, amidst these disadvantages, it was judged expedient to print it *verbatim*, except as some notes were added.

When therefore the occasion, which required the publication, was passed, and the second edition, which had been called for in a few days, was disposed of, he dropped all thoughts of reprinting it; thinking it too much adapted to special circumstances, to answer the permanent purposes of a calm, deliberate, matured, and impartial treatise on the deep and mysterious subject.

He finds, however, that the Sermon is frequently enquired for; and this has made him apprehensive, lest the circumstance of its being out of print should be considered as a dereliction of his principles. He has therefore at length determined to publish another edition: but in doing this, while he adheres strictly to the arrangement and sentiments of the original Sermon; he considers himself at liberty to omit some things *occasional*, to revise the style, and to make several additions and alterations, in order to render it something more adequate to the ends proposed by the publication.

The reader will perceive, that the principal difference betwixt the statement here given of the doctrines in question, and that of many modern Calvinists, relates to redemption by the death of Christ, as being of *infinite sufficiency*, and therefore

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in some respects the *common benefit of mankind*. This view of the subject makes not the least difference, in respect of the entire freeness of salvation by the sovereign purpose and grace of God, made known in the effectual calling of his chosen remnant: while it gives the preacher an immense advantage in fulfilling the ministry of reconciliation, and yields the awakened sinner the greatest encouragement in applying to Christ for salvation—On this ground we may say to any human being, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved:” but on the other plan, no one can know, previously to conversion, whether he has any more right to rely on the merits and mediations of Christ, than fallen angels have.

The Author earnestly desires the candid enquirer after truth, and all who dare to think for themselves, to examine the passages quoted from Scripture in this Sermon, and to observe accurately whether they do not fully establish his statement? Then let them weigh all the other testimonies of holy writ with the same design: and finally let them consider what immense pains and ingenuity it requires, to explain a variety of texts in consistency with the other scheme; with what confidence and plausibility opponents urge them against our doctrine; and yet how naturally they coincide with the view here given. To the author they give no trouble; they express his sentiments, and in similar circumstances he should use the same language. The statement, here given, is by no means new or peculiar. He has proved that the compilers of our liturgy held the same sentiments. Many of his brethren at present coincide with him. The most eminent Calvinist divines in North America, who have lived during the present century, view the subject in the same light; and abundance of testimonies of this kind, from every quarter, might easily be adduced: but let the word of God decide.

The Author is not anxious about the class of professed christians, among whom his brethren may rank him. No one of them is either right or wrong in every thing; and that which in one situation is disgraceful, in another is deemed honourable. But it appears to him of great consequence to shew, that these doctrines, though generally despised, dreaded, or abhorred, are scriptural, rational, holy, consolatory, and consistent

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with every other part of christianity; and that the objections commonly urged against them, originate in misapprehension of their nature and tendency; and may generally be traced back to unscriptural views or scandalous abuses of them.

In some few places however, the terms *Calvinist* and *Calvinism*, *Arminian* and *Arminianism*, are retained; not as invidious distinctions, but for convenience, and to prevent circumlocution. It is a great mistake to suppose, that self-righteous pride is peculiar to Arminians, or Antinomian laxity to Calvinists. Pride and dislike to the holy law of God are congenial to our fallen nature: so that every man is radically of himself both self-righteous and antinomian. No creed, as such, will cure either of these distempers; but regeneration renders us *convalescent*. Yet even true christians frequently hold and contend for doctrines, which very inadequately influence their own hearts and lives; nay, they often maintain errors, without being proportionably injured by them. Hence many Calvinists are prone to pride and self-preference; and many Arminians peculiarly humble, modest, and unassuming. But the christian temper, wherever found, is vastly more valuable, than the most exact notions without "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." On the other hand, the Arminian is not at all secured from Antinomianism, nor the Calvinist exposed to it, by their several tenets: seeing both of them are Antinomian just as far as they are un sanctified, and no farther: "because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can it be." Perhaps *speculating* Antinomians abound most among professed Calvinists; but Antinomians, whose sentiments influence their practice, are innumerable among Arminians. Does the reader doubt this? Let him ask any of those multitudes, who trample on God's commandments, what they think of predestination and election; and he will speedily be convinced, that it is undeniably true: for all these, in various ways take occasion, from the mercy of God, to encourage themselves in impenitent wickedness. It would therefore be unspeakably better, for all parties to examine these subjects, with impartiality, meekness, and brotherly love; than reciprocally to censure, despise, and condemn one another.

May 2, 1793.

SERMON, &c.



JOHN vi. 37—40.

All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me: and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 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.

THE holy Scriptures, being the Word of God, are doubtless perfectly consistent. Moses and Samuel, David and Isaiah, Paul and James, being merely the penmen of the Holy Spirit, must perfectly harmonize in the truths which they inculcate. Precepts, threatenings, warnings, judgments, counsels, exhortations, invitations, promises, privileges, histories, examples, types, and parables, in divers methods coincide in for-

warding our instruction. They all display and illustrate the same character of God and of man; and impress the same ideas of sin and of holiness, of time and of eternity, of happiness and of misery. They all concur in displaying the glory of the divine perfections by the dispensations of Providence in this world, and the final distribution of rewards and punishments in the world to come. And though these constituent parts of holy writ do not in all respects answer the same purposes, each has its distinct important use, in the accomplishment of one vast and uniform design.

But though the Scriptures are in themselves completely harmonious; yet men do not readily perceive this harmony. Numbers imagine they see in them numerous inconsistencies and contradictions: others, judging it impracticable to reconcile the sacred writers, give a partial preference to one above another, and set them in opposition to each other, according to their several opinions. The various sects and parties, professing Christianity, appeal to Scripture in proof of their discordant tenets; and multitudes, content with those passages which seem to speak the language of some favourite system, pass over all the rest as if nothing to the purpose, or nothing to them, a mere *caput mortuum** in divinity.

These things are notorious; but whence do they arise? We allow, that the vastness of the design re-

* The *insidid mass*, that remains when the spirits are all drawn off by distillation; or the *mere dross* left in refining metals.

vealed in Scripture, which has relation to things unseen and eternal, and to the perfections of the incomprehensible God, must very far exceed the capacity of our narrow minds, and cannot enter the understanding at once, nor be apprehended at one glance; and when viewed in parts, the unity is broken and the harmony obscured: insomuch that we may justly question, whether any creature can perfectly comprehend the consistency of the glorious plan, “which angels desire to look into.”—But other reasons concur in producing this discordancy of sentiment. The Bible is a revelation from God to *sinner*s: and it seems an apparent intention of the Holy Spirit, so to arrange and constitute this revelation, as to make trial of men’s hearts; and to distinguish betwixt the humble teachable enquirer after salvation, and those who read the Scriptures with captious self-sufficiency in order to start objections, with attachment to a party for weapons of angry controversy, or with a worldly and sensual mind to find excuse for their sins. “The way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” But “the LORD taketh the wise in their own craftiness:” “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; and for *this cause* God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they might all be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* “Unto you,” saith our Lord to his enquiring disciples, “it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom

* 1 Thess. ii. 10—12.

“ of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables; that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”*—My brethren, let us pray for a humble teachable spirit, which will avail us far more in understanding the Scriptures to the good of our own souls, than all the acuteness and learning in the world. In proportion as we possess this temper, and really love truth and holiness, we shall escape these dangers, and perceive more and more the consistency of the word of God.

But as this disposition is imperfect, and counteracted by remaining prejudice, in the best of men; so none of us perceive all that consistency which really subsists in divine revelation.—A satisfactory discovery, however, of the harmony of Scripture is doubtless a good test of the degree in which we really understand divine things: and ever since the Bible became my peculiar study, this discovery has been my invariable object. No arguments could induce my assent even to the doctrine of *justification by faith in Christ, alone*, till I was satisfied of its perfect agreement with the honour of the divine law, and the indispensable necessity of personal holiness, and fruitfulness in good works, which I was sure were every where insisted on in the sacred volume. In like manner my objections to the doc-

* Is. vi 9, 10. Matt. xiii. 11—15. Mark iv. 11, 12. Luke viii. 9, 10. John xii. 40, 41. Acts xxviii. 25—27.

trines of *personal election* and *final perseverance* were insuperable, till I was fully satisfied of their consistency with exhortations, warnings, invitations, and persuasions on the minister's part; and diligence, watchfulness, and strenuous exertions on that of the people; which are far more spoken of in Scripture, than these doctrines are.

In order to state, with clearness and fulness, the result of my enquiries on this mysterious and controverted subject, I have chosen a very copious text, but neither intend to enter particularly into minute explanation, nor to confine myself closely to it; but, according to a very simple plan and method, to advert to a variety of other scriptures, as we proceed with the subject. I shall therefore take occasion from the text to observe,

I. That Christ came down from heaven to execute the Father's commission.

II. That this commission hath a special reference to those, whom the Father hath given him.

III. That all these, and none else, will come to Christ.

IV. That he will most certainly receive all who do come to him.

V. That his commission reaches to the infallible and everlasting salvation of the body and soul of every one, who is thus given to him, and comes

to him; or who sees him, believes in him, and depends on him for salvation.

VI. That all these observations are perfectly consistent with many things which some professed Calvinists object to, and which many Arminians suppose inconsistent with our doctrines. This will naturally lead me to close with a brief application.—And may God the Spirit open all our understandings and hearts to understand and receive his truth; and bless this design to the edification and establishment of many souls, and the promoting of true godliness within us and around us.

I. CHRIST CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN TO EXECUTE THE FATHER'S COMMISSION. "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."

It might have been supposed that this expression, "I came down from heaven," would create considerable difficulty to such as look upon Christ as a mere man, who never was in heaven before his ascension: but criticism in the hands of an ingenious man is a magick wand, and nothing can stand before it! It is, however, greatly to be wished, that these modes of interpretation had been conceded, as a kind of monopoly, to the Socinians, and had never disgraced the writings of those who call Jesus their Lord and God, and profess to trust in him alone for salvation. Oh, when will men shew due reverence to the oracles of

God, and suppose that the Holy Spirit dictates proper language, which need not be tortured from its plain meaning in the defence of truth, whatever the credit of a party may require!

We, however, profess to believe, that “being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God: yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man.” Originally he was no servant, and therefore no creature; for all holy creatures must be the servants of God: but he condescended to assume that character along with human nature. In this character he acted on earth, and will act in heaven till the day of judgment, by *commission*, and *according to instructions*. “He came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him;” in which he not only is our Saviour, but “hath left us an example that we should follow his steps.”

We must not, however, suppose that there is the least opposition betwixt the will of the Father and that of the Son. He appeared on earth as man; and by this language he intimated that he acted not by human partiality, but according to the counsel of God. It is likewise an accommodation to our infirmities, and serves to obviate our misapprehensions.

But what is the general purport of this commission? Let us hear the word of God: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of *all* acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,

“ but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son
 “ into the world to condemn the world, but that the
 “ world through him might be saved.” “ His blood
 “ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only
 “ but for the sins of the whole world.”* Had the writers of the Scriptures been as scrupulously careful, to prevent even the appearance of deviating from systematic consistency, as many moderns are, they would never have thus expressed themselves.—I dare not, however, adopt any of the above-mentioned arts of criticism to narrow the obvious sense of these and similar texts: and as I hope this day, previously to receiving and administering the Lord’s Supper, to use the following terms in solemn prayer, Christ ‘ by his
 ‘ own oblation of himself once offered, made a full,
 ‘ perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfac-
 ‘ tion for the sins of the whole world;’† I would no more contradict this solemn profession from the pulpit, than I would preach against the seventeenth article respecting predestination.—The compilers of our Liturgy evidently thought both true, and consistent with each other, and I am happy, to coincide in senti-

* John iii. 16—20. 1 Tim. i. 15. 1 John ii. 1, 2.

† 1. I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world;

2. In God the Son, who hath redeemed me and *all mankind*;

3. In God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and *all the elect people of God.* (Church Catechism.)

ment with these venerable characters.* It will appear that none but the elect will eventually be benefited by the death of Christ: yet, there is a sense of vast importance, in which it may be properly said, and the Holy

Here *Election* is supposed to be connected immediately with *sanctification*, not with *redemption*: and this appears to me most evidently the scriptural way of stating the subject; though it differs in some measure from many Calvinist creeds and systems.

‘ Christ was crucified to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of men.’ (2d Article.)

‘ The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual.’ (31st Article.)

Hence it appears, that this was the *deliberate judgment* of our venerable reformers; and that it is the *standard-doctrine* of our established church.

* It is very well worthy of observation, that the Liturgy of the Church of England, though compiled by known Calvinists, is most pointedly opposite to every degree and species of Antinomianism. The conclusion of the general Thanksgiving, a great part of the Litany, and innumerable other passages, might be adduced in illustration of this remark. But the Collect for the day, when this Sermon was preached, is so directly apposite to the subject, that I shall insert a part of it.—‘ Stir up, O Lord, we beseech thee, the *wills* of thy faithful people, that they *plentifully* bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be *plenteously* rewarded.’—It hath been much wondered how Socinians, Arians, or Arminians can subscribe our articles, or use our Liturgy: and it must be at least equally surprising, if any Antinomians can do either the one or the other.

Spirit hath expressly said, that “ his blood is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.”

The principal, though not the only, object of Christ’s appearing in human nature, and living so many years a holy sufferer, and dying in unknown agonies on the cross, was “ to bring in everlasting righteousness, and “ to make propitiation for iniquity;” as preparatory to his mediation and his intercession for sinners, as our High Priest before God in heaven. The perfection of his arduous obedience, and the intenseness of his complicated sufferings, were doubtless of indispensable necessity and of vast efficacy, in this plan of redemption: yet it was the union of the *Deity* with the man Christ Jesus in one mysterious person, which stamped its full value on this sacrifice for sin. But can any man who believes the real deity of Christ, hesitate to pronounce it an *infinite ransom*? Infinite honour was given to the divine law by his obedience, and infinite satisfaction made to divine justice by his atoning sacrifice.* And through this infinite sufficiency, that hindrance, which arose from the perfect holiness and righteousness of God, and the inconceivable demerit of sin is once for all entirely removed: so that it would be no impeachment of the purity of the divine character, no

* Even Calvin himself writes thus, ‘ He (the apostle) maketh it the common grace of all men, because it is proposed to all, not because it is actually extended to all. For although Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world; and is *offered* indiscriminately to all men by the goodness of God, yet all do not apprehend him.’ (Rom. v. 18.) And again, ‘ Christ suffered

deduction from the honour of the law, and no abatement of the horror and hatred which we ought to con-

‘*sufficiently* for the whole world; but *efficaciously* only for the ‘elect.’ (1 John ii. 2.)—Indeed if human authority availeth any thing, it would be easy to adduce abundant evidence from the most respectable Calvinist divines.

To this it is objected, that it does not consist with the *justice of God*, that any should perish for whom Christ died. Yet Peter scruples not to speak of those “who deny the Lord that *bought them*, and bring upon themselves swift destruction:” and Paul of “destroying those for whom Christ died.” It might indeed have been expected that systematical expositors would find out other interpretations of these and similar testimonies; but the question is, whether their interpretations be natural and obvious, and such as they would deem admissible in different circumstances?

The idea of Christ paying *exactly so much for one*, and *so much for another*, and so much for each, and then adding the sums together, and forming a large *limited* sum, just sufficient to ransom the elect, appears unscriptural, and gives a degrading view of the glorious subject. An *all-sufficient* atonement was made at once, and an immeasurable fulness of mercy and grace is treasured up in Christ, to be communicated, according to the eternal purpose and counsel of God. Every believer receives from this fulness: others remain under condemnation, not through defect of merit in Christ, but through their own impenitency and unbelief.

It would not have consisted with divine justice to have saved sinners without an atonement; as it appears from the apostle’s reasoning; (Rom. iii. 25, 26:) otherwise perhaps we should have been rash in asserting it. But where is it written that God cannot, consistently with justice, condemn any unbeliever? Doubtless he will fulfil his whole counsel, and save all he intended to save. But previously to faith in Christ, no sinner hath any claim upon his offended Sovereign: and afterwards the divine faithfulness and mercy are his sole and sufficient security.

ceive against sin, should God through Christ pardon all the sinners who now live, or who ever shall live, on earth.

In love that surpasseth knowledge, the Redeemer having executed this part of his commission, arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, there in glory at the Father's right hand to complete the grand design; and hath all power and authority in heaven and earth, and all the fulness of the Spirit, for that purpose: and this design consists in pardoning, sanctifying, defending, and bringing to perfect holiness and felicity, all without exception who come to God through him. But this leads us to shew

II. THAT CHRIST'S COMMISSION HAS A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THOSE WHOM THE FATHER HATH GIVEN TO HIM.

Though no obstacle from divine justice to the salvation of any sinner, or of every sinner, now remains: yet a hindrance equally insuperable, except by omnipotent grace, is found in the depravity of our fallen nature.—The sun is created, and placed in the open firmament, for the common benefit of mankind; there is in that luminary no defect of light, nor would there be any, were innumerable additional millions to share the benefit. Yet some men do not see; not from any defect in the sun, but from one in themselves. God, who is no debtor to his creatures, gives the blessing of sight to whom he will: but if he withhold or withdraw it, the man is benighted at noon day.

Christ was lifted up upon the cross, (like the bra-

zen serpent on the pole,) and is held forth in the preached gospel, for “all the ends of the earth to look unto and be saved.” This may properly be called the *common benefit of mankind*: there is no defect of merit, of mercy, or of grace in him; nor would be any, if millions as numerous as the sand should receive out of his fulness. But the want of a right *disposition of heart*, which fallen man has not, which God alone can give, but which he may justly withhold from a rebellious subject, effectually prevents the salvation of all who do not receive it. The case is parallel: except, that bodily blindness is not generally a man’s fault, or a defect in his moral character; whereas the want of humility, spirituality, and love of God is *sin, original sin*, the fruitful parent of all other sins, in fallen men and fallen angels.

Let the blessings of the gospel be fairly proposed, with solemn warnings and pressing invitations, to two men of exactly the same character and disposition; if they were left to themselves in entirely similar circumstances, the effect must be precisely the same. But behold, while one proudly scorns and resents the gracious offer; the other trembles, weeps, repents, prays, believes! “Who maketh this man to differ from the other? or what hath he that he hath not received?” The scriptural answer to this question, when properly understood, decides the whole controversy. Human depravity produces different effects in vast variety, and gathers strength by habit: but, in its root and nature, it is the same and equal in all men. This can be effectually overcome by nothing except a new creation, a “work

“wrought by the exceeding greatness of that mighty power, which raised Christ from the dead.”—I do not now argue with such as oppose the doctrine of original sin.

In the case before stated, the man who proudly scorned and resented the offer of free salvation from deserved perdition, had this work been wrought in his heart by the energy of the Holy Ghost, would certainly have embraced it: and had the other, who believed, been left to himself, he would as certainly have rejected it. This distinguishing grace is previously neither *merited* nor *desired* by either of them; it might justly have been withheld from both; but it is graciously communicated to one, and not to the other, by a sovereign God “according to the counsel of his own will.” He, and he alone, “hath made one to differ from another.” Now, was this distinction *intentionally* made by the sovereign Disposer of all things, or was it not? If *intentionally*; was that *intention first conceived at the moment of execution, or previously*? If *previously*, why not from eternity? Indeed, if any of the works of God, when actually accomplished, be righteous, holy, wise, good, and faithful, the eternal purpose of performing them must have been equally righteous, holy, wise, good, and faithful: unless it can be *wrong to determine to do right*, if that determination was formed long before it was executed! If it consists with divine justice and goodness to leave one sinner to perish, and to save another equally guilty by an act of sovereign grace and power; it must have been equally consistent with justice and goodness, to *decree*

the destruction of the one and the salvation of the other. In short, the two doctrines; that of man's *entire depravity*, and that of a *new creation unto holiness* by the sole energy of the Holy Ghost, without any help, and notwithstanding every hindrance, from nature, can never consistently be separated from that of *personal election*: nor upon this ground can a satisfactory reason be given, why any are saved and sanctified, but this,* that "God hath chosen us in Christ 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 unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace, whereby he hath made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins."

"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." In his unsearchable judgments; (Oh, how deep are they!) doubtless for wise and righteous purposes, though not clearly discernable by us purblind mortals, he was pleased to permit the first entrance of sin, the fall of Adam, and the depravation of the human race. It suits not my present limits to discant on this subject: I may scarcely pause to drop a tear for the awful catastrophe. But, that man is fallen and depraved, that "the whole world lieth in wickedness," all we see, hear, read, or experience

* Ephesians i. 4—7.

demonstrates, and all confirms the testimony of God in Scripture to this humbling doctrine. Utterly destitute of love to the holy perfections of God, desire of his favour, delight in his service, gratitude for his benefits, or regard to his glory, man is universally disposed to inordinate idolatrous self-love, and love of worldly objects. His own honour and glory he seeks, his own imagined excellences he admires, his crimes he vindicates or excuses; he affects independency, and would have all others admire and honour him as much as he does himself. He also idolizes worldly objects: “The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life” he chooses as his portion. These are “his good things,” for which he most ardently thirsts, on which he mainly depends, and in which he places his chief felicity. Hence eventually proceed all unrighteousness, licentiousness, and ungodliness, according to the different constitutional propensities, educations, and habits of different men. “The law of God is weak through the flesh,” and cannot restrain their impetuous desires. In the pursuit of their self-exalting or carnal projects, the will and worship of God are neglected, the rules of justice, truth, and benevolence violated, and every excess committed. But “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;” and eternal punishment is annexed to the transgression of this holy law by him “to whom vengeance belongs;” and when this is made known to the proud rebel, his negligent contempt of God breaks forth in enmity, and sometimes in blasphemy against the divine perfections, law, and govern-

ment; “because the carnal mind is enmity against God,
“for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed
“can be; so then, they that are in the flesh *cannot*
“please God.”

This state of the human race God foresaw; and he, who alone is competent to estimate the tendency of such a temper of heart, and the malignity of such a conduct, evidently considered all men both as meriting eternal misery, and as “vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.”

Redemption by the blood of Christ was a most distinguished part of his original plan. He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Whatever other method God, in his infinite wisdom, could have devised for his own glory in the salvation of sinners, this was doubtless the best; for it was actually chosen. But this plan can have no foundation except in the humiliating truth, that all men were so exceedingly guilty and deserving of everlasting misery, that it did not stand with the honour of a just and holy God to be reconciled to any of them, or to rescue them from destruction, except through the interposition of such a sacrifice, as that of “his well beloved Son in whom he is well pleased.” If man does not deserve damnation, deliverance from it is not of *grace but of debt*.* And though eternal life must in strict

* If we cannot by other arguments prove the justice of God in the damnation of sinners, the method of redemption alone demonstrates it. And it is more our interest, and more become

propriety of language be an unmerited gift of God to any of his creatures: yet, as far as we know, it might have been honourably given to us; had it not been that man was so guilty and God so holy, that without the atonement made by the death of the divine Saviour, it would not have consisted with his holiness to save so vile a rebel. If this be not so, “then Christ is dead “in vain.”

But if the heart of sinful man is enmity to a holy God, and disdains the authority, dislikes the precept, and abhors the sentence, of that holy law which condemns him for his crimes; if the gospel shews the malignity of sin and the desert of every sinner, in the most conspicuous light; if it maintains the authority, magnifies the precept, and vindicates the justice of the sentence of the law; and if it gives no quarter to any sin, saves no man in his sins, but from all sin, and to all that very holiness which the law demands, “writing “the law in the heart:” could it be reasonably supposed, that man would not also hate and quarrel with the affronting, though most merciful, message of free salvation? It might have been previously expected, and matter of fact indisputably proves, that the unadulterated gospel, notwithstanding its surprising largeness and freeness of grace and love, is more offensive to the

ing us, to submit to his righteousness, and apply for his mercy; than in the midst of our ignorance and blindness, to spend our time in vain reasonings upon a subject, for which we are incompetent; and in making objections to those appointments which are unalterably determined, whether we submit to them or no.

proud rebel than the very law itself, and excites more enmity and blasphemy. Nor need we hesitate to assert that every individual, if left to himself, would as infallibly have either neglected and opposed, or perverted and abused, the gospel, as he has broken and quarrelled with the law. From this source especially have arisen, all the persecutions of Christianity which have raged in many ages and places; all the indifference and contempt which have prevailed; and all the innumerable corruptions of the gospel, which have been devised, to render it more palatable or tolerable to the pride or to the lusts of men.

Foreseeing this as the inevitable consequence of leaving the gospel to take its own course in the world; knowing that all would reject or abuse it to their deeper condemnation; the Lord did not consider himself bound *in justice* to afford his obstinate enemies any further grace, but judged that he might *righteously* have left them all to the consequences of their perverseness. He is no man's debtor, he doeth no man injustice, he punisheth no man who hath not deserved it, nor any one above his deservings: and, however men may now dare to find fault, all his dealings will be shewn most glorious in wisdom, holiness, truth, and love, and "every mouth will be stopped" in "the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render unto every man according to his deeds."

But where none has any claim, may not the great Ruler of the universe bestow his unmerited favours on whom he will? Is *he* alone restricted from "doing what he will with his own?" Seeing that none either de-

serve, or desire mercy in *his appointed way*, but all harden themselves in impenitent and obstinate rebellion; in high sovereignty he declares, “ I will have mercy, “ on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then “ it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”—“ There- “ fore he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, “ and whom he will he hardeneth.” Not but that all who are saved, do run and seek; and “ every one that “ seeketh, findeth:” but God’s mercy takes the lead; his preventing grace hath produced this willingness; and therefore the one sinner wills, runs, seeks and finds: whilst others, left to themselves and to their own lusts, and to Satan’s temptations, meet with those things in the righteous providence of God, which harden them more and more to their destruction.*

Doubtless the Lord acts with the most perfect wisdom in making this difference among sinners; but he deigns not to inform us of his reasons; and who are

* ‘ The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to *faith and calling* upon God. Wherefore we have no strength to do good works pleasant and acceptable unto God, without the grace of God by Christ *preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working in us when we have that good will.*’ (10th Article.)

“ *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God, which worketh in you to will and do, of his good pleasure.*” (Phil. ii. 12, 13.)

we, worms, rebels, and enemies, that we should expect it from him?

When therefore he appointed his beloved Son (“his Elect whom he had chosen”) for salvation to the ends of the earth: that his grace might not be frustrated by man’s perverseness, as otherwise it must have been; while he saw good to leave others under the condemnation of the law, and, through the tendency of their evil nature, to reject the gospel, “from the beginning he chose” a people “unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; whereunto he calls them by the gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*—These are the persons spoken of in the text, as “given unto Christ” (by some mysterious transaction, according to our low apprehensions, betwixt the Father and the Son,) when he undertook the work of redemption.†

* 2 Thess. ii. 11—14.

† ‘Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those, whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore they, which he endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God’s purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the call: they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works; and at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.’ (17th Article.) Some argue,

With an especial intention of saving this “remnant according to the election of grace,” Christ shed his precious blood. “I lay down,” says he, “my life for the sheep.” His death was a *sufficient* atonement for *all*: this forms an encouragement for every one that hears the gospel, and leaves all without excuse who neglect such great salvation. But our Lord foresaw who would eventually partake of this infinite ransom. These are in some sense his sheep even before conversion: “Other sheep, says he, I *have*, which are not of this fold:” meaning the unconverted Gentiles. When as lost sheep they are wandering in the ways of destruction, he sends his ministers to those places where they reside, that he may seek and save them, and bring them home to his fold:—and he continues them in their stations till his purposes are accomplished. “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; *for I have much people in this city*,” saith he to persecuted Paul at Corinth, concerning the licentious inhabitants.* And for these he especially intercedes, and not for the world.†—“God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us even when dead in sin;—hath quickened us together with Christ —For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and

that this article is not Calvinistick: it, however, exactly and admirably, sums up the opinions of the author, by whatever term he may be distinguished.

* Acts xviii. 9, 10.

† John xvii. 9, 10, 20.

“ that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”*——
 Thus he separates his elect by new-creating grace, and makes them “ a willing people in the day of his power, in the beauties of holiness.” “ We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour 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.” “ He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”†
 Others are invited, but these only are *made willing to come*; the rest make light of it and go their ways to their favourite pursuits. This leads me,

III. To observe, THAT ALL THESE SHALL COME TO CHRIST, AND NONE ELSE WILL.

This is illustrated by the decree of Cyrus to the captive Jews.‡ “ Who is there among you, of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem.” This was *general for all*. But many had got comfortable settlements at Babylon, and did not care enough for the ashes of the holy city, or for the interests of religion, to encounter the perils and hardships of such an expedition. Who then eventually availed them-

* Eph. ii 1—10. † 2 Tim. i. 9. Tit. iii. 2—9. ‡ Ezra i.

selves of the king's permission? "All they, whose spirit God had raised to go," and none else. The others might and could, had they possessed *a willing mind*; but they had not, and therefore they went not. Nor would any have gone, had not God interposed *to make some of them willing*.*

May not sinners come to Christ? How runs the proclamation? "How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you."†—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy on him: and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon."‡—"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." "We beseech you,—that

* See a letter of Archbishop Usher's, for a more full discussion of this point; and for this and several other illustrations and arguments.

† Prov. i. 22, 23.

‡ Isaiah lv. 1—3, 6, 7.

“ ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”* “ Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever *will*, let him take of the water of life freely.”† Who is excepted by name or character in these general proclamations?—Christ complains of men, that “ *they will* not come to him, that they might have life;” and he thus pathetically laments over Jerusalem, “ How often *would* I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not.*”

JEHOVAH says with the greatest solemnity and earnestness; “ As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?”—Justice indeed demands the execution of the criminal; but the merciful Prince, as it were, sheds tears, whilst as a matter of necessity, (if he will maintain the honour of his kingdom,) he signs the death-warrant. The reason of the destruction of sinners is therefore thus stated:—“ Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched forth my hands, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.”‡

But sinners *cannot obey the call*. This is a truth, if truly understood. They are under a *moral*, not a *natural*, inability. Is this distinction useless and unintelligible? Is there no difference betwixt a covetous wretch, who with a full purse hath *no heart*, and a

* 2 Cor. v. vi. † Rev. xxii. 17. ‡ Prov. i. 24—33.

compassionate man who hath *no money* to relieve a fellow-creature in distress? Both are effectually prevented, but the one *from himself*, the other *by an external hindrance*. Every generous man at once indignantly condemns the one, and wholly justifies the other. When the case is put, divested of all false colouring, the one *could if he would*, and the other *would if he could*. It is said of God that he *cannot lie*. But whence arises this impossibility? Surely not from *external restraint*, but from the *perfection of his essential holiness*. Satan cannot but hate his Maker. Not because of outward force put upon him, but through the horrid malignity of his disposition.*

* If there is no real difference betwixt the *want of natural faculties*, and the *want of moral dispositions*; there can be nothing culpable even in Satan's opposing God, and endeavouring the destruction of men; for it is as impossible at least that he should do otherwise, as that sinners should perfectly obey the law, or of themselves repent and believe the gospel: and if they are excusable, Satan is consequently so too. Indeed, on this supposition, all characters are reduced to a level: for in proportion to the degree of evil disposition, or *moral inability* to good, evil actions become excusable; and by parity of reason, in proportion to the degree of moral excellency of disposition, or of *moral inability* to evil, good actions being unavoidable become less praiseworthy. Thus, the more inwardly holy any man is, the less esteem are his piety, justice, and charity entitled to; for he can scarcely do otherwise. An angel, as confirmed in holiness, is still less entitled to commendation; for in *some sense* it is impossible he should do otherwise than be holy. He *cannot sin*. And through *necessary* excellency of nature, it is strictly impossible God should do any thing inconsistent with

Sinners are not of themselves *willing* to stoop so low, and to leave so much, as the gospel requires; or

the most consummate wisdom, justice, truth, and goodness. He *cannot*: and shall we say, this inability (which is the incommunicable glory of his nature) renders him less entitled to our admiring, adoring, grateful love, than otherwise he would be?

Every one must see what confusion would be introduced into civil and domestick concerns, if no regard were paid to this distinction, and an inveterate propensity were allowed as an excuse for crimes: and it introduces equal perplexity into all our discourses on divine things; because it runs directly counter to all our rules of judging characters and actions. A good outward action, without the *least correspondent disposition*, is in reality *mere hyftocrisy*: as the disposition to good and aversion to evil increase, good actions have more *genuine sincerity*, and the character more amiableness. When we can say with the apostles, “We *cannot* but do,” so, and so—we are entitled to as much esteem and approbation as mere men can be. This *moral inability* to evil is much stronger in angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; and therefore we are taught to look forward to such a holy estate and temper, as the summit of our wishes and desires: and God himself, who, being under no restraint, but doing his whole pleasure, cannot but be perfectly and unchangeably holy, is proposed as the object of entire love, admiring gratitude, and adoring praise.

On the other hand, a bad action, if done without *intention*, or the *least disposition to such moral evil*, is deemed purely accidental, and not culpable. When it is contrary to a man’s general disposition and character, and the effect of *sudden temptation*, it is considered as more venial than when the effect of a rooted disposition: and for a criminal to plead, ‘I am so prone to theft and cruelty, that I *could not* help it,’ would be to condemn himself as the vilest miscreant, not fit to live, in the opinion of judge, jury, and spectators.

to part with every forbidden indulgence, to renounce the world and deny themselves, to take up their cross and follow Christ; and without this *willingness* they cannot be his disciples. This is the real, and the only, hindrance. Were they once willing they would ask, and God would give them, all the rest.

Do they not come because these blessings were not intended for them? No man out of hell can possibly know this respecting himself; and very few habitually think it. God's secret purposes and open declarations perfectly coincide; "But secret things belong unto the LORD our God, and the things which are revealed, to us;" (a distinction not sufficiently attended to:) the former are not, and cannot be, the rule of our conduct, but the latter are; and these exclude none, but such as *will not come* to the feast.* Esau sold his birth-right for one morsel of meat. The Lord indeed did not intend the birth-right for Esau, but for Jacob; yet this, not being the *motive* of Esau's conduct, formed no excuse for it. He is condemned in Scrip-

There can be no difficulty in proving that this distinction is implied throughout the Bible, and has its foundation in the nature of things; and so far from being novel, it is impossible that any rational creature can be unacquainted with it. No man ever yet missed the distinction *between the sick servant who could not work, and the lazy servant who had no heart to his work*; that is, *betwixt natural and moral inability*: and no man could govern even his domesticks in a proper manner, without continually adverting to it.

* Matthew xxii. 3. Luke xiv. 18.

ture as profane, a despiser of his birth-right, and an example of one who repented not till it was too late; and he is proposed as a warning to us, not to despise or abuse the mercy of God, lest our doom should be irreversibly determined.† Proud contempt of a free salvation, idolatrous love of earthly objects, and profane disregard for spiritual blessings, are the real motives of men's rejecting the gospel; and therefore no unknown purpose of God is allowed as an excuse. It is true, the Elect were of the same disposition, and had they been left to themselves, would have made the same choice: thus "boasting is excluded;" and God appears glorious in justice in condemning sinners, but more glorious in grace in saving believers.

"No man can come to me," saith our Lord, in the discourse from which our text is taken, "except the Father which hath sent me *draw* him."—"They shall be all *taught of God*; every man therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh to me." We are here informed how this otherwise insurmountable hindrance is removed. Men are *drawn* by rational inducements, not *forced* by external violence: and this drawing is effected by the communication, not of new faculties, but of new dispositions and discoveries, which give a new direction to the judgment, desires, and affections. They are *taught of God, and learn of the Father*, who both opens the eyes of their understanding, takes the veil from their heart, and causes his light to shine upon them, and within

* Heb. xii. 17.

them. Frequently after long patience with them, and preserving them during their ungodly course of life; in some cases, when they are grown more determined in wickedness than ever, and it might be supposed they were nigh unto destruction; by his Holy Spirit he shews them his glorious majesty and holiness, their relations and obligations to him, and the authority, extent, and reasonableness of his law. Thus he “convinces them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment;” and lays open the eternal world to their view in all its tremendous importance: till alarmed at their danger, they tremble at his word, and take warning “to flee from the wrath to come.” Their terror is accompanied by humiliation and penitent remorse, when the Holy Spirit teaches them the odious nature and dreadful tendency of sin, and vileness of their own conduct and character: then every kind and degree of reformation and amendment proves utterly insufficient to appease their disquieted consciences. While others, after awakenings, take shelter in this refuge of lies, they are taught to exclaim, “We are all as unclean things, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Thus by despair of atoning for the past, or justifying themselves before a holy God, by such unholy services, they become cordially willing to accept of a free salvation.

They discover likewise, that personal holiness is absolutely necessary; and are taught that “the Lord can have no pleasure in iniquity;” and that none can be meet for a holy heaven and the enjoyment of a holy

God, without conformity to his holiness. Thus they are preserved from that fatal refuge of lies, into which the love of sin betrays vast numbers, of perverting the doctrines of grace into a reason for being satisfied in the neglect of holiness. At the same time they are taught of God their own utter inability to obtain this holiness, except from him; and they learn to prize sanctification by the Spirit, as highly as redemption by the blood of Christ. When such important concerns engross their minds, worldly objects seem diminished, and they learn to count them as nothing in comparison of the salvation of their souls: thus they become willing to deny themselves, to forsake all, and to follow Christ, bearing their cross; whilst others perish in the vain attempt of serving God and Mammon, and reconciling the interests of time and eternity.

In this manner the hindrances, arising from the pride and corrupt passions of the heart, being efficaciously removed, men readily learn under such a Teacher, the grand lesson without which all others would be useless, and to which all else are subordinate. We must mention one thing before another; but it is not necessary to determine in what order these lessons shall be taught, or whether more speedily, or more gradually. But in his own time and manner, the divine Spirit will teach every elect person, the nature, truth, and glory of the gospel of Christ; and shew him, that in the divine Saviour, in his righteousness, sacrifice, intercession, and grace, all he wants, or can desire, is contained; "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine,

“and shall shew it unto you.”* Now he feels an ardent longing for an interest in Christ and all his blessings, and fears nothing so much as being rejected. Now he makes, trembling perhaps, his earnest application; “Behold he prayeth!” As a condemned criminal, a perishing sinner, he comes, he asks, he waits; he persists in waiting and praying; and, giving up every other hope, he says, “Lord, to whom shall I go? “thou hast the words of eternal life.” Now he respects every instruction, observes every direction, uses every means, watches against every sin, attends to every duty; yet trusts in nothing but the free mercy of God through the redemption of his Son, whom he desires “to be made unto him, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Now he is very apt to suspect that he does not ask and seek in a proper manner, and becomes jealous of himself lest he should be deceived: and though he longs for relief from the burden of his guilt, yet he fears a false peace; and still seeks for more earnestness and deeper humiliation. He will take no denial, yield to no discouragement, and be satisfied with nothing short of ALL that Christ died to purchase and is exalted to bestow: pardon, righteousness, holiness, liberty, victory, and eternal life. Thus all, whom the Father hath given unto Christ, being taught and drawn of God, come unto him, receive him, and walk in him.—But is this our experience, or is it not? It is for substance, though with circumstantial variations, I trust, the experience

* John xvi. 14, 15.

of all true christians: and yet I fear that very many, who are zealous for these doctrines, continue strangers to this method of coming day by day to Christ for his complete salvation.* I proceed,

IV. To observe that CHRIST WILL MOST CERTAINLY RECEIVE ALL WHO COME UNTO HIM. This is here most emphatically declared, “him that cometh unto me, I will *in no wise* cast out;” and the double negation in the original is still more expressive. Had the vilest sinner, who ever trembled with the desperate apprehensions of having sinned beyond all reach of mercy, been allowed to draw up a clause for his own encouragement in coming to the Saviour, he could scarcely have worded it more favourably. Imagine the basest character, which ever disgraced humanity and scourged the world; one grown hoary in

* ‘ As the godly consideration of predestination and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as *feel in themselves* the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things; as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: so for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God’s predestination, is a most dangerous downfall whereby the devil doth thrust them into desperation, or into wretchedness of unclean living, no less perilous than desperation. (17th Article.)

multiplied rapines, murders, adulteries, rapes, and unnatural lusts; and breathing out perjuries and blasphemies, as if ambitious of pre-eminence in profaneness: if even this man truly come to Christ, “he will *in no wise* cast him out.” Suppose the most consummate villainy, to the very verge of life, carried on under the broad vizard of designed hypocrisy; or some wretch, emboldened in sin by the very gospel itself, who had given such scandal, that thousands in hell should curse him as the occasion of their perdition; or some vile apostate, some Judas, who had betrayed and sold his Lord. If even such persons really come to Christ, in the manner that hath been described, he will, he can “in no wise cast them out.” He cannot alter the word, that is gone out of his lips. I determine not whether they ever do actually come, or whether it is much to be expected that they should; for “there is a sin unto death,” and “it is impossible to renew some unto repentance.” But did they come, even at the last hour, they should *in no wise be cast out*; for there is nothing in the constitution of the gospel to exclude them from mercy. Should there then be one present, who is ready to despair, and trembles to approach the mercy-seat, because he expects and dreads a repulse; let him make the trial, and plead the promise, and wait the Lord’s time in his way; and he shall find, that neither aggravated guilt, nor strong corruptions, nor inveterate evil habits, can exclude him from this full and free salvation.

No man has the least occasion in such circumstances to enquire previously, whether he be elect, which

he cannot possibly know in this stage of his experience. He needs only to ask himself; am I sincerely willing to be saved from sin, and all its consequences, in the humbling self-denying method of the gospel? do I believe that Jesus, and he alone, is able thus to save me? do I apply to him and trust in him for these things? and do I observe his directions, and use the means which he hath appointed for that end? Every *approach* to a temper and conduct so opposite to corrupt nature must be from some kind or degree of influence of the Holy Spirit; and whatever looks like it should be in a measure encouraged. But as many promising appearances are blighted, and the Scripture speaks of such as “had been partakers of the Holy Ghost, and had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, who yet fell away:” we are constrained to add that not every operation of this kind is that good work, which distinguishes the chosen people of God.—Nay, probably few perish, where the word of God is fully preached, without many awakenings, many fears, many desires, yea, and many feeble endeavours, which are all subdued and extinguished “through the love of sin.” “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” Yet as far as there is any tendency to good in these things, they are to be ascribed to a good cause: and not only “hating the light,” and acting in defiance of their own consciences, but also “resisting the Holy Ghost,” will be found among the aggravations of sin, in many that perish at the day of judgment.

Nor are they who are saved, free from the same guilt: but in them grace proves victorious; and though resisted, by its invincible efficacy it gains the ascendancy. — This distinguishing work of God, will in time shew itself, and make it evident that the man was drawn and taught of God in coming to Christ. Hence, when all are invited, none will come but they who are *willing*: none are *willing*, but as made *willing* by God: he makes none willing but *the elect*: he would have all encouraged, who are willing: he will have all sinners left without excuse: no one can know his election, but by his vocation; nor his vocation, until he hath actually come to Christ: and there is no way to answer these ends, but by free and urgent invitations, connected with warnings, instructions, exhortations, and exhortations. If this style of address be not adopted, you “quench the smoking flax, and break the bruised reed:” for the trembling sinner will be apt to say, ‘if any poor sinner, may not come, how can I know that I may? for I know not that I am elected: But if every one is invited then I may come, and now I am heartily willing, and this gives me encouragement.’

Many are zealous for the system, who do not understand the arguments, by which it is maintained; but he that does, will allow that this question is the very knot of the whole controversy; *Who makes man willing to be saved in the method of the gospel?** If any

* I say, *in the method of the gospel*: For every man is willing to be saved from misery and made happy, if it may but be in some way of his own, either favourable to his pride, or to his love of sin.

natural preferable disposition, or any improvement of nature, contribute to produce this *willingness*, then the doctrines generally called Arminianism must be true, and boasting must be introduced. But if God alone produce this willingness without any help, and notwithstanding every hindrance, from man's evil nature, *then the grand principles of Calvinism are established, and boasting is excluded.* Notions in the head indeed do not always suitably influence the heart and conduct. Many of those who are called, and who call themselves, Arminians, are far from boasting, nay, are remarkably pious and humble: and too many Calvinists are haughty, dogmatical, censorious, and contentious. But a humble believer in Jesus is a brother, and entitled to our cordial love, though he cannot subscribe our whole creed.

This, however, being the real question, it contains nothing that militates against invitations: we invite *all that will to come to Christ for his salvation*; and as it is not necessary to make any limitation in respect of the *unwilling*, who sufficiently distinguish themselves; so we give the invitation in all respects general and unencumbered;—"As many as ye shall find bid to the "marriage." My fellow sinners, if you are willing, you will seek our merciful Saviour, and you shall find mercy and grace: but if any of you are not willing, raise no slander against him; charge him not with unwillingness, but be sure the fault is entirely your own.—I proceed then,

V. To observe, THAT CHRIST'S COMMISSION REACHETH TO THE INFALLIBLE AND EVERLAST-

ING SALVATION OF THE BODY AND SOUL OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL, WHO IS GIVEN TO HIM, SEES HIM, AND BELIEVES ON HIM. “ This is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” Indeed this unavoidably follows from all that hath been already discoursed; and likewise from the unchangeable wisdom, faithfulness, and love of God; and from his promise, covenant and counsel, “ confirmed with an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie; we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast.”*—“ Whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.—Moreover whom he did predestinate them he also called: and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified. What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that *justifieth.*”—“ Who

* Heb. vi. 17—19.

“ shall separate us from the love of Christ?—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.”*
 To object, that though nothing else can, our own sin
 may separate us from Christ, is a mere evasion; for
 nothing has any tendency to separate betwixt Christ
 and the believer but sin, or as it powerfully tempts
 him to sin.

In like manner Peter confirms the doctrine of his
 “ beloved brother Paul,” at the very opening of his
 first epistle, which begins in this manner: “ To the
 “ strangers,—elect according to the foreknowledge
 “ of God the Father, through sanctification of the
 “ Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of
 “ Jesus—Grace unto you and peace be multiplied.
 “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus
 “ Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath
 “ begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resur-
 “ rection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheri-
 “ tance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth
 “ not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept
 “ *by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*”†
 And again, “ Unto you that believe he is precious;
 “ but unto them that be disobedient, the stone which
 “ the builders disallowed, the same is made the head
 “ of the corner; and a stone of stumbling and a rock

* Rom. viii. 29—39. † 1 Pet. i. 1—5. Comp. Luke xxii. 22.

“ of offence, even to them which stumble at the word,
 “ being disobedient whereunto *also they were appoint-*
 “ *ed.* But ye are a *chosen generation*, a royal priesthood,
 “ an holy nation, that ye should shew forth the praises
 “ of him, who hath called you out of darkness into
 “ his marvellous light.”* “ For God had not *appoint-*
 “ *ed* them to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord
 “ Jesus Christ.”† Thus likewise says another apostle,
 “ Of *his own will*, begat he us with the word of truth;
 “ that we should be a kind of first fruits of his crea-
 “ tures.”‡ And our Lord himself says, “ 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 who gave them me, is greater than all,
 “ and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s
 “ hand. I and my Father are One.”§ The only way,
 in which Satan, or any other enemy, can endeavour to
 pluck the sheep out of Christ’s hand, is by tempting
 them to wilful and final apostacy: but in this attempt
 every enemy must be unsuccessful, according to the
 obvious meaning of such express and absolute pro-
 mises: and if this conclusion may not be deduced from
 them; both these, and all other numerous Scriptures,
 which are calculated to give a strong consolation to
 them who flee for refuge to Christ, not providing
 against this only danger, mean just nothing at all.

What though many professors apostatize? Who can

* 1 Pet. ii. 7—10.

† 1 Thess. v. 9.

‡ James i. 18.

§ John x. 27—30.

warrant their preceding sincerity? “They went out from us, *because they were not of us,*” says one apostle. “There must be heresies” (false teachers and false doctrines) “that they that are approved may be made manifest,” says another. But surely this is not applicable to all who decline in their profession. Let us then suppose the persons in question, not to be apostates, but backsliders. Can we positively say, this or that man dies impenitent? Such decisions belong to God, not to us. Without all doubt, if a professed christian turns aside to notorious sin, or throws up his religion, and live and die impenitent, he will perish everlastingly: for he alone, “who endureth unto the end shall be saved.” The doctrine of final perseverance is not at all concerned in this case; for the man’s apostacy is the detection of his hypocrisy: and the only question is whether God hath not in his word, engaged to preserve all *real believers* from thus finally departing from him?

Except a man be truly converted, he can persevere only in open ungodliness or in hypocrisy: except he have scriptural evidence of his conversion, he cannot warrantably conclude any thing concerning his perseverance: and if any one, while living in habitual sin, or in a negligent and slothful manner, encourages himself by this doctrine, he is guilty of awful presumption. But the true Christian, habitually and sincerely abiding in Christ, and walking in all his ordinances and commandments; amidst his sharp conflicts with corruption and temptation, and his fears of future consequences, may find a most reviving cordial to refresh his droop-

ing spirits, and renew his strength, from the assurance that Christ will make him at length more than conqueror, and “preserve him from every evil work unto “his heavenly kingdom.”

The stony-ground hearers, however flourishing, having *no root in themselves*, must one day wither away. The ground overgrown with thorns, the emblem of worldly professors, will “bear no fruit to perfection.” But they who receive the seed in good ground, in *an honest and good heart*, made such by divine grace, will “bring forth fruit with *patience*.” “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give “him,” says our Lord to the woman of Samaria, meaning especially the Spirit of life and holiness, “shall *never* thirst, but the water that I shall give “him, shall be *in him* a well of water, springing up “into everlasting life.” It will spring up in all holy affections, and flow forth in all holy thoughts, words, and actions, until it be perfected in eternal glory.*

The real Christian is generally very far from thinking he has attained perfection. As a poor sinner, he still feels abundant cause for the daily exercise of repentance and faith; and he daily needs the free mercy of the Father, the precious blood of the Son, and fresh supplies of the grace of the Spirit. He has occasion for constant watchfulness and prayer, and he often wants reproof and chastisement. Seasons of slackness and instances of transgression, he has to mourn over:

* John iv. 14. vii. 37—39.

and if he steps farther out of the way, his security lies in the following promises and assurances:—"As many
" as I love I rebuke and chasten." "They shall be
" my people, and I will be their God; and I will give
" them one heart and one way, that they may fear me
" for ever, for the good of them and of their children
" after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant
" with them, that I will not turn away from them to
" do them good, *and I will put my fear into their*
" *hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*"* For
in this manner, the Lord brings back his offending
children with weeping and supplication. The final
perseverance of all, who hold certain doctrines, relate
plausible experiences, or make a credible profession,
cannot be made to consist with matter of fact. But
the final perseverance of the true penitent believer in
Christ, who is delivered from the dominion of sin;
who through faith in Christ has in some degree over-
come the world, and aspires after a more complete
victory; who has learned to hate all sin, and delight in
the law of God, and is hungering and thirsting after
righteousness, is doubtless a truth of God's word.
Yea, without a peradventure, the meanest, feeblest,
true believer on earth shall infallibly "be kept by the
" power of God, through faith unto salvation." "For
" this is the will of him that sent me, that of all whom
" he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should
" raise it up again at the last day."

And this leads me,

* Jer. xxxii. 38—40.

V. To observe,—THAT ALL THIS IS PERFECTLY CONSISTENT WITH MANY THINGS WHICH SOME OBJECT TO, AS ARMINIANISM.—It is surprising to hear some, who profess themselves Calvinists, in doubt whether their principles be consistent with the government of the world by rewards and punishments, proposed as motives to the hopes and fears of mankind.—Surely if the Bible do, in any part of it, teach those doctrines, which are commonly denominated Calvinism, they must implicitly pervade the whole of it; and we can have no occasion to resort to an opposite system, in order to explain any part of the sacred volume. For what reason, can any one suppose that punishment is less deserved on these principles than on the other? The foreknowledge or secret purpose of God is not the effective cause, or inducing motive, of any man's rebellion, impenitence, and rejection of the gospel; and therefore cannot form an excuse for them, or render his condemnation less just. This decree neither deprives him of any thing good which he either possessed or merited, nor puts any *evil* disposition into his heart. The Lord merely determines to leave the sinner to himself; without any efficacious unmerited interposition, to prevent him from destroying himself by his voluntary wickedness and obstinacy. On the other hand, a man must deviate very far indeed from the whole scheme of Christianity, who supposes that the *reward of a believing sinner is merited*. Many Arminians allow as expressly, though perhaps not quite so consistently, as the Calvinists, that the reward is not of debt, but of grace. Fear of future pu-

nishment, yea, hope of future reward (though blind and presumptuous) answer, even respecting those who eventually perish, important purposes in God's providence, exactly the same upon one scheme as the other. They are not effectual for the salvation of the ungodly; but they keep mankind in some measure of order, and prevent much wickedness: for, what a world would it be, were all the wicked entirely liberated from the fear of future punishment, or wholly desperate! At the same time the Lord, in calling his Elect and in preserving them in his ways, draws them on, and effects his purposes of love, in a considerable degree by means of their hopes of future happiness and fears of future misery.

What then is there in these doctrines inconsistent with charging guilt upon men's consciences? warning them to flee from the wrath to come? laying open the law as the ministration of condemnation? calling upon sinners to repent and believe the gospel, and exhorting them to "labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life," to "strive to enter in at the strait gate," to search the Scriptures, to pray, "to press into the kingdom of heaven, to forsake their sins, and to separate from sinners?" These are the appointed means, which, in all ages have been owned by God for the conviction of sinners; and though, without supernatural grace, they prove insufficient to overcome man's strong corruption, yet they are suitable means; as suitable as ploughing and sowing to procure the crop, though here also God only can give the increase; so suitable, that in the mouth of the prisoner

Paul they made even a proud Felix tremble, and almost persuaded Agrippa to be a Christian.

What is there inconsistent with inviting sinners to come to Christ? with warning them not to neglect such great salvation, not to refuse him that speaketh? or with declaring that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for those who reject the gospel? What, inconsistent with exhorting men to “examine themselves whether they be in the faith?” and to “look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God?” “to give diligence, to make their calling and election sure,” and to be careful that no man deceive them, and that they do not deceive themselves? What, inconsistent with distinguishing between the true christian and the hypocrite? with exhorting christians to adorn their profession, to glorify God, to let their light shine before men, to be faithful in the unrighteous mammon, to redeem their time, to walk circumspectly, to beware of growing negligent; to press forward, and to be ready to every good work? What inconsistent, with declaring that “hereby we know the children of God, and the children of the devil; every one that doeth not righteousness, is not of God,” “Every one that committeth sin is of the devil?”

Finally, what is there inconsistent with discoursing to *christians* very particularly concerning the christian temper and walk? concerning relative duties and all other duties; and admonishing, persuading, reproofing, beseeching, exhorting them, in every method, and by every motive, “to walk worthy of God, who hath

“ called them to his kingdom and glory?” There must be a vast disadvantage in arguing against these things, which are so fully handled in the Scriptures, and are so naturally expressed in scriptural terms: and if we be proved inconsistent, we have this consolation, that every writer in the sacred Scriptures will share the same censure. But in one word, are means any part of God’s plan?* If they are not: the argument not only concludes against *practical preaching*, but against *all preaching*: and we may give over ploughing our fields, eating our food, and taking medicine.† But if *means* as well as *ends* are provided for in the divine counsels; then these doctrines form as firm a foundation for all exhortations, instructions, warnings, invitations, and

* That is, Did God predestinate the end, *with or without reference* to the means, by which he intended to accomplish it?

† The apostle Paul was assured, in a vision, that the life of every individual who sailed with him should be preserved: yet afterwards he declared as positively, That “ except the seamen “ continued in the ship, they could not be saved.” (Acts xxvii. 24, 31.) Was the event then doubtful? Was there any alteration in the purpose of God? Was the apostle inconsistent? Or did the passengers act rationally, when, without hesitation, they went and cut the cords, and let the boat fall into the sea, thus defeating the intention of the sailors?

This was (as a friend observed to me) common sense, which is a very different thing from the vain reasonings of men in matters of religion. The truth is, God determined to save the lives of Paul and those that sailed with him; but he determined to save them *in this precise manner, and in no other*: and the means were as infallibly decreed as the event.

expostulations of the preacher, and for all diligence, and watchfulness, and activity of the hearer, as the opposite tenets: and if true, no doubt they give an advantage in enforcing all these topicks; for error can never promote holiness, and truth can never subvert it. Indeed, besides the native tendency of these means, there appears a more close connection of the means with the blessing, from the consideration that the same Lord who appointed them, hath promised the blessing, and inclines the heart to use them.

And now in applying the subject I would observe,

I. That while numbers argue with the greatest vehemence against the points in question, and groundlessly charge them with implying the most dishonourable thoughts of God, and tending to the most pernicious consequences: others are ready to say, in extravagant zeal, to any one of greater moderation, ‘If you really believe these doctrines, why do you preach them so sparingly, cautiously, and practically?’—I would desire such a man carefully to study even St. Paul’s Epistles, and to answer the objection himself. Perhaps he may find that there is not a less proportion on such subjects in our sermons and publications, than in his writings; and that he as carefully guards them from abuse, and connects them as much with holy practice, as we can do. We generally meet with a few verses in an Epistle upon the doctrines in question; a much larger proportion upon the person, love, and sufferings of Christ, and on faith in him; and whole chapters upon a holy life and conversation: and if we

do not in the same manner proportion, guard, and connect them, hypocrites will abuse them, infidels will despise them, and the weak will be stumbled. Indeed they are not at all proper subjects to insist on, when we preach to sinners, to prejudiced hearers, or newly-awakened persons; and are seldom if ever found in Scripture explicitly thus addressed: yet a great part of our more publick ministry is exercised among such persons. Let it not then be thought *carnal polic* to adapt our discourses to the occasions and wants of the hearers, while nothing inconsistent with truth is spoken, nothing profitable kept back. Our Lord himself says, “ I have yet many things to say unto you, “ but ye cannot bear them now:” and Paul writes to some, who were prone to be “ wise in their own conceits.” “ I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal.—I have fed you with “ milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not “ able to bear it; neither yet are ye now able:” and he gives a reason for this conduct, which proves that many in most congregations are not able; namely the prevalence of strife and contention among them.*

2. God’s secret purposes are consistent with his revealed declarations: let then no sinner vainly endeavour to excuse his sins, or quiet his conscience by an abuse of these doctrines. Though the salvation of the righteous is wholly of the Lord, the damnation of the wicked is wholly of themselves: and if the lustre of

* 1 Cor. iii. 1—4. 2 Peter iii. 16.

these truths dazzles the eyes of some poor distressed souls, some weak believers or enquirers; let them turn their attention to another part of divine truth. Still, still this is true, "Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."*

3. How careful should we be to ascertain the reality of our *conversion*, before we take the comfort of *perseverance*! An error in this matter proves fatal to thousands, who, mistaking some transient emotions and affections for a saving change, buoy up their hopes to the end by abusing these truths, and perish with "a lie in their right hand." And let it be especially observed, that the scriptural way of making our calling and election sure, is, by giving all diligence, not only in the means of grace, but in following after holiness, and abounding in every good work.†

4. The native tendency of these doctrines, (as completely excluding boasting, leading us to ascribe all the glory of contriving, preparing, revealing, and applying salvation wholly to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and thus producing deeper humiliation, and inspiring more lively gratitude, than any other scheme,) forms their chief excellency. Did we entirely and constantly live under their influence, we could

* 'We must receive God's promises in such wise as they be generally set forth in holy Scripture: and in our doings the will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God.' (17th Article.)

† 2 Peter i. 3—11.

never despise others, admire and prefer ourselves, or be angry with such as differed from us. We should “in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves:” we should argue, persuade, and exhort them; because these are the means God hath appointed, and we may hope for his blessing on them. But “as the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;” we certainly should never slander or revile others, or contend with acrimony; or hold up an opponent to derision and contempt, whilst with an air of conscious superiority (as if “we had made ourselves to differ”) we plumed ourselves and our party on pre-eminent *discernment*, if not integrity. These are none of the means God hath appointed, nor can we expect a blessing on them; nor can they do credit to any cause.

Take heed therefore, beloved, that your zeal for the doctrines do not lead you into a spirit and conduct diametrically opposite to that humility, compassion, meekness, and gentleness, which they are calculated to inspire.—If Calvinists dispute with acrimony; pass hard censures, spread slanderous reports about others, judge another man’s servants, and be quarrelsome and implacable; the doctrines they profess are not to blame, nor yet their belief of them. The unholy state of their hearts is the sole cause of the mischief. Yet the truth is disgraced through their misconduct: and one moderate man, who loves and is kind to Christians without respect of party, and differs from his brethren peaceably and charitably, where constrained to differ; and who adorns his profession by a holy life and conversation, will do more even in bringing others cordially and intelligent-

ly to embrace his sentiments, than twenty angry disputants, who humour the pride and the malignant passions of their own party, but disgust and prejudice the minds of all who differ from them:—"Put on, therefore, as the Elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."—Neither let it be inferred from your conduct, that the zeal of Calvinists is chiefly shewn in trying to proselyte others to their tenets; but that they are far less active in seeking the conversion and salvation of sinners, than their brethren whom they call Arminians. If indeed we are true believers, God hath made use of *means* and *instruments* to effect the purposes of his everlasting love towards us: and what is there in our peculiar opinions, that should render us less desirous of being his instruments in communicating the same blessings to others, or less sanguine in our expectations of success while using his appointed means? And what other *stimulus* can we want to excite our most self-denying, perilous, and zealous endeavours to spread his Gospel, than the special distinguishing love of God our Saviour, so freely shewn in delivering us from the wrath to come, and calling us to his eternal glory, by Jesus Christ our Lord?

Finally, my Brethren, if you have attained to a scriptural assurance of your calling and election, give diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: remember from what a dreadful state you are so won-

derfully delivered; how free to you this deliverance; what a price it cost your Redeemer; and what he hath done for you, and prepared for you. While you rejoice in the Lord, rejoice likewise in your tribulations, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, in all your conflicts and temptations: and let “the love of Christ constrain you to live no longer to yourselves, but to him, who died for you, and rose again.” Be ye therefore stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

END OF VOL. II.

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