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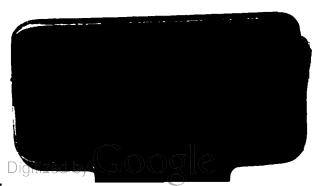
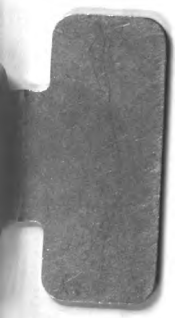
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SERMONS,

AND

PLANS OF SERMONS,

ON MANY OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TEXTS OF

Holy Scripture.

BY THE LATE REV. JOSEPH BENSON.

Την διακονίαν σου πληροφορήσον.—2 Tim. iv. 5.

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SERMONS,

AND

PLANS OF SERMONS.

I.

THE IMAGE OF GOD.

GEN. i. 27.

God created man in his own image.

OF all the subjects that can possibly come under our consideration, next to the great and glorious Author of our being, *man himself* claims the first place, and is to man the most important. And, of all the branches of knowledge attainable by us, during our abode on earth, the knowledge of ourselves, is, at once, the most needful, and the most useful. This, indeed has been allowed in all ages, and, Γνωθὶ σεαυτὸν, *know thyself*, was a precept inculcated by wise men, thousands of years before our evangelical Poet repeated and urged the advice, in lines which, doubtless, many of you remember,

“ Man ! know thyself. All wisdom centres there ;
To none man seems ignoble, but to man ;
Angels that grandeur, men o'erlook, admire.”

But what is that knowledge of ourselves which is of such *utility* and *necessity*, that all wisdom, it seems, centres in it? Is it the knowledge of our *frame* or constitution of body or mind? Does he know himself, who is informed respecting the various materials and parts included in his complex nature, who can dissect, as it were, and anatomize his flesh and spirit, and specify the component parts and powers of each? By no means. However useful such know-

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ledge may be, and whatever important ends may be answered by it, it is not that knowledge of ourselves, which is recommended to us in the Holy Scriptures, and in the writings of wise and pious men. Nor, added thereto, is an acquaintance with our ability, or inability for any particular undertaking, employment, or office, or even the knowledge of our true character, chiefly meant here, but rather, the knowledge of what we were, when we first came out of the hands of our Maker; of what we are *now* in our fallen and degenerate state, and of what we may, and must be made, in order to our happiness here and hereafter. To this species of self-knowledge let me now engage your attention; a species of knowledge all implied in, or to be inferred from the account here given us of man at his first creation, compared with what is now matter of daily experience and observation.

According to Moses, the man of GOD, who beheld the divine glory, and with whom God spake face to face, as a man converseth with his friend; and who, therefore, has delivered to us, not "a lame account of the creation"—as the pride and self-conceit of a modern philosopher has suggested—but a perfectly true and sufficiently clear and full history of that beginning of wonders;—according to Moses, I say, man, at his first creation, was a highly honoured and favoured being. As the work of creation advanced from the less to the more perfect creatures, so man, as being the most perfect of all God's works in this lower world, was made last of all, and not till the whole visible creation, as a sumptuous palace, was completely fitted up, furnished and prepared for his reception. And whereas, in forming the inferior creatures, he only "spake," and "it was done;" "commanded," and "it stood fast;" said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" "Let there be a firmament;" "Let the earth and the waters bring forth," and "it was so;" designing now to form a far nobler creature than any he had yet made, the phraseology is altered, and the Eternal Father, addressing his Eternal Word and Spirit, (for so the ancients understood the passage,) says, "Let us make man." It is true, as a well-known commentator observes, "Man was made the same day that the beasts were, because his body was formed of the same earth with theirs; and, while he is in the body, he inhabits the same earth with them." Yet, as he was to be a creature very different from and superior to any of them; as "flesh and spirit, heaven and earth, were to be put together in him, and he was to be allied to both worlds, therefore God himself not only undertakes to make, but is pleased to express himself as if he called a council to consider of

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the making of him;—"Let us make man." He adds, "In our image, after our likeness;" a distinction not observed with regard to any other creature that was formed, as related by Moses. Surely then this circumstance alone effectually distinguishes man from the brutes, and confutes the low and grovelling doctrine of those infidel philosophers, who, denying a future life, sink us to a level with the beasts that perish, and teach that death destroys and annihilates us, as it does our cattle.

But consider we,

I. IN WHAT RESPECTS GOD CREATED MAN AFTER HIS IMAGE.

Some have supposed that the *Logos*, the *Word* or *Son of God*, who was the immediate Creator of man and all things, according to St. John, (ch. i. 3,) assumed, on this occasion, a visible form, and that man was made, even with respect to his body, after a resemblance of Him. And it seems to me that this is not at all improbable, considering how often he appeared to and conversed with the patriarchs and prophets; and, as is likely, with Adam also in the garden, in a human shape. This, at least, we may assert, that, as the Son of God was to assume our nature, to be made flesh, and to be clothed with a body like ours, and, in due time, was to clothe his people with a glory like his own; so at the first creation, he formed the body of man, according to the plan or delineation of that in which he designed to appear himself in the fulness of time, and, probably, surrounded it with rays of glory. And here I might call your attention to the majesty of man's countenance, to which the face of no creature on earth bears any resemblance, to the height of his stature, and his erect structure, looking up towards the heavens, his country and his home, his origin and his end, while the inferior creatures, by their down-cast looks, and their grovelling form, show the lowness and meanness of their nature and designation.

But it was the soul, "the *great soul*" of man, as one speaks, that was especially formed after God's image, and that in three respects; after his *natural*, *political*, and *moral* image.

After his *NATURAL* image. It is true in some things man could not be made after the natural image of God, as, for instance, in Self-existence, Independence, Eternity, Infinity, Immutability, Supremacy. These are some of God's incommunicable attributes, and in these neither man nor angel can bear any resemblance to Him. But, God is a *Spirit*, and the soul of man is a *spirit*. (1 Cor. ii. 11.) It is a spiritual being as God is, and,

although united to flesh, is nevertheless in *itself*, and with respect to its nature and properties, perfectly remote from, and entirely unlike to every species of matter.—God, the *anima mundi*, “the soul of the world,” as the ancients termed him, is *invisible*. Although he pervades, influences, actuates, and governs the whole universe,

“Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent ;
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect in a *hair*, as *heart* ;
As full, as perfect in vile man that mourns,
As the rapt seraph, that adores and burns ;”

Yet is he not perceived by our bodily eyes or other senses. He is only seen in and by his works. Just so, the spirit of man, the soul of the *lesser world*, as some have termed man’s body, a world which contains all the wonders of the greater, although it inhabits, influences, actuates, and governs all our senses and members, yet is invisible to us, and can only be perceived in and by its operations and effects, as it looks through our eyes, speaks by our tongues, acts by our hands, and uses our various members as the instruments of its will and pleasure.—God is *intelligent*. This, indeed, may be termed his highest perfection. And the soul of man was formed intelligent, capable of perception, judgment, reasoning, memory.—God is *active*, never unemployed, so to speak. “My Father worketh hitherto,” said Jesus. And such also is our soul ;

“Active, aërial, towering, unconfin’d,
Unfetter’d by her gross companion’s fall ;”

always employed ; for

.....“Without employ,
The soul is on the rack, the rack of rest ;
To souls most adverse ; action all their joy.”

—God is *free* ; although active, necessarily active, yet possessed of perfect liberty, and infinitely free in acting. And, after a resemblance of him, the soul of man was made free ; although necessarily active, yet at perfect liberty to act thus or thus ; to consider, desire, choose, and pursue sin or righteousness, good or evil. “He placed man in the hands of his own counsel,” said the wise man. Once more ;—God is *immortal*, and he created man to be immortal, both in soul and body, and made him to be an image of his own eternity, not indeed of an eternity past, so to speak, but of an eternity to come.

Man was made after GOD'S POLITICAL image. I use the word *political* here for want of a better. I mean, GOD made man his representative here on earth, and gave him dominion over all the inferior creatures. "Have dominion," said the Creator, to this his new-made creature, "over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth," (Gen. i. 26, 28.) The Psalmist speaks of this in beautiful language. "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep, and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." (Ps. viii. 6—8.) As an instance and proof of this dominion which GOD gave him over them, "GOD brought every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, to Adam," (Gen. ii. 19,) "either by the ministry of angels," says Henry, "or, by a special instinct, directing them to come to man as their master, teaching the ox betimes to know *his owner*. Thus," adds he, "GOD gave man livery and seisin of that fair estate he had granted him, and put him in possession of his dominion over the creature; which did now, as it were, do homage to their prince, at his inauguration, and swear fealty and allegiance to him." By thus coming to him they acknowledged him for their lord, and looked up to him for government and protection, as he did to GOD.

But man was especially formed after GOD'S MORAL image; which, according to St. Paul, (Col. iii. 10, Eph. iv. 24,) consists in *knowledge, holiness, righteousness, and happiness* resulting therefrom.

When I speak of *knowledge*, as a leading branch of the moral image of GOD, I mean chiefly that which is *divine*; the knowledge of GOD and his will. It is true, as many have observed, Adam, at his first creation, must have had a high degree of the knowledge of GOD'S works, which is evident from his giving every creature a name, as it came before him, descriptive of its nature, and that, it seems, immediately, by a kind of intuition, without the least trouble of reasoning. The manner in which this is related by the inspired Penman is remarkable; "The LORD GOD brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them," that is, certainly, to prove his knowledge, "and whatsoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof;" words, which evidently signify that every creature was rightly named, and that its name was exactly according to its nature. Now if man was thus acquainted with the nature and properties of the creatures, he could not be ignorant of the wisdom, power, and goodness, or, indeed, of any of the perfections of his CREATOR. If "the invisible things of him," our GOD, "from the creation of the world are clearly seen," even by us, the "eyes of whose understanding are darkened," "being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that we are without ex-

cuse," if we do not know them; how much more must they have been seen and known by Adam in his primeval state of high illumination! And if he was acquainted with the divine attributes, he could not be ignorant of the relations in which GOD stood to himself as his Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Protector, Lawgiver, Governor, and Judge, nor of the duties he owed to him according to those relations. As Adam must know his obligations to, and dependence upon GOD for life, and breath, and all things; as he could not but see that he was entirely in GOD's hands, and at his disposal, and had no member of body, nor faculty of soul, no power nor property of any kind independent of him; so he could not be unacquainted with the dispositions of mind, or the actions of life, which were, in consequence, required of him. He must see that lowliness of mind became him, who had nothing which he had not received; that gratitude was due to the Author of all his blessings; that it was highly reasonable he should confide in him, who of his own free inclination and will, unsolicited, unasked, had already done so much for him; that

" Nature's immortal, immaterial Sun,
Whose all-prolific beam late call'd him forth
From darkness, teeming darkness when he lay
The worms inferior, and in rank beneath
The dust he trod on, high to bear his brow,
To drink the spirit of the golden day,
And triumph in existence, and who knew
No motive but his bliss, and had ordain'd
A rise in blessing."

Surely to this source of his being and blessedness he had reason to say,—

" I trust in thee, and know in whom I trust."

And did he not discern also, what reason he had to love him, a Being whom he saw to be infinitely amiable in himself, and infinitely kind to him? And could he be ignorant that the will of this his kind, and wise, and mighty Maker and Preserver, his Friend and Father, his GOD and all, must be his rule in all things, so that he was under an indispensable obligation to shun whatever he should prohibit, and to do whatever he should enjoin? And, as he well knew the FATHER, and the FATHER's will concerning him, so was he also equally acquainted with the beloved and only-begotten SON of the FATHER, the creating Wisdom and Word, who spake him and every creature into being, and with the DIVINE SPIRIT, which, when the earth was without form and void, and when darkness was upon the face of the deep, moved on the face of the waters; or, as one beautifully expresses it,

" Which, brooding o'er the abyss of formless waters lay,
Call'd into order all that is, and darkness into day."

* * * * *

The next branch of the moral image of GOD is *holiness*—Towards GOD; including a high esteem and veneration for Him, fervent desire after Him, cordial delight in Him, ardent zeal for his glory, humility before Him, acquiescence in and obedience to his will, perfectly, universally, and constantly, with unspeakable hatred to every thing contrary thereto, or to all sin.—Towards *himself*, temperance, chastity, purity, including an entire government of his bodily appetites and all the passions, and a perfect moderation in the use of every outward gratification and enjoyment.

Righteousness is another branch of the moral image of God ; including justice and mercy towards the inferior creatures,—and to those of his own species, love, meekness, gentleness, condescension, truth, honesty, pity, liberality.

The result of all this was *happiness*. Man was made after the image of God's blessedness ; his understanding being capacious, distinct and clear ; his will yielding to the will of God, as clay to the seal ; and of itself inclined and disposed to hear and obey ; his affections, without wandering or distraction, being supremely fixed on the highest object, and finding all their enjoyment in his love and favour ; no perturbation of appetite, or irregularity of passion to discompose him ! a heart upright, a conscience clear, and a head unclouded to entertain him ! uninterrupted health, and untainted innocence to delight him ! a diversified earth, a sweet paradise for him to enjoy ! a glorious universe for him to contemplate ! an everlasting heaven for him to expect ! and, in the mean time, the Author of that paradise, the King of that universe, and the Giver of that glory,—his God, his Creator, his Benefactor,—to see, to converse with, to bless, to glorify, to obey ! Such was the happiness of our first parents !

“ O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint ! ”

But man, being in honour and felicity, did not abide, but degraded himself even below the beasts that perish !

This leads me to show,

II. WHETHER MAN HAS LOST THIS IMAGE OF GOD, IN WHICH HE WAS CREATED ; AND IF SO, HOW FAR ; AND BY WHAT MEANS HE HAS LOST IT.

That man has lost the image of God, in a great measure, is certain. Adam, after his disobedience, gave every proof of having lost it. See Gen. iii. 9, and v. 3, where it is said, he “ begat a son in his own likeness, after his image,” distinguished from “ the likeness of God,” (ver. 1.) The whole Scripture speaks of man as born and growing up in a state of depravity and sin. Hence it is necessary he should be “ born again,” (John iii. 3,) created anew, (Eph. ii. 10, 2 Cor. v. 17, Eph. iv. 24,) and sanctified, (Tit. iii. 4, 5,) which, otherwise, it would not be.

But in what respect has man lost God's image ? He still retains, in some sense, God's natural image. His soul is still a spirit, invisible, intelligent, free, active, immortal ; but it is greatly corrupted and degraded, and these powers and privileges are greatly abused. For, though a *spirit*, it is immersed in flesh and sense ; (Gen. vi. 3 ;) the soul being in subjection to the body, and the senses and appetites of it. Though *invisible*, and conscious of its existence and original excellence, and of the existence and excellence of the invisible God, and the invisible world, it overlooks or neglects them, and is wholly taken up with things

visible and temporal. Though *intelligent*, its understanding is darkened, its apprehension dull, its reasoning vague, its judgment fallacious, its memory treacherous. Though *free*, it abuses its liberty, and prefers bondage to liberty, the world to God, sin to righteousness, death to life, misery to happiness. It is enslaved to the devil, the world, and the flesh. Though *active*, it is become averse and backward to the pursuit of what is good, but prone to, and active to do evil. Though *immortal*, its immortality is become a curse, and it will, unless God prevent, be immortal in misery; while at present, infirmity, affliction, pain, death, and dissolution, have come upon the body.

Man retains some dominion over the creatures, with the fear and dread of him impressed upon them by God (Gen. ix. 2,) and his superior knowledge and art give him a degree of power over them; but he has manifestly lost the dominion which Adam had. The whole creation was "made subject to vanity," and "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

The chief branch, however, of that image of God which man has lost is his moral image, in knowledge, holiness, righteousness, and the happiness consequent thereupon. See Tit. iii. 3. He has lost,—his *knowledge*, of the *works* of God, and especially of man himself, what he was before the fall, is now in his fallen state, and may be hereafter, what he is, whence he came, and whither he is going; of *God*, his nature, and attributes, what he is in himself, and *is*, or is ready to *be*, to his rational and immortal creatures; of *God's* will concerning man, his duty and happiness. (Eph. iv. 18, Rom. iii. 11.)—His *holiness*. Where now is man's esteem and veneration for this greatest and best of beings? his desire after him, and delight in him? his zeal for his glory, resignation to his will, and acquiescence in his disposal? his hatred to sin, his self-government and restriction in the indulgence of his appetites and passions. Alas! he is "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him." (Eph. iv. 18.) His life no longer resembles the life of God; he is no longer conformed to him in holiness.—Nor in *righteousness*;—For his love to his fellow-creatures, and the proper fruit thereof is lost, and he is become the subject of every selfish, vindictive, ungenerous, and hateful temper. "As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God, they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Rom. iii. 10—12.) Consequently, he has lost his—*happiness*. (Rom. iii. 16, 17; Isaiah lvii.

20, 21.) His understanding being dark and bewildered, his will perverse and rebellious, his affections irregular and disordered, his appetites craving and insatiable, his conscience guilty and accusing, his fears alarmed and terrifying, his health declining, infirmity, affliction, and death approaching, and God frowning, all conspire to make him miserable. A hell here, and a hell hereafter.

But when, and how did man lose this image of God? See Gen. iii. 3—6. By unbelief respecting the divine declarations and threatenings. By irregular and inordinate desire, excited by an outward object,—desire of the flesh; the fruit was “good for food:” of the eyes; it was “pleasant to the eyes:” of honour; it was “to be desired to make one wise,” and “as gods.” By yielding to this desire. (Jam. i. 14, 15.) Thus the divine presence and spirit, the source of man’s knowledge, holiness, righteousness, and happiness was withdrawn, and man was divested of the image of God, and saw and felt himself naked.

III. WHETHER MAN MAY, AND MUST RECOVER THIS IMAGE OF GOD? HOW FAR? AND BY WHAT MEANS?

To begin with that branch of it last mentioned, man may certainly recover the moral image of God. (Eph. iv. 20—24, Col. iii. 9, 10, 2 Cor. v. 17.) His ignorance as to spiritual and divine things, his unreasonableness and folly, may be removed, and he may be enlightened with knowledge and wisdom. This is the very design of the coming of CHRIST, of the preaching of the Gospel, and the gift of the Spirit. (Isaiah xlii. 6, 7, Acts xxvi. 18, 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6, Eph. v. 8, 1 Pet. ii. 9.)—His depravity may be removed, and he may be made holy and righteous. This is the end of the gift of CHRIST for his church; (Eph. v. 25, Tit. ii. 14, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 1 John iii. 8;) of the gift of the Spirit, (Eph. v. 9, Gal. v. 22;) of the preaching of the Gospel, and its promises, (Acts xxvi. 18, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14, 2 Pet. i. 4.) Thus we have power over sin, deliverance from it, are consecrated and conformed to God, and are imitators of him, (Eph. iv. 32, and v. 1,) are wise, true, just, holy, merciful, kind, bountiful, have in us the mind of CHRIST, and walk as he walked; “as he is, so are we in this world.” (1 John iv. 17, iii. 2.)

Thus wherein we had lost the image of God in other respects, it is either restored now, or shall be hereafter. Our soul asserts and manifests its spiritual nature, and shakes off the dominion of flesh and sense. Invisible itself, it attends to and claims kindred

with the invisible God, and invisible world. It is intelligent, so as to understand its true interest, free to choose it, and active in pursuing it. It recovers its liberty, and maintains it. (John viii. 31, 32, 36.) It has so far dominion over the creatures that nothing harms, (Ps. xci. 1, 1 Pet. iii. 13;) and all things work together for good. Some, by strong faith, have walked on water, quenched the violence of fire, stopped the mouths of lions. The immortality of man's soul becomes an everlasting blessing, and his body shall be restored, and made immortal, being conformed to CHRIST's glorious body. (Phil. iii. 21, 1 Cor. xv. 47—50.)

As to the necessity of thus recovering the divine image; Without this we do not learn CHRIST aright; the Gospel and grace of God do not answer their end upon us, nor are we Christians; (Eph. iv. 21;) without this we do not, cannot glorify God, but dishonour him; (Rom. ii. 23—26;) without this, we cannot be happy here, we cannot be admitted into heaven. (Heb. xii. 14, Matt. v. 8, 1 John iii. 3, Rev. vii. 14, xix. 8, Matt. xxii. 11, 2 Cor. v. 3.)

In order to recover this lovely image of God, we must look at it, as Eve looked at the fruit; (2 Cor. iii. 18;) we must long for it, must hunger and thirst after it; (Matt. v. 6;) we must exercise faith in CHRIST, (Acts xxvi. 18,) and in the promises; (2 Pet. i. 4;) and thus approach the tree of life, and pluck, and eat its fruit; we must pray for the Spirit; (Tit. iii. 5, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 27, 2 Cor. iii. 18;) we must read the word, hear, meditate, &c.; (John viii. 31, 32, xvii. 17, 1 Pet. i. 22, 23, James i. 18;) we must use self-denial, and mortification, (Rom. viii. 13, Gal. v. 16,) and watchfulness. (1 Pet. v. 8, Rev. xvi. 15.)

II.

WALKING BEFORE GOD.

GEN. xvii. 1.

I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

THESE words were spoken to Abraham after his leaving his country in obedience to the divine command, (ch. xii;) his giving up his own interest for peace with Lot, (ch. xiii;) his venturing

his life to rescue his kinsman, (ch. xiv ;) his being met and blessed by Melchizedek, and refreshed and strengthened with bread and wine ; his believing the divine promise, and being justified, (ch. xv.) They imply,

I. A DECLARATION,—*I am the Almighty God.*

Whose favour is better than life, yea is the greatest good ; and whose displeasure is worse than death, yea is the greatest evil.

Who is perfectly able to direct thee in all difficulties, to protect thee in all dangers, to comfort thee in all troubles, and to supply all thy wants.

Able to strengthen thee for thy spiritual warfare, for thy duty, and for sufferings.

Able to work, *in* thee and *by* thee, his whole will, and to raise thee to a state of felicity and glory inconceivable and eternal.

All-sufficient.—Whose favour, and image, and communion with whom are an all-sufficient portion, here and hereafter.

II. A COMMAND,—*Walk before me.*

To walk before GOD is,

To remember that we are *before him*, at all times, in all places, employments, companies, and to think of his omnipresence.

That his eye is upon us, and upon all our ways, our thoughts, desires, tempers, words and works, motives and ends.

That he is not an unconcerned spectator of our deportment ; but is so holy, as constantly to approve or disapprove, and to abhor or delight in our spirit or conduct.

That he is so just as to determine to punish or reward to all eternity.

That he is so merciful as to forgive, through CHRIST, all that is past, and so gracious as to be even ready to change our nature at the present, and enable us to live to his glory for the future.

It is to have these things in daily recollection, to think, speak, act, &c., under a sense of them.

To have an eye to him in all our walk, as GOD *Almighty* and *All-sufficient*. Is his favour better than life ? Then let us value it, and have an eye to it accordingly. Is he able to direct in difficulties, protect in dangers, comfort in troubles, and supply our wants ? Then let us look to him for direction, protection, comfort, and a supply of our wants. Is he able to strengthen us for our spiritual warfare, duty, and sufferings ? Then we must

look to him to do this for us. Is he able to work in us and by us his whole will, and to raise us to felicity and glory? Then let us look to him for this. Is his favour and image, and communion with him, an all-sufficient portion here and hereafter? Then let us view him as our chief good, and live constantly, in all our conduct, under a sense of this.

III. A FURTHER COMMAND, OR PROMISE,—*Be thou perfect, or thou shalt be perfect.*

As a *command*, it imports, thou shalt be *upright* and *sincere*, in all the particulars above-mentioned.

As a *promise*,—thou shalt be *perfect*, as thy state and nature can bear.

Negatively not in *knowledge*, so as to be free from ignorance, error, mistake; or in *holiness*, so as to have no infirmity, failing, or defect; or in *happiness*, so as to have no adversity, reproach, pain, affliction, &c., or so as not to feel such things as evils.

But, *positively*, perfect in a *knowledge* of the great and most important truths of the Gospel as far as they are revealed, (Heb. vi. 1, Eph. iv. 14.)—In *holiness*, so as both to have power over sin, and deliverance from all those tempers, words, and works, that are known to be evil; and also to have faith, hope, love, humility, and all other graces, in lively and vigorous exercise.—In *happiness*, so as to receive all trials, &c., in faith, hope, patience, and resignation, and to find God a sufficient portion.

The readiest way to this perfection is to walk before God, as above described. We shall then see light in his light, and gain a knowledge, which shall “shine clearer to the perfect day.” While steadily contemplating the holiness of God, as revealed by his Spirit, we shall not only adore, but abase ourselves before him, (Job xlii. 6,) and see our need of conformity to him. Also, while regarding his mercy and faithfulness, we shall obtain encouragement to trust in him, and, by faith in his promises, we are actually made partakers of his holiness. In short, while we walk before him, as the all-sufficient God, we shall be blessed with the fulness of his grace and goodness.

It is promised in this way. Only let us *walk* before God, and he will make us perfect.

III.

FAMILY RELIGION.

GEN. xviii. 19.

I know him, that 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 the context we have a lively picture of the hospitality, simplicity, benevolence, and liberality of the ancient patriarchs, (ver. 1.) This appearance of God to Abraham seems to have had in it more of freedom and familiarity, and less of grandeur and majesty, than those of which we have hitherto read, and, therefore, more resembled that great visit, which, in the fulness of time, the Son of God was to make to the world. He "sat in the tent door in the heat of the day," not so much to repose himself, as to seek an opportunity of doing good, by giving entertainment to strangers. (Heb. xiii. 2.) And when there were no inns where travellers could refresh themselves, it was necessary for hospitable persons to invite such at noon, or at eventide, into their houses, or tents, (ver. 2.) "And lo, three men stood by him;" three spiritual, heavenly beings, now assuming human shapes that they might be visible to Abraham, and conversant with him. Some think they were all three created angels; others, which is more probable, that one of them was the Son of God. "And he rose to meet them, and bowed himself toward the ground." Religion does not destroy, but improve good manners, and teaches us to "honour all men." (ver. 9.) "And they said, where is Sarah, thy wife?" By naming her, they gave intimation to Abraham, that, though they seemed strangers, they well knew him and his family, and were concerned for their welfare; and by speaking of Sarah, she overhearing it, they drew her to listen to what was further to be said. (ver. 10.) "I will return unto," or *visit* "thee, according to the time of life," (or, nine months hence,) and in fulfilment of my promise, "and Sarah, thy wife, shall have a son." (ver. 12.) "Therefore Sarah laughed within herself." It was not a laughter of faith like Abraham's, (ch. xvii. 17;) but of doubting and distrust. The great objection, which Sarah could not get over, was her advanced age, and that of her husband;

which, in the course of nature, rendered them incapable of having children, especially as Sarah had been hitherto barren. "And JEHOVAH said, Wherefore did Sarah laugh? Is any thing too hard for the LORD?" By showing that he knew what Sarah did secretly in another apartment of the tent, he manifested that he could accomplish his word, however contrary to the ordinary course of nature. "And JEHOVAH said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (ver. 17.) God often, in his counsels, expresses himself, after the manner of men, with deliberation. "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him." Those that by faith live a life of communion with God, cannot but know more of his mind than other people. They have a better insight into what is present, and a better foresight of what is to come. But a reason is assigned why God would make known to Abraham his purpose concerning Sodom. He knew and approved his piety and integrity, and was assured he would employ his authority, as a father and a master, for the promotion of religion and justice, and would communicate the knowledge he acquired, for the benefit of those under his charge.

Let us consider,

I. THE LIGHT IN WHICH ABRAHAM APPEARS IN THIS PASSAGE; AND HOW HE WAS QUALIFIED FOR THE DUTY HERE ASCRIBED TO HIM.

He appears,—A man of KNOWLEDGE; not, perhaps, in the jargon of language, the refinements of sciences, the niceties of history, or the subtilities of speculation; but in matters of the greatest moment to his own present and everlasting salvation, and that of others, namely, in religion and morality, here termed the "way of the LORD," "justice and judgment." — — —

A man of PIETY. He not only understood the way of the LORD; but he loved, experienced, and practised it. Hence his concern and endeavour to impress it upon others. Without personal religion in the heads of families, we cannot expect they will sincerely and perseveringly endeavour to promote it in their children or servants. — — —

A man of VIRTUE. Justice and judgment were as dear to him, and as much practised by him, as the "way of the LORD." He did not make doing his duty to God, a reason for neglecting his duty to his neighbour; nor, what God had joined together did he put asunder. — — —

A man of AUTHORITY. "He will command his children and

his household after him." Observe the respect and obedience he enforced, and his great influence over his family.

This was owing to his *station*. GOD had made him their head, and they had been taught to acknowledge and revere the appointment of GOD.

His *knowledge* and *wisdom*. — — —

His *known* and *approved piety*. They knew GOD was on his side, and that if they opposed him, GOD would resent it.

His *consistent virtue*. — — —

A man of **FIDELITY**. Whatever knowledge, piety, virtue, or authority he had, he faithfully employed for *his* glory, who entrusted him with them, and to the end intended,—the good of others, and especially of his own family.

A man of **DILIGENCE**. He appears evidently to have been laborious in this duty.

II. THE NATURE OF THIS DUTY ; OR HIS ENDEAVOURS FOR THE GOOD OF HIS FAMILY.

He not only prayed *with* and *before* his family, but interceded for them as a **PRIEST**. This the ancient patriarchs and holy men of old did. They were priests in their own houses. (Job i. 5.) So should every master of a Christian family be. Indeed every private Christian is a priest unto GOD. (Enlarge respecting praying with and for every member of our family.)

He was a **PROPHET** in his family. He instructed them ; not in matters of mere speculation, nor doubtful disputation,—this were foolish and unprofitable,—but in matters of experimental and practical religion and virtue.

He taught them the "way of the LORD," i. e. GOD's way towards them, as a Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and their way towards GOD, or piety, and godliness ; the true knowledge, fear, love of GOD, obedience to his commands, patience under his dispensations, contentment in all estates, the time being short, deadness to the world and sin, and devotedness to GOD ; and, in order to all this, repentance towards GOD, and faith in CHRIST. (Here show how the being and attributes of GOD may be demonstrated even to children from the works of creation, &c., the truth of the Scriptures also, and of Christianity, &c.)

He taught them *virtue*, "to do justice and judgment,"—truth, justice, mercy, charity, flowing from the love of our neighbour, and the love of GOD. Children should be taught to consider all men as allied to each other, being creatures of one Creator, made of one blood, partaking of one nature, mortal, immortal, bought by the Redeemer, &c. Also, children should be early accustomed to sincerity, veracity, strict honesty, plain dealing, pity to those in distress, a forgiving spirit, a readiness to relieve those in want. In order to this, as well as to the health of their own bodies, and the peace of their own minds, they should be taught temperance, chastity, self-denial, &c. — — —

Abraham taught his family, lastly, not barely to know these things, but to do them.

Now upon whom must this be inculcated?—Upon *children*. (Deut. iv. 9.) If our children be the LORD's, they must be educated for him. If they wear his livery, and be called by his name, they must do his work. What hypocrisy is it to dedicate our children to GOD in baptism, and promise they shall "renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that they shall not follow, nor be led by them," and afterwards to take no care that they may fulfil it!—Upon *servants*. Abraham had born in his house, 318 servants, (Gen. xiv. 14,) *trained*, or, as the Hebrew word means, *catechized*. Our servants are entrusted to our care, and should be taught and directed by us, while in our family.

But how must our children and servants be instructed? (Deut. vi. 6, &c.) By conversation, advice, exhortation, reading, hearing, catechizing, &c., and especially teaching them to "know the Scriptures." (2 Tim. iii. 15.) Further,

He was a KING in his house, and used authority. He not only recommended these things, and advised, and set before them the advantages on the one hand, and the miseries on the other, of the conduct which they might pursue, but he solemnly enjoined and insisted on these things, on pain of incurring his displeasure, as well as that of GOD. He not only used *doctrine*, *νῆστια*, but *discipline*, *παιδεία*. (Eph. vi. 4.) He not only informed the understanding of his children and domestics, as it might gradually open, by doctrine, and reminded and admonished them, but he persuaded, turned, and subdued the will to GOD and man, as far as possible, by discipline, rewards, punishments, or corrections, especially with regard to his children.

III. HOW PLEASING IT WAS TO GOD, AND THE BLESSED CONSEQUENCES THEREOF TO ABRAHAM AND HIS FAMILY.

Observe—The reason why GOD would hide nothing from Abraham. "For I know him," &c. Abraham was communicative of his knowledge, and improved it to the good of those under his care, and therefore GOD resolved to make communications to him.

The way to the accomplishment of GOD's promises; "That the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

Family blessings arise from family religion;—Temperance, frugality, industry, discretion.

Peace, quietness, love, harmony.

The favour, protection, care of GOD, his direction and aid.

All necessities. (Psalm xxxvii. 25, Matt. vi. 33.)

Prosperity, as far as will be for good for us and our families.

Our prayers are heard.

Afflictions are sanctified to us, and we are supported under them.

We make a comfortable progress together in the ways of GOD, and receive many spiritual blessings.

We shall meet in his presence and kingdom hereafter, and spend an eternity together.

The sad reverse when this course is not taken.

Hence arise family curses—Intemperance, prodigality, idleness, imprudence.

Strife, contention, hatred, disturbance.

The displeasure of GOD, &c., and his curse on all we do.

Not even necessities, perhaps, but beggary and want.

Nothing prospers.

Our prayers are rejected.

We are abandoned of GOD in our afflictions, and hardened by them.

We go forward miserably in the ways of the Devil.

We shall meet at the left hand of the Judge in the great day, and in hell, amidst everlasting strife and misery.

IV.

JACOB'S VOW.

GEN. xxviii. 20, 21.

If GOD will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my GOD.

THE chapter from which these words are taken, contains an account of the journey of the patriarch Jacob from Beer-sheba to Padan-aram, to escape the effects of his brother Esau's rage, whom he had defrauded of the blessing; in the course of which journey, overcome with fatigue, and no hospitable dwelling being at hand, he laid down to rest in a certain place, taking "the stones for his pillows," and having the heavens for his covering; but he was comfortable in the persuasion of the divine protection, implied in the blessing, which he inherited from Abraham, and the assurance his GOD could make him to dwell in safety. Here, in a

dream, he was favoured with a vision of "the ladder set upon the earth, the top of which reached to heaven," representing the providence of God over his people, carried on by the ministry of angels, but vouchsafed only through the mediation of CHRIST ; for he is the true ladder, who, by his humiliation and exaltation, has alone opened a gracious communication between heaven and earth, (Col. i. 20.) Moreover the LORD appeared standing above it, and ratified to him, in the fullest manner, the blessings promised in his covenant with Abraham, promising likewise to attend and preserve him, "in all places where he was going, and to bring him back to that land." Jacob, having met with these unexpected manifestations of God, was filled with holy fear and reverence, and having set up the stone on which he had laid his head, for "a pillar," or memorial of God's favour to him, and "poured oil on the top of it," as an earnest of his intention to build an altar there, when he should have the means of doing it,—calling the name of the place *Beth-el*, or the house of God, he bound himself by the vow, contained in the text, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace ; then shall the LORD be my God."

In considering this vow, we shall notice,

I. WHAT JACOB DESIRED OF GOD IN REFERENCE TO THIS WORLD.

He desired—The comfortable presence and favour of God. "If God will be with me." When the ancients would express all that seemed beneficial in life, they used this phrase. (Gen. xxxix. 2, 3, 21 ; 1 Sam. xviii. 14, 28 ; 2 Sam. v. 10.) The wisdom, courage, and success of David is resolved into this,—“The Lord was with him.”

This administers solid, satisfying comfort to the soul. (Psalm iv. 6, 7, xxxvi. 7—9, and lxiii. 1, John iv. 14.)

Where this is wanting nothing else can fully satisfy ; not riches, honour, health, &c. (Jer. ii. 13.)

This can satisfy when all other things are wanting ; in disgrace, in poverty, in bonds, in bodily affliction, in torture, in death ; both by the present enjoyment and comfort which the soul hereby receives, and also by the hope and assurance this gives of endless happiness.

“What have I lost of excellent or fair,
Or kind or good, that thou can'st not repair ?”

What have I lost of truth or amity,
But what deriv'd its gentle source from thee?
At one kind look, one sparkling glance of thine,
Created pride must languish and decline."

This is the all in all. (Col. iii. 2-4, 11, Phil. i. 21.)

—The guidance of the divine counsel and the protection of the divine Providence. "And will keep me in this way that I go."

This is a most sure direction, and safe defence.

The righteous shall not err in any thing of importance, either as to this life, or the next; either as to truth or duty.

They shall be safe. (Prov. xviii. 10, Psalm xxvii. 1-6, and xxxii. 7.)

If all other counsel and protection be wanting, this will be a compensation. (Rom. viii. 31, 1 Pet. iii. 12, 13, Heb. xiii. 5, 6.)

All other refuges and defences are weak without this. (Psalm cxiv.)

This is promised. (Prov. iii. 5, 6, Psalm xci.)

Therefore,—That he would supply him, not with delicacies and luxuries, but with necessaries; "And will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on." This is the wise request of Agur, (Prov. xxx. 8.) This, the LORD's prayer teaches us to be content with; and the Apostle's rule, (1 Tim. vi. 8.)

Whatever we possess, we have from the free allowance, and mere goodness of GOD; he owes us nothing.

Our measure is determined for us, not only by him who is the absolute LORD of his own bounty, but by him who is the wise dispenser of his own benefits, and knows, far better than we do, what portion is fittest for us.

We are but stewards of external blessings, and must account for the use we make of them; and, if we have more than enough, our account will be more difficult.

Nature is content with little; *natura paucis contenta*. Whatever is more than enough is, in truth, vain, useless, and unprofitable, and even an incumbrance.

A state of mediocrity is more safe and free from care, than any other state. Jacob with his staff was more happy than Jacob with his flocks.

We are more safe in reference to others; less exposed to envy, &c.

All worldly matters are subject to many and great changes. (Psalm lxxiii. 3, 18-20, ciii. 15, 16, xxxvii. 1, 2.)

This should be the rule and the measure of every good man in reference to this life, till he "come to his Father's house in peace;" that house wherein there are "many mansions," which the great Father, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," hath provided for them that love him.

In this house, our mansion will be according to our works; our holiness, usefulness, suffering. There we shall be at home; now we are pilgrims in a foreign land. There we shall find rest and all felicity; here we must look for labour and suffering. This, therefore, is the mark we should continually keep in view.

II. WHAT JACOB PROMISES TO GOD,—*Then shall the LORD be my God.*

One, to whom we must ascribe all we are, and all we have.

One, whom we must trust in, love, and obey.

To whom we must dedicate all our powers of soul and body, and whom we must serve with them all.

On whom we must wholly depend, for the supply of all our wants.

In whom we must seek and find our happiness, here, and hereafter.

From whom we must expect our final condition, and reward.

APPLICATION.

Let me inquire, are there not many of you who are very differently disposed from Jacob?

You have not GOD with you, his favour and presence, and care not that he is absent. You do not value his guidance and protection, but lean to your own understanding, and trust in an arm of flesh. You are not content to be provided only with food and raiment. You are content to stay here for ever, and think not about your Father's house.

Those of you who can adopt the desires of the Patriarch, and bound your wishes by the same measures, shall have, and must take, the LORD for your GOD.

V.

MAN'S LIFE ON EARTH A PILGRIMAGE.

GEN. xlvii. 9.

The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.

PERHAPS there are no parts of Holy Writ in which we find ourselves more interested, than in those that respect the ancient

Patriarchs. They were venerable men; men of extraordinary wisdom and grace, and who obtained great influence and respect, in the age in which they lived. Their story also is wonderful, and most admirably told by Moses. It is all instructive, and some parts are remarkably affecting; particularly those which relate to Jacob and his son Joseph, who are the principal subjects of that part of the history, from which I take my text. We find these venerable men, on this occasion, standing before Pharaoh, one of the greatest kings then upon the earth; and the conversation that passed between them is highly instructive and interesting, although according to the simplicity of that early age of the world. (Read, and explain from the beginning of the chapter.)

We learn,

I. THAT THE LIFE OF MAN UPON EARTH IS A PILGRIMAGE.

Thus it is termed by Jacob here, and also by others of the ancient worthies. (1 Chron. xxix. 15, Psal. xxxix. 12, cxix. 19, Heb. xi. 13.) Consider the reason of this. A man is properly termed a pilgrim or sojourner, who is not in his own house, but only in lodgings, or in a tent; not in his own country, but in a strange land; and not among his own people, but a strange people. This is the case, especially, with the people of God while on earth.

The soul is in the body as in a house not its own; in a hired house, in lodgings, in a tent, a frail and moveable fabric. The body is forfeited and due to death and corruption, and the soul's time of abode in it is very short:—

“ Life's little stage is a small eminence,
Inch-high, the grave above; that home of man,
Where dwells the multitude: we gaze around;
We read their monuments; we sigh, and while
We sigh, we sink; and *are* what we deplor'd;
Lamenting, or lamented, all our lot!”

While on earth, we are not in our own country. This earth is the Lord's, and only lent us; (Lev. xxv. 23;) or, if given at first to Adam and his posterity for a place of habitation, has been forfeited by sin, and is soon taken from us, and we are to be put out of possession. Nay, it is due to the general burning. (2 Pet. iii. 7.)

The people of God here are not among their own people, but among a strange people; not citizens of heaven, but heirs of hell.

Like pilgrims, we brought nothing into the world, possess nothing in it, and can carry nothing out of it.

We are continually upon our journey to the other world, and are passing hastily through this, which is only like an inn upon the road, where we ought but to seek refreshment. And yet,

“This wretched inn, where we scarce stay to bait,
We call our dwelling place;
We call one step a race.”

Like pilgrims, while here we are exposed to many wants, hardships, dangers, and afflictions, and to much contempt and ill usage.

II. THAT MAN'S DAYS IN THIS PILGRIMAGE-STATE ARE FEW AND EVIL.

First, **FEW**—Compared with **GOD'S** eternity, (Psa. xc. 1—12,) —with the life of the ante-diluvians;—*Few* in themselves, a handbreadth, a shadow. (Psal. xxxix. 4, 5, Job xiv. 1, 2.)

..... “By life's passing breath blown up from earth,
Light as the summer's dust, we take in air,
A moment's giddy flight, and fall again;
Join the dull mass, increase the trodden soil,
And sleep till earth herself shall be no more.”

Secondly, **EVIL**—Being uncertain; not to be depended on for one moment. — — — Being vain; (Psalm xxxix. 5, 6;) with respect to the generality, answering no valuable end, for **GOD'S** glory, their own good, or the good of others.—Being sinful; every day, hour, and moment tinctured in the best, were it not for the atonement of **CHRIST**, and in most, deeply died with sin.—And being miserable; through labour and toil, care and fear, disappointments and losses, ingratitude of friends, disobedience of children, and the untoward humours and passions of those around us; and through pain and sickness in ourselves, or those dear to us, corrupt passions, a consciousness of guilt, and foreboding fears of wrath.

III. THE CAUSE OF THIS, AND WHETHER AND HOW FAR THE EVIL ADMITS OF A CURE.

It is not consistent with the wisdom, power, and goodness of **GOD** to have formed man originally in this state.

The fall of man is the cause. (Rom. v. 12.)

..... “Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden———.”

Many make their days fewer than they otherwise would be, through intemperance, and more evil many ways. — — —

But as we fell in the first, we may rise in the second Adam, and obtain deliverance from a great part of this evil. We will instance in the evils above mentioned, beginning with the last.

Does our misery arise from a consciousness of guilt, and fears of future wrath? An interest in CHRIST, and justification, obtained by repentance towards GOD, and faith in him, remove these, and bring peace, and a hope of immortality. Are corrupt passions the causes of our misery? Regeneration and sanctification subdue, give us the mastery over, and even remove these, and free us from the misery they occasion. Are pain and sickness the sources of our misery? A confidence that all things work for our good, because we love GOD, and, as an effect thereof, resignation to the divine will, alleviate these, and support the soul under them. Is the ingratitude of friends, or the disobedience of children, or the ill-usage of any, the causes of our misery? Doing good to our friends or others, out of a principle of love to GOD, and looking for no recompense from man, will put an end to all unassiduousness on that head, and, however men treat us, we shall not be disappointed, nor lose our reward. Are disappointments and losses sources of trouble? The being dead to earthly things will enable us to receive them without much concern or distress. Are cares and fears the causes of our misery? A persuasion that we are the children of GOD, that our heavenly Father will take care of us, and a dependence on him for all we want, will free us from these. Do we complain of labour and toil? Temperance, frugality, and contentment with our lot, will cut off much unnecessary toil and labour, and alleviate what remains. Are the sinfulness, vanity, and uncertainty of our days, evils? True religion will, in a great degree, remedy these. By possessing it, we shall be holy, useful, and secure of living till our work is done, and as long as will be for our good. Are we unhappy because our days are few, and our life a pilgrimage? Although we have here no continuing city, yet we seek and shall find one to come, where our days will be everlasting.

INFERENCES.

Is this a pilgrimage state? Then why should we be so much attached to, or affected with any thing here? a country where we are pilgrims?

Are our days few? Then let us make haste, for we have a great work to do.

Are they evil? Then why are we in love with them? Why unwilling to go where days are evil no more?

Has GOD provided a cure? Then, let us take care we do not reject it. — — —

VI.

NOT FOLLOWING A MULTITUDE.

EXOD. xxiii. 2.

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.

THE fatal influence of bad example is acknowledged by all. Some, who deny the original depravity of human nature, attribute all the sin and wickedness in the world to it. This is carrying the matter too far; for, in that case, one might ask, how came there to be any bad example set at first? And why are not people as ready to follow good example, when placed before them, as bad? which daily matter of fact shows they are not. But, certainly, its influence is great, and greater through the corruption of our nature; just as the danger from fire is greater to those who have gunpowder in their houses.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that the disorder of the times calls loudly for admonition on this subject.—The words contain a general rule for our conduct, at all times, and in all cases whatsoever, though they are applied in the context to a particular case.

Consider we,

I. THE PROPER MEANING OF THIS CAUTION.

The Hebrew is only, *to evil*, and may be read, “a multitude of evil persons.”

We are not required to distinguish ourselves from evil-doers in any thing they do as *men*; as in feeding and clothing our bodies, being sensible of the calamities of life, taking care of our families and affairs, &c.

We need not act contrary to the generality in matters political; and may concur with them, in all which tends to the welfare of states and kingdoms. Good Christians will be good subjects.

The text does not forbid our falling in with the sentiments of bad men, on some points of religion.

Nor does it forbid our complying with their prevailing humours and prejudices in lesser things, when this will not interfere with more important matters.

But it forbids our complying with them in any thing sinful, or, that appears so to us; for we owe more to the authority of God, and the dictates of conscience, than to any, or all the men in the world. See the context; and instance in the sins of omission and

commission, most commonly practised. The more common any sin is, the more it is our duty to shun it. — — —

We must observe this direction against all considerations whatever; common fame,—worldly profit,—gratifications of sense and appetite. We must not regard numbers on the other side,—the wealth and high station of offenders,—relations, friends, or intimate acquaintance,—evil counsel, (Prov. i. 10,)—nor example, which is an abiding and unwearied kind of solicitation, and has great power.

Let us,

II. ENFORCE THE OBSERVATION OF THIS ADVICE BY SOME ARGUMENTS.

The sins of others will not excuse ours.

The law of God, and not custom, is our rule, and by that we shall be judged at the last day. We are warned not to "follow a multitude," and it will be a poor excuse to say, we did not regard the warning. If we *sin* with others, we must *suffer* with others.

That a multitude participate with us in torment, will not lessen our sense of it.

To have companions in poverty, disgrace, and such comparative evils, greatly lessens the affliction; but it is otherwise in positive evils, such as in strong pain. To see the torments of others, and hear their shrieks and groans, will add to our misery. And then, one will upbraid and curse another.

Set the example of persons eminent for singular piety, against those of a contrary stamp.

As Enoch, Noah, Lot, Joshua, Elijah, Daniel, the Angel in Milton,—

..... "The Seraph Abdiel, faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only he;
Among innumerable false unmov'd,
Unshaken, unsecul'd, unterrified,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
Though single———."

Learn from a heathen the importance of persevering in well doing:—One day when the people were coming out of the theatre, Diogenes was going in, making his way with difficulty against the crowd. Being asked, why he did so? he replied, "I endeavour to do this through my whole life;" *i. e.* to be singular, to act differently from the generality.

Think of the honour and happiness of such in this life.

Observe how the persons mentioned in the preceding instances have been honoured, while the memory of their wicked persecutors has perished. All wise and good men are sure to honour them; nay, and the wicked themselves

secretly approve of them. CHRIST and his Apostles were most singular, most persecuted, and yet most honoured through all succeeding ages.

Such shall be rewarded gloriously in a future state. (Luke xxii. 29.)

“ Servant of God, well done ! well hast thou fought
The better fight, who single hast maintain’d,
Against revolted multitudes, the cause
Of Truth———

And for the testimony’ of Truth hast borne
Universal reproach, far worse to bear
Than violence ; for this was all thy care,
To stand approv’d in sight of God, though worlds
Judg’d thee perverse———.”

INFERENCES.

Hence we may learn one necessary part of the character of a Christian. Like his Master, he is “ separate from sinners.” Such a singularity is truly honourable.

This should engage those, who have followed “ a multitude,” to separate themselves from them. This, it is true, will require self-denial, resolution, and fortitude, and a disregard of the scorn, the sneers, and reproaches of men. But it will be only acting like Lot, in leaving Sodom and escaping to the mountain ; or like Noah, I do not say in building the ark, for we have not the ark to build, which is to save us ; it is already built to our hands,—I mean the church of CHRIST, and CHRIST himself,—but like Noah in his entering into the ark. Let them take the same angel, Abdiel, for their example in this case.

..... “ From amidst them forth he pass’d,
Long way through scorn, which single he sustain’d
Superior, nor of violence fear’d ought.”

The good that might arise from thus separating themselves from the ungodly is incalculable, not only to themselves but to their family, friends, neighbourhood, and companions in sin especially. If it should not be a mean of their thorough conversion, it may, at least, make them less wicked ; may break up their sinful meetings, and disperse them. — —

If it be our duty to be singular, it is a sin to be ashamed of such singularity. The reproof of a gentleman to his friend, watching an opportunity to escape, unobserved, from a place of ill resort, is worth mentioning. “ Come away,” said he, “ from that place ; you need not be ashamed to leave it, but you should have been ashamed to go to it.” “ The just man is laughed to scorn of his neighbour.” (Job xii. 4.) But we must “ scorn the scorners,” as

GOD doth, (Prov. iii. 34,) and like the angel, of whom it is said,

..... "With retorted scorn, his back he turn'd
On those proud towers, to swift destruction doom'd."

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt. x. 28.)

We have need of peculiar help from on high, which shall be imparted. "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid, nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us, than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the **LORD** our **GOD** to help us, and to fight our battles." (2 Chron. xxxii. 7.) "My grace," says **JESUS**, "is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. xii. 9.)

That we may be ever decided in religion, and secured in future against the sin of "following a multitude to do evil," we must get our sinful nature changed; the tree made good, that the fruit may be good. — — —

We must unite ourselves and associate with the "wise," that we may be "wise." (Prov. xiii. 20.) — — —

VII.

THE SCRIPTURES TO BE LAID TO HEART AND DILIGENTLY TAUGHT.

DEUT. vi. 6—9.

These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou best down, and when thou risest up. And thou shall bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

Such was the doctrine of Moses the *man of God*, and great lawgiver of the tribes of Jacob, while that people were still in the wilderness. And such was the doctrine of their wisest and best

kings after they were settled in Canaan. David's description of a blessed man is, that "his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (Psalm i. 2.) And with respect to his children, his language is, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD." (Psalm xxxiv. 11.) Solomon had the same views with his father David, (Prov. vii. 1;) he exhorts, "My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart." And, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. xxii. 6.) Such also was the doctrine of their greatest prophets; "My words which I have put in thy mouth," says Isaiah, "shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever." (Isai. lix. 21.) Nor was such doctrine as this only suited for, and delivered to the Jewish Church. It is the doctrine of the Apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR to the Christian Church. "Let the word of Christ," says St. Paul, "dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." (Col. iii. 16.) "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD." (Eph. vi. 4.) And, what said the "Word made flesh," the wisdom of God incarnate, on these two points? "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life;" (John v. 39;) and "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xix. 14.) Nay, the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST himself, spoke thus from heaven, to that great general and saviour of Israel, who was commissioned to lead the LORD's host over Jordan into Canaan,—a remarkable type of our Joshua, who conducts the ransomed of the LORD into the heavenly Canaan, and is "the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him,"—"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." (Josh. i. 8.) And of the FATHER of the faithful he testified, "I know him, that 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." (Gen. xviii. 19.) So that it appears, that this is no trivial doc-

trine, and that Moses was not singular in inculcating it. It has been the doctrine of the Church of God in all ages, and under every dispensation of divine grace,—Patriarchal, Mosaic, Prophetic, and Christian. But, what is this doctrine? It is here set in a clear point of view. “These words &c.” Observe,

I. THE WORDS CONCERNING WHICH THE COMMAND IS GIVEN; THEIR NATURE AND IMPORTANCE.

The term *words*, frequently, both in the Old and New Testaments, means *things* or subjects, about which words are spoken. “I will do this thing,” λογος, Septuagint. (Exod. xxxiii. 17.) “How sweet are thy words unto my taste.” (Psalm cxix. 103.) “Thou hast the words of eternal life.” (John vi. 68.) “That these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.” (Acts xiii. 42.)

Moses here means the whole divine revelation made to them, including—The history of past facts and events; of the prophecies, promises, threatenings, &c., contained in the book of Genesis, and former part of Exodus. These were the foundation of the whole Mosaic dispensation.—The *Moral* law, grounded on God’s redeeming and entering into covenant with the children of Israel; “I am the LORD thy GOD, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” (Exod. xx. 2.) It contains the sum of our duty to GOD and our neighbour.—The *Ceremonial* law, respecting the priesthood, expiations, purifications, &c.; emblematical of the priesthood of CHRIST, his atonement and intercession, the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, and other blessings of Christianity.—The *Political* law; for they were under a theocracy, and GOD was their King. This was emblematical of the kingdom of Christ, termed in the New Testament the “kingdom of God,” and the “kingdom of heaven.”

To the Jewish people, in after ages, “these words” refer to that dispensation as further explained, unfolded, and enforced by the prophets.—To us, under the New Testament dispensation, they include the more clear, full, and perfect revelation made by CHRIST and his Apostles, which we are still more bound to have in our hearts than the Israelites were to have that of Moses and the Prophets.—We need not wonder at the injunction concerning these words, or things revealed, or concerning the Scriptures in general, if we consider,

Their supernatural origin. They were “given by inspiration of GOD,” (2Tim. iii. 16.) “Holy men of GOD spake as they were moved by the Holy

Ghost." (2 Pet. i. 21.) This also appears from the majesty of their style; the truth, purity, simplicity, sublimity, and authority of their doctrines; the harmony of their parts; and the accomplishment of their prophecies.—The extraordinary manner in which GOD has sanctioned them; in the signs and wonders, performed by those who spoke or wrote the things declared in them.—The evident excellency, and useful tendency of their contents, "to make us wise unto salvation." For they are profitable, *for doctrine*. All the great and important truths of religion, necessary to be known in order to salvation, are there taught, and that more clearly and fully than elsewhere; and with an authority and influence to be found in no other writings. — There, then, we have doctrinal knowledge. *For reproof, or conviction*, as *ελεγχος* rather signifies; and that not only of error in judgment, but of sin in practice, and of condemnation and wrath due to us on account of sin; as also of the depravity of our nature; of our weakness and inability to save ourselves, and of righteousness and salvation for us in CHRIST; of danger and misery till we are in CHRIST, and of safety and happiness when in him. They contain the law, "a schoolmaster to bring us unto CHRIST," and they hold the glass of it before the face of our souls. They awaken by their discoveries, convince by their commands, alarm by their threatenings, encourage by their promises. By them, therefore, we have experimental knowledge. *For correction, or amendment*, as *επιτιμιαι* may be properly rendered; showing us clearly what evils in temper, word, or work, must be avoided; what graces and virtues must be possessed and practised; furnishing us, at the same time, with all proper and needful motives to holiness of heart and life,—the love of GOD in CHRIST, fear of punishment, hope of reward, the example of CHRIST, showing us where our strength lies. In the Scriptures, then, we have practical knowledge. *For instruction*, *επιτιμιαι*, or training and building persons up in *righteousness*, in all truth, and grace, and holiness, that they may continue, persevere, and grow from babes to young men, and to fathers, going on from one degree of piety and virtue to another; and may increase with all the "increase of GOD," till "the man of GOD is perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," having all the knowledge, experimental and practical, necessary for himself, and to enable him to instruct others.

Hence we may consider the provision which GOD has made for our understanding his will by raising up one holy man after another, to explain and enforce it. He himself, by his Spirit, opens the eyes of our "understanding, that we may understand the Scriptures." (Luke xxiv. 45, Eph. i. 17, 18.)—And he evidently blesses them, and gives them power and efficacy on the minds of men.

But "These words which I command thee," &c., seem especially to be intended of the words immediately preceding, (ver. 4, 5,) "Hear, O Israel; THE LORD our GOD is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." In this light the Jews have generally understood Moses; and, accordingly, have reckoned these two verses as the choicest portions of Scripture. They wrote them on their phylacteries, and thought themselves not only obliged in duty to repeat them twice every day, but very happy in being so obliged; having this saying among them, "Blessed

are we who, every morning and evening, say, Hear, O Israel, the LORD our GOD is one LORD!" And no wonder they should so prize this passage; for it contains both the knowledge and love of GOD, which are the two great principles and springs of all religion and morality, of all piety and virtue.

Our God.—The only proper object of worship is JEHOVAH; a Being infinitely and eternally perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, who was, and is, and is to come. This is intended in opposition to all idolatry, whether it be worshipping imaginary beings, or images, or creatures, as the host of heaven, or heroes, &c.—He is one JEHOVAH, one living and true GOD. (1 Tim. ii. 5, John xvii. 3, Mark xii. 32, Gal. iii. 20.) This is spoken in opposition to all polytheism. (1 Cor. viii. 5, 6.)—But it is not opposed to the Christian doctrine of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, as the last quoted Scripture shows, and also, 1 Cor. xii. 4—6, and Eph. iv. 4—6. The text, in the original, signifies this, being literally, *JEHOVAH our Gods*. Compare Gen. i. 26, and iii. 22.—We must know and believe in the FATHER in (John xiv. 9, 10) and through the SON, (Eph. ii. 18, John xiv. 6,) and by the SPIRIT. (Eph. i. 17, 18.)—Hence arise reverence and fear, humility and self-abasement, (Job xl. 4, 5, and xlii. 5, 6, Isai. vi. 5,) confidence, (Psal. ix. 10,) but also and especially love. (1 John iv. 8, 9.)—Thus, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thine heart." (ver. 5.) Consider the NATURE of this love. It implies, that we esteem him highly, even as the greatest and best of beings; that we rejoice there is such a being, and take pleasure in all his perfections, and in the relations in which he stands to us, as our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Redeemer, Lawgiver, and Judge; that our desire be to him for his favour, his image, and communion with him; that we delight and rest in him as our portion; that we be zealous for and devoted to his glory.—As to the PROPERTIES of this love; it must be *sincere* and *internal*, in the heart; not only professed but possessed; not in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth, delighting ourselves with him. It must be a *strong love*; "with ALL the heart;" which must be carried out after him with great ardour, fervency of affection, and resolution of will. We should not do, or say we do any thing else but this, "with all our heart." It must be *superlative* and *predominant* in the heart. We must love this infinitely amiable, perfect, and loving Being, unspeakably above any and every creature whatsoever. Nay, what we love beside should be loved not only in subordination to him, but for his sake. It must not be a blind impulse, but a *rational* and *intelligent* affection, proceeding from knowledge; or "with all the understanding." (Mark xii. 33.) We must know him, and therefore love him, as those that see good reason for loving him. This love should engage and occupy all our faculties. Our understanding should think upon him, contemplate and know him; our conscience witness for him; our memory recollect him, his word and faithfulness, his goodness and power; our will choose him, and intend his glory; our affections follow after, and embrace him, and be united in his love. This is to be done with all our might; our love, obedience, and service is to be rendered to the uttermost of our power.—This is the religion of the Bible. It implies and draws after it, the love of our neighbour, and the whole of our duty to mankind and ourselves.

II. THE COMMAND GIVEN CONCERNING THESE THINGS,—*They*

*

shall be in thine heart; thou shalt teach them, &c.—AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS MAY BE BEST DONE.

They shall be in thine heart.

We must not be indifferent, but deeply impressed with, and concerned about, these things; that is, about Divine Revelation in general, its truth, its importance, its contents; and about that religion set forth in this passage, as above explained, consisting in the knowledge and love of God.

We must see that this is religion, and this alone; and that if we rest short of this, we rest short of religion.—We must be concerned to have proper views of, to experience and to practise this religion.

But how must these things “be in our hearts?”—They must be known, believed, approved, remembered, loved, marked, learned, digested, fed upon.—They must operate upon, and influence the heart; they must enlighten the understanding, rectify the judgment, inform, awaken and direct the conscience, subdue and guide the will; they must win and inflame the affections, regulate the passions, restrain the appetites. They must be in the heart as seed in the earth, as leaven among meal, as a candle or as fire in a room.

Thou shalt teach them diligently, &c.

Here are two errors to be avoided;

The supposing we shall or can teach them successfully to our children, or others, unless they be in our own hearts.—None, *hired* to teach in Sunday-Schools, will teach like those who do it gratis.*— — —

Thinking it is sufficient that we have them in our own hearts, though we do not teach them. — — — This is “faith without works,” which is dead.

Moses thought, says Bishop Patrick, the things of his law to be so very plain and easy, that every father might be able to instruct his sons in it, and every mother her daughters. And, surely, the Gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST is as plain as Moses’s law.

But who are to be instructed? Our *children*; to whom we have been instrumental in communicating not only a visible, corporeal, and mortal nature, but,—what is indeed very strange, and would be incredible, did not matter of fact prove it!—an invisible, spiritual, intelligent and immortal nature. Surely, if we love the LORD God ourselves, and know the importance of loving him, we shall

* This Sermon was preached in behalf of the Sunday-School Society.

do what we can to engage the affections of our children to Him, and so preserve the entail of religion in our families from being cut off. That good thing which is committed to us, we shall carefully transmit to those that come after us, that it may be perpetuated.

But not only the children of our own bodies, say the Jews, are here included, but all that are any way under our care. Abraham “will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment.” (Gen. xviii. 19.) “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Josh. xxiv. 15.) We are to instruct all others also whom we can, especially the children of the poor.

What must we teach them? *These things.*

To know and believe the truth, importance, and contents of Divine Revelation in general; and, in order hereto, we must take care that they can and do read the Scriptures.

The nature and necessity of the religion inculcated in the Scriptures,—the knowledge and love of God, here inculcated by Moses; and how to attain it.

The manner in which this may be best done. “Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.”

The expression here used, in the Hebrew, is remarkable; יָשַׁר ; thou shalt *whet, grind, or sharpen.* Si exacues ea, i. e., accuratè et commodissimè inculcabis. “Thou shalt whet them diligently upon thy children;” repeat them frequently, try to instil them into their minds, or, by *whetting*, aim to sharpen and put an edge on the minds of thy children.

“Thou shalt talk of them.”

With reverence, seriousness, and sweetness; in a spirit of humility, meekness, patience, and affection.—When? “Sitting in thy house;” at work; at meat; at rest; to receive the visits of thy friends; “Walking by the way,” for relaxation, conversation; On journeys; When retiring to “lie down” to rest; and when “rising up.”—The subjects are not unrevealed mysteries, or matters of doubtful disputation, but the plain truths and duties of religion and morality; things belonging to our peace. The more we converse about them, the more shall we esteem and be affected with them.

“Thou shalt bind them for a sign,” &c.—As at that time, there were few written copies of the whole law, and the people had it read to them only at the feast of tabernacles; God seems to have appointed, at least for the present, that some select sentences of the law, which are *weighty and comprehensive*, should literally be written on slips of parchment, to be worn about their wrists, or bound upon their foreheads;—hence the Phylacteries, (Matt. xxiii. 5);—and upon their gates and walls. Hence it was well provided by

our Reformers, when Bibles were scarce, that some select portions of Scripture should be written on the walls and pillars of churches.

This was binding on the Jews even in the letter of it; on us, in the spirit and end. We should, by all means possible, endeavour to make the word of God familiar to us; that we may have it ready on all occasions for restraint from sin, and for our direction and excitement to duty. It must be always before our eyes, (Prov. vii. 2—4;) upon our forehead, to guide our way; upon our hands, to direct our work.—It is here intended, that we must never be ashamed of our religion; nor to own that we are under its government. Let it, as it were, be written on our gates, and let all that go by read that we believe Jehovah to be our God, and that we consider ourselves to be bound to love him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

III. THE OBLIGATIONS WHICH LIE UPON US TO OBEY THAT COMMAND.

Gratitude; for this Book lays us under great, yea infinite obligations. Consider what would have been our condition, had we not had the Bible,—how ignorant, sinful, and miserable! Ought we not then to be thankful for it? But, how are we to be thankful, if we do not acquaint ourselves with its truth, importance, and contents?

The *express command of God*, who gave us the Scriptures, lays us under an indispensable obligation; HE is our Creator, Benefactor, Redeemer, Lawgiver, and Judge. He solemnly enjoins us to have these things in our hearts.

The *example of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and his Apostles, &c.* who all made these things the subjects of their chief study, and discourse from day to day. All will do the same, who are animated by the same spirit; who are not carnally, but spiritually minded. They will “delight in the law of the LORD, and meditate therein day and night.” (Ps. i. 2.)

Compassion for and love to our children,—mortal and immortal beings; to whom, under God, we have given being, and who are committed to our care by Him, the great proprietor and governor of all, who says, “All souls are mine.”

Our *own interest* should influence us; and that for time and for eternity.

For if we have not God's Word in general, and the knowledge and love of God in particular, in our own hearts, we shall be miserable here, and perish everlastingly hereafter. But, if we have these things in our hearts, we shall be happy here and hereafter. (Rom. xv. 4.)—And if we do not inculcate these things on our children and dependants, and those on whom we might inculcate them, and they perish; God will require “their blood,” their souls, at our hands.

VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN CALLED TO REVIEW THE
DEALINGS OF GOD WITH HIM.

DEUT. viii. 2.

Thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no.

THE Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us, that the law was "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things;" — — —

Moses, the Legislator of that law, was a type of CHRIST; the Prophet like to him. — — —

The Priest of that dispensation was a type of CHRIST, the Priest after the order of Melchisedec.—The sacrifices of atonement and expiation, the intercession and benediction, were typical of those of CHRIST.—The washings, purifications, &c., of the Jews were also typical.—

The Jewish Church, also, was typical of the Christian;—The bondage of Egypt, of the bondage of sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh;—The deliverance from Egypt, of our spiritual deliverance;—The passage of Israel through the sea, of our passing through repentance, and being baptized unto CHRIST as they were unto Moses, (1 Cor. x. 1, 2;)—The song of Moses, (Exod. xv.) of the Christian song, when redemption is obtained. (Isai. xii.; Psal. ciii. 1.)—Redeemed Israel, brought to Sinai to receive the law, was emblematical of all pardoned sinners brought into covenant with God, and under the law to Christ.—Their state of sojourning and pilgrimage in the wilderness, exposed to inconveniences, wants, dangers, distresses, hardships, and sufferings, was an emblem of the state of all Christians on earth. — — — The enemies that attacked Israel were a figure of our enemies;—their victories, of our victories;—Jordan represented death, and Canaan heaven.

Various passages of the New Testament countenance this view of things. We not only learn, in general, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope,"

(Rom. xv. 4;) but St. Paul, in 1 Cor. x. 1, mentions some particular instances, in which the ancient Israelites partook of blessings which were typical of the privileges of Christian believers; and also records some of their punishments, as examples to us, of what we are to expect, notwithstanding our profession of Christianity, if we act like them, by desiring evil things, or distrusting the care of CHRIST, and murmuring against his appointments, though afflictive. For all the events in the history of the Jewish Church were recorded for our admonition, who live under the last and most perfect dispensation of the will of GOD. (Heb. iii. 7, 8; iv. 2.)

The words of our text are addressed, primarily, to Israel; "Thou shalt remember;" thou shalt call to mind, and meditate upon the wisdom and goodness of GOD towards thee, and the power exerted on thy behalf; "all the way which the LORD thy GOD led thee;" all the events which befell thee in the way, the miraculous protections, deliverances, provisions, instructions, which GOD gave thee, and withal the severe punishments of thy disobedience; "to know what was in thine heart;" that thou mightest discover thyself, and manifest to others the infidelity, inconstancy, hypocrisy, and perverseness, which lay hid in thine heart, the discovery and manifestation whereof GOD saw would be of peculiar use, both to them and to his church in all succeeding ages. But, the words may be considered as, also, addressed to the true Israel of GOD under every dispensation; to all who are delivered out of spiritual bondage, and brought into covenant with GOD; who are in the wilderness of this world, pilgrims and sojourners, and are travelling to the heavenly Canaan. All such should remember the way, by which GOD has hitherto led, and still leads them, that they may trust in him and cheerfully serve him. Observe,

I. THE WAY IN WHICH WE ARE LED.—"All the way."

This is two-fold.—*The way of Providence.*

Our whole past life, and all the circumstances of it; childhood, youth; mature and declining age; the various scenes of it. This is proper to be done frequently, especially at the close of one year, and at the beginning of another. It is necessary, that we may learn experience from it.—All the events, particularly the chief and leading events of our life, whether prosperous or adverse; the changes we have passed through; as education, apprenticeship, entering on business, engagements in business, marriage; the birth of children, their sickness or death, their health and life, growing up, being educated, their becoming pious or wicked, giving us

comfort or trouble; the death of parents, of husband or wife.—Our protections in danger, threatening our property, character, health, life, body, soul; those of our wife, husband, child or children, and our preservations.—The direction experienced in our difficulties.—Our deliverance out of, or support under, distress and trouble.—The provision afforded for the supply of our wants, spiritual and bodily; shadowed forth by the manna, with which the Israelites were fed, and the water of the rock, which they drank.—The corrections, chastisements of our disobedience.—None of these things come by chance. **GOD** as truly teaches us by his Providence, as by his works of creation, or by his word.

The way of Grace.

Consider when and how you were enlightened in the knowledge of yourself, what you are, whence you came, whither you are going; of **GOD**, his nature, his attributes, his relations to you, and your obligations to him.—When and how you were awakened to a deep concern about eternal things;—convinced of your sinfulness, guilt, depravity, wretchedness, helplessness, alienation from him and enmity with him;—brought to genuine humiliation, contrition, sorrow, and repentance;— —brought to hate and forsake all known sins of omission and commission, and to endeavour in good earnest to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and live in new obedience;—brought to believe, with the heart unto righteousness, on **CHRIST**, as a Mediator and Saviour, and in the mercy and promises of **GOD** through him.—When and how you were justified, and obtained peace with **GOD**, adoption into his family, and were made heirs according to the promise;—were regenerated, and created anew unto good works, so that the tree, being good, naturally and easily brought forth good fruit.—Consider the line of usefulness as well as holiness in which he has led you;—how upon using your grace and gifts they have been improved and increased, and your sphere of usefulness enlarged.

II. THE END FOR WHICH WE ARE LED IN THIS WAY.

“To humble thee.” Consider the vast importance of this in order to our obtaining, retaining, and increasing in grace; (*Matt. v. 3, 4; Isai. lvii. 15; 1 Pet. v. 5, 6; Jam. iv. 6, 10;*) This respects,

The *judgment*; that we, with sincerity, think meanly of ourselves, of our grace, gifts, or any faculties we possess.—The *will*; that it be subjected to, and acquiesce in the will of **GOD**.—The *affections*; that we do not covet, desire, or expect high things.—The *intention*; that we do not aim at them.

“To prove thee ;” *i. e. to try thee.* The Hebrew word is the same with that used Gen. xxii. 1., and is there rendered *tempt.* See also Exod. xvi. 4.

God tries and proves the genuineness of our repentance when he causes, or permits temptations to sin to assault us, and suffers sin to wear a pleasing dress.—Of our faith, when difficulties seem to arise in the way of his making good, and fulfilling his declarations and promises.—Of our trust in him, when dangers, wants, enemies, distresses assault us.—Of our resignation to his will, in reproach and affliction, and in the affliction and death of those we love.—Of our patience, in great and long-continued pain, or in a succession and continuance of troubles and calamities.—Of our contentment with our lot, in poverty and the want of all things.—Of our meekness, gentleness, and forgiving spirit, amidst provocations, affronts, and injuries.—Of our long-suffering, amidst the follies and sins of those round about us.—Of our love to mankind, and to our enemies, amidst the hatred and ill-will of others.—Of our love to God, when the world courts us, and we must of necessity abandon one or the other.—Of our obedience, when hard and difficult duties are enjoined, and we are called to deny ourselves and take up our cross.—Of our hope of everlasting life, that anchor of the soul entering within the veil, when both the wind of temptation and the tide of our corruption are strongly against us, and threaten to bear us into sin and hell, and to prevent our ever gaining the port of bliss.

“To know what was in thine heart.”—God, who searches the heart, and knows what is in man, infallibly knows what is in thine heart ; but thou must know thyself, and discover to others what is in the heart.

The inward evils with which we should be acquainted, are such as the following ; namely, The secret unbelief of God's truth, of his declarations, promises, threatenings, and the infidelity lurking in our heart ;—The love of money, honour, and pleasure ;—The aversion to holiness, and a life of entire devotedness to God ;—The pride and self-will ;—The insincerity and falseness ;—The lukewarmness and sloth ;—The inconstancy and unsteadiness ;—The hypocrisy ;—The perverseness and obstinacy.

And all this is to be known that thou mightest not trust thy heart, but watch over it, deny and mortify the lusts and passions of it, and keep and guard it with all diligence.

“Whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no.”

Whether thou wouldest be brought to love him with all thy heart, as thou art commanded.—To serve him with all thy strength.—To make his will thy rule in all thy actions.—To make his glory thy end, and not thy own honour, or interest, or pleasure.

To bring us to stand thus complete in all the will of God, is what the LORD has in view in all his dispensations. And, this

end cannot be answered, in an intelligent and free creature, without consideration, and remembrance of the instructions, cautions, and warnings, &c., which GOD gives us by his providence and grace, as well as by his word. Therefore observe,

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF "REMEMBERING ALL THE WAY WHICH THE LORD THY GOD HATH LED THEE," &c.

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IX.

ON COVENANTING WITH GOD.

DEUT. xxix. 10—13.

Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water: that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day: that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

THERE are few things in the economy or usages of the Methodists, of the connexion of the late Rev. J. Wesley, which have been more misunderstood, or misrepresented, than our annual custom of meeting together, to renew our covenant with GOD. Not that this custom is enjoined in our Rules of Society, or was in use in the first rise of our institution. It was not till some years after societies had been formed in many parts of the kingdom, that it obtained at all, and then only in London, and but at one chapel. Afterwards it was observed at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and Bristol. That it has of late years been introduced into most of our principal societies is entirely owing to the experience which both ministers and people have had of its utility as a mean of grace, and of the good effects which it has pro-

duced. It has, however, been conceived, by some persons, to be a kind of ignorant and profane contracting, or bargaining with God Almighty ; a kind of engaging, that if he will confer upon us certain blessings, we will perform certain acts of duty and obedience ; and that of ourselves, and in our own strength.

It may not be amiss, therefore, to examine seriously whether it be unscriptural and wrong to enter into, or renew a covenant with God ; and if not, how this may be done, so that good and not harm to ourselves, and all engaged therein, may arise from the transaction. For, no doubt, this, like all other good things, is capable of abuse. I shall endeavour to show,

I. THAT COVENANTING WITH GOD, AND THAT PUBLICLY, IS NOT AN UNPRECEDENTED THING IN THE CHURCH OF GOD, BUT HAS BEEN USUAL IN FORMER AGES.

That covenanting with God is not unprecedented, we find in the annals of God's church from the beginning. The records of God's people before the flood, are few and short. But, as David describes all God's "saints as making a covenant with him by sacrifice," and as we find Abel offering sacrifice, and thereby obtaining witness that he was righteous ; we may safely conclude that he thereby entered into, or renewed, his covenant with God. Immediately after the flood, we find God covenanting with Noah and his seed in a most solemn manner. For, "God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you ;—neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth." (Gen. ix. 8—11.) We read also, (Gen. xvii. 1, 2,) that, "when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared,—and said, I am the Almighty God ; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly."—It was a most solemn covenant into which Jacob entered, when having had an extraordinary and divine dream at a place which he named *Beth-el*, because he found it the "house of God," he "vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace ; then shall the Lord be my God."

If it be objected that these were only instances of private persons covenanting with God in secret, and, therefore, cannot

be pleaded to justify public meetings kept for such a purpose, I will lead you to observe public acts of this kind between God and a whole people. Such was that, when the law was given from Sinai; and such is that described in my text. (See ver. 1, &c.) Such was that made before the death of Joshua, (ch. xxiv. 15.) Such was that in the days of Josiah, (2 Kings xxiii. 2, 3,) when “the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people both small and great; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD. And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD to walk after the LORD, and keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.” And Jeremiah foretold, (ch. i. 4,) “In those days and in that time,—the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping; they shall go and seek the LORD their God;” of which prophecy we read the accomplishment in Ezra, (ch. viii. 21; x. 1—3;) and Nehemiah, (ch. ix. 1—3, 38; x. 29.)

If it be objected, further, that this was under the Old Testament dispensation, and it be asked what this has to do with the Gospel? I answer, that God by Jeremiah speaks of Gospel-days when he says, (Jer. xxxi. 31,) “Behold the days come that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,” &c., (Comp. Heb. viii. 8,) and, in the Epistles to the Galatians and Hebrews, the Gospel is continually represented as a *Covenant* and *Testament*, for the original word means both; and penitent and believing souls are entered into it, and entitled to the blessings of it. But,

II. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THAT COVENANT, INTO WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GOD HAVE ENTERED, AND INTO WHICH WE ARE CALLED TO ENTER WITH HIM, AND HOW DO WE ENTER INTO IT.

It is not a *covenant* of justice, or, as it has been improperly termed, a covenant of works, like that made with innocent man in paradise. Adam had not then sinned, and therefore had no guilt to be pardoned. He was not then depraved, and had not a nature which had need to be renewed. He was not then weak in

himself, but had power sufficient to do all that was required of him. But man being now fallen, and the reverse of all this,—the reverse of innocent Adam in these particulars,—the covenant, whereby he must be saved, must make provision for pardoning, renewing, and enabling him to do the will of God, which, as a covenant of grace, it really does.

It is not a covenant of works now, in the sense in which the Mosaic covenant was such, being clogged with an endless variety of expensive and burdensome ceremonies, termed by St. Paul the “elements of the world,” (Gal. iv. 3,) which were but typical and shadowy representations of Gospel blessings, and had no inherent excellency in themselves. These were adapted to the church of God in those middle ages, when the whole earth was immersed in idolatry; but they did not abrogate the preceding and more simple covenant of grace, which was in force through the patriarchal ages. (Gal. iii. 17—20.)—The Christian covenant is founded “upon better promises.” (Heb. viii. 6.) Its ceremonies are only two, baptism and the LORD’s supper, both most significant. Its conditions or duties are most reasonable, necessary in the nature of things, and easy. Its worship is pure and spiritual, and confined to neither time nor place. Its privileges and blessings are spiritual and eternal.

Now this covenant can only be entered into by a Mediator. (Gal. iii. 19; Heb. vii. 22—28.)—We enter into this covenant, through this Mediator, by profession when we are baptized, and, according to the church of England, promise to “renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all the covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh;” but we only enter into it in reality, when we really, intelligently, and deliberately do these things; that is, when we turn to God in genuine repentance. (Jer. l. 4, 5.)—We enter into it by saving faith in the revealed will of God, in the truths of the Gospel, and in CHRIST, and the promises of the new covenant.—By self-dedication. (Rom. vi. 13; xii. 1.) Thus also by another kind of sacrifice we make a covenant with him. (Psal. l. 14.) To him we must give ourselves; and to him we must join ourselves. (Jer. l. 5; Isai. lvi. 6.)

This covenant is God’s oath. He has drawn up the covenant, and settled it; and he requires our consent to it. He has sworn to us, and to him we must be sworn, which, in fact, we are when we receive the sacrament, a word signifying *an oath*. We must be sincere and serious, humble and reverent in our covenant-

transactions with God, remembering how great a God he is with whom we are covenanting; that he has perfect knowledge of us, and absolute dominion over us. But observe,

III. THE END FOR WHICH WE SHOULD ENTER INTO OR RENEW OUR COVENANT.

“ That he may establish thee for a *people* to himself.”

A *believing* people, receiving in faith all his truths and promises.—A *loving* people, (Deut. xxx. 6, 16, 20,) esteeming, desiring, grateful to, and delighting in him.—An *obedient* people, (Deut. xxx. 20.) “ O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” (Deut. v. 29.)—His loyal subjects.—His faithful servants, serving him in the diligent and faithful use of all the talents he has entrusted us with, in the station of life in which he has placed us.—His dutiful children; confiding in him, casting our care on him, and resigning our wills to him.—His affectionate and constant spouse, giving him our hearts, in preference to all others in the universe.—His true and spiritual worshippers.

In order to be established as such, we should engage to be steady and constant in all these things. — — This end, these solemn covenant-transactions are peculiarly calculated to promote, when entered into and performed suitably, as in the immediate presence of God, before so many witnesses, men and angels, so many joining in prayer for the divine blessing, and that blessing given in a peculiar manner.

Thus JEHOVAH, the self-existent and self-sufficient, will be to us a God; will do in us and for us all that can be expected from a God.—He will fully enlighten our minds by his Spirit of Truth, with the knowledge of the whole truth. He will justify our persons, and give us constant peace with himself, and peace of mind. He will renew our nature, and work in us whatever is well-pleasing in his sight; will sanctify us wholly, and stamp his image completely upon our souls. He will acknowledge us for and treat us as his children, and will guide, and protect, and provide for us as such. He will give us all things needful for body as well as soul. He will constitute us his heirs, and joint heirs with his Son. He will raise us to immortality and glory. Our Lord shows that even this was implied, when God spake to Moses at the bush, and styled himself “ the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” (Luke xx. 37.)

IMPROVEMENT.

Ye, now present, *stand all of you before the LORD your GOD, your captains of your tribes, &c.* As none are too great to come within the bonds of the covenant; so none are too mean to inherit its blessings.

This day; the first Sabbath of the new year, and the (third) day of it. And has GOD spared us amidst the sins and failings, the unfaithfulness of the past year, and brought us hitherto?—How great humility and thankfulness should our sins and mercies beget in us!—How little do we know what trials may await us the ensuing year!—How much do we need GOD's protection and support! — — —

Ye stand before JEHOVAH, your GOD, the omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, whose eye is upon you. — — —

Ye stand here that ye should enter into covenant with JEHOVAH, your GOD, your Creator, from whom you have derived your being, and all your powers of body and mind; your Preserver, Benefactor, Redeemer, Lawgiver, and Judge. Consider the obligations you are under to enter into this covenant, from justice, gratitude, interest, present and eternal. — — —

X.

MAGNITUDE OF THE DIVINE FAVOURS.

DEUT. xxxii. 6.

Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise?

WHAT an eminent saint! what a faithful servant of GOD was the author of this book! What great works did he perform, during the short space of his mortal life! Commissioned and assisted by the Almighty JEHOVAH, he delivered the Israelites from the oppressive power of Egypt, where they had suffered a long and grievous slavery; led them through the very midst of the Red Sea, which divided hither and thither to give them passage, but returned upon and overwhelmed Pharaoh and all his host; and conducted them into a great and terrible wilderness, through

which they were to march to take possession of the land of Canaan, promised to their fathers. During their abode in that wilderness, (for they were sentenced to wander up and down in it for the space of forty years, on account of their sins,) at the command of God, he formed them into a people, instituted amongst them a most excellent method of government, and enjoined them a body of laws, which were "holy, just, and good;" equitable in themselves, and calculated for their good. But what was more than all this, he taught them the true knowledge and fear of the Lord, and exemplified his doctrine in his own person, so that others seeing his good works, might be induced to imitate the same, and glorify the God of their salvation.

Nor did this bright luminary go down in a cloud. He shone more and more refulgent, not merely till the noon, but till the evening of life, and at his setting broke forth with more than meridian splendour. All his greatest actions were performed during the last forty years of his life, and all that are recorded in this book, during the last month thereof. This book, indeed, is rather a history of words than deeds; it rather acquaints us with what Moses taught, than what he did. It is certain, the contents of it were delivered by him to the Israelites within a month of his death, even in the eleventh month of that year, which, together with the thirty days of mourning for his death, completed their forty years peregrination in the wilderness. Thus diligently did this man of God work while it was day, knowing the night of death was at hand when he could not work. Thus did he hasten to finish what his Master had given him to do, for he was faithful to him that appointed him in all his house. Thus did he exhibit to us a living example of the advice, afterwards given by as great a man, and as eminent a saint; "Exhort one another daily, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

In some of the foregoing chapters, we have an account of Moses's farewell address to the people of Israel, who were all assembled to hear his last words. In this discourse he warns them, in a most solemn manner, of the unavoidable miseries which would befall them, by the Providence of God, if they forsook his worship and service; and, at the same time, assures them of every desirable mercy from God's love and faithfulness, if they adhered to him. He sets before them life and death, blessing and cursing, and exhorts them to choose life, that both they and their seed might live. But, that no means might be wanting to do that obstinate and ungrateful people good, at the command of God

Moses writes the song contained in this chapter, in which he celebrates the perfections of Jehovah, rehearses his favours towards Israel, and their ill behaviour in return towards him; foretells the wasting and destroying judgments which God was about to bring upon them for their sins, and closes the whole with a gracious promise of the destruction of their enemies and oppressors at the last, and the glorious deliverance of a remnant of their nation. Of the many powerful strokes of true eloquence, contained in this divine song, the words of our text, taken in their proper connection, are not the least affecting. Speaking of the Israelites, he says, (ver. 5,) "They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children;" or, more literally, according to the Hebrew, "their spot is not in his children;" "they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? Is he not thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?"

In discoursing from these words, I propose to accommodate them, as much as possible, not to the case of the Israelites, for whose benefit they were primarily intended, but to our own case. I shall consider,

I. WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US?

II. HOW WE OUGHT IN REASON, DUTY, AND INTEREST, TO REQUITE HIM.

I. I am to consider what God has done for us.

And what has he not done? Has he not done every thing for us that is done? And what could he have done for us, which he has not done? Surely, we are indebted to him for our being, and our well-being; for all our present comforts, and future hopes. What are we, or what have we, which we have not received from him, and for which we do not depend on him every day, and hour, and moment? All our temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings we owe to God; whatsoever we now enjoy, and whatsoever we hope to enjoy through everlasting ages. The goodness of God is a boundless and unfathomable sea, without either bottom or shore. His favours are so many, so various, and so great, that the line of our finite mind cannot reach their value, nor can our limited capacity recount their number. For multitude, diversity, and splendour, they resemble the stars of heaven, which the more attentively they are viewed, appear the more

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numerous, and, were we not so immensely distant from them, would equally astonish us with their magnitude and order. Look then toward heaven, and see if thou be able to number, to methodize, or measure the stars. As little canst thou recount, set in order, or comprehend the mercies of God. However, to pursue the simile a little further, as some of those luminous bodies attract our attention more than others, either on account of their distinguished situation, their apparent magnitude, or their dazzling brightness, so some of the divine favours are more observable than others, and better deserving our regards. All that I can do then at present, is to select two or three of these, and engage you to consider them.

The first remarkable favour of God towards us, which strikes our observation, is our creation. Our very existence is his gift. Our bodies and souls, with all the powers and faculties belonging to each, came originally from him. There was a time when we could neither see nor hear, speak nor act; when we could not think, reason, nor remember; when, in fact, we had neither bodies nor souls; when we were not. But *He* spoke us into being by the word of his power.

And the same God, who originally gave us our existence and all our powers, hath continued them to us until now; for "in him we live, and move, and have our being." As we could not of ourselves start into life at first, so we cannot subsist in life any future moment without his interposition, power, and superintending Providence. We are not less dependant on him for our preservation, than we were for our creation, and that, not only because he gives us "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our mouths with food and gladness," and hereby supports our animal nature, but because he feeds continually the lamp of life, and keeps it burning, and maintains our various faculties and members in health and vigour, which, otherwise, would soon become useless. "By him," says the Apostle, "all things consist," are supported perpetually, and hang together.

Are not these remarkable stars in the constellation of divine favours? Do they not distinguish themselves by their amazing magnitude and splendid brightness? Do they not enlighten our benighted minds in the knowledge of God's goodness, and warm our frozen hearts with humble and lively gratitude? Surely they do, if we view them attentively, and shun not the influence of their refulgent beams. God called us into being, that we might be happy; he created us, that we might display his infinite perfections, especially his wisdom, power, and love, in raising us up out of nothing, to be possessed of immortal glory and felicity,

such as we cannot now conceive. For the same end hath he preserved us in being until now, though, by sin and wickedness, we have again and again forfeited our existence, together with all our comforts.—Here then appears the value of this gift of divine and unmerited love. In consequence of it, we are made capable (which, had we not been created, we could not have been) of manifesting the boundless glory of the Godhead, in our honour and happiness, through everlasting ages. When we were not, infinite goodness gave us our being, and made every possible provision for our well-being, in time and in eternity; and when we had forfeited this precious gift, and, by the vilest ingratitude and rebellion, deserved, not only to be reduced to our original nothing, but to be punished with endless torment, he mercifully spared and reprieved us; and still, if it is not our own fault, we may be as the angels of God, rich, glorious, and happy beyond expression, beyond thought, for evermore! How amazing is this! What a wonder of omnipotent love! How does the contemplation of its splendour dazzle one's mind, and overwhelm its powers! And is it so?

“ Shall I, who some few years ago was less
Than worm, or mite, or shadow can express,
Was nothing, shall I live, when every fire,
And every star shall languish and expire?
When earth's no more, shall I exist above,
And through the radiant files of angels move? ”—

If I do not counteract the designs of his love, I shall. O then let me acknowledge my Creator's amazing goodness, praise him for his unspeakable gift, and walk worthy of so high a calling, and so glorious a hope!

But, to proceed.—A second still more illustrious and remarkable gift of God towards us, is our redemption from sin and misery, present and eternal, by JESUS CHRIST. The foundation of this divine favour is laid in our abuse of the former. Had we not slighted, or abused God's love, in the fore-mentioned instance, there would have been no room for discovering it in *this*; had we not destroyed ourselves after God had made us, there would have been no occasion for his redeeming us. Hence it appears, that, though his goodness shines with astonishing brightness in our creation, yet, it beams forth with more than redoubled splendour in our redemption. The more sin abounds, so much the more does grace abound. Having violated God's holy law, involved ourselves in its curse, and exposed our defenceless souls

to the wrath of the Lawgiver; having insulted the authority of the King of kings, rebelled against his government, and incensed his inflexible justice, we had been ruined beyond recovery, had not God laid help upon one that was mighty. But He pitied our misery, and provided a remedy. He "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that," notwithstanding our sin and misery, "whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life." For "he sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."—Shout, O heavens! and be joyful, O earth, for the Lord hath done it! He hath visited and redeemed his people, and raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David his servant. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his only begotten Son into the world, that," though dead in our sins, "we might live through him;" yea, made him a sin-offering for us, though he knew no sin, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Join we then the angelic host, and loudly proclaim, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!"

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." He who was "the effulgence of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," who "made and upholds all things by the word of his power," who was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God," even he "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Having assumed our frail and wretched nature into union with his Divinity, he, for our sakes, magnified the law in his life, and suffered its penalty, due to us, in his death. He perfectly answered all the demands which infinite justice had upon us, illustrated the divine holiness, and so made way for the full exercise of his mercy and love towards a rebellious and guilty world. Hence it is that, in consequence of what he has done and suffered, God is no less faithful and just, than loving and gracious, when he pardons our sins, and "cleanses us from all unrighteousness."

Here then, let us stand still, and see this salvation of God! Let us consider the gift itself; the blessing conferred.—Redemption! free, full, eternal redemption! Redemption from sin, and all its dreadfully fatal consequences; from guilt and fear; from

death and hell ; from misery and perdition, present and future, unavoidable and eternal ! Redemption from the world, to which we were enslaved ; from the lusts of the flesh, to which we were wholly subject ; and from Satan himself, who led us captive at his will ! Redemption into life and liberty ; the glorious liberty of the children of God ! liberty of access to God, as his adopted sons and daughters, and to love and serve him in sincerity and truth ! A redemption, which implies perfect holiness, attended with unutterable peace and joy in this world, and bliss and glory, which shall know no period, in the world to come ! O how valuable, or rather invaluable, a gift is this ! Who can sufficiently estimate its worth ! what man upon earth, I will not say, but, what angel in heaven, can comprehend its necessity on the one hand, or its value on the other ! Without it, we had been eternally undone ; with it, we are made happy for ever !

But we must not stop here. Let us proceed to reflect upon the way in which this salvation is conferred, and it will appear doubly important,—a way altogether new and astonishing. That our rebellion against the King of kings might be pardoned, our ruined souls recovered, our forfeited privileges restored, and, at the same time, the honour of the Divine attributes secured, the authority of his law preserved, and the equity of his government demonstrated ; God's eternal Son becomes incarnate ! He relinquishes that glory and felicity he had with the Father before the world began ; he clothes himself with our frail humanity, with its attendant infirmities ; he suffers, bleeds, dies ;—dies the most painful and disgraceful death, which the malice of men and devils could devise, or their power inflict ! Let men and angels, yea, let the whole creation stop, and gaze, and adore this strange mystery !

“ Redemption ! 'twas creation more sublime ;
 Redemption ! 'twas the labour of the skies ;
 Far more than labour,—it was death in heaven.”

Surely this is love indeed ! Love, high as heaven ; for from thence it brought the Son of God down to us, and thither it raises our fallen souls ! Love, deep as hell ; for from thence it stoops to redeem us, and from thence it rescues us ! Love, broad as the world, and long as eternity ; for it comprehends the whole human race, and shall endure through everlasting ages ! Love, immeasurable as infinity, and mysterious as God its author ! Well might the Apostle say, “ God is love,” for this is that attribute, which blazes out with such effulgence, and pours forth such a flood of

light as almost to shade his other perfections, while it overwhelms our weak and finite minds.

“ O how omnipotence is lost in love!
 Father of angels! but the friend of man;
 Thou who didst save him, snatch the smoking brand
 From out the flames, and quench it in thy blood!
 How art thou pleas'd by bounty to distress,
 To make us groan beneath our gratitude,
 To challenge and to distance all return!
 Of lavish love, stupendous heights to soar,
 And leave praise panting in the distant vale.”

Not to dwell too long on this engaging topic, which is indeed inexhaustible, and will afford sufficient, and more than sufficient matter for contemplation and praise, through the ages of eternity, I hasten to call your attention to another divine favour, which shines resplendently in the new heavens, enlightens and cheers us with its kindly influence, and, adding to the lustre of the preceding, renders them more efficacious and useful. The blessing I mean, is the light of the Gospel, whereby we are made acquainted with the fore-mentioned mercies of God, and so engaged thankfully to accept and walk worthy of them.

Had not the Lord “brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel,” had not “the Day-spring from on high visited us to give light to us who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death;” we must have remained in gross ignorance both of ourselves and of God, both of this world and the next, both of sin and the Redeemer, both of our fall and recovery. The almost universal experience of the heathen world is a sad, a very sad demonstration of this truth. Alas! how little the very wisest of them knew concerning the most interesting points; such as related to, and were closely connected with, their present and eternal felicity! Not that God left himself entirely without witness among them. If so, their sin would have been unavoidable. The dim light, reflected from his works of creation and providence, and transfused into their understanding and conscience, by the secret influences of his Spirit, might doubtless, if followed, have conducted them to glory and virtue, and, therefore, renders the condemnation of those who neglected that light, reasonable and just. But still, it must be allowed that our advantages for religious knowledge, are, I had almost said, infinitely superior to theirs. We are now no longer at a loss to know, either ourselves,—whence we came, what we are, and whither we are going? or the Author

of all things,—what he is in himself, and what to his creatures? **God** is revealed to us in all his holiness and justice, wisdom and power, truth and love; and we are plainly and fully informed concerning our lost estate by nature and practice, our redemption by **CHRIST JESUS**, and those offers of pardon, holiness and happiness, made to us through him, which, if we accept in a way of repentance and faith, we shall be eternally and unchangeably happy, but if we reject them, we must be punished with extreme and endless torment. So that we may truly say, “The darkness is indeed past, and the true light now shineth.”

And this light of revelation wherewith the **LORD** has graciously favoured us, not only shines in our Bibles, and illuminates, with the knowledge of **God** and **JESUS CHRIST** whom he hath sent, those who have leisure and ability to peruse the sacred pages; but, blessed be **God**, it beams forth from our pulpits, and darts its bright rays from the examples of many living witnesses of the power of godliness. Yes! **God** has graciously raised up many burning and shining lights, whose instructions and behaviour show us “how we ought to walk, and please **God**.” Nay, further, he has instituted certain outward and visible signs of his inward and spiritual grace, which, while they represent it, are likewise means of its conveyance. Thus, in the sacrament of the **LORD’S** Supper, “**CHRIST JESUS** is evidently set forth as crucified before our eyes,” and the benefits purchased by his death are exhibited to us, and, if we believe, embraced by us; while the washing of water in baptism, is a striking emblem of the purification of our souls from sin, and the renovation of our nature after the image of **God**.

I must not conclude this head without mentioning one more gift of **God**, which adds a double value to all his other gifts, and without which they would have all been unprofitable—the gift of the Holy Spirit; the purchase of our Redeemer’s sufferings, and the fruit of his mediation. “Having ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the **LORD God** might dwell among them,” viz. by the influences of his Spirit. “If I go not away,” said **JESUS** to his disciples, “the Comforter will not come, but if I depart I will send him unto you. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter to abide with you for ever.” And this blessing was not to be confined to the Apostles and primitive Christians, but was to be extended to all nations and ages. For it was promised of old, “that **God** would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh,” which promise, **St. Peter** tells us, was not only to that generation,

and to the nation of the Jews, but to "their children, and to those that were afar off, even as many as the LORD should call." Accordingly, "the true light" of the Spirit enlightens, more or less, "every man that cometh into the world," and that "grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

This Spirit, thus purchased for, and offered to, the whole human race, is called "the Spirit of Truth," "the Holy Spirit," and "the Comforter," because it is his office to enlighten, sanctify, and comfort mankind. The Gospel diffuses around us a glorious light, and scatters the shades of darkness, wherewith we were encompassed in our heathen state. But, alas! we cannot see this light, we still remain in gross ignorance of every necessary truth, because "the eyes of our understanding are blinded," and the veil of unbelief interposes betwixt us and the light. In this condition we continue, till "he, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of CHRIST JESUS." Then, being put in possession of that faith which is of the operation of God, "with unveiled face we behold as in a glass the glory of the LORD, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the LORD." Thus are we convinced of sin, and brought to unfeigned repentance for it; thus are we also convinced of righteousness, and put in possession of it. We are directed and induced to submit to the righteousness of God; or that way of salvation he hath appointed, through faith in the righteousness of CHRIST. We are assured of our justification by the testimony of the Spirit, by whose agency "the love of God is" likewise "shed abroad in our hearts, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Taught of God, we see the evil of sin, and flee from it; the beauty of holiness, and aspire after it. We pay a due respect to, and observe all God's commandments, which we do not find grievous, and "in keeping of which there is great reward;" and hence we rejoice also in the testimony of a good conscience, and possess a "peace of mind that passeth understanding."

How can we doubt whether this is a valuable and necessary gift of God? How could we have done without it? What would all his other gifts have availed us, if he had not given us this? Surely nothing; nay, they would even have involved us in certain and increased misery. For, good had it been for us, that we had never been created, if God had not redeemed us from that sin, and guilt, and bondage into which we had fallen; and equally

good had it been, that we had not been redeemed, if the Holy Spirit had not been given to apply that redemption. In vain had CHRIST lived and died for us, if "the Spirit did not take of the things that are his, and shew them unto us;" in vain would the light of the glorious Gospel shine around us, if the Holy Spirit did not shine within us; and in vain had we been at first created, if, through the operations of the self-same Spirit, we were not *new-created*. I may add also, that "in as much as the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and the things of God knoweth no man, but by the Spirit of God," we cannot so much as understand either the nature or the value of God's gifts, much less can we improve them, without the influences of his Spirit. In every point of view, therefore, the absolute necessity, and incomparable value, of the gift of the Holy Spirit is very apparent; for without it, all the other gifts of God would have been more than lost upon us; whereas with it, they answer their intended end, and become truly and infinitely useful.

And how does this, as well as God's other favours, demonstrate his amazing, his unfathomable love to us! Will the Most High indeed dwell with man? Will Infinite Majesty and Glory condescend to abide with vile worms of the earth? Will the pure and holy God visit our impure and unholy breasts with his sacred inspiration? He will; he does; yea, he has done it from our youth up until now. From our earliest years does the Spirit of God strive with man, and powerfully, though often secretly, and unobserved, enlighten their minds, awaken their consciences, persuade their wills, and attract their desires! Yea, "the light shineth in darkness, even when the darkness comprehendeth it not," when men "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," yea, when they even "hate the light, and will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be re-proved."

The death of CHRIST draws those, who do not yield to its attraction, but, on the contrary, despise and trample it under foot. And the Spirit of grace visits those, who grieve his love, quench his motions, and do despite to his gracious offices. This is mercy, forbearance, and long-suffering indeed! O, how condescending, patient, and kind is the LORD our GOD! How wonderful it is, that he should so long bear with us, notwithstanding our provocations, and defer our punishment; that he should so long strive with us, and wait to do us good, notwithstanding our abuse of his grace, and contempt of his love! How amazing it is that he has not, long before now, resolved his Spirit should no more strive with us, and

“sworn in his wrath we should never enter into his rest!” Let us adore that rich grace, and magnify that infinite mercy, which has not only spared the barren fig-tree until now, though still a cumberer of the ground, but daily and hourly, with tender care and unwearied diligence, attends, manures, and dresses it, that after all it may bear fruit. And at the same time, let us remember that this patience of God towards us, this kindness to us, and the pains he takes with us, are a standing demonstration, not only of his compassion for us, and concern for our salvation, but likewise of our great and urgent necessities, and our extreme and unavoidable misery, if after all we remain unfruitful, and make him no returns for his favours. “If it bear fruit, well; if not, after that thou shalt cut it down.” This leads me to inquire,

II. HOW WE OUGHT IN REASON, DUTY, AND INTEREST, TO REQUITE THE LORD FOR THESE HIS GIFTS?

But, having enlarged so much on the foregoing head, I shall here confine myself to some general INFERENCES, tending to show the influence these favours of God ought to have upon our temper and conduct. Only I must premise, lest any of us should think ourselves unconcerned in this matter, that those gifts of God’s grace which I have mentioned, are more or less conferred upon us all. Nay, I may safely affirm, that we all are, or may be, equally sharers in them. As God, our Creator, has called us all into being, so he has given his Son a ransom for us all; his Gospel has been fully and clearly preached to us all, and his Spirit of grace has visited all our hearts, times without number. And if he has not equally enlightened, sanctified, and comforted all our souls, we must not accuse him of partiality, who is no “respector of persons,” but blame ourselves, who have resisted his divine operations, and obstructed his good work upon our souls, so that we are all equally concerned to inquire what influence these favours of God ought to have upon us, and whether they have it accordingly.

If we ourselves are the creatures of God’s power, and have no faculty of soul, no member of body, no qualification or endowment of any kind, absolutely nothing but what we have received from our Creator originally, and for which we depend on him every day, and hour, and moment; surely it ill becomes us to boast of any thing that we have, as though we received it not, or to value ourselves on account of what is not our own, but only lent us for a little time, and to be re-demanded soon, with usury. Certainly, in this view of things, it appears that pride was never made for

man ; much less, when we add to this the consideration of our departure from God, our defection from moral rectitude and order, and our voluntary immersion into sin, and guilt, and misery. If we have ungratefully abused God's inestimable favours, if we have treacherously rebelled against our rightful Sovereign, who is also our most indulgent Father, and bountiful Benefactor, if we have foolishly and basely preferred the vilest and most abject slavery, that of sin and Satan, to the most honourable and happy service, that of the Parent of all good, and the source of all bliss, which service is indeed perfect freedom ; if, in consequence, we have buried ourselves under mountains of guilt, which we could never remove, and plunged ourselves deep into a lake of torment out of which it was impossible we should ever emerge ; if we have acted thus, contrary to reason, and duty, and interest, if we have thus foolishly and madly destroyed ourselves, if our state and condition is so deplorable, and that owing to our own fault ;—surely it well becomes us to “lay our mouths in the dust,” and, covered with shame and self-abasement, to confess “it is of God's mercy we are not consumed, even because his compassions fail not.” It well becomes us to think meanly of ourselves, and to manifest in the whole of our deportment, the deepest humility and self-abasement of soul ; giving God the whole glory of all the good that exists in us, or is done by us, and taking to ourselves the blame of all that is evil ! All our thoughts, words, and works, should spring from, and express, the utmost lowliness of mind ; and all our inward tempers and outward actions should be clothed with humility. And though God has pitied us in our ruined condition, and so loved us as to give his Son for our redemption ; yet, even on this account, we have no cause to think highly of ourselves, though thus honoured of God, but, on the contrary, to adore the unsearchable riches of Divine grace, which “deals not with us according to our deserts,” which “weighs not our merits but pardons our offences,” and humbly to acknowledge we are less than the least of all his mercies ; saying from the heart, “Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name be the praise !”

This leads me to a second inference, which we may justly make from what has been advanced ; that the many mercies of God have laid an indispensable obligation upon us unfeignedly and gratefully to praise him. Has he given us our being and our well-being ? Has he made and redeemed us ? Did he originally create us after his image in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, and, when we had defaced his likeness, and brought ruin and misery upon our souls, did he send his only begotten, his well beloved

Son, into our wretched world, to assume our nature; and suffer in our stead a most shameful and excruciating death, in order to our recovery to rectitude and bliss? Has he dispelled the shades of ignorance and error, wherewith we were encompassed, by the light of his glorious Gospel, and has he sent us a message of peace and reconciliation by his ministers, whom he has appointed to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation? And, to crown all, has he conferred upon us his Holy Spirit to enlighten, sanctify, and comfort us, to insure our title to, and work in us a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light? Has he done all this for us? And ten thousand times more than we can conceive? Do we owe to him, not only all our comforts, but likewise all our hopes? Then, what returns shall we make him? What shall we render unto the LORD for all the benefits he hath done unto us? Surely we cannot render him less in return for his mercies, than the tribute of our humble and grateful praise. This should ever ascend from the altar of our hearts,

“Praise ardent, cordial, constant, to high heaven.”

Surely we shall join with the holy Apostle, and say, “Thanks be to God for his unspeakable Gift,” and with the royal Psalmist when, with a heart swelling with gratitude, he broke out into a divine rapture, and said, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy name; bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” And again, “I will bless the LORD at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD; the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!”

Considering what he has done, and is still doing for us, we ought continually to praise him, and, as the Apostle says, “in every thing to give thanks;” in sickness as in health, in pain as in ease, in adversity as in prosperity. In all things, at all times, and in all places, we should unfeignedly bless and magnify the God of our life, who is the one source of all our comforts, and the only foundation of all our hopes. Yes! our every breath should be praise; we should

.....“breathe no longer than we breathe
Our soul in praise to Him who gave our soul
And all her infinite of prospect fair;
Cut through the shades of hell, great love, by thee!
When shall that praise begin which ne'er should end?
Where'er I turn what claim on all applause!”

But again ; may we not infer from the preceding observations, that it is no less our duty to trust in God, than it is humbly to praise him ? The many and wonderful things which he hath done for us, the great and inestimable blessings he hath conferred upon us, utterly unworthy and hell-deserving as we are, leave no room at all to doubt either of his goodness or power ; either of his inclination or ability to help and save us. Are we the workmanship of his hands, and objects of his peculiar love and favour ? Has he not only called us into existence, and bestowed upon us a thousand temporal and spiritual mercies ; but has he likewise not spared even his only begotten Son, but freely delivered him up for us all ? “ How then,” as St. Paul infers, “ shall he not with him freely give us all things ? ” What will he, what can he withhold from his friends, who did not withhold the Son of his eternal complacency and delight, even from enemies ? Well may we conclude that he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from us, if we “ walk uprightly.” If we “ seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” if we love God, and are “ followers of that which is good,” every thing needful or useful “ shall be added unto us,” and none,—yea “ nothing shall harm us.” On the contrary, every thing “ shall work for our good,” and our God shall make “ his grace sufficient for us,” and supply abundantly our every want, “ according to the riches of his glory in CHRIST JESUS.” Well then may we “ cast all our care upon him who careth for us,” being “ careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, making our requests known unto GOD ! ” Well may we “ trust in the LORD for ever,” who hath done so much for us, and will still do, for with him there is everlasting love, and everlasting strength. Well does it become us to repose ourselves wholly upon him, to leave all our concerns in his hands, and give them up to his management ! Surely we should in reason and duty confide in this GOD of inexhaustible goodness and boundless power, who hath thus set his love upon us ; for our bodies and souls, for ourselves and our friends, for time and eternity ! We should trust in his mercy to forgive our sins, in his Divine Spirit to purify our hearts, in his faithfulness and truth to provide for us the necessaries and conveniences of this life. For he hath said, and confirmed it by a thousand proofs, “ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Let us then, whatever dangers threaten us, whatever difficulties beset us, whatever enemies attack us, whatever troubles oppress us, put our entire confidence in him, and he will never fail or disappoint us ; for who ever trusted in the LORD, and was confounded ? Let us rely upon him while

life shall last, and he will be our God and guide unto death, and our portion for ever!

Once more. The loving-kindness of the LORD to us-ward, so wonderfully displayed, so frequently repeated, yea, so variously and incessantly exercised, notwithstanding our ingratitude, obstinacy, and rebellion, certainly demands returns of love, and lays us under an indispensable obligation to serve and glorify him. O the height and depth, and length and breadth, of that love which called us out of nothing, which raised us to a state of dignity and happiness, little inferior to that of angels! Which pitied us, when fallen; which spread its mantle over us when we were cast out into the open fields wounded, and mangled, weltering in our blood! Which even then passed by, and said unto us, Live! Nay, which exposed its dearest, fairest object, God's eternal Son, to wounds and bruises, torture and death, for our sakes! and, through him, offers us,—instead of guilt and fear, torment and despair,—pardon, hope, joy and glory, now and for ever! O, what love is this! How deep and unfathomable! How immense and incomprehensible! How mysterious and astonishing! And shall we suffer no spark of this heavenly fire to fall upon the altar of our hearts, and inflame our desires, and kindle our devotion! Alas for us! our hearts are made of ice; and though thousands, I will not say, of sparks, but of burning torches, lighted by Divine love, are perpetually cast upon them by almighty goodness, yet are they as constantly extinguished, and we remain cold and frozen still. Ah, how many mercies are daily and hourly heaped upon us, and how much favour and kindness is continually shown us, and yet how insensible are we towards our gracious Benefactor, and how negligent to please and obey him! O that the LORD himself would descend, and, with the victorious fire of his infinite goodness, warm often our icy breasts! O that he would sit upon us as a refiner and purifier of silver, and purify our souls from all the dross of sin and impure desire, and mould us into a new mass of pure metal, fit to be stamped with the image of God! O that we could draw near, and, with unveiled face, gaze upon his glorious love, till we were “changed into the same image, from glory to glory,” by its powerful operations! till the heavenly flame kindled, mounted, and enwrapped our whole soul, and filled us with love, and with God. Then should we “dwell in love,” and in God, and “God in us!” Then should we perpetually burn for his glory! Then would his mercies constrain us [to “present our bodies and souls a living sacrifice,” burning but not consumed, “holy and acceptable to God, which

is our reasonable service ! Then would the “ zeal of his house eat us up,” and we should find it our “ meat and drink to do his will.” We “ should no longer live to ourselves, but to him that died for us and rose again,” and should “ glorify God with our body and spirit, which are God’s.*

XI.

THE WISDOM OF CONSIDERING OUR LATTER END.

DEUT. xxxii. 29.

O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

It is supposed by some, Moses meant by this wish that the Israelites should lay to heart what he had forewarned them would take place, if they apostatized from the worship of the true God, and from obedience to his laws, and rejected the Messiah when he should be sent to them,—that God would utterly cast them off from being his people, and would scatter them through all lands. But the words contain an evident truth, with relation to every individual of the human race, if they be understood of that latter end which is common to all men ; the due consideration of which is both a great part of wisdom, and a great mean of attaining and improving it. For most of the sins and follies of mankind certainly proceed, as from want of consideration in general, so especially from not considering, with seriousness and attention, their latter end. Inquire we,

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN CONSIDERING OUR LATTER END.

By the “ latter end ” here spoken of, we may understand the

* It appears from Mr. Benson’s MS., that he intended, under the *Second* Head of this Discourse, fully to have shown, how men, in general, do actually “ requite the Lord ” for his goodness, and the unreasonableness, guilt, and folly, of their ingratitude. He proposed also, in a future Discourse, to treat the subject in a manner particularly adapted to the case of the people of God.

future part of our life on earth, should it please God to spare us a little longer, which we ought so to consider, as to provide for the happiness and usefulness of it. We must remember that, though we may now be in health, ease, affluence, and honour, it will not be always so. If we live much longer in the world, the scene will change. Infirmity, affliction, and pain will come, and, perhaps too, poverty and reproach; and we must consider how we are to be supported under such severe trials, and heavy troubles. We must reflect how little money, honour or pleasure, houses or lands, business or the gains of it; nay, even relations or friends, can do for us in affliction, pain and death. And we must provide against such seasons, what alone can support us under them, peace with God, peace of conscience, a well-grounded and lively hope of eternal life, and the consolations of God's Spirit. Or, if it please God that we should, till near the last, be exempted from these trials, nevertheless, we should lay in a stock of wisdom, experience and grace, that we may not live in vain, but may be useful in our generation.

Our "latter end," however, here rather means *death*, an event which awaits us all. With respect to this, we must *consider*, that is, not only believe and know, but lay to heart,—

The certainty of it; that, because of the sentence pronounced upon our first parents, and all their posterity, (Gen. iii. 19,) "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return,"—it is unavoidable. "It is appointed unto men once to die." (Heb. ix. 27.)

"Since our first parents' fall,
Inevitable death descends on all,
A portion none of human race can miss."

Now, though this is believed and known, it is not laid to heart, at least with regard to ourselves, which gave occasion to the Poet's observation,

"All men think all men mortal, but themselves."

—The uncertainty of the time when we shall die. The exact period is hidden from us with great wisdom, that, being ignorant of the time when we are to be called away, we may look for it continually, and be always ready. Yet, as Dr. Young says,

"In death's uncertainty thy danger lies."

Now this uncertainty must be considered, and improved accordingly.

—That, at the longest, the period of death is not far distant.—How soon are three-score and ten years over! But the greater part of this congregation have already lived half that time, and have not forty years remaining; nay, not thirty.

“ Is death at distance ? No : he has been on thee ;
 And giv'n sure earnest of his final blow.
 Those hours which lately smil'd, where are they now ?

* * * * *

The rest are on the wing ; how fleet their flight !
 Already has the fatal train took fire ;
 A moment, and the world's blown up to thee ;
 The sun is darkness, and the stars are dust.”

How many will be swept away in twenty, in ten, yea in five, or even two year's time ! This is not considered, and laid to heart. The following beautiful and striking lines are too just a picture of mankind.

“ Life and the scenes that round it rise
 Share in the same uncertainties ;
 Yet still we hug ourselves with vain presage
 Of future days, serene and long ;
 Of pleasures fresh, and ever strong ;
 An active youth, and slow declining age.

Like a fair prospect, still we make
 Things future, pleasing forms to take ;
 First verdant meads arise, and flowery fields,
 Cool groves and shady copses here,
 There brooks and winding streams appear ;
 While change of objects still new pleasure yields.

Farther fine castles court the eye,
 There wealth and honour we espy ;
Beyond, a huddled mixture fills the stage,
 Till the remoter distance shrouds
 The plains with hills, those hills with clouds ;
 There we place death behind old shiv'ring age.

When death, alas ! perhaps too nigh,
 In the next hedge doth skulking lie ;
 There plants his engines, there lets fly his dart ;
 Which, while we ramble without fear,
 Will stop us in our full career ;
 And force us from our airy dreams to part.”

We must “ consider ” that it may be to-morrow or the next hour. That we are young, healthy, strong, is no argument against this. How suddenly do many expire !

We must consider that when it comes, it will separate us from all below, our friends, relations, all earthly possessions, all human honours, and carnal pleasures, our cares and business among men, yea from our very bodies, and all the objects perceived through the medium of the senses. It is a removal from a world of sense to a world of spirits ; from time to eternity.—

Death does not make an end of us. The body, indeed, returns to dust as it was, but not for ever. Even the Old Testament saints expected a resurrection,

(Job xiv. 15; xix. 25; Isai. xxvi. 19; Dan. xii. 2;) much more the New Testament saints, to whom life and immortality are brought to light. (John v. 28, 29; 1 Cor. xv. *passim*.) But the soul does not die at all, (Matt. x. 28;) it returns to GOD, (Eccles. xii. 7,) to be received to happiness, (Luke xxiii. 43; Acts vii. 59; 2 Cor. v. 8; Phil. i. 21;) or consigned to misery. (Luke xvi. 23.) Well then might the Poet say,

“ When life’s close knot, by writ from destiny,
Disease shall cut, or age untie;
When after some delays, some dying strife,
The soul stands shivering on the ridge of life;
With what a dreadful curiosity
Does she launch out into the sea of vast eternity!”

We must consider that death fixes our state and condition for ever; judgment and eternity following upon it:—That it is the termination of our state of trial, and our entrance upon an unchangeable state of retribution:—That, if it find us in our sins, unpardoned, unrenewed, we are undone for ever; being destitute of the favour of God, and exposed to his wrath.

This leads me to observe, that “our latter end,” here also means the future and everlasting state which awaits us; the certainty, nature, and importance of which we should consider, and lay to heart, and prepare for.

Or, it may mean the consequences of things. These we should consider; we should lay to heart what will be the consequences, here and hereafter, of a life of piety and virtue, on the one hand, or of vice and profaneness, on the other; the happiness we shall lose, and the misery into which we shall plunge ourselves, if we follow such a course of conduct? and where and how the way we take is likely to end. — — —

II. HOW IT APPEARS TO BE A POINT OF WISDOM TO CONSIDER OUR LATTER END.

It is a point of wisdom to foresee what is coming, as far as possible; especially if of great consequence to us, and if the foresight will do us any good. Now our *latter end*, in the several senses above explained, is what we certainly may foresee,—and it is of great consequence that we should do it, in a variety of ways.—

A foresight of our latter end will do us much good in life, in death, and for ever.

In LIFE; which it will render more wise, holy, happy, and useful.—More *wise*. [For we shall direct and govern our desires, cares, and pursuits with a reference to the future part of our life on earth, and more especially our eternal life in heaven, which is great wisdom, and will give a character of dignity and importance to all we do, which otherwise could not be attained.

*

“ The soul of man, (let man in homage bow,
 Who names his soul,) a native of the skies,
 High born, and free, her freedom should maintain
 Unsold, unmortgaged for earth's little bribes.
 The' illustrious stranger, in this foreign land,
 Like strangers, jealous of her dignity,
 Studious of home, and ardent to return,
 Of earth suspicious, earth's enchanted cup
 With cool reserve light touching, should indulge
 On immortality her godlike taste;
 There take large draughts, make her chief banquet there.”

—More *holy*. For, being conscious that sin would render the future part of our life bitter, and death dreadful, while we seek a pardon for the past, we shall shun it for the time to come, and follow universal holiness, as a necessary qualification for happiness here and hereafter. Now if sin be the greatest evil, and holiness the greatest good, this is wisdom.—More *happy*. What is it that renders life unhappy? Is it not discontent in our station and circumstances, impatience under troubles, anxious cares, and immoderate desires, and especially the fear of death. Now the consideration of our latter end will make us content with our lot, the time being short; patient under troubles, seeing their end is at hand; free from anxious cares, and immoderate desires after earthly things; and especially we shall get rid of the fear of death, which keeps so many in bondage all their life. “Death's terror is the barrier between man and peace.”—More *useful*. For we shall be induced to improve our time, and employ our talents to more advantage, when we have a constant foresight of the certainty, nearness, &c., of death, and the shortness and uncertainty of life, and of the awfulness of eternity and the life to come.

The proper consideration of our latter end will do us good in DEATH. It will prepare us, by the grace of GOD to die with safety, with ease, with comfort, and to our everlasting advantage.—With *safety*. What is it that renders death unsafe? Is it not its sting? Now foreseeing its approach, and laying to heart its nearness and certainty, we shall be stirred up, without delay, to seek deliverance from sin, its guilt, and power, and defilement. This is the sting of death, and where this is drawn, death is harmless as a serpent that has lost its sting; no wrath following.—With *ease*. Consider what renders death disagreeable? Either a consideration of sin unpardoned as to its guilt, unbroken as to its power, or not purged away as to its defilement; hence death is dreaded as to its consequences. Or, inordinate affection to the world, or to something in it. Or, mistaken views of death, arising from want of reflection upon it. Frequent and serious reflection upon it stirs us up to get deliverance from sin (as above;) familiarizes it to our minds, and strips it of much of its terror; tends to loosen our affections from the world, and take away that aversion to death, which arose from that quarter; to raise our affections to things above, where there is no death nor sorrow, whence we should even desire it.

“ O when will death, now stingless, like a friend
 Admit me of their choir? O when will death,
 This mouldering old partition-wall throw down,
 Give beings, one in nature, one abode?”

—With *comfort* and perhaps triumph; having made our peace with GOD, being made his children, heirs of GOD, and having a lively hope of a future inheritance and a foretaste of it.—It will tend to *our everlasting advantage*. We shall not only lose nothing by death, but gain much; deliverance from toil, care, pain, sickness, temptation, and sin; the presence and enjoyment of GOD; the society of saints, angels, &c. — — —

Hence the consideration of death will do us good in ETERNITY; as it will induce us to acquire holiness, and follow after higher degrees of it; usefulness, to our fellow creatures; patience in suffering; and as it will increase our reward for ever.

The wisdom of considering our latter end will appear in a still more striking light, if we contrast therewith the folly and miserable consequences of not considering it. This may also be noticed,—

In LIFE,—which thereby becomes *unwise*. For these, rejecting the best interests of their rational, spiritual, and immortal nature for the sake of the things of time and sense,

“ Sink into slaves, and sell for present hire
Their rich reversion; and what shares its fate,
Their native freedom, to the prince who sways
This nether world.”———

They likewise become *unholy; unhappy; unprofitable*; (Ps. xxxix. 6;) “Man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain;” in every particular the reverse of what was said above.

In DEATH,—which is thereby rendered *dangerous, difficult, and destructive*.

“ At that dread moment, how the frantic soul
Raves round the walls of her clay tenement!
Runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help;
But shrieks in vain!———
A little longer! ah! a little longer,
Might she but stay to wash away her crimes,
And fit her for her passage! Moving sight!
Her very eyes weep blood, and every sigh
She heaves is big with horror! but the foe,
Like a staunch murderer, steady to his purpose,
Pursues her close through every lane of life,
Nor misses once the track, but presses on,
Till forc'd at last to the tremendous verge,
At once she sinks!”

Then all is lost, and everlasting misery incurred.

In ETERNITY.—Our life being useless, sinful, hurtful, and all our sufferings not reclaiming us, we obtain an increased misery for ever.

III. WHY MEN ARE SO AVERSE TO THE CONSIDERATION OF THEIR LATTER END, AND HOW THAT AVERSION MAY BE OVERCOME?

This is implied in the text, "O that they were wise," &c.

It arises from ignorance on the subjects of death and eternity.

"Amazing state! No wonder that we dread
To think of death, or view the dead.
Thou'rt all wrapp'd up in clouds, as if to thee
Our very knowledge had antipathy.
Death could not a more sad retinue find,
Sickness and pain before, and darkness all behind."

—From sin, its guilt and power.—From an inordinate love to the world.

To overcome it—Know what death is, viz. the gate of life.—Apply to him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.—Get suitable views of a better life after this.

APPLICATION.

* * * * *

XII.

NONE LIKE THE GOD OF JESHURUN.

DEUT. xxxiii. 26—29.

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them! Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

THESE, it seems, are the last words of all that Moses, the earliest and one of the greatest of writers, ever wrote. They are, therefore, were it only on this account, very remarkable,

and well worthy the serious attention of all, who have a respect for the memory of that ancient and eminent servant of God. But they are still more remarkable for the excellent matter they contain, which all must find more or less edifying, who carefully consider it with faith and prayer. Moses here magnifies, with his last breath, both the God of Israel, and the Israel of God; and who was ever better acquainted with either? They are both incomparable in his judgment. Of the former he plainly affirms, not fearing to be contradicted, "There is none like the God of Jeshurun." And, concerning the latter, he speaks with no less decision, saying, "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the LORD!"

These words, you know, were originally spoken to the posterity of Jacob, at the time when they had just finished their forty years' peregrination in the wilderness, and were about to pass over Jordan, and take possession of the promised land. In their primary, literal, and most obvious signification, therefore, they relate to the Israelites under these circumstances; but, in a secondary sense, and that by no means far-fetched, or unnatural, this whole passage may be very justly applied to the true church and people of God in all ages; and, thus taken, it is admirably calculated to illustrate some important branches of their character, duty, safety, and happiness. And, in some sense, though still more remote from their primary meaning, these words may be applied to those countries, in which the church of God is planted, protected, and encouraged, and where the true people of God are increasing, and possess singular privileges.

I shall explain the words with a reference to these particulars, in the order in which they stand.

In the preceding part of the chapter, we have an account of "the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death." Having given each tribe its particular portion, he addresses them conjointly, in the words which I have just read, in which, it seems, breaking out into a rapture, from the fulness of his heart, he celebrates God and his people. "There is none like the God of Jeshurun."—Moses does not say, There is no God like him, for to have expressed himself so would have implied that there was some other god or gods, which Moses knew there was not; all that have been, are, or will be called gods, being mere pretenders to deity, and possessing nothing divine, but the mere name,—either the creatures of the true God, the workmanship of men's hands, or mere imaginary beings, having no existence, except in the fancies

of men. But he says, "There is *none* like the God of Jeshurun;" no being in the universe. All other beings are but creatures produced, upheld, preserved by the Creator, and, therefore, surely cannot any of them be compared to Him. He alone had no beginning, is self-existent, independent of all other beings, supreme over all, and immutable. He alone is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent; unsearchable in wisdom, almighty in power, boundless in goodness, of truth inviolable, of justice impartial, of mercy unspeakable. He alone inhabits eternity, and fills immensity; he is the Creator of all, the Preserver of all, the Governor of all, the sole Judge of men and angels, the Author and End of all things. Well then might the inspired penman pronounce that none is like him. Thus also the prophet; "To whom then will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him? Behold, he hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. Yea, all nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted by him less than nothing and vanity. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the HOLY ONE? Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in."

This God, thus incomparably great and glorious, is "the God of Jeshurun," *i. e.* of the *upright* or *righteous*. It is here applied to Israel, the visible church of old, to instruct them what they ought to be, and to reprove them for what they were not; and because they had his oracles and ordinances among them. But we must not confine this to the Israelites of old. This God was, doubtless, their God; their God in covenant, who had separated them from other nations, and taken them to be his peculiar people. But he was not theirs *only*. He is the God of the righteous in all ages. Having bestowed upon them true repentance for sin, and living faith in the Son of his love, he is reconciled to them after all they have done, and takes them into covenant with himself. He becomes their friend, their father, their husband, and they are esteemed his adopted children, his chosen people, his peculiar treasure. Being separated, by divine grace

from sin and sinners, and consecrated to the service of God, they conduct themselves as strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and hence “desire a better country, that is, an heavenly, wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.” (Heb. xi. 16.) Towards this city they are travelling through the wilderness of this world, where they are beset with many snares, pursued by many enemies, exposed to many dangers.

As their God, he “rideth upon the heavens for their help,” &c.; words, which not only declare how glorious he is, who maketh the clouds his chariot, and rideth upon the wings of the wind! how great he is in power, how extensive in authority, who manages the heavens, and the heavenly bodies, as a man does the horse on which he rides!—not only the earth, but the heavens also, yea, the heaven of heavens being subject to his sway, and full of his glory,—and how comprehensive his knowledge, nothing certainly being hid from the all-seeing eye of him, “who sitteth upon the circle of the heavens,” and from thence, as it were, surveys the inhabitants of both worlds, and all their actions, yea, sees at one glance, whatever is done, throughout his immense dominions;—But what is here affirmed is, that he employs these attributes for the good of his people; he “rideth upon the heavens for their help.” How literally and wonderfully was this declaration verified in the various judgments, or “plagues,” as they are called, brought upon their enemies the Egyptians, and in the blessings conferred on his people in the wilderness, by giving them bread from heaven, and bringing them flesh on the wings of the wind! and, in after ages, when he cast down from heaven great hailstones upon the Canaanites, and made the sun to stand still, till they were avenged on their enemies! when he caused the stars in their courses to fight against Sisera, and pestilential winds, through the ministry of the angel, to destroy the army of Sennacherib! and other instances, too numerous to be mentioned.—He rode upon the heavens for the help of this country in the days of Queen Elizabeth, when the Spanish Armada, destined for the destruction of the country, was scattered by a storm, which gave occasion for the medal then struck; *afflavit Deus, et dissipantur.* — — — And has he not frequently, since then, rode upon the heavens for our help; sending prosperous gales to the aid of our fleets? And did he not, in a very extraordinary and effectual way, ride upon the heavens to our help, and the help of all Europe, when he buried the French army, men and horses, and their allies, in the snows of

Russia? But, in a higher and more important sense does he ride upon the heavens to the help of his spiritual Israel, whom he never fails to "make speed to save, to make haste to deliver."

Of all such he, the eternal God, is the refuge. To him, to his mercy and love, manifested to them in CHRIST JESUS, they flee for refuge from the accusations of an awakened conscience, and the fears of future misery, which pursue and distress them. To God, made man, who is as "an hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," they betake themselves for shelter from the scorching sun of incensed justice, and the impending storm of divine wrath, ready to burst upon their guilty heads, in irretrievable ruin and perdition. And, having fled to a reconciled God for refuge, they also dwell, or continue "in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm xci. 1.) They make the LORD, who is their refuge, their *habitation* likewise, as the word here rendered *refuge* also signifies. In "God manifest in the flesh," his people take up their abode. "LORD," says Moses, (Psalm xc. 6,) "thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." Though the Israelites had lived in Egypt, had wandered forty years to and fro in the wilderness, and were now going to settle in Canaan, yet those of them, that were Israelites indeed, had not changed their habitation in time past, nor must they change it in time to come. Still they had, and still they must have the Eternal God for their dwelling-place; in him, and in communion with him, they take up their abode, and here they are safe and at rest, as a man in his own house. And well they may, for,

"Underneath are the everlasting arms,"—God's everlasting attributes, his wisdom, his power, his love, all infinite and eternal, are, as it were, underneath his people, and as certainly and effectually bear them up, and prevent their falling into danger and destruction, as a parent's arms support and preserve the child they carry. Hence we may learn our own weakness, and the tender care our heavenly FATHER takes of us.—His covenant, I may add, made through CHRIST, with all true believers, and the inestimable consolations of it, which such partake of, are those *everlasting arms*, which support their confidence and hope, and keep their heads above water. Hereby they are preserved from sinking under the guilt of sin, and the fears of death and future misery. Divine "grace is sufficient for them;" and, therefore, though "pressed above measure," yet they "faint not;" but hold on their way rejoicing, and even wax stronger and stronger, while they keep their

eye fixed on God's faithful promises of grace to help in time of need, and "have respect to the recompence of reward," looking not "at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." Thus would the Eternal God be the refuge of our nation, if our nation were, in general, pious, and thus underneath it would be his everlasting arms. — — —

"And he shall thrust out the enemy before thee." The Israelites were now about to pass over Jordan, dispossess the Canaanites, and settle in their land. But who shall justify them in this undertaking, and enable them to accomplish it? The inhabitants of the land were a strong and formidable people, courageous, and well defended. These being, it seems, the first planters of the country, looked upon themselves as its rightful owners. And who shall dare to dispute their right, invade their property, and attempt their expulsion?—In answer hereto, Moses promises, upon divine authority, that God would "thrust out the enemy from before them, and say, Destroy them." He, who is the sovereign LORD of all, and has an undoubted right to do what he will with his own, not only permits, but expressly *commands* his people to take possession of the land of Canaan, and put its inhabitants to the sword.* And that they might not want power to effect what they were thus authorized to do, God himself engages to be with them to assist them, yea, he himself will "thrust out the enemy from before them."

This is the primary and literal sense of the words; but they may be applied to the enemies of any country, the inhabitants of which make the eternal God their refuge. They have been very applicable to the enemies of our country, over whom God has made us and our allies victorious in a very extraordinary and unexpected manner. They may also be applied to Antichrist, and to all those spiritual enemies, over whom God is engaged by promise to give his people the victory.

We know that sin and Satan, with legions of lusts under their command, are by nature in full and quiet possession of our hearts. "The strong man armed keeps his house and his goods in peace." But God has promised to "thrust out the enemy, and say, Destroy them." And we know if he speak it shall be done. "LORD, speak but the word," said the Centurion, "and my servant shall be healed." Thus (Luke i. 67) Zacharias, "filled with the

* The reason of this was their idolatry, offering their own children to Moloch, lewdness, sodomy, &c.

Holy Ghost, prophesied, saying, Blessed be the LORD GOD of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David; that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our father, Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." To deliver us from our spiritual enemies, was our LORD's principal errand into the world. "He was manifested to take away our sins," and "to destroy the works of the devil." Now, as CHRIST came into the world for this purpose, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us to himself; so GOD is represented, in the passage just quoted, as binding himself by promises, covenants, and oaths, to accomplish this deliverance for his people. And we know he is "faithful that hath called us, who also will do it." Yes; "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just," not only "to forgive us our sins," but, likewise, "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

GOD has, therefore, promised to "thrust out the enemies" of our peace, "and say, Destroy them." He has promised, not only that "sin shall not have dominion over us," that we shall not be brought into bondage by it, but that we shall "take them captives, whose captives we were, and shall rule over our oppressors." Yea, he has promised to "turn us from all our iniquities," outwardly, and moreover, to "cleanse us," inwardly, "from all our filthiness, and from all our idols." "A new heart will he give unto us, and a right spirit will he renew within us." "The LORD, whom we seek, will suddenly come to the temple" of our hearts, and operate there like "a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." He will abide there as "a refiner and purifier of silver, and will purify and purge us as gold and silver," that we, being separated from all sin, may afterwards "offer unto him an offering in righteousness." Thus shall the "GOD of peace" himself even "sanctify us wholly, and make us perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us whatsoever is well pleasing in his sight, through JESUS CHRIST." Thus will he thrust out and destroy, not only our outward, but our inward sins likewise. He will not only save us from sinful words and actions, but from sinful tempers and desires also, from pride, self-will, malice, envy, anger, covetousness, evil desire; from whatever is contrary to the mind of CHRIST and the image of GOD. The grace of our LORD

JESUS CHRIST, reigning in the heart, shall pull down, and destroy, and go on conquering and to conquer, till "every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of CHRIST," and the whole soul is filled with that pure love of GOD, which is the fulfilling of the law, and the bond of perfection.

If it should be objected, to invalidate the force, and detract from the deep meaning of these great and precious promises, that the Canaanites were never totally thrust out and destroyed, nor the conquests of the Israelites so extensive and complete as our text seems to represent, and that, therefore, we must interpret these, and such like declarations of Holy Scripture, with some restriction,—I answer, it is true that, in fact, these promises were never thus fulfilled, and perfectly accomplished. But then, why were they not? Surely, not because they were not intended to be so accomplished, any more than because GOD was wanting in power, or love, or faithfulness to fulfil them? The reason could only be, that as the promises were made, not absolutely, but conditionally, so they were not fulfilled, as the people did not comply with the conditions. Thus, in our text, though the promise seems to be expressed in a very absolute form, nevertheless, a condition is implied. He does not assure them of certain victory and conquest, whether they fought or fled from their enemies. He only promises to "thrust out the enemy from *before them*;" intimating, what is fully expressed in a thousand other places, that it was their duty to face and fight their enemies; and only in so doing could they expect the LORD would interpose for their destruction. If, therefore, the Canaanites were not totally thrust out and destroyed, we must not blame the goodness, power, or faithfulness of GOD, but the unbelief, perverseness, and rebellion of man.

To apply this observation to ourselves. If we would obtain the full accomplishment of those exceeding great and precious promises, in which GOD hath caused us to hope, we must make it our care to comply with the conditions prescribed, and use the means appointed; we must not flee from, but courageously face and fight our spiritual enemies. Being surrounded with "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left," we must venture out into the field, among the thickest of our foes. We must not only stand on our guard against all their secret and open attacks, and defend ourselves, but we must carry the war into the enemy's territories, and, in the name of the LORD, thrust out and destroy them. Though our pride, or anger, or evil desire let us alone, and give us, for the present, no uneasiness,

we must not, on that account, sit down at our ease, and, thinking to live at peace with these crafty Canaanites, leave them in the undisturbed possession of our hearts; but, convinced, if they are suffered to remain, they will be as goads to our sides, and "thorns in our eyes," and that God himself has commanded us to make no peace with the inhabitants of the land, we must pursue them through all their secret mazes, and destroy them utterly. We must watch, pray, and believe, strive against sin, do good, and run the way of God's commandments, still directing our eye towards the hills whence our help cometh, still waiting upon the LORD, and expecting the fulfilment of his promise, till he speak and it is done; till he himself "finish transgression, make an end of sin, and bring into our souls everlasting righteousness."

Let us observe, now, the happy consequence of our obtaining these blessings. "Israel shall then dwell in safety alone, the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine, also his heavens shall drop down dew." This passage, in its primary and literal sense, contains a most fruitful description of the happy condition, which the Israelites would be in, after they were put in full possession of the good land, and the Canaanites were expelled from it. Then they would dwell *alone*, not intermixed with other nations, nor protected by them; but though alone, yet in *safety*, well defended, and secured from invading harm. They were to occupy a fruitful land, watered with fountains and streams beneath, and with rain and dew from above; and, hence, they would abound in corn and wine. This illustrates, in a most striking manner, that happy condition, into which the people of God are brought, when the LORD has saved them from their sins, has thrust out and destroyed their enemies.

Then "the beloved of the LORD," as said Moses of Benjamin, "shall dwell in safety by him." And no wonder, for the "name of the LORD is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are safe." "We have a strong city," says the Prophet; "salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." And who are the persons admitted to dwell within the defence of it, he informs us, when he adds, "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation, which keepeth the truth, may enter in." What can possibly harm those whom salvation itself defends! Yea, the God of salvation! "Thou art my hiding place," says the Psalmist, "thou shalt preserve me from trouble, thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." And that this security was not peculiar to himself, but the portion of all who are "Israelites indeed," we learn from the ninety-first Psalm, a passage of Scrip-

ture very remarkable and full to our purpose. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the MOST HIGH shall abide under the shadow of the ALMIGHTY." Surely he "shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence." He "shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes, shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the MOST HIGH, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways,—lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

But though the saved of the LORD dwell thus in safety, yet they dwell *alone*. They are neither beholden to sinful alliances, nor sinful submissions, for their security. Like Israel of old, they are a peculiar people, separated from sin and sinners, devoted to the service of God, and singular in the general tenour of their deportment. They have complied with that well-known and useful exhortation, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY." The LORD, therefore, takes them under his peculiar care, and they are "a peculiar treasure unto him, above all people of the earth." They are "as a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of their God." The LORD himself is "their sun and shield, the LORD will give them grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold" from them. Yea, he will "guide them continually, and satisfy their soul in drought, and make their bones fat, and they shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of waters, whose waters fail not."

This is all implied in the next particular, "The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine, also his heavens shall drop down dew." By the "fountain of Jacob," some understand the posterity of Jacob, which flowed from him as waters from a fountain; and if this is the sense of it, the fountain is put for the streams issuing thence. Others suppose "the fountain of Jacob" to signify the people of that generation, from which all the succeeding generations of Israelites were derived. Or, the word

here rendered *fountain*, may be translated *eye*, as it primarily and properly means. "The eye of Jacob is upon a land of corn and wine." In either of these ways it signifies one and the same thing, *viz.* that the Israelites should possess a fruitful land; a land productive of corn and wine, in which commodities, that it might abound the more, the "heavens would drop down dew." Thus understood, it beautifully illustrates that happy and flourishing state, into which the LORD brings all those in whom he destroys the works of the Devil. But it would represent this in a still more striking manner, if we should admit that the phraseology of this passage, like that of many others in the Hebrew Bible, was not very exact, and, therefore, construe it with a little latitude. Thus we may understand the inspired penman, as informing us, not only that the land of Canaan should be well watered with rain from heaven, and consequently produce plenty of corn and wine, but likewise that it should abound in wells and fountains from beneath, for the pleasure and refreshment of the inhabitants. This we know was the case with that land, as appears from the eighth chapter of this book, and the seven following verses; a passage of Scripture which serves to explain the meaning of our text. "The LORD thy God," says Moses, "bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, that spring out of valleys and hills." Then it is added, "a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates, a land of oil-olive and honey; a land, wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land, whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." In this sense, then, we may lawfully take this passage, and thus taken it may be considered as a striking emblem of that Gospel liberty, and plenty, and enjoyment into which CHRIST saves his followers.

When the LORD has thrust out and destroyed the enemies of his people, then shall Israel not only "dwell in safety alone," but also "the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine." Or, as it is in the prophet, "They shall dwell on high, their place of defence shall be the munition of rocks; bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure." They shall not only enjoy in peace and tranquillity all those temporal blessings which the LORD sees good for them, but shall also be "satisfied with the fatness of his house, even of his holy temple;" shall be abundantly replenished "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in CHRIST JESUS." The indwelling Spirit of GOD, which has now taken up its abode in their hearts, is in

them, a "fountain of living waters, springing up to life everlasting." This is that "river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God." Here their thirsty souls are refreshed, satisfied, and comforted, and hence they are qualified for usefulness to others. "He that believeth on me," says Jesus, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." From that well of divine grace, which is within them, bubbling up with love, and hope, and joy, and overflowing in peace and righteousness all around, streams of edification and comfort are perpetually descending upon children, servants, and neighbours. All within their influence are watered by them, look green and flourish. "They that dwell under their shadow return;" after being apparently exhausted and dead, they become verdant and fruitful; they "revive as the corn, grow as the vine; their smell is like the wine of Lebanon."

But again. While they are thus replenished with the grace of God within, for their own refreshment, and the good of others; at the same time they shall be supplied with every outward advantage for their spiritual proficiency and growth in grace. They shall cultivate a rich soil, watered with fruitful dews and showers from heaven; "a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew." The word and ordinances of God, the means of grace, the promises and privileges of the Gospel, shall be to their souls what corn and wine, the most useful things in nature, are to men's bodies. Hereby shall they be nourished and strengthened, that they may keep their enemies at a distance, may do the whole will of God, and cheerfully sustain the trials and afflictions of this pilgrimage-state. And the word of God, and the ordinances of his appointment, shall not be as dry breasts to them, or as a wilderness and land of drought, because "the heavens shall drop down dew." The grace of God, distilling from above in silent sweetness, shall render those means like green pastures, where CHRIST'S flock shall feed in peace; like fruitful "valleys laughing with plenty of corn, and vineyards overflowing with red wine."

"In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine, I the LORD do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not, and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD, thy God in the midst of thee, is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. Sing, O daughter of Zion, shout O Israel, be glad and rejoice, with all the heart, O daughter of

Jerusalem. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy; the King of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee, thou shalt not see evil any more." Now "shalt thou remain" in the everlasting possession of that good land, into which the LORD has brought thee;

"A land of corn, and wine, and oil,
Favour'd with GOD's peculiar smile,
With every blessing blest;
There dwells the LORD our righteousness,
And keeps his own in perfect peace,
And everlasting rest."

Having now finished the explanatory part of this Discourse, before I congratulated those who are brought into this happy state, in the language of the twenty-ninth verse, I would address myself, briefly, to two different classes of people. First, to those who believe there is no such holy and happy state attainable in this world, as I have been describing. You, my friends, too much resemble the men of that wicked generation, who unreasonably disbelieved the true testimony of Joshua and Caleb concerning that good land, which God had promised to his people, while they readily credited the lying stories of other spies, who maliciously brought up an evil report of the land. You unreasonably reject the true testimony which the Old and New Testament, which the Prophets and Apostles, yea, and CHRIST himself, have unanimously borne to the *great salvation* of the Gospel, while you readily believe the suggestions of Satan, who was a "liar from the beginning," the false insinuations of men of "corrupt minds and destitute of the truth," and the dictates of your own deceitful hearts. How unjustifiable is your conduct! How can you excuse yourselves to GOD or man? Nay, how shall you escape if you continue to neglect so great salvation? How did those unbelieving and ungrateful Israelites escape? "Their carcases fell in the wilderness." God was grieved with that evil generation, and said, "It is a people that do always err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways;" so "he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest." Now, inasmuch as these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are recorded for our admonition, surely if we imitate them in their sin, we have but too much reason to dread their punishment!

The Israelites did not "enter in because of unbelief." For the very same reason you shall not enter in. According to the whole tenour of the Gospel dispensation, only those who believe the pro-

mises obtain their fulfilment. Those who, notwithstanding their evidence and certainty, continue to call their veracity in question, and doubt their accomplishment, shall live and die destitute of the blessings promised. But this you do not regard. It would be matter of grief rather than of joy to you, to be convinced such holiness was really attainable and necessary. You love your idols too well, to part with them without reluctance. Your attachment to the world and sin, whatever you may think of it, is in fact at the bottom of your aversion to this doctrine. "You love darkness rather than light, because your deeds are evil." You are in love with sin, and therefore you hate to hear of entire sanctification. Let me, therefore, observe further, because you "despise the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering," because you deny and undervalue his mercies, therefore you shall feel the effects of his indignation and wrath, and sustain, however reluctant, the execution of his threatenings.

Consider, therefore, in time what you are doing. If there is indeed such a good land to be possessed, you cannot neglect to proceed to the possession of it, and yet be innocent and safe. You cannot live and die in that wilderness of doubt, and fear, and sin, and misery, in which you now wander, without such a mixture of unbelief, ingratitude, and obstinacy, as, you have great reason to think, God will remember and punish with the loss of the Canaan of eternal rest, yea, with everlasting destruction. Besides, granting what there is not the least reason to grant, that we carry matters to an extreme, and that there is no such holiness to be attained in this frail state of things, yet, after all, where is the danger of this doctrine? what harm can it do us to believe and practise it? Is there any danger of our being too holy, of our hating sin, and loving God too much? Can we possibly run to an extreme here? Surely not. The only danger is, lest we should not go far enough; lest, after all, we should be but *almost Christians*, lest we should stop short of that "holiness without which no man shall see the LORD;" and for that reason we should be excluded the holy and pure city, into which nothing unclean can enter. "Awake then, thou that sleepest!" Know thy privileges! Know thy danger! O lay aside thy evil reasoning, and thy unbelief, and by following "after holiness, and giving diligence to be found of him in peace, and without spot and blameless, make" now "thy calling and thy election sure." So shalt "thou never fall, but an entrance shall be administered to thee abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our God and SAVIOUR."

I would, secondly, address myself to those who, "having fled to God in CHRIST for refuge, and "made the Most High their habitation," while they repose themselves "under his shadow, and feel underneath them the everlasting arms," are, notwithstanding, still dissatisfied and uneasy, because the Canaanites are yet in the land, and are waiting in ardent expectation, when the LORD, in fulfilment of his promises, will "thrust out the enemy from before them, and say, Destroy them." You, my brethren, have great cause to praise the LORD for delivering you from the bondage of Egypt, for tenderly bearing so long with your manners in the wilderness, and for patiently conducting you, through so many dangers and difficulties, to the borders of the promised land. O praise the LORD for his past mercies, and for your future hopes! Praise him for opening your eyes to see your privileges, and raising in you a desire to possess them! But, at the same time, let me call upon you to consider, that the very people, whom the LORD redeemed out of Egypt, and led about, and instructed for the space of forty years, in that great and terrible wilderness, and at last, in their posterity, put in possession of Canaan; that people, for whose sake he did signs, and wonders, and marvellous works, such as had not been seen or heard before, because they neglected to extend their conquests, and entirely to expel the Canaanites, according to the Divine command, were, therefore, ensnared and seduced by them from the true worship and service of God, and were of consequence frequently overcome and enslaved by those enemies they had foolishly spared, and, at length, dispossessed of the country, after long inhabiting it, and carried captive into a foreign land.

"Let us, therefore, fear," since these things were written for our learning, "lest, a promise being left us of entering into his perfect rest, any of us should come short of it." Yea, and "let us labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief;" let us "up and be doing, and the LORD will be with us; he will not fail us nor forsake us, only let us be strong and very courageous." My brethren, let not your hands hang down, your knees wax feeble, or your hearts faint within you. What though the people be "strong that dwell in the land, and the cities walled, and very great;" What though "the sons of Anak" be there, those "giants which are descended of the giants," and you are "as grasshoppers in their sight," and likewise in "your own sight;" yet still I say, "fear not." "The LORD your God shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace," from

all murmuring and repining, from all evil reasoning, and unbelieving fears. Yes, "faithful is he who hath promised," who also "will perform it;" he "will thrust out the enemy from *before you*, and say, Destroy them."

From "*before you*," I say, for you must go out against them in his strength, and relying on his certain direction, and powerful assistance. Convinced that the LORD is the "shield of your help," and the "sword of your excellency," and that he will be with you, to defend and fight for you, go up "at once and possess the good land;" for thus armed, and thus aided, you are well able to overcome it. Watch, pray, and believe, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow JESUS; "endure hardness, as good soldiers of JESUS CHRIST," use your arms, exercise your graces, and you shall go on from conquering to conquer. Cease not from the strife; withdraw not your hand from shedding blood; still face, and follow, and cut down your foes; pursue your victory, root out and destroy, till your enemies, disappointed of their hopes, and "found liars unto you," in their vain threats, are all cast out, and you "tread upon their high places." So shall the good land be all your own, and you shall live and die unmolested, in the peaceful possession of it.

It is now time for me, in the last place, to turn my discourse to those who are made actual partakers of this great salvation. These I cannot address in more suitable language than that of Moses, as contained in our text. "Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the LORD?" Those whom the LORD has thus saved from worse than Egyptian bondage,—the bondage of sin and Satan,—whom he has led through the howling wilderness of temptation, doubt, and fear, into the possession of this good land, the Canaan of his perfect love; whom He, moreover, defends from all invading harm, as the shield of their help, and all whose enemies he utterly destroys, as the sword of their excellency; those are a happy people indeed! Yes! though they should be sorely tempted by the Devil, grievously persecuted by the world, greatly distressed in their circumstances, and painfully afflicted in their bodies; yet those very persons, I will not say *shall be*, but even now are, happy in what God is to them, and has already done for them, as well as in what he has hereafter promised to do; they are, notwithstanding what men and devils do against them, truly and perpetually happy.

And O, who is "like unto them?" Who is "like unto thee, O Israel!" This challenge Moses gave all the nations of the earth, before his death, and it remained unanswered, till David,

who, like him, pronounced none like the God of Israel, made it a second time, in similar language. "What one nation of the earth," says he, "is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations, and from their gods? for thou hast confirmed to thyself, thy people Israel, to be a people unto thee for ever, and thou, LORD, art become their God." Just so we demand still, Who is like the true Israel of God, the people saved of the LORD with his uttermost salvation? Who is worthy to be compared with them for every real excellence, and valuable endowment; for wisdom, power, courage, riches, beauty, glory, felicity? Who is so wise as he whom the wisdom of God makes "wise unto salvation?" Who so powerful and brave as the valiant soldier of JESUS CHRIST, who being "strong in the LORD, and in the power of his might," "wrestles not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness, in high places?" Who is rich as he who is "rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom" here, and shall hereafter certainly "inherit all things?" Who so comely as the spouse of CHRIST, whom he has invested with the robe of his righteousness, and rendered all glorious within, with his meek and lowly mind, and whom he himself addresses with words like these, "Thou art all fair, my love, my dove, my undefiled, there is no spot in thee?" In fine, who are so highly honoured, and so solidly happy as the children of God, the members of CHRIST, and the heirs of God's own eternal glory?

Well then may we ask, Who is like unto thee, O believer, saved by the LORD, justified freely by his blood, and sanctified wholly by his Spirit! Happy art thou, and there is none like unto thee! Redeemed by the precious blood of CHRIST, and inhabited by the Holy Spirit of grace, thou art returning under the protection of infinite power, and the conduct of unerring wisdom, through this world to the Sion above, with "singing and everlasting joy upon thy head." And yet a little longer, and thou shalt arrive at the wished-for home. Thou art indeed, yet a pilgrim and a stranger here, travelling through gloomy ways, and desert wilds; but, fear not, though thou "walk through the valley of the shadow of death, his rod and staff shall comfort thee." And ere long, thou shalt come to "Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God

the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Then shalt thou know what that meaneth, "Blessed are the dead that die in the LORD, yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. He that overcometh shall inherit all things. I will be his GOD, and he shall be my son." Thou shalt then see his face, and his name shall be on thy forehead. Thou shalt obtain everlasting joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away.

XIII.

THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THE SERVICE OF GOD.

JOSH. xxiv. 15.

If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve.

JOSHUA, in the former chapter, had taken a solemn farewell of the Israelites, and exhorted them resolutely to persevere in their duty to God; but, probably, living longer than he expected, when he delivered the foregoing discourse; or, it being his custom to assemble the people frequently to remind them of their duty, and to enforce it upon them, he called them together once more, to Shechem, that he might give them some further advice before he died. He briefly recounts what great things God had done for them and their fathers; (ver. 1—13;) and as the mercies of God are strong enforcements of man's duty to him, he exhorts them to "fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and truth." Then he provokes them to bind themselves to God by their own choice; insinuating that the worship of God is so highly reasonable, necessary, and beneficial, and the service of idols so absurd, vain, and pernicious, that if it were left free for all men to take their

choice, every one in his right senses must needs choose the service of God before that of idols.

The words imply what is generally acknowledged,—That man is a rational and free creature.—That it is his indispensable duty to make use of the powers God has given him, and not to be governed by custom, the example of others, habit or caprice, but, to consider, and examine things impartially, and choose what evidently appears best. “Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” (Jer. vi. 16.) Or as here, “If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve.”

Let us inquire,

I. WHAT IT IS TO SERVE THE LORD ; AND WHAT ARE THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THIS SERVICE.

It is the more necessary to make this inquiry, because many professors of religion are, it is evident, grossly ignorant or entirely mistaken respecting this matter, considering the mere outward worship of God, or the use of the means of grace, as of prayer, &c., or an attendance on the ordinances of God, to be all, or, at least, the principal thing that is implied in serving the LORD ; just as if a servant’s coming occasionally into his master’s presence, to consult him, to make requests to him, or to receive his orders, were the whole, or the principal part, of his duty and service, and not rather means in order to that end. — — —

The foundation of the true and proper service of God must be laid in the knowledge of him, (1 Chron. xxviii. 9,)—in reconciliation with him, (Heb. ix. 14,)—in deliverance from other masters. (Matt. vi. 24 ; Rom. vi. 14 ; Luke i. 74.) — — —

We must enter into his service by yielding or giving ourselves up, freely and fully to be his servants. (Rom. vi. 16.) This implies that we no longer yield ourselves to the world, the flesh, the devil, or sin ; but to the LORD, with desire that he would accept us through his Son, and confidence that he does so. Hereby we are joined to the LORD in order to serve him. (Isai. lvi. 6.)

As his servants, we must be subject to his authority, and obedient to the divine will, (Rom. vi. 16,) including—*Holiness towards God*, which is a death to sin and deliverance from it, the being dedicated to God, employed for him, conformed to him :—

And *righteousness towards our neighbour*; truth, justice, mercy, love, and its fruits.

This subjection and obedience must be constant and universal. (1 Cor. x. 31; Psalm cxix. 6.)

In what sense such do, and in what sense they do not serve God, may be seen by reference to Psalm xvi. 2; Job xxii. 2, 3; xxxv. 5—8.

As to the properties of this service,—It must be *sincere* and *upright*; (Jos. xxiv. 14; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9; John iv. 23, 24;)—*Reverential*; (Heb. xii. 28;) from a sense of his presence; (Luke i. 75;) his glory, wisdom, power, eternity, immensity, supremacy. “Lo! God is here!”—*Fiducial* or filial; *i. e.* with confidence and hope. (Luke i. 74; Rom. viii. 15; Psalm ii. 11.) The foundation of this must be the mediation of CHRIST; justification through him; (Rom. v. 1;) and the testimony of our conscience. (1 John iii. 21.)—*Humble*, (Acts xx. 19; Mic. vi. 8,) implying a deep sense of the distance between him and us, a consciousness that we are not worthy to be permitted to serve him, and that our best services are not worthy of his acceptance.—*Resigned, patient, and contented*; from a conviction that his providence is over all, and that all his dispensations are just, and wise, and kind; that his eye is on each of his servants, and that he sets each to the work which he sees he is most fit for, and puts each in the most proper place.—*Loving*; from love, (Isaiah lvi. 6,) a willing mind, (1 Chron. xxviii. 9,) and an undivided heart. (John xiv. 15; Matt. vi. 24.)—*Disinterested*; with a single eye to his glory. (Rom. xiv. 7—9; 1 Cor. x. 31; Col. iii. 17.)

II. WHETHER IT BE EVIL TO SERVE THE LORD, OR THE REASONABLENESS AND ADVANTAGES OF THIS SERVICE.

The word *evil* is taken here in a peculiar sense, and means *unjust, unreasonable, disadvantageous, or unnecessary*.

Is it UNJUST, or UNREASONABLE for him to demand, or for us to pay this service? He is our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, and ought we not to be devoted to his glory, and obedient to his will?—As to the properties of this service; since he searches the heart, is it unreasonable to serve him with sincerity? or would hypocrisy be more appropriate? He is most great and powerful; is it unreasonable to serve him with reverence and fear. (Mal. i. 6.) He is merciful and gracious, and the friend and father of penitent believing souls; is it unreasonable to serve him with confidence and hope? He is most just

and holy ; is it unreasonable to serve him with humility ? He is infinite in love and goodness, and has given his only Son for our sins ; (1 John iv. 8 ;) is it unreasonable to serve him from love ? He is the LORD of glory, and the centre and source of glory ; is it not more reasonable we should have regard to his glory, than our own ?

Is this service of GOD DISADVANTAGEOUS ?—In *life* ? Many will think so, even as many as have gained, or suppose they have gained, profit, or honour, or pleasure by sin. Sin must be renounced, and all the gains of it ; our idols ; our lusts ; the right hand must be cut off ; the right eye must be plucked out ; but this is only like the being obliged not to drink poison, or stab ourselves, or parting with a gangrened member.

The service of GOD is sometimes attended with other consequences, as the loss of our character, our property, our liberty, our life, distress, torture ; and is not this disadvantageous ?

CHRIST makes up for these losses. Disgraced among men, we are honoured before GOD. Deprived of the riches of this world, we are put into possession of the unsearchable riches of CHRIST. Denied in carnal pleasures, we enjoy spiritual. Losing a short, uncertain, vain, miserable life, we gain a durable, immortal, and most blessed life in heaven.—View also the gains of this service.

These are,—The pardon of sin, implying a deliverance from guilt, condemnation, and wrath,—The favour of the greatest and best Being in the universe, on whom all other beings are dependant, and to whom they are subservient,—Communion with Him, with all the sweet and ravishing pleasures hereby produced,—His direction, protection, and help, with a supply of all wants, ghostly and bodily, and all things needful or useful,—A good conscience ; the consolations of the Spirit, and the hope of eternal life.

These things are to be enjoyed in life. Is it disadvantageous then to serve GOD in this life ? If not ; surely it is not—In *death*. What can the things we are required to *give* up, when we become the servants of GOD, do for us in that awful moment ? sin, the world, fleshly lusts ?

“ Will toys amuse, when med’cines cannot cure ?
When spirits ebb, when life’s enchanting scenes
Their lustre lose, and lessen in our sight ? ”

Will it then be disadvantageous, when the world is torn from us, to have a GOD to fly to ? When “ the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved,” to “ have a building of GOD, a house

not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?" To have no guilt, fear, or anguish, but peace, hope, and joy in the HOLY GHOST?

But how great the benefit arising from the service of God,—In *eternity*; the intermediate state; at the day of judgment, for ever and ever? — — — —

Perhaps you say, "I own it will do a man no harm, but there is no need of it." Let us inquire therefore, is it UNNECESSARY?—Can these ends be attained without it?

Can we escape the miseries in which we are already involved, without it?—Can we shun farther, greater, and eternal miseries without it?—Can we otherwise attain the perfection and happiness of which our nature is capable, either here? or hereafter?

III. I SHALL REFER THE MATTER TO YOUR JUDGMENT AND CHOICE WHOM YOU WILL SERVE.

If you still see things in a different light, and "it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve." Will you serve the *world*? Consider what is in the world; "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" the emptiness, uncertainty, and short duration of these things, since the world is passing from us, and we from it. Conceive the world on fire, as it will be in the great day;—a burning God!

Will you serve the *flesh*? Your body and animal nature, infirm, afflicted, dead, corrupted,—a rotten god! Or your corrupt nature, "the flesh lusting against the Spirit," and "warring against the law of your mind, and leading you captive to the law of sin;" the greatest evil in the universe, and the fruitful source of all other evils? — — —

In serving the world and the flesh you serve *Satan*. How will he reward you? What is his inclination? Does he love and wish you well? What is his power? What has he for himself?—now?—for ever? Has he wisdom, or honour, or riches, or happiness? The poet represents him as saying, and saying truly,

"Where'er I am is hell! myself am hell."

Judge from hence what he can give you.

Bring the matter to a point this day.—You are at years to judge. You have the use of your reason; of liberty. You have had the matter fairly stated to you. Choose, therefore; find a

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better master, better work, and better wages if you can. If you can find a better master, JEHOVAH can find a servant without you. If you do not want him, he does not want you.—Why this delay? “Choose you *this day* whom ye will serve.” Let me caution you against the folly and danger of procrastination in deciding a point, in which you are so materially interested.

If, after all, you choose to serve these other lords, that have had dominion over you, you must not expect me to give you directions how to serve them. There is no need I should, as your own heart, and the lives of a great majority of your fellow-sinners will sufficiently direct you. But I shall endeavour,

IV. TO GIVE SOME DIRECTIONS TO THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO SERVE THE LORD, WITH A VIEW TO ASSIST THEM IN THAT IMPORTANT UNDERTAKING.

Read what follows the text; “Ye cannot serve the LORD.” (ver. 19.)—This is spoken, not of an absolute, but of a moral impossibility, or a very great difficulty, which Joshua alleges to make the people more considerate in obliging themselves, and more resolved to fulfil their obligations.—You cannot serve God, while unacquainted with him; (1 Chron. xxviii. 9;)—while not reconciled to him; (Heb. ix. 14;)—while under the power of other masters; (Luke i. 74; Rom. vi. 14;)—while unchanged; (Matt. vii. 17; xii. 33; Luke vi. 43—45;)—while possessed only of the strength of nature. (John xv. 4, 5.)

Acquaint yourselves with God,—by considering his nature and attributes, and the relations in which he stands to you, as manifested by his works and word;—by prayer for the illumination of his Spirit. “I will give them a heart to know me.” (Jer. xxiv. 7.)

Be reconciled to him, through his Son, by repentance and faith. (Heb. ix. 14.)

Seek deliverance out of the hands of your enemies by his Spirit. (John viii. 33—36; Rom. viii. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 17.)

Be born again, and made new creatures; and then, the tree being good, the fruit will be good.

Seek grace to help you in time of need. (Heb. xii. 28.)

In order to all these, use the means of grace in private and public, and do not rest in them; but look through them to the end.

XIV.

PERSONAL AND FAMILY RELIGION.

JOSH. xxiv. 15.

As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

THIS noble resolution of Joshua, though it has been celebrated from age to age, in all countries, where the Scriptures of the Old Testament have been known, and imitated, as well as commended by many individuals, yet has not always been understood, even by those that have undertaken to explain it, and to enforce it upon others. It is true the nature of the service required by God is continually mentioned in Scripture, and, certainly, is there sufficiently unfolded. Nevertheless, many who have the Bible in their hands, and occasionally read it, seem clearly not to have learned what it is to serve God. They either make it to consist in a round of outward duties, and an external good conduct on the one hand, or in inward emotions and impressions on the other. Or, perhaps, they even reconcile with it the commission of open iniquity. They do not consider that it implies the whole of religion and morality, and includes every branch of piety to God, of righteousness to man, and of temperance, chastity, and purity in our own persons; indeed every grace and every virtue.

From the former part of this verse I have endeavoured to lay before you, in the clearest manner I could, the nature and properties of the service of God, as well as the advantages which result from it. This I did with a view both to induce you to resolve with Joshua that you will serve the LORD, and to lead you to that acquaintance with your duty in this respect, that your resolution might proceed on rational and solid grounds. This labour, I trust, was not in vain, but that you have acquired more just and full views of this subject than you before had, and that you have resolved more firmly than ever to serve the LORD. Nevertheless, the subject is not exhausted, and I shall now add something to what has been advanced, particularly on one branch on which I did not before touch, I mean *family religion*; a necessary and important branch indeed, but one seldom treated on in public, and sadly neglected in private. And that I may lay

down a proper foundation for what I have to say concerning this point, I shall consider,

I. THE NATURE OF JOSHUA'S RESOLUTION.

This will easily appear, if we observe, that his resolution was not like that of a mere nominal inconsistent professor, either of Judaism or Christianity, who "professes to know GOD, but by works denies him;" who "names the name of CHRIST," or of Moses, but does "not depart from iniquity."

Nor does it resemble the resolution of an empty formalist, who mistakes an external round of duties for the true and spiritual worship of GOD; forgetting that religion has its soul as well as its body, its substance as well as its shadow, and that there may be a form of godliness without the power thereof, and a name to live when a person is dead.

Nor is it the resolution of a self-righteous moralist, who mistakes the serving, or, rather, the not *dis*-serving man for the serving of GOD, and substitutes the not doing harm to his fellow-creatures for the glorifying his Creator.

Nor is it similar to the resolution of the ignorant and high-minded enthusiast, who mistakes the extravagant sallies of his heated imagination, or the uncertain emotions and fluctuations of his own passions, for the inspiration of the SPIRIT of GOD, and the graces flowing from it.

But it is the resolution of an *enlightened, awakened, justified, renewed, devoted, consistent, experienced believer.*

Of a BELIEVER. Faith has been, and is necessary under every dispensation, Patriarchal, Mosaic, or Christian; as the Epistle to the Hebrews, (ch. xi.) evidently shows; it was as necessary for Joshua as for us. For, "without faith it is impossible to please GOD." (Heb. xi. 6.)—It is necessary to believe in GOD, in his revealed will, in his declarations, promises, and threatenings. (Heb. iii. 19; iv. 3.) For want of this the Israelites perished in the wilderness; and for this Joshua and Caleb are so justly famed.

Of an ENLIGHTENED believer. Having a clear and distinct knowledge of him, whom he worships, (1 Chron. xxviii. 9.)—A knowledge of his law, its spirituality, its great extent, and obligation. This convinces of sin.—A knowledge of the service of GOD, as requiring us to worship him in spirit and in truth; (Matt. iv. 10; John iv. 23;) to obey him (Rom. vi. 16) from love; to promote

his glory. (1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 9.) In fine,—A knowledge of our own insufficiency, and where help may be found.

Of an **AWAKENED** believer.—Awakened out of the sleep of nature, (Eph. v. 14,) *i. e.* his insensible, unconcerned, and indolent state, as to spiritual things. Hence arises a just apprehension and sense of the majesty, power, holiness, justice, and goodness of God, producing reverence, awe, dread, fear of offending him, (Josh. xxiv. 14; Heb. xii. 28;) and of death, judgment, eternity, producing a deep concern and great diligence. This Joshua experienced. See the following verses.

Of a **JUSTIFIED** believer.—Abraham was justified, (Gen. xv. 6; Rom. iv. 3,) and David, (Psalm xxxii.,) and so, undoubtedly, was Joshua. This is the foundation of that confidence, and hope, love, peace, and joy, essential to the service of God. (Heb. ix. 14; iii. 6, 14.) For we are to serve as *sons*, and not merely as *servants*. (Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 5.)

Of a **RENEWED** believer.—Joshua was born in sin, like the rest of mankind, but born again and renewed. This is necessary; for we must “serve in newness of spirit,” which we cannot do without we obtain a new spirit and a new heart. (Matt. vii. 17; xii. 33; Luke vi. 43, 45.)

Of a **DEVOTED** believer.—Sensible of God’s mercy and love to him, and loving God in return, without which there can be no religion, (Deut. vi. 5; xxx. 6; 1 Tim. i. 5; 1 Cor. xiii. 1,) and saying, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits?”—dedicating all to him, and employing all for him.

Of a **CONSISTENT** believer.—Walking in all God’s ordinances, and worshipping him in spirit and in truth, keeping all his commandments from love, and with a single eye; endeavouring constantly to promote his glory; being “sober and righteous, as well as godly in this present world,” (Tit. ii. 12;) serving God in righteousness towards our neighbour, as well as in holiness towards himself. (Luke i. 75.)

Of an **EXPERIENCED** believer, who has made trial of this service.—

Therefore he could resolve for himself, in dependance on the grace he had already received, and still expected. And, as to his house, he knew either that they were like-minded with himself; or he purposed to use his endeavours that they might be so, and trusted in God, he should succeed.

II. WHETHER IT WAS A RESOLUTION SO REASONABLE AND WISE, THAT IT WOULD BE WELL FOR US TO IMITATE IT.

It was reasonable and wise, because Joshua knew that he was the CREATURE of GOD, who had been formed, and had received all his faculties and powers for this very end. (Acts xvii. 26, 27.)

He knew that he was a DEPENDANT creature—Living, moving, and having his being in GOD, and that he was spared and preserved for this end; not to eat, drink, or sleep; to gratify his senses and passions, or to please himself in any way, but to serve GOD. (Matt. iii. 10; Luke xiii. 6—9.)

AN OBLIGED creature.—Having received innumerable benefits and mercies for this end. (Rom. xii. 1.) If the ox knoweth and serveth his owner, surely Israel should know and serve GOD. He thought it reasonable that he should know and serve the kind hand that fed him, and the author of all his mercies.

A REDEEMED creature.—Joshua was redeemed out of Egypt, and we are redeemed from the wrath of GOD for this end. (2 Cor. v. 14, 15; 1 Cor. vi. 20; Tit. ii. 14, 15.)

A HIGHLY PRIVILEGED creature.—A member of the visible Church, and favoured with the light of the revelation of JESUS CHRIST for this end. (Eph. v. 8—10; 1 Pet. ii. 9.)

AN ACCOUNTABLE creature.—That must be judged, how he had answered the end of his creation, preservation, and redemption, and what use he had made of his talents.

A MORTAL creature.—Yet immortal, that must pass certainly, soon, perhaps to-morrow, from a state of trial, to a state of re-tribution.

He knew, therefore, that to serve GOD aright, was essential to his everlasting happiness; to his escaping hell and attaining heaven.

That it was essential to his present happiness; as he could not otherwise have peace of mind, a good conscience, a hope of immortality, the favour, protection, and care of GOD, his direction and aid, all things needful and useful, and all things working for his good.

That it was essential to his usefulness to others, and particularly to his own family, to whom, especially, GOD had called him to be useful.

That what was his duty and happiness was also *theirs*. Therefore, out of love, he resolves for them, that they should serve the LORD.

Nor can we doubt that it was pleasing to GOD that he should do his utmost to induce his family to serve GOD, and how certainly it was the way to the accomplishment of GOD's promises. (Gen. xviii. 19.)

On all these accounts his resolution was reasonable and wise, and, therefore, since we are not debarred, but at liberty so to do, we should imitate him..

III. HOW WE MAY BE ENABLED TO DO SO.

As to ourselves,

We must see that we lay a foundation for the service of God, in an acquaintance and reconciliation with him, adoption into his family, a new birth, in consequence of repentance and faith; whereby we receive an interest in, and union with CHRIST, and find in him righteousness and strength, and "grace to help in time of need."

We must make ourselves acquainted with every branch of the service of God, and of our duty.

We must not allow ourselves in the neglect of any branch of it, and, therefore, we must deny ourselves, and take up our cross.

We must be found in the constant use of the means, that the edge of our minds, when blunted, may be sharpened, and grace may be continued to us, and increased in us.

As to our families,

We must be deeply concerned that they should serve him. We shall be desirous that all men should serve God, if we love them. But much more will our family be objects of this concern, because we are more nearly related to them, and have more love towards them; they are peculiarly entrusted to our care, and we shall be made accountable for that trust. So that not only love to them, but fear for ourselves, should influence us, in a religious care over them.

We must set them a good example, and show,—that we serve God ourselves, and are neither hypocrites, which they may be apt to suspect, nor formalists;—that we consider the serving of God as of greater importance than any thing else about which they may be occupied, and that we can more easily excuse any thing than their neglecting to serve God.

We must instruct them, (Deut. vi. 6—9,) converse with them, read to them, make them read,—(and here we may remark the importance of children, servants, and apprentices learning to read,—) we must bring them under the word preached, if possible, two or three times every LORD'S day, and at other times, and inquire what they can remember of what they have heard.

We must catechise them. This is the doctrine of the LORD. Bring up your children "in the nurture and admonition," (*παιδεία καὶ νομοθεσία*), in the *discipline* and *instruction* "of the LORD." (Eph. vi. 4.) Discipline must be used by us, as it was by Abraham, "I know that he will *command* his children." (Gen. xviii. 19.)

We must also encourage them, and excite them every way in our power.

We must give them proof that we are actuated only by love to them.

We must pray for them; for each child by name, and must pray with them, and put them upon praying for themselves.

We must persevere in this exercise, notwithstanding all discouragements.

As a motive to this labour, for the benefit of our children, it may be mentioned, that we have been instrumental in bringing them into the world; and shall we not endeavour to save them from hell?

XV.

THE WISDOM OF EARLY PIETY.

2 CHRON. xxxiv. 3.

While he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David his Father.

THIS is spoken of Josiah, one of the best of the Kings of Judah, descended from David. Of these, the names of several have been handed down to their eternal dishonour, as Rehoboam, Jehoram, Ahaziah, Ahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah. They were a curse to the people over whom they reigned, and countenanced and encouraged them in idolatry and other sins, till, at length, GOD'S wrath came upon them, in a most signal and awful manner. This wickedness, however, was greatly checked by several kings, of the same line, of a very different spirit and conduct, whose names are recorded to their everlasting honour, as Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah. These, with the

help of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, were enabled to work partial reformatations, and through them the destruction was delayed, and space was given for repentance; but, alas! without any lasting good effect. (Read ch. xxxvi. 14—22.)

Of these good kings, Josiah was the last, and was a signal blessing to the country. (ch. xxxiv. 30—34.) He also kept a passover. (ch. xxxv. 1, 18.) God himself said to him, by Huldah, a prophetess, "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same." (ch. xxxiv. 27, 28.) And see with what honour he is spoken of by the sacred historian, ch. xxxv. 25—27! Now observe the beginning of all this goodness and greatness; "While he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father." Consider we,

I. IN WHAT SENSE, OR IN WHAT RESPECTS HE SOUGHT AFTER GOD.

This does not imply that God was far from him, or that he is far from any of us. He is "about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways." (Psalm cxxxix. 3.) "In him we live, and move, and have our being." But Josiah was, as all are by nature, alienated from the knowledge, favour, image, and enjoyment of God, and these he sought after, as absolutely necessary to his happiness here and hereafter.

He sought after an acquaintance with him.—He had heard of him, and of the wonderful things which he had done for Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan.—He believed in his being and attributes, and the revelation he had made of his will by Moses, and such prophets as had written. But he was not yet truly and savingly acquainted with him. (Job xxii. 21.)

What is implied in this acquaintance may be illustrated by the difference between believing or knowing that a person exists, and possesses certain qualities, and being acquainted with him; for this implies some intimacy and intercourse. This acquaintance we may have with God. — — —

A true and saving acquaintance with God is always productive of certain effects; where these fruits are not, it does not exist. *e. g.* An acquaintance with his glory and majesty, as his self-existence, independence, infinity, eternity, supremacy, produces veneration, adoration, and praise, internal and

exalted.—An acquaintance with his omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, produces reverence, awe, solemnity, seriousness, and watchfulness.—An acquaintance with his greatness, holiness, justice, produces humility, self-abasement, contrition, godly sorrow. (Job xl. 4, 5; xlii. 6; Psal. viii. 3, 4; Isai. vi. 5).—An acquaintance with his mercy and faithfulness (Jer. xxxi. 34) produces confidence, (Psalm ix. 10,) hope, and joy.—An acquaintance with his love, *etc.* his loveliness, and loving-kindness, produces esteem, love, and gratitude. (1 John iv. 8.)—An acquaintance with his equity, goodness, sovereignty over us, and government of us, produces subjection and obedience. (1 John ii. 3, 4.)

To obtain this acquaintance, we must consider his works of creation and redemption, the dispensations of Providence, and the revelation he has made of himself in his word. We must have the spirit of wisdom and revelation, to be asked in prayer. Josiah undoubtedly sought it in this way.

He sought after his favour, or reconciliation with him. We are naturally at enmity with him, guilty, condemned by his law, and exposed to wrath. This reconciliation is only to be obtained through a Mediator and his sacrifice,—typified by the Jewish high-priest, and the sacrifices of their law,—in the way of repentance and faith. Josiah saw his need of this. (ver. 21, 27.)

He sought after a conformity to him; to recover his image and partake of his divine nature. This is to be obtained, through the influence of the word and Spirit, by hearing, reading, and prayer.

He sought after communion with him, and the enjoyment of him as his portion. Thus did his ancestor, David, continually. This he would seek in and by his word, ordinances, and providences.

He sought to know God's will concerning him, and his duty in the station in which he was placed. This he would seek in the use of prayer, and every proper means.

II. HIS REASONS FOR DOING THIS.

He knew that his rational and immortal nature, endued with intelligence and liberty, had been given him, that he might become acquainted with God, and that, otherwise, it would have been sufficient for him to have had an inferior nature.

—That his privileges and advantages, as a member of God's visible church, had been granted for this end, as circumcision, and other ordinances, the oracles of God, the society of his people. That had it not been for this, he might as well not have been favoured with these, but have been born and brought up a heathen.

—That his forefathers had been redeemed out of Egypt, and

that he and all mankind would be redeemed by the life and death of the Messiah for this end.

—That it was for this end he was spared and preserved on earth, and for which, life and all things were continued to him.

—That he should be called to an account by the Lawgiver and Governor of the world, the final Judge of all men, perhaps *here*, but certainly hereafter, for the use he had made of his powers, privileges, and blessings.

—That it was his absolute duty, both that he might answer the end of his creation, and manifest gratitude to God for his mercies; as well as obedience to his express and often-repeated commands. (Isai. lv. 6.)

—That it was his great, nay, and greatest interest, in time and in eternity; that godliness has even the promise of this life; (Psalm lxxxiv. 11;) that protection, counsel, peace, hope, joy, and all felicity, are to be thus attained, and hereafter eternal felicity.

III. WHETHER HE ACTED WISELY IN DOING IT, WHILE HE WAS YET YOUNG.

Why should he thus seek after God, “while yet young?” Why should he not rather enjoy the pleasures of the world, and defer seeking after God till he was in declining years?—Because he knew that what was always reasonable, proper, and necessary to be done, could not be done too soon.—

—That the pleasures of true religion far exceed all the pleasures of the world.—

—That what are called the pleasures of the world are all empty and vain, “broken cisterns,” “wells without water;” uncertain, as depending on the continuance of health, the use of the faculties and members, the possession of means; and at best transitory; and, when pursued rather than God and independent of him, that they are all bitter, and leave a sting behind.

—That by first acquainting himself with God, and making his peace with him, he should enjoy, to the best purpose, whatever is to be enjoyed in the world.

—That by beginning to seek after God early, he should secure his favour, and support, direction, and care, and should escape many snares, errors, sins, and miseries, which he would otherwise fall into.

—That, as man is “born to trouble,” and he could not possibly escape it, at all times, he would in this way find consolations.

tion, and "help in every time of need." In this way also he would obtain the sanctification of his troubles, that they might "work for good," and afterwards "yield the fruits of righteousness."

—That delays were dangerous, and, if he should neglect to seek God "while yet young," he might never do it at all; as God might deny him grace and an opportunity, taking him away by an early and unexpected death.

APPLICATION.

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XVI.

HUMAN FRAILTY AND DIVINE CONDESCENSION.

JOB xiv. 1—3.

*Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble.
He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth
also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open
thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment
with thee?*

THE subject of these striking observations of Job, and of the inquiry founded upon them is MAN, the last and most perfect of all God's works, the master-piece of the creation, concerning whom, before he was made, a council of the subsistences, or persons of the Godhead, was called, and the conclusion was, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" of whom accordingly it was said, "God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him." His body was "fearfully and wonderfully made;" furnished with members, all convenient for use, and senses, all inlets to instruction and pleasure, being a medium of intercourse between him and the world, in which he was placed, and adapted to apprehend, receive, and enjoy all the astonishing qualities of it; light, sound, taste, smell, and feeling.

†

In his body was placed a spiritual principle, immaterial, invisible, active, intelligent, free, pure, immortal; capable of discernment, judgment, choice, affection, as well as delight in the use of those powers; possessed of knowledge, holiness, righteousness; bearing God's moral as well as natural image, and resembling him in all that is wise, holy, and happy.

But it is not of man, as he came out of the hands of his Maker, that Job here speaks. He was not "of few days," but designed to be immortal;—was not "full of trouble," but perfectly free from it;—was not "a flower" fading, or to be cut down, but designed to flourish in immortal youth and beauty;—was not a continually changing and fleeting "shadow;" but a being possessed of permanent life, health, youth, beauty, and felicity. It is of fallen man the patriarch here speaks; of "man, born of a woman." He may refer to the first woman *Eve*, who was the mother of all living, and, being deceived by the tempter, was first in the transgression. Of her we are all born, and, consequently, derive from her that sin and corruption, which both shortens our days, and renders them a scene of sorrow and trouble. Or, he may refer to every man's immediate mother. The woman is the weaker vessel, and, as the saying is, *partus sequitur ventrem*, the child takes after the mother. The strong man, therefore, must not glory in his strength, or in the strength of his father, but remember, he is born of a woman, even a weak creature. Hence our weakness and frailty.—

Being born of a "woman," we are not only born of that sex, by which sin and all calamity were brought into the world, but which, like the other sex, is corrupt and sinful, and through which sin and corruption are transmitted from one generation to another. For, (ver. 4,) "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." If man be born of parents that are sinners, how can he be but a sinner? (ch. xxv. 4.) How can he be clean, who is descended from sinful parents, and infected with original corruption? A pure offspring can no more come from unclean parents, than pure streams can proceed from an impure spring, or grapes from thorns. Our habitual corruption is derived with our nature, from our progenitors, and is, therefore, (if we may use the expression,) bred in the bone; our blood is not only attained by a legal conviction, but tainted with an hereditary disease. And hence flow all our actual transgressions, which are the natural product of internal and habitual corruption.

In discoursing further, on the words of the text, we shall consider,

I. WHAT THESE DECLARATIONS CONCERNING MAN IMPLY.

“Man is of few days.”—Not taking in the whole duration of his existence. If we fall into the lake of fire, our days will not be few. If we come to “Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” &c., our days will not be few.—But our days are few on earth; few in which to possess or enjoy any thing here; few to suffer any thing. The days of our trial are few; although the consequences everlasting. The days allotted us for rising out of the ruins of our fall are few; for recovering the knowledge and love, the favour, image, and communion of God; for working out our salvation; for serving God and our generation; for bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, and laying up for ourselves treasure in the heavens.—They are few compared with God’s eternity; (Psal. xc. 2, 4;) with the life of the antediluvians. In the Hebrew, the words of the text are “short of days,” or days curtailed and contracted, from what they were in the first ages.—They are few in themselves; not only a few years, or months, or weeks, but *few days*. (Psslm xxxix. 4, 5; xc. 10.)

“Life’s little stage is a small eminence,
Inch-high, the grave above; that home of man,
Where dwells the multitude.”——

.....“By life’s passing breath, blown up from earth,
Light as the summer’s dust, we take in air,
A moment’s giddy flight, and fall again;
Join the dull mass, increase the trodden soil,
And sleep till earth herself shall be no more.”

“And full of trouble.”—Man is not only *short-lived*, says one, but *sad-lived*. Although he had but a few days here, yet, if he might rejoice in those few, it were well; but it is not so. During those few days, he is not only *troubled*, but *full of trouble*. Hebrew שבע-ריג, “satur trepidæ corporis et animi commotionis,” *full of disquietude and commotion in mind and body*. The word is used of Abraham, (Gen. xxv. 8,) “an old man and *full of years*.”—Nothing that belongs to man is exempt from the attack of trouble. He is vulnerable in his character, by reproach, and slander; in his property, by losses, fraud, and violence; in his body, by various accidents, disease, and pain, from his infancy to his dissolution. His understanding, memory, conscience, will, affections, may all administer to his trouble. In his feelings and

sympathies with his relations, friends, his wife, children, &c., he is afflicted in their affliction, and troubled in their trouble. The more his family is multiplied, the more is he exposed to be wounded, through their misconduct or suffering, and his own toil and care for them. A day seldom passes without some cause of vexation and distress; some hurry; some disorder or other. He is *satur tremore*. The fewness of his days creates him continual trouble and uneasiness in the expectation of their close, and he always hangs in doubt of his life.

“He cometh forth like a flower;” which grows, expands, and is opened by degrees from the bud; which blossoms, appearing fair and beautiful, diffusing a sweet fragrance, and promising fruit.—Observe the child gradually formed in the womb, from the *punctum saliens*, the first principle of life, to the brain and spinal marrow; the head, heart; senses, members, afterwards protruded and opened by degrees.—When born, his understanding and all his faculties are gradually developed.—Observe him going forth into the world; probably favourable connexions and prospects open and extend themselves. He may be compared to a beautiful flower, both in body and mind!

“The morning flow’rs display their sweets,
And, gay, their silken leaves unfold;
As careless of the noon-day heats,
As fearless of the evening cold.

So blooms the human face divine,
When youth its pride of beauty shows;
Fairer than spring the colours shine,
And sweeter than the virgin-rose.”

The flower, perhaps, is fragrant, and diffuses all around instruction, edification, and comfort, as an agreeable and reviving odour, (2 Cor. ii. 14,) bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, through JESUS CHRIST, to the praise and glory of God.—But “he cometh forth like a flower, and is *cut down*;”—perhaps in infancy, in the getting teeth, by convulsions, by the measles, or other complaints;—in youth, by a consumption, a fever, or what is called an accident.—If not in these ways, by the sure and gradual decays of nature. “The grass,” which supports the flower, “withereth.” (Psal. xxxvii. 2.) But the flower generally fails before the grass:—the health, strength, youth, beauty; the judgment, memory, and intellectual endowments; the eyesight, hearing, feeling, taste, often fail before the life expires. If not, they wither together. (Jam. i. 10, 11.)

There is some, though little, solidity in the flower; but, behold, man is as "a shadow." "What is your life?" says St. James; "it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Nay, it is a shadow, in which there is appearance without substance, being caused by the obstruction of the light through the interposition of an opaque body, and being subject to constant variation, from the progress of the sun in the heavens, till, at length, it disappear, and is mingled with the shades of the evening. Thus the tragic Poet,

"Life's but a walking shadow."

And as this term expresses an imperfect and faint representation, in opposition to the substance of any thing, we may observe the greatest excellencies, found amongst mankind, are but some shadows of the divine perfection. And the best men are not so properly images of God, as shadows of his nature, wisdom, goodness, holiness, and dominion.

We consider,

II. THE INQUIRY FOUNDED THEREON.

"Dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?"

Dost thou, whose days have had no beginning, "open thine eyes" and notice one of yesterday? Thou, who art eternal, whose years "are throughout all generations," and "have no end," look on one of "few days." Dost thou, who art infinitely happy, look on one "full of trouble?" Thou who art independent, on a "flower," derived from seed, depending on the sun, the rain, the earth, and which is to be "cut down?" Thou, the self-existent and immutable, on "a shadow" that passeth by? Thou, "the Creator of the ends of the earth," who "createdst the heavens and stretchedst them out, who spreadest forth the earth and that which cometh out of it, who givest bread unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein," (Isai. xlii. 5,) on a mean and vile creature? "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" (Psalm viii. 3, 4.) Dost thou, who art infinite in wisdom, "open thine eyes," upon one living in a dark cottage of clay? Thou, the Almighty, on one without strength, "crushed before the moth?" (Job iv. 19.) Thou, the

Holy One of Israel, on a polluted sinner? Thou, the great Governor of the universe, on a slave of sin? "What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? and that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him? and that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" (Job vii. 17, 18.)

Dost thou "open thine eyes," to notice his conduct, his actions, his words, and even "the thoughts that come into his mind?" Yes; "The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." (2 Chron. xvi. 9.) He "visits him every morning, and tries him every moment."

Dost thou "open thine eyes" upon such an one, and "enter into judgment" with him, "correcting" him in measure for his offences? Yes; "Whom the LORD loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Prov. iii. 12; Heb. xii. 6.)

Dost thou, the most just and righteous, "open thine eyes," and pity and compassionate such an one? Yes; "The LORD is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works." (Psal. cxlv. 9.)

Dost thou so compassionate such an one, as to redeem and save him? Yes; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) "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." (1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) He "is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." (1 Tim. iv. 10.)

Dost thou, the Judge of angels, and of the heavenly hierarchies, enter into judgment with worms of the earth? Yes; "The Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." (Matt. xxv. 31, 32.) "God shall judge the secrets of men by JESUS CHRIST." (Rom. ii. 16.) "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Eccles. xii. 14.) "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things

which were written in the books, according to *their works.*" (Rev. xx. 11, 12.)

But will any consequences follow this solemn investigation? Yes; for man was formed after God's image, intelligent, free, accountable. Hence God "will render to every man according to his deeds," &c. (Rom. ii. 6, &c.) "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." (Rev. xxii. 12.) "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. xxv. 46.)

INFERENCES.

Are the days of man "few?" Then ought we not to consider this, and, instead of building our tabernacles here, prepare to remove into another world?—The days of our trial being few, ought we not to watch and pray, that we may conduct ourselves so as to be approved?—Are only a few days allotted us to rise out of the ruins of our fallen state? to work out our salvation? Then ought we not to improve them, and that without delay? Do we think these few days too many? Can we afford to waste, or throw away any of them? Is it wise? is it safe so to do?

Are our days "full of trouble?" Then why should we be attached to the present life, or the present world, in which we have so much trouble? Why unwilling to go, where trouble is no more? (Rev. xxi. 4.)

Are we "cut down as a flower?" soon? unexpectedly? and "flee as a shadow?" Then, let us not dare to defer turning to God one day or hour. Let us not build on the vapour or fleeting shadow of human life.

But, insignificant and frail as we are, the Lord's eyes, it seems, are fixed upon us? Then let us admire his condescension.

Does he observe our whole conduct? Let us then act as those who are under his eye.

Moreover, does he "open his eyes" upon us, in our fallen, sinful, and miserable state, with pity and compassion? and has he redeemed us, and is he willing to save us? Then let us confide in his mercy and love. Let us give ourselves up entirely to him, and apply, by faith in prayer for his salvation, complying cheerfully, readily, and resolutely with the terms on which he hath promised it in his Son, JESUS CHRIST.

To bring us to this, does he enter "into judgment" with us, by

correcting and chastising us? Then let us neither “despise the chastening of the LORD, nor faint when we are rebuked of him.”

And will he enter into judgment with us in the great day? and bring to light all the hidden things of darkness? Then let us prepare to meet him at his bar; and, “seeing that we look for such things, be diligent, that we may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.” (2 Pet. iii. 14.)

XVII.

DEATH SUCCEEDED BY IMMORTALITY.

JOB xiv. 10.

Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?

“O THAT they were wise,” said Moses, (Deut. xxxii. 29,) “that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.” “So teach us to number our days,” he says again, (Psalm xc. 12,) “that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” “LORD, make me to know mine end,” David prayed, (Psalm xxxix. 4,) “and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.” In these passages, we are taught, what has been acknowledged by the wisest and best of men in every age and nation, that the frailty and mortality of man is one of the most necessary and profitable subjects of contemplation and knowledge. It is the soil in which wisdom, in all its branches, is planted, and grows to best advantage. Whereas, not to consider this subject is the certain way to folly and misery in time and in eternity.

But who are most capable of discoursing on this subject? Who will instruct us to most advantage? Surely those whose own minds have been most impressed by it, and are most familiar with it; those who have walked most in the valley of the shadow of death, will instruct us best concerning it. Let us then hear this son of affliction, Job;—“Man born of a woman.” This expression is either used to intimate the cause of man’s misery, that he is born of a woman, a weak creature, (1 Pet. iii. 7,) and one corrupt and sinful, and of that sex by which sin and all cala-

man was brought into the world; (ch. xv. 14; Gen. iii. 17; 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14;) or to signify the universality of the thing;—only one man was to be born, and, afterwards, was born without a father, viz., our LORD JESUS CHRIST; but no man was ever born without a mother.—“Is of few days:” *few* compared with God’s eternity; (Psal. xc. 1—12;) with the antediluvians; for the life of man is now contracted, and cut short; *few* in themselves; “Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee.” (Psal. xxxix. 5.) “As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.” (Psal. ciii. 15, 16.)—“And full of trouble,”—disquietude, fluctuation, fear, and distress; including the uncertainty of life, and every thing in it; the vanity of it, as answering no valuable end; the misery of it, through labour and toil, care and fear, disappointments and losses, ingratitude of friends, disobedience of children, pain and sickness of body in ourselves or those dear to us, anxiety and distress of mind.

And yet he promises better at his birth.—“He cometh forth,” out of his mother’s womb, “like a flower;” fair and flourishing, and promises to give, as well as receive, delight and pleasure. But he is “cut down,” by some sudden and untimely stroke of disease, or, if not, soon decays and withers by old age. “The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it.” (Isai. xl. 7.)—“Like a flower.” The expression may be intended to signify either the gradual opening of the parts and powers of man’s body; or the tender composition of man’s elegant frame, which is easily destroyed by the smallest accidents.

“He fleeth as a shadow;” a shadow made by the sun having nothing substantial in it, and being in perpetual uncertainty, till it quite disappear. (Psal. cii. 11.) Such is man, and such his enjoyments; so unsubstantial, uncertain, fleeting, and, with perpetual speed, hastening to their period!

“And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one?” to regard him, or take any thought or care about him. Or, to observe his ways, his tempers and behaviour, and make him accountable for them to thee. “And bringest him into judgment with thee?” chastising him, in the world; and, hereafter, trying him, and condemning him. Surely, this could not be, that God could “open his eyes” upon such a short-lived, miserable, and vanishing creature, were he not possessed of a rational and immortal soul!

“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” Job did

not pretend to be faultless; and thought it impossible, descended as he was from fallen and corrupt parents, from sinful Adam and Eve. He considered himself also unable to cleanse and purify his own nature, the corruption of which he regarded as the source of misery and mortality.

Hence, "his days are determined." Heb. *cut short, contracted*. The word here used is rendered, *maimed*, (Lev. xxii. 22;) signifying the loss of a limb by amputation. He alludes to the longevity of the antediluvians, and the present abbreviation of human life. "The number of his months are with thee;" *i. e.* at thy disposal. "Thou hast appointed his bounds," the limit of his days, beyond which he cannot prolong his life. Therefore, as if he said, "Let this short life, and unavoidable death, suffice for man's punishment; do not add further calamities."

"Turn from him," withdraw thine afflicting hand, "that he may rest," enjoy some little ease and comfort, "till he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day;" till he finish his course, and come to the period of his life, which thou hast allotted him, as a man appoints a set time to a hired servant. "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again;" but man, though a far nobler creature, is apparently in a worse condition, for when once he loseth his life in this world, he never recovers it. "Though the root wax old," begin to decay, "in the earth, and the stock die," to outward appearance, "yet through the scent of water, it will bring forth boughs, like a plant," or like a tree newly planted; "But man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"

Consider we

I. THE FRAILTY AND MORTALITY OF MAN.

"Man dieth." This is the language of *Scripture*, agreeably with the threatening denounced to our first parents should they sin, (Gen. ii. 16, 17,) the sentence pronounced upon them after their fall. (Gen. iii. 19.) Hence, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12; Heb. ix. 27.) In consequence of this, "all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." (Isai. xl. 6—8; 1 Pet. i. 24.)

Of *observation*. Where are the ancient generations, the ages past? Those that lived before the flood, though many of them lived eight or nine hundred years? Those that lived after the flood, and again peopled the earth? Where are the ancient and

powerful nations, the Assyrians, the Phenicians, the Babylonians, the Medes, the Persians, and the Carthaginians? — — —

Of *experience*. Our innumerable infirmities, afflictions, pains, are but so many precursors of death.

“And wasteth away;” the Hebrew word may mean, is debilitated and weakened. When the body is dead, man has not, like the root of a tree that is felled, any latent strength or vigorous principle remaining in him, to renew his life; (see ver. 7, 8.)

“A tree which falls beneath the wounding steel,
Hopes a new growth the cruel wound to heal;
Yea, though its sapless stock with age decay,
The roots half mould’ring in th’ unwatered clay,
Touch’d by the vital stream it buds around,
Like a young plant, with flowers and fruitage crown’d;
But man expir’d, what latent powers restore?
Man disappears, and who beholds him more?”

But the declaration of the text does not imply that man is annihilated after death. We therefore consider,

II. HIS IMMORTALITY,

“Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?”

Is he therefore lost? Did Job think so? No, certainly. He intimates the contrary in this very chapter, (ver. 12—15,) and more especially, in ch. xix. 25, 26. A future state was known, and expected by the Patriarchs and Prophets. (Heb. xi. 13—16, 19; Psal. xvi. 10, 11; xvii. 15; xlix. 15; xxiii.; xxxvi.; lxxiii; Isai. lvii. 1; Eccles. xii. 7; Dan. xii. 2; Wisdom iii. iv. 7.) The untimely and tragical death of Abel, together with the unequal distribution of rewards and punishments in this world, which they could not but observe, and likewise, the translation of Enoch, might confirm and strengthen this expectation; but it was most probably derived from Adam by tradition, and is very congenial to the mind of man, as appears in the case of the heathen, who had a faint hope of the same thing.

But “life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel.” —The immortality of the soul, is clearly ascertained from the following passages:—Matt. x. 28; Luke xvi. 19, &c.; xxiii. 43, 46; Acts vii. 59; 2 Cor. v. 1; Phil. i. 21; 1 Pet. iii. 19.—The resurrection of the body, from John v. 25, 28; Rom. viii. 10, 17; 1 Cor. xv. 20, 22; 1 Thess. iv. 13.—We shall

III. ANSWER THE QUESTION, AND SHOW FROM THE SCRIPTURE WHERE HE IS.

As to his body, he has joined the dust out of which he was taken, has been dissolved into the four elements out of which he was compounded; but his soul is in *adns*, the invisible world, till the resurrection. It is either in extreme misery on the one hand, (Luke xvi. 23, 25, 28; Jude 6, 7,) which misery will be much increased after the resurrection, and general judgment, when he shall be cast into the lake of fire; (Mark ix. 44, 46, 48; Matt. xxv. 41, 46; 2 Thess. i. 7, 8; Rev. xx. 10, 15;) or in exceeding great happiness on the other; in paradise, (Luke xxiii. 43,) with JESUS, (John xiv. 3; xvii. 24; 2 Cor. v. 1; Phil. i. 21; Rev. xiv. 13.) The happiness to be enjoyed will be much increased after the resurrection. On the state of the new-raised body, see Phil. iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 35, &c.; on the future habitation of the saints, see 2 Pet. iii. 13; Rev. xxi; called an inheritance, (1 Pet. i. 3;) an eternal weight of glory. (2 Cor. iv. 17.) It will include the vision and enjoyment of GOD; the society of angels and saints. (Rev. xxi. 3; Heb. xii. 22.) "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which GOD hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.)

But shall we obtain this happiness when we die? This depends on our repenting; (Luke xiii. 3, Acts iii. 19;) on our believing the Gospel, and on CHRIST, (Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 16; Acts xvi. 31;) on being in him; (Rom. viii. 1, Rev. xiv. 13;) and having him in us; (Col. i. 27;) on our being justified; (Rom. v. 1; Tit. iii. 7;) on our being converted and born again; (Matt. xviii. 3, John iii 3;) on our being sanctified, and made holy; (Heb. xii. 14; 2 Thess. ii. 13; Matt. v. 8; 1 John iii. 3;) on our obedience to the divine commandments; (Matt. vii. 21; Rom. ii. 6—11; Rev. xxii. 14.) Those who do not bear this character, and have not this experience, must have their part in the lake of fire.

INFERENCES.

Is death inevitable? Then let us lay it to heart. Let us "consider our latter end," that it may not surprise us unprepared.

Is life uncertain? Then let us not depend upon it, but sit loose from all terrestrial things.—

Is it short at the longest? Let us consider how much we have

to do, and not delay one moment, but look well to ourselves, lest we lose the ends which it is calculated to answer.

Is there a life after this? and an everlasting life, the happiness or misery whereof is so extreme? Let it then engross all our thoughts.

Is it impossible we should attain the happiness, or escape the misery of a future life, without we bear the character, and answer the description above given? Then, let us examine ourselves respecting these particulars,—and not rest till this character be ours. — —

XVIII.

THE BELIEVER WAITING FOR HIS CHANGE.

JOB xiv. 14, 15.

All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.

How just and important, and how well adapted to man in his present state of frailty and mortality, are the reflections contained in this chapter, and in many other parts of this admirable book!—"Man that is born of a woman;" a creature, weak, corrupt, and sinful, and of that sex by which sin, and a long train of other calamities were brought into the world; "is of few days;" few at the most, compared with the days of the first Patriarchs, much more in comparison with the days of eternity, "and full of trouble," liable to a great variety of miseries; exposed to labour and toil, affliction and pain, grief and fear; some cause of vexation and distress arising every day. "He cometh forth like a flower," tender and delicate, fair and beautiful, his faculties and members opening and expanding by degrees; "and is cut down;" by the scythe of some spreading malady, or cropped by the ruthless hand of some distemper, or withered by the frost of some lingering weakness. "He fleeth as a shadow;" which being caused by the sun,

follows its motions, and is in perpetual variation, till, at last, it quite vanish, and disappear. "And dost thou," the infinite and eternal $\text{J}\epsilon\theta\upsilon\sigma\alpha\eta$, the almighty Governor of all, "open thine eyes upon" a creature so insignificant and helpless, "and bringest me into judgment with thee;" pleadest with me by thy judgments, and thereby, in a manner, forcest me to plead with thee? With thee, who art so piercing in sight, to discover the least failing; so holy, to hate it; so just, to condemn it; so mighty, to punish it? The consideration of our inability to contend with God, and of our sinfulness and weakness, should engage us to pray, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O LORD; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."—"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" I confess I am an unclean creature, and therefore abhorrent to thy holiness, and obnoxious to thy justice; but this is the common case of every man. Why then inflict such peculiar and extraordinary judgments upon me?—"Seeing his days are determined;" limited to a certain period; "the number of his months are with thee;" exactly known to thee, and in thy power and disposal; "thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;" a certain end of his days, beyond which he cannot prolong his life.—"Turn from him that he may rest, till he accomplish, as a hireling, his day." As the poor mercenary gladly rests when he has finished the work of the day, and received his wages; so must that be an acceptable and joyful time, which puts a period to the life and sufferings of a man sinking under accumulated troubles, and which introduces him into a state of perfect rest and endless felicity.—"For there is hope of a tree if it be cut down," if the stump only be left in the ground, that "it will sprout again." Heb. $\eta\lambda\iota\tau$, *will yet renew itself*, will revive and flourish as the spring comes on. "Though the root thereof wax old and the stock die," in appearance, "yet through the scent of water," or by means of moisture from the earth, and rain; scent or smell being here figuratively ascribed to a tree; "it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man," though of so much nobler nature, "dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"

Two words are here used for man, the one signifying "a mighty man," the other "a man of earth;" but though mighty, he dies; being made of earth, he returns to it. He "dieth and wasteth away;" before death he is dying daily, continually wasting away; in death, he "gives us the ghost;" the spirit leaves the body, and returns to God, the Father of spirits, who gave it. After death, "where is he?" Not where he was; his place

knows him no more; his body, all that was visible of him is rotting away in the grave. But where is the thinking, intelligent principle, the self-conscious being, the proper man? Is this no where? Yes, it is somewhere; and it is a very awful consideration to think, where they are that have given up the ghost, and where we shall be when we give it up. It is gone into the world of spirits; gone into eternity; gone to return no more to this world. "As the waters fail from the sea." This may mean either, As the waters go, or flow out from the sea, and return no thither again. (Eccles. i. 7.) Or, as some portion of the waters are exhaled from the sea, by the sun, or are received and sunk into the dry and thirsty earth; Or, as the waters of the sea fail when they forsake the place into which they used to flow; "And the flood," river or lake, (for the word signifies any considerable confluence of waters,) "decayeth and drieth up," in a season of great drought, so that the same waters never return to their former places. So it is with man; when once the fountain of life is dried up, he dies, and never revives again in the present life. "Man lieth down," in his bed, the grave, sleeping the sleep of death, "and riseth not till the heavens be no more;" until the time of the general resurrection and restitution of all things, when these visible heavens shall pass away for ever; or, at least, exist no more in the same form in which they are now. The meaning of the passage is, that as we see every thing fluctuating and subject to change, so the whole shall one day be changed. The sea itself will at length be absorbed; and the running rivers which now perpetually flow, as if supplied by everlasting springs, will nevertheless, in time, quite cease and disappear. This visible frame of things shall be dissolved, and the present heavens shall be no more; and then, and not before, will be the resurrection and general judgment.—"O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, and keep me secret!" The grave is not only a resting place, but a *hiding-place* to the children of God. In the grave they are concealed, as treasure in a place of secrecy and safety. O that thou wouldest hide me, not only from the storms and troubles of this life, but for the bliss and glory of a better life! "Until thy wrath be past." As long as our bodies lie in the grave, we experience some effects of God's wrath against sin; but when the body is raised, that wrath is wholly past, and death, the last enemy, is totally destroyed. "That thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me;" not only fix a time when thou wilt end my sufferings, and my life, but when thou wilt remember my flesh, lodged in the grave, as thou didst remember Noah and "every living

thing," in the ark. (Gen. viii. 1.) "If a man die shall he live again?" He shall not in this world; but he shall in another and a better; and therefore, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

Let us consider,

I. THE CHANGE HERE SPOKEN OF.

This was evidently intended of death, which, certainly, makes a wonderful change in the state and condition of every one, in whom it takes place, removing us from the visible and temporal to the invisible and eternal world;—from the society of men in the flesh, to the society of spirits, good or bad, happy or miserable, who have put off the body;—from a state of trial, now for ever ended, to a state of final and everlasting recompense;—from a state of incessant change and fluctuation, to a state permanent and constant;—from a mixed state of ignorance and knowledge, folly and wisdom, sin and holiness, misery and happiness, to a state of un-mixed wisdom or folly, holiness or sin, happiness or misery.

"It must be done, my soul, but 'tis a strange,
A dismal, and mysterious change,
When thou shalt leave this tenement of clay,
And to an unknown somewhere wing away;
When time shall be eternity, and thou
Shalt be thou know'st not what, and live thou know'st not how."

The change, however, here intended, is not that which passes on the wicked at death, but that which Job expected to pass on himself; and which passes on all the truly righteous. Accordingly the word used, in the original, *חֲלִיפָה*, properly signifies a change for the better, a renewal.

This leads me to observe, that the change which will pass on the saints at the general resurrection and final judgment, is here especially intended, when JESUS shall transform "their vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," and cause their corruptible body to put on incorruption, and their mortal, to put on immortality, their dark, dead, gross, and sluggish body of flesh and blood, and bones, to become spiritual, luminous, active, and full of life and vigour, perfect and everlasting, incapable of any infirmity, affliction, or pain, and much more of death and dissolution. For though it is sown, immediately after death, "in corruption," being ready to putrefy, and by the various degrees of

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corruption and decay, to return to the dust from whence it came; "it is raised in incorruption," utterly incapable of either dissolution or decay; though "sown in dishonour," shocking to those who loved it best, human nature in disgrace, "it is raised in glory," clothed with robes of light suited for those whom the King of heaven delights to honour; though "sown in weakness," deprived of that feeble strength it once enjoyed, "it is raised in power," endued with vigour, strength, and activity, such as we cannot now conceive; though "sown a natural body," or rather an *animal body*, supported by food, sleep, and air, "it is raised a spiritual body," of a more refined texture, needing none of those animal refreshments, and endued with qualities of a spiritual nature, like the angels of God. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written," with respect to the animal body, (Gen. ii. 7,) "The first man Adam was made a living soul;" God gave him an animal life, in many respects resembling that of other living creatures; "the last Adam was made," or rather *was*, or *is*, "a quickening spirit." Having life in himself, and quickening whom he will, he shall impart even a more refined life to men's bodies at the resurrection, than that which they formerly possessed. CHRIST is called *Adam*, because believers receive their sanctified spiritual nature, and their immortal bodies from him, just as mankind have derived their corrupted nature and mortal bodies from the first Adam. He is also called the *last Adam*, because he is posterior in time to the first Adam, or because there shall be no restorer and head of the human race after him. "Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterwards, that which is spiritual." As the first Adam existed before CHRIST was sent to assume our nature, and become our Saviour, so must we first wear that animal body, which we derive from the one, before we put on that spiritual body which we receive from the other. (1 Cor. xv. 42—46.)

Again, the change intended in this passage is from earth, a world suited to our state of infancy and childhood,—for

"This is [only] the bud of being, the dim dawn,
The twilight of our day, the vestibule:
Life's theatre as yet is shut, and death,
Strong death, alone can heave the massy bar,
This gross impediment of clay remove" —

to heaven, where none of the imperfections of earth can have any place, and GOD will, doubtless, give unspeakably greater displays

of his divine perfections, especially of his wisdom, power, and goodness, than he has given in this earth, and the surrounding heavens; while our incorruptible and immortal bodies will be furnished with senses and other powers perfectly fitted to open a communication between our spirits and that world, and to give us a perfect view, and full knowledge of, all the wonders it contains, and to hold communion with its most wise, holy, happy, and glorious inhabitants, and especially with the LORD of glory, and with his and our everlasting Friend and Father. In prospect of all these and other nameless and indescribable felicities and glories, let us observe,

II. JOB'S RESOLUTION WITH RESPECT TO IT :

“All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.”

The time is foreseen and allowed by GOD. Thus, (ch. vii. 1,) “Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?” Not that this implies GOD has determined exactly the number of days, hours, and minutes, which belong to every man's life on earth; for it is very certain, that men may, and often do, shorten their days, by intemperance, and other vices, as well as by imprudence; while many lay violent hands upon themselves, none of which things certainly can be appointed by GOD, but are expressly forbidden.

But the word *אָבָה*, here rendered *appointed time*, more properly signifies *the time of my warfare, or service, or suffering*.—Of my *warfare*, with my spiritual enemies; as the devil, of equal subtlety and power; the world, which assails us in all circumstances of prosperity or adversity, wealth or power, honour or dishonour, pleasure or pain; the flesh, with its lusts and passions; sin, deceitful and malignant; death, arrayed in terror.—Of my *service*, of GOD and my fellow-creatures, in that post or station of life which is assigned me by my sovereign LORD and Master. “I will wait, till I am released from it;” Job may be conceived to say, by “my change.”—Of my *suffering*, in various ways, through the permission or appointment of Divine Providence, whether for my chastisement, trial, or purification.

III. THE MANNER IN WHICH HE WAITED, AND IN WHICH WE MUST WAIT, FOR OUR CHANGE.

In FAITH; respecting the being and perfections of GOD, his wisdom, goodness, holiness, and power; and the relations in which

he stands to his people, as their Creator, Benefactor, Governor, Saviour; (Heb. xi. 6;)—respecting the declarations and promises of his word, believing and relying on them, and on him in whom they are “yea and amen.” “Thou shalt call,” said he; at death thou shalt call my body to the grave, and my soul to thyself; “and I will answer thee;” I will immediately and cheerfully reply, “Here I am.” Enlightened and gracious souls, in every age and nation, readily answer death’s summons. Their spirits are not forcibly “required of them,” as was that of the rich man, (Luke xii. 20,) but willingly resigned by them, and the earthly tabernacle not violently “pulled down,” but voluntarily “laid down.”—At the resurrection “thou shalt call me” out of the grave, “and I will answer,” and come at thy call, “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” (ch. xix. 25—27.) Thus did Job express himself. And yet he lived long before “life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel,” or, as is probable, before any written Divine Revelation was given to men respecting a future state of blessedness. How much more may *we* use this language, who have had the most perfect and satisfactory information given us on the subject by the Prophets and Apostles, and by the Son of God himself, the faithful and true witness, sealing the infinitely important doctrine by their blood, and confirming it by miracles many and mighty; *We*, who have had an example of it in the resurrection of God’s eternal Son, the first fruits of them who sleep; *We*, who have heard the infallible testimony of Inspiration, that when the body returns to the dust as it was, “the spirit returns to God, who gave it;” that as soon as the spirits of the saints “are absent from the body, they are present with the Lord;” as soon as they depart hence, “they are with Christ,” and with “the spirits of the just made perfect;” that as he comes at the period of death, and receives their souls “to himself,” that “where he is,” even in paradise, “they may be also;” so that he shall even “quicken their mortal bodies,” which “shall hear his voice and live;” yea, that “all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (John v. 28, 29.)

With a much better ground for confidence, then, than Job could have; may we say, “Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee,” relying on him to make his word good; and with more

assurance than he could obtain, may we add, "Thou shalt have a desire to the work of thine hands;" a love for the soul, which thou hast made, and new-made by thy grace; and for the body which is also the work of thy hands, and for which thou hast prepared glory in a future world; especially as thou hast become incarnate, lived and died to save both, bought them both with thy precious blood, and hast thereby shown what a high value thou puttest on both.

Now it is by this faith "the just live," till "he that shall come, do come, and do not tarry." (Heb. x. 37.) By this we are entitled to the blessed change here spoken of, are fitted for it, and have an anticipation of it. By this we are brought into, and guided in the way leading to it, are strengthened to begin and proceed therein, and enabled to persevere.—Without faith we cannot war a good warfare, cannot even have courage and fortitude for the conflict; faith being the means of girding the Christian soldier's loins about with truth, and, joined with love, constituting his "breastplate of righteousness," (1 Thess. v. 8,) and "the shield by which he quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked." (Eph. vi. 16.) Without it we cannot accomplish, as a hireling, our day of service, (ver. 6,) can neither have inclination, nor power to obey the Divine will, and live to his glory; and without it we cannot receive with resignation, nor be supported under our sufferings. — — —

IN HOPE;—A well-grounded and lively expectation of the future reward to be received; of the joys and glories to be conferred upon us, when the fore-mentioned change takes place. This hope lays us in the dust in humility, under a sense of our unworthiness, inflames us with gratitude, for the Divine goodness, (1 Pet. i. 3,) causes us to "rejoice with joy unspeakable." (Rom. v. 2; xii. 12.) It is our helmet in "the Christian warfare," and our anchor when wind and tide are against us on our voyage to the port of bliss. It produces alacrity, zeal, and diligence in all our services, and makes us resigned and patient under all our sufferings. (1 Thess. i. 3.) For we must "wait for our change,"

IN PATIENCE and RESIGNATION;—Of which, amidst our various trials and troubles, we have peculiar need; (Heb. x. 36;) and to work which, those trials and afflictions are sent, or permitted to come upon us. (Rom. v. 3; James i. 3.) In order to this, we must be persuaded that they do not come by chance, but that the hand of a wise Providence is in them; that God, who has provided such a blessed and glorious change for us, will not suffer any affliction or trouble to come upon us, but what he sees to be needful, or will be useful to prepare us for that change, what he intends

shall work for our good, and will enable us to endure and sanctify to us, and will amply recompense us for patiently bearing. (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.) Hence we must not faint, but "let patience have her perfect work." (Jam. i. 4; v. 7, 8.)

In CONTENTMENT;—with our present lot and situation, be it what it may, knowing that it is assigned us by the infinitely wise, holy, just, and good God, and "that the time is short."

In ZEAL;—persevering, and increasing zeal and diligence in doing well, (Rom. ii. 7; Gal. vi. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 58,) attending to the motive from which, the end to which, the rule by which, and the spirit in which we speak and act; "continuing in the faith, grounded and settled, and not being moved away from the hope of the Gospel," (Col. i. 23,) "being faithful unto death," "enduring to the end."

XIX.

AN ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD A SOURCE OF THE GREATEST GOOD.

JOB xxii. 21.

Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee.

Good is the desire and pursuit of all, but respecting what is truly good, and how that good is to be attained, men differ widely, and mistake grievously. The opinions of the ancient heathen philosophers, concerning the *summum bonum*, or *chief good*, according to Varro, were no fewer than 288. Indeed, they were as endless, as they were contradictory to each other. Some placed it in one thing, and some in another; but none in the right. And, though we, who are favoured with a revelation from the infinitely wise God, to direct us in this inquiry, are wiser than they in theory; yet, in practice, unless regenerated by Divine grace, we are equally mistaken and deluded, seeking happiness from day to day, in those things in which reason, Scripture, and experience, assure us it is not to be found. For we pursue and accumulate

outward things, such as wealth, honour, and carnal pleasure, to fill up that want of happiness, which is internal, and which only something inward and spiritual can supply ;—an acquaintance with God, the chief good, and peace with him. “ Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace ; thereby good shall come unto thee.”

This advice was given of old by Eliphaz to his friend Job, whose case he seems to have mistaken ; inferring, from the outward troubles that had befallen Job, that he was unacquainted with God, and at enmity with him. This, certainly, was not the case ; and yet, as appears from ch. xlii. 5, 6, he had not that deep acquaintance with God, which he needed, and afterwards obtained. This advice, then, was not improper as given to him ; but how much more proper, as given to most of us !

Consider

I. THE REASON WHY THIS ADVICE WAS GIVEN ; OR, WHAT IS PRE-SUPPOSED BY IT.

It was given, because of our natural ignorance of God, and insensibility with respect to his nature and attributes. (1 Cor ii. 11, 14 ; Matt. xi. 27.) We are naturally ignorant and insensible of his great power, glory, and majesty, and of our absolute dependence upon him, for life, and breath, and all things. Hence our indifference about him, disobedience to him, and disregard of him.—Of his holiness, justice, and truth. Hence our hope to please him by a merely outward, partial, and inconstant obedience ; and, as if we had performed that obedience, or could at any time perform it, our self-confidence and pride. Thus the Jews. (Rom. x. 2, 3.)—Of his mercy and love. Hence presumption, distrust, ingratitude.

Because of our alienation from him ; (Eph. iv. 18, 19 ;) including not only an absence of communion with him, of delight in him, or desire after him ; but a separation, and estrangement from him, and a disaffection to him. This appears by our inordinate desire after, and delight in the creature, in which we naturally seek all our happiness. (Jer. ii. 13 ; 1 John ii. 15.)

Because we are at enmity with him ; (Col. i. 21 ; Rom. v. 10 ;) not subject to him ; but subject to, and siding with, his enemies ; and fighting against him. This appears in our disobedience to his commands, and repining under sufferings.

Because we are at enmity with ourselves. Our judgment and

conscience are at war with our will and affections. Our passions are in a state of anarchy and disorder. (Isai. lvii. 20, 21.)

Because we are at enmity with others. We are full of anger, malice, envy ; "hateful, and hating one another."

Because, as must follow from the preceding particulars, we are devoid of all just confidence, or genuine tranquillity and peace.

Hence the advice in the text pre-supposes our misery, which outward things can no more relieve, than fine clothes, put on an ulcerated, sick, or tortured body, can give it ease ; or than gold put into the pocket, can quench the thirst, or appease the hunger of the stomach.

II. WHAT THIS ADVICE IMPLIES.

"Acquaint thyself with him ;" *i. e.* know him, as to his great glory and majesty ; view him as self-existent, who owes his being and blessedness only to himself ; as independent, supreme, eternal, incomprehensible, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, — — — ; as the Maker, Upholder, and LORD of all ; from whom all creatures have derived their being, and on whom they continually depend ; compared with whom, all nations and worlds are but as the "drop of a bucket," "as the small dust of the balance." (Isai. xl. 15, 18, 22, 26.) His works, especially of creation, are calculated to manifest him in this light to us, (Rom. i. 19, 20,) but much more his word and Spirit. Hence arise reverence and fear, (Jer. x. 6, 7,) humility and self-abasement. (Psal. viii. 4.)

Know him, as to his holiness, justice, and truth ; the purity of his nature ; (1 John i. 5 ;) the equity of his government ; (Deut. xxxii. 4 ;) as true to his promises and threatenings. (Deut. xxix. 18—20.) The dispensations of his Providence, as far as our present limited faculties can comprehend their nature and tendency, give us some view of this part of the Divine character. But his word chiefly discloses these attributes, and, particularly, the preceptive part of it, or his Law, but not without the Spirit of Truth. (John xvi. 8.) "I was alive without the law once ; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." (Rom. vii. 9.) Thus we are convinced of sin, of guilt, depravity, weakness, and misery, (Isai. vi. 5,) and brought to repentance. (Job xl. 4 ; xlii. 6.)

Know him, as to his mercy and love ; (Exod. xxxiii. 19 ; xxxiv. 6 ;)—as redeeming us by CHRIST ; (John iii. 16 ; 1 John iv. 9, 10 ;)—as justifying us through CHRIST. (2 Cor. v. 19—21 ; Rom.

iii. 23—26 ; Jer. xxxi. 34.) With these attributes we become acquainted, through the Gospel, by the exercise of faith in the truths and promises it contains, and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Now, having acquired this acquaintance with God, we shall be—At peace with him, (Rom. v. 1.) God is reconciled to us, and we to God. We have access to him with confidence, and we know him to be our friend, father, and husband.—At peace with ourselves. The judgment and conscience, which are now enlightened, are at peace with the will and affections, which are brought under due control ; the passions are also subdued ; we have freedom from guilt, fear, care, inordinate desire, discontent, and impatience. (Isai. lvii. 19 ; Phil. iv. 7 ; Col. iii. 15.)—We have confidence and tranquillity under all trials.—We are at peace with all men. Love and meekness are our ruling dispositions. We provoke none by doing injuries. When injuries are done to us, we do not resent them, but return love for hatred, and good for evil. How amiable and excellent is this religion !

.....“ And shall the victor now
Boast the proud laurels on his painted brow?
Religion ! O thou cherub ! heavenly bright !
O joys unmix'd and fathomless delight !
Thou, thou art all !”

III. THE ADVANTAGES WHICH WILL ACCRUE TO US FROM TAKING IT.

“ Thereby good shall come unto thee.”

SPIRITUAL GOOD.—Pardon for sin ; which may be considered as a debt, for which we are liable to be cast into the infernal prison. Would you not think the forgiveness of a large debt, a great blessing ; especially if you are poor, and have nothing to pay ? But sin is a crime, for which we deserve the vengeance of eternal fire. Would not a criminal, condemned to a gallows for theft, think the pardon of his crime a blessing ? It is as valuable as his life, for it saves from the loss of it. Thus sin may be regarded as a robbery of God, for which we are condemned to the second death. The forgiveness of sins releases us from this, and is consequently an invaluable blessing.—But “ the good that shall come to us,” includes also the favour of God, that is, of a Being infinitely great and good, whose favour is an infinite honour and advantage ; a Being of boundless wisdom, power, goodness ; able

by himself, immediately, or, mediately by his creatures, all of whom serve him, to do us the greatest good; a "God at hand and not afar off," who has also engaged by covenant not to depart from his people. (Jer. xxxii. 40.) Compared with the favour of such a Being, that of the greatest earthly prince, or even an archangel, is contemptible. Moreover, we are acknowledged and treated as his children. (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.) He loves us with approbation, delight, protection, care, intimacy. We are made his heirs, and joint heirs with CHRIST. [Compare this with being by nature, or adoption, a king's son.]—We have, further, a lively hope of eternal life, productive of purity, gratitude, joy, even joy unspeakable, and full of glory, (1 Pet. i. 3,)—and an earnest of this inheritance in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, giving us a foretaste of glory, by the knowledge, love, and enjoyment of God.

MORAL GOOD.—As to outward things, "all things needful;" (Matt. vi. 33;) all things useful; (Psalm lxxxiv. 11;) all apparent evils sanctified, and made to "work for our good." (Rom. viii. 28.) Thus is "godliness profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and," much more, "of that which is to come."—Protection and deliverance in time of public or private calamity.

ETERNAL GOOD.—We may notice the good that will come to us at death; though that be the period when we are to suffer a separation from all we hold valuable in this world; we shall have an approving God, a quiet conscience, a hope full of immortality, joy in the HOLY GHOST, communion with God, support under affliction. We shall have it in our power to say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."—

"As some tall tow'r, or lofty mountain's brow,
 Detains the sun illustrious from its height,
 While rising vapours, and descending shades,
 With damps and darkness, drown the spacious vale:
 At that black hour, which general horror sheds,
 On the low level of the inglorious throng;
 Sweet peace, and heavenly hope, and humble joy,
 Divinely beam on our exalted souls;
 Destruction gild, and crown us for the skies,
 With incommunicable lustre, bright."

—The good that will come to us, in the intermediate state, (2 Cor. v. 1; Phil. i. 21; Rev. xiv. 13,) in paradise, (Luke xxiii.

43; see also 2 Cor. xii. 3, 4.)—At the resurrection; when we look for the LORD JESUS CHRIST, “who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body.” (Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Cor. xv. 41—50.) An emblem of this we have, Matt. xvii. 2.—At the general judgment. We shall then receive a sentence of acquittal from the mouth of the Judge; be assessors with him in his judgment of our enemies, (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3,) and have “an entrance ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST.” (2 Pet. i. 11.)—In eternity. (Rev. xxi. 3—7, 22—27; xxii. 1—3, 5.)

IV. WE SHALL APPLY THE SUBJECT, BY URGING AN IMMEDIATE COMPLIANCE WITH THE ADVICE IN THE TEXT, AND SHOWING THE WAY HOW TO COMPLY WITH IT.

Are you acquainted with God? [Recapitulate what has been said, by way of examination.] If not, you cannot be possessed of real peace and happiness now. These you will seek in vain from outward things. And, continuing in this state, you will be miserable hereafter, notwithstanding all your forms of religion, acts of charity, or doctrinal opinions.

You must know God.—What avails your knowledge of other persons and things? Be acquainted and in friendship with him. You should be even intimate with him, and live in fellowship and communion with him.—What avails any other acquaintance or friendship? How little good can arise from the best and most desirable human connections or friendships, in comparison with that to be derived from an acquaintance with God! This is an individual duty. “Acquaint thyself with God,” thou sinner, whether thy iniquities be open or secret,—thou pharisee,—thou formalist,—thou backslider. — — —

Know him “*now*.”—Hast thou not been unhappy long enough?—Canst thou be happy too soon?—Hast thou not, by thy delay, injured thyself, and grieved God long enough? What, if his Spirit should strive no more with thee?—Know him *soon* or *never*. Death is at hand, and may come to-morrow, nay, to-night.

But, do you ask, how you are to know him?—Consider the works of creation,—the dispensations of Providence,—the word of God.—Pray for the HOLY SPIRIT, earnestly, with perseverance, and in faith.—Repent and forsake sin. (Isa. lv. 6, 7.)

XX.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD THE HIGHEST WISDOM.

JOB xxviii. 28.

Unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

As certainly as reason raises man above the brute creatures; so certainly does wisdom raise one man above another. This is, indeed, generally allowed, and, therefore, it is thought to be the greatest commendation we can, ordinarily, bestow upon any one, to say that "he is a *wise man*." On the other hand, to call a man a "fool," is deemed the greatest reproach. Yet, much as the reputation of wisdom is valued, and the imputation of folly resented, the generality of mankind are very fools. Most men mistake in what wisdom itself consists; others mistake the way to attain it. The greatest pretenders to wisdom often place it in some comparatively little, mean, and trivial object, and do not give it a latitude, commensurate to the state, nature, and endless existence of mankind. Hence, one esteems it the only wisdom to be a good politician; another to be well informed respecting the works of nature; a third to be a good linguist, &c. But these are very partial objects of wisdom; their effects inconsiderable, and of short duration. Nor are they adapted to the state of all men, nor attainable by all, and, therefore, are not wisdom, properly and emphatically so called.

Job, after a diligent search for wisdom, (ver. 12,) at length draws two conclusions;—That God, who is omniscient, knows what is wisdom, and where it is to be found;—And, that he has directed man to his "fear," as the true and highest "wisdom," and "to depart from evil" as "understanding." David speaks to the same purpose; (Psalm cxi. 10;) and likewise Solomon, (Prov. i. 7; ix. 10,) who, after making many experiments, and an assiduous inquiry into what might be good for the sons of men, came at length to this result, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." (Eccles. xii. 13.) And, considering his knowledge, experience, and diligent search, his opportunity

and advantage, from his extraordinary wealth and power, to make discoveries, we may well admit the conclusion he has drawn.

But, how little is this believed in the world! Do not many think that he is the wisest person, who has least of this principle of true wisdom appearing in him? Who shakes off the fear of God, a sense of his presence, and the discipline of conscience, and gives his utmost efforts in pursuit of worldly profit, honour, or pleasure? On the contrary, he that governs his heart and life, his tempers, words, and works, by the fear and love of God, and pursues a nobler end than the world thinks of, is accounted a weak, shallow, and foolish man! a melancholy man, or enthusiastic! But upon a sound and thorough examination of this matter, we shall find the inspired penman right.

Inquire we,

I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE "FEAR OF THE LORD," AND "DEPARTING FROM EVIL?"

FEAR, you know, like hope, love, joy, or sorrow, is an affection of the human soul, and is much varied in its nature, according to the diversity of those objects by which it is excited. The fear, here mentioned, has God for its object.

It is,—A fear of *reverence* and *veneration*, arising from a deep sense of his presence, glory, and majesty. (Jer. v. 22; x. 7; Heb. xii. 28.)—A fear of *awfulness*, arising from a conviction of his power, his wisdom, his holiness, his justice, and of our ignorance, weakness, sinfulness, and guilt. (Matt. x. 28.)—A fear of *dutifulness* or *subjection*, termed a "godly fear." (Heb. xii. 28.) This arises, chiefly, from a sense of his goodness and mercy, joined with his wisdom and power, and implies "departing from evil." (Isa. l. 10.)—A fear of *grieving* him, as our Benefactor, and exposing ourselves to his wrath as our Judge.—A *watchful* fear, (Prov. xxviii. 14,) from a sense of his omnipresence and his omniscience.

The "fear of the LORD," therefore, stands here for the whole of religion and virtue; for the knowledge of God, exciting in our hearts suitable affections towards him,—affections corresponding with his attributes, and the relations in which he stands to us,—affections, governing and directing our whole life, all our tempers, conversation, and actions.

This was generally termed the FEAR OF THE LORD, under the [Old Testament dispensation, and the LOVE OF GOD, under the New. [Explain the reason of this.]

II. HOW THIS APPEARS TO BE THE HIGHEST WISDOM.

This, and this only, effectually distinguishes man from the brute creatures. They evidently reason as well as man. Therefore he is better defined by his religion than his reason; not, *Homo est animal rationale*, but, *Homo est animal religiosum*. And for two reasons.—Of all creatures here below, man only has a sense, or capacity of religion.—This, above every thing else, ennobles, and perfects human nature.

This removes the sources of most of the follies of mankind; and, *sapientia prima est stultitiâ caruisse*. These are,—The unruliness of the sensual appetites, whence spring intemperance, in all its forms, as ghoutry, drunkenness, &c.; the tendency of which is to consume the property, stain the character, destroy the health, and debase the mind.—Inordinate and irregular passions, as the love of things not lovely, or the excessive love of things, lovely in a degree; irregular or immoderate desire, hope, sorrow, anger, excited by things which ought not to excite such passions, or not in such a degree.—Those diseases of the mind, such as pride, vain glory, ambition, envy, revenge, covetousness, &c., which like the furies, of which the heathen fabled as let loose out of Pandora's box, raise most of the storms and tempests which disturb the world.—Another cause of folly is, the want of consideration, or, inadvertency, precipitation, and rashness.—True religion removes all these causes of folly, and renders us wise and prudent, in the government of our appetites and passions, and in the regulation of the mind and conduct.

It improves whatever is excellent in human attainments and actions.—The knowledge and skill of the politician, without religion, degenerates into craft and pitiful shuffling; but this ennobles his wisdom, and directs it to a proper end.—Philosophy, without the fear of God, will beget pride, and arrogance, and, perhaps, unbelief and scepticism; but, attended with the fear of God, it enlarges the mind, and raises it to the admiration of the First Cause, and subserves the furtherance of truth and piety.—A man, industrious in his calling, without religion, is a drudge to the world; he is vexed when disappointed, and overjoyed with success; but this makes him patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and enables him to direct all his ways to the glory of God.

It fills the mind with tranquillity and peace, which is a wisdom, few learned men attain.—

Such a man is wise because he is taught of God, by his Spirit,

as well as by his word and providence. Hence, he is wise, both in temporal and spiritual things. He must be wise, whom Infinite Wisdom teaches.—

He provides for the future. For this the wisdom of the ant is admired. (Prov. xxx. 25.)—He provides for the future part of life here. By walking in the fear of God, he transmits to his future life, a serene conscience, and insures the favour, protection, and care of God.—For the evil days that are coming; days of infirmity, old age, sickness, and death. Although he cannot avoid these, yet he renders them tolerable, yea comfortable, by obtaining the presence of God, the light of his countenance, the consolations of his Spirit, and the hopes of everlasting life.—For a future life after this. Here especially is wisdom. Where this is neglected, all is folly. (Matt. xvi. 26.)

INFERENCES.

How exceedingly mistaken are the generality of mankind on this subject; in accounting folly as wisdom, and wisdom as folly; or in substituting the pursuit of temporal advantages in the place of the chief objects of wisdom.

Whatever a person has, on earth, let it be riches, honours, titles, yet, if he has not religion, he has not wisdom. We may call him rich, honourable, and so forth, yet, not properly so, for he will soon be poor and contemptible enough; but we must not call him *wise*. No. “They have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?” (Jer. viii. 9.) All devoid of religion are really fools. They are such in God’s account now, and will be such in their own, and in that of the whole rational creation by and by. Apply this to yourselves, ye that live in sin, that love not God. Consider, if ye be not really fools, and that you will never begin to be wise, before you begin to be truly religious.

The distinction commonly made is without foundation. We say, that a certain person is “more fool than knave,” or “more knave than fool.” If by *knave* be meant a wicked man, every such an one, yea, every one who is not religious, is a fool. “Whoso findeth me, [religion,] findeth life, but he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul.” (Prov. viii. 35, 36.) Hence David asks, “Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?” Very little surely.

We may infer both the meaning and the importance of Solomon’s advice, (Prov. iv. 7,) “Wisdom is the principal thing;

therefore, get wisdom : and with all thy getting, get understanding.”

But how are we to get this wisdom?—Hear the word.—Hear, CHRIST, the Divine wisdom, and word. He speaks by Moses and the Prophets, by the Evangelists and Apostles.—Read their writings.—Meditate.—Pray for the Spirit of wisdom. (Prov. ii. 1—9.)—Associate with the wise. (Prov. xiii. 20.)—Number your days, and set the approaching time of infirmity, affliction, and death before you. (Psa. xc. 12; Deut. xxxii. 29; Eccl. xii. 1—7.)

 XXI.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD TO THOSE WHO FEAR AND TRUST IN HIM.

PSALM xxxi. 19.

Oh, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee ; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men !

THERE are two errors, respecting GOD and his people, into which the generality of unenlightened men appear to have fallen ; errors, very great in themselves, and most destructive in their consequences. These are,—That, although GOD be a very glorious and powerful Being, infinitely able to save or to destroy ; yet, that he is severe, wrathful, and tyrannical, so that it is a most difficult matter to please him, and that his service is a perfect drudgery and bondage.—That, as to his people, although they may be serious, watchful, and even strict and circumspect in their manner of life ; yet, that they are sorrowful and uncomfortable, low spirited, and ignorant of their real interest, and true happiness. I call these errors *great*, because they are quite contrary to truth ; and I term them, *destructive*, because they detain many in bondage to sin and Satan, and prevent their approaching GOD in his worship ; they hinder them from trusting in him, devoting themselves to his service, and uniting themselves to his people.

Now, as it is certainly our duty to endeavour to remove these errors, so, I do not know that we can find a passage, in all the Scriptures, better adapted to our purpose, than these words of David, which I have just read. The Patriarch was as well acquainted with God, and with his conduct towards his people, as most, and few persons have been more exercised with trials, or have drunk deeper of the cup of sorrow than he did. And yet such is the testimony which he bears to the goodness of God, and the happiness of his people! When he meditates on both, he seems lost in wonder and astonishment, and filled with gratitude and praise. "Oh, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men!"

We shall consider,

I. THE CHARACTER HERE GIVEN OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

They fear him, and trust in him.

They **FEAR** him. True religion, in every age, and under every dispensation, is described from its most conspicuous and prominent feature. In former ages, and under the Old Testament dispensation, this was "fear;" but in these latter days, and under the Christian dispensation, it is love; since the revelations afforded to us, under the latter dispensation, are far more gracious, and calculated to promote this more generous and happy affection in our hearts.—

But, as the saints of old were not without "love," as abundantly appears from the books of Moses, the Psalms, and Prophecies in general, and from the two great commandments in particular; so neither are we without "fear."

To be more particular. It is indeed our privilege to be without a slavish fear of God, as though he were a tyrannical king, a hard master, or a severe judge. This is termed, "the spirit of bondage to fear." (Rom. viii. 15.) And from this we may be delivered, because we may be made the children of God, and spouse of CHRIST, and may possess confidence towards God, and the spirit of adoption.—

We may also be without a *tormenting* fear; arising from an apprehension of the wrath of God and future punishment, due to us for sin, distressing and tormenting the mind; for we may have a hope of immortality, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and the love, "that casteth out this fear."

But we must not be without a fear of *reverence*; (Heb. xii. 28; Psalm ii. 11;) a sense of his presence, his glory, his majesty, and holiness,—checking levity, carelessness, and trifling, and producing solemnity, seriousness, watchfulness, and circumspect walking.

Nor must we be without a fear of *awfulness*, (Matt. x. 28,) “Stand in awe, and sin not.” (Psalm. iv. 4.) This will restrain us from sin, and produce tenderness of conscience, and will preserve us from resting without an assurance of reconciliation, and peace with God.

Nor yet, further, should we be without a *filial* fear of offending God, termed “a godly fear.” (Heb. xii. 28.) The more assured we are of God’s love to us, and the deeper sense we have of the value of that love, the more we shall have of this fear. As to its effects; it will induce us “to walk in all well pleasing,” in all acceptable obedience, to take care that we have “our conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity,” and to have a “conscience void of offence towards God and man.”

God’s people are further described as TRUSTING in the LORD. This is an important duty; and a great privilege, (Isai. xxvi. 3, 4,) and the never-failing fruit of a saving knowledge of God. (Psalm ix. 10.) The happiness of those who have it is unspeakably great, as also, the misery of those who want it. “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.” (Jer. xvii. 5.)

But what do they trust in the LORD for?—For the continued remission of all their sins.—For a perfect deliverance from all their corruptions.—For help against their enemies.—For direction in all their difficulties.—For protection in all their dangers.—For succour in all their temptations.—For comfort in all their troubles.—For aid in all their duties.—That “all things,” absolutely, “shall work for their good.”—For eternal life.—As it respects all these things, the power and love of God, and his faithfulness to his promises, are their support.

II. THE GOODNESS GOD HATH WROUGHT FOR THEM HERE BEFORE THE SONS OF MEN, AND LAID UP FOR THEM HEREAFTER.

They were sold into slavery, and were in bondage to the wrath of God, and to Satan, sin, and death. He hath ransomed, and redeemed them by the incarnation, life, and death, of his own Son. Think of the dignity of his person, the depth of his humili-

liation, the greatness of his sufferings, whereby he made atonement, and the amazing goodness of God, in giving such a ransom for persons so unworthy. (John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 9.)

They were in a state of darkness; but he hath enlightened them. (Eph. v. 8.)

They were under guilt and condemnation; (Rom. iii. 19;) but he hath pardoned them. (Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14.) — —

They were exposed to wrath, (Eph. ii. 3,) but he hath taken them into favour. (Rom. v. 9.)

They were of their "father, the Devil;" (John viii. 44;) but he hath made them his children. (John i. 12; 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; Rom. viii. 14.) Consider the greatness of this privilege, and the nearness and affection implied in this relation. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." (1 John iii. 1.)

They were born in sin, and in a state of depravity; (Gen. vi. 6;) but he hath converted, regenerated, and made them new creatures in CHRIST JESUS. (1 John i. 9; Tit. iii. 5; 2 Tim. i. 9; 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.)

They were obnoxious to eternal death; (Rom. vi. 23; but he hath entitled them to eternal life. (Tit. iii. 7; Rom. viii. 17; Gal. iv. 7.)

Their corruptions had fitted them for eternal death; but he "hath made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. i. 12; Heb. xii. 10.)

They had the sense of their sins, and the anticipations of judgment, beginnings of eternal death; but he hath given them, in faith, hope, and love, in peace, and joy, foretastes of everlasting life.

He hath wrought out for them many temporal deliverances; directing them in their difficulties, protecting them in their dangers, succouring them in their temptations, supporting them under, and delivering them out of their troubles. And all this "before the sons of men!" (Acts xiii. 41.)

Yet, this is not to be compared to the goodness "which he has laid up" for them, which is such as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." (1 Cor. ii. 9.) —The things which they shall enjoy in spirit, with JESUS, and the spirits of the just, in the intermediate state, in Paradise. (2 Cor. xii. 4.)—At the resurrection, when their bodies shall be raised incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual. (1 Cor. xv. 42; Phil. iii. 20, 21.)—At the day of judgment, when honour, glory, felicity, and rewards, will be conferred upon them.—In the new

world, in which "there shall be no curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." (Rev. xxii. 3.)—In the society of saints and angels.—In the vision and enjoyment of all that God is or has.

This goodness is "*laid up* for them." It is concealed from the wicked; nay, and from the righteous themselves. (Col. iii. 3; 1 John iii. 2.)

It is *reserved*.—In the counsels of the divine wisdom, power, and love, or, in his eternal purpose. (Eph. i. 9—11.)—In CHRIST, (Col. iii. 3,) in whom it hath pleased God all fulness should dwell, and who, as our Intercessor, Advocate, and Forerunner, hath received and prepared it for us.—And, lastly, in God's "exceeding great, precious, and faithful promises."

III. THAT THIS OUGHT TO BE MATTER OF WONDER, PRAISE, AND JOY TO SAINTS, WHILE IT SHOULD ENCOURAGE SINNERS TO TURN TO HIM.

We ought to consider, admire, accept, rejoice in, and praise God, for this his goodness; to walk worthy of it, in gratitude, love, obedience, resignation, contentment, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, benevolence, and every other virtue.

This should induce sinners to repent of their sins against him; (Rom. ii. 4;) to draw near to him; to confide in him; and to engage heartily in his service.

XXII.

CHILDREN INSTRUCTED TO FEAR GOD.

PSALM XXXIV. 11.

Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

SUCH was once the language of a King, a "man after God's own heart," and a Prophet. What a commendation is contained in these words of all Schools and institutions, the object of which is the religious instruction of children and young persons!

Whilst, as a man of piety, the author of these words acknowledges the importance of teaching children the fear of the LORD, and, as an inspired prophet, declares it to be the will of the Most High, that they should be so taught, he does not think it beneath him, though a great King, to be interested in promoting so good a work! And why should he? Did not David's Son and David's LORD speak similar language, when he said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xix. 14.) Well may we then, that speak in public, occasionally address children on this important subject, and preach in their behalf, and well may you, that are subscribers, or teachers to these Schools * adopt this language, and say, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD."

This is a peculiarly instructive and encouraging Psalm; describing the nature, and the many advantages arising from true religion, and is well suited to be committed to memory by children. It was made upon the occasion, though not at the time, when David counterfeited madness before Abimelech, called *Achish*. (1 Sam. xxi. 10.)

"I will bless the LORD at all times; I will never forget to bless God for this miraculous deliverance; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD;" shall glory in this, that I have so powerful and gracious a deliverer. "The humble," or the meek, "shall hear thereof and be glad;" both on my account, and for the comfort and benefit of my example to those who may fall into similar straits and difficulties. "O magnify the LORD with me;" join your praises with mine, O ye humble ones; "and let us exalt his name together." If not in one place, yet, in affection and work, let our souls and our praises meet in the ears of the all-hearing God. Or, the word, קָרוֹב, may be rendered *alike*, *i. e.* with equal zeal and fervency; let none be willingly outstripped by another. The humble in heart will always desire and encourage each other to show forth and celebrate the majesty and goodness of God, when any of his servants experience the interpositions of his providence, in their deliverance from any threatening evil. With the Psalmist, they ascribe their safety, not to their own contrivance, or power, but to the care of God, who watches over them. David then proceeds to give reasons, why God should

* The Sermon was preached for the benefit of the Sunday-School Society.

be praised and glorified. He, and others, had found by experience, that he was a God hearing and answering prayer. He first mentions his own case, "I sought the LORD, and he heard me." God had heard and answered him, "and delivered him from all his fears;" not only from the death he feared, but from the disquietude he was put into by the fear of it. "This," says Chandler, "exactly answers to the history, which informs us, that when David heard what the servants of Achish said concerning him, 'he laid up their words in his heart, and was greatly afraid.' (1 Sam. xxi. 13.) Undoubtedly he thought himself in extreme danger, but, instead of removing their suspicions, and his own fears, by offering to join with the Philistines against his country, he rather chose to counterfeit madness, and trust Providence with the success of it, than secure his safety by base and dishonourable compliances."—But, it may be said, David was a great and eminent man; and we cannot expect to be so favoured, or to have our prayers answered, as his were. Yes; for we are assured, in general terms, "they looked unto him;" viz. the humble, or they that fear him, they sought and expected help from the LORD; "and were lightened," comforted, and encouraged.—If it be said, Perhaps these also were persons of great eminency, like David himself, and, upon that account, were highly favoured, or their numbers made them considerable; the Psalmist replies, "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him;" a single person, mean in his condition, whom no man much regarded, was yet as welcome to the throne of grace as David, or any of his worthies; for "the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles;" God will regard the prayer of the destitute. (Psalm cii. 17; Isa. lvii. 15.)

"The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him;" as a life-guard about a prince. The singular number is here put for the plural; a guard of angels, being as unanimous, however, in their service, as if they were but one; "encampeth around them that fear him, and delivereth them:" from dangers to which they are exposed, and from trials and troubles, when they are suffered to fall into them, to which work they are appointed by God. (Heb. i. 14.) "O taste and see that the LORD is good;" i. e. kind, merciful, and gracious; "Blessed is the man that trusteth in him." The goodness of God here spoken of, includes both the amiableness and benevolence of his nature, and the bounty and beneficence of his providence and grace; and, in calling us to taste and see this, the Psalmist means, that we should seriously, thoroughly, and affectionately

consider of it, and make trial of it, by our own experience. "O fear the LORD, ye his saints;" reverence, serve, and trust in him; "for there is no want to them that fear him;" they shall have every good, whether temporal or spiritual, communicated to them, so far, at least, as to have no reason to complain of the want of any. "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger." If God takes care of the beasts of the field, much more will he take care of them who fear him, and much sooner will he suffer those to die for want of their prey, than these to perish through a want of necessaries, or a failure of his protection: "but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing;" *i. e.* any thing necessary, and truly good for them, all circumstances considered; of which God alone is a competent judge. "Come, ye children;" come, all ye, who, by considering the advantages above described, as attending on true religion, are desirous to obtain it, and, therefore, willing to be instructed; "hearken unto me," in simplicity and humility of mind, with a serious resolution to comply with the divine will, as far as it is made known to you; "and I will teach you the fear of the LORD;" the true and acceptable way of worshipping and serving him, so that you may please and glorify him on earth, and, finally, be admitted into his kingdom hereafter.

Inquire we,

I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY "THE FEAR OF THE LORD."

"Fear," like hope, desire, love, joy, or sorrow, is an affection of the human soul, and is good or bad, laudable, or the contrary, according as the object by which it is excited is good or bad, and according to the degree in which it is excited. The fear here spoken of has God for its object, and cannot be excessive, if it be of the right kind. For, we can no more *fear* than we can love, or desire, or rejoice in him too much, or expect too great things from him; supposing our fear of him be rational and scriptural.

It must not be a fear of terror or dread, unless we be going on in sin, and be under its guilt and power, in which case it is quite proper we should be afraid of his wrath. — — —

Nor is it a fear of timidity, dejection, and discouragement; unless that we must be discouraged from hoping for prosperity, protection, or happiness, while we continue in a state of enmity and disobedience to him.

Nor is it a fear of diffidence, distrust, or suspicion, as if he would not fulfil his promises, or make good his word.

But it is a fear of reverence; from a sense of his glory and majesty. (Jer. x. 7; Heb. xii. 28.)—Of awe and concern, from a sense of his power, wisdom, holiness, justice, and of our ignorance, sinfulness, and guilt. (Jer. v. 21, 22; Matt. x. 28.)—Of subjection; termed a “godly fear;” (Heb. xii. 28;) from a sense of his goodness, as well as power and wisdom, producing a disposition to obey him. (Isai. l. 10.)—Of watchfulness and circumspection; from a sense of his omnipresence and omniscience. (Prov. xxviii. 14.)

With respect to the properties of this fear, we may observe, it is awakening, alarming, humbling, restraining from evil, constraining to good.

The whole of religion is here meant by the fear of God. This is generally termed the “fear of God” in the Old Testament, (Gen. xx. 11; xlii. 18; Psalm xix. 9,) and the “love of God” in the New. (Gal. v. 6; 1 Cor. xiii. 13.) — — —

It is religion in the heart, and in experience; in opposition to that in the head, and in speculation merely.—In reality and in practice; in opposition to that in profession, and in pretence.—Internally, and in power; in opposition to that externally, and in form.—In its principle and source, therefore, steady and permanent; in opposition to that which is assumed, inconstant, and transitory.

II. HOW IT APPEARS THAT IT IS OF IMPORTANCE TO TEACH THIS TO CHILDREN AND OTHERS.

It is infinitely reasonable that we should reverence a Being so glorious, stand in awe of one so powerful and holy, be subject to one so good, be watchful under the eye of one so omniscient. All the divine perfections and the relations in which he stands to us, show the reasonableness of the particulars above mentioned, as comprehended in the fear of God.

It is in its beginning, the “beginning of wisdom;” in its progress, the progress of wisdom. Thus David, (Psalm cxi. 10,) Solomon, (Prov. i. 7; ix. 10,) and Job. (ch. xxviii. 28.)

This, and only this, raises man above the brute creatures. They reason, in a measure, as well as man, but are not capable of religion. It is this, above every thing, which ennobles, and perfects human nature.

It provides a remedy for the follies and actual misconduct, into

which we naturally fall, in the government of our minds and actions, as also the irregularity and exorbitancy of the appetites and passions. — — —

It imparts a higher excellence and value to all human attainments, and directs us, in the employment of them, to regard the interests of our fellow-creatures, and the glory of GOD.* — —

It is the mean of providing, most effectually, for our comfort in the present life, and for our everlasting felicity in the next.†

Hence it appears that it is our interest to possess this religion. — *Temporally*; “Godliness having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come;” of the necessities of life; (Matt. vi. 33;) of all things useful; (Psalm lxxxiv. 11; xxxii. 9, 10;) of deliverance from trouble. (ver. 4—6, 19.)— *Spiritually*; It makes us partakers of the unsearchable riches of CHRIST; pardon, the divine favour, adoption, regeneration, progressive renovation, direction in our difficulties, protection in dangers, (ver. 7,) answers to prayer, deliverance from troubles. (ver. 15—18.)

Therefore, it is our happiness. We have thereby peace with GOD, peace of mind, hope of immortality, joy in the HOLY GHOST, communion with GOD, the fellowship of saints, the moderate enjoyment of the creature.

Consider the honour of it. It may, indeed, be attended with reproach among the ignorant and wicked; but it is truly to our honour, as it is so reasonable and excellent, and as we thus imitate the wisest and best men that ever lived, the angels of GOD, and even CHRIST himself; nay, and thus we become godlike. It will be our eternal glory. Hereby, and hereby only, is our nature advanced to the dignity of which it is capable.—

Consider its amiableness in all, especially in young persons.—

Now, if religion be thus reasonable, wise, advantageous, happy, honourable, we cannot have it too soon.—And it is peculiarly for the honour of GOD, the good of society in general, and the comfort and advantage of their parents and friends in particular, and their own individual comfort, that children and young persons should be religious.

Hence piety towards GOD, benevolence to man, especially to the rising generation, and even self-interest, should induce us to

* See p. 126.

† See p. 126.

say, with the royal Psalmist and Prophet, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD." I will do it myself, or I will do it by my substitute.—I will contribute from my fortune to have it done, or I will attend myself and see it done. I will promote it every way in my power.

III. HOW IT MAY BE TAUGHT THEM BEST, MOST SURELY, AND MOST LASTINGLY.

By instruction.—We must instruct them to know themselves, their ignorance, weakness, guilt, depravity.—To know GOD, his nature and attributes, and the relations in which he stands to his creatures.—To know CHRIST, in his person, and offices, his love, and sufferings.—

We must instruct them to know the way of salvation, the will of GOD, their duty, and their happiness.—To know the Scriptures in order thereto.—To read and meditate. (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.)

By reproof, exhortation, corrections, rewards.—

By showing them a good example in all respects.—

By praying with and for them, and putting them on praying for themselves, and habituating them to public, social, family, and private worship.—

XXIII.

CHRIST THE SOUL'S PHYSICIAN.

PSALM xli. 4.

LORD, be merciful unto me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

THE Psalmist appears, when he composed this Psalm, to have been suffering from some sore disease, which furnished an opportunity for his enemies to load him with reproach and infamy; but he recommends himself to the tender mercy of GOD, and, being more anxious for the cure of his spiritual maladies, than the recovery of bodily health, he adopts the prayer of the text.

Observe,

I. SIN IS THE DISEASE OF THE SOUL, AND MAY BE ILLUSTRATED BY THE SICKNESS OF THE BODY.

Any disease of the body more or less affects every part ; so sin has disordered every power of the soul. It has spread darkness over the understanding, forgetfulness through the memory, rebellion over the will, disorder and turbulence over the affections, guilt and pain over the conscience.—

Diseases of the body produce weakness and inability for our usual avocations ; so sin renders the soul weak, and unfit for the duties of religion.—

Diseases of the body divest it of all its comeliness and beauty ; so sin divests the soul of the image of God, and of every grace and virtue, which rendered it lovely in his eyes.—

Diseases of the body create a sense of weariness and disgust, even in those pursuits and employments, in which, otherwise, we should take pleasure ; so sin causes a man to take no pleasure in the things of God.—

Diseases of the body destroy its appetite, so that, if the most sumptuous feast should be set before the sick man, he would have no relish for any part of it ; so sin destroys the appetite of the soul, and it has no relish for the Gospel-supper, or for any part thereof, neither for illumination of mind, nor renovation of heart ; neither for the remission of sins, nor the favour of God ; neither for the present privileges of the children of God, nor their future prospects.—

Diseases of the body, if not removed, increase, till they become incurable, and terminate in death ; so do the diseases of the soul, till, having already brought on spiritual death, they issue in death eternal.—

II. CHRIST IS THE PHYSICIAN OF THE SOUL.

By the FATHER'S appointment. "The SPIRIT of the LORD God is upon me ; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." (Isai. lxi. 1, 2.) With these words he opened his commission in the synagogue of Nazareth. (Luke iv. 16.)—

He was typified as fulfilling the character of a physician, by the paschal lamb, the scape-goat, the brazen serpent.—

Every thing belonging to him, which can be applied for our benefit, is healing ; as his rod ; his word.—“He sent his word and healed them ;” (Psalm cvii. 20 ;) his blood ; his grace.—

III. HE EXCELS ALL OTHER PHYSICIANS.

In wisdom. He perfectly knows the constitution, disorder, and all the circumstances of his patients.—

In power. Ordinary physicians, even when they know their patients' disorder, habit of body, &c., are often unable to heal them. The disease, perhaps, has gone too far. None are too sick of sin for CHRIST to heal.—

In compassion and tenderness. He pities the situation of his patients, sympathizes with them, and is tender over them.—

In being always at hand when wanted ; not far to fetch.—

In performing all his cures gratis, and being accessible to all persons.—

In love and generosity. He has given his unsearchable riches ; his honour ; his life ; his body and soul for his patients.—

In his wonderful method of healing. He takes our sicknesses upon himself ; he gives ease by his wounds, life by his death, healing by his stripes.—

IV. WHAT HE PRESCRIBES.

An emetic is to be taken. We must be made excessively sick of sin ; and we must cast it off.—

We must apply, or take the balm of life ; the promise of pardon, of justification, of a new heart, &c.—

We must drink the living waters ; his HOLY SPIRIT.—

We must feed on the bread of life ; the truths of his Word.—

We must shun poison, and whatsoever is unwholesome.—

We must attend to air and exercise, and use the strength we have gained.—

XXIV.

GOD A REFUGE TO HIS PEOPLE.

PSALM xlvii. 1—5.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early.

How great is the advantage which those who know and believe the Holy Scriptures, and regard their contents, have over those, who are ignorant of them, disbelieve, or disregard them! The former acknowledge God in all their ways, have a divine light shining on their paths, however intricate, and well know where they will end; while the latter are uncertain and bewildered in their way, and stumble on the dark mountains of error and sin. The former have a place of refuge, to which they can betake themselves in all their difficulties and dangers, while the latter are defenceless, and exposed to the assaults of a host of malicious and implacable enemies. The former have a never-failing support and consolation in their greatest troubles, while the latter are left to groan under the intolerable load, which they are frequently compelled to bear, without one ray of hope, affording them the prospect of future relief or comfort. In short, while the latter, who, as the Psalmist speaks, "hasten after other gods," and have recourse to "the broken cisterns," find "their sorrows multiplied," and look around, in vain, saying, "Who will show us any good?" the people of God can say, "The Lord is the portion of our inheritance, and of our cup; the lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage." (Psalm xvi. 5, 6.)

This difference is especially manifest in times of public and national calamity, whether from war, pestilence, or famine, or any other of God's sore judgments. While these things are felt in all their force, by such as see not God's hand in them,

but impute them to chance, or merely second causes, they, who are enlightened by the word, and quickened by the SPIRIT of God, and acknowledge his providence in all events, can believe they "will work for their good," can hope for a future recompense, and in the midst of their trials can adopt the language of this most animating Psalm, and sing, "God is our refuge and strength,—a very present help in trouble."—In this way, it is said, that great Reformer and man of faith, LUTHER, was wont to comfort himself under affliction, saying to his friends, when he heard any discouraging news, "Come, let us sing the Forty-Sixth Psalm."

We have here,

I. AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE LAID DOWN, OR TRUTH ASSERTED, BY THE PSALMIST, IN THE NAME OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

"God is our refuge."—

The word here rendered *refuge*, (different from that which occurs ver. 7,) signifies that place, or person, to which any one has recourse in any difficulty, danger, want, or trouble. Now God is this refuge.

He may be our refuge. He, who is self-existent, and, therefore, independent, and supreme above every creature, without whose permission no creature can hurt, and without whose command, no creature can help; who, with infinite ease, can arm any creature against us, or for us; who in wisdom is unsearchable, and knows us all, and all our difficulties and trials, as well as the ways and means of relieving us; who is of infinite power, goodness, faithfulness, justice, mercy, love; who is our friend, our father, and God in covenant;—To him we may have recourse, notwithstanding our past sins, though they are many, great, and aggravated, personal, as well as, of our family, and nation, and notwithstanding our present unworthiness; if we go through the Mediator.

To him we ought to have recourse,—

In *reason*. To whom should a creature go for help but to a Creator; one dependant, but to a Preserver, Benefactor; a captive, but to a Redeemer; a lost sinner, but to a Saviour; a man, but to his Friend; a child, but to a Father.—In *duty*. God has made it our indispensable duty, (Psal. l. 15,) and a part of our religion.—In *interest*. Other refuges are refuges of lies, and all means, without his blessing, are without efficacy.

How are we to have recourse to God?—By confession. (Jer. xiv. 7, 20; Dan. ix. 3—15; Ezra ix. 6, 7; Neh. ix. 16—26; Psal. xxxii. 5; li. 1—5.)—In humiliation. (Jam. iv. 6, 10; 1 Pet.

v. 6.)—In godly sorrow for, and hatred to, our iniquities. (Jam. iv. 8, 9.)—In prayer and supplication, (Hos. xiv. 2,) sincere, earnest, importunate, persevering. (Dan ix. 16—19.)—By renouncing all other dependencies. (Hos. xiv. 3; Isai. xxx. 15, 16.)—In faith, grounded on his declarations and promises. (Jam. i. 6;) 2 Chron. xx. 20.)—By reformation and amendment. (Isai. lv. 7; i. 10—20; Jer. vii. 1—11; Ezek. xviii. 21—32; Jam. iv. 8.)

Thus he will be our *strength*. He will give fortitude, resolution, firmness, ability against our enemies, visible, invisible, temporal, spiritual; for our duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves; for the fulfilment of the whole work assigned us, and for support under all our trials and troubles.

“A very present help in the time of trouble.”—God is a *help* in the time of trouble. In the Hebrew it is *troubles*; either spiritual, temporal, personal, domestic, or national. This he has promised to be, by supporting us under trouble, sanctifying it, and making it work for good, and delivering us out of it at the most proper time. (Jer. xiv. 8; Psal. l. 15.)—He is a *present help*; a help at hand; other help, such as men, means, counsels, armies, navies, may be far off.—He is a *very present help*; observing us, surrounding us, pervading us, being not only above, but in and through us all, at all times, and places, by sea or land, at home or abroad.—The Hebrew expression is, *tried very much*. He is a *tried* help, tried greatly, very much, and very often, and that in all kinds of troubles.

In *spiritual*, troubles, by David. (Psal. xxxii. 7; xl. 1.) In *temporal* troubles by Lot. (Gen. xix. 29.) Hezekiah. (2 Kings xx. 1.) In *personal* and domestic troubles, by Jacob. (Gen. xxxii. 7, 9—24.) In *national* troubles, by Abijah. (2 Chron. xiii. 13—16.) Asa. (2 Chron. xiv. 9—12; xv. 1—15.) Jehoiada, who made a covenant. (2 Chron. xxiii. 16.) Jehoshaphat, (2 Chron. xx. 1—4, 14—36.) By Hezekiah, in his deliverance from Sennacherib. (Isa. xxxvi., xxxvii. 14—36.)

He has, indeed, been tried very often, and never failed any that trusted in him. (Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12; Isa. xxvi. 3, 4.)

II. THE CONFIDENCE AND COURAGE BUILT THEREON BY THE TRUE PEOPLE OF GOD.

“Therefore will we not fear,” &c.

“We;” Who? Those who seldom think about, and do not desire, or call upon him, or have recourse to him? who “are without him in the world?” who say, “Depart from us; for we desire not

the knowledge of thy ways?" who neglect his worship, slight his ordinances, disregard his word, break his laws, and rebel against his government? No. But, those who not only *may* have recourse, and ought to have recourse to God as their refuge and help, but who actually *do* betake themselves to this refuge, and find him, by experience, their strength, and a present and tried help in troubles. (Ps. xlviii. 3.) — — —

They need not "fear," for God, with his infinite perfections, is for them, and who can be against them?—They do not fear, (Psal. xxiii., xci.,) knowing that they who fear and trust in God, are safe under his protection. The LORD reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof." "The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever." Peace and tranquillity are the necessary effects of this confidence. (Isai. xxvi. 3.)

III. THE FIRM FOUNDATION WHICH THE TRUE PEOPLE OF GOD HAVE FOR THEIR CONFIDENCE AND COURAGE, AND THE CONSOLATION FLOWING TO THEM THEREFROM.

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High."

The "city of God" here spoken of, being styled "the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High," is the true church of God, often represented as a city, or state, as Psal. xlviii. 1; lxxxvii.; Isai. xxvi. 1; xxxiii. 20; lx. 1; Heb. xii. 22. The reason of its being so termed is, that it is a state, or kingdom under the government of CHRIST, as a King, (Psal. ii. 6,) the laws of which kingdom are contained in the Gospel, and the citizens are true believers, (Phil. iii. 20,) or the righteous who "keep the truth," (Isai. xxvi. 2,) who are subject to this King, observe the laws of this kingdom, and live in peace, love, and unity with each other.

This city being consecrated to God, its government, laws, regulations, and subjects being all holy, is termed the "Holy Place;" alluding to the Holy Place in the ancient tabernacle and temple. The most holy place is not here meant, or the Holy of Holies. That is the church triumphant, into which nothing shall "enter that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. xxi. 27.) There God appears in glory between the cherubim, over the mercy-seat, and there our great High

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Priest appears to minister for us. But the church on earth is the Holy Place, separated by the veil of a proper discipline from the world at large, and having the candlesticks, the perpetual light of truth; the show-bread, the food of the soul; and the altar of incense, prayer and praise, without ceasing.

But how do we enter this city?—We must not remain in the court of the Gentiles, or mere proselytes of the Gate. — — — We must pass into the court of the people, and be united with the true Israelites, among whom we must worship. And as none could enter into the Holy Place, without passing through the court of the Priests, where was the altar of burnt-offering, and the laver of brass; so, we must obtain an interest in CHRIST'S sacrifice, and must be washed in the laver of regeneration, in order to our being admitted into the true church of CHRIST, as its genuine members.

This city is under GOD'S peculiar protection. "Salvation is appointed for walls and bulwarks." (Isa. xxvi. 1.) The LORD himself "encamps about his house." (Zech. ix. 8.) He "will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." (Zech. ii. 5.) All the citizens "dwell on high; their place of defence is the munition of rocks; their bread is given them, and their waters are sure." (Isai. xxxiii. 16.) "Dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, they abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psal. xci. 1.) Thus they are preserved from external enemies, who approach them at their peril, and to their own destruction.

This city is the "tabernacle of the Most High." Here God dwells, and is the glory in the midst of her. This is cause for rejoicing. (Isai. xii. 6; Zeph. iii. 14—18.) This preserves them from internal dissension, and all the causes of discord, and enables the members to live in peace and love. Therefore, though the earth be removed, the Church shall not. For the Church shall survive the world, and be in bliss when the world is in ruins. She shall not be moved from without, or from within. For "God shall help her" against all external and internal foes, "and that right early," at the most proper time and manner, when things are brought to the last extremity, and relief is most welcome. The Hebrew expression is, "when the morning appeareth." It may be night with her, and she may be in dark and dismal troubles; but the morning of millennial light shall appear, and then she shall be helped, and that effectually. For "she is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." (Matt. xvi. 18.)

In the mean time, "there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." Here is an allusion to the waters of Siloam, which "went softly," by Jerusalem, (Isai. viii. 6,) and, though of no great depth, were of use to defend the city, in Hezekiah's time. (Isai. xxii. 10, 11.) But the river and its streams are to be understood spiritually. The covenant of grace is the river, and the promises thereof are the streams. Or, the Holy Spirit is the river, (John vii. 38, 39,) and the influences and graces thereof, are the streams. Or, God's word and ordinances are the river and streams, with which God refreshes his people, especially in dark and cloudy days. God himself, in his nature and attributes, is to his church, "a place of broad rivers and streams." (Isai. xxxiii. 21.) These streams, which make glad the city of God, are not rapid and muddy, but gentle and clear, like those of Siloam. "The spiritual comforts imparted to the saints by soft and silent whispers, and which come not with observation, are sufficient to balance the most loud and noisy threatenings of an angry and malicious world."—*Henry*.

 XXV.

 RELIGION MANIFESTED IN LIFE AND
 DEATH.

PSALM lxxiii. 24—26.

Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

ALTHOUGH this Psalm is ascribed to Asaph in our Bibles; yet as the Hebrew, אשא, may be rendered, "a Psalm for Asaph," some think he did not compose it, but was only the chief Musician, to whom it was delivered to be set to music. Since, however, we read, (2 Chron. xxix. 30,) that "the words," not only "of David," but "of Asaph the Seer," were used in praising God

in Hezekiah's time, and as the style of the Psalm seems to differ considerably from that of David, it is not improbable Asaph was the author of this, as well as of the ten following. For, although the spirit of Prophecy in sacred songs, descended chiefly on David, who is called "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," yet God put a portion of that spirit on others, cotemporary with him. But, whoever might be the author of this Psalm, we are much indebted to him under God, for it. It is a Psalm of great utility; as it shows us that holy men of old were no more free from temptation, than we are now, and that their temptations were of a nature, in many respects similar to those with which we are wont to be exercised. To observe the afflicted state of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked, was a sore trial to some in those days, as it is yet to many, who look at those things which are seen rather than at those which are unseen; and consult with flesh and blood, instead of going into the sanctuary of God, where they would obtain all the satisfaction they can desire. As soon as the Psalmist did this, his doubts vanished, his confidence in God was strengthened and confirmed, and, as in the verses just read, he could rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The Psalm begins rather abruptly; "Truly God is good to Israel;" or, as the margin reads it, and as is more consistent with the Hebrew, "Yet God is good to Israel." It is evident that while he had been thinking of the prosperity of the wicked he had been drawn into a labyrinth of doubt and uncertainty, respecting the providence of God over mankind, and the equity of his government over his rational creatures. But, while musing, he recollects himself, "the fire burns, and he speaks with his tongue," by way of check to his unprofitable reasonings; "Yet God is good to Israel." On this sacred, certain, and infallible principle he lays hold. This he holds fast, and by the help of this he keeps his ground, when, as he tells us, his "feet were almost gone." Thus David, on a similar occasion; "Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." (Psal. lviii. 11.) Indeed the unequal distribution of rewards and punishments in the present life; the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflicted state of the righteous in this world, is, among many others, one very certain and infallible proof of a life to come. For shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? If, therefore, men be not rewarded according to their works here, which they are not, they must hereafter. Hence the confidence and peace of this good man, as expressed in the words of the text,

when he saw things in a true light, and the darkness which began to envelope him, was dispersed.

We have here,

I. THE RELIGION OF A TRULY PIOUS MAN IN LIFE,—HIS FAITH, HIS HOPE, AND HIS LOVE.

“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel.” Mark his FAITH.

His humble faith. He believes, and is assured of his own ignorance and folly, and sees his absolute need of the guidance of the divine counsel.—In matters spiritual. In the way of *truth*, that he may be truly enlightened and preserved from destructive error.— — In the way of *grace*, that he may be truly justified and regenerated, and have sound and genuine experience in religion, and be what God calls him to be. In the way of *duty*, that he may know, and do the will of God, without which there is no salvation. (Matt. vii. 21.)—In matters temporal; especially such as are of peculiar moment, and are closely connected with our holiness, usefulness, and comfort, as the choice of an employment, a place of abode, a partner in business, &c.

His obedient and resigned faith. He is willing, nay, and desirous to be guided by God’s counsel.—To submit his understanding to the teaching of God’s word in matters of truth, and not to be wise above what is written.—To submit his conscience, will, and affections to the influence of God’s SPIRIT, in matters of grace and experience.—To submit his life to the government of God’s laws and providence, in matters of duty and usefulness.

His confident and assured faith. “Thou shalt guide,” &c.—Such is thy wisdom and power, that thou art able to do it.—Such is thy love and mercy, that thou art disposed to do it, being related to me as a Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, Friend, Father, Husband.—Such is thy faithfulness, that thou wilt do it, to fulfil thy promise.—

His HOPE.—“Afterward thou wilt receive me to” or *with* “glory.” They that leave Egypt, pass through the Red Sea, and traverse the wilderness under the conduct of JEHOVAH, shall be brought to the promised land.

They expect glory.—In their souls, which will be enlightened, enlarged, ennobled, purified, and comforted, beyond all that can now be conceived.—In their bodies, which will be made spiritual, luminous, active, like the body of CHRIST—In their habi-

tation, which will be a world full of light and glory, rising out of the ashes of the old world.—In the company of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, all of them glorified.—

But why do they hope for it? Being, as above, enlightened by the truth, they are informed concerning it, and desire it. (1 Cor. ii. 9—11.) Being influenced by grace, justified, adopted, and regenerated, they are entitled to it, fitted for it, and expect it. Being directed in the way of duty, they are in the direct road to it.—

The Hebrew expression is, “receive me *with* glory;” implying a hope of dying in a glorious manner, in peace and triumph.—

But will not this hope make them ashamed? No. “For the LOVE of GOD is shed abroad in their heart.” Their language is, “Whom have I in heaven but thee?” Here we have the nature of genuine love to GOD. It is not a cold esteem for him, on the one hand; nor a dry obedience to his laws, on the other. But it is desire after him, his favour, his image, and fellowship with him, in preference to every person and thing in the world, or in the universe; the desire of nothing contrary to him, and nothing in comparison of him. It is cordial delight in him. “*Whom* have I in heaven but thee.”—

II. THE CONFIDENCE AND COMFORT OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN IN DEATH.

“My flesh and my heart faileth;” that is, the body, with all its senses, members, and parts.—The *animal powers*, viz. the whole nervous system; “the silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl broken.” Hence the eyes grow dim; the hearing, taste, and all the sensations, become blunt and fail. “The keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, and the grinders cease, and those that look out of the windows are darkened.” — The *vital powers*. “The pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel is broken at the cistern.” The right ventricle of the heart no longer propels the blood by the appointed channels into the lungs, to be replenished with the vital air. Nor is it returned, as it should, from thence to the left ventricle, to be further prepared for circulation through the great artery, and its different branches, to all parts of the body.—Hence the blood stagnates, vital heat departs, and every member becomes motionless and insensible.

"The soul, unable to maintain
 The fruitless and unequal strife,
 Finding her weak endeavours vain,
 To keep the counterscarp of life,
 By slow degrees retires toward the heart,
 And fortifies that little fort,
 With all the kind artilleries of art ;
 Botanic legions guarding every port.
 But death, whose arms no mortal can repel,
 A formal siege disdains to lay,
 Summons his fierce battalions to the fray,
 And in a minute storms the feeble citadel."

— But the heart rather means the mind and spirit. This, as far as it is dependant on the body, fails in old age, under the pressure of certain diseases, and on the approach of death. The affectionous lose their liveliness; the will, its vigour; the memory, its readiness to revive our past ideas; the understanding, its quickness of apprehension, its acuteness of reasoning, its solidity of judgment. Thus, "the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars," are darkened, and the "clouds return after rain." The disordered body becomes incapable of serving the mind, and is like an instrument out of tune, on which the musician cannot play.—Again, the heart may be put for confidence, courage, and fortitude. Perhaps these fail. Past sins are brought to remembrance, with many aggravations, arising from still remaining corruptions, the injections of the enemy, and of all the powers of darkness.—This life, and every thing here, is to be left. An unknown world is to be entered. A deep, and rapid, and untried river is to be passed. — — —

Where is support or comfort to be found? "God is the strength of my heart." The Hebrew is, the "*rock* of my heart," on which I stand in passing the river, and build all my hopes.—His nature and attributes. His wisdom; he knows me and my situation. His power; on account of which he can help me. His love; which he has already manifested, and will not withdraw. His mercy; on account of which he delights in relieving and delivering the needy who call upon him.—The relations in which he stands to me. He is my Creator, and must have desire to the work of his hands. He is my Preserver, who upholds me by his right hand. He is my Redeemer, who has ransomed me from the power of death and the grave. He is my Covenant God, who has given me most gracious promises of support, comfort, and eternal life. Here I depend.—

III. THE HAPPINESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS FOR EVER.

“Thou art my portion for ever.” Observe,—The clear and comprehensive knowledge we shall have of him, termed vision.—The corresponding love we shall have to him; an object infinitely worthy of our love, and that will assuredly return, and amply compensate the regard and affection which we place in him.—The full enjoyment we shall have of him in all his attributes, and the relations in which he stands to us.—What he will do for us in body and soul.—What he will do for us in preparing for us a new world.—And, finally, what he will confer upon us, even his unsearchable riches.

XXVI.

THE NEW BIRTH.*

PSALM lxxxvii. 6.

The LORD shall count when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there.

THE subject of this Psalm is the Church of God; not so much, perhaps, under the Jewish, as under the Christian dispensation, — —The society or company of the faithful, forming the Church, are compared to a city or temple.—The particular, which David chiefly dwells upon, and celebrates respecting Zion, or the Church, is, that “this and that man shall be born in her.” It is not the natural, but the spiritual birth, that is spoken of; for we are not born into the world, and made men, when we become members of the church, but are born of God, and made Christians. Now what is affirmed in this Psalm concerning the Church in general, may in some degree, be affirmed of every particular society or congregation of the faithful; “This and that man was born there;” and, by an easy figure, the same may be said of the place, whether called a Church or Chapel, where they assemble, and where the Gospel is preached, “This and that man was born there.”

* Preached at the opening of a Chapel.

It is here intimated that, as God perfectly knows where every one is born again, and made his child, so that, he counts, or, as it is in the other translation, "rehearses," to the inhabitants of heaven, to saints and angels, "when he writeth up the people," or enters their names in the book of life, that this and that man was born in such a place. Or, that he will count and rehearse it at the day of judgment, when he "accomplisheth the number of his elect." Then it will be found more were born in some places than others; and, I earnestly hope, it will be found many were born in this place, which we open this day, as a house for the worship of God.

But is there any truth in this matter? Is not the doctrine of a new birth, a mere fable?

Let us inquire, therefore,

I. IS IT NECESSARY WE SHOULD BE BORN AGAIN? AND ON WHAT IS THAT NECESSITY FOUNDED?

This is the solemn and repeated declaration of our LORD, (John iii. 3-5; Matt. xviii. 3;) and of St. Paul. (2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15.)

The reason of this doctrine of the new birth, or the ground of its necessity is shown us, by our LORD. (John iii. 6, 7.) We are born in sin, and, therefore, we must be born again.—We sinned in Adam, and were thereby made subject to condemnation. We derived from him a corrupted nature, (Psalm li. 5,) whence arise our evil tempers, words, and works.—Both on account of original and actual sin we have become guilty, and are children of wrath, children of the devil, and we must be taken into favour and made children of God. This is properly adoption, which is a relative change.—Our whole nature is corrupted; (Gen. vi. 5;) and we are "earthly, sensual, and devilish;" (James iii. 15;) and, therefore, we must be regenerated, converted, and made new creatures. This is a real change.—

This leads me to consider,

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS NEW BIRTH? WHAT IS ITS NATURE, AND WHAT ARE ITS FRUITS?

It is an inward change. (2 Cor. v. 17; Eph. iv. 23; Tit. iii. 5.) To describe this briefly; the understanding is enlightened; the judgment is corrected; the conscience is informed, awakened, and purged from guilt; the will is subjected to the will of God; the

affections are drawn from earth to heaven, and our dispositions, words, and actions, our cares, labours, and pursuits, are all changed.

Why is this called a *Birth*? Because it is similar to the natural birth.—The natural birth introduces us into natural life, in consequence of which we have union with, and breathe the air of this world; so, by the spiritual birth, we are introduced into spiritual life, have union with GOD, and breathe the spirit of prayer and praise. The natural birth opens our bodily senses, as the eye-sight, hearing, taste, &c., and thereby discloses natural things; so the spiritual birth opens our spiritual senses, and imparts the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the feeling sense; and thus manifests to us spiritual things.—The natural birth prepares us to enjoy natural things, which, without being born into this world, it is impossible we should enjoy; so the spiritual birth introduces us to the enjoyment of spiritual things, as illumination of mind, renovation of heart, manifestations of the divine favour, communications of the divine Spirit, peace and joy through believing, a lively hope of life eternal, and above all, fellowship with the FATHER, and with his Son JESUS CHRIST. The natural birth introduces us among men, and, partaking of their nature, as we advance on in life, we begin to share in their desires and aversions, hopes and fears, sorrows and joys, cares, labours, and pursuits; we hear the conversation of our fellow-creatures, and understand, and then begin to converse ourselves. In like manner, the spiritual birth introduces us among Christians, true Christians; nor are we only *among*, but *of them*, and as we partake of their heavenly and holy nature by regeneration, we also soon begin to entertain their views, and manifest affections and dispositions, desires and designs, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, similar to theirs; first we hear, and then, being improved in knowledge, we speak their heavenly language.—When born into this world, we are capable of receiving, relishing, and being nourished by the food provided for us; so when born of GOD, we begin to have an appetite for, and to partake, first, of the sincere, uncorrupted milk of the word, adapted to the state of babes in CHRIST, and then, of the stronger meat suited to those of riper age.—Hence follows an improvement in spiritual health and strength, knowledge, experience, and holiness, till, “growing up into CHRIST in all things,” we arrive at “the measure of the stature of his fulness.”

As to the fruits of this birth, I shall only mention such as are expressly named, and insisted upon by one Apostle, St John.—

These are *Love* (1 John iv. 7) to God; his children; (ch. v. 1;) all mankind; our enemies. (Matt. v. 44, 45.)—*Purity*, or overcoming the world. (1 John v. 4; ii. 15, 16.) — — — *Obedience*: (1 John iii. 9; v. 18.)

III. WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THIS CHANGE, AND BY WHAT MEANS IT IS WROUGHT?

God is the author. (1 John v. 4; Jam. i. 18.) The moving cause is not our works, but his mercy. (1 Pet. i. 3; Tit. iii. 5.) The efficient cause is not our power, but his Spirit. (John iii. 5, 8.)—The instrumental cause, on *God's* part, is his word; (Jam. i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23;) on *our* part, it is faith, and, therefore, we must use prayer for the Spirit, and faith in the word, with watchfulness and self-denial.

Hence, it appears, we have reason to hope that some, yea, many, will be born here. For God, by his Spirit, will be present where his name is worshipped, and his word dispensed, in order to work this change: "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." (Exod. xx. 24.) "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) To his disciples Jesus said, "Go and teach all nations,"—and, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Now, we trust, *here* his word will be taught, and prayer will be offered up.—Hence we may hope that "this and that man will be born" here.

APPLICATION.

Let me inquire, Are you born again? Examine particularly. If not, you know it is absolutely necessary.—It is the chief end you should have in view in attending here.—You will attend in vain if this end is not answered.—Use, therefore, all the appointed means; look for it from God's mercy, and to be wrought by his Spirit, in hearing and faith, prayer and watchfulness.—

We may infer from the whole, that the building of this and other places, where the Gospel will be clearly preached, is a good work. This, we are assured, you will see while you live, and more especially after you die, when you are informed of one and another, perhaps of your own friends or relations, brought to God. The chief good of it will appear when CHRIST "writeth

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up the people," at the day of judgment; for then it will be seen how many have been born here; what a heaven they have obtained, and what a hell they have escaped, through the building of this house; and how much honour has thereby been brought to God.

XXVII.

NUMBERING OUR DAYS.

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

THIS Psalm is entitled a *prayer*, that is, a *poetical* prayer. For Moses was not only a great historian, lawgiver, and divine, but also an eminent poet. Those pieces of his composition in this kind, which have come down to us, are most elevated and sublime, as all who read them attentively, especially in the Hebrew, must confess. I refer to his two songs, (Exod. xv. 1—19, and Deut. xxxii.) the prophecies of Balaam, the benediction of the tribes of Israel by Jacob and himself, this Psalm, and, most probably, also, the book of Job.—In all these compositions, their author shines not only as a scholar, and man of genius, but, what is infinitely more, as the inspired prophet, and man of God.

It must be observed, that we cannot judge from the order in which the Psalms have been arranged, when they were composed. The preceding Psalm seems to refer to the Babylonish captivity; and was, probably, written at that time, and yet it is placed before this, penned by Moses while the Israelites were in the wilderness. The occasion of writing this Psalm is supposed to have been the awful sentence denounced and executed on that people, because of their unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion against God, as recorded in Num. xiv., which sentence was, that their carcases, *viz.* of all those that were then of age, should fall in the wilderness. And none of them, save Joshua and Caleb, were permitted to enter Canaan, but were all consumed by a series of afflictions in the space of thirty-eight years. Amidst the various instances of mortality which were continually occurring, Moses

comforts himself and the people with the eternity of God, and their interest in him. (ver. 1, 2.) He humbles himself and the people, with the consideration of the frailty of man. (ver. 3—6.) He acknowledges and submits to the righteous sentence which God had passed upon them. (ver. 7—11.) He prays for mercy and grace, and the return of God's favour. (ver. 13.) The use we should make of the Psalm, and the substance of the whole, is contained in the text. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Thus, in his song, (Deut. xxxii. 29,) "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end."

We will consider,

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN NUMBERING OUR DAYS.

To "number our days," does not mean that we should count exactly how many they have been, or foretell how many they will be, which latter is to us impossible, God having, for wise reasons, concealed from us the time of our dissolution, and, if not impossible, would, probably, answer no valuable end; but that we should consider, they will not be many at the most. God has taught, and assured us of this, by the contracted limits he has set to human life, partly since the flood, and especially since the period to which this Psalm refers. (ver. 10.) "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if, by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow." Before the flood, men lived six, seven, eight, or even nine hundred years, which protracted space, however, was as nothing to God's eternal duration. "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God." "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday." (ver. 2, 4.) Before Moses, men lived, ordinarily, to one hundred or one hundred and fifty; but, since that time, seventy or eighty is the common period of human life, which few exceed, and the generality do not attain. Those are judged to have had as large a share of life as they had reason to expect, who have reached seventy, and how short a time is this, compared with Eternity! or even the lives of the Ante-diluvians! Thus, "he turneth man to destruction, and saith, Return ye children of men." (ver. 3.) "Thou carriest them away as with a flood." (ver. 5.) We are *continually* gliding down the stream of time into the ocean of Eternity. As soon as we are born we begin to die, and every year, nay every day, and hour of our life urges us nearer to death. We are carried away *violently* and *irresistibly*, as with a flood of waters,

or an inundation, which sweeps away all before it. Thus God swept away the old world by Noah's flood, and although he promised not to drown the world again; yet, as one observes, "death is a constant deluge." So frail and short-lived are mankind that they are "like grass." (Ver. 5, 6.) In the morning it looks green and pleasant, but "in the evening it is cut down and withereth;" changes its colour and loses all its beauty. Thus death will change us shortly, perhaps suddenly, and great is the alteration which it makes. Man, even in his prime, does but flourish as the grass, which is weak, and low, and tender, and exposed; and "All flesh is grass," and when the winter of old age comes, it will wither of itself. But it may be cut down, as occurs daily, by disease or disaster, as the grass in the midst of summer. Thus David, "Thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth;" (Psal. xxxix. 5;) the breadth of four fingers; a certain dimension, a small one, the measure whereof we have always about us, always before our eyes.

In the view of our short space of existence here, how just the question proposed by St. James, "What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away!" (ch. iv. 14.)

To "number our days," implies that we mark them as they go, and do not suffer them to pass away insensibly. To prevent this God has measured out time to us, and called our attention to its rapid flight in various ways, but, especially, by the heavenly bodies, God's great time-piece, or, as one expresses it, "That Horologe machinery divine!" And as in a clock, or watch, different portions and divisions of time are marked; so among the heavenly bodies, there are comets, four hundred and fifty of which are supposed to belong to one system, and perform their revolutions in very different periods. One, according to Dr. Halley, in seventy-five or seventy-six years, one in one hundred and twenty-nine, and another in five hundred and seventy-five. These measure out very large portions of time.—The planets performing their revolutions round the sun, although in different periods, yet generally in much shorter than the comets, dispense time to us in smaller portions.—The sun, or rather, the earth, revolving round the sun, divides time into years, and each year into four distinct and distinguishable seasons.—The moon divides the year into months, and, as it proceeds through its quarters, into weeks.—The earth by its diurnal revolution round its axis, presenting in succession, its different sides to the rising, the meridian, and the setting sun, divides time not only into day and night, but the

whole natural day into hours and minutes, which may be observed on the dial.—God has also appointed weekly sabbaths, not only as a memorial of his “finishing his own works,” and as a type of the heavenly rest, but as a means of directing our attention to the lapse of time, and the duty of improving it. And, to aid all this, he has endued man with skill to construct hour-glasses, watches, and sundry kinds of time-pieces. Still, man is, as it were, asleep and dreaming. (Ver. 5.) The flight of time is not observed; it slips away insensibly, and we dream of many days and years to come. For,

“The solar shadow, as it measures life,
It life resembles too; life speeds away,
From point to point, though seeming to stand still.”

One second follows another, till the minute is gone; minutes follow each other till an hour is past; thus days and weeks, and years, glide unobserved, and all mankind mistake their time of day.

To “number our days” implies, that we remember, and lay to heart, that a great many of them are gone already. The infant, that has lived only one year, has spent in this world three hundred and sixty-five days; the child of ten years, three thousand, six hundred, and fifty; the youth of twenty, seven thousand, three hundred; the man of mature age at thirty, ten thousand, nine hundred, and fifty; and the man of sixty, twice that number. So that, although in one respect our days are few, yet we need not complain of the want of time. We have sufficient for performing the great business of life, had we but a heart to improve it. But, alas! “what years are squandered, wisdom’s debt unpaid!” and how few there are that reflect and inquire,

“Those hours which lately smil’d, where are they now?
..... Drown’d, all drown’d,
In that great deep which nothing disembogues,
And, dying, they bequeath’d thee small renown.”

And God has taught, and still teaches us this, by our various infirmities, afflictions, the death of cotemporaries and friends, which show that many of our years are gone.

To “number our days” implies, that we consider the few which remain, if any do remain, to be wholly uncertain, and not to be depended on. Of this we are reminded by the sudden and unexpected death of many of all ages, states, and conditions;—of

persons in health, and strength, and youth, as well as weakness, sickness, and old age. May we not ask then,

“What thus infatuates? what enchantment plants
The phantom of an age ’twixt us and death,
Already at the door?”——

II. THE END FOR WHICH WE OUGHT TO NUMBER OUR DAYS,—

“That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

What is this wisdom to which a right numbering of our days will lead?

Negatively.—Is it to be unconcerned whether there is a life after this? If there be a future life, what sort it is, and how we may secure happiness in that life?—Is it, for the sake of those pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, to give up our title to a life of endless happiness after this, and to plunge ourselves voluntarily or thoughtlessly into a life of eternal misery? Is this wisdom?—Is it to spend the few days of this short and uncertain life in the pursuit of things which we may never attain, or, if we should attain them, cannot afford happiness, or afford it only for a very little while; and in the mean time to neglect those things, which we surely may attain, and which, when attained, do satisfy and stay with us for ever?—Is it to be much affected with any thing here, whether losses or gains, honour or dishonour, pleasure or pain? Is this wisdom?

Positively.—Is it not to consider what a great work we have to do in the short space of our life, viz. to get our minds thoroughly enlightened, our persons justified, our nature changed, our weakness strengthened; to attain repentance, faith, and holiness, as indispensably necessary to everlasting salvation?—Are a great many of our days fled? Then does not wisdom bid us consider how much of our work is done, and how much remains? Are there not many here in whom it is not even begun?—Does time slip insensibly away? Then ought we not to take heed, and be watchful, lest we should,

“To the mercies of a moment leave
The vast concerns of an eternal scene.”

Lest the whole of our probationary life should thus slip away, our work remaining undone, and we be hurried into eternity in a state of ignorance, guilt, and depravity.—Is it quite uncertain, whether we have any days to come, and, if we have, how many they be?

Then is it not wisdom no longer to delay turning to God, in true repentance, and embracing JESUS CHRIST by a lively faith? Not to lose a moment more, but to work while it is day, "remembering the night of death cometh, when no man can work?" Is there any other way of making our calling and election sure? And is it not wisdom to do this, and folly not to do it? And what a mercy is it, since we have lost so much time, and involved ourselves in so much guilt, depravity, and wretchedness, that,

"To-day is yesterday return'd; return'd
Full-power'd to cancel, expiate, raise, adorn,
And re-instate us on the rock of peace."

To be more particlular. This wisdom is to improve life; to prepare for death; to insure all the happiness and glory attainable in Eternity.

To improve life: In answering the end for which our present time was given, and is prolonged; not to pursue and amass wealth, to seek honour, pleasure, or riches, "which things have not profited such as have sought them;" but—to rise from our fall, and recover the blessings lost thereby, the knowledge of God and of his will, his favour, image, and communion with him;—To glorify him by making him known, spreading his praise, devoting all our powers of body and mind, our talents and time to his service, and employing them all therein.—By not harming but profiting our neighbour both in soul and body.

To prepare and be ready for death.—That it may be safe. This it cannot be, if we be overtaken by it while we are in our sins, unpardoned, unchanged, without love and obedience, in which case it will have a deadly sting. We must, therefore, seek forgiveness of sins, a change of heart, with an entire conformity to all the Divine will.—That death may be comfortable. This it cannot be, while we are averse to it, and fear its approach, through an inordinate love to some persons or things in the world, from which we are unwilling to be separated; through a consciousness of the guilt and power of sin, and a knowledge or fear that we are not delivered from it; through ignorance of a future state, as to its nature and felicity, and through our want of a lively hope, arising from a title to it, a meetness for it, an earnest and foretaste of it; through a dread of the afflictions and pains that may precede death, and take down the bodily tabernacle, and a want of confidence in God, and resignation to his will.—To be prepared for death, we must seek deliverance from these.—

To seek all the happiness and glory attainable in Eternity. Future happiness will be attained by all who "die in the LORD;" but in different degrees, in proportion to our holiness, usefulness, or endeavours to be useful, and our sufferings patiently endured and improved. Our wisdom is to seek the highest degree of happiness, and the happy consequences of this wisdom, are boundless and eternal.

From the preceding considerations, it appears that the wisdom, to which a right numbering of our days leads us, is true religion. The "fear of the LORD, that is wisdom." Does wisdom imply knowledge? Nothing so enlightens, and informs the mind, as Religion. Does it mean prudence? The truly religious man is alone prudent, providing for futurity in this world and the next.

To this wisdom we must "apply," not only our head, our tongue, our time and labour, but our "*heart*;" we must cause our heart to come (so the Hebrew) "to wisdom." For this purpose, we need a serious, thoughtful, understanding, believing, humble, resigned, patient, contented, meek, zealous, resolved, pure, disinterested, and therefore, a "*new heart*." Hence, in order to all this, *i. e.*, that we may number our days aright, and cause an union to take place between our hearts and this wisdom, so that it may influence our whole conduct,

III. WE NEED DIVINE TEACHING, AND MUST APPLY FOR IT.

It appears from what was advanced under the first head, that GOD does already, in fact, teach us several ways. — — — We should seriously and frequently reflect on the instruction he has afforded us in his works and providence.

GOD teaches us in his word, and by his messengers. We must hear, read, meditate, and search the Scriptures daily, and that with prayer.

GOD teaches us by his Spirit. This we must pray for most fervently. Thus David, (Psal. xxxix. 4,) "LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am." He does not ask to know how long he should live, and when he should die. He could not in faith pray for this, for GOD has no where promised to let us know it; but has in wisdom locked up that knowledge from us, as not being for our good. But he prays in effect, "Give me wisdom and grace to consider my end," (Deut. xxxii. 29,) and improve what I know concerning it. 'LORD, make me to consider—What death is; that it is my end, the end of my life, and of all the employments and enjoyments of it; the period to be put to my state of probation and preparation, and an awful entrance on a state of final retribution. Give me to be better acquainted and more familiar with death, to consider what a serious thing it is to enter an eternal state, and to be more affected with the greatness of the change—How near it is. (When we look on death as

at a distance, we are apt to delay the necessary preparation for it;)—That death is continually working in us, and the clay tabernacle mouldering into dust.’

We must be watchful, and not grieve or quench the Spirit, by whom we are made savingly acquainted with this wisdom.

 XXVIII.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

PSALM CX. 4.

The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

THE story of Melchizedek, here referred to by the Psalmist, and recorded Gen. xiv. 18, is one of the most remarkable and important, although very short, that is to be found in the Old Testament. When Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings, Melchizedek, King of Salem, says the historian, met him, and “brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.”

It has been matter of much inquiry and debate, among the learned, who this Melchizedek was. Some have thought that he was the Son of God himself, taking upon him the form of a man, in anticipation, as it were, of his incarnation. This, however, is not consistent with the declaration of the inspired Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who says, (ch. vii. 3,) that he was, *αφομοιωμένος*, “made like to the Son of God.” Besides, all opinions that make him more than man, are inconsistent with that Apostle’s design, which is to prove, that, even among men, there was a priest, and a priesthood, which was representative of CHRIST and his priesthood, superior to those of the law. Add to this, that he lays it down as a certain principle, (ch. v. 1,) that every priest being “ordained for men in things pertaining to God, is taken from among men,” and, therefore, if Melchizedek was a priest, he was also taken from men.

Of those who allow that he was a mere man, very many, following the opinion of the Jewish Rabbins, contend that he was Shem, the son of Noah; who, certainly, was then alive, and of great authority in the world by virtue of his primogeniture. But this also is contrary to the Apostle, who affirms, that he was "without father, and without mother, without beginning of days, or end of life." That is, his father, mother, or descent, are not recorded in Scripture. But those of Shem are recorded.

The truth is, we have no means of ascertaining who he was. All that is, or can be offered upon the subject is mere conjecture. It is very probable, however, that, although he lived in Canaan, he was not of the seven Kings, which, according to the prophecy of Noah, were condemned to bondage and destruction. Dr. Owen, as great a Theologian as a Scholar, gives it as his opinion, that he was of the posterity of Japhet, the father of the Gentiles, who were to be afterwards called into the church of God, and that God brought him into the land of Canaan, even before Abraham had possession of it, and placed him in a condition and office superior to Abraham, that a claim might be put in, on behalf of Japhet's posterity to "dwell in the tents of Shem." Melchizedek, he observes, "in those very places which were to be the seat of the Church, took possession for the Gentile posterity of Japhet."

The only thing, however, that now concerns us, is this doctrine of the Psalmist, confirmed repeatedly in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the Messiah is "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." That the Psalmist here speaks of the Messiah, is certain. The whole Psalm treats of him only; and was so understood by the Jews in our LORD'S time, and by our LORD himself. (Matt. xxii. 44.)

"The LORD said unto my LORD." נֵאֻם יְהוָה לֵאדֹנָי. *The saying or decree of Jehovah to my LORD, i. e., to his Son, the Messiah, whom I acknowledge as my LORD and GOD. This decree, made in eternity, was in due time published, and was actually executed, when GOD raised up CHRIST from the dead, and received him into heaven. David was led by the Spirit, to call the Messiah his "LORD," in order to instruct the Church in all ages, that, although he was his son, according to the human nature, yet he had a higher nature, according to which, he was his LORD, as being "God blessed for ever," and consequently "LORD of all." (Acts x. 36.) It was also calculated to prevent that offence which the Holy Ghost foresaw, the Jews and others would be ready to take at the meanness of CHRIST'S appearance in the flesh.—"Sit thou at my right hand." Thou hast finished the work of man's redemption, and glorified me on earth, now take thy rest, and the possession of that sovereign kingdom, which by right belongs to thee; with an authority and honour far above all*

creatures in earth or heaven.—“Until,” by my almighty power, communicated to thee as Mediator, “I make thine enemies,” those crucified with thee, and the idolatrous heathen, as also the power of sin and Satan, and at last, death itself, “thy footstool;” alluding to the custom of Eastern conquerors putting their feet upon the necks of the kings whom they had conquered.

Having spoken of Jehovah's decree concerning the Messiah, David now addresses him on his exaltation to the mediatorial kingdom.—“The LORD shall send,” or *send forth*, “the rod of thy strength;” *i. e.*, thy sceptre or kingly power. But as the kingdom of CHRIST is spiritual, this rod is his Word or Gospel, published by himself, or by his Apostles and Ministers, and accompanied by his Spirit.—“Out of Zion;” Jerusalem. Here the kingdom of the Messiah was to be first established, according to the predictions of the Prophets, and from hence his religion was to be propagated to the ends of the world.—“Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies;” or “Thou shalt rule,” in the midst of them, partly by thy grace, converting their hearts, and partly by thy providence, by which thou wilt constantly defend thy people, and subdue all their adversaries, who, by their utmost efforts, shall not be able to hinder the erection and establishment of thy kingdom, but bring ruin on themselves by opposing it.—“Thy people,” or thy subjects, “shall be willing;” Heb. *willingnesses*, *i. e.*, *most willing*, or shall be *free-will offerings*, as the word properly means. Thy subjects shall not yield thee a feigned obedience, as the subjects to earthly princes, or those conquered by them frequently do, but shall readily obey all thy commands. They shall not need to be pressed to thy service, but voluntarily enlist themselves, and fight under thy banner, against all thy enemies.—“In the day of thy power.” When thou shalt take into thy hands the rod of thy strength, exerting thy mighty power in the preaching of thy word, and winning souls to thyself by it.—“In the beauties of holiness;” adorned with the beautiful and glorious robes of righteousness and true holiness, wherewith all true Christians are clothed.—“From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth;” *i. e.* thy offspring, the members of the Christian Church, shall be more numerous than the drops of the morning dew.—“The LORD hath sworn.” He did not swear in constituting the Aarōnic priesthood; but in this case, he did so, to signify to all mankind, that the Messiah's priesthood was made irrevocable, which that of Aaron was not.—“Thou art a priest,” as well as a king. Those offices which before were divided and given to different families, are united in thee, being both absolutely necessary for the establishment of thy kingdom, which is spiritual and heavenly in its nature, and therefore requires such a King as is also a Minister of holy things.—“For ever;” thy priesthood not being transient and successive, like that of Aaron, which was transferred, after the death of one priest to another, but to be continued to thee for ever.—“After the order of Melchizedek;” who was a Priest and a King, and both without a successor, and without end, in the sense intended by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The Psalmist then describes the Messiah in the exercise of his regal authority, pursuing his conquest over sinners, and all the opposers of his kingdom, in terms not to be literally, but figuratively explained, according to the spiritual nature of his reign.—“The LORD upon thy right hand,” meaning Jehovah, “shall strike through Kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen; he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads,” principals and rulers, “over many countries,” meaning, probably, the Roman Emperors, who shall stand up to oppose Christianity, and whose power would extend over the greatest part of the world, though, doubtless, every

antichristian is included.—But lest from such a description of success and triumph, any should suppose the Messiah would be entirely exempt from suffering humiliation, David intimates, finally, that, in his “way,” to his glorious kingdom, “he shall drink of the brook,” or *torrent*, (Heb.) a frequent metaphor in Scripture for *afflictions*, “and therefore shall he lift up his head.” Thus St. Paul, who may be considered as commenting on these words, observes, “that being in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.” (Phil. ii. 8, 9.)

But the most important sentence of the Psalm is that concerning the priesthood of the Messiah, containing a sacred truth, which appears to have been hid for many ages from the Church, but was revealed to, and is here declared, by David. Let us consider more particularly the meaning of this declaration, as it is elucidated in the New Testament, and inquire

I. WHAT IS THE “ORDER AFTER WHICH CHRIST WAS MADE A PRIEST.” In other words, “HOW WERE THE PECULIAR EXCELLENCIES AND PROPERTIES OF CHRIST, AS A PRIEST, REPRESENTED BY THE NAME, PERSON, AND OFFICE OF MELCHIZEDEK.”

The word “Melchizedek” means, as interpreted by the Apostle, “KING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.” (Heb. vii. 2.) Such is CHRIST. (Isai. xxxii. 1.) He is—*A righteous King*; righteous in himself; in his laws, which are holy, just, and good; in his rewards and punishments, which are distributed in perfect equity. (Rev. xxii. 12; Isai. xi. 3—5.)—*King of righteousness*; as he is the cause, author, and dispenser of it. (Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.) — — —

“KING OF SALEM.” (Heb. vii. 1.) Of Jerusalem, which was anciently called “Salem.” (Psal. lxxvi. 2.) It seems, that, when in the possession of the Jebusites, it was called, “*Jebus-Salem*.” This word was afterwards changed into Jerusalem, which means, “a vision of peace;” probably in consequence of the visions and revelations of peace with God, given there. In this place Melchizedek dwelt; and CHRIST also dwelt there, who is a Prophet, and Seer, and sees for us “a vision of peace.”—

“KING OF PEACE.” (Heb. vii. 2.)—*A peaceful King*. The “Shiloh” of Jacob, “unto whom shall the gathering of the people be,” typified by Solomon, (Psal. lxxii. 7;) named “Prince of Peace.” (Isai. ix. 6.)—The *Maker* and *Giver* of peace. (Col. i. 20; Eph. ii. 13—18; Isai. xxxii. 15—18.) — — —

Melchizedek, also, was “PRIEST OF THE MOST HIGH GOD,”—performing, no doubt, all sacerdotal acts, as offering sacrifice, (Heb. v. 1,) interceding, and blessing. Thus CHRIST, according to the pro-

phency of Zechariah, is "a priest upon his throne," (Zech. vi. 13;) a priest after the order of Melchizedek, and not after that of Aaron.

Melchizedek came not to his office by right of primogeniture, or, in a way of succession, as the sons of Aaron, but was raised up, and immediately called of GOD. Thus CHRIST was "called of GOD," (Heb. v. 4—6, 10; vii. 21, 28.) — Melchizedek had no successor on earth; nor had CHRIST. (Heb. vii. 23, 24.) — Melchizedek is not spoken of as laying aside his priesthood; and CHRIST "abideth a priest for ever;" he is "consecrated for evermore." (Heb. vii. 24, 28.) — Melchizedek was a type of CHRIST, because his progenitors are not recorded. The Son of GOD was "without father, without mother, without descent." (Heb. vii. 3.) — — The "beginning" of Melchizedek's "days," and his "end of life," are not recorded. CHRIST was without "beginning of days, and end of life." — —

These are some of the important points, discussed at large in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the Author's design is, not so much to set forth the *nature* and *exercise* of CHRIST's priesthood, as its *excellency* and *dignity*, and that not absolutely, but in comparison with the Levitical; with a view to persuade the Hebrews to renounce the latter, and embrace the former. He proves, from the writings of David, whom they acknowledged to speak by Divine Inspiration, that, antecedently to the giving of the Law, and the institution of the Levitical priesthood, GOD had, without any respect thereto, given a typical prefiguration of this priesthood of CHRIST, in one who was, on all accounts, superior to the priests who should arise of the order of Aaron. Hence the Aaronic or Levitical priests paid tithes to him in the loins of their progenitor, Abraham, and while they were constituted "without an oath," he was made with one. (Heb. vii. 9, 20.)

But,

II. WHAT IS THIS TO US? ARE THERE ANY ADVANTAGES, OR BLESSINGS, WHICH WE MAY DERIVE FROM HIM, AND HIS PRIESTHOOD?

Certainly there are. We may derive,

RIGHTEOUSNESS; from him as the King of Righteousness, He is "the LORD our righteousness;" (Jer. xxiii. 6;) "made of GOD unto us righteousness;" (1 Cor. i. 30;) "the end of the law for righteousness;" (Rom. x. 4.) We obtain—*Justification*, by his obedience unto death. (Rom. iii. 21—26.) Hence it is said in Isaiah, (ch. xlv. 25,) "In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." See also 1 Cor. vi. 11.—

Regeneration by his Spirit, whose influences his sacrifice hath procured, and his resurrection, ascension, and intercession, hath obtained. (Psal. lxxviii. 18 ; Acts ii. 33 ; John xvi. 7.) By these influences, righteousness is planted in us, and we are sanctified, and made holy. (1 Cor. vi. 11 ; Tit. iii. 5, 6.)—*Practical obedience* ; we have the rule of it, in his laws ; the motives to it, in his promises and threatenings, rewards and punishments ; the inclination to it, in his constraining love ; and the power, in his grace renewing our nature.

PEACE ; the doctrine of it ; a vision, discovery, or revelation of peace.—Actual peace with God.—Peace of conscience.—Peace, or tranquillity of mind.—Peace with one another, Jew or Gentile, Calvinist or Arminian, Churchman or Dissenter, if we be truly his disciples.—A disposition of peace and good will to all men.—

REFRESHMENT ; in and after our labours, conflicts with our enemies and sufferings. Melchizedek “brought forth” to Abraham “bread and wine.” (Gen. xiv. 18.) CHRIST’s word, and his flesh, are our bread. (John vi. 35.) His Spirit, and the consolations of it, are our wine.—Abraham was the father of the faithful, and a type of all his children ; and as he and his were refreshed by the royal bounty of Melchizedek, so shall all the faithful in CHRIST be refreshed by the most enlarged munificence, and unsearchable riches of their King.—Abraham intended nothing more by going to Melchizedek, than to do honour to his priestly office ; he received, however, his kingly bounty. Those who apply to CHRIST, on account of his priesthood, that they may be justified through his blood, accepted, and saved to the uttermost, by his intercession, shall also receive the riches and blessings of his kingdom.—This meeting of Melchizedek and Abraham, after he had accomplished the conquest of the confederate Kings, is a type and representation of the glorious meeting of CHRIST and his Church at the last day, when the whole Church shall have finished her warfare, and completed her victory over the world, sin, death, and hell. Then will the LORD bring out the stores of heaven, for their everlasting refreshment, and provide a feast for them in the kingdom of his Father.—Finally,

BLESSING, in the name of the Most High God. This benediction is expressed, Gen. xiv. 19, 20 : “And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth ; and blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.” In this blessing there are two parts.—That which had Abraham for its object, was a blessing of *prayer*. We have an illustration of this under

the law. See Num. vi. 22—27. All blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, are from “the Most High God,” who is possessed of all things in both worlds.—

He affords deliverance from, and protection against all adverse power, visible and invisible, for he is above them all.—He affords all things needful and useful for the body, as the possessor of “earth;” All things needful for the soul as the possessor of “heaven;” he “gives grace and glory, and withholds no good thing” from the children of Abraham, the imitators of his faith.

The second part of the blessing had God for its object. It was a blessing of *thanksgiving*. “Blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.”

CHRIST inspires us with gratitude, which is a most holy and happy disposition, and enables us acceptably to praise God. (Eph. i. 3; 1 Pet. i. 3.)—He presents our praises to God, and makes them acceptable.—Sincere and ardent thanksgiving to God will be our chief employment and felicity for ever.

III. WHAT OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST EXPECTS FROM US IN RETURN.

That, in imitation of Abraham, we should, so to speak, pay “tithes of all.”

Abraham paid tithes in token of *reverence*. We must reverence our Great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, “passed into the heavens,” (Heb. iv. 14;) “made higher than the heavens,” (Heb. vii. 26;) “set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” (Heb. i. 3;) “on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” (Heb. viii. 1.)

In token of *inferiority and subjection*. We must be subject to CHRIST.—(Psal. cx. 1; Rom. xiv. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.)

In token of *love and gratitude*. From the same principle we must dedicate our souls and bodies, our faculties and members, and a portion of all our gains, and of whatever we possess, to the LORD. Nay, we must lay all we are, and have, at his feet, and must intend, desire, and endeavour to employ all for his glory.—

XXIX.

THE DEATH OF GOD'S SAINTS PRECIOUS.

PSALM CXVI. 15.

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

THERE are few Psalms in the whole collection that are more instructive or animating than this. It is a song of thanksgiving, and composed, most probably, by David, but whether on some particular occasion, or upon a general review of the many gracious deliverances, God had wrought out for him, is not clear. He seems, however, when he wrote it, to have had an affecting sense of God's goodness to him, and under a lively impression of it, he utters delightful praise and thanksgiving to God in the following language.

"I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." Hebrew, *בימי אקרא*, "I will call upon him, *in my days*;" *i. e.*, as long as I have a day to live, as this phrase is used, 2 Kings xx. 19; Isai. xxxix. 8. "The sorrows of death," dangerous and deadly calamities, as bitter as death; Hebrew, *חבלים מות*, *the cords or bands of death*; "compassed me, and the pains of hell," or of *the grave, or of death*; either cutting, killing pains; or such agonies and horrors, as dying persons often feel within themselves, "gat hold upon me:" Hebrew, *מצאתי*, *found me, i. e.*, surprised me. Having been long pursuing me, at last they overtook and seized upon me, and I gave up myself for lost. "I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD." Being brought to the last extremity, I made use of this my wonted and only remedy in trouble, which I had found a balm for every wound. "O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." These attributes are recollected as supplying motives of encouragement in prayer, and for resigning his cause into the hands of God, who will perform his promises, and save those who faithfully serve and trust in him. "The LORD preserveth the simple;" those who are upright and sincere, and make use of no guile, no indirect or unlawful means for their deliverance, but, as the original word implies, depend wholly upon God, as little children do upon their parents. "I was brought low," by distress and misery, "and he helped me," patiently to

bear what was laid upon me, and to hope for deliverance at the proper time. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul;" unto that tranquillity of mind, and repose in the divine care and promises, which thou didst once enjoy; "for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee;" "For thou hast delivered my soul from death;" from threatening and approaching death in the body; or from spiritual and eternal death. "Mine eyes from tears," my heart from inordinate grief, "and my feet from falling;" viz. into sin, and so into misery. "I will walk before the LORD." Heb. אהלתי *I will set myself to walk before the LORD.* This is either the Psalmist's resolution, in return for the blessings he so thankfully acknowledged, or his confident hope that, though now banished from the place of GOD's worship and presence, he should be restored to it, and spend his future days in his house and service. "In the land of the living." Among living men in this world. "I believed," in the promise of GOD respecting my deliverance, and the kingdom over Israel, made me by Samuel, which I was persuaded he would perform: "therefore have I spoken" what I have now said, (ver. 9,) or what I have uttered to others concerning GOD's promises to me. Yet, he confesses, "I said in my haste," through precipitation of mind, when my thoughts were distracted by aggravated distress, "All men are liars." Even my professed friends prove deceitful, their promises fail, so that my case is desperate, if GOD do not help me; or, all men, even GOD's prophets, are liable to mistake, and may deceive others. "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?" Notwithstanding all my dangers and my distrust of GOD also, he hath conferred such great blessings upon me, that I can never sufficiently manifest his praise. "I will take of the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD;" or, as in ver. 17, "I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving to GOD." The phrase is doubtless taken from the common practice of the Jews in their thank-offerings, when a feast was made of the remainder of the sacrifices, and the offerers, together with the priests, ate and drank before the LORD; and, among other rites, the master of the feast took a cup of wine into his hand, and solemnly blessed GOD for it, and for the mercy which was then acknowledged, and then gave it to all the guests who successively drank of it. (1 Chron. xvi. 23.) To this CHRIST alluded, in the institution of "the cup of blessing," or of salvation, which we receive in the sacrament of his supper. (1 Cor. x. 16.) "I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people." Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

Inquire we

I. WHO ARE MEANT HERE BY SAINTS ?

The Hebrew word, חַסִּדִּים, here rendered, "*his saints*," more properly means "*his merciful ones*," or men of mercy.

They are the *objects of his mercy*; not only of his sparing, but of his pardoning mercy. They have turned to him in true repentance, accompanied with fruits worthy of repentance; and in living faith, producing its fruits, good works. Therefore they are in CHRIST, have an interest in him, and union with him; they are "found in him, not having their own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of CHRIST; the righteousness which is of GOD by faith." (Phil. iii. 9.) "There is no condemnation to them which are in CHRIST JESUS," but they are "justified freely through the redemption that is in him." (1 Pet. ii. 10.)

They are the *subjects of his mercy*. Mercy hath been manifested to them, and hath affected, influenced, and changed their hearts, so that they are converted, regenerated, and created anew by it, through that blessed spirit it hath communicated. "Through the tender mercy of GOD the Day-spring from on high hath visited them, to give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace." (Luke i. 78, 79.) Of "his abundant mercy he hath begotten them again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." (1 Pet. i. 3, 4.) They are "his workmanship, created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works, which GOD hath before ordained that they should walk in them." (Eph. ii. 10.)

They are *patterns, examples, or imitators of his mercy*. (See Eph. v. 1.) Being made tender-hearted, kind, and beneficent, they are inwardly affected with the infirmities, necessities, and miseries of their fellow-creatures; they feel them as their own, and endeavour, with tender sympathy, according as they have ability, to relieve them; and, not confining themselves to the communicating of temporal relief to the needy and wretched, they labour also to do spiritual good; to enlighten the darkness of men's minds, heal the disorder of their souls, and reclaim them from vice and misery, from every unholy and unhappy temper, from every sinful word and work; always manifesting a readiness to forgive the faults of others, as they themselves need and expect

forgiveness from GOD. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt. v. 7.) As they deal with their fellow-creatures, GOD will deal with them. He will incline men to show them mercy when in need of it, and deal kindly to them, and he himself will "grant them mercy in that day." (2 Tim. i. 18.)

But they are "saints" also, or "holy ones."—They are a company, selected and separated from the profane world. (John xvii. 14, 16; 2 Cor. vi. 17.)—They are not of the world as to its spirit; (1 Cor. ii. 12;) its fashions and customs; (Rom. xii. 2;) its ways and manners; (James iv. 4.)—They are set apart for, and consecrated to GOD.—They are conformed to GOD, possessed of his nature, stamped with his image, and imitate CHRIST, "GOD manifest in the flesh."—Holiness is their business and profession; the grand object, under GOD, of their thoughts, desires, delight, care, and pursuit. (Zech. xiv. 20, 21.) They know that without it they cannot "see the LORD;" and hence they make it the object of their first attention and care. As others attend to their trade, commerce, husbandry, and various, worldly avocations, with the same earnestness do they pursue holiness.

II. SAINTS ARE MORTAL, AND MUST DIE EQUALLY WITH OTHERS.

These "merciful ones," though enjoying the peculiar favour of GOD; these "saints," although conformed to GOD, are mortal, and must die as well as others.

They must die *certainly*. "It is appointed unto men once to die." (Heb. ix. 27.) "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death" hath "passed upon all men, for all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) They are, indeed, highly privileged in being in CHRIST, and having CHRIST in them, CHRIST a quickening spirit, CHRIST the resurrection and the life, and this, in some sense, abolishes death; they who enjoy this happiness will, in a sense, never die, (John xi. 26,) nor taste of death. (John viii. 52.) But this is not the sense intended when we speak of the saints as mortal. They shall not die spiritually or eternally, but they must die temporally. (Rom. viii. 10, 11.)

They may, like many, that are not saints, die in early life; in childhood or youth.—They may die suddenly.—By what is termed an accidental, or a violent death—By a lingering and more painful death. — — —

But, in all cases,

III. THEIR DEATH IS PRECIOUS.

The death of the saints is distinguished in this respect from that of carnal persons. "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

They *themselves* are precious.—They are amiable, lovely, beautiful, in God's sight.—They are unspeakably dear to God, as his friends, children, spouse.—They are of great value in his sight. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." Hence they are bought with precious blood; possessed of precious faith; partakers of exceeding great and precious promises.—They are of great use and importance to mankind, and to God's glory.—They are a precious seed to Abraham and to God; (Gal. iii. 16, 26—29;) "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." (1 Pet. ii. 9.)—They are precious "stones" in the "spiritual house," or temple of God. (1 Pet. ii. 5.)—Precious "jewels." (Mal. iii. 17.)—A precious "portion" and "a peculiar treasure" to the LORD. (Deut. xxxii. 9; Exod. xix. 5; Psalm cxxxv. 4.)

Their *life* is precious. It is of great value on earth, of great virtue or efficacy, under the grace of God.—Through the word of their testimony.—Through their example.—Through their intercessions and prayers, and "power with God."—Hence God set a high price upon David's life, guarding it from injury, and would not give it up to Saul, or Absalom, or to any of his enemies or persecutors, how much soever they might desire it. With this truth David had comforted himself in the depth of his distress and danger, and the event having confirmed his belief of it, he comforts others, who in a course of obedience to God, might be exposed to similar dangers, with the same persuasion. (2 Kings i. 13.) The blood of the saints is precious. (Psalm lxxii. 14.) If their enemies shed it, they shall pay dearly for it. This is one sense of the text. They shall not die by chance; but he will preserve their life, till it shall be best for them to be deprived of it. God often wonderfully prevents the removal of his saints, when there is but a step between them and death, and defends and prolongs their life.

Their *death* is precious. God takes special care to order it for the best in all circumstances, as to time, place, means, &c.—It is dear to God, and therefore desired and delighted in by him, because then the saints are delivered from the burden of the flesh, with its infirmities, afflictions, and pains; from the cares and fears, toils and labours, sorrows and sufferings, of this pilgrimage state. They are then finally victorious over, and placed beyond the reach

of every enemy, even of death itself. They are "present with the LORD;" for death is not a state of absolute insensibility, but of exquisite perception, activity, and enjoyment. The saints, after death, are perfected in knowledge, (1 Cor. xiii. 12,) in holiness, (Heb. xii. 23,) in happiness; for the "servant" of CHRIST then enters "the joy of his LORD;" the "soldier" of CHRIST receives the "crown of life;" the spiritual racer wins the prize; the labourer finds his rest, sits down at the marriage-feast, and receives his reward; the child and heir of GOD, the joint heir with CHRIST, who is heir of all things, obtains and is admitted to his inheritance. Therefore the death of his saints must be precious or dear to GOD, and must be pleasing to him for their sakes and out of love to them.—Further, it is of great value or importance to his glory. GOD's corn is then ripe, (Rev. xiv. 15, Matt. xiii. 28,) and laid up in the garner, and preserved from all danger; it cannot now wither in the blade, be blasted in the ear, or shaken out and dispersed. His jewels are made up and placed in his own cabinet. His living stones are firmly placed and built together in his heavenly temple. Thus he is glorified in them as he never was before. The FATHER sees it was not in vain he gave his Son; JESUS sees of the travail of his soul; the SPIRIT sees the fruit of his striving, and working in them; the angels see the end of their ministry; the ministers of CHRIST the fruit of their labours and sufferings.—The death of the saints is also of great importance and utility to others. To see the peace, the serenity, the joy, the triumph in which a child of GOD often dies, is an everlasting blessing to many.—Finally, GOD often makes the time of death a precious time of joy and consolation to a saint.

INFERENCES.

We may infer the vast importance of examining ourselves whether we be these "merciful ones," and these "saints."—"Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." (Isai. iii. 10, 11.)

We must not conclude, because we are "merciful," and "saints," that we shall not die, either early, suddenly, by what is termed accident, or by violence; but we should stand prepared for whatever Infinite Wisdom may permit, or appoint to be the means of our removal from this world.

How different the light in which the eyes of flesh and sense view things; view sufferings and even death, from that in which they should be viewed!

Let what is "precious in the sight of the LORD," be precious in our sight. Let us think of death without fear or aversion. Nay, let us seek to view it with desire and delight, were it only out of love to ourselves, to whom, in many ways, it will be gain; out of concern for the glory of GOD, who shall thus be particularly glorified; out of love to mankind, who may thus be, as many thousands, and tens of thousands have been, lastingly benefited.

Let us not grieve on the departure of our friends, "like those that have no hope."

XXX.

THE GOD OF JACOB OUR HELP IN THE PROSPECT OF MORTALITY.

PSALM cxlvi. 4, 5.

His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God.

This and the Psalms that follow, to the end of the book, begin and end with "Hallelujah;" a word which, as one observes, "puts much of GOD's praise into a little compass." We render it, "Praise ye the LORD." But it should, rather, be rendered, "Praise ye Jehovah;" *Jah* being a contraction of *Jehovah*, *i. e.*, Praise the self-existent, independent, supreme, infinite, and eternal GOD, the centre and source of perfection and beauty, of being and blessedness, this being implied in the word *Jehovah*.

We are not informed who was the author of this and the four following Psalms, but the foregoing is expressly ascribed to David and is entitled, "David's Psalm of Praise." And he was probably the writer of these five, which are also Psalms of praise, and excellent in their kind. May we be enabled to read or sing them, in the same spirit in which they were written!

It is remarkable, that these six Psalms, consisting wholly of praise, are preceded by five, consisting almost wholly of prayer.

Let us be fervent and importunate in prayer, and we shall not want matter for praise. Our thanksgiving for mercy, when received, will ever exceed our supplications for it, when we were seeking it. For *five* prayers, we have here *six* songs of praise. We may remark also, if our life be spent in prayer, it will end in praise. Perhaps this was intended to be intimated, by the Book of Psalms ending only with songs of praise. God's people should be more abundant in expressions of gratitude and thanksgiving, as they approach the close of their days, because when this life is ended, they hope to remove to a world of everlasting praise, and the nearer they come to heaven, the more they should accustom themselves to the work of heaven.

David, though a prince, and a mighty prince, did not think himself exempted from the obligation of praising God. He did not think it enough to see that his priests and people performed this duty, and that he needed not to do it, in his own person. Michal thought it a disparagement to him, to dance before the ark, but he was so far from being of this mind, that he wished to be first and foremost in the work. He thought his dignity so far from excusing him from that service, it rather obliged him to take the lead in it; and that, so far from lessening, such a service would rather exalt him. "Praise ye the LORD, Praise the LORD, O my soul! While I live will I praise the LORD; I will sing praises unto my God, while I have any being. Put not your trust in princes," however great their wealth or power may be, "nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." "Earthly princes, if they have the will, often want the power, even to protect their friends;" and if they want not power, yet its exercise depends upon the breath in their nostrils, which perhaps at the very critical moment goeth forth, and all their thoughts of assistance, and the thoughts of those who looked for advancement from them, are buried in the same grave. "His breath goeth forth; he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God."

In these words we have,

I. THE FRAILTY AND MORTALITY OF MAN, WITH THE SUDDEN AND FINAL RUIN OF ALL HIS EARTHLY SCHEMES AND PURSUITS.

"His breath goeth forth," &c. Man lives by breathing. His body, so "fearfully and wonderfully made," a piece of divine mechanism, first set in motion, when God "breathed into his

nostrils the breath of life," (Gen. ii. 7,) is kept in action by the same way, *viz.* by breathing. This comprehends two alternate motions, one of inspiration, whereby we draw in the air which surrounds us, in whatever state it may be, the other of expiration, whereby we expel the air, having been contaminated in passing through our bodies. This circumstance shows how liable we are to disease and death; the air we breathe not being always equally fit for respiration, being too cold or too warm, too moist or too dry, too light or too heavy, and being often the vehicle of infection, disorders, and death.

On our breathing depend the circulation of the blood, and all the other animal functions. The weight of the incumbent atmosphere acts as a counterbalance to the muscles that serve for respiration, and the contraction of the heart, and is that which keeps all the wheels of the body, so to speak, in motion. As in the elevation of the chest, by drawing in the air, a passage is opened for the blood into the lungs, where it is replenished with fresh air, so in the depression thereof, by the subsiding of the lungs, and the consequent compression of the blood-vessels, the blood is driven through the pulmonary vein, from the right to the left ventricle of the heart, to be conveyed from thence by the arteries to every part of the body. It is then brought back by the veins, to be again propelled in the same manner. Hence vital motion and activity are maintained. But how easily is this perpetual motion impeded! or interrupted! and the wheels broken or clogged in their operation! — — —

"His breath goeth forth." How frail is man! Suppose there be no air to breathe, or not enough, or that which he breathes unwholesome, or that there be a disorder in his lungs, so that he cannot breathe; then death ensues!

How certainly must this happen! In the nature of things the blood must thicken, and be unable to permeate through all the fine vessels; the lungs, arteries, veins, &c., must gradually wear out, and be unable to perform their office. (Eccles. xii. 3—7.) God, in consequence of the fall, has ensured death to all Adam's posterity. The air we breathe, which is impregnated with impurity; the food we eat, which, while it nourishes, impairs our health; the actions of the corporeal vessels and organs, the motion of the wheels, which, while they preserve life, do themselves wear out, and bring on death;—all ensure our dissolution!

Death is also near, as well as certain. Well might one say, "There is but a step between me and death." We have only

to cease breathing, and we die ! The blood no longer circulates, all the functions of life are suspended, sensation ceases, we grow cold, the whole frame dissolves, and returns to its dust !

How unsubstantial and uncertain is life !

“ From the maternal tomb,
To the grave’s fruitful womb,
We call her life ; but life’s a name
That nothing here can truly claim.”

“ O life, thou nothing’s younger brother,
So like, that one may take *one* for the *other* !
In all the cobwebs of the schoolmen’s trade,
We no such nice distinctions woven see,
As ‘tis to *be*, or *not to be*.”

How necessary is it to be always prepared ! But you say, perhaps, “ What need of this, if death be only ceasing to breathe, and the immediate loss of all sense and motion ? ” This is not the case. In one view of death, it is the stopping of all the wheels of this machine, the end of respiration, the cessation of motion, of vital heat, of sensation, and of all intercourse with the present world. But, in another and more important view of death, it is the separation of the soul and body. The Hebrew expression is, literally, “ His *spirit* goeth out,” even the spirit mentioned Gen. ii. 7. This does not die with the body. (Eccles. xii. 7 ; Rom. viii. 10 ; Matt. x. 28 ; Luke xii. 5 ; xvi. 22 ; 2 Pet. i. 13 ; Luke xxiii. 43, 46 ; Acts vii. 59 ; Heb. xii. 23 ; 1 Pet. iii. 18—20.) From this consideration we must perceive the necessity of preparing for our death ; that the spirit, on departing from the body, may have a right, according to the covenant of grace, to enter on a state of happiness and glory, and may have a meetness for being with CHRIST, his angels, and saints. —

“ He,” *i. e.* his body, “ returneth to his earth ; ” out of which he was taken. (Gen. iii. 19.)—“ His earth,” which, if a worldly man, he hath chosen for his portion and inheritance. (James iii. 15 ; 1 Cor. xv. 47, 48.) He goes to his own place.—*His*, because of the property he has in it. “ The earth God hath given to the children of men,” and great striving and contention there is about it. But after a while no part of the earth will be ours, but that in which the dead body shall make its bed, and that will belong to us, while the earth remaineth. —

“ In that very day his thoughts perish.”—His worldly thoughts,

desires, cares, schemes, and pursuits, will then have an end. —
— What folly it is, inordinately, to esteem, or desire any thing here! — —

But in the prospect of this dissolution of our frail and dying nature, we consider,

II. THE PRIVILEGES OF THOSE WHO HAVE THE GOD OF JACOB FOR THEIR HELP, AND WHOSE HOPE IS IN THE LORD THEIR GOD.

They have the “God of Jacob,” the God that “fed him all his life,” (Gen. xlviii. 15,) to support them in life, till they are prepared for death.—

—To help them to make that preparation, working in them repentance and faith, whence they obtain an interest in CHRIST, and union with him. In consequence of this, they have a title to, and fitness for eternal life.—

—To direct them on their journey through life.—

—To enable them to overcome all the enemies that oppose their salvation, who must be overcome in order to final happiness. (Rev. ii. 7; iii. 5.)

—To enable them to do the will of God to the end, and finish the work given them to do. (Rev. xxii. 14.)

—To support them under all their sufferings. There is a necessity for suffering on earth, (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12; Rom. viii. 17,) and they know the need of being supported under sufferings. They have God for their help; they have an interest in his attributes and promises. — — —

On these, his power, love, and faithfulness, they ground their hope, both as to the happiness of the soul, with JESUS, immediately after death, (2 Cor. v. 1—8; Phil. i. 21,) and as to the resurrection of the body. (Rom. viii. 11; Phil. iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv.)

Consider,

III. WHO THEY ARE THAT POSSESS THESE PRIVILEGES, AND THE HAPPINESS OF SUCH.

They who are in covenant with God. “The LORD *his* God.” Who are justified, adopted, regenerated. (Rom. v. 1; Tit. iii. 7; Rom. viii. 17; Gal. iv. 7.) — —

They who receive CHRIST in all his saving offices, in fulfilling which he becomes an effectual help to the children of men,

and trusting in whom, "our faith and hope is placed in God." (1 Pet. i. 21.) — — —

As to their happiness, they meet all antecedent sufferings, and death, with confidence, peace, and joy. To them these apparent evils are changed into good.

IMPROVEMENT.

* * * * *

XXXI.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF WALKING WITH WISE MEN OR FOOLS.

PROVERBS xiii. 20.

*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of
fools shall be destroyed.*

WE may remark the wisdom and importance of most of the Proverbs which are contained in this book. — — — Several instances in proof of this observation, occur in this very chapter, ver. 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 21, 24, and especially the text. — — —

We will inquire,

I. WHO ARE INTENDED BY THE "WISE" AND THE "FOOLS"
SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT.

The "wise," here meant, are not the learned, nor the knowing. Such are frequently unwise; either because they understand not, or do not pursue their true interest. Wisdom, sometimes called prudence, is to understand and pursue our proper and real welfare. It implies that we know what is our true interest,—what are the means that lead to it,—and that we prosecute them accordingly.

To know what is our true interest, we must take into consider-

ation all that belongs to us, our character, our property, our health, our peace of mind, the only foundation of which is peace with God, purity, and obedience. We should next view all these in reference to Eternity, our character at the day of judgment and in the eternal world; our eternal riches; our health and immortality after the resurrection; our everlasting peace, purity and righteousness.—

We must know the way that leads to these ends. That is, the possession of true religion; repentance, faith, and holiness.—

With respect to the practical use of this knowledge; nothing short of this is wisdom. We must not only be acquainted with the ends, we ought to have in view, and the way that leads to them, but must act accordingly. — —

All that do not answer the above character are foolish. But they are so in different degrees. Some pay no regard to their property, or character, or health, even in this world; much less in the world to come. — — — Others often regard these things, but do not regard peace of mind. — — —

Others again, that regard this last, do not regard peace with God, purity and obedience; they do not live for eternity. — —

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN "WALKING WITH WISE MEN;" OR IN "BEING A COMPANION OF FOOLS."

He "walks with wise men," who esteems and loves them, who prefers their company and conversation,—who associates with them,—who is intimate with them,—who is joined in Christian fellowship with them,—who observes narrowly their temper and behaviour, with a view to imitation.

He is "a companion of fools," who pursues the opposite line of conduct, who associates himself with the wicked, and admires and imitates their spirit and behaviour.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF PURSUING THE ONE AND THE OTHER LINE OF CONDUCT.

The very circumstance that we are in friendship with wise men, is a restraint upon us; and this is especially the case, if we be joined with such in intimate fellowship.—

There is something in the spirit, disposition, and heavenly mind of the wise which cannot but affect and influence us.—

Their example, actually before our eyes, provokes us to an imitation of them.—

Their discourse, their instructions, their advice, reproofs, and exhortations, are a check upon us, and, if regarded, a blessing to us. — —

Their prayers, added to all these, have much influence in obtaining for us "the wisdom that is from above." (James iii. 17.)

The opposite is the case with regard to the wicked. — —

XXXII.

THE EXPECTATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS NOT CUT OFF.

PROVERBS xxiii. 18.

Surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.

ALTHOUGH the instructions contained in the book of the Proverbs of Solomon are delivered in short and unconnected sentences, they are not the less important on that account, or the less worthy of our serious attention. How weighty are most of the advices given in the preceding verses! See ver. 4, 5, 11, 13, 14, and especially ver. 17, which is very important. "Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long." "Do not grudge them," says Henry, "either the liberty they take to sin, or the success they have in sin. It will cost them dear; and they are to be pitied rather than envied. Their prosperity is their portion, (Psalm xvii. 14;) nay, it is their poison. (Prov. i. 32.) We must not harbour in our hearts any secret discontent at the providence of God, though it seem to smile upon them, or wish ourselves in their condition." "Let not thine heart imitate sinners," as some translate the words. "Do not as they do. Walk not in the way with them, use not the methods they take to enrich themselves, though they thrive by them." "But be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long." We must "be in his fear," says the same writer, "as in our employment, exercising ourselves in holy adorings of God, in subjection to his precepts, submission to his providences, and a constant care to please him. We must be in it as in our element,

taking a pleasure in contemplating God's glory, and complying with his will. All the days of our life we must constantly keep up an awe of God upon our spirits, must pay a deference to his authority, and have a dread of his wrath. We must be always so in his fear as never to be out of it."

To enforce this advice, the words of our text are introduced. "Surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off."

There will surely be an end, both of the prosperity of the wicked, and of the afflictions of the righteous. And the latter shall certainly enjoy the good which they expect, when the happiness of the former will be finally and for ever lost.

The consideration of this may well reconcile us to all the difficulties of a religious life, and dispose us to pursue our heavenward course with cheerfulness and comfort.

But inquire we more particularly,

I. IN WHAT SENSE THERE SHALL SURELY BE AN END.

There shall be an end, as of the prosperity of the wicked, (Psalm lxxiii. 18, 19,) so of all earthly pursuits, gains, possessions, honours, and enjoyments. (1 Cor. vii. 31 ; 1 John ii. 17 ; 2 Pet. iii. 10.)—Of the labours, afflictions, and spiritual warfare of the righteous. (2 Cor. iv. 17 ; Heb. iv. 9 ; James v. 8.)—Of human life itself here below, which will terminate certainly, (Heb. ix. 27 ; Rom. v. 12,) soon, (Job vii. 1 ; xiv. 1 ; Psalm xxxix. 4, 5 ; xc. 4—7, 10 ; ciii. 15, 16,) perhaps to-morrow, (Prov. xxvii. 1 ; James iv. 14.)—Of our state of trial. This terminates with life. (Rev. xxii. 11.) How awful!

But there shall not be an end of our being. The soul shall not die. (Matt. x. 28 ; 1 Pet. iii. 19.) The body shall rise again. (John v. 28.) "We must all appear at the judgment-seat of CHRIST." The consequences of judgment are everlasting.

This leads me to consider,

II. THE EXPECTATION HERE MENTIONED, WHICH SHALL NOT BE CUT OFF.

This has reference to the *ground* of the expectation, or hope of the righteous, which is not reason, but the Holy Scriptures, and the Resurrection of CHRIST. (Rom. xv. 4 ; 1 Pet. i. 3.)—And to its nature ;—That they shall receive direction, protection, aid, and consolation, and shall not be forsaken in their future trials ; (2 Cor. xii. 9 ; Heb. xiii. 5 ;)—That they shall be per-

sected in holiness, and fitted for heaven; (Gal. v. 5);—That their spirits shall be with JESUS immediately on death; (Phil. i. 23);—That their bodies shall be raised incorruptible, immortal, and glorious; (Acts xxiii. 6; xxviii. 20);—That they shall be acquitted and justified at his judgment-seat;—That their reward shall be in proportion to their holiness, labours, and sufferings, although not for the merit of them. (1 Cor. iii. 8; xv. 10; Rom. iii. 27; xi. 6.)

This expectation shall not be cut off. For, having received CHRIST, they are children of GOD by adoption and regeneration.—They are heirs of GOD, and joint heirs with CHRIST.—Hence they are entitled to the blessings for which they hope.—They are, at least, prepared, in a measure, for those blessings.—They have the strongest assurances in the doctrines of the Gospel, and in the declarations and promises of GOD, that they shall receive them.—They have already an earnest and anticipation of them, by the “HOLY SPIRIT of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” (Eph. i. 13, 14.)

III. THE USE TO BE MADE OF THESE THINGS.

Shall there be an end of the prosperity of the wicked? Shall they lose their whole portion, and that soon, and for ever? Then, let us pity and pray for them, instead of envying them.

Shall all earthly pursuits, possessions, honours, enjoyments, soon end? Then let us not too highly appreciate them, or be too much concerned about them, or too eagerly follow or delight in them. Let us not be inordinately attached to earthly things, but sit loose from them; make a right use of them while we have them, and be always ready to give them up.

Shall our labours, afflictions, and warfare as Christians, soon have an end? Then let us patiently bear them, persevere in the work of the LORD, and continue to “fight the good fight of faith,” as good soldiers of JESUS CHRIST.

Shall life itself soon end? Then let us actively improve and employ it to the glory of GOD and the good of our fellow-creatures, or patiently suffer it.

Are we now on our trial for eternity? and shall our state of probation soon end? Then let us consider how much depends on these few days, and take care that we be in a state of readiness for eternity, when summoned to appear before our Maker and Judge.

Shall the expectation of the righteous never be cut off? Then, let

us inquire whether we have laid a foundation for such an expectation, by becoming truly righteous, and, if not, let us do it without delay.

If, by the grace of God, we have done so, let us indulge and strengthen the expectation, as reasonable in itself, our indispensable duty, (Heb. iii. 6, 14; 1 Pet. i. 13; Tit. ii. 13;) our great interest, and as productive of the best consequences.

Let us see that our christian hope bring forth the proper fruits, such as fortitude, patience, gratitude, joy, purity, diligence.

XXXIII.

THREATENING DENOUNCED AGAINST
THE OBSTINATELY IMPENITENT.

PROVERBS xxix. 1.

He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

THIS subject will lead us to inquire,

I. WHAT DESCRIPTION OF PERSONS MAY BE SAID TO BE OFTEN REPROVED.

The Hebrew, *איש תוכחה*, is literally, *the man of reproofs*; and the word rendered *reproofs* implies also light and conviction. Hence the expression imports one that is favoured with means of information, conviction, and reproof. To be more particular. It includes,

Those who are favoured with the revealed will of God; whose doctrines inform; whose commands convince; whose promises encourage; and whose threatenings alarm.

Those who hear, or who might hear the word plainly and powerfully preached.

Those who are often told of their danger, and warned to flee for safety; who are reprov'd by their neighbours, or friends, for things amiss in their temper or behaviour.

Those who are reprov'd by God's providence in afflictions, disappointments, losses, the death of friends, and so forth.

Those who are reproved by his HOLY SPIRIT, striving with them.

II. WHAT IS MEANT BY THEIR "HARDENING THEIR NECKS."

The expression is figurative. It is borrowed from the unwillingness of bullocks to submit to the yoke put on their neck, and to draw in it. Religion; its doctrines, but especially its duties; the authority of GOD, his government and laws, are such a yoke, to which we must submit. We are required to take it upon us, always to wear it, and obediently to draw in it. Hence it follows, that they "harden their necks," who do not submit to the government of GOD, nor comply with his will; neither believing what he has revealed, nor obeying what he has commanded, nor desiring what he has promised.—Who, having taken this yoke upon them, again throw it off.—Who do not draw in it; not working under the direction of GOD, and the influences of his Spirit, and not entirely devoting themselves to his service. In other words, they may be said to "harden their necks," who do not comply with the light of the doctrines of GOD's word,—who do not obey its commands, revere its threatenings, nor embrace its promises;—Who are "hearers, but not doers of the word,"—who do not hearken to the advice, nor submit to the reproofs of friends,—who are not humbled, nor subdued by alarming or afflictive dispensations of Providence, (Isai. i. 5,)—who do not yield to, but "grieve," "quench," and "do despite" to the motions of the Spirit.

But whence does this proceed? We answer,—From the depravity of our nature, our blindness and hardness of heart,—From having embraced erroneous opinions; or from thinking that religion is a mere outward thing; or that a slight and transient sorrow is repentance, that a correct creed is the faith which saveth, and that a partial reformation is christian obedience,—From wrong views of religion, as if the possession of it would render us miserable,—From delusive hopes of repenting by and by,—From following evil example,—From ignorance of the nature of GOD's merc productive either of discouragement or presumption.

Observe,

III. THE THREATENING DENOUNCED AGAINST THEM.

They "shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

They shall suffer great temporal calamities of various kinds. Possibly, their worldly circumstances shall be ruined; they shall

suffer from the death of relatives and of friends, whose advice they regret; they shall have to endure long, painful, and remediless affliction.—Should these be no longer chastisements but punishments, God's SPIRIT shall finally be withdrawn, and his word be rendered ineffectual.—They shall be cut off by sudden death, perhaps, in some remarkably alarming way.—They shall be sent to aggravated damnation in hell.—All this shall come upon them unexpectedly, perhaps, in a moment, and “without remedy.” Hebrew, *אין מרפא*, *no healing*. We may illustrate this by reference to Eli's sons, (1 Sam. ii. 23—25; iv. 11,) to the inhabitants of the old world; to those of Sodom; to the Israelites; (2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16;) to the Jews, after the time of CHRIST; and to many instances in all ages. — —

 XXXIV.

REMEMBERING OUR CREATOR IN YOUTH.

ECCLESIASTES xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

THE importance of this advice will easily be admitted by those who consider the wisdom of him that gave it. According to the Jewish historian, (1 Kings iv. 29—31; x. 23, 24; 2 Chron. ix. 22—24,) he surpassed all the Kings of the earth, and all the children of the East, which was then the seat of knowledge, as in riches so in wisdom. He was, it appears, wiser than all men. His fame was in all lands, and all the earth sought unto him to hear his wisdom. He undoubtedly possessed a strong natural understanding; which was improved by the best education that age could afford. And God, according to his promise, by supernatural inspiration, had given him a wise and understanding heart, in such a degree, that God himself testified that, “there was none like him before him, and that none after him should arise like unto him.” Add to this, that, as a most opulent and powerful King, he had great advantages for making experiments

and discoveries, respecting what was good for the children of men. These advantages he certainly used to the utmost, and therefore, excelled, not only in theoretical, but in practical knowledge or experience. (ch. i. 12, &c., ii. 1, &c.) Hence his decisions should be received as oracles. For who can hope to equal Solomon in knowledge, or to find that in the world, or in any creature in it, which he did not find.—But, alas! as if we could exceed him in advantages for the attainment of wisdom, or in skill and diligence in the use of them, we are all for making the experiment ourselves, and trying whether we cannot discover what escaped him. This is a source of constant misery to mankind, that they will not learn by the experience of others, but must tread again the same track of vanity themselves. Nay, it often happens that our own experience does not instruct us. But, let us, at least, be influenced by a prospect of death, of judgment, and eternity, and give attention to the instructions of Solomon, in the close of the former chapter, (ver. 8, 9,) where he ironically addresses a young man, who is supposed to be bent on the pursuit of sensual pleasure, and not to be restrained by merely rational persuasions. “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” Then, having admonished him to “remove” that which must in the end cause “sorrow” to the heart, and, in many cases, also “evil,” and pain to the “flesh,” he affectionately exhorts him, in the language of the text; from which we will consider,

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN REMEMBERING OUR CREATOR,

It is not a mere act of memory that is here advised, but such a remembrance as corresponds with the different relations, in which God stands to us; his various attributes, and the benefits we have received from him: as though Solomon had said, Thou dost already know, but consider, lay to heart, and keep always in remembrance,—That thou hast a Creator, the author of thy very being, from whom thou hast derived thy body, with its members and senses; thy soul with its faculties and powers.—That he is thy Preserver, supporting thy being and life; thy health and strength; thy body and soul; thy members and faculties.—That he is thy Benefactor, the bountiful giver of all thy good things; thy food, clothing, and habitation; thy relations and friends; all thy temporal, spiritual, personal, family, national

blessings.—That he is thy Redeemer, who has given for thy ransom, what was dearer to him than all his works, even his only-begotten Son.—That he might become thy Saviour from sin, its guilt, its power, and its defilement, into his favour, image, and fellowship, to his kingdom, grace, glory.—That he might be thy friend, and father, and husband. — —

Seek such an acquaintance with God, and remembrance of him as shall influence thy spirit and temper, by the teaching of his Spirit, as well as word.

Learn to fear and reverence him; to stand in awe of his power; to fear to offend him.—Love him with esteem, desire, and delight.—Serve him from love, and, in the strength of grace, endeavour always to obey his will, to keep his commandments, and intend, aim, and strive to promote his glory. This is remembering God practically, not to do which is, in Scripture language, to forget him.

Remember his infinite glory, purity, justice, and be humbled before him.—His unspeakable mercy, love, and kindness, his most gracious care and providence, and confide in him for body and soul, for time and eternity.—Remember his omnipotence, so as to value his favour, and dread his displeasure above all things in the world.—His omniscience, so as to be afraid to sin in secret as much as in the presence of a multitude.—His omnipresence, so as to walk always before him, and live as in his sight.—His eternity, and seek to have fellowship, and live with him for ever and ever.

Remember him,—In private; in thy closet; and read, meditate upon, and pray to him.—In thy family.—In the great congregation.—In thy worldly business; therein aiming at his glory, seeking his direction and blessing, respecting his providence, and devoting a proportion of thy gains to his service, and remembering him in his people and members.—At all times; in the morning, at noon, and in the night, on Sabbath days, and all other days.—In all places; in thy house, shop, market, at home, abroad.—In all companies; when with relations, friends, or enemies; with those who are righteous or otherwise.—In all employments; whether *religious*, in which we must manifest the power, as well as the form of godliness; or *civil*, being just and faithful in all our transactions; or *natural actions*, as eating and drinking, being temperate in all things, and doing even these things to his glory.—

II. WHY WE MUST REMEMBER OUR CREATOR?

It is reasonable in itself, that a Being so great, so good, so excellent in himself, so kind to us, so nearly related, so useful, so necessary to our being and well-being, should always be remembered.—

It is our indispensable duty.—By the law of our creation; our rational and immortal nature being given, and preserved to us for this end.—By the law of our redemption, being redeemed for this purpose, that we might be “a peculiar people,” for the LORD.—By the express law of God’s revealed will, divine commands being given us to the same effect.—

It is our great interest for time and for eternity.—This, above all subjects of contemplation and remembrance, enlightens, enlarges, ennobles, purifies, comforts, and enriches the soul; rendering it happy here, and ensuring its happiness hereafter.—This godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.

III. WHEN WE MUST REMEMBER OUR CREATOR?

“In the days of youth.” And that because we are then best able to do it. The understanding is clear to apprehend, and less prejudiced against divine truths. The memory is stronger to retain them. The affections are lively to embrace them. The will is more resolute and vigorous to pursue them. The conscience is unblinded to acknowledge, and tender to feel them. The health is firm, and the body strong for active services, with a view to God’s glory, and our neighbour’s good. Add to this, the work becomes more difficult through delay.

Moreover, in youth we have the best opportunity to remember our Creator.—Our hindrances are the least from care and business, from worldly connexions, attachments, and interests, or from infirmities and afflictions.—Our helps are the greatest. We are more at liberty to read the word of God and pious books, to hear, meditate, pray, and form acquaintance with the wise and good.

It will be most acceptable to God, and most for his glory, to serve him in our earlier days; because, as is implied in what has been already said, we are then most able to glorify him.—We have most time to do it; and, beginning in our earliest years, we may spend our whole life to his glory.—It is certainly but little to his honour for a man to cease from sin, when, through infirmity, affliction, and old age, he can commit it no longer; for

a man to give up the world, its honours, riches, and pleasures, when he can enjoy it no longer ; for a man to cease serving the devil, when he can serve him no more ; to give God the dregs of his time, the wretched remains of his health and strength. But the contrary is much to his honour ; and, without question, we owe the best of our time and strength to God.

It will be most for the good of our neighbour so to do.—Our example will be most edifying in all the particulars above mentioned.—We shall be best enabled to be useful to others.—We shall have most time for it, and may be useful all our life.

It will be most comfortable to ourselves. Religion, indeed, brings comfort in every age, or, at least, supports us under our infirmities, afflictions, and trials ; but if we wish to have full evidence of our own sincerity in a profession of godliness, and to have the happiness from it, which it is calculated to yield, and to be prepared for old age and death, we must embrace it heartily in youth.

“Remember now thy Creator, while the evil days come not ;” *i. e.*, the time of old age, which may be called *evil*, because burdensome in itself, and far more grievous, when it is loaded with the sad remembrance of our youthful sins and follies, and with the dreadful prospect of approaching death and judgment, which renders a man so wretched that he cannot live, yet dare not die. “Nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” When thy life shall be bitter to thee, and every natural object which once afforded thee pleasure, will be viewed with indifference. The calamities of old age are as strikingly as beautifully described in the words following the text, “While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened ;” these heavenly luminaries being, as it were, obscured through the dim-sightedness of old age,—or, if the words be understood figuratively, the understanding, memory, imagination, and judgment, which are not unsuitably compared to the sun, moon, and stars, generally decay in advanced age. Then also, afflictions come on, in continual succession, as in wet season “the clouds return after the rain :” *one deep calling upon another*. The hands and arms, with which a man defends himself against assaults of men or beasts, as watchmen “keep the house,” are subject “to tremble,” by paralytic, and other similar distempers, incident to age. “And the strong men” the legs and thighs, or the back, in which the strength of the body consists, being now grown feeble, “bow themselves,” and the teeth, which “grind” the meat which we eat, “cease” to perform their office, “because they are few,” being only here one and there another ; neither so united together, nor

opposite each other, as to be fit for their work. The eyes, that look from their sockets, or through the eye-lids, which like "windows" are opened or shut, are "darkened," and "the doors are shut in the streets;" namely, the outward senses, or rather the mouth, or two lips, (Psal. cxli. 3,) which are the principal means of eating and conversation. And these are said to be shut, because in extreme old age, men become indisposed to converse, and have little appetite to eat. "And he shall rise up," from his bed, being weary of lying and unable to sleep, "at the voice of the bird," which chirps early in the morning.—"And all the daughters of music," the parts of the body adapted to utter or receive sounds, "shall be brought low," and be incapable of making, or delighting in melody. "When they shall be afraid of that which is high," either of steep places, on account of the difficulty they feel to ascend them through debility and weakness, or of high things, lest they should fall upon them; "and fears shall be in the way," lest as they are walking, they should stumble, and fall, or be thrust down, or suffer from some other accident. Their heads shall be full of gray hairs, as "the almond tree" of white blossoms, "and the grasshopper shall be a burden," if it accidentally light upon them, or, rather, every inconvenience will become a grief to them, being a burden to themselves. "And desire," after every natural pleasure, and whatever was delightful in youth, "shall fail," because man goeth, "and every day is more nearly approaching, "his long home," *i. e.*, the grave, from whence there is no return into this world, or to the invisible state, which is unchangeable and everlasting. When this takes place, "the mourners go about the streets," to accompany the corpse to the grave. "Or ever the silver cord be loosed," which means probably the spinal marrow, which comes from the brain, the origin of all sensation, and goes down to the lowest end of the back bone. This is aptly compared to a "cord," both for its figure, which is long and round, and for its use, which is to draw and move the parts of the body; and to "silver," both on account of its excellence and colour, which is a bright white. And it may properly be said to be "loosed," or dissolved, because before death it is relaxed, and otherwise disabled for its proper service. Agreeably to this, by the "golden bowl" we may understand the membranes of the brain, and especially the inmost of them, called the *pia mater*, which may be described as a "bowl," because it is round, and contains in it all the substance of the brain, enclosing it in every part; and a "golden bowl," from its great preciousness and usefulness; and from its colour,

which is somewhat yellow, and nearer to that of gold than any other part of the body. This, upon the approach of death, is commonly shrivelled up, and often broken. And, as Solomon, in these clauses, refers to the brain, which is the fountain of the animal powers, so, in the following, he alludes to the spring of our vital powers, and describes the chief organs employed in the production and the circulation of the blood. "Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern." * The wonderful provision made for preparing and circulating the vital fluid, is at death entirely deranged. The veins do not return the blood to the heart, but suffer it to stand and cool, whence arises the coldness of the outward parts, previous to dissolution. And the great arteries do not perform their office of propelling the blood, through their lesser branches, to the most remote parts of the body, whence arises the cessation of the pulse, which is a certain sign of approaching death.

At this momentous period, instead of having religion to seek, we ought to have the comfort of it to support us. But if, so far from that, we are oppressed with a load of guilt and apprehensions of future punishment, how dreadful will be our situation! Add to this,—

If we, who have the Gospel continually preached to us, and so many opportunities for spiritual improvement, neglect God in our youth, there is reason to fear we shall never truly turn to him; but reap the consequences of our accumulated guilt, with unavailing sorrow. (Prov. i. 28—31.)

But, alas! my exhortation comes too late for many of you. The days of your youth are no more. You have lost much precious time, which can never be recalled; and the best part of your time: You have employed it for the worst master; in the worst

* Though the circulation of the blood has been hid for many generations, and the honour of its invention is ascribed to an eminent Physician of our own country, yet it is not improbably supposed, it was well known to Solomon, but after his time lost; as doubtless many other things were, which he wrote concerning plants, &c.—According to this notion, the "fountain" is the right ventricle of the heart, which is now acknowledged to be the spring of life; and the "pitcher," is the arteries which convey the blood from thence to other parts, and especially that arterious vein by which it is transmitted to the lungs, and thence to the left ventricle, where it is better elaborated, and then thrust out into the great artery, called *aorta*, and by its branches dispersed into all the parts of the body. The "cistern" is the left ventricle of the heart, and the "wheel," seems to be the great artery, which is fitly so called, because it is the great instrument of this circulation.—See the Author's Commentary.

work, and for the worst wages. It is lost to God, whom you have not glorified; to your neighbour, whom you have not edified and profited; and to yourself, both in things temporal and spiritual, both as to this life and the life to come. You have neither attained the wisdom, nor holiness, nor happiness, nor the capacities of usefulness you might have attained here, nor are you capable of the reward you might have had hereafter. For God will not, cannot reward you in heaven, for serving the Devil on earth. But the best that can be done is to remember him now; because,—It is not *safe* to delay. Your life is a vapour. You have no certainty of living one day. The Spirit of God may cease striving with you.—It is not *wise*. If you have lost much time already, it is not wise to lose still more. The longer you delay, the work will be more difficult. You will have more work to do, and less time to do it in. Our reward in a future state, is to be according to our holiness and usefulness; but the longer you are in beginning, the less time you will have to acquire holiness, or to be made useful.—It is not *comfortable*. You cannot be truly happy till you remember your Creator, as you have been advised.—And are you reluctant to attain substantial joys? Can you be happy too soon? — —

 XXXV.

THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

ECCLESIASTES xii. 13.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

THIS conclusion, drawn by Solomon, is not only to be considered as a consequence deduced from reasoning, but also as a result of experience. He not only inferred, from certain and infallible principles, that it must be so, but proved, by his own experience, that it was so; that all other things were vanity, and that religion alone was the chief good of man. This appears from ch. i. 12, ii. 1, 4—11. And, surely, this conclusion may be relied on as infallible, considering—The extraordinary wisdom of its

author.—The opportunities he had to make discoveries on the subject, from his immense wealth, influence, and power.—The diligence he used in making inquiries.—His great and long experience. If we, then, be wise, we shall admit, entertain, and act on this conclusion; and so shall spare ourselves much fruitless labour and unnecessary trouble, in seeking happiness where it is not to be found. For, surely, we cannot hope that any investigations, or trials of ours, will confute the result of his wisdom and experience, or that we shall find, in things of a worldly, carnal, and temporal nature, what he could not. For, “what can the man do that comes after the King?”

Consider we,

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN FEARING GOD, AND KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS.

The *fear* of God is an expression often used in the Old Testament, for the whole of religion, (Gen. xx. 11, xlii. 18; Psalm xix. 9, xxxiv. 7, 8, 11.) — — — In the New Testament, the expression more commonly used is *love*, or faith, hope, and love. (Gal. v. 6; 1 Cor. xiii. 13; 1 John iv. 7, 16.)

The reason of this may be found in the comparative darkness of the former dispensation; the love of God not being then so fully manifested to the church. Under the Old Testament, God was represented more as an object of fear than of love. (Heb. xii. 18.) Hence God's people were then represented chiefly as “servants,” under a spirit of bondage; but they are now sons, (Rom. viii. 15,) their adoption being fully manifested.

However, as the Old Testament saints were not without “love,” so neither are the New Testament saints without “fear,” especially in the beginning of their spiritual course. Their first awakenings and convictions naturally produce fear of God, as a lawgiver and judge. — — —

There are different kinds of the fear of God.—A reverential fear of him. This arises from an acquaintance with and sense of the Divine glories; his self-existence, eternity, immensity, and greatness. “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.” (Isaiah xl. 12—15.) “It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell

in." (Is. xl. 22.) This is recommended, Deut. xxviii. 58; Psal. ii. 11; Jer. x. 6, 7; Heb. xii. 28; and it implies respect, admiration, veneration. — —

—An awful fear; recommended, Jer. v. 21, 22; Matt. x. 28. This arises from a view and sense of his almighty power, whereby we see we can have no enemy so formidable, and no friend so valuable; that there is no one so much to be regarded. Hence the expostulation, "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man, that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass, and forgettest the LORD thy Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?" (Isai. li. 12, 13;) and the command, "Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." (Isai. viii. 13.)

—A fear of dread and terror, arising from a conviction that we have merited, and are exposed to his displeasure and wrath on account of our depravity and guilt, and his holiness, justice, and truth. This will not fail to produce the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" To which it has pleased God to afford the most satisfactory answer, in his word; or in his commands.

What these commands are, we now proceed to show. To a fallen creature, the first command is, "Repent ye." — — — The second, "Believe the Gospel:" (Mark i. xv.) Or, Believe in CHRIST. (John vi. 28, 29; 1 John iii. 23.) Hereby we are prepared to observe the third command, to love God. (Matt. xxii. 37.) This implies a high veneration of him for his infinite perfections; an earnest desire after him, as a good, suitable and needful for our happiness; a holy acquiescence and delight in him, as being "found of them that seek him," communicating himself to them, and a lively gratitude to him, not only for the bounties of his providence, but blessings of his grace. (Psal. viii. 1; lxxiii. 25; lxiii. 1; xvi. 6—9; Phil. iv. 4; Psal. ciii. 1, 2, &c.) This requires a very exalted state of mind, the attainment of which will alone give true rest to our souls. (Psal. cxvi. 7.) It is essentially connected with every branch of religion and virtue. It leads to the fourth command, *viz.* love to our neighbour; a complacency and delight in God's children; gratitude to friends and benefactors; meekness and long-suffering towards enemies; pity and bounty towards the miserable and needy; benevolence towards all. And to the fifth,

universal holiness; (Lev. xi. 44; xix. 2; 1 Pet. i. 16;) the mind of CHRIST, and walking as he walked. This is recommended in the text; the fear of God implying all inward, and keeping his commandments, all outward holiness. This implies—That we make GOD's will the one rule of our conversation and conduct, carefully shunning whatever he hath forbidden, and carefully doing what he hath commanded. (Psa. cxix. 6; Matt. vii. 21; Rev. xxii. 14.)—That we obey from love, (Gal. v. 6; John xiv. 15—23.)—That our end be his glory, and that we do every thing to this end. (1 Cor. x. 31; Col. iii. 17.)—That we do all in a spirit of humility before God, of resignation and patience towards him, and of meekness towards man.

II. IN WHAT SENSE THIS IS THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

We may observe first, it is his DUTY. In reason, as he is the creature of GOD, made, preserved, sustained, bought by him. It is doubly his duty, because GOD hath commanded it, and his commands lay an indispensable obligation upon his creatures, his servants, his children.—Secondly, it is his WHOLE DUTY. Nothing is his duty, but what is comprehended in this. The commands of GOD enjoin whatever is his duty to GOD, his fellow-creatures, and himself. GOD has even enjoined him to feed and clothe himself; to provide for his family, and do whatsoever is really conducive to his present welfare. And he must do these things as his duty, and should do nothing that GOD has not made his duty. A good man can find time for nothing else but his duty. — — —

It is his INTEREST—*Temporally*; “Godliness having the promise of the life that now is.” All things necessary in this life are insured by it; (Matt. vi. 33;) all things useful; (Psa. lxxxiv. 11;) all evil things are made to work together for good. (Rom. viii. 28.)—*Spiritually*. In this way the soul attains all the unsearchable riches of CHRIST, pardon, the divine favour, adoption, regeneration, his whole image, “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” a new body, a glorious mansion, a crown, a kingdom, the enjoyment of the Creator, the best enjoyment of the creatures and all things.—His WHOLE INTEREST. Nothing else is his interest, whatever it may promise, but his loss; because if GOD's commands enjoin his whole duty, whatever is not his duty is sin, and surely sin is not his gain, but his loss.

It is his HAPPINESS; including confidence, peace, hope, joy, lowliness, meekness, patience, communion with GOD, the guardianship of angels, the fellowship of saints; with a moderate

enjoyment of God's creatures. All this will be enjoyed here, and eternal life hereafter.—His **WHOLE HAPPINESS**. Whatever is so called, arising from other quarters, does not deserve the name. This is alone satisfactory, certain, durable, and eternal.

His **WISDOM**.—That it is his wisdom appears from the declaration of Scripture. (Psa. cxi. 10; Prov. i. 7; ix. 10; Job xxviii. 28.) To neglect what is our duty, and our whole duty; our interest, and our whole interest; our happiness, and our whole happiness, must certainly be folly; it must manifest the greatest want of judgment, consideration, foresight, and attention to our true welfare. On the contrary, to attend to what is our duty, interest, and happiness, must be wisdom; as showing that judgment, consideration, foresight and attention.—His **WHOLE WISDOM**. For every thing that concerns us is comprehended in these, our duty, our interest, and our happiness.

His **GLORY**.—It is the *glory* of man, to reverence the greatest of Beings; to stand in awe of the most powerful; to love one infinitely lovely and loving; to intend his glory, who is the author and end of all things; to do his will, who is the lawgiver, governor, and judge of men and angels.—It is also his **HIGHEST**, nay his **ONLY** glory. Nothing else is truly honourable, and calculated to advance his nature to the real dignity and honour of which it is capable. — — They who glory in sin, or wealth not properly used, or in talents of any kind not employed for the honour of God, “glory in their shame;” and they who are ashamed of piety and virtue are ashamed of their glory. — —

Upon the whole. As to other things, whether opposed to this religion, or unconnected with it, one single question shows the vanity and folly of pursuing them. *Quid bono?* What good will they do us in life, in death, and especially at the day of judgment?

III. HOW THIS APPEARS.

“God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” This one consideration, independent of all others, proves to a demonstration that religion is the whole of man's duty.—

We learn the *certainty* of this judgment from the light of nature, conscience, and Scripture. — —

Its *solemnity*, from the circumstances which are to precede, accompany, and follow it. — —

Its *universality*.—“We must *all* appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST.”

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The *strict process* which will be observed in it. "Every work ;" "every secret thing" will be brought into judgment.

The awful and irreversible *sentence* which will be passed, and its consequences. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal."

The only way to escape condemnation on that awful occasion, is now to "fear God and keep his commandments," in the full and extensive meaning of these words, which has been above given. — —



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