

THE
MISCELLANEOUS WORKS

OF THE LATE

JOHN FAWCETT, D. D.

AUTHOR OF THE DEVOTIONAL FAMILY BIBLE :

COMPRISING

ESSAYS, SERMONS, AND TRACTS.

NOW FIRST COLLECTED :

WITH

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR, AND PORTRAIT.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR W. JONES, 5, LOVELL'S COURT,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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MEMOIR
OF
THE AUTHOR.

THE tracts which comprise the following pages, and which are now for the first time collected into a volume, were the productions of one who during a long, laborious, and active life was a zealous and intrepid advocate for the cause of God and truth; who in his public ministry uniformly advocated the doctrines of rich, free, and sovereign grace; and whose life and conversation was a bright exemplification of the holy influence of those truths which it was his delight to dwell upon in all his preaching and in all his writings. Of such a man, posterity will be glad to know the personal history, and for their sakes the following particulars are here recorded:

JOHN FAWCETT was born January 6th, O. S. 1739-40, at Lidget-green, near Bradford, in Yorkshire. At the age of twelve, he lost his father, Stephen Fawcett, a farmer, who died of a fever, leaving a widow who long survived him, and a numerous family, to lament his loss. Having been early initiated in the common branches of learning, he soon manifested a taste for books, and read with eagerness whatever came in his way. At the age of thirteen, he was put apprentice to a person at Bradford, with whom he remained to the expiration of his term, which was six years. The grammar school, in

that town, was then under the management of the Rev. Mr. Butler, from whom he received many marks of kindness and condescension, encouraging him in the prosecution of his studies, by the loan of books, and occasional instruction in classical learning.

We are told that, during the continuance of his apprenticeship, his time was occupied in his master's service from six in the morning to eight at night, so that what time he had for reading was principally redeemed from sleep, or seized by stealth. The sacred book, whether he was in the house or by the way, whether engaged in work or at leisure, was his constant companion. Between the age of twelve and fourteen, he had read it over repeatedly; and he thought himself enriched for ever when he had obtained possession of a *small pocket Bible*. Perhaps it would scarcely be proper to relate the different plans he adopted to elude the notice of the family, who had no idea of the enjoyment he found in reading and retirement, and the means he employed to rescue from sleep a little time for these purposes. Happily for this turn of mind, he had a small lodging room to himself: a considerable part of his pocket money was employed in the purchase of candles. His master and mistress, with the domestics, retired at an early hour: he, among the rest, took his candle up stairs, and, to avoid suspicion, when he had been a little time in the room, hid the lighted candle under an earthen vessel till he supposed the family were all asleep; when he betook himself to his delightful employment for a considerable part of the night. Sometimes he tied a weight to his foot, and at others fastened his hand to the bedpost, that he might not sleep too long. A considerable portion of the time thus redeemed from sleep was spent in earnest and fervent prayer.

During the former part of this period he knew nothing of the Dissenters, and Methodism was not much talked of; but he occasionally went on Sabbath evenings to the Presbyterian chapel at Bradford, where, according to a custom which had long prevailed among the Puritans, the sermons preached at the place were rehearsed from notes, which, in this instance, had been taken down by a gentleman of the name of Swain. The discourses were principally such as Mr. Swain had heard there in his younger days. The good man read his MS. papers with great piety and affection, sometimes introducing a few remarks of his own. He was often melted into tears, both from a recollection of past days, and a painful conviction that there had been a considerable declension in religion since the time when these sermons were first preached. With this worthy gentleman he formed an acquaintance, which was of great service to him. His constant aim was to seek the society of those from whose judgment and experience he might derive advantage. He had indeed, as was often remarked by those who knew him, from the age of fifteen or sixteen, all the gravity and appearance of maturity; he soon 'put away childish things,' and associated with men.

About this time, the attention of young Fawcett was irresistibly attracted by the preaching of Mr. George Whitefield, whom he, for the first time, saw and heard at Bradford, preaching in the open air, near the water side. His text was John iii. 14. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; &c." and as long as he lived, he continued to remember both the text and the sermon. Though he had read much, and been regular in his attendance on public ordinances, yet from early prepossessions, and the general strain of the ser-

mons he heard, he was far from having clear conceptions as to the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God: but this Apollos, who was 'mighty in the scriptures,' even by one sermon showed him the 'way of God more perfectly' than he had ever seen it before. The glimpses he had before enjoyed, suddenly became clearer, and gospel light beamed upon his soul with resplendent rays. The mode of address was quite *new* to him, and brighter scenes were disclosed to view—a God reconciled through the atonement of a suffering Saviour, with the free and gracious proclamations exhibited from the divine word, at once dispelled his unbelieving fears, and filled him with 'joy unspeakable' and 'full of glory.'

Mr. Whitefield preaching again in the evening, he requested leave of his master to go and hear him, which was granted, though with some hesitation. He evinced a degree of displeasure at his eagerness, and inquired who had put it into his mind to follow this strange preacher; to which he replied, that he believed it was the Almighty. At the evening service the same truths were held forth which he had heard in the morning; that striking passage, 'For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil,'—some evident before the eyes of man in the idolatry and profaneness which prevailed in the world; others in the minds even of those who were more regular; namely, prejudices against the truth, self-righteousness, &c.; and he then proceeded to set forth the ability of Christ to destroy these works, and the manner in which he effects it.

From this time he began to make a more public profession of religion, and connected himself with those who were known by the general denomination of Me-

thodists, a term at first by no means exclusively appropriated, as at present in these parts, to the followers of Mr. John Wesley, but common to all who were earnest in their enquiries respecting the salvation of their souls, who imbibed this *new doctrine*; as it was considered by their opponents, and who were strict in their deportment. He attended their private meetings as often as he was allowed: these were sometimes protracted to an unreasonable hour, so that being too late to gain admittance into his master's house, who was in the habit of retiring early to rest, he not unfrequently spent the remainder of the night in the open fields or under sheds.

But Whitefield was his favourite, and whenever he came into the North, he eagerly embraced the opportunity of attending his ministry. His next visit to Bradford was in the year following. Mr. Whitefield, in one of his letters, dated August 24th, 1756, says, 'It is now a fortnight since I came to Leeds, in and about which I preached eight days successively, three times almost every day, to thronged and affected auditors. On Sunday last, at Bradford, in the morning the audience consisted of above ten thousand; at noon, and in the evening, at Birstall, of nearly double that number. Though hoarse, I was able to speak so that they all heard.' These religious opportunities were often mentioned by the subject of this memoir, as having produced an uncommon and lasting effect upon his mind. After having heard him at Bradford in the morning, he followed him to Birstall; where a platform was erected at the foot of a hill adjoining the town, whence Mr. Whitefield had to address an immense concourse of people, not fewer, as was supposed, than twenty thousand, who were ranged before him on the declivity of a hill in the form of an amphitheatre. Much as he was in the habit

of public speaking and preaching to large and promiscuous multitudes, when he cast his eyes around him on the vast assemblage, and was about to mount the temporary stage, he expressed to his surrounding friends a considerable degree of intimidation; but when he began to speak, an unusual solemnity pervaded the assembly, and thousands, in the course of the sermon, as was often the case, vented their emotions by tears and groans. Fools who came to mock, began to pray, and to cry out, 'What must we do to be saved?'

At the age of 19, young Fawcett offered himself before the Baptist church at Bradford, then in its infancy, as a candidate for baptism and church fellowship, and on March 11th, 1758, he was baptized, and added to the church. With this society he continued as a private member, for about five years, occasionally exercising his talent in the way of exhortation and prayer. But in the year 1763, he was induced, by the persuasion of his pastor and brethren, to speak in a more public manner.

On his first appearance in this way, he chose, as the subject of discourse, the words of our Saviour, John x. 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold,' &c. In this attempt his mind was very unhappy. The assembly was much larger than he expected, and he was overcome by that fear of man which bringeth a snare. This prevailed to such a degree, that he could not recollect what he had premeditated, nor avail himself of the notes he had before him. He was so much discouraged by what he then felt, that he formed a resolution never more to expose his weakness in the same way; but his friends saw something, both in what he delivered at that time, and in what they had heard from him on former occasions, which led them to solicit him

again. They also requested Mr. Hartley, to whose judgment he paid the greatest deference, to urge him to a compliance. After a considerable interval of hesitation, he consented. His text was in unison with his feelings: 'A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' He was, on this occasion, as happy as he could wish; his hesitations were removed; he was enabled to look above man, and to express himself with becoming boldness and firmness. From that time he continued to preach frequently. The following is extracted from his diary: 'When I had engaged six or seven times in public, the church agreed to pass their approbation on me; and an invitation having been sent from the church at Wainsgate, I consented to officiate, after many earnest supplications to the Almighty for his direction; being deeply impressed with a sense of my own unworthiness. The first Sabbath I spent there was, if I am not mistaken, December 18th, 1763. The text in the morning was 1 John iv. 3.: 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God,' &c. In the afternoon I preached from Psal. li. 17. I had great liberty on both occasions. The people expressed their satisfaction, and invited me to go again. I have been four times, not successively, but every second Sabbath.'

Mr. F. accepted the invitation of the people at Wainsgate, and accordingly settled among them in February, 1764. The church was small, not exceeding thirty members, and even these were not all of one mind regarding the doctrines of the gospel. Mr. Smith, their former pastor, was naturally of a very infirm constitution, and so broken down by disease, that he died at the age of 53, having been pastor of the church thirteen years. His last sickness was long and tedious, and his sufferings great: but his humility and patience

were remarkable, his faith steady, and his consolation strong.

About this time, Mr. Fawcett began to make some valuable acquaintances whose friendship and correspondence he assiduously cultivated, and it proved a source of honour and mutual gratification through life. Among these favoured individuals were Messrs. Henry Foster, the late highly esteemed minister of Clerkenwell, London, and Henry Venn, of Huddersfield, clergymen of the established church: John Thornton, Esq. of Clapham,—Mr. Dan Taylor, of Mile End, London, who was many years at the head of the General Baptist connection;—and, of his own denomination, Mr. Hartley, of Howarth—Crabtree, of Bradford—Hirst, of Bacup—Sutcliffe, of Olney—Medley, of Liverpool—Beatson, of Hull, and others. But Mr. Taylor, and Mr. Foster, were his more intimate associates, owing to their residing in his neighbourhood at the time of his first entering on the work of the ministry. Though these three friends had different sentiments as to some points, both of doctrine and discipline, Mr. Foster's views being directed to the church, and Mr. Taylor being afterwards the distinguished leader of the new connexion among the general Baptists, this difference did not disturb the harmony that subsisted between them, having each of them the same grand ends in view; namely, to glorify God, and to proclaim the everlasting gospel. During the long vacations, when attendance at college was not necessary, Mr. Foster spent a considerable portion of his time at Wainsgate, where he was joined by Mr. Taylor. It was customary with them to be together three or four days in the course of every week. They were associates, not only in the study of divinity, but in reading the classics,

and other branches of polite learning. Their society proved, in each of these respects, a source of great pleasure and advantage. Engaged in such important pursuits, and stimulated by such motives as ought to influence a minister of the gospel, no situation, however forbidding in itself, can be tiresome; the wilderness itself is transformed into a fruitful garden.

The friendship thus auspiciously begun continued through life. These friends, after their separation, witnessed with delight and holy satisfaction the success which the Almighty was pleased to grant to their respective labours, in those diversified situations where Providence placed them. As often as distance and necessary engagements would permit, they corresponded and met together. With respect to characters so well known to the public as Mr. Foster and Mr. Taylor were, it is scarcely necessary, and might be deemed irrelevant, to mention many further particulars. Mr. Foster left Yorkshire, in September, 1767, when he was ordained deacon by the bishop of London.

Though Wainsgate might be considered as the station in which the subject of these Memoirs was fixed; his ministerial labours extended to a very extensive circuit, both on the borders of Lancashire and in the opposite direction. Where he was invited to preach on the week days, numbers, who at first came merely from curiosity, were afterwards induced from better motives to struggle with the difficulties of the way, and repair to this hitherto solitary place, for the purpose of attending upon his ministry in a stated manner. The barren desert began to assume the appearance of a fertile region, 'bearing the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.' Numbers who had never been in the habit of resorting to public wor-

ship, were constrained to say, 'Let us go up to the house of the Lord, for he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths;' whilst many derived advantage from his occasional labours, who from distance of situation and other causes could not regularly attend and unite with the society; but used their influence and exertions in their own immediate neighbourhoods to obtain a stated ministry. Where this was the case, with the spirit of an apostle, he was ready to say, 'Christ is preached, and herein do I rejoice, yea and will rejoice.'

From the imperfect records which remain of this part of Mr. F.'s life, it is evident, that there was a considerable revival in his own congregation. The place became too small to accommodate the stated hearers, some of whom came regularly many miles every Lord's day. A gallery was erected, and several other improvements made in the interior of the place of worship. The prospect among the younger part of the audience was peculiarly encouraging. Many of these began to ask the 'way to Zion, with their faces thitherward.' Fears and painful anxiety lest he should have run without being sent, were now dispelled, by seeing these his spiritual children, the greatest joy a faithful minister can have, 'walking in the truth,' while he looks forward to the period, when they shall prove his joy and rejoicing 'in the day of the Lord Jesus.'

The following letter from the late Dr. Samuel Stennett, written to Mr. Fawcett, dated Watford, near London, Aug. 15th, 1770, deserves a place here, not only as being a memorial of the kind and friendly regards which he entertained towards him, but also for its intrinsic excellence on other accounts.

"DEAR SIR,

"I received yours of July, and was greatly comforted with the contents of it. I intended to acknowledge it sooner, but one engagement or other prevented. My health has been indifferent, but I bless God I am now somewhat better. This I write from my mother's, who lives at the distance of nearly twenty miles from London. Her health being in a declining state, I think it my duty to be with her as much as possible.

"I sincerely sympathize with you in the distress you have felt on account of some misunderstandings in your church, and rejoice to find that, through your prudent and Christian conduct, and the blessing of God, they have in any measure subsided: Trust, my dear brother, in God, and you will still find him nigh at hand to help you. Jesus, the great Head of the church, is touched with his people's infirmities, and, doubtless, has a tender compassion for his faithful ministers when exercised with such trials as these. I have no doubt the good of immortal souls, and the peace of the community you preside in, are your grand objects. Having these in view, a prudent, meek, firm, and persevering conduct, will, with the divine blessing, carry you through great difficulties, and make you superior to all the discouragements which the devices of Satan, and the foolish passions of men, may throw in your way. And O remember, my dear friend, how good a master you serve, and what exceeding great and precious promises he has made for your support and comfort. This is the time of trial and suffering; but the day of rewards and triumph will speedily come.

"I rejoice with you in the success of your ministry, and particularly in the instance you mention, wherein

the great power and goodness of God were seen. There was something truly remarkable in it. An ardent desire to be useful to the souls of men is frequently, through grace, thus rewarded. When we are weak, it often appears that through divine assistance we become strong. Go on, my dear brother, courageously in your work, and I doubt not the Lord will be with you.

“I thank you much for the esteem and affection which you express, though undeservedly, for me. I assure you I feel my heart knit to you; and I doubt not you will favour me with an interest in your prayers at the throne of grace; I need them, much need them, so great is the work to which Providence has called me, and so unequal am I of myself to it. We have had lately some additions to the church, and have yet some more in prospect.

“You will remember me affectionately to all friends, particularly Mr. Hartley, when you see him. Wishing you much of the divine presence, and every needful blessing, I remain,

“Your very affectionate friend and brother,

“SAMUEL STENNETT.”

“It will always give me pleasure to hear of your health (which the Lord of his mercy establish), and of your welfare in every respect. Adieu.”

Mr. Fawcett began about this time to distinguish himself as an author both in prose and verse. In the year 1772, he published “The Christian’s humble plea for his God and Saviour,” a little piece in blank verse, in answer to some attacks that were made on the divinity of Christ. In the same year, he, for the first time, went up to London, to supply for the late Dr. Gill, who, through age and infirmities, was now inca-

pacitated for public preaching. His stay in London was about two months, during which he preached fifty-eight times! Dr. Gill dying soon afterwards, Mr. Fawcett received an invitation to return to London with a view to a permanent residence. At this time his income from the church did not exceed £25 per annum. The temptation therefore was great; but his virtue overcame it, and he at once determined to cast himself upon Providence, and to live and die with the people who had chosen him to be their pastor.

To help out his scanty pittance of income Mr. Fawcett now began to take pupils, and in a course of time was successful in raising a very respectable seminary. Numbers of young ministers had recourse to him for the purpose of improving their education, among whom we may particularly mention, the late Mr. Ward, of Serampore, and Mr. Sutcliff, of Olney.

About the year 1774, Mr. F. was much exercised with domestic afflictions; he lost a darling boy, by the small pox, at the age of four years and a half: and soon afterwards was attacked with a fit of the stone, which reduced him to the brink of the grave. To soothe his sorrows, he employed the hours of intermission from excruciating pain, in writing “The Sick Man’s Employ, or Views of Death and Eternity realized.” The manuscript, when finished, was entrusted to the care of his friend Mr. Booth, of Prescott Street, London, who kindly saw it through the press. Small as the piece was it has been held in high estimation, chiefly on account of the rich savour of genuine piety that pervades every page of it. The circulation has consequently been considerable, nor is it likely to be soon forgotten.

Sometime after his recovery from this severe illness, Mr. Fawcett found it necessary to remove his residence

from Wainsgate: and after being exercised with various perplexities respecting a proper situation, he fixed upon Brearley Hall. This was one of those houses anciently inhabited by a respectable family; but, through those vicissitudes so common in the neighbourhood, it had been long deserted by its original owners, and being let into small tenements, was in a most ruined, dilapidated state. The family, however, removed to such part of the premises as were tenantable, in the early part of the spring, 1776, and were for some time exposed to great inconvenience for want of room; but agreeably to the stipulated conditions, the buildings were, during the succeeding summer, fitted up for their accommodation. In this respect the kindness and generosity of the landlord anticipated the wishes of his tenant, though he had been till now nearly a stranger to him. The situation, in all respects, appeared to correspond with the wishes of the family, and to be suited for the purpose to which it was now devoted. In many things it was quite a contrast to the former: the back grounds there were moorlands of a vast extent; but the house now occupied stood upon a small eminence, nearly surrounded by a hanging wood, having, in front, a view of the river Calder, and the valley through which it runs for a considerable extent, and was adjoining the public road, (scarcely finished at that time) from Halifax into many parts of Lancashire. Agreeably to the ancient style of building, the house, being partly in the castellated form, contained, in the middle, a large room or hall, the height of the building, with a gallery on one side. Whether these apartments were originally intended for courts of justice, or merely for the purpose of festal entertainments, cannot be ascertained: but it was now consecrated to a purpose for

which it had, in all probability, never been used before. It had been the regular practice of its present occupier to have three services every Sabbath at Wainsgate; but as that place was several miles distant, and the family could not conveniently remain there to a late hour, a lecture on Lord's day evenings was opened in the hall above-mentioned, and continued for many succeeding years. The first text was happily selected from Acts xxviii. 30, 31. 'Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God,' &c.

His resolution was like that of the venerable patriarch, wherever God fixed his habitation, to erect an altar there, publicly to maintain the worship of God, and to use every effort in his power to promote the best interests of the neighbourhood at large. The congregations, at these evening lectures, were generally much crowded, when the weather was favourable, and consisted, for the most part, of persons who were in the habit of attending places of different denominations during the preceding parts of the day. The choice of his subjects for these occasions showed that it was not merely his object to make proselytes to his particular sentiments, but to explain and enforce those great fundamental truths, relating to doctrine and practice, which are of equal importance to all who call themselves Christians. Instead of robbing other churches, his wish was to promote their welfare and prosperity. On summer eves the scene was often highly interesting, while many, not only of those who made a profession of Christianity, but others who had hitherto lived in the neglect of religious duties, joined in these evening oblations, and afterwards became regular attendants on public worship.

Many young persons, in the higher walks of life, from the neighbourhood of Halifax, were frequently present, friendly connexions were formed with them; and on the minds of several, impressions were made which, there is reason to believe, were never afterwards effaced.

The increase of the congregation at Wainsgate at length convinced almost every one of the absolute necessity of a larger and more suitable place of worship. A plot of ground in the village of Hebdenbridge, as being central, was purchased, but soon after exchanged for another near it, in a still more convenient situation, on which a plain, commodious building, capable of containing from five to six hundred persons, was erected in the year 1777. The plan of it was so much approved, that it has been, with some slight variations, the model followed in the numerous meeting-houses since built throughout the neighbourhood. It was undertaken by a few individuals of property, who advanced the money, which, being in due time refunded, the place was vested in the hands of trustees.

The expense of the meeting-house, with the ground, was about five hundred pounds, which was partly liquidated by subscriptions in the church and congregation, and partly by generous benefactions from other quarters.

In the year 1778, Mr. Fawcett published his "Advice to Youth, on the advantages of Early Piety;" a work which contributed more than any of his former writings to make him known to the religious public of different denominations, not only in his own neighbourhood, but in other parts of the kingdom. The style is plain, and suited to the capacities of young persons; the arguments are forcible, urged with the greatest

earnestness and affection; and still more deeply to impress the mind with the subject, the ideas are frequently comprised in verse, at the close of the chapters. Every page bears the strongest marks of the sense the author had of the importance of his subject, and his desire to promote the best interests of those whom he addresses. If proofs were necessary, this book contains the most ample proofs, that the doctrine he taught as a minister and an instructor of youth, had the most direct tendency to promote holiness of heart and life.

The numerous editions through which it has passed are sufficient proofs of its acceptance with the public; and notwithstanding the variety of other works since written for the use of young persons, it is still highly deserving of their attention. In some of the later editions, considerable improvements have been made.

Mr. Fawcett's poetical talents were by no means inconsiderable, and in the year 1782 he published a small volume of "Hymns adapted to Public Worship and Private Devotion." Several of these hymns, of which a new and neat edition has recently been published, had been composed at a very early period in life; others on occasions which sometimes occurred in the long course of his ministry, when he preached from subjects which were not particularly referred to in Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns. For this inimitable work no one could have a greater value than himself; it was in unison with his avowed sentiments, and touched the finest feelings of his soul. On no occasions did his mind approach so much to holy rapture as when joining with the great congregation, at the close of public worship, in singing these divine compositions. He had not the most distant intention, in publishing the above-mentioned poems, to interfere with a work so long and universal-

ly admired, but to furnish his friends with a humble supplement for occasional use; several of them being in metres not to be found in Dr. Watts's Hymn book, and adapted to favourite tunes of recent composition. As he observes in the preface, it had "been customary with him for many years, after having digested his thoughts on some portion of the divine word, to sum up the leading ideas in a few plain verses, to be sung after the service, that the recollection of his hearers might be aided, and that the truths he had been attempting to explain and enforce might be more deeply impressed on their minds." Copies of these hymns had been frequently circulated in a fugitive form, and it was in compliance with the earnest request of many, that they were at length collected into a volume. He observes, that they had been (whatever imperfections may be discerned in them) the result of much labour, "and were principally composed in the midnight hours previous to the Sabbath, while others were enjoying the sweets of balmy rest."

Another portion of these poems was not intended so much to be introduced in public worship, as for perusal in private. Among these may be enumerated the imitation of the Latin prayer of Mary Queen of Scots, the Christian Soldier, and the Hymn on Spring; to the last of these the notice of Reviewers and the insertion of it in the "Introduction to the English Reader," have given considerable publicity. It is unquestionably one of the happiest of his poetical effusions, though produced with less effort than others of inferior merit.

In the year 1793, he published, as a circular letter, the small piece entitled "The Cross of Christ the Christian's Glory." The ideas advanced by Mr. Mac-laurin, in his celebrated treatise on the same subject,

are here condensed into a small compass. It was one of those subjects on which the author felt himself in his element; it was the theme on which, of all others, he most delighted to dwell; not with the coldness of a mere speculatist, but with that holy fervour which inspired the apostle, when he exclaimed, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' The sweet comment upon this passage, in Dr. Watts's Hymns, was particularly precious to him; and he could never repeat it without the strongest emotions:

When I survey the wondrous cross, &c.

Several large impressions of the pamphlet on the Cross of Christ were printed by the author himself, and it has since gained a more extended circulation, being one of the pieces distributed, and sold at a low price, by several Tract Societies.

In the year 1788, the "Essay on Anger" was published by subscription. The first idea of this work originated in a sermon delivered at one of the public meetings. The subject itself being rather uncommon, and the manner of discussing it adapted for general usefulness, he was repeatedly urged to commit his thoughts to the press, either as at first delivered, or in a more enlarged form; the latter of these appeared, on all accounts, more eligible. It is scarcely necessary to detail the contents of this work, as it has been pretty generally read and approved. It may, however, be expected that something should be said relative to a circumstance which, though very contrary to the author's wishes, has been frequently mentioned. For the British constitution, as a fabric which had been gradually reared by the wisdom of ages, he felt and uniformly evi-

denced great reverence. He had a particular attachment to the august Family seated on the throne, both on account of the extended privileges of a religious nature enjoyed under their mild administration, and the personal virtues of the reigning Sovereign, who was nearly coeval with himself. As it is a principle in human nature to desire that, where sincere and grateful sentiments of respect are felt, they should be communicated to the object of them, he embraced an opportunity, offered by the kindness of a friend, to present a copy of this small work, accompanied by a humble address expressive of his sentiments; to that venerable Personage. This he afterwards learned was graciously received, and perused with approbation. He was repeatedly induced, in conjunction with others, to solicit the exercise of royal clemency in mitigating the severity of that punishment which the law denounces; and it gladdened the sympathetic feelings of his heart to know that these petitions were not unavailing; but the modesty of his character made him often regret the publicity which had been given to this subject.—How mysterious, that the evening of life in one so distinguished by private virtues, and deeds of condescending benevolence, should be so beclouded, as to render him incapable of witnessing the joys and sorrows, or even knowing the grateful and sympathetic emotions, of his family and people!

In the year 1792, some time after the death of that excellent man, Dr. Caleb Evans, who had been no less eminent as an eloquent preacher than as a tutor, Mr. F. was invited, by the Bristol Education Society, to become President of the Bristol Academy. Alderman Harris, and Thomas Ransford, Esq. were delegated by the society to wait upon him with the invitation. Much

as he felt himself honoured by their intentions, his present attachments, his various engagements, and his advancing years, forbade a compliance. His habits of life were now fixed; those sentiments which had influenced his determination in his younger days, when invited to remove, were now become, if possible, still more deeply rooted; as many inducements of a temporal nature, through the blessing of Providence on his exertions, no longer existed. It was a matter of great satisfaction to him that the views of the society were subsequently directed to one so well calculated for discharging the duties of that important station.

About the year 1796, Mr. Fawcett commenced a monthly publication under the title of "Miscellanea Sacra," which he continued until two volumes were completed. It was in this Miscellany that several of the pieces contained in this volume first made their appearance—particularly, the "Summary of the Evidences of Christianity,"—the "Essay on Divine Providence,"—On "Christian Communion," &c. &c. and it ought to be recorded to his honour, that most, if not all his publications were issued from a small printing office which he had established in his own house; but in the year 1800, he was induced by the declining state of his health, which had no doubt been injured by his close application, to dispose of the printing concern, which, after being in his possession more than four years, was removed to Halifax. This released him from the obligation of providing materials to keep the press at work, though he still continued to write occasionally, when he was either solicited by his friends or saw a probability of rendering service to the public.

The British and Foreign Bible Society, instituted in the year 1804, was in its constitution and operations so

congenial with the views of the subject of this memoir, that, from the commencement, it excited a lively interest in his mind. In this instance, as well as in Sunday school establishments, the simplicity of the plan recommended it to the attention of Christians of every denomination; and whilst every one was led to express surprise that such an institution, on an extended liberal scale, had never before engaged the attention of Protestants, who profess to consider the *Bible alone* as the standard of faith and practice, they hailed it as the blessed means of allaying the animosities which had prevailed among the different denominations of Christians; as that which would unite and concentrate their energies, and ultimately lead to the evangelization of the whole world.

The patronage and success of the parent institution in London, naturally suggested the idea of similar plans and meetings, not only in different parts of Great Britain, but throughout the civilized world. Every encouragement and facility was afforded for this purpose by the parent society, and the opportunity of co-operating with it was eagerly embraced by many populous districts in the united kingdoms. The West Riding of Yorkshire, so long favoured with religious knowledge, could not but feel the happy influence of that noble emulation in this sacred cause, which was diffusing itself in every direction. Leeds was one of the most forward and active of the manufacturing towns, and the energy, talent, and liberality, which have there been displayed, render it a most important station.

Mr. Fawcett took an active part in establishing auxiliary societies, both at Leeds and Halifax; and he also commenced a Bible association at Hebdenbridge, but the infirmities of age prevented his paying that at-

tention to them which he could wish. The Baptist mission to India, also, engrossed much of his affectionate regards. He entered into it warmly from its commencement, and forwarded its interests by every means in his power. He kept up an intimate correspondence with Mr. Fuller and Mr. Sutcliff during their lives, and when death had removed them from the important stations which they occupied, he felt their removal as a most painful and discouraging circumstance. To supply in some measure such a loss, vigorous exertions became necessary; and among other expedients, the formation of auxiliary societies was strongly recommended. The northern counties united for that purpose; and the first meeting was held at Manchester. On this occasion, which was the last time of his leaving home, Dr. F. was one of the preachers. The text was, Isa. lii. 10: 'The Lord hath made bare his holy arm, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.' In what manner he illustrated and applied the strong and figurative language in the former part of the text, the writer is not able to say; but the latter part would lead him to a subject, of all others, the most interesting to his own mind, and on which he enlarged with ever new delight. This, of any thing would make him forget his pains for the time, and call forth all the energies of his soul. The kindness of his friends, at this parting interview, and the noble spirit which was displayed by many individuals, in promoting the good word, greatly affected him, and rendered this journey highly gratifying, though his bodily strength was scarcely equal to such an undertaking.

Several of Mr. F.'s friends had long expressed a desire that he would give a digest of the sermons he had preached on almost every part of the divine word, and

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his general idea of the sense of scripture, by writing a short comment on the bible, with suitable reflections at the close of each chapter. The materials he had long been treasuring up, the leisure he now enjoyed from the confinement of his former avocation, and the state of his health, which was in some respects improved, induced him to take the matter into serious consideration. His mind, however, for a considerable time, shrunk back at the thoughts of such an undertaking.

To commence a work of that magnitude when on the verge of seventy, was what perhaps had never before been attempted. The recollection of the many instances in which those who had engaged in similar works in the vigour of their days, as Poole, Henry, Doddridge, &c. but died before the completion, was a discouraging circumstance. His intimate friend, Mr. Fuller, though he approved of the design, had little expectation that his life would be prolonged till he could bring it to a conclusion. In one of his letters he says—I hope your life and strength may be spared to go on with the commentary, though there is not much probability of your living to finish it. I have somewhere met with the following expression; “Jesus could say, ‘It is finished,’ and then gave up the ghost; but this is more than can be said of any one besides. Death generally finds us with a number of our unfinished works on our hands.”

His advanced years certainly presented one important advantage for entering upon this arduous undertaking; namely, the mental stores and matured experience which he had acquired, from his constant study of the scriptures, and from his ministerial labours. No doubt, when he finally concluded to accede to the wishes of his friends, he was influenced by motives similar to those of

the apostle Peter, when drawing towards the close of life: “Moreover, I will endeavour that, after my decease, ye may have these things always in remembrance: for we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

From a date, (November 17th, 1807) in the manuscript, at the close of Gen. iv. it may be inferred, that he entered upon the work of writing the comment, in the beginning of that month. His regular plan, unless prevented by some unforeseen occurrence, was to go through one chapter, on an average, every day; and on the Lord's day mornings he expounded one of the chapters he had commented upon during the preceding week. This was both a relief to his own mind, in his studies preparatory to preaching, and proved highly interesting to the hearers, as was evident from the considerable increase in his morning congregations, more especially while he was upon the historical parts of scripture, which he had the happy talent of rendering both entertaining and instructive. For the gratification of his aged partner in life, and others, who occasionally stepped in, he usually read, before he retired to rest, what he had composed during each day. These evening rehearsals also afforded him an opportunity of making the necessary corrections, and supplying what might have been omitted.

In a letter to a highly valued friend, to whose perusal part of the manuscript was submitted, he says, “I am glad to find you do not disapprove of my feeble attempts, in a work to which the powers of my mind are not equal, though I find a present reward in them. I often wonder that I have been enabled to sit to close study, for twelve or fourteen hours in the day, without

any material injury to my health. The fact is, I am running a race, with death at my heels, not knowing how soon he may overtake me. The work is formidable; but who can tell what the Almighty may intend to do by one of the weakest and most unworthy of his servants? I would live, and act, think, read, and write, depending on him. You will easily conceive that I must meet with many interruptions from company; and I have been obliged to publish three pamphlets during the last summer. The uncertainty of my being able to get through the work, must be an obstacle in the way of printing; but, if I should fail, it will be what others have done before me; and I should hope some one will be found able and willing to carry it forward to a conclusion. At all events, so long as I am continued in a capacity for writing, I feel a strong inclination to persevere. Above two thousand close pages have cost me some labour; and besides these, I have many materials, on several remaining parts of the sacred book. As to my style of composition, you know it is plain, and not embellished with the ornaments of modern refinement. My principal object is to make myself understood, and to interest the heart of the reader. It would not suit me to attempt to rise above the level of my own powers;—but pardon my prolixity. My dear wife sends her love; alas! she is sinking apace. I often fear she will soon be taken from me; we have been together more than half a century; and the separating stroke, whenever it comes, will be severely felt. We often talk of our absent friends; and it is my wish to write more frequently; but, after I have spent the whole day in study, I feel my spirits exhausted. Yet, through divine mercy, my health is in as favourable a state as I have any reason to expect, considering my years and infirmities.”

The progress he made in writing the comment on the Bible far exceeded the expectations of his friends. That persevering and steady industry in his undertakings, which had distinguished the former periods of his life, did not fail in its effect here; but he had scarcely got to the middle of the work before his assiduous labours were impeded by a circumstance most painful to his private feelings; though it did not come upon him by surprise, as is evident from many expressions in the preceding letters. His beloved partner in life, who had distinguished herself in that relation by activity, integrity, steady piety, and sincere affection, for more than fifty years; after languishing for some months, was removed by the stroke of death. The complaints with which she had long been attended terminated in a dropsy. She took her room about Christmas, 1809, and died March 30th, 1810. Her sickness deprived him of the satisfaction he had found in reading to her his commentary; and the attention her feeble situation required by night and by day, while it broke in upon his rest, rendered him often unfit for study.

He was enabled to bear the parting stroke with the fortitude and patience of a Christian. It is one happy tendency of extreme and long-continued suffering, that it reconciles us to a separation from our dearest relatives, and especially when satisfactory evidence has been given, that death will be their release from all pain and sorrow. He remained by her to the last moment of her mortal existence, holding her arm, so as to feel her pulse, till the lungs finally ceased to heave, and the crimson current was arrested in its progress.

In the month of June, 1810, the annual association was held at Bradford. As this was Mr. F.'s native place, he was earnestly importuned, and at length con-

sented, to attend on that occasion, to officiate as one of the ministers, and that he might once more have an interview with his relations and friends, who were resident there, and with those who came from distant places. On the morning of the day on which he had to preach, he was more than usually agitated in the prospect of appearing in public, expressing in the strongest and most humiliating terms the sense he had of his unfitness for the work, both on account of his great weakness and mental infirmities. But when he entered the pulpit and read his text (Joshua xxiii. 14: 'Behold this day I am going the way of all the earth'), every eye in the large assembly was fixed upon him, and he had not proceeded far in opening the subject, before almost every individual present was melted into tears. Since the days of Whitefield, few such seasons had been witnessed; and the remembrance of it will remain with many who were present to the latest period of life. It was not enthusiasm; it was that melting of the heart, which truths of infinite and universal concernment, delivered with feeling, and accompanied by divine energy, cannot fail to produce. He had a few months before completed his threescore years and ten; his partner in life, for whom this was intended as a funeral sermon, had, as we have seen, been recently taken from him; many present had known him long, and had often been edified by hearing him at these solemn seasons; and their presentiments told them that he was now, like Joshua, taking a final leave of them, as a public character. This sermon, the last he published, was soon after printed in a cheap form, and has gone through many editions. It cannot be supposed that, independently of circumstances peculiar to the time and mode of delivery, and which in themselves have a great effect upon the mind, it

should be equally impressive in the perusal, as when first delivered; but it has generally been considered as one of the best specimens to be found among the writings of the deceased of his method in preaching, and illustrating subjects of that nature. Those who have sat under his ministry will here find his manner exhibited, so far as language can convey it. For this reason it forms a part of this volume.

During the last year of his being employed on the commentary, he had several serious attacks of indisposition, by which he was for weeks together prevented from making any progress. On one of these occasions he had a slight paralytic affection in his right arm, which disabled him from writing. This was a discouraging circumstance at his advanced age; but by the use of proper means and a little respite, he resumed his pen sooner than could have been expected.

In a letter written at this time, he thus expresses himself: "Through mercy I feel myself in a way for recovery. I began to be better yesterday in the afternoon, and have had a good night. I hope you will lend me your kind assistance on Lord's day, in the afternoon. I thank you for all your affectionate solicitude, of which I am totally unworthy. The solemn subjects now under my consideration in Matthew almost overpower me. I sink under the idea of my own insufficiency. There is a majesty and glory in revelation, which I never felt so forcibly as now. It is all divine. O that we did but understand it, and experience its energy!"

Notwithstanding these frequent interruptions from indisposition and other causes, the writing of the commentary was completed in less than four years from the time of its commencement; namely, in the month of

August, 1811; and about the same time the degree of Doctor in Divinity was conferred upon him by one of the Transatlantic Universities.

Having accomplished this great undertaking, he began to look forwards with fixed attention towards the close of his labours, and though an unusual twilight was afforded him, his days were passed amidst scenes of affliction, arising from the loss of surrounding friends and the pains and inquietudes that old age is generally incident to. In almost daily expectation of the separating stroke, he may be rather said to have languished than lived, till the 25th of July 1817, when he expired in the 77th year of his age.

As to the state of his mind in this last illness, it was conformable to what he had experienced and evidenced through all his former afflictions. Mercy, divine mercy, was what he implored, with all the lowliness of a babe in Christ. He joined with the greatest fervency in the petitions offered up at his bed-side; and though his mind was not in general so much elevated with holy joy as some of God's people have been, he had solid comfort, and often expressed his 'desire to depart and to be with Christ.' A short time before he expired he said, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' One of his attendants having said, 'There remaineth a rest for the people of God,' he added, 'O receive me to thy children!'

Few individuals had lived more in the anticipation of the closing scene than himself; the general train of his views and feelings, as claiming acquaintance with a future world, and the many afflictions which he had previously endured, led him to realize this event; and though the final struggles were very great, owing to a paralysis of the heart and leading arteries, which pre-

vented the crimson current from flowing to the extremities long before the lungs ceased to heave, he was quite collected to the last, and humbly resigned to the divine will.

We shall conclude this short account of the venerable author with the following sketch of his character furnished by one of his cotemporaries.

"It may truly be said of him, that he was 'a burning and shining light.' He was an eminent Christian, and strikingly exemplified in his own conduct the purifying tendency of that religion which he recommended to others. Let a minister possess the finest natural abilities, the most extensive learning, and all the powers of the most commanding eloquence, unless they are accompanied with a good example, his labours are not likely to be useful. But Dr. Fawcett enforced all his religious instructions, by the powerful influence of a holy life. He was an affectionate husband, the best of fathers, a kind master, and a good neighbour, administering advice and consolation as the case required. His character was adorned with every Christian grace and virtue; but his unaffected humility and meekness, his fervent piety and his ardent and habitual devotion, were its most prominent features. He entered on a profession of religion when young, and he uniformly adorned the profession, by a pious and holy conduct to the end of his days.

"As an instructor of youth, he was eminently qualified, and his labours in this capacity were extensively useful. He had the happiness of seeing many of his pupils filling highly reputable stations in society with honour and usefulness. I see some present who were once his pupils, and I am persuaded that to them his memory will always be dear. Our highly esteemed

missionary the Rev. Mr. Ward was among those who went through a course of preparatory study under his direction.

“I am not afraid of giving offence to any of my brethren, when I say that as a minister, he stood, for many years, the first in our denomination in this part of the kingdom. His natural abilities were extensive, and these he had greatly improved by a long course of reading and study. His religious opinions were thoroughly evangelical, and equally free from any tendency to foster Pharisaic pride, and to encourage Antinomian licentiousness. He inculcated the great doctrines of Christianity with a seriousness suited to their vast importance, and with a plainness almost puritanical. His manner was perhaps somewhat peculiar, but exceedingly solemn and deeply impressive. For considerably more than half a century, he continued with great fidelity, and zeal, and with increasing popularity and success, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

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A SUMMARY
OF
THE EVIDENCES
OF
CHRISTIANITY.



I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying, that this is the true
grace of God wherein ye stand.—*Peter.*

INTRODUCTION.

THE writer of this tract is aware that his labours, on this most important of all subjects, may, to some, appear to have been unnecessary. The arguments made use of for the support of the Christian cause are very general; and little can be advanced on that head which has any just claim to originality. Fabricius has reckoned up some hundreds who have employed their pens in defence of revealed religion; and many able writers, since his time, have exerted their abilities with great success, in the same way.

But infidelity is now making a most alarming progress; and the author will think himself happy, if, through the divine blessing, his feeble efforts may be the means of establishing any in the faith, who have not the opportunity of consulting larger works; or of confirming any in that regard for the blessed gospel, which will be the best preservative against the baneful influence of the errors, the blasphemies, and the other abominations of the licentious age in which we live.

On a late public occasion, the author delivered a discourse on the Evidences of Christianity, from the words of king Agrippa to Paul, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.* The ministers, and some others present, requested its publication, leaving him, however, at full liberty to enlarge and improve his plan at his own discretion. In compliance with this solicitation, after having consulted many volumes on the subject, he has,

in addition to his own, adopted, without scruple, such thoughts and expressions as appeared to him most striking and conclusive. It will be of little consequence to the writer, though he should be condemned on this account for barrenness of thought, or poverty of genius, provided the arguments made use of are solid and substantial in themselves, and may serve to settle the judgment, interest the heart, and influence the life of any reader. The cause has been clearly and fully handled by a variety of authors of late; and the idle, trifling, profane, and blasphemous attacks of its enemies, coolly and judiciously repelled; especially by Dr. Watson, whose excellent Apology for the Bible, as he modestly calls it, has already been of very great service to many, and, it is hoped, will be read with advantage by many more. May the divine blessing attend his servants in all their labours, whether great or small, for the spiritual and eternal profit of immortal souls!

The plan of this treatise is as follows:—Evidences which might rationally be expected in favour of Christianity.—The evidence arising from the credibility of what is contained in the scriptures, and from the characters and qualifications of some of the writers of them.—The evidence arising from the concurring testimony of heathen writers.—The evidence arising from the prevalence of the cause, amidst great opposition, though promoted by means which in themselves might appear inadequate.—The evidence arising from the persecution which the primitive Christians endured for their religion.—Concluding remarks.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

EVIDENCES WHICH MIGHT RATIONALLY BE EXPECTED IN FAVOUR OF CHRISTIANITY.

THOSE persons who never set themselves heartily and in earnest to inquire into the truth of Christianity; those who secretly wish it may not be true; and those who are less attentive to evidence than to difficulties, and regard objections more than what is said in answer to them, cannot be thought in a likely way to discern the strength of those arguments which are made use of in support of the cause. There is, without doubt, great propriety in what the gracious Redeemer has said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." A mind open to conviction is of great importance.

Let me entreat the reader, when he takes up this little tract into his hands, to consider within himself, what evidences of the truth of Christianity he could wish to have. If he cannot suddenly answer that inquiry, let him stop, and deliberate upon it. Let him consult his books; let him ask his friends. Let him make his demands as large and extensive as he can. And whatever rational evidence he may be pleased to require, I flatter myself it may be given him. The glorious Author of our being, on a subject of such moment as this, has been graciously pleased to afford us all the credentials which we can, in reason, expect, or even desire. The reader's serious attention is requested to the following particulars.

In a revelation which comes from God to men, it might perhaps be reasonable to expect some account of the original formation of that world in which we find ourselves placed. The wisest heathens were utterly at a loss on this subject. They could not determine how the universe came into existence, whether it were by chance, or by a concourse of atoms jumbled together just as it happened; or whether it were not eternal and self-existent. But no sooner do we open the Bible than we meet with sufficient information respecting this. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." He had but to speak, and it was done, to give commandment, and it was established. "Let there be light, and there was light; let there be a firmament, and there was a firmament;" let there be a world, and the world, with its vast variety of furniture, decorations and ornaments, rose into existence. It appears, however, that a consultation was held in heaven, respecting the formation of man, who was to be lord of the creation. "Let us," said the Father to his eternal Son and Holy Spirit, who with him are the one true and living God, the object of all worship and obedience, "let us make man in our image; after our likeness." So God created man in his own image;" which certainly must imply intelligence, rectitude and purity; "in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them."

It is reasonable to suppose, that in a revelation of the divine will to man, we should find some account of the origin of evil. This has long been a subject of inquiry and disputation in the schools of philosophy. It has been asked again and again, For what reason is it, that human life is filled with such a vast variety of afflictions and miseries? Why is the only thinking being on this globe doomed to pass his time, from youth to old age, either in fearing or suffering calamities?

If the mere light of nature, if what is called philosophy can give no satisfactory answer to these inquiries, it is to be sup-

posed, that the divine book in which God himself is represented as unfolding his whole mind to his creature man, must furnish out the needful information. And so indeed it does. It teaches us, that though the original state of man was a state of innocence, and, by just consequence, a state of happiness, yet now it is otherwise. Man apostatized from his Maker, and sin and misery were produced together.

'Take in the whole of the prospect,' says a modern writer*, 'view man in every age, and climate, and nation; in every condition and period of society. Where now do you discover the characters of his exalted nature? "How is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed?" How is his reason clouded? How are his affections perverted, how is his conscience stupified! How do anger, and envy, and hatred, and revenge spring up in his wretched bosom! How is he enslaved to the meanest of his appetites! What fatal propensities does he discover to evil! What inaptitude to good!

'Dwell awhile on the state of the ancient world; not merely on that benighted part of it, where all lay buried in brutish ignorance and barbarism, but on the seats of civilized and polished nations, on the empire of taste, and learning, and philosophy; yet in these chosen regions, with whatever lustre the sun of science poured forth its rays, the moral darkness was so thick that "it might be felt." Behold their sottish idolatries, their absurd superstitions, their want of natural affection, their brutal excesses, their unfeeling oppression, their savage cruelty! Look not to the illiterate and the vulgar, but to the learned and refined. Form not your ideas from the conduct of the less restrained and more licentious; you will turn away with disgust and shame from the allowed and familiar habits of the decent and the moral. St. Paul best states the facts, and furnishes the explanation; "Because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them over to a reprobate mind."

'But you give up the heathen nations as indefensible, and wish rather to form your estimate of man from a view of

* Mr. Wilberforce.

countries which have been blessed with the light of revelation.

‘True it is, and with joy let us record the concession, Christianity has set the general tone of morals much higher than it was ever known in the pagan world. She has every where improved the character, and multiplied the comforts of society, particularly to the poor and the weak, whom from the beginning she professed to take under her patronage. Like her divine Author, “who sends his rain on the evil and on the good,” she showers down unnumbered blessings on thousands who profit from her bounty, while they forget or deny her power, and set at nought her authority. Yet even in this more favoured situation, we shall discover too many lamentable proofs of the depravity of man. Nay, this depravity will now become even more apparent, and less deniable.

‘For what bars does it not now overleap? Over what motives is it not now victorious? Consider well the superior light and advantages which we enjoy, and then appreciate the superior obligations which are imposed on us. Consider in how many cases our evil propensities are now kept from breaking forth, by the superior restraints under which vice is laid by positive laws, and by the amended standard of public opinion.’

Man is then brought, by his own dreadful apostacy, into a state of sin and misery. Of this we have the fullest and clearest account in the scriptures, and this account is confirmed by matter of fact; by what we feel in ourselves and every where see in others. “We were shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin. We are all as an unclean thing. We are by nature children of wrath. We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Such is the picture of human nature in its present depraved state, exhibited in various parts of the sacred volume. Hence that deluge of crimes, and the

consequent train of miseries, afflictions and calamities with which the world is overspread in every part, and at every period of time.

It may appear strange to some, that this humiliating view of the human race should be introduced on the present occasion. ‘What relation,’ it may be said, ‘has all this to the subject under consideration?’ To which I answer, The guilt and misery of mankind alone could make such a system necessary as that for which we plead; nor can the suitableness and propriety of that system be understood without some knowledge of the lapsed and ruined state of man. The gospel is glad tidings of salvation to those who have destroyed themselves, and are utterly helpless. I therefore consider the large and particular account of the guilt and misery of mankind, given us in the scriptures, and confirmed by experience and matter of fact, as one evidence of the truth of Christianity. Every doctrine of the gospel supposes what we have been briefly stating. The whole œconomy of redemption implies, that there was an absolute necessity for such a remedy. I therefore add,

It is reasonable to suppose that in a revelation of God to men, some early intimations should be given of a method of recovery. And no sooner had the parent of the human race involved himself and his posterity in guilt and misery, than a gracious declaration was given, relating to a happy restoration, by the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent’s head. This declaration was mysterious, but clearer discoveries were gradually made to the patriarchs and the prophets; till at last, the inspired writers spoke of the coming Messiah in terms so strong, lively and descriptive, that they might seem almost to have beheld him with their eyes, and been witnesses to his transactions.

The time of his coming was signified in several ancient predictions. He was to make his appearance before the government ceased in the tribe of Judah, while the second temple was standing, and a little before its destruction. Daniel’s prophecy of seventy weeks of years fixed the period of this

mighty Deliverer's advent. Four hundred and ninety years after the commandment was given to build Jerusalem, this great event was to take place. This command was issued out in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, or at least very near that period.

It was foretold that he should be of the seed of Abraham; that he should be born of a virgin; "a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel." He should be of the house of David, and the place of his birth should be Bethlehem; which name signifies, the house of bread. It was predicted, that on account of his low and mean appearance he should be despised, rejected and insulted by the Jews.

Yet the dignity of his person was clearly signified in prophecy. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." The offices he sustains were pointed out; "a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you;—him shall ye hear in all things which he shall say unto you. A king shall reign in righteousness. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

The sufferings he should undergo were particularly foretold. He should be wounded, bruised, stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. He should be brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and be dumb as a sheep before her shearers. He was to give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; and not to hide his face from shame and spitting. His hands and his feet were to be pierced. Gall and vinegar were to be presented to him. His garments were to be parted among the soldiers, and a lot cast for his vesture. He should make his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; which intended his being crucified between two thieves, and buried in a rich man's tomb. His side was to be pierced on the cross, but none of his bones were to be broken.

It was foretold that he should rise again from the dead; and not see corruption; that he should be received up to hea-

ven, and there seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, till all his enemies be made his footstool; that he should pour forth his Spirit on his followers, and give great success to the labours of his ministers; so that though the Jews should persist in their unbelief, the Gentiles should be brought to the knowledge of his salvation.

With what punctuality and exactness all these predictions received their accomplishment, in the birth, the life, the sufferings, the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, needs not be told. Every one who carefully peruses the New Testament must observe it. The evangelists constantly remind us of what was foretold concerning Jesus, and how it was fulfilled.

It is reasonable to suppose, that some means should be used to keep the promised Saviour in view, before the period of his actual appearance on earth. And we find wonderful provision made for this purpose through the whole œconomy of the former dispensation, to keep the faith and hope of the Old Testament saints alive, respecting the glorious redemption to be obtained by the Messiah.

The institution of the paschal lamb had a particular reference to him who is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. By the morning and evening sacrifices the Redeemer was every day held forth to the people, as one who should come in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. To what purpose was the slaying of so many thousand victims, the shedding of so much blood, and the burning of so much flesh, but to point out the atonement which was to be made by him, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and without the shedding of which there would have been no remission? These were shadows of things to come, but the body is Christ.

The Jewish priesthood itself was typical of Christ. Almost every thing under that dispensation was significant of that eternal redemption which was to be obtained for us. The eating of blood was solemnly prohibited, because it is the price of the soul. The sin-offerings, the peace-offerings,

the great day of atonement, the year of jubilee, and all the legal purifications to be daily and constantly observed, were wisely and graciously ordained for the purposes mentioned above. Without this reference, they were insignificant and unmeaning services; but as by them the gospel and its glorious blessings were held forth to the penitent and believing Israelites, they were wise, suitable and gracious institutions; and every way worthy of him who ordained them.

It might perhaps be reasonable to suppose, that God would give some testimony from heaven of the truth of that religion which it was his will to establish in the world. And this we find was actually the case. The Almighty afforded to his ancient professing people repeated and redoubled indications, that their religion was from him. Such were the wonders frequently wrought among them; their Urim and Thummim; their frequent oracles; their succession of prophets, whose predictions respecting the Jews themselves, and the neighbouring nations, were continually fulfilling before their eyes.

Of miracles, the number was great; in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and through the wilderness. The manna, the cloudy pillar, and the water which flowed from the smitten rock, to supply their thirsty tribes in all their wanderings, were constant miracles, in which the hand of Omnipotence was most apparent. For the revival of the declining cause of religion, many years after, God raised up his servants Elijah and Elisha, and wrought many wonders by them. Were not all these instances so many evidences of the truth of that revelation on which the gospel system is founded?

It might be supposed, that as the time was fixed in prophecy for the Saviour's appearance, his coming would be expected. And so we find it was.

When the time of his entrance on the stage of the world drew nigh, there was a general expectation among the Jews of his coming. The pious and faithful waited for the consolation of Israel, looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. Some of the chief priests and scribes were of this number;

for when John the Baptist entered on his ministry, the Jews sent priests and Levites to ask him, whether he were the Christ. Even the woman of Samaria, though she belonged to a people with whom the Jews had no dealings, yet said, "I know that Messias cometh, who is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto thee am he." The preaching of his harbinger was of so divine a nature, that all men mused in their hearts whether he were the Christ or not. And when Jesus had performed a variety of miracles, which evidently bespoke the exertion of omnipotence, the question was proposed by some of the people, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than this man hath done?" The coming of the Messiah was made an express article of the Jewish faith; the hope of his appearance was propagated from father to son; and the denial of it was deemed a most dangerous heresy, and a virtual renunciation of the authority and truth of the law of Moses.

It is evident also, from many authentic records, that in the eastern part of the world, and among the Romans, there was a notion, that some extraordinary person should arise, and rule the earth.

It might be expected, that the coming of this glorious person would be marked out with some wonderful events. The gospel history informs us that this was the case. A messenger from God was sent before him, to proclaim his approach. Of this messenger the prophet Isaiah thus spoke, many hundreds of years before he made his appearance. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high-way for our God. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." When the eastern monarchs travelled, harbingers went before, to give notice that they were upon the road. Proper persons were employed to remove obstacles, and prepare their way. In like manner, when the King of kings, and Lord of lords is going to make his public appearance, his way must

be prepared. Mountains of difficulty must be levelled into plains before him, and vallies must be filled up. The crooked ways must be made straight, and the rough places plain:

An angel is commissioned from heaven to give intelligence to the virgin, of the conception and birth of him whose name should be called JESUS, because he should save his people from their sins. Joseph was also favoured with the like information, perhaps by the same messenger. - When the Redeemer was born, there were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night, and probably, at the same time, employed in divine contemplation, or in edifying discourse concerning the redemption of Israel; for they that feared the Lord spake often one to another of this great event; and the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. Lo! the angel of God came upon them, and the glory of the Most High shone round about them. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.

An unusual star appeared in the heavens, to give intimation to the eastern sages that the Sun of righteousness was going to arise. They knew the sign, and guided by it to the place where the Prince of life was born, they came to pay their adorations to him, and to present their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Such were the circumstances which signalized this long-expected and most important of all events, the birth of Immanuel; and such the preparations made for his public appearance in the world. Nor should we forget what took place at his baptism. "For Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo! the heavens were opened unto him, and John saw the Spirit of God descending, like a dove, and lighting upon him. And lo! a voice

from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus the Author of Christianity was distinguished, on his entrance into the world, with the most unequivocal attestations of Heaven.

We may reasonably suppose, that this divine Saviour should appear in all the beauty of unspotted purity and holiness. And so he did. But though I am charmed with the amiableness of his character, I feel myself unable fully to describe it. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Love, meekness, patience, condescension and humility shone with the brightest lustre through his life, in his sufferings, and at his death. His Father's honour touched his heart, and zeal for his house, his laws and his worship, to use the emphatical language of scripture, did even eat him up. What diligence; what fervour of devotion, what contempt of the world, what compassion for the miseries of mankind, and what unwearied activity in relieving them, were apparent in his whole conduct! His days were spent in giving to the ignorant the instruction of life, and in healing all that were diseased; these were frequently succeeded by whole nights of intercession, supplication and thanksgiving. No defect, no failing, no impropriety was ever found in any part of his conduct. If we examine his whole life with the exactest scrutiny, from his poor manger to his bitter cross, we shall find that the law of his God was in his heart, and that none of his steps did slide. To his bitterest enemies he could say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

'Go,' says Dr. Sherlock, 'go to your natural religion; lay before her Mahomet and his disciples, arrayed in armour and blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands who fell by his victorious sword. Shew her the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth. When she has viewed him in this scene, carry her into his retirement; shew her the prophet's chamber; his concubines and his wives, and let her hear him allege revelation, and a divine commission, to justify his adultery and lust.

When she is tired with this prospect, then shew her the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men. Let her see him in his most retired privacies; let her follow him to the mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to his Father. Carry her to his table to view his poor fare; and hear his heavenly discourse. Let her attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead her to his cross; let her view him in the agony of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors;—*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* When natural religion has thus viewed both, ask her, Which is the prophet of God? But her answer we have already had, when she saw part of this scene, through the eyes of the Centurion, who attended at the cross. By him she spoke, and said, *Truly this man was the Son of God.*

It may be supposed that the Redeemer's mission would be attested by miracles. And the history of our Lord's public life will give us ample satisfaction on this head. He constantly appealed to his works, as convincing proofs of his being the promised Messiah. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not."

He gave sight to those whose benighted eyes had never beheld the cheering light of day. The dumb, at his command, opened their joyful lips to speak his praise, and tell of his salvation. He unstopped the deaf ear, to hear the words of everlasting life from his mouth. He caused the lame man to leap as an hart, in transports of joy and gratitude. The leper, by his touch, was perfectly cleansed, and delivered from every symptom of his loathsome disease. Distempers indeed, of every kind, which mocked the force of medicine, and baffled the skill of the ablest physicians, fled at his rebuke. Diseases which were blended with the earliest seeds of life, and rivetted in the very constitution by long continuance, were effectually eradicated; and that not by tedious applications, painful operations, or expensive prescriptions; but in the twinkling of an eye, by a word from his lips, a touch

from his hand; or even by the bare act of his will. Instances of this kind were not few and rare; but almost without number. The whole of his public ministry was filled up with an unintermitted series of those healing miracles, the least of which was enough to demonstrate his eternal power and Godhead.

Bread was multiplied in the hands of him who is himself the bread of life. And when many thousands of hungry men had been fed and satisfied, much more was left than what was furnished at the beginning of the repast.

He walked serenely on the waves of the sea, as on a pavement of marble. When the swelling surges raged horribly, he spoke their most tempestuous agitations into perfect stillness. The boisterous winds heard his awful voice, and instantly obeyed their Sovereign's word. They were hushed into perfect silence, and there was a great calm.

He displayed his omnipotence in respect to those malignant beings, the devil and his angels. At his command, they abandoned their conquests, and relinquished their habitations. They owned his sway, and were constrained to cry, "We know thee who thou art, thou Holy One of God; we beseech thee, torment us not." Whole legions of these fierce and indignant spirits were dispossessed by him, and driven to seek rest in desert places, or permitted to spend their rage on the most sordid brutes.

He raised the dead to life again. He opened the eyes, which, according to the course of nature, had been sealed in everlasting night. The heart, which had forgot its vital motion, at his command, resumed its former active spring. The crimson current, which was not only congealed by the cold hand of death, but changed to putrefaction, at his order began its wonderful circulation afresh through every vein. The departed soul, which had entered the regions of the invisible world, at the Redeemer's signal, returned to its tenement of clay.

When inquiry was made of him by the disciples of John, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for an-

other? He referred them to his works. "Go and shew John again those things that ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

These miracles were wrought in a public manner, before enemies and unbelievers; without any air of pride, vanity or ostentation, or the most distant prospect of obtaining worldly advantage.—They were performed in confirmation of doctrines the most interesting to mankind; they were very numerous; their effects were not transient, but permanent, and might be reviewed, and re-examined; as in the cases of those who were cured of dreadful diseases, and of those who were raised from the dead*. They had nothing fantastical or cruel in them, but were all acts of kindness, mercy, or beneficence. They were such as the prophets had foretold that the Messiah should perform. And, in a word, they were significant, and expressive of the design of the Redeemer's coming into the world; which was to deliver us from the power and dominion of the prince of darkness; to give saving instruction to those who have been blinded by sin and the god of this world; to raise us from a death in sin, to a divine and spiritual life; to cure our souls of the leprosy of uncleanness, and of all the other maladies which sin has introduced into the various powers of our minds, that we may devote our whole selves, and our whole lives to the service and honour of God, in the most vigorous, cheerful, thankful and active manner.

* Quadratus, who lived in the same age with Polycarp, a disciple of John the divine, has left us the following remarkable testimony:

"The works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, for they were real; both on those that were healed and on those that were raised from the dead: who were seen, not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards. Not only whilst he dwelt on this earth, but also after his departure, yea, for a good while after it; insomuch that some of them have reached to our times."

We may reasonably expect to find this divine Messenger engaged in revealing his Father's will to mankind. And on the slightest review of the gospel history, we find that Jesus was thus employed from his entrance on his public life, to his finishing it on the cross. He was the great prophet raised up like unto Moses, whom the people were to hear in all things that he should say unto them. He preached constantly to them, declaring the whole will of God to the sons of men. He could make his appeal to the Father, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation. Lo! I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest, I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart. I have declared thy faithfulness, and thy salvation. I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation."

In the temple, in the synagogues, in the streets, in ships, in the wilderness, and on the mountains, he daily preached the gospel of the kingdom. He opened the law in its extent and spirituality, as we see in his sermon on the mount. He preached the joyful tidings of a glorious salvation from sin, guilt, condemnation and misery, by his death. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." He considered the people as his flock, and fed them with a shepherd's care, gathering the lambs with his arm, carrying them in his bosom, and gently leading those that are with young. "Come unto me," said he, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

He exercised the most tender compassion to the weak and the feeble, not breaking the bruised reed, nor quenching the smoking flax; but strengthening the weak hands, and confirming the feeble knees. The Spirit of the Lord God was upon him, because the Lord had anointed him to preach

good tidings to the meek. He had sent him to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to open the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and to comfort all that mourn. The people wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, and exclaimed, "Never man spake like this man." The apostle tells the Hebrews, that God, who, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. The Author of our religion taught it with his own mouth, and made known the will of his Father to men.

We may probably suppose, that this divine Messenger would give farther proofs of his being the true Messiah by foretelling future events. If we expect this kind of evidence, we are not disappointed. The blessed Redeemer clearly foretold remote contingencies, and discovered the secrets of futurity. The sacred historians have recorded many instances of this. As the treason of Judas, the fall of Peter, and the timid flight of all the disciples, in that gloomy night, when the Shepherd was to be smitten, and the sheep scattered; Jesus exactly predicted all these circumstances; together with the time and manner of his own death, the term of his continuance in the grave, and his glorious resurrection, and triumphant ascension into heaven. We find him also foretelling the divine inspiration, the mission, the miraculous powers, and wonderful success of his apostles. All these events took place as Jesus had said, and not one of his prophetic declarations failed of its accomplishment.

He particularly foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the demolition of the temple, with the prodigies which preceded it, the tribulation which accompanied it, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation which followed upon it. Divine Providence so ordered it, that Josephus, a learned Jew, who was an eye-witness of the amazing desolation which was made on this occasion, should give a full and

faithful narrative of the whole. What he records, we find to be an exact fulfilment of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the twenty-first of Luke. Much might be said concerning the predictions of Jesus respecting those events which are now fulfilling before our eyes; as that the holy city, or the church, shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled. But I forbear. It is sufficient for my present purpose, to remark the prophecies of our Lord respecting the Jews.

Their temple, according to his prediction, was levelled to the ground; nor could the power and munificence of an emperor, when exercised with a view to counteract the Redeemer's prophecy, renew the structure, or even remove the ruins of it, for the erection of another edifice. The Jews were overtaken by the severest judgments of the Almighty, and the blood of him whom they had crucified, was revenged on their children, and their country; while, to the present period, they continue to be the signal monuments of the truth of what he had said concerning them.

The Jewish nation and government were destroyed in a manner, exactly conformable to the predictions of Christ. The people, who survived the carnage, were carried away captive, and dispersed through the most distant countries; in which state of dispersion they remain unto this day, as so many living witnesses of the truth of Christianity. While our hearts pity them on account of their blindness and stupidity, we cannot but look on them with a kind of veneration. Wherever we see a Jew, we see an evidence of the truth of our holy religion.

They remain still a numerous people, united among themselves, and distinguished from the rest of the world; as they were in the days of Moses, by the profession of his law. They are every where looked upon in a manner which fully confirms the prophetic account given of their present state so many ages before; "Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee." Their continuing in the circumstances in

which they are known to be from age to age, and in different parts of the habitable globe, is little less than a standing miracle*.

Thus, Jesus delivered prophecies of events, which eternal wisdom alone could foresee, and which almighty power alone could bring to pass. From a system of religion, authenticated by such overpowering evidence, what unprejudiced inquirer can withhold his assent? Amongst the numerous varieties of plans which have been proposed to direct the belief, and influence the practice of mankind, where shall we find a system which can pretend to attestations in any degree equal to those we are now mentioning? Let the adversaries of Christianity point out a religion that bears such visible impressions of an Almighty hand, ere they attempt to shake our faith in that which is our sovereign, and our only support, both in life and death.

It might be expected, that according to the predictions of the ancient prophets, the Saviour of men should suffer and die; that he should give his life a ransom for their souls; and that his death should be attended with some extraordinary events. The gospel history affords us ample satisfaction in these particulars. Jesus had signified repeatedly what was the end of his coming; that he was come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for

* We have now in the Jews, a people, who of all mankind can be the least suspected of partial favour towards us, lending their assistance to support the Christian cause; and by the zeal which they shew for their law and their prophets, preserving, with the most exact fidelity, our evidences, and their own condemnation. Those who rejected and crucified our Lord, being offended at him, are the same people with whom those writings still remain, which testify concerning him, and which affirm that he should be rejected by them, as a rock of offence. Thus has their refusal of him added an eminent mark to the truth of his credentials. He has been equally demonstrated to be the Messiah by the believing part of the Jewish nation, who embraced him, and by the unbelieving, who despised him; the one event, no less than the other, having been long before prophetically declared.—*Mons. Pascal.*

many; that he was to lay down his life for the sheep; that he was to be lifted up upon the cross, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

At length the solemn, the all-important period arrived when that great sacrifice was to be offered, the efficacy of which reaches back to the first transgression of man, and extends forward, not only to the end of time, but perfects for ever them that are sanctified and saved by it.

That guilt must be expiated by suffering, is a sentiment which has prevailed more or less, in the minds of thinking men of every age and nation. On this principle all government is founded, that public justice requires compensation for crimes. All forms of religion, whether among heathens, Jews or Christians, proceed upon the belief, that, in order to the pardon of the sinner, atonement must be made to the justice of the Governor of the world. Hence the vast variety of sacrifices, offerings and expiations, which have been made in every corner of the earth. But the one sacrifice which the great Redeemer offered for sin, is that alone through which we can be saved. Here we see the forfeit of guilt paid by a divine personage in our behalf. Through this we are emboldened to look up with humble confidence to the Judge of all, as merciful to the guilty, as pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin; and as doing this in consistency with justice and order.

Behold, then, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world! What was done legally by types, was in reality effected by him. He was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. See him agonizing in the garden of Gethsemane; follow him to the court of Herod, to the judgment-hall of Pilate, and to the hill of Calvary. There see him nailed to the cross, made a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of the law, and dying that we might live for ever.

By wonders in heaven, and wonders on earth, was this

most interesting of all events distinguished*. All nature seemed to feel it; and the dead and the living bore witness to its importance. The veil of the temple was rent in twain. The earth shook. There was darkness over all the land. The graves were opened, and many who slept arose and went into the holy city. Nor were these the only prodigies of this awful hour. The most hardened hearts were subdued and changed. The judge, who, in order to gratify the multitude, passed sentence upon Jesus, publicly attested his innocence. The Roman centurion, who presided at the execution, glorified God, and acknowledged the sufferer to be more than man. *Truly*, said he, *this was the Son of God.*

The *Jewish* malefactor, who was crucified with Jesus, addressed him as the Lord of life and glory, and implored his favour. Even the crowd of insensible spectators, who had come forth as to a common show, and who had insulted him with clamours and out-cries, returned home, smiting their breasts,—Look back on the heroes, the philosophers, the legislators of old. View them in their last moments. Recall every circumstance which distinguished their departure from the world. Where can you find such an assemblage of great events, as concurred at the death of Christ? Where, so many testimonies given to the dignity of the dying person, by earth, and by heaven? Surely, Christianity bears the divine signature most visibly upon it, in this; as well as in all other instances.

It might be expected, that Jesus would rise again from the dead, according to the scriptures, and that he would ascend in triumph to his Father. And these facts are clearly and strongly attested by the writers of the New Testament. In vain was the massy stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre; in vain was the seal affixed; in vain were the soldiers commanded to guard the sacred place where the body of Jesus was laid. At the appointed period, he burst the bars of death, because it was impossible for him to be holden

* Blair's sermon, on the Death of Christ.

of them. He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead. The obstinate Jews put into the mouths of the Roman guards the most absurd story that ever was invented. They suborned them by the promise of money to say, "His disciples came, while we slept, and stole him away." They did not consider that this story confuted itself. For if the soldiers were all asleep, they could not know what was doing in the mean time; and if any of them were awake, they would soon have alarmed the rest, and prevented such an attempt.

The proofs of the Redeemer's resurrection are so full and convincing, that the apostle Paul does not scruple to risk the whole weight of the Christian cause upon the evidence of this single fact, "If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain, ye are yet in your sins. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."

Mr. Locke has reduced the highest proof of a matter of fact, which depends upon testimony, to the following particulars.—A sufficient number of witnesses; the integrity of those witnesses; their skill and understanding; their design; and the consistency of the parts and circumstances of the relation. Nothing can be more fair or more reasonable than these rules of judging concerning the authenticity of any historical relation; and it will be found, on the strictest inquiry, that the proofs of our Lord's resurrection are conformable to them all. The witnesses were numerous, they were every way qualified to give evidence in the case, they could have no inducement to impose on mankind, they had no motive or interest to incline them to falsify, nor could they possibly have succeeded if they had made the attempt. To all which we may add, the God of truth has manifestly stamped their report with the sanction of his own approbation. But there will be occasion to say more of this hereafter.

After Jesus had shewn himself alive from the dead to many infallible witnesses, he ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and having received gifts for men, he entered tri-

umphantly into the regions of glory, to appear in the presence of God for us.

It might be expected, that those who were living witnesses of all the Redeemer's transactions, and whom he had chosen for that purpose, should testify these things openly to the world. And this they did, with the greatest boldness and freedom, in the face of all dangers, amidst tides of opposition and torrents of rage, raised against them by all ranks of people. Observe the spirit, mark the language of these champions in the Christian cause, "Whether we should not obey God rather than men, judge ye. We cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen." As if they had said, 'Prepare your tortures, open your prisons, bring your chains and your scourges, utter your threatenings, invent new methods of cruelty, do with us what you please, we must not, we dare not be awed into silence; we cannot hold our peace.'

Soon after the day of Pentecost, when some of them had been seized and threatened by the Sanhedrim, they were anointed with such an effusion of the Spirit, that the very house was shaken in which they were assembled to offer up their fervent devotions. Their prayers ascended to the divine throne with acceptance, while they said, respecting their opposers, "Now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." They were afterwards led out of prison by an angel, who said to them, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people, all the words of this life." Implying, that the whole life and happiness of men depended on their knowing and receiving this message. They were obedient to the heavenly vision, and spake the word of God with boldness.

It is reasonable to suppose, that these witnesses of the Redeemer's transactions should be qualified for the great work they had to do, and supported in it. Accordingly, we find it recorded in that excellent and useful book called The Acts of the Apostles, that, in a very few days after the ascension of Jesus into heaven, the Spirit of God was, in pursuance of

his promise, poured out upon his disciples in an abundant manner, attended with the visible appearance of a lambent celestial flame. In consequence of this amazing unction, the poor fishermen of Galilee, and their companions, were in a moment enabled to speak with the greatest readiness and propriety a variety of languages, the first rudiments of which they had never learned.

The multitudes present were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, "Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians; we do hear them speak, in our own tongues, the wonderful works of God." This was necessary to fit them, according to their commission, to preach the gospel to every creature.

The gift of tongues, though a very extraordinary apostolic qualification, was far from being the only one which the apostles received on that memorable day. They were every way amply furnished for the great work before them, and at all times afterwards divinely assisted in it. The risen Redeemer had said to them, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

When they were brought before rulers and kings, it was given to them, without premeditation, what they should say, and what they should speak. When they addressed the multitudes who came to hear them, they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. They had power, in the name of Jesus, to perform all kinds of miracles*, equal to those of their

* The apostles, when they began to preach the gospel, declared that Jesus was the Christ, the Saviour of the world; that he had done many mighty works; that he was risen from the dead, and had sent them to preach remission of sins in his name among all nations, and

Master, and, as he had told them, in some circumstances superior to them: Nor should we here forget that extraordinary power, of communicating to others the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, by the imposition of their hands.

It is reasonable to suppose, that these messengers should be successful in their labours. And so they were. The very first sermon which was preached, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, converted three thousand of those who, by wicked hands, had crucified and slain the Prince of life. At another time, we read of five thousand; and again of multitudes, both of men and women. Many of the priests were obedient to the faith. So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.

When the apostles delivered their testimony to the Gentiles, the word of the Lord ran, and was glorified. The heathen writers complained, that their idols were neglected, that their temples were deserted, and that no man would buy the sacrifices. All this success attended the plain discourses of a few mean, unlearned fishermen; the Lord working with them, their testimony bore down the pride and the prejudices of the Jews, and prevailed over all the learning of Greece and Rome. So that, in a short space of time, they brought a great part of the world into subjection to the cross of Christ. But the excellency of the power was of God, and not of men.

It must be allowed, that it is no absolute proof of the favour and approbation of God, for any cause to become popular, and to be encouraged by a multitude of adherents. This, simply considered, is not a determinate evidence of the truth of any religious system, as is plain from the case of Mahomet and his deluded followers*.

to confirm the truth of what they delivered, by signs and wonders, and mighty deeds.

By declaring this, they were under the necessity of working miracles, or of losing credit among men. If they wrought no miracles, they confuted themselves.

* It has been said, that if we, at the present period, divide the

But in particular situations, and under peculiar circumstances, such as those already mentioned, the argument drawn from success appears to me to have great weight. I mean in situations, where no human strength, art or genius could of itself have prevailed; under circumstances, where imposture could never have supported itself, amidst the dangers and the obstacles which visibly stood in its way.

With respect to the apostles of Christ, every thing around them wore an appearance dangerous to their persons, and hostile to the cause in which they were embarked. In the execution of their office they had to contend with the jealousy of power, and the opposition of authority. The deep-rooted prejudices, the favourite superstitions, and the darling vices of a corrupt world, united all their force to impede their progress. But every mountain became a plain before them; because the work was of God, and no power of man could withstand it. The Spirit of the Most High inspired their hearts with a confidence of success, and his almighty arm gave them that success.

We may also justly suppose, that the tidings which these messengers published, and the religion which they established, should have great power over the hearts and lives of those who sincerely embraced them. This is evident beyond all contradiction. The gospel, as it was first preached by the apostles of Christ, turned men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. It was the power of God to the salvation of every one who believed, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. The apostolic weapons of warfare were mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

The converts to Christianity became new creatures; old things with them passed away, and all things became new. known regions of the world into thirty equal parts, the Christians will be found to be in possession of five, the Mahometans of six, and the idolaters of nineteen.

Men of the most infamous character were washed and sanctified by the blood of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. They put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new. They cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Their hearts were detached from the world, and set on things above. They sold their possessions*, and distributed to every man as his necessities required. They were inflamed with love to God, to his Son Jesus Christ, and to one another. The multitude of the disciples were of one heart and of one soul. Their heads then neighbours were constrained to say, 'See how these Christians love one another.' Religion was their main business, and the solemn acts of devotion their delight. They continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking bread and in prayers. Those who believed came and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Those who had curious arts of magic and deception, brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver†. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. It wrought effectually in them that believed. Their works of faith, their labours of love, and their patience of hope were manifest unto all men.

Now, compare with this any of those religious systems which men have devised, and you will in one moment perceive the amazing difference. That system of religion must be of God which effectually recovers lost sinners to himself, and reinstamps his blessed image on their souls. And let it be remembered, that so far as the gospel still prevails, it is

* 'This excess of generosity, which cast private property into the public stock, was so far from being required by the apostles, or imposed as a law of Christianity, that Peter reminds Ananias, that he had been guilty, in his behaviour, of an officious and voluntary prevarication. For whilst, says he, thy estate remained unsold, "was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?"—*Paley's View of the Evidences*, &c. Vol. I. p. 71.

† About six thousand pounds sterling.

known to produce, in a measure, the very same effects as at the beginning. O that its power might be experienced, and its fruits brought forth, as in ancient days! This would best put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*.

It is reasonable to suppose, that a religion, of which God is the Author, should secure due honour to all his attributes and perfections. If the gospel system does not do this, and that more effectually than any other religious system that ever was proposed to the attention of mankind, I am, for my own part, willing to give it up. If the reader will allow me to express my own feelings on this head; I must beg leave to say, that no system, which is not honourable to God, at the same time that it affords suitable relief to man, in his lapsed and miserable state; will afford me any rational satisfaction. But from the closest examination of the Christian scheme, for more than forty years, I do sincerely declare, that I think it, on every account, most worthy of all acceptance; and nothing endears it more to my own heart than this one con-

* Archdeacon Paley justly observes, 'After men became Christians, much of their time was spent in prayer and devotion, in religious meetings, in celebrating the eucharist, in conferences, in exhortations, in preaching, in an affectionate intercourse with one another, and correspondence with other societies. Perhaps their mode of life, in its form and habit, was not very unlike that of the *Unitas Fratrum*, or that of modern Methodists.'—*View of the Evidences of Christianity*, Vol. I. p. 38.

He adds, 'We know what the precepts of the religion are; how pure, how benevolent, how disinterested a conduct they enjoin; and that this purity and benevolence are extended to the very thoughts and affections. Men are brought to any thing almost sooner than to change their habit of life, especially when the change is either inconvenient, or made against the force of natural inclination, or with the loss of accustomed indulgences. It is the most difficult of all things to convert men from vicious habits to virtuous ones, as every one may judge from what he feels in himself, as well as from what he sees in others. It is almost like making men over again.' Yet this was done by that gospel which, as has been remarked, is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth.

sideration, that it secures the highest honour to all the perfections of Him who is its Author.

We see, in the sacred scheme of Christianity, that a just and holy God, though determined to display his mercy and unbounded grace, would do it only in such a way as might eternally vindicate the honour of his law, demonstrate the purity of his nature, and set forth the inviolable faithfulness of his threatening word.

We conceive that the Most High is infinitely wise; and we see his wisdom shine through all his works. But nowhere have we so striking a display of it as in the economy of our salvation. How wonderful was the contrivance which could harmonize in this vast design, the seemingly opposite claims of mercy and of justice! Which could satisfy, which could exalt, and magnify both; causing mercy and truth to meet together, righteousness and peace to embrace each other! Had punishment been inflicted on the sinner in all its severity, the glory of mercy had been obscured. And on the other hand, had the sinner been pardoned without any penalty sustained by himself or his substitute, justice had been set aside, and, speaking after the manner of men, one essential attribute of Deity would have triumphed over another. It is well observed by a celebrated poet, that

A God all mercy is a God unjust.

But in the Christian scheme, mercy and justice are equally glorified. He who is its Author, and whose understanding is infinite, hath, in the plan of our salvation by the death of his Son, abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.

The apostle Paul tells us, that God set forth his Son for a propitiation, through faith in his blood, with this express design, that he might declare his righteousness; might demonstrate that vindictive justice, the essential character and principal office of which is to punish sin. Thus a holy God, shews himself to be strictly and inviolably righteous, in the administration of his government, even while he is the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

In this method of dispensing grace, he secures the utmost

reverence to his divine law, he declares his infinite abhorrence of sin, he strikes the deepest terror on every persevering sinner, at the same time that he lays a solid foundation for the highest hope, in every penitent transgressor. The punishment inflicted on condemned souls in the infernal regions is not so awful a monument of the justice and holiness of God, as he hath given in the crucifixion of his beloved Son. For if the Lord spared not him, when no sin was found in him, but only imputed to him, how much less will he spare the stubborn offender himself, who obstinately persists in his rebellion? Nothing so strikingly sets forth the horrid nature of sin, its execrable vileness and loathsomeness in the sight of God; nothing speaks such terror to those who continue to trample on the just and holy laws of their Maker, did they but lay it to heart, as the shameful, the bitter, the accursed death of the Prince of life, for our offences.

The love, the grace and mercy of God are most illustriously displayed in the Christian system. Pardon, life, and endless felicity granted to condemned criminals on any terms, must set forth the riches of divine mercy. But when the Father grants these through the wounds, the agonies, the death of his dear, his only begotten, his equal Son, he not only manifests his love, but, as the apostle speaks, commends it. He shews it in such a way as may justly inflame us with gratitude, and transport our souls with everlasting admiration. He displays it in its highest perfection and glory.

The blessings of salvation, invaluable in themselves, are unspeakably enhanced by the manner in which they are conferred. God so loved the world, loved it in such a way, and to such a degree, as can only be expressed, only conceived by himself; he so loved it, that he gave his only begotten Son to torments and death, even the death of the cross, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Sin hath reigned unto death; but God's free and unbounded grace, in all her fulness, riches and splendour, reigns, like a glorious and superior sovereign, through righteousness to eternal life. A thousand worlds

conferred on us would have been as nothing, in comparison with the grace which is displayed in the death of the Son of God for us. While I contemplate the divine character as exhibited in the Christian system, I know not how to express my sentiments better than in the words of the poet,

Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with teach'rous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.

It is reasonable to suppose, that if the gospel is from God, it must contain all that relief for man which his helpless and ruined circumstances require. There was no ray of light in the whole system of heathen philosophy and morality, to direct the guilty how their sins might be pardoned. Nothing that could give solid peace to a wounded conscience. But the reconciliation of sinners to God, by the death of his Son in their room and stead, is the distinguishing peculiarity and glory of the evangelical system. It is this, in general, which makes it so suitable to our case, as guilty and perishing sinners.

A very respectable writer* uses, on this subject, the following remarkable expressions. 'We find so much use of Christ, if I may so speak, that he appears as the *soul* which animates the whole body of our divinity; as the centre of the system, diffusing light and life to every part of it. Take away Christ, yea, take away the Deity and atonement of Christ, and the whole ceremonial of the Old Testament appears to us, little more than a dead mass of uninteresting matter; prophecy loses almost all that is valuable and endearing; the gospel is annihilated, or ceases to be that *good news* to lost sinners, which it professes to be; practical religion is divested of its most powerful motives; the evangelical dispensation of its peculiar glory, and heaven itself of its most transporting joys.'

Is any one convinced of guilt, as provoking Heaven, and ruining the soul? Let him ask reason to point out a method

* Fuller.

of reconciliation, and a refuge of safety. Reason is at a loss, she hesitates as she replies, 'The Deity may perhaps accept our supplications, and grant forgiveness.' But the gospel leaves us not to the sad uncertainty of conjecture. It speaks the language of clear assurance. It informs us that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. That Christ was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. That his blood cleanseth from all sin. That whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

Is the poor sinner's conscience disquieted? The gospel remedy alone can give him substantial peace. Nothing can afford true peace to an enlightened conscience, but that which removes sin, saves from destruction, satisfies the demands of justice, and gives due honour to God and his holy law. The trembling conscience finds all these important ends completely answered by the obedience and the sacrifice of the Son of God. Here then it meets with substantial relief for all its disquietudes, that which furnishes a solid ground whereon to rest, and which will fill it with the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

Is the sinner conscious of the imperfection of all his own obedience, and sensible that he cannot stand before his Maker, or find acceptance with him, in any righteousness which is not answerable to the full demands of the law? He finds in the gospel the gift of righteousness revealed, even that righteousness of God which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe.

Is the sinner deeply convinced of his own impotence and insufficiency in respect to the repelling of temptation, performing the duties incumbent upon him, and bringing forth fruit to God? The gospel furnishes him with ample relief. 'It hath pleased the Father that in Christ all fulness should dwell, and from his fulness we receive grace for grace. It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Sin shall not have dominion over you. Ye are

kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. My grace is sufficient for you, my strength is made perfect through weakness."

In short, let the sinner's wants be ever so many, his enemies ever so numerous, or his dangers ever so great, the gospel system provides for all. It is exactly suited to his circumstances, and adapted to his necessities. It is a sovereign balm for every wound, a cordial for every fear, a plaster for every sore, a medicine for every malady. Surely then, it is contrived, prepared, and furnished by a Divine Hand*.

It is reasonable to suppose, that if the Christian religion is really of divine origin, it must afford support and consolation under all the afflictions and calamities of life. When a man is visited with sickness, or oppressed by calamity, let him look into the systems of the most refined philosophy for relief. Plato will tell him, that such dispensations coincide with the general plan of the divine government. Virgil will inform him, that afflictive visitations are, more or less, the unavoidable lot of all men. Another moralist will whisper in the ear of the distressed and dejected sufferer, 'Impatience adds to the load; but a calm submission renders it more supportable.' Now, though these observations are just, yet they are spiritless and inefficacious cordials, in comparison with those which the gospel affords.

In this divine system we are informed, that afflictions are fatherly chastisements; that they are tokens of our Redeem-

* True religion, in order to accomplish the happiness of man, ought to be suitable to his fallen state. It ought to convince us, not only that there is a God, that we are under every kind of obligation to love him with all our hearts, and that our true felicity consists in being devoted to him; but it ought to inform us, that we are full of gross darkness, which hinders us from knowing and loving him. It ought to discover to us the cause of that enmity and opposition which we bear to God, and to our own happiness. It ought to set before us that divine Remedy which infinite mercy has provided, and in what way we are to be actually interested in it. Let men compare all the religions in the world, in these respects; and let them try whether any one but the Christian is suited to their necessities.—*Mons. Pascal.*

er's love, and fruits of his faithful care; that they are intended to make us partakers of his holiness; to produce in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and to work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Our compassionate Saviour assures us, that in all our affliction he is afflicted; that he will be with us in trouble; that he will never leave us nor forsake us; that his Spirit shall be our comforter, his promises our stay, and his everlasting arm our never-failing support. He assures us, that we are only afflicted for our profit, and that all these things shall work together for our good. What sovereign cordials are these amidst the calamities of life!

Supported by these cordials, we find the afflicted children of God enabled to glory in tribulation. "What shall we then say to these things?" says the apostle Paul; "if God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or persecution? or famine? or nakedness? or peril? or death? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Let those who dare to reject this divine remedy consider what they are doing. They give up that which only can smoothe the rugged path of life, and afford consolation amidst the sorrows and calamities of the present state.

It is reasonable to suppose that such a system of religion, as that in question, must furnish substantial support in a dying hour, and open to the minds of real believers, certain prospects of future felicity. And this is most certainly the case. The religion of Jesus dispenses her choicest cordials when they are most needed; in the seasons of exigence, in poverty, in exile, in sickness, and in our last conflict with that most formidable enemy, the king of terrors. The essential superiority which is derived from it is less felt, at least, it is less apparent, when the Christian is in full possession of riches, and splendour, and rank, and the various other gifts of Providence. But when all these are swept away by the rude hand of time, or the rough blasts of adversity, the faithful fol-

lower of Jesus stands, like the steady oak, the glory of the forest, erect, and vigorous; stripped indeed of his summer foliage, but more than ever discovering to the observing eye his solid strength; being rooted and grounded in Christ, as a tree of righteousness of the Lord's own planting, that he may be glorified.

Death, the last enemy of man; and the gloomy grave, the terror of all living, are overcome by the Captain of our salvation. The true Christian must feel the stroke of mortality, as well as other men; but to him the sting of death is no more. His guilt being expiated by the atonement of the Redeemer, death is disarmed. The pardoned sinner, relying on the all-sufficient Saviour, is enabled to say,—“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. My heart and my flesh fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. 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. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

Is not that religion of divine origin by which the king of terrors is transformed into a messenger of peace, which makes it gain to die, which ensures a glorious resurrection at the last day, and which opens the most enlivening and consolatory prospects of unbounded and everlasting felicity in heaven? Let those who would persuade us to relinquish this system produce any thing that will bear the least degree of comparison with it. Let them point out something sufficient to countervail the loss of that which is our only solace under the calamities of life, our sovereign support in the awful hour of dissolution, and the foundation of a sure and certain hope of future happiness.

It is reasonable to suppose, that a religion of this description should have the stamp of holiness and purity through its whole contexture. And the Christian system does not dis-

appoint us in this. Its purity is a decisive evidence of the origin whence it proceeded. It is an evidence every where legible and visible. On the strictest examination, the inquirer must be convinced, from every view of it, that it is worthy of its Author, who is glorious in holiness, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Its laws are holy, just and good, requiring truth in the inward part, and the strictest integrity of principle, of intention, of thought and of action. Its doctrines are doctrines according to godliness, teaching us, most powerfully and influentially, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

If we contemplate the gospel by itself, and view it in its own light, we shall have every reason to admire it, both for the purity of its nature, and the tendency which it has to promote the holiness and the happiness of mankind. It bears on it the stamp of a divine original; the image and superscription of him from whom it comes*. There is a spirit which animates and beautifies it throughout, which must strongly prepossess the pious mind in its favour. There is no vice, even within the darkest retreats of the mind, which the word of God does not detect. There is no duty, connected with the glory of the divine Being, the welfare of our neighbour, or the true happiness of ourselves, but what this sacred book enjoins, and enforces with the strongest motives and inducements imaginable. “Thy word,” says the man after God's own heart, “thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.”

Lastly, it seems highly reasonable to suppose, that if the gospel be of God, he would appoint it to be transmitted to posterity in writing. The Son of God had a commission

* The disciples of the Lord were examples of fervent zeal for the welfare of mankind; they were of an inoffensive behaviour, of disinterestedness and self-denial, of unwearied industry, of the most extensive charity, of courage, of constancy, and in short, of a regular practice of what they taught and recommended to others. The first Christians resembled their teachers in these good qualities.

from his Father's throne, for the benefit of all nations, and of all ages. Undoubtedly, care must have been taken, to have some authentic records of the doctrine which he taught, of the wonderful transactions of his life, and the circumstances of his death and resurrection. It is reasonable to suppose, that he would qualify and ordain some of his followers, to deliver down to posterity, in the most accurate manner, the whole system of that religion of which he is both the Author, and the sum and substance.

Because it is very apparent that the great end of this vast and astonishing *apparatus*, if that expression may be allowed, must, in the nature of things, have been frustrated, if no such records had been provided. For it is morally impossible that unwritten tradition should convey a system of religion pure and uncorrupted, even to the next generation; and much more, that it should so convey it to the end of time.

And it should seem, so far as we can judge, by no means worthy the divine wisdom, to suffer the good effects of so great and noble a plan to be lost, for want of so easy an expedient.

Having proceeded thus far, I shall now beg leave to take a short survey of the sacred writings in general, and of their scope, tendency and design; after which I shall call the reader's attention to the New Testament in particular, and touch on the characters and qualifications of the principal writers of it, with a view to establish the important point under consideration, *The truth of the Christian religion.*

CHAPTER II.

THE EVIDENCE ARISING FROM THE CREDIBILITY OF WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES, AND FROM THE CHARACTERS AND QUALIFICATIONS OF SOME OF THE WRITERS OF THEM.

IN a revelation of the Divine will concerning us, we might expect to find those truths which it is most necessary for us to know, in order to our serving our Maker acceptably in this

world, and our being prepared for a state of happiness in another. As he that cometh to God must believe that he is; and that he is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him, we might expect to find in a revelation which professedly comes from him, a clear account of his own existence, of the unity of his divine essence, and of the perfections and attributes of his nature. We might expect here to be informed of the necessary and immutable difference between good and evil; the rewards and punishments of a future state; and the absolute necessity of attending with seriousness and ardour, to the great concerns of our souls, and of the eternal world. And the bible will not disappoint us in any of these particulars.

We might expect, in such a revelation, the line and path of our duty to be clearly marked out; and that every vice would be exposed, and every virtue enjoined. We might reasonably suppose, its general tendency would be, to instruct us in those things which are most necessary to be known and understood by us. These are not subjects of amusement, or curiosity; not the origin of arts, or the depths of science; not the histories of mighty empires, desolating the globe by their bloody contentions*; not the subtilties of

* With respect to *politics*, in the usual sense of that word, or discussions concerning different forms of government, Christianity declines every question upon the subject. Whilst politicians are disputing about monarchies, aristocracies, and republics, the gospel is alike applicable, useful, and friendly to them all; inasmuch as,

1. It tends to make men virtuous; as it is easier to govern good men than bad men under any constitution.

2. It states obedience to government in ordinary cases, to be not merely a submission to force, but a duty of conscience.

3. It induces dispositions favourable to public tranquillity; a Christian's chief care being to pass quietly through this world to a better.

4. It prays for communities, and for the governors of communities, of whatever description or denomination they be, with a solicitude and fervency proportioned to the influence which they possess upon human happiness. All which, in my opinion, is just as it should be.

—*Paley's View of the Evidences; &c. Vol. II. p. 70.*

logic; the mysteries of metaphysics; the sublimities of poetry, or the niceties of criticism. These are not subjects necessary to be known in order to final happiness. They doubtless have their use, and may properly enough occupy the learned leisure of a few individuals of mankind. But the divine word sets before us matters infinitely more important and of more general concern. It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths.

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward.” Such is the Psalmist’s commendation of the five books of Moses, and of those few other divine records then extant. How justly may we apply it to the bible in its present entire and perfect state!

‘When I consider,’ says a pious and elegant writer, ‘the contents of the scriptures, and believe myself interested in the promises they make, and the privileges they confer, I am induced to cry out,—What are all the other books in the world, compared with these invaluable volumes! No more than an entertaining novel, or a few prudential rules for domestic œconomy, compared with a parent’s will, a royal charter, or an imperial grant of titles and manors! When I consider the language of the scriptures, and sometimes experience their energy on my soul, I am inclined to say,—Other writings, though polished with the nicest touches of art, only tinkle on the ear, or affect us like the shepherd’s reed. But these, even amidst all their noble negligence, strike, alarm, transport us, somewhat like the voice of thunder, or the archangel’s trumpet.—Inestimable book! It heals the maladies of life, and subdues the fear of death. It strikes a lightsome vista through the gloom of the grave, and opens a charming, a glorious prospect of immortality in the heavens.’

No other book gives us such views of God, and of man, of

the present, and of a future life, or of the relations which all these bear to each other. It gives us a just portrait of the vanity of this world, and of all its pursuits, and exhibits distinct, lively and exquisite representations of the joys of another; of the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, and the triumphs of the righteous in that day, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.

No other book has ever pretended to give any account of the depravity of man, or to point out any suitable remedy for it. No other has ventured to declare the unpardonable nature of sin without the influence of a mediatorial interposition, and the vicarious atonement of a divine Redeemer*.

The peculiar doctrines of the gospel were as inconceivable to the wisest of mankind, antecedent to their publication, as the Newtonian system of philosophy is at this day, to the most ignorant tribes of savages in the wilds of America. They are doctrines which human reason never could have discovered; but which, when discovered, coincide with it, and are confirmed by it; and which, though beyond the reach of all the learning and penetration of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, are now clearly laid open to the eye of every peasant and mechanic with the bible in his hand.

In this divine book we find the power of religion exemplified in the lives of good and holy men. And perhaps no species of writing has been rendered more beneficial, or more promoted the cause of vital godliness. Being compassed about with a cloud of witnesses, who have experienced the efficacy of saving grace, realized the supports and consolations of religion, and been enabled to practise the duties of

* That Christ suffered and died as an atonement for the sins of men, is a doctrine so constantly and so strongly enforced through every part of the New Testament, that whoever will seriously peruse those writings, and deny that it is there, may, with as much reason and truth, after reading the works of Thucydides and Livy, assert; that in them no mention is made of any facts relative to the histories of Greece and Rome.—*Jenyns*.

it with steadiness, constancy and perseverance, amidst a thousand difficulties; we, in our turn, are encouraged to lay aside every weight, and the sin which easily besets us, and to run with patience, the race set before us.

There is nothing in the characters exhibited in this sacred volume which would lead any one to suspect that they are feigned. They have all the internal marks imaginable of being real.

The history in general, contained in this book, has every evidence of its being a real history. Many profane historians, writing of the same times, confirm the truth of the events which are either incidentally or more purposely related in it. The Old Testament contains a chronological account of the beginning of the world, and an unbroken genealogy of mankind for many ages before common history begins; and carried forward so as to make up a continued thread of history for the space of almost four thousand years.

It contains an account of God's entering into covenant with a particular nation, that they should be his people, and he their God, in a peculiar sense. It informs us of his often interposing in their affairs in a miraculous way; of his giving them the promise of a particular country, and long after, the possession of it; of his assuring them of the greatest national prosperity in it, if they would worship him, and obey his commands, renouncing all the idols which the heathen nations acknowledged, and abstaining from their sinful customs and practices. It contains threatenings denounced against them, if they disobeyed their rightful sovereign, and fell into the idolatry which almost universally prevailed in the world.

This book gives us a general account of the condition of religion and its professors, in that state of apostacy from God, in which it every where supposes the world to lie. And this account of the state of religion carries along with it some brief hints of the political state of things, so far as religion is affected by it.

Revelation indeed represents the common affairs of this world and what is going on in it, as a mere scene of distract-

tion. It contains some very general account of the great empires which were to rise, flourish, and decline, in successive periods, till the God of heaven should set up a kingdom never to be destroyed.

The writers of the sacred books, though they lived and wrote in different ages, and at distant periods of time, yet all harmoniously agree in the relation of facts, and in the establishment of every important point of doctrine. If we find, in any instance, a trifling difference of expression, or an omission of circumstances by one writer which are recorded by another, we are hence the more fully convinced that there was no combination among those writers, to impose upon mankind. That apparent disagreement in circumstantial matters, on which some found their objections against the Christian scheme, is, in fact, an argument of considerable weight in favour of the truth of it. The sacred writers all inculcate and express the same points of faith; they all deliver the same injunctions and commands; they all, for substance, relate the same things, however they may differ as to certain modes of expression, which admit of a very easy reconciliation.

The similarity of certain transactions which took place at different times, the ambiguity of names, and many other circumstances, may occasion some little difficulty of interpretation, yet do by no means weaken the credibility of the sacred writers; but, on the other hand, serve to vindicate and free them from all suspicion of falsehood. Since it is usual with those who would impose upon mankind, to relate all circumstances by compact and agreement, so that there may not appear any colour or shew of difference.

The New Testament abounds with internal proofs of the truth of its contents. A spirit of piety, charity and disinterestedness appears through the whole of it. The evangelists ingenuously relate the misbehaviour of the apostles on some occasions. They have sometimes recorded what the smallest degree of craft and dissimulation would have taught them to suppress. A statuary works upon marble, an his-

torian upon facts; both cut them to their fancy, and pare off all that will not serve for their purpose. But the writers of the New Testament stand remarkably clear of this imputation*. They enter into a large and accurate detail of places, times, persons and events very circumstantially, in which, if they had mixed fraud and falsehood, they might have been easily detected †.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established. Divine Providence has favoured us with four, in respect to the life, the actions, the sufferings, and the death of Jesus Christ. We have also a history, taking up the narrative from his death, and carrying on an account of the propagation of his religion, and of some of the most eminent instruments engaged in that work, for about thirty years. We have, likewise, as the learned Paley observes, what some may think still more original, a collection of letters, written upon the subject of Christianity, by certain principal agents in the business, and in the midst of their concern and connection with it. And we have these writ-

* Nothing can destroy the evidence of testimony in any case, but a proof or probability that the persons are not competent judges of the facts to which they give testimony; or that they are actually under some indirect influence in giving it.

† 'It doth not appear that it ever came into the minds of these writers, to consider how this or the other action would appear to mankind, or what objections might be raised thereupon. But, without at all attending to this, they lay the facts before you, at no pains to think whether they will appear credible or not. If the reader will not believe their testimony, there is no help for it; they tell the truth and attend to nothing else. Surely this looks like sincerity, and that they published nothing to the world but what they believed themselves.'—*Duchal*.

'There is always some truth where there are considerable particularities related: as in Thucydides's history of the Peloponnesian war, and Caesar's of the war in Gaul. In both these, the particulars of time, place and persons are mentioned. They are therefore universally esteemed true, to a great degree of exactness.'—*Hartley*, Vol. II. p. 109.

ings severally attesting the subject in question, particularizing the sufferings of the witnesses of the facts recorded in the gospel history, and attesting these facts in every variety of form in which they can be represented; directly and indirectly, expressly and incidentally, by assertion, recital and allusion; by narratives of the transactions themselves, and by arguments and discourses built upon them; either occasionally referring to them, or necessarily supposing them.

This variety claims particular notice, because, in examining ancient records, or indeed any species of testimony, it is of the greatest importance to attend to the grounds of argument which are casually and undesignedly disclosed; as this kind of proof is, of all others, the least liable to be corrupted by fraud, or misrepresentation.

The letters of the apostles, though written without the remotest design of transmitting the history of Christ, or of Christianity, to future ages, incidentally disclose to us the following circumstances; the descent and family of Jesus according to the flesh; the innocence, the meekness, and the gentleness of his character; his exalted nature; his circumcision; his transfiguration; his life of suffering, and the patience and resignation he manifested through it; the appointment of his holy supper; his agony; his confession before Pilate; his stripes, crucifixion, burial and resurrection; his appearance after it, first to Cephas, then to the rest of the apostles; his ascension into heaven, and his appointment to be the future Judge of mankind; the residence of the apostles at Jerusalem; the working of miracles by the first preachers of the gospel; the successful propagation of the truth; the persecution of its followers; the miraculous conversion of Paul; miracles wrought by him, and alleged in controversies with his adversaries in letters written to the persons among whom they were wrought*. He also ob-

* When these things are calmly considered, we need not be surprised that even a man of Rousseau's principles should say, as he does to Emilius, 'Shall we suppose the evangelic history to be a mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction. On the

serves, that miracles were the signs of an apostle. The reader may find all these particulars in the epistle to the Hebrews, the first and second epistles to the Corinthians, and in other places.

There is a close connection and perfect agreement in the leading doctrines of Christianity, with each other. The corruption of human nature, the free and sovereign grace of God in our salvation, the proper Deity of our adorable Redeemer, our reconciliation to God by his atoning sacrifice, the pardon of our sins, and the complete justification of our persons by his blood, together with the sanctification of our natures by the operations of his Holy Spirit, are doctrines in perfect harmony one with another; they are all parts of one whole, united in close dependence and mutual congruity.

There is also an intimate connection between these leading doctrines of Christianity, and the practical precepts of it. For the 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.

There is the same agreement and mutual dependence to be observed in those noble virtues and holy tempers which Christianity so strongly and repeatedly enjoins, and by our progress in which, we may best judge of our advancement in holiness. Such are the fear and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, deadness to the world, heavenly-mindedness, self-denial and humility; to which may be added, love, kindness and meekness towards our fellow-creatures. The wisdom of God is so evident in this whole system, which is the only solid ground of our present and future happiness, that an argument may be thence deduced in proof of its divine origin.

The most celebrated virtues of the ancient heathens were high spirit, intrepid courage, and implacable resentment.

contrary; the history of Socrates, which no body presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ.—*Truth of Christianity vindicated*, page 128.

*Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer**,

was the portrait of the most illustrious hero, drawn by one of the first poets of antiquity. To these admired qualities, those of a true Christian are an exact contrast; for this religion constantly enjoins meekness, patience, and forgiveness of injuries. "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." That is, as is elsewhere expressed in plainer terms, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

We are willing to allow, when we maintain the inspiration of the Old and New Testament, that the hand of a transcriber might chance, in some places, to insert one letter or word for another, as is often now done in printing; and the various readings of the sacred Scriptures, as well as of all other ancient books, prove, that this has sometimes been the case †. But does this weaken the authority of the bible? By no means. Those various readings are generally of so little importance, that he who can lay any stress upon them in the present case, must either be defective in judgment, or in integrity. No material alteration has been suffered to be made in the sacred books; we have them preserved to us by the watchful care of Providence, such as they were when they came from the hands of those whose names they bear.

The translation of the scriptures into our own tongue, if diligently compared with the original, will be found, in the main, to be just, faithful, and judicious. The original copies of the writings of the New Testament, it has been proved by Grotius and others, were preserved for two hundred years after Christ. In the following ages, they were translated into the Syriac, Æthiopic, Arabic and Latin tongues; these trans-

* Intrepid, fierce, of unforgiving rage.

† Dr. Bentley observes, that the New Testament has suffered less injury by the errors of transcribers than the works of any profane author, of the same size and antiquity; which shews that there never was any writing, in the preservation and purity of which, the world was so interested, or so careful.

lations are yet extant, and do not differ in any thing of moment from the Greek copies themselves*.

That the four Gospels, the history of the Acts of the Apostles, the several Epistles, and the book of the Revelation, have descended to us uncorrupted, is fully manifest, from the citations which have been made from them by Christian writers of all ages; from the multitude of copies, and early translations, which left no room to fraud or inattention to do them any important injury; and from the various readings themselves, which, for the most part, as has been observed, are of small consequence.

It seems very desirable to have some intelligence of the writers of so important a book as the New Testament. And it hath been the good pleasure of God to favour us with a circumstantial history of several of them; particularly of John, of Peter, and of Paul, whose writings constitute a considerable part of the sacred volume.

With respect to John, we know that, besides the concern he had in the cure of the lame man, he was favoured with the visions of God in the isle of Patmos, where our Lord, more than half a century after his ascension, did him the honour to use him as his amanuensis, expressly dictating to him the letters he was pleased to send to the seven churches in Asia. No doubt the Redeemer would then so preside over his other writings, as to secure him from mistakes in them.

As to Peter, we find him striking Ananias and Sapphira dead with a word; curing, by the like powerful word, one cripple at Jerusalem, and another at Lydda; and calling back Dorcas even from the dead. Let us view him in that great concern, of being marked out so particularly by an angel to Cornelius, and sent to him, as the oracle of God himself, from whom that worthy and honourable Roman officer was to hear

* We ask no more for the books composing the New Testament than what we allow to other books. That the Koran is genuine no one denies. That the history of Apollonius Tyaneus was written by Philostratus, no one doubts. Why should the books of the New Testament be suspected not to be genuine?

the solemn words, by which he and all his house should be saved.

After this we view him, on a particular occasion, delivered from the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews, by an angel from heaven; who struck off his chains, and opened the doors of his prison, the very night before he was to have been executed. What more could be necessary to prove the divine inspiration of what he taught, so far as inspiration was necessary to render it completely authentic? And upon what pretence can the authority of his writings be denied, if that of his preaching be granted.

Let Paul, that great scribe, instructed in the kingdom of God, and tutored in the regions of Paradise, to whose pen we owe so many invaluable epistles, be considered in the same view. Let us impress our minds with the various scenes through which we know he passed, and the distinguishing favours with which his Master honoured him, that we may judge how we are to receive the instructions of his pen. He was miraculously called by the voice of Christ to the profession of his gospel, when he was persecuting the believers of it even to the death. He then received a full and distinct revelation of that glorious gospel, by the immediate inspiration of its divine Author. This is a fact which he expressly and repeatedly records, and in which he could not be mistaken. How bright was the lustre of those astonishing works which he was enabled to shew forth wherever he went, as well as of those wrought in his favour, which manifested him to be the care of the Keeper of Israel! Demons ejected; distempers cured, sometimes with a touch, and sometimes without, by a garment sent from him to the patient; his motions guided from place to place by a divine oracle; Elymas struck blind for opposing him; his bands loosed by an earthquake; his strength and vigour instantaneously restored, when the rage of the barbarous populace at Lystra had stoned him, and left him for dead; and, to add no more, his safety in a shipwreck, with that of near three hundred persons in the same

vessel for his sake, promised by an angel, and accomplished without the loss of a single person, when they had expected nothing but certain destruction.

The testimony of the apostle Paul may be considered as detached from that of the other apostles. He declares, as we have seen, that he received the gospel in general, and the institution of the Lord's supper in particular, not from the rest of the apostles, or in conjunction with them, but from Christ himself; whom he saw after his ascension, as is recorded in the history of the Acts. His first epistle to the Corinthians, in which he particularly gives this account of his commission from the Redeemer, is quoted by Clemens Romanus, in an epistle of his own to the same church.

Paul likewise testifies, what was publicly known by the people to whom he wrote, that it was the Lord who had endued him with the power of working miracles. "Truly, the signs of an apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, in signs and wonders, and mighty deeds." He also speaks of a great variety of miraculous gifts bestowed on many individuals of those communities to whom he addressed himself. These gifts were then known to subsist among them. He mentions them, as it were, incidentally, in the most easy manner, as any person might speak to another of a fact which was familiarly known to them both.

These considerations seem to me sufficient to carry conviction along with them to every candid mind, of the point in question, in proportion to the degree of attention with which they are regarded.

It may be farther observed, that Jesus Christ had absolutely promised his disciples the special guidance of his Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of truth, to guide them into all truth, to shew them things to come, to teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever he had said unto them, and to abide with them for ever; that being thus fitted and empowered, they might bear witness unto him. Accordingly, after his resurrection, when he gave them their full commission, he said, "As my Father hath sent me, even

so send I you; and he breathed upon them, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

Jesus had before given his disciples this assurance of his aid; "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you. On the same principle we may conclude, that when they were to write for the use of all future generations, it was the Spirit of the Father who dictated to them what they should write; so that they wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

It must farther be observed, that these holy men assume to themselves such authority, and speak of their own discourses and writings in such peculiar terms, as nothing but a consciousness of divine inspiration could warrant. "The things which I write unto you, are the commandments of the Lord. He that despiseth, that is, rejecteth what I write, despiseth not man but God, who hath given us his Holy Spirit."

Though the apostle John was remarkable for his modesty and humility of mind, yet he in effect asserts, that he had, in concurrence with his brethren, given such abundant proof of his being under divine guidance in his teaching, whether by word or letter, that his doctrine was the standard by which they might judge of truth or error; and surely this can be nothing short of asserting the fullest inspiration: "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth us not: hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

I would beg leave to add, that in regard to the facts recorded in the New Testament, it appears to me impossible that they should have been delivered to us in the manner they are, without divine inspiration. Supposing the Evangelists, for instance, to have been eye-witnesses of the events they report, it nevertheless would have been strange to the last degree, if, left to themselves, they should have given us so clear, particular, and consistent a detail of them as they have done. Let any one reflect on the number and the va-

riety of the facts they record, with all the circumstances attending them, the length of many of our Saviour's discourses, the time that elapsed before they were committed to writing, the fallibility of the memory, the different impressions which things usually make on the minds of spectators, and many other unavoidable occasions of inaccuracy and mistake, and surely he must be convinced, that nothing short of inspiration could have enabled these writers to deliver their concurring testimonies in the manner they have done.

The Holy Spirit kept a watch over them as they wrote, guarded them against the illusions of a warm and eccentric imagination, enabled them to state facts truly, to relate the circumstances of them accurately, and to range them in an orderly and consistent manner. To this purpose our Lord speaks, when he promises his disciples, as we have before observed, that the Holy Ghost should bring all things to their remembrance.

And here it should be remarked, that this inspiration did by no means preclude the natural and regular use of their own proper memory. The facts reported, of which they had been eye-witnesses, rose to their view in the manner they had beheld them, and struck them, it is probable, with the same sensations they felt at the time they happened.

Nor was it necessary to their being thus inspired, that they should not be at liberty to use their own words, or to write in that style which was natural to them. This I mention, because it is evident that the inspired writers, particularly the Evangelists, differ in their style from each other. And it is also evident, that, in the writings of John, there is a manifest sameness of style in his Gospel, Epistles, and book of Revelation. This may be also observed in the writings of Luke and Paul.

But the objection to the inspiration of the New Testament, grounded on this circumstance, is utterly inconclusive. This will appear, if it be considered, that, in relating historical events, the main business is, the stating of them truly and accurately. To which purpose, it is not necessary that

other words be dictated to the writer than he is accustomed to use, or that the natural and usual turn of his periods and phraseology should be over-ruled. It is enough that we are assured, by divine authority, that the facts which the Evangelists relate are in every particular true, and may most surely be depended upon.

It ought farther to be remarked, that this variety of style observable in their writings, is so far from being an evidence of their not being inspired, that it hath quite the contrary effect. For it seems to have been wisely so ordered by the Father of lights, that they should use their own words, to render the veracity and agreement of the several writers the more conspicuous. And, after all, whatever difference there may be in their style, even admitting that there is more ease and elegance in one than in another, yet that which each uses is the fittest and best adapted to the purpose which infinite wisdom proposed.

Before I dismiss this head, I would just observe, that the sacred writers denounced the most awful judgments on those who should either pervert their writings, add to them, or detract from them. Those who wrested the apostolic epistles are said to have wrested them, as they did the other scriptures, to their own destruction. How very awful are the words of these holy men of God! "Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life!" Nothing short of the most perfect divine inspiration could justify such language as this, or secure those who used it from the charge of bold presumption, and base imposition.

CHAPTER III.

THE EVIDENCE ARISING FROM THE CONCURRING TESTIMONIES OF HEATHEN WRITERS.

WE shall now proceed to observe, that some of the leading facts of the gospel history were taken notice of, and recorded by those heathen authors, who lived in the age of our Saviour and his apostles, or near that period. Though I would avoid every thing that may have the appearance of an ostentatious parade of learning, yet it seems necessary to assert some things on this important subject, which cannot certainly be known without some little acquaintance with ancient writers.

The most considerable Roman historians, who lived near the period referred to, are Tacitus and Suetonius; and to them an appeal is always, and very justly made, as being substantial witnesses on this occasion. Tacitus assures us, 'that in Nero's days,' who began his reign about twenty years after the death of Christ, 'there was a vast multitude of Christians, not only in Judea, but at Rome; against whom Nero raised a persecution; attended with such circumstances of ignominy and cruelty, as moved the compassion even of their enemies.' He intimates also, that this was not the first attempt that was made to crush them.

His contemporary, Suetonius, in his concise manner, speaks much to the same purpose. And Pliny, the intimate friend and correspondent of both these historians, being employed in Trajan's time to persecute the Christians, writes an account of them to that emperor, of the vast multitudes he every where found of them, and of the respectability of their moral character.

Some parts of the history of Jesus may be reasonably expected from those who lived at no great distance from Judea, the scene of action. Tacitus, Suetonius and Dion record, 'That Augustus Cæsar ordered the whole empire to

be censured or taxed; which procedure, by the over-ruling Providence of God, brought the reputed parents of Jesus to Bethlehem, the place where he was to be born. Chalcidius relates, 'That a great light, or a new star appeared at that time in the East,' which was the star that directed the wise men to the place where they presented their gifts to the new-born Prince of life.

Macrobius relates it as a known fact, 'That Herod, the king of Palestine, so often mentioned in the Roman history, made a great slaughter of innocent children,' being so jealous of a successor, that he put to death his own sons on that account. This character of him is given by several historians. That the infant Saviour was carried into Egypt, is acknowledged by Celsus.

Tacitus records, 'That Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea; that Jesus was brought into judgment before him, and by him condemned and crucified.'

Julian the apostate, Porphyry, and Hierocles, all of them, not only Pagans, but professed enemies and persecutors of Christianity, do yet confess, 'that many miraculous cures and works, out of the ordinary course of nature, were wrought by Christ.'

Phlegon, in his annals, confessed, 'That Jesus foretold several things, which came to pass according to his predictions.'

Trallian, who was the freed man of Adrian the emperor, records, 'that at the time when Jesus died, there was a miraculous darkness, and a great earthquake.' Probably some of his heathen friends and correspondents had been witnesses to the darkness, and felt the concussion of the earth.

Pliny, the younger, mentioned above, about seventy years after the death of Christ, gives us such particulars relating to the Christian religion, within the compass of his own knowledge of the subject, as agree with the accounts we have in the scriptures, of the first state of Christianity, after the crucifixion of Christ. The passage, to which I refer, is

to the following purport, 'That Christ was worshipped among the Christians as God; that they would rather suffer death than blaspheme him; that they received a sacrament, and by it entered into a vow of abstaining from sin and wickedness; that they had private assemblies of worship, and used to join together in singing hymns to Christ as God.' How thankful ought we to be for this pleasing testimony, given by this ancient and respectable heathen writer!

Julian, the blaspheming apostate, acknowledges, 'That Peter, the apostle of Christ, performed many wonderful works.'

Porphry, who objects to Christianity, that since Jesus had begun to be worshipped, Esculapius and the rest of the gods, did no more hold intercourse with men, yet acknowledges, That the devils, or evil spirits, were subject to the Christians.

Thus we see what a multitude of Pagan testimonies may be produced for all these remarkable facts, relating to the Christian religion. It cannot be expected that they should mention particulars which were transacted among the disciples only; such as the transfiguration, the agony in the garden, the appearance of Christ after the resurrection, and others of the like nature. It was impossible for a heathen author to relate these things, because, if he had sincerely believed them, he would have been a heathen no longer; and, on that account, his testimony would not have been thought of so much validity. The desolations of war, and the depredations of time, have doubtless destroyed many other testimonies which once existed, but we have reason to be thankful that Providence has preserved so many as have been now cited, together with others which I forbear to introduce, lest I should tire the reader's patience.

The Christian religion has not been denied the testimony of enemies; a testimony of which it did not stand in need; but which, being extorted by the irresistible force of truth, may well be esteemed as a confirmation of its general evidence; since they whose wish and whose interest it was to

decry it, were yet compelled to acknowledge it in part. Thus, like Pilate, they pronounced him righteous whom they condemned; and, like Judas, they confessed him innocent whom they betrayed.

The brief and incidental relations and notices of what relates to the affairs of Christianity, which are found in the writings of Pagans, so far as they go, are of great weight. They bear testimony of these facts; that Jesus of Nazareth was the author of this religion; that he was put to death at Jerusalem, by the authority of the Roman governor, Pilate; that notwithstanding this, the cause prevailed in that city, and throughout Judea, and that it was thence propagated to distant countries; that the converts were very numerous; that they suffered great hardships and injuries for their profession; and that all this took place in the age of the world which our sacred books have assigned.

They proceed further, to describe the manners of Christians, in terms perfectly conformable to the accounts extant in the New Testament; that they constantly assembled together on a certain day; that they sung hymns to Christ as God; that they bound themselves in a solemn manner, not to commit any crime, but to adhere strictly to their promises; that they worshipped him who was crucified in Judea; that this their first Lawgiver had taught them to look upon themselves and one another as brethren; that they had a great contempt for the things of the world; that with great readiness they flew to one another's relief; that they lived in the hope of immortality; that they despised death, and willingly surrendered themselves to sufferings. I know not what we could have desired more, in point of testimony, from those who were professed enemies. Let it be remembered, that these accounts are given by persons who viewed the subject at a distance; who understood not the true nature of Christianity, and who were uninterested about it. Yet there is no contradiction, in what they say, of the sacred history; no different story set up against it; but a circumstantial coincidence with what the inspired writers have recorded.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EVIDENCE ARISING FROM THE PREVALENCE OF THE CAUSE, AMIDST GREAT OPPOSITION, THOUGH PROMOTED BY MEANS WHICH IN THEMSELVES MIGHT APPEAR INADEQUATE.

It was foretold that the kingdom of the Redeemer should be established on and after his appearance in the world, that it should be extended far and wide, that it should, in a short space of time, have a large and ample increase, and that it should continue for ever. For though the Jews would reject it, it should be embraced by multitudes among the Gentile nations. "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed;—and it shall stand for ever. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

The religion of Jesus presented itself to mankind with an aspect the most chaste and severe. Far from condescending to flatter their appetites and passions, it strictly enjoined its followers the unpleasing exercise of constant self-denial, of plucking out even the eye, and cutting off the hand, that gave occasion of offence. Far from seeking to recommend itself to popular favour, by complying and accommodating tenets; it directly and openly opposed almost every opinion, and every prejudice of those to whom it was proposed.

It was not enjoined on the subject nations by the commands of sovereign princes and rulers; nor was it, for the space of full three hundred years, even indirectly countenanced by any influence of government and authority. On

the contrary, we behold, with astonishment, the pomp of adverse power, no less than the pride of learning, and the arrogance of philosophy, resisting its influence, by a long and persevering persecution; but yielding at length to the power of those weapons of warfare which are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.

In a few years after the establishment of Christianity, as we find from the epistles written to the several churches, there were large congregations of Christians at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Colosse, Thessalonica, Philippi, Laodicea, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, in the island of Crete, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, as well as in many other places*. Our Lord Jesus Christ so wrought by the apostle Paul, as to make the Gentiles obedient both in word and deed; so that from Jerusalem even round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the gospel of Christ. The rest of the inspired witnesses had considerable success in other parts of the world, as Eusebius and other historians inform us. So that with good reason the apostle Paul applies to them and their doctrine, what is originally spoken of the luminaries of heaven,

* The propagation of this religion was not less extraordinary than the religion itself, or less above the reach of all human power, than the discovery of it was above that of all human understanding. It is well known, that, in a short space of time, it was spread over all the principal parts of Asia and Europe; and this by the ministry of only an inconsiderable number of the most inconsiderable persons. At this time Paganism was in the highest repute, believed universally by the vulgar, and patronised by the great. The wisest men of the wisest nations assisted at its sacrifices, and consulted its oracles on the most important occasions. Whether these were tricks of the priests or of the devil, is of no consequence, as they were both equally unlikely to be overcome; the fact is certain, that, on the preaching of the apostles, their altars were deserted, and their deities were dumb. This is surely sufficient to prove the authority of their commission; and to convince us, that neither their undertaking nor their execution of it could possibly be their own.—*Jenyns*.

“ Their line is gone out into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”

I shall here beg leave to make some extracts from a late eminent and respectable author on this subject.

As the apostles themselves were honoured with very remarkable success, this divine seed was propagated so fast in the next age, that Pliny testifies, ‘ he found the heathen temples in Achaia almost deserted;’ and Tertullian afterwards declares, ‘ that all places but those temples were filled with Christians; so that were they only to withdraw, cities and provinces would be depopulated.’

Nor did the gospel triumph thus only within the boundaries of the Roman empire; for long before Tertullian was born, Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, written somewhat more than an hundred years after the death of Christ, declares, ‘ that there was no nation of men, whether Greeks or barbarians, not excepting those savage nations who wandered in clans from one region to another, and had no fixed habitation, who had not learnt to offer prayers and thanksgivings to the Father and Maker of all, in the name of Jesus who was crucified*.’

How can we account for all this, but by saying that the hand of the Lord was with the first preachers of the gospel, and therefore such multitudes believed, and turned to the Lord? How had it been possible, that so small a fountain should presently have swelled into a mighty river, and even have covered the face of the earth, had it not sprung from the sanctuary of God, and been rendered thus triumphant under his almighty arm?*

* The learned and ingenious historian, Mr. Gibbon, has strangely enough put his invention to the rack, in order to discover secondary causes for the wonderful progress of Christianity. Of these he has enumerated five of a very peculiar kind. Yet he felt himself obliged to acknowledge, that ‘ the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth, by the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and the ruling providence of its great Author.’—*Gibbon’s Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. ii. p. 220.

Had this new religion, so directly contrary to all the prejudices of education, been contrived to soothe men’s vices, to assert their errors, to defend their superstitions, or to promote their temporal interests, we might easily have accounted for its prevalence in the world. Had its preachers been very profound philosophers, or polite and fashionable orators, many might have been charmed with their discourses, and engaged, at least for a while, to follow them. Had the princes and potentates of the earth declared themselves its patrons, and armed their legions for its defence and propagation, multitudes might have been induced to make an external profession of it, though none could, by such means, have been rationally persuaded to the belief of its doctrines.

But without some such advantages as these, we can hardly conceive how any new religion should so strangely prevail; even though it had crept into the world in its darkest ages, and most barbarous countries; and though it had been gradually proposed in the most artful manner, with the finest veil industriously drawn over those parts of it, which might, at the first view, have been supposed likely to hinder its general acceptance.

But the very reverse of all this was the case here. From the apparent constitution of Christianity, the lusts and errors, the superstitions and interests of carnal men would immediately rise up against it, as a most irreconcilable enemy. It is certain, that the learning and wit of the Greeks and the Romans were early employed to overbear and ridicule it. As all the herd of heathen deities were to be discarded, the priests, who subsisted on that craft, must, on the foot of interest, find themselves obliged to oppose it with all their influence. We are well assured, that the princes of the earth drew their swords against it, and armed torments and death for the destruction of its followers.

And yet we see that it triumphed over all*. Though pub-

* Tertullian appeals to the governors of the Roman empire in these terms; ‘ We are but of yesterday, and we have filled your cities, islands, towns, and boroughs, the camp, the senate, and the forum.

lished in ages and places of the greatest learning and refinement; and proposed, not in an ornamented and artificial manner, but with great plainness of speech, it was counted worthy of all acceptation. The doctrine of the cross was always avowed as the leading and fundamental doctrine of the gospel, though this was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks; and the absolute necessity of renouncing all idolatrous worship, was insisted on immediately, and in the strongest terms; though it must, at that period, make the religion of Jesus appear the most singular and unsocial religion which had ever been taught in the world.

Had one of the wits or politicians of the present age seen the apostles, and a few other plain men, who had been educated among the lowest of the people, as most of the first teachers of Christianity were, going out armed with nothing but truth, faith, and love, to encounter the power of princes, the bigotry of priests, the learning of philosophers, the rage of the populace, and the prejudices of all; how would he have derided the attempt, and said with Sanballat, "What will these feeble Jews do?" But had he seen the event, surely he must have owned that it was the finger of God; and might justly have fallen on his face, even amongst those whom he had insulted, with an humble acknowledgment, that *God was in them of a truth.*

When persons of mean extraction, of no human learning, but poor in this world, obscure and friendless, are employed in the great work of establishing the kingdom of Christ

They (the heathen adversaries of Christianity) lament that every sex, age and condition, and persons of every rank also, are converts to that name.—*Tertull. Apol. Cap. 37.*

'Now,' says Jerome, 'the passion and resurrection of Christ are celebrated in the discourses and writings of all nations. I need not mention Jews, Greeks and Latins. The Indians, Persians, Goths and Egyptians firmly believe the immortality of the soul, and future recompences. The fierceness of the Thracians and Scythians is now softened by the gentle sound of the gospel; and every where Christ is all in all.'—*Jerom. Ep. 8. ad Heliod.*

through the world, nothing can follow but disappointment and shame, scorn and ridicule, unless the divine presence be with them, which can give strength to weakness, wisdom to ignorance, and accomplish the most important purposes by the most unpromising means and instruments. Thus, God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.

CHAPTER V.

THE EVIDENCE ARISING FROM THE PERSECUTIONS, WHICH THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS ENDURED FOR THEIR RELIGION.

THE first witnesses to the truth of the gospel, according to what their divine Master had given them reason to expect, freely sacrificed their lives in the cause they had so much at heart, and sealed their testimony with their blood. It has been said, that almost all sects have their martyrs; and it is true, that men may suffer in defence of mistaken opinions, and wrong notions. But the case of the apostles of Christ was very different.

They suffered in behalf of facts; in confirmation of the testimony which they gave, of what they had seen with their own eyes, and heard with their own ears, respecting that adorable Person on whom all their faith and hope were founded. In bearing their testimony for him they persisted, and for this they died. But no man, no not even the greatest enthusiast, will lay down his life in confirmation of facts which he knows to be false.

The danger, to which the apostles of Christ exposed themselves, proceeded in a measure from the sudden bursts of violence at particular places, from the licentiousness of the populace, the rashness of some magistrates, and the

negligence of others; and, in general, from the variety and warmth of opinion, which a doctrine so new and extraordinary, as that which they taught, could not fail to excite.

Some length of time might pass, before the vast machine of the Roman empire would be put in motion, or its attention be obtained to religious controversy, as a judicious writer observes; but during that time a great deal of ill usage might be endured, by a set of friendless, unprotected travellers, telling men, wherever they came, that the religion of their ancestors, the religion in which they had been brought up, the religion of the state, and of the magistrate, the rites which they frequented, the pomps which they admired, were throughout a system of folly and delusion.

The Mahometan imposture was propagated at a time when universal ignorance and barbarism had prepared mankind to receive, without hesitation, any impressions from the artful and designing. But Christianity was proposed in an age, which, perhaps above all others, was distinguished for curious speculation, and philosophical research.

The Roman empire was at that time in its full glory; and a long and profound peace, together with the patronage and encouragement of authority, had contributed to raise the arts and sciences to a height unknown before; and which later ages, with all their boasted improvements, have scarce been able to exceed. At such a period did the religion of Jesus invite, and endure the test of the severest scrutiny, till, at length, like pure gold, it came forth unsullied, and undiminished from the flames.

The religion which the apostles of Christ were zealous to promote, as Archdeacon Paley justly observes, was exclusive. It denied, without reserve, the truth of every article of heathen mythology, the existence of every object of their worship. It accepted no compromise. It must prevail, if it prevailed at all, by the overthrow of every statue, altar and temple in the world. It will not easily be credited, that a design, so bold as this was, could in any age be attempted, to be carried into execution, without great difficulty and

danger. Christianity pronounced all the idols of the heathens to be false, and all the worship paid to them to be vain.

Under this head, a quotation from Tacitus, well known to every scholar, must be inserted, as deserving particular attention. The passage was written about seventy years after the crucifixion of Christ, and it relates to transactions which took place about thirty years after that event. Speaking of the fire which happened at Rome, in the time of Nero, and of the suspicions which were entertained that the cruel emperor himself was concerned in causing it, the historian thus proceeds in his narrative and observations:

‘But neither these exertions, nor his gifts to the people, nor his offerings to the gods, removed the infamous imputation under which Nero lay, of having ordered the city to be set on fire. To put an end therefore to this report, he laid the guilt, and inflicted the most cruel punishments upon a set of people who were held in abhorrence for their crimes, and called Christians by the vulgar. The founder of that name was Christ, who suffered death in the reign of Tiberius, under his procurator, Pontius Pilate.’

‘This pernicious superstition, thus checked for a while, broke out again; and spread, not only over Judea, where the evil originated, but through Rome also, whither every thing bad upon earth finds its way, and is practised. Some who confessed their sect were first seized, and afterwards, by their information, a vast multitude were apprehended; who were convicted, not so much of the crime of burning Rome, as of hatred to mankind. Their sufferings at their execution were aggravated by insult and mockery; for some were disguised in the skins of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs.—Some were crucified.—And others were wrapt in pitched shirts, and set on fire when the day closed, that they might serve as lights to illuminate the night.

‘Nero lent his own gardens for these executions; and exhibited, at the same time, a mock Circensian entertainment, being a spectator of the whole, in the dress of a charioteer;

sometimes mingling with the crowd on foot, and sometimes viewing the spectacles from his car. This conduct made the sufferers pitied; and though they were criminals, and deserving the severest punishment, yet they were considered as sacrificed, not so much out of a regard to the public good, as to gratify the cruelty of one man.

The reader will remember, while he reviews the above-cited passage, that it is the language of an enemy, who entertained very unjust ideas both of Christianity, and of those who suffered in support of the good cause.

Juvenal, commemorating the cruelties exercised under Nero's government, is thought to have the suffering Christians in view, in a passage we meet with in one of his satires, which is to the following purpose:

— 'You shall suffer the same punishment with those who stand burning in their own flame and smoke, their head being held up by a stake fixed to their chin, till they make a long stream of blood and melted sulphur on the ground.'

Martial, as was usual with him in other cases, has made the sufferings of the Christians the subject of his ridicule. But from what this poet and other heathen writers say on this head, it is plain, that the Christians, who were put to death for their religion, were martyrs in the strictest sense; their sufferings were so voluntary, that it was in their power, at the time when the sentence was pronounced upon them, to have saved their lives, by consenting to join in the acts of idolatrous worship.—I do not encumber these pages by inserting quotations from these authors in the language in which they wrote, because, to the learned they are well known, and to others such quotations would be of no service.

From most of the heathen writers who have touched on the sufferings of the Christians, it appears, that they endured all the tortures inflicted upon them with great firmness and constancy. But to these noble Christian virtues, the hard names of madness, obstinacy and fashion, or habit, were given by those who knew no better.

Thus Epictetus asks, 'Is it possible that a man may arrive

at this temper, and become indifferent to those things, from madness or from habit, as the Galileans?'

And Marcus Aurelius, 'Let this preparation of the mind [for death] arise from its own judgment, and not from obstinacy, like the Christians.'

All the evangelists represent our Divine Saviour as foretelling the persecutions to which his followers should be exposed for his sake.

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. They shall lay hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolks and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. The time cometh, that he that killeth you will think that he doth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them."

The sacred book, which bears the name of the New Testament, abounds with exhortations to patience under persecution, and with suitable topics of consolation for those who are under the fiery trial.

"We are troubled," say the champions in the Christian cause, "yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.—Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.—For which cause we faint not, but, though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

"Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the

name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings. Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

Perhaps the reader will not be displeased with the following extract from an epistle of Clement, relating to the persecutions which the Christians underwent in his days. The apostle Paul mentions this person among his fellow-labourers, in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Philippians:—“With Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life.” There is extant a letter of his to the Corinthian church, in which are the following passages:

‘Let us take the examples of our own age. Through zeal and envy, the most faithful and righteous pillars of the church, have been persecuted even to the most grievous deaths. Let us set before our eyes the holy apostles. Peter, by unjust envy, underwent not one or two, but many sufferings; till at last being martyred, he went to the place of glory that was due unto him. For the same cause did Paul, in like manner, receive the reward of his patience. Seven times he was in bonds; he was whipped, he was stoned. He preached both in the east and in the west, leaving behind him the glorious report of his faith; and so having taught the whole world righteousness, and for that end travelled even to the utmost bounds of the west, he at last suffered martyrdom by the command of the governors, and departed out of the world, and went unto his holy place, having become a most eminent pattern of patience unto all ages.

‘To these holy apostles were joined a very great number

of others, who, having through envy undergone, in like manner, many pains and torments, have left a glorious example to us. For this, not only men, but women, have been persecuted; and, having suffered very grievous and heavy punishments, have finished the course of their faith with firmness.’

Such numbers of the followers of Jesus were put to death for his sake, in the three first centuries, that, to an eye of reason, it might appear highly probable the whole race of Christians would be soon extinct. From the writers of those times we may conclude, that more suffered death for the cause of Christ, than were ever known to be cut off in the same compass of time, by war, pestilence, or famine. Some were buried alive; some crucified; some devoured by wild beasts; some consumed by fire; some slain with the sword; and others tortured in a manner which cannot be thought of without horror.

But all this savage cruelty, which continued, with some short intervals of rest and tranquillity, almost to the days of Constantine, was so far from deterring men from the profession of Christianity, or from diminishing the number of Christians, that the blood of the martyrs might very justly be said to have been the seed of the rising church.

The conversion of so many to the Christian faith, who laid down their lives for him whom having not seen they loved, in whatever way we consider it, abounds with proofs of the truth of the gospel. The courage and constancy, with which the first Christians underwent all that human nature shuns and fears, are astonishing. Even women and young persons suffered with unshaken resolution, tortures, the very recital of which would make one shudder. Most certainly, that God, to whose cause they gave testimony by their blood, supported them in the fiery trial, and enabled them to glory in tribulation.

In a letter written by the church at Smyrna, soon after the martyrdom of Polycarp, who had been the companion of John the Divine, we find the following interesting passage;

'The sufferings of all the other martyrs were blessed and glorious, which they underwent according to the will of God. For so it becomes us, to ascribe the power and ordering of all things to him. And, indeed, who can choose but admire the greatness of their minds, and that admirable patience and love of their Master, which then appeared in them? Why when they were so flayed with whipping, that the frame and structure of their bodies were laid open to their very inward arteries; nevertheless endured it. In like manner, those who were condemned to the beasts, and kept a long time in prison, underwent many cruel torments; being forced to lie upon sharp spikes laid under their bodies, and tormented with divers other sorts of punishments; that so, if it were possible, the tyrant, by the length of their sufferings, might have brought them to deny Christ.'

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

WE have presented the reader, as was proposed, with a summary of the evidences of Christianity, and in doing that we have taken a short survey of the principal facts recorded in the New Testament. Let us now endeavour to bring the matter to an issue.

Can we suppose the reporters of the facts which have been mentioned, did themselves certainly know that they were false? If so, we must suppose, that thousands of others who were eye-witnesses of them, did also certainly know that they were mere fictions and fables. For they were as capable of determining with certainty as were the apostles themselves, whether they had seen the facts which were reported or not. On this supposition, as an American writer* observes, all Jerusalem and Judea must assuredly have known, that they never saw any such transactions as are recorded in the gospel history.

* Dickenson.

They must have known, in particular, that they never saw any thing of what took place on the day of Pentecost; as the visible descent of the Holy Ghost, and the consequences which followed.

The several churches established throughout the world, must, on this supposition, have known, that they saw no miracles wrought by the apostles, in confirmation of their mission, and that they never knew any thing about those miraculous gifts which are reported to have been so common among themselves. And it must be supposed, on the ground above-mentioned, that all these conspired in the deceit, to the utter subversion of the different systems of religion in which they had been educated. It must be supposed, that multitudes of these men united in this fraud, at the expence of their honour, their estates, and their lives; and that not an individual among them all stood forth to discover the villainy of this procedure. At the same time, let it be considered, that there could be no motive whatever to induce all these myriads of people to unite their efforts in support of such fraud as is supposed. Can we imagine, that, without hoping to gain any advantage by this conduct, they would have quietly and willingly submitted to the most cruel usage, to the greatest hardships, and even to all that is shocking and terrible to human nature, rather than contradict and disprove what they knew to be false? No man, surely, in the sober exercise of his reason, can imagine, for one moment, that the whole body of professing Christians knew, that all that they did, and all that they suffered were in support of an imposture.

To propagate a false religion, knowing it to be so, would be the greatest piece of villainy of which a man can be guilty. If the evangelists did certainly know, that their narratives of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus were false, it must follow, that a set of the vilest and most wicked men that ever lived upon earth, drew up the best system of practical religion, the most honourable to God, and the most suitable and safe for man, that ever was proposed. It must follow, that,

contrary to their inward principles, they walked according to the rules of this system themselves, and set the best example before others. That without any known motive whatsoever they spent their whole lives in a continued course of the greatest toil, fatigue and affliction, that ever men did, to promote this holy religion, to impress it on the minds of others, and to engage them, according to it, to live in the love and fear of God. Can this, for one moment, be supposed possible to be done, by men of such wicked principles as they must have been possessed of, if they knew that they were propagating lies in the name of God?

Can it be thought that such men would not only give up all hope of future happiness, but all prospect of ease, tranquillity and pleasure in this world, in the vindication of a known falsehood? That to this end they would expose themselves to the greatest dangers, and to the most cruel death, without the least possible advantage here or hereafter? For they could not but know that they were putting themselves, and leading their followers into the hands of powerful and cruel enemies, without any prospect beyond the grave (supposing that they were deceivers) but that of certain perdition. We cannot imagine or suspect them to have been impostors, without supposing them, at the same time, to have acted continually in direct opposition to all their interests, their comforts, and their hopes; and, in a word, to have run counter to all the principles of humanity, and to all the common springs of action which were ever known among rational beings.

Will it then be said, that the writers of the gospel history, and all those who were spectators of what they record, had their senses imposed upon, and were deceived? If this be granted, no evidence of any transaction whatsoever can deserve regard. The apostles daily saw the miracles of their Divine Master performed before their eyes. Attending multitudes saw the wounded made whole, the sick healed, the lepers cleansed, and the dead raised. They beheld these wonders repeated again and again, for a long tract of time.

The witnesses of our Lord's resurrection saw him after his death, they ate and drank with him, they conversed familiarly with him for the space of forty days, and they beheld him ascend up into heaven. If we suppose the whole a deception, we must at the same time conclude that there can be no certainty of any thing, and that our senses can be of no service to us. It is as reasonable to imagine, that our whole life, from our infancy to the present moment, is not a reality but a dream. Arguments, reasonings, proofs and evidences, upon any subject, must stand for nothing with people of so incredulous and obstinate a turn of mind.

The early writers against Christianity had not the boldness of our modern infidels. They did not attempt to deny the facts on which the system is founded. They could not have wanted advantages or inclination to have detected any fraud or deceit, if any could have been found. But the important transactions in question are verified by evidences which cannot be resisted, and by which none can be deceived who will pay proper attention to them.

The matter plainly comes to this issue. If the gospel history be not true, then all the known laws of nature were changed. All the known motives and incentives to human actions have been inverted. The vilest men that ever existed in the world have taken the greatest pains, and endured the greatest hardships to invent, to propagate, and to exemplify, in their own practice, with the strictest uniformity and unanimity, the most holy and divine system of religion that ever was proposed to the attention of mankind. And not only the apostles and others in their day, but whole nations of men, and even of all sorts of men, Jews, Christians, and Pagans, have entered into a confederacy to support a known cheat, against their own credit, their own interest and safety. Yea, multitudes of men, without any prospect of advantage here or hereafter, have been brought strenuously and tenaciously to profess what they knew to be false; to exchange the comforts and pleasures of life, for shame, reproach, banishment, scourgings, imprisonment, tortures and death; and,

in one word, to expose themselves to the hatred of God and man, without any motive whatever.

I do not pretend, in this small work, to have touched upon all the variety of evidences which have been adduced in proof of Christianity, and ably urged by different writers. What has been advanced, I should think sufficient to satisfy any unprejudiced mind. No other historical fact whatever is supported by proofs like these.—No other religious system, which at any period of time has been proposed to the world, ever bore credentials which would admit of any kind of comparison with these. I must own, it seems to me absolutely impossible that so many different kinds of proofs, and all so strong, should have lent their concurrent aid, as a celebrated author expresses himself, and have united their joint force in the establishment of a falsehood.

He who doubts of the truth of Christianity, and yet seeks not to be resolved, is equally unhappy and unjust, as Mons. Pascal has observed. But if, at the same time, he appears easy and composed, if he freely declares his indifference; nay, if he professes it with vanity, and seems to make this deplorable condition the matter of his diversion, I know not what name to give so extravagant a creature. How is it possible for a rational being to indulge himself in such an horrible disposition! What delight is there in jesting about everlasting misery! What bravery is there in a man's willingly involving himself in impenetrable darkness! Or what consolation in being indifferent about that which is the only source of comfort?

I am fully persuaded, that the reason why some pretend to disbelieve the truth of Christianity, is not for want of sufficient evidence, as they would insinuate; but from other causes. Mr. WILBERFORCE, in his excellent work, lately published, gives us a striking view of the progress of infidelity. I shall beg leave to cite a few sentences:—'From the account here given, it appears plainly, that infidelity is generally the offspring of prejudice; and that its success is mainly to be ascribed to the depravity of the moral character. This

fact is confirmed by the undeniable truth, that in *societies*, which consist of individuals, infidelity is the natural fruit, not so much of a studious and disputatious, as of a dissipated and vicious age. It diffuses itself in proportion as the general morals decline; and it is embraced with less apprehension, when every infidel is left in spirits, by seeing many around him who are sharing fortunes with himself.

To any fair mind, this consideration alone might be offered, as suggesting a strong argument against infidelity, and in favour of revelation. And the friends of Christianity might justly retort the charge, which their opponents often urge with no little affectation of superior wisdom; that we implicitly surrender ourselves to the influence of prejudice, instead of examining dispassionately the ground of our faith, and yielding our assent only according to the degree of evidence.

In our own days, when it is but too clear that infidelity increases, it is not in consequence of the reasonings of the infidel writers having been much studied; but from the progress of luxury, and the decay of morals. And, so far as this increase may be traced at all to sceptical writers, it has been produced, not by argument and discussion, but by sarcasms and points of wit, which have operated on weak minds, or on nominal Christians, by bringing gradually into contempt, opinions which, in their case, had only rested on the basis of blind respect, and the prejudices of education.

It may therefore be laid down as an axiom, that *infidelity is in general a disease of the heart more than of the understanding*. If revelation were assailed only by reason and argument, it would have little to fear. The literary opposers of Christianity, from Herbert to Hume, have been seldom read. They made some stir in their day. During their span of existence they were noisy and noxious; but, like the locusts of the east, which for a while obscure the air, and destroy the verdure, they were soon swept away and forgotten; their very names would be scarcely found, if Leland had not preserved them from oblivion.

The first step towards believing the truth of the Christian religion, is a hope that it may be true. And who would not entertain such a hope? It is certainly for the interest of all, yea, even of the worst men in the world, that it should be true; because it is the only system which can give them any ground to expect, on repentance, the pardon of their crimes, and reconciliation with the offended Majesty of heaven. The punishment of sin is a debt due to justice, which cannot be remitted without compensation: repentance can be no compensation; it is a change of the sinner's mind, attended with a corresponding change of conduct; but it cannot wash away sin. If any man, by extravagance, contracts a debt, repentance may induce him to act with more caution in future; but it can never pay off his old arrears, for which he must ever be accountable, unless they are discharged by himself, or some other person in his stead. This very discharge of Christianity alone holds forth, through the mediation of its divine Author. It makes the most liberal proclamation to the vilest of the human race, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

The gospel exactly suits the case of guilty, miserable, helpless men. But let none dare to reject so divine a remedy. In doing that, all ground of hope would be given up at once. "Beware therefore lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye will in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

There is no evidence of the truth of Christianity so satisfactory to a man's own soul, as the inward experience of the power of the gospel in its enlightening, quickening, and sanctifying influence. He who feels his heart so effectually wrought upon by the constraining energy of the divine word, as to be turned by it from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, will be able to say, against all the

sophistical insinuations of infidels, with the man whose eyes had been miraculously opened by Christ, "This one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." As such, he will be ready to despise the subtle objections which may be raised against the blessed gospel. He cannot doubt, but that the word of truth, by which he has been begotten again to a lively hope, is that very word of God which is able to make men wise to salvation. He that believeth hath the witness in himself. And it is possible there may be seasons of darkness and temptation in which the Christian will find this to be the surest support of his hope.

I shall now leave my readers to their own reflections on this important subject; humbly entreating that Almighty Saviour, whose cause I have attempted to plead, to give his blessing to my feeble endeavours, so that his glory may thereby be promoted, and his followers be confirmed in their faith in his name, and in their warm and steady attachment to his interest. As for those who obstinately shut their eyes against the light, I sincerely pity them. Their condition is deplorable. But what if some do not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God, or the truth which he has so clearly revealed, without effect? God forbid. He has furnished us with every kind of evidence that we can reasonably desire. For my own part, I solemnly declare, I should not know how to form a wish for other proofs of the truth of the Christian religion, than those which God has given. To his name be everlasting honour. Amen.

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AN
ESSAY
ON THE
WISDOM, THE EQUITY, AND THE BOUNTY
OF
DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

— I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to man. — MILTON.

THE
WISDOM, THE EQUITY, AND THE BOUNTY
OF
DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

THERE are two ways whereby the Author of our being makes himself known unto us,—his word, and the operations of his hands, in Creation, and in Providence.

His word gives us the brightest and clearest display of his character and perfections, and contains the most ample and satisfactory revelation of his mind and will concerning us, his reasonable creatures. It discovers unto us our original formation after his own image and likeness; our present state of apostacy, depravity and guilt; and sets before us that divine remedy which his infinite wisdom and love have contrived and provided, for our complete redemption and recovery from that state of misery into which we have brought ourselves by sin; so that it is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. The works of God, in his making the world, and his governing it by his all-wise and gracious Providence, are the confirmation of his word, and designed to lead us, in conjunction with that, to a more enlarged acquaintance with himself. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

By Providence, we understand the superintendance and care of the Almighty over created beings; his furnishing them with what is necessary to their subsistence, preserving, ordering and directing them, for their good, and for the manifestation of his own glory. It supposes some certain ends in view, the choice of proper means for the obtaining of those

ends, and the disposing and regulating of the means, so that they may effectually promote the purposes intended.

The providential kingdom of God is managed and maintained by infinite wisdom, uncontrollable power, impartial justice, abundant mercy, and immutable veracity. These are some of the attributes of that adorable Being who presides over the universe, and governs all the creatures which his own Almighty arm has brought into existence.

To attempt a formal and laboured proof of the doctrine of Providence, among those who are not at all disposed to call the truth of it in question, might seem improper. Let us rather suggest a few hints which may serve for the illustration of this important subject, mention a few of the properties of God's providential government, and attempt some practical improvement of it.

By a learned and judicious assembly, God's works of Providence are said to be, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving, and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.

To suppose that events fall out by chance, without any particular care or superintendency exercised over them, by the great Creator, is to reject the doctrine in question. The conclusions which naturally arise from a denial of the government of Providence are awful. It represents the Parent of the universe as an imperfect Being; a being defective in understanding, in power, and in goodness. And as such, there cannot be a proper foundation for our supreme love to him, trust in him, or dependance upon him. This system then must shock every attentive and pious mind.

The Almighty cannot be an indifferent spectator of the affairs of that world to which he has given being. His goodness must as certainly engage him to manage and direct them, as his wisdom and power must enable him to do it in the most effectual manner possible. That supreme intelligence and love which are present to all things, must govern all. A God without a Providence, doubtless, implies a contradiction. It is foolish to imagine, that mean and insignificant creatures are beneath the attention of the Most High.

If it was not unworthy of him to bring them on the stage of existence, it cannot be unworthy of him to preside over them, and take care of their concerns. With respect to him, all distinctions of high and low in the creation vanish; as all beings are infinitely inferior to him.

The laws of nature, as they are called, are no other than the uniform agency of Providence.—The notion of a self-subsisting world borders upon atheism. That adorable Being who formed the universe at first, is every where present in it; to it he is most nearly related, and with it, in all its parts, he has the most constant and active concern.

As to ourselves, our bodies and our souls, we are assured by the word of truth, that the Lord is intimately near to every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being. He is the source of all vital influence to us. We possess our lives, from the first moment of our existence to the last, by the uninterrupted emanations of his effective and governing Providence. In him we have all our powers, and all our activity of motion, both in soul and body. It is he who enables us to form designs, and to execute our purposes. Nay, it is in him that we have our continuance in being, from one moment to another. It is his Spirit that moves our heaving lungs, or they would heave no more. It is from him that we constantly receive all the advantages, the supports, and the comforts of our existence, both of the animal and rational kind.

The whole creation has a necessary dependance on that Almighty Being who is its Author. He is the life of it, by whom it is every moment actuated and sustained. Material causes are no more than instruments in his powerful hand. All their efficacy is derived from him. He is so far from being a mere spectator of what comes to pass, that were he, for one instant, to withdraw or suspend his agency, confusion would immediately and universally take place, and the whole system of nature fall to pieces. It is he that actuates and pervades the whole of this material world, whose incessant and unremitting energy is the cause to which every effect

must necessarily be traced. There is not a single atom of matter on which this energy does not act, nor any one living creature with reference to which Providence has no concern.

If a sparrow falls not to the ground without our heavenly Father, much less do his children sink into adversity, or suffer calamity, without his appointment. It appears to be a truth clearly revealed in the scriptures, that whatever evils or disasters there are in the world, they are only such as an infinitely wise and holy Being was pleased to admit into it: and they can prevail no farther than he sees fit to suffer them. He can restrain them as he pleases, and over-rule them for good in the issue.

The doctrine of Divine Providence should never be taught, in such a manner, as to intimate that it destroys the free agency of created beings. This doctrine, when rightly understood, is perfectly consistent with the liberty of mankind. The prescience of the Divine Being does not change the property of things, nor put any bonds of restraint on the liberty of the human will. But metaphysical inquiries would be improper in this essay.

Divine wisdom is manifested in the structure of every object in the inanimate creation. Among the vegetable tribes, we see a most curious arrangement in all their parts; a profusion of beauty and elegance in their structure; the nicest workmanship, and the most astonishing art and design in their whole form. Does God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; has he been thus abundant in his wisdom and skill in the lowest of his works, and can it be supposed that he is less regardful of his reasonable creatures? Shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin; and yet, even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.

Can that munificent Being, whose hand is so apparent, not only in every flower of the field, but in every leaf of the

trees which adorn our hedges, and every spire of grass which we trample under our feet, can he be inattentive to his intelligent creatures? Most certainly they are, in a more peculiar way, the objects of his providential care.

All vegetable productions derive their kindly nutriment originally from the liberal hand of Providence. Obedient to its laws, the enlivening juices ascend through their proper tubes, and fermenting under the influence of the sun and the air, are at length so matured, as to break forth into an endless variety of buds, leaves, blossoms and fruits. Surely these are the wonderful works of him who, in a way of Providence, is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe; who waters the vineyard of his grace every moment; and, lest any should hurt it, keeps it night and day.

The constant succession of vegetables and of animals, which is kept up in the world, is the work of Providence, and cannot be completely accounted for by the mere powers of mechanism, or their own artificial construction. Every plant, every animal is a new production of divine power, exerting itself with constant regularity, according to the plan first fixed and established by divine wisdom. Millions of these are continually brought into being; they are all the effects of amazing art and skill; and it is as impossible to conceive that they should rise into existence without the immediate exertion of divine power, as that they should create themselves. There is a constant administration of Providence through all nature.

The care of Providence over the most weak and helpless of living creatures, may justly excite admiration. They are inspired with a strong natural attachment to their young. By means of this, they nurse them up with tenderness, and seem to think no pains too great to be taken for them; no danger too great to be ventured upon, for their good and security. They caress them with their affectionate notes, put food into their mouths, suckle them, cherish and keep them warm, teach them to gather food for themselves, and perform the part of so many nurses, deputed by the hand of Provi-

dence, to assist such feeble, helpless creatures, till they are able to shift for themselves.

Other animals, whose offspring is too numerous for the parent's provision, are cast immediately on the care of Almighty goodness. Yet every one of them is particularly furnished with what is necessary for its subsistence. This is the case with the various tribes of insects.

Admirable provision is made for some of the most helpless creatures, at a time when they must otherwise utterly perish. The winter is an improper season to afford them nourishment, when the fields, the trees and plants are naked, and the air is chilled with frost. Providence, at that season, lulls them to repose, so that, without any inconvenience to themselves, they pass the wintry months in a torpid state. All motion of the animal juices is suspended. They suffer no waste, and consequently need no recruits. The returning spring awakens them, and they immediately find every thing prepared for their ample supply, and full satisfaction.

The hand of Providence is apparent in perpetually adjusting the balance of the creatures. The terraqueous globe can afford room and support to no more than a determinate number of all sorts of animals. If they should multiply beyond proper bounds they must starve and die. To keep the balance even, Providence has determined the lives of all creatures to such a length, and their increase to such a number, as are proportioned to their use in the world. The increase of huge, majestic and terrific creatures, is exceedingly small, that the universe may not be overstocked with them. On the other hand, the increase of such as are useful to man, is abundant. But a just balance is always wisely preserved.

Providence is to be seen in the regulation of circumstances which seem to us altogether fortuitous. The best laid schemes among men often strangely fail of success. Incidents, in themselves the most trifling, disconcert them, and bring forward some of the greatest changes which take place in human affairs. A full proof that Providence has the secret direction of what appears to us insignificant and ac-

cidental. There are many devices in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord shall stand. Nothing appears to be more casual and contingent than the falling of a lot; yet, even in that instance, we are taught by divine inspiration, that the hand of Providence interposes. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing of it is of the Lord."

We might here enlarge on the eventful journey of Abraham's servant, when he went to take a wife for his master's son; the inimitable history of Joseph; the artless story of Ruth, with many others, in which we find a surprising concurrence of incidents, undesigned, and unthought of by any human being; and yet all tending, in the most direct way imaginable, to bring forward the great designs of Providence. But no where do we find this observation so fully exemplified, as in the history of that divine Saviour, on whom all our felicity depends, both in this world and that which is to come. The circumstances of his birth, of his life and actions, of his sufferings, of his death, and of his resurrection, were all foretold in the prophecies relating to him; and Providence so ordered every thing, that the whole series of divine predictions had its accomplishment. It is needless to select particular instances. The history of Christ at large, is a full and clear exemplification of the doctrine under consideration.

The hand of Providence is seen in accomplishing great designs by the most simple, weak, and unpromising means and instruments. With a sling and a stone the ruddy stripping, David, conquered the champion of the Philistines, and, in so doing, vanquished the terror, and revived the hopes of all Israel. The lofty and impregnable walls of Jericho fell down to the ground by the sound of rams' horns. Gideon, by earthen pitchers and lighted lamps, overcame the whole host of the Midianites. Moses wrought wonders in Egypt, divided the Red Sea, and brought rivers of water out of the flinty rock, by a rod in his hand. Nay, more, the redemption of the world was obtained by one who was despised and rejected of men, who was treated with every mark of

ignominy and contempt, and thought less worthy of regard than the vilest malefactor. Yet this is he who hath conquered sin and hell, death and the grave; and brought life and immortality to light. This is he who hath obtained eternal redemption for us, and is become the Author of everlasting salvation to all them that obey him; who hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to whom glory and dominion are due for ever and ever.

When the kingdom of the Redeemer was to be established in the world, and nations, the learned and the rude, brought into subjection to it, who were the instruments employed? Rabbies, doctors, men of renown for philosophical knowledge, and literary accomplishments? Instead of these, a few poor fishermen are selected, and appointed to the important work, who were counted the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things. Before them, Satan fell as lightning from heaven; his kingdom tottered to its very foundation. The word of God in their mouths, ran and was glorified. A plain sermon, preached by one of them, shall convert thousands. They were caused always to triumph in Christ, and the savour of his knowledge was made manifest by them, in every place. But the excellency of the power was of God, and not of men.

Providence affords relief, at many times, in the very crisis of need, and in the moment of extremity. At the very instant when Haman came in to speak to his master about the death of Mordecai, he found the scale of things turned, in a surprising manner, in favour of that holy man. The king had been denied the gift of sleep, and to beguile the tedious hours, he called for the book of records, and was providentially directed to the very page in which were recorded the integrity and loyalty of Mordecai. Haman is immediately called in, and commanded to shew the highest marks of royal favour towards the man whom he had wickedly doomed to an ignominious death.

David, with his handful of men, was just on the point of

destruction, by the hand of Saul, who pursued him with a powerful army. David was on one side of the hill, and Saul on the other. The prey was almost in the teeth of the devouring lion; but just at the critical moment, a messenger arrives to inform Saul, that there was an invasion of his territories, which required his immediate exertions to suppress. Saul, on this, leaves David at full liberty to return thanks to God, and say, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped."

When the father of the faithful had obeyed the mysterious command of the Almighty Sovereign to the very last act, Providence stopped his lifted arm from plunging the knife in the throat of the innocent victim. "Abraham! Abraham! Lay not thine upon the lad, for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." Abraham called the name of the place, with the greatest propriety, Jehovah-jireh, The Lord will provide; as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. That is, in the mount of danger and extremity, it shall be seen that he will provide deliverance.

Relief is often afforded by Providence in answer to prayer, so as to make it evident, that the Governor of the universe is a very present Helper in the time of trouble. They who conclude, as the unbelieving Jews did of old, that the Lord hath forsaken the earth, that he seeth not, neither regardeth, may, consistently with such conclusions say, "It is in vain to serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" But in all ages, those who have feared his name, have fled to him as their refuge, and have frequently experienced his immediate interposition in their favour.

The man after God's own heart, in the midst of his perplexity, occasioned by Absalom's perfidious rebellion, supported by the artful counsels of his prime minister, prayed to the God of heaven, that he would turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. He was immediately heard and answered. At the prayer of Moses, the man of God, the

Red Sea was divided; the flinty rock was rent, and streams of water gushed forth, to supply the thirsty tribes of Israel. He interceded for that rebellious people, when they seemed devoted to destruction, and they were spared. While his supplicating hands were lifted up, the Israelites were protected and delivered from the power of the Amalekites. Pious Hannah prayed, and obtained the gift of a son, whom she named Samuel. Asked of the Lord. Mordecai and Esther sought God by fasting and prayer; Haman fell, and Israel was delivered. Nehemiah, when his heart was full of troubles, and his countenance sad, even when he stood in the presence of the king, his master, prayed to the God of heaven, and his prayer was speedily answered. In a word, Peter was shut up in prison, bound with two chains, attended by soldiers, and the keepers stood before the prison doors, to guard them with the utmost security: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. By and by Peter stands, at full liberty, knocking at the gate of John, whose surname was Mark, where the pious company were gathered together praying for his deliverance. The Lord is nigh unto all such as call upon him in truth, and, in many cases, his Providence affords immediate answers to their requests.

Rewards and punishments are, in a measure, dispensed to man in the present life. Thus we see the luxurious glutton, who fares sumptuously every day, denied that precious gift of health, which is more generally granted to men of temperance and sobriety. Remorse, with its harpy talons, hovers over the guilty sons of men, and poisons and embitters every enjoyment; while the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps the hearts and rules the minds of those that love and fear him. The passions of men, indulged beyond due bounds, lead to a dreadful precipice, and plunge those who so indulge them into distraction and misery. Thus the man, who is governed by avarice, is often unhappy in the midst of abundance, and, wallowing in wealth, endures, in idea, all the ills of abject poverty. Ambition, when by toil-

some steps it has gained the dignity to which it eagerly aspired, finds, on the very summit of its wishes, no rest for the soles of its feet. The man of impure desires, instead of the rose of pleasure which he seeks, often grasps the prickly thorn.

But though vice may seem for a while wantonly to bask itself in the sunny beams of prosperity, the pompous appearance is perhaps but the splendid cover of that distress which tears the heart, and rankles within the bosom. The man of unaffected piety, on the other hand, while he appears to be assailed by the chilling wintry blasts of poverty and affliction, enjoys the present reward of a peaceful conscience, and, with placid resignation to his lot, relishes, in his homely fare, the satisfaction which all the laboured dainties of the rich cannot afford. Thus Providence distributes to men, according to their several characters, rewards and punishments, even in the present life.

Having thus endeavoured to illustrate the doctrine, we shall now proceed to mention a few of the properties of God's providential government.

Providence is wise. Infinite wisdom sits at the helm, directing the several movements of the vast machine of nature, to accomplish the proposed end. The mysterious wheels of God's government are full of eyes. His understanding is infinite. There cannot be the least weakness or defect in his superintendency, as there is in that of other rulers. Nothing of error or mistake; nothing which the most excellent prudence would order otherwise. No want of judgment as to things present, or want of foresight as to things to come. For the only wise God and our Saviour has all things past, present and future in his all-comprehending view, in every act of his government. "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew."

Providence is universal in its operations. It clasps at once, in its parental and encircling arm, the highest archangel

and the grovelling insect. The wants of all are supplied by its bounty. Providence feeds the young ravens when they cry. The shaggy monster of the wilderness roams after his prey, and seeks his meat from God. With unsparing bounty, every living creature is constantly fed with food convenient for it. To man, especially, Providence gives all things richly to enjoy. Bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure.

Of the Governor of the universe it is justly said, that his kingdom ruleth over all. As there can be nothing too great for his power to control, so there cannot be any thing too mean for his infinite condescension to notice. While he rules among the armies of heaven, and disposes of the empires and kingdoms of this lower world at his pleasure, the most insignificant reptile is the object of his care; the sparrow falls not without his observance; and the very hairs of our heads are all numbered.

The creatures which exist in the air, on the earth, and in the mighty waters, according to their various ranks, orders, and generations, are astonishingly numerous; yet every one of these is the care of Providence, and at its disposal. Well may we say, with wonder and elevated transports of delight, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches." Let imagination range through the wide expanse of creation, and lose itself in pleasing astonishment. The armies of heaven, the worlds of light which roll in perfect order and harmony above our heads, and the vast regions of the air, the earth, and the sea, are all formed, peopled, supported, preserved, regulated and sustained by the hand of Omnipotence. "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

'My soul, with all the powers I boast,
Is in the boundless prospect lost.'

The superintendence of the Almighty over his creatures, extends not only to the more momentous concerns of their existence, as some have mistakenly imagined, but to the in-

nutest circumstances relating to it, as our Redeemer himself hath taught us, in the passages we have already cited.

'He sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall;
Atoms or systems into ruin hurl'd,
And now a bubble burst, and now a world.'

It has been justly observed in favour of a particular Providence, that we cannot conceive of any reasons which can influence the Almighty to exercise *any* Providence over the world, which are not likewise reasons for extending it to *all* that happens in the world. As far as it is confined to generals, or overlooks *any* individual, or *any* event, it is incomplete, and therefore unsuitable to the idea of a perfect Being.

Some have been bold enough to ridicule the idea of a particular Providence, and have raised several objections against it, which are but so many proofs of their own ignorance and presumption. We should not conceive of the all-sufficient Jehovah as if he were like ourselves, who are often bewildered in a multiplicity of affairs; we should remove all human imperfection from our ideas of him. To infinite power and infinite wisdom all things are alike easy. It is absurd, and implies a plain contradiction, to suppose that a Being possessed of infinite perfection can ever be encumbered or perplexed.

It is reasonable to conclude, that if there be *one* event in the world, of which all the care is not taken that is *right* to be taken, the administration of the universe is *so far* defective; and, let it be spoken with reverence, the character of the Author and Governor of it is imperfect. But let us ascribe unto the Lord wisdom and strength; let us ascribe unto him the glory due unto his name. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of his dominion there is no end.

The ways of Providence are mysterious. Sometimes we see adversity pouring all its billows over the head of him who is eminent for piety, and may be justly numbered among the excellent of the earth. But let us remember that God pre-

sides in the storm as well as the calm, and often accomplishes the purposes of his grace by measures which seem, in their own nature, pregnant with ruin and desolation. He hath his way in the whirlwind. The afflicted saint, on whom you look with a pitying eye, perhaps derives comforts from distress, and glories in tribulation; because tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. His mind, which, amidst unnumbered trials and afflictions, is fixed on the supreme good, lively in faith, ardent in love, and fervent in devotion, might have been inebriated with the enchanting cup of prosperity; and sunk into supineness and forgetfulness of God. Happy then is the man whom the Lord chasteneth, and teacheth out of his law.

Providence ordains what comports with our welfare, though not with our wishes, and connects our felicity with our woes. The graces which might wither under too warm a beam, are made to thrive and flourish in the shade, and the happiness denied to prosperous vice, may even be gathered from the thorn of affliction, through that over-ruling Providence which causeth all things to work together for good.

The line of reason is too short to sound the depths of heavenly wisdom. Let us not presume to censure the ways of him who always directs his steady but mysterious course to the end he has in view; who, to bring his grand eventful counsels to full maturity, makes things opposite in their natures harmoniously to combine together, that men may learn to reverence and adore him, in his incomprehensible dispensations. The threatening storm, under his direction, shall but drive the well-freighted vessel, with the utmost safety, into the haven of peace. Through his over-ruling hand abasement itself shall exalt, disgrace shall ennoble, and adversity be productive of felicity.

The breasts of Israel's sons were filled with ungenerous and malignant envy towards their younger brother. Joseph, for a dream indicating his future dignity, was doomed to feel the dire effects of their hatred. The heart of Reuben, moved with tenderness, devised means to prevent the execution

of his brethren's bloody designs upon the innocent and harmless stripling. By the direction of Providence the Ishmaelitic merchants appear in sight at the critical moment. They purchase the young Hebrew, and convey him, more precious than all their spicy treasures, to distant climes. The hope of the aged patriarch becomes a slave in the land of Egypt. For a short season his woes are alleviated, and the gloomy aspect of bondage begins to wear a smile. But the prospect is illusive; new calamities attend the exile. He falls a prey, innocent as he was, an unpitied prey to the revenge of his wicked mistress.

To the gloom of a dungeon Joseph is consigned, and is there detained for many long and tedious years. At length the mysterious web of Providence was gradually unfolded, and wisdom and goodness shone resplendent through the whole texture. All circumstances conspire together to realize the dreams with which Joseph had been favoured so many years before. Hatred, bondage, calumny, and imprisonment do but prepare the way to honour. The scene is quickly shifted at last. The dungeon is exchanged for a throne. The young Hebrew, arrayed in all the dignity of regal splendour, is seated next to Pharaoh. He is honoured through all the land of Egypt, and lives to cherish his father, drooping under a weight of years and sorrows, and to pour into the patriarch's bosom the tears of filial affection and transport. His brethren, the sheaves of his dream, stand round him in amazement, and pay obeisance to his sheaf. Thus were the mysterious ways of Providence unfolded.

The infant Moses was hid three months by his fond parents. But when he could be concealed no longer from the rage of a blood-thirsty tyrant, his tender mother exposed him, in an ark of bulrushes, on the brink of the Nile. Ye mothers say, what she must have felt on the mournful occasion. Of the dear babe, however, she must take her leave, Behold, her slowly receding from the borders of the river, and casting many a tearful glance, to see what would become of the darling of her soul. But just at the critical moment,

Pharaoh's daughter, under the guidance of Providence, comes down to the river, and to that very place where her interposition was necessary. She sees the strange deposit, orders it to be brought, and, turning aside the cover, beholds the lovely infant; and, that all her tenderness might be excited on the needful occasion, the babe wept. A nurse being required, the mother of Moses is called, and wondrous to tell, is paid by the princess for nursing her own child. This Moses, being instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, was ordained by Providence to be the deliverer of Israel, and to humble the pride of Pharaoh.

There are many things in the œconomy of the divine government, which are to us, for the present, awfully mysterious. We see multitudes of mankind suffered to walk in their own ways, and to live without God in the world. Totally enslaved by their own vicious dispositions, they are unmoved by the terrors of the law, and unaffected with the grace of the gospel. They harden themselves in folly and sin, and go on to make their own destruction sure.

Others, who, in themselves, are altogether as vile and abandoned as the worst of mankind, are called, by divine grace, out of darkness into God's marvellous light; they are freely pardoned, completely justified, and made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Of such were the polluted Magdalene, the once unrighteous and oppressive Zaccheus, the infamous woman of Samaria, the thief on the cross, and the persecuting Saul of Tarsus, with multitudes more, which no man can number, who are now advanced to thrones of glory.

There are many nations of the earth where the glorious light of the gospel does not shine; where the true God is not known; but men worship idols, stocks and stones, the workmanship of their own hands; while on other regions the Sun of righteousness rises, with healing under his wings.

The unequal distribution of the good things of this life is mysterious. Dives, an enemy of God, is clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day; while La-

zarus, a favourite of heaven, lies at the rich man's gate, covered with sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table. But the one had his good things here, the other hereafter. The one, when he died, lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torments; the other was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.

We are short-sighted creatures. It is impossible for us to comprehend the whole plan of Providence, or to enter into the counsels of an infinite Being. It is sufficient for us to know, that he does every thing which it is wisest and best for him to do, for the glorifying of his own name, and promoting the happiness of his creatures.

The operations of Providence are concealed and invisible to mortal eyes, so that we cannot, in particular cases, determine in what manner they are exerted, or what are their designs. In some instances indeed, the interpositions of the divine hand have been open and visible; but such interpositions are very extraordinary. To expect them in common cases would be foolish and unreasonable.

There are innumerable difficulties in the conduct of Providence, in reference to which, we must, for a time, remain in the dark. Our God is in the heavens; he doth whatsoever he pleaseth, and giveth not to mortals an account of any of his matters. The volume of his mysterious purposes is sealed, and not submitted to our perusal. All that our contracted minds are capable of comprehending on this side the grave, lies within a narrow compass. We are surrounded with the mists of darkness, of prejudice, and of impurity. Let us not indulge an unreasonable curiosity in scanning the wonderful works of him who is perfect in wisdom. "Canst thou, by searching, find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? It is deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is larger than the earth, and broader than the sea."

'Wait the great teacher, death, and God adore.'

The ways of Providence have all a special tendency to pro-

mote the welfare of the church. The God of our lives is the Saviour of all men, in the dispensations of his providential wisdom and goodness, but especially of them that believe. The divine Redeemer is not only the head of the church, but the head over all things to it; governing, directing, and overruling every event for the spiritual and eternal advantage of his followers.

The good work of grace is not unfrequently begun by means of awakening dispensations of Providence; and amidst trials, tribulations and afflictions, it is carried on, from one degree to another. By these the followers of Jesus learn to know themselves, the emptiness, the uncertainty, and the vanity of the world, and the necessity and propriety of setting their affection on things above. Finding no rest on earth, they are brought to seek it in heaven. Disappointed in their sublunary hopes and expectations, they look for their whole felicity in him whose favour is life. They are cast into the furnace of affliction, that the trial of their faith, which is much more precious than gold which perisheth, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearance of Jesus Christ. Their love, their hope, their fear, their patience and humility, are all brought into exercise, promoted and improved, by the trying dispensations of Providence. Therefore the man of piety has often been heard to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn righteousness."

The dispensations of Providence are righteous and equitable. As an instance of this, we find that Providence deals with men by way of just retaliation. The enemies of God and goodness are sometimes taken in their own nets, and paid in their own coin. Into the pit which they have digged for others they themselves are seen to fall.

Thus guileful Haman was intent on the destruction of Mordecai, and erected a gallows for him fifty cubits high. But by the hand of Providence, the life of upright Mordecai was secured, and the proud and malicious Haman hanged in his stead, on the very gallows which he himself had provided for

Mordecai. The story at length is highly interesting, and serves to illustrate the point in question.

In the place where Naboth's blood was shed, by the order of Jezebel, the dogs licked the blood of that infamous woman. By the command of Pharaoh, the male children of the Israelites were drowned; he himself, his chief men, and all the glory of Egypt perish in the Red Sea. All this is conformable to the declarations of the divine word; "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands."

Of the righteous Governor of the world we may well say with the prophet, "He is a rock, his work is perfect, all his ways are judgment; just and right is he. Clouds and darkness are round about him, but justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

The dispensations of Providence are all ordered according to the eternal purpose of him who worketh all in all. If we believe the testimony of his own word, we must be persuaded of this. For we are there assured that he worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.

We shall only add, as to this part of our subject, that it seems pretty evident, from the sacred scriptures, that God is pleased to employ the instrumentality of angels in accomplishing some of the designs of his Providence. But as these subordinate agents are to us invisible, it is impossible to tell how far their instrumentality extends. Of this, however, we may be certain, that they all act, in every instance, under the superintendency of the Supreme Being. They are his ministers to do his pleasure.

We shall close with some practical hints, by way of improvement.

Let us acquiesce in the disposals of Providence, and be content with the lot assigned us. Were the world under the government of necessity or of chance, we might justly be disquieted. But the Lord reigneth. Almighty power, in conjunction with unerring wisdom, and infinite goodness,

will manage all our affairs, and order every thing for the best. If poverty and adversity are appointed for us, let us never indulge a repining thought, but submit to them with becoming resignation, as the allotments of unerring Providence.

Let us give up our own wills to the will of our Maker and Governor, carefully suppressing all solicitude about what may befall us in this imperfect state, and never eagerly wish to enjoy any thing which Providence is pleased to deny us, or to be exempted from those trials which are allotted to us for the promotion of our best interests. Let us bid welcome to all events; even to disappointment, to disease, and to death itself, since Jehovah reigns, and his eternal wisdom and mercy preside every where, and rule over all.

Let us view the fulfilment of the sacred scriptures, by the dispensations of Providence. We find, in the inspired writings, many predictions of events very distant from the periods when those predictions were delivered. It is of great utility to mark the accomplishment of them. By so doing, our faith in divine revelation will be confirmed. The dispersion of the Jews, the general corruption of Christianity by Popish superstition, and the fall of antichristian tyranny, are events frequently and clearly foretold. While these circumstances take place, under the superintendency of Providence, exactly according to what is written by the prophets, we know that those holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Providence gives a satisfactory comment on those mysterious predictions, which could not otherwise be understood.

Let us learn to trust in Divine Providence for all we need, with unshaken confidence. The practical belief of it should so operate on our hearts, as to render us calm and serene in all conditions. No perplexing fears, no anxious, desponding solicitude should possess our bosoms; since whatever may happen to us, we are under the protection of infinite power, the watchfulness of unbounded wisdom, and the care of sovereign mercy and goodness. While we are

attentive to the path of duty, and the rules of prudence and diligence, we have all possible encouragement to trust Providence for whatever we need, and to cast all our care upon him who careth for us. A pretended trust in God, unconnected with proper exertions and activity in the way of duty, is presumption. But trust in the Lord, and do good, dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. The notion of a superintending Providence does not exclude, on our part, the vigorous use of proper and appointed means. The means are included as necessary to the end.

It is the will of Providence that seed-time and harvest shall not cease; but if the husbandman, under a pretence of trusting Providence, should expect to gather in a plentiful crop, without the necessary culture of his grounds, he would find himself disappointed; and every one would censure his confidence and conduct as ridiculous, inconsistent and absurd. The certainty of Hezekiah's recovery from his sickness, did not render the use of the remedy appointed for that purpose unnecessary; neither did the assurance given him, of living fifteen years longer, imply that he had no need to take any care about the preservation of his life and health.

Trust Providence while you are diligently attentive to the duties incumbent upon you.

Let us look up, by constant, humble and fervent prayer, for the guidance, the protection, and the various blessings of Providence. God is intimately present with us every moment, to observe all our thoughts, to know all our wants, and to dispose of all the circumstances of our existence. Whatever falls out he can over-rule to our advantage, and grant suitable answers to all our requests. Nothing can be more proper than that we should entreat his favour with our whole hearts, seek his protection, fly to him in every danger, request his aid for the accomplishment of our laudable designs, and ask of him our daily bread.

Let the hand of Providence be constantly acknowledged by us. Let us ever keep in mind the care of the Almighty

over us, and maintain a deep sense of it upon our hearts from day to day. Let us, in all our undertakings, look to him for success. Let us, in all our ways, acknowledge him, and he will direct our paths. We are prone to neglect this; God is ever near us, and yet we disregard the operation of his hand. He is in every breath we draw; and in every thought we conceive, and yet we are prone to forget him. His power is as much displayed in those events which are common, as in those which are more extraordinary. By the latter we are roused and affected, but of the former we seldom take notice as we ought. Let us labour to acquire a habit of carrying up our views to Providence, on all occasions.

It is criminal and impious to terminate our views on the objects of sense, and forget the Almighty hand which upholds us, and provides all for us, and to ascribe to chance, to fortune or to fate, all the good or the evil which attends us.

Let us rejoice in the privilege of being under the wise and merciful government of God. Within the embraces of his arms we are always safe*. Confiding in his care, we shall not only be freed from danger, but from solicitude and anxiety. To exempt us from that care, the weight of which we are not well able to sustain, he is willing to take it upon himself. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee." Surely we should think it a peculiar felicity to be under such a gracious and condescending Governor, who is ready to bear and manage all himself, and would have nothing to lie on his subjects to the weight of which their powers are unequal. He even counts it a dishonour done to him, when we are solicitously anxious about those things, which he has undertaken to regulate and manage for us; because this anxiety implies, in its very nature, either that the Lord is not able, or not willing to order what concerns us for the best, and as it should be ordered.

* For this, and several other remarks, the author of this essay acknowledges himself indebted to a Dissertation on Providence, by the late learned Doctor Price.

When Melancthon was extremely solicitous about the affairs of the church, in his day, Luther admonished him in these terms; 'Let Philip no longer take upon himself the government of the world.' The government of church and state is upon the shoulders of our omnipotent Redeemer; and he is sufficient for it. He will order every thing better for us than we could do for ourselves. The good of his subjects is always kept in view, in his various dispensations; and this is so happily connected with his own glory, that whatever advances his honour, tends to promote their happiness. Let us be thankful, then, that we are under his paternal care. "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye saints of his. Say among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad. For he shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight."

Let us wait the issue of Providence. We are now perhaps tossed on a tempestuous ocean; the waves and billows of affliction seem to threaten our destruction; but let us have patience a little while. Our Almighty Preserver sits at the helm. He who holds the winds in his fist, and the waters in the hollow of his hand, has the sole direction and management of that voyage of life which seems to us so full of danger. Under his incessant inspection and wise governance, our little bark will be guided safely into the port of peace; and then we shall look back on all his dealings with us, with admiration, astonishment and gratitude; and see that he has done all things well. The whole scene of his providential dispensations will be opened to our wondering eyes, and we shall see that every thing has been ordered for the best. We shall see that all his dealings with us have been full of wisdom, faithfulness and love. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee,

to humble thee, to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart."

Have patience for a short season, and every dark cloud shall be dispelled. Rest satisfied, that though clouds and darkness are round about him, yet justice and judgment are the habitation of the Almighty's throne. He says to you, amidst your present perplexities, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." By and by you shall see, that your heaviest afflictions were of the number of your greatest mercies. What appeared nothing but confusion and disorder, to the feeble and erring eye of sense, you will perceive to have been all harmony and perfect regularity. The very circumstances concerning which you have too rashly said, in the gloomy hour of despondency, "All these things are against me," you will clearly see have wrought together for your highest good. The Lord will then bring you forth to the clear light of unclouded and celestial day; and you shall behold his righteousness, the equity, the propriety, and the wisdom of his whole conduct. The things which now occasion your deepest sorrow, will then excite your loudest songs.

Great advantages result from an attentive and humble observation of the dispensations of Providence, respecting ourselves, our families, and the religious societies with which we may stand connected. As such, we think it highly proper for those, who have ability and opportunity, to preserve written memorials of some, at least, of the most remarkable interpositions of the divine hand in their favour. Such memorials might be of service to themselves, when new straits and difficulties attend their path. It is true, the things which deeply affect us are not easily forgotten; but we all know, that our recollection of past deliverances often fails us, when we are under the immediate pressure of some heavy calamity. Nor will such records of God's dealings with us be useful to ourselves alone, but, it is highly probable, they may prove beneficial to others, when we are numbered with the dead.

Thy ways, O God, are in the sea,
Thy paths we cannot trace;
Nor comprehend the mystery
Of thine unbounded grace.
'Tis but in part, we know thy will,
We bless thee for the sight;
When will thy love the rest reveal
In glory's clearer light?
Here the dark veils of flesh and sense
Our captive souls surround;
Mysterious deeps of Providence,
Our wond'ring thoughts confound.
When we behold thy awful hand,
Our earthly hopes destroy;
In deep astonishment we stand,
And ask the reason why.
As through a glass, we dimly see
The wonders of thy love;
How little do we know of thee,
Or of the joys above.
When will the day of perfect light,
The happy morn arise,
That shall remove the shades of night
From our beclouded eyes?
With rapture shall we then survey
Thy providence and grace,
And spend an everlasting day
In wonder, love and praise.

THE DOCTRINE

OF

THE CROSS

STATED AND IMPROVED.

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DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS

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THE refined system of religion, which is at this day adopted by many, is unsuitable to the case of anxious guilty criminals. It is insufficient to give substantial peace to a wounded conscience; insufficient to furnish a proper reply to that most important of all inquiries, "What must I do to be saved?"

But the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is richly adapted to answer all these purposes. It directs us to the death of the divine Saviour in our room and stead, as the sovereign remedy for all the evils which sin has introduced. The cross of Christ is the grand source of relief, which it proposes to our consideration. It is this which distinguishes the religion of Jesus from every other religion professed in the world.

It may be needful just to observe, before we proceed, that the Redeemer of men suffered death on a sort of gibbet called a cross.—With the Greeks, the Romans, and some other nations, this was a punishment inflicted on the vilest slaves, who had been guilty of notorious offences. It was shameful, painful, and lingering. The criminal was first scourged with cords. These cords had frequently sharp pointed bones fixed to their ends. The sufferer must then bear his cross to the place of execution. There, his clothes being stripped off, his body was stretched upon the timber, his hands nailed to the cross beam, and his feet to the lower part. The cross was then raised, and fixed in the ground, the nails driven through the most sensible parts of the body, and sustaining its weight, rendered the pain exquisite beyond expression. Yet it was sometimes two or three days before the person expired. The legs of the two thieves crucified with our Redeemer, were

broken to hasten their end, for a reason assigned by the Jews. When they came to Jesus, they found that he was dead already, and they marvelled at it. This was probably owing to the overwhelming sorrows of his holy soul, the weight of human guilt, and the insupportable strokes of avenging justice. He was oppressed and afflicted in a manner that cannot be described. Hence his most piercing outcry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

By the cross of Christ we understand, not the timber to which he was nailed, and on which he expired, but his crucifixion upon it; the death which he died for sinners. The publication of this is called "the preaching of the cross," 1 Cor. i. 18. To suffer persecution for maintaining this doctrine, is to suffer persecution for the cross of Christ; and to glory in salvation by Jesus, is to glory in his cross, Gal. vi. 12, 14.

This then is the subject we are a little to consider. A subject too wonderful, and too copious for our feeble powers. All we can say, and especially in so narrow a compass, will fall far beneath the dignity and sublimity of it. We shall only remind you, with simplicity and plainness, that the cross of Christ is the fulfilment of divine purposes and predictions—the sum of the gospel—the salvation of sinners—the conquest of all enemies—the foundation of hope—the ground of triumph—the display of the divine perfections—and the grand incentive to holiness.

1. *The cross of Christ is the fulfilment of divine purposes, prophecies, and promises.* The thoughts and counsels of the God of all grace were, from everlasting, employed on the grand design, which was accomplished by the Redeemer's death. He is styled the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The purposes of the Father in Christ Jesus our Lord, are said to be eternal. When he was delivered up to be crucified, it was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

What a series of prophecies, of visions, of types and of promises were accomplished in the cross of Christ! In this

great centre they all met. From Moses to Malachi, the Spirit of God in all the prophets, testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. The oracles of heaven, through succeeding generations, referred to the cross of Christ.

In this the Mosaic rites and ordinances, types and symbols had their accomplishment. If we consider them not in this light, what are they all, but pompous and unmeaning institutions, utterly unworthy the wisdom of their great Author. What significance could there be in the shedding of so much blood, the slaughtering of so many innocent victims, the consuming of so much flesh, if the whole were not to teach us, that without the shedding of Jesus's blood, there could be no remission of sins for us? The constant sacrificing of so many inoffensive animals, pointed to the one great sacrifice which Jesus was to offer up without spot to God. Considered in this light, every institution of this kind had its significance. We are therefore taught, in the New Testament, to understand them as shadows of good things to come, of which the body is Christ. The ambiguity of types vanished in his cross, when he appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Many of the most remarkable events, and many of the most distinguished personages mentioned in the Old Testament, were typical of the cross of Christ. We cannot be mistaken in this interpretation of them, since the inspired writers of the New Testament teach us so to understand them. The priesthood of Melchisedec, and that of Aaron and his sons, prefigured the everlasting priesthood of the Son of God. The astonishing transaction of Isaac's being bound and laid on the altar by the hands of his father, is explained by the cross of Christ. It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief, he made his soul an offering for sin.

The lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, for the healing of the expiring Israelites, was realized in the elevation of Jesus on the cross. So was the Son of man lifted

up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Bread from heaven sustained the lives of the travellers from Egypt to Canaan; Jesus came down from heaven, and gave himself to be the life of the world. The rock was smitten to give drink to the thirsty tribes of the Lord; that rock was Christ, smitten for us by the rod of justice, that we might be furnished from him with the waters of life and salvation. Joshua led the people of Israel into Canaan; Jesus brings us into the promised land of rest and felicity.

The prophets of God, wrapt into future times, foretold the transactions of the Redeemer's life, the sorrows of his soul, the agonies of his death, and the glorious effects which were to ensue. In the early ages of the world, the faith of God's people was supported by that mysterious prediction, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. The patriarchs were assured that in the promised seed all nations of the world should be blessed. Job knew that his Redeemer lived. Jacob in a divine ecstasy before his death delivered that wonderful oracle, that the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh, the prince of peace, should make his appearance; to whom the gathering of the people should be. To the beloved Daniel, the time was revealed more expressly, when Messiah should be cut off; to finish transgression; to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy.

The circumstances attending the crucifixion of Jesus, are foretold by the psalmist, as if he had actually seen them. The agonies he should feel are described; the cry he should utter on the cross is expressed; the casting of lots for his garments, the piercing of his hands and his feet, and the vinegar and the gall given him to drink, are distinctly mentioned, Psal. xxii.

Sometimes the prophets represent Jesus as a sufferer; and sometimes as a conqueror. Now they speak of his humiliation, then of his exaltation. They point him out as the star

that was to come out of Jacob, and as the branch that was to spring out of the stem of Jesse. They describe him as the angel of the covenant; and as the desire of all nations who should suddenly come into his temple. They hold him forth as a king who should reign in righteousness, extending his sway from shore to shore; whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of whose dominion there shall be no end. To us, they cry in a divine transport, to us the Child is born, to us the Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Yet, mysterious as it is, this is he of whom they speak in other places, as calling himself a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised by the people; as being hated without a cause; as being despised and rejected of men; led like a lamb to the slaughter; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and cut off out of the land of the living. The cross of Christ explains, elucidates, and confirms all these predictions.

2. *The cross of Christ is the sum of the gospel.* What is the gospel but a message from heaven, of mercy, of peace, and of salvation through the sufferings and death of the Son of God. Of gospel history, what is the sum? Christ crucified. What do the four evangelists relate? They all for substance tell the same story; and that story is rightly termed the gospel. It is the history of the cross. In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established. God has graciously given us four, all inspired by his Holy Spirit, to relate the birth, the life, the labours, the preaching, the miracles, the sufferings, and the death of Jesus. They tell us what he said, what he did, and what he endured; from the powers of darkness, from the hands of men, and from the sword of justice. They inform us how he was, at last, condemned, and nailed to the tree, for the testimony which he bore to truth, that he was the only begotten Son of God, and that the same divine honours were due to him as to the Father.

The doctrine of the gospel is the doctrine of the cross. We preach Christ crucified. I determined, says one of the first of his messengers, inspired to bear his name before Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel, I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. The death of Christ for our sins is the life of the gospel. All the lines of evangelical truth meet in this one point. You cannot mention one individual branch of the sacred system, which stands unconnected with it. Our being chosen to eternal life, our regeneration, our calling, our justification, our adoption into the family of God, our sanctification, our perseverance in faith and holiness to eternal felicity, all have an immediate relation to the atonement of Christ. Take that foundation away, and the whole superstructure falls to the ground.

3. *The cross of Christ is the salvation of sinners.*—The gospel is a system which glorifies God by doing good to men. A system in its aspect benign, and in its agency infinitely beneficial. It is not like a meteor, to dazzle us with a vain glitter: not like a comet, to terrify us with a formidable blaze, without affording us any solid advantage. It is richly stored with benefits of the most needful, the most important, and the most exalted kind; like the glorious sun in the heavens, diffusing beams of light and life, and ineffable joy all around. By it all that believe are eventually brought to enjoy a much nobler, and more exalted state of existence, than that from which Adam fell, and which they lost in him.

The grand object held forth in the gospel is the salvation of man. The distinguishing character of him who effects this great work, is that of a Saviour, an Almighty Saviour, who came to deliver us from the wrath to come: to recover us from the abyss of sin and misery into which we are fallen, and to exalt us to the regions of endless felicity. This he effected, not barely by the heavenly doctrine which he taught, and the bright example which he set before us; but by the death which he died for our sins.

Mankind are represented in the scriptures of truth, as

being in a lost and ruined condition. But Jesus came to save the lost, by bearing their sins in his own body on the tree; by being wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities; by suffering, the just for the unjust; that they might have healing by his stripes, and life by his death.

This enables us to account for all that is said in the scripture, concerning the dignity of the Redeemer's person. He was found in fashion as a man, but he thought it no robbery; thought it no more than what he might justly claim, to be equal with God. Though he was really and truly man, that he might be capable of suffering; and of dying; yet all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily in him. He and the Father are one in nature and perfections. If the Redeemer's death were not a proper atonement for sin, why was it necessary that God should be manifested in the flesh? Why was it necessary that he who redeems us should be Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature? An angel from heaven might have taught us the will of our Maker, and given us a good example. Nay, a man like ourselves might have done both. The deity of Christ, and his atonement for sin, must stand or fall together. Hence those who deny the one, do also consistently enough, deny the other. It is the dignity of the Redeemer's person that gives efficacy and validity to his sacrifice.

Misery is the natural consequence of guilt. Death is the wages of sin; its proper and just reward.—What then is it that saves us from impending ruin? No effort, no expedient of our own; but the remedy which God himself has provided. What is it that delivers us from going down to destruction, but the ransom found? Our blessed Lord told Nicodemus, that the end of his being lifted up upon the cross, was this, that whosoever believed in him should not perish. Is it not then the cross of Christ that saves us from destruction? Is it not a crucified Jesus who saves us from eternal misery? Who that seriously thinks of this can forbear to admire the wonderful expedient.

The cross of Christ reconciles us to God. It procures our

peace with him. It appeases the wrath of our incensed Judge, as it is a full satisfaction for our crimes. Through this ample compensation, awful justice smiles, as well pleased with every one who believes in Jesus. He is emphatically styled our peace, having made peace by the blood of his cross. This is the import of that divine declaration, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Through his cross, we enjoy the favour of God which is better than life. His love is manifested to us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The cross of Christ procures our spiritual life.—We are raised from a death in trespasses and sins, in consequence of the Redeemer's death for us. The end of his dying for us, we are assured was, that we might live unto God; that divine life might be imparted to us from our living head. To this purpose is his own testimony, I am come that they might have life. Thus a sweet singer in our Israel expresses the delightful truth;

Her noblest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounds and bleeding side.

In consequence of his dying for us, the life-giving Spirit is bestowed, to impart to us heavenly knowledge, evangelical repentance, lively faith, holy love, and spiritual joy. Whatever we are as Christians, we are that of God in Christ Jesus, and as the fruit of his death. He is made of God unto us, not only wisdom and righteousness, but sanctification. If we are quickened it is together with Christ; if we are healed, it is by his stripes.

The cross of Christ procures our pardon and justification. There is no remission of sins but through the shedding of his blood. We are chargeable with crimes, almost without number; from the least of which nothing can free us, but the cross of Christ.—This removes our transgressions from us, as far as the east is from the west. The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. Whosoever believeth in him shall receive the blessing of a free and full remission. Sin shall never rise up in judgment against him; it is done away, as though it had

never been; nay, we are assured, it shall not even be remembered any more for ever.

The curse of that holy law which we had broken, is removed from us by the cross of Christ. If we have faith in the Son of God, the law proclaims no words of terror against us: its awful penalty has been borne, its tremendous malediction has been endured, by him who espoused our cause, and undertook our recovery. What else can be the meaning of that most cheering declaration, Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us? There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; they are justified freely by his blood; so justified, that nothing is laid to their charge; so justified as to stand complete in Christ; so justified as to be beheld without spot by the eyes of infinite purity. The righteousness of Jesus covers them; hides their nakedness, and all their deformity; and renders them righteous, even as he is righteous. Glorious privilege! What tongue can express, what heart conceive its value?

The cross of Christ opens the gates of paradise for our reception. As there is no escaping eternal destruction, so there is no enjoying the felicity of the heavenly state, but through the Saviour's cross. Contemplate dear brethren, the bliss of the celestial inheritance; think how great, how permanent, how satisfying it will be; and remember that it is the gift of God to you, through Jesus Christ. If Israel is saved with an everlasting salvation, he is saved in the Lord. The saints who are now in glory, overcame by the blood of the Lamb; they washed their robes, and made them white in that cleansing fountain; therefore are they before the throne of God. Hence they say with one voice, "Worthy art thou to receive riches, and honour, and glory, and power; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

But the blessings which hang clustering on the Saviour's cross, are so great, that they can never be told. Whatever is included in our salvation comes to us in this way. And therefore we add,

4. *The cross of Christ is the conquest of our enemies.* Captivity itself is led captive. The powers of darkness are overcome. Jesus has spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them on the cross. They may yet be permitted to distress us for a while, but the God of peace shall bruise Satan, and all his legions under our feet shortly.

Our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed. The decree is gone forth which shall never be reversed, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." After the apostle Paul had been uttering that pathetic exclamation, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death, (he immediately adds) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" a glorious prospect of complete victory opened to his view, which turned his mourning into joy.

The cross of Christ delivers us from this present wicked world, with all its snares and vexations. The divine Redeemer died to accomplish this, among all his other achievements. In this view, the cross of Christ was endeared to the blessed apostle Paul, as that by which the world was crucified to him, and he unto the world.

Death, the last foe of man, and the gloomy grave, the terror of all living, are overcome by the cross of Christ. Death's formidable appearance remains, but his sting is gone; for when guilt was expiated, death was disarmed. The pardoned sinner therefore may boldly say, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The king of terrors is, by the cross of Christ, converted into a messenger of peace. Now it is gain to die. The grave is become a quiet resting place, for our mouldering bones, till the great rising day.

5. *The cross of Christ is the foundation of our hope.* Some talk of a hope built on the review of a well spent life. A certain indication of a want of self-knowledge. What hope can the enlightened, the anxious trembling sinner have

on this ground? A thousand miscarriages arise to his view. Were there no ground of hope but that of the deeds of the law, such a one must sink into despair. Nothing can be a sure ground of hope, but that which removes sin, that which takes away the curse, that which satisfies justice, that which procures peace with God, and constitutes a sure title to heaven. The cross of Christ, we have seen, answers all these purposes; answers them effectually. And hence it becomes the one, the only foundation of hope. The hope which is built upon it is sure and steadfast, like an anchor of the soul. Jesus Christ is the believing sinner's hope, and none but he. Other foundation, for this salutary purpose, can no man lay. The disquieted conscience finds no relief but in the Saviour's complete atonement. The enlightened mind can derive no supporting confidence, but from this source. "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved."

6. *The cross of Christ is the ground of our triumph.* How should it be otherwise? It answers every salutary purpose. It removes every evil, and ensures every good. The Christian has not only hope towards God, but joy and consolation; joy which arises, at times, to a holy triumph. But on what is it founded? The apostle furnishes us with an answer. "We joy in God through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom we have now received the atonement." He exemplifies this in his own happy experience. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." This to me is the ground of the sublimest consolation, of the highest triumph, even of glorying. The atoning sacrifice of a crucified Saviour is all my boast. It is not only my constant support; it fills me with ineffable joy.

7. *The cross of Christ gives us the brightest display of the divine perfections.* It not only brings the most solid comforts to man, but the highest glory to God. We see, on this ground, that a just and holy God, though determined to display his mercy and unbounded grace, would do it only in such a way, as might eternally vindicate the honour of

his law; might demonstrate the purity of his nature, and declare the inviolable faithfulness of his threatening word.

We conceive that the Most High is infinitely wise. His wisdom shines in all his works. But no where have we so striking a display of it, as in the cross of Christ. How wonderful was the contrivance which could harmonize in the salvation of men, the seemingly opposite claims of mercy and of justice! That could satisfy, that could exalt, and magnify both; causing mercy and truth to meet together, righteousness and peace to embrace each other! Had punishment been inflicted on the sinner in all its severity, the glory of mercy had been obscured. And on the other hand, had the sinner been pardoned without any penalties sustained by himself or his substitute, justice had been set aside, and, speaking after the manner of men, one essential attribute of Deity would have triumphed over another.

'A God all mercy is a God unjust.' But in the cross of Christ, mercy and justice are equally glorified. In this divine expedient, therefore, God hath displayed infinite wisdom; or, to use the language of inspiration, "he hath abounded towards us, in all wisdom and prudence."

The apostle Paul tells us, that God set forth the blessed Jesus for a propitiation, through faith in his blood, with this express design, that he might declare his righteousness; might demonstrate that vindictive justice, whose essential character and principal office is to punish sin. Thus a holy God shews himself to be strictly and inviolably righteous, in the administration of his government, even while he is the justifier of the sinner that believeth in Jesus. In this method of dispensing grace, he secures the utmost reverence to his divine law, he declares his infinite abhorrence of sin, he strikes the deepest terror on every persevering sinner, at the same time that he lays a solid foundation for the highest hope in every penitent transgressor. The torments inflicted on condemned souls in the infernal regions, are not so awful a monument of the justice and holiness of a sin-hating God, as he has given us in

the crucifixion of his beloved Son.—For if the Lord spared him not, when guilt was not found in him, but only imputed to him, how much less shall he spare the stubborn offender himself, who obstinately persists in his rebellion? Nothing sets forth the horrid aggravations of sin, its execrable vileness and loathsomeness in the sight of God—nothing speaks such terror to the workers of iniquity, did they but lay it to heart, as the shameful, the bitter, the accursed death of the Prince of life for our offences.

The love, the grace and mercy of God are most illustriously displayed in the cross of Christ. Pardon, life and endless felicity granted to the condemned criminals on any terms, must be wonderful, and give an astonishing display of divine mercy. But when the Father grants these through the wounds, the agonies, the death of his dear, his only begotten, his equal Son, he not only manifests his love, but *commends* it; he displays it in such a way as may justly inflame us with gratitude, and transport us with everlasting admiration. He shews it in its highest perfection. The blessings of salvation, invaluable in themselves, are unspeakably enhanced by the manner in which they are conferred. God so loved the world, loved it in such a way and to such a degree, as can only be expressed, only conceived by himself; he so loved it, that he gave his only begotten Son to tortures and to death, even the death of the cross, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Sin hath reigned unto death; but God's free and unbounded grace, like a glorious and superior sovereign, in all her fulness, riches, and splendour, reigns through the righteousness of Jesus to eternal life. A thousand worlds conferred on us would have been as nothing, in comparison with the grace which is displayed in the death of the Son of God for us. Herein is love indeed.

In a word; would we see the tremendous name of Jehovah written in the fairest lines; would we see all his adorable perfections shine forth with the greatest splendour, we must fix our attention on the Redeemer's cross.

We shall close these remarks with one observation more; and that is,

8. *The cross of Christ is the grand incentive to holiness.* The doctrine of complete salvation by the Redeemer's death, is far from being unfriendly to the interests of morality. That morality which is recommended in the sacred scriptures is ingrafted on evangelical principles, and produced by the constraining love of a dying Redeemer. If we wish you to be animated to the practice of every good work, we are persuaded that the love of Christ in his dying for you, will be the most powerful incitement. A lively sense of this, will produce the gratitude of heart, which will be more operative than the most cogent philosophical reasonings, to stir you up to activity in the way of holiness, or the most awful threatenings to deter you from the contrary.

We do not mean, that exhortations to duty are superseded by the doctrine for which we plead; or that it is unnecessary to instruct, to caution, to warn and admonish the followers of Christ, with respect to their conduct; what we mean is, that the love and grace of the Redeemer manifested in his dying for us, are the most powerful inducements to practical holiness. "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Would we be excited to unfeigned and active love to the Author of our salvation? We love him because he first loved us. Would we be excited to ingenuous sorrow for sin? While we look to him whom we have pierced, we mourn after a godly sort. Nothing is so likely to break the stony heart and to melt the ice within us to evangelical repentance, as a view of a suffering Saviour, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Would we be induced to a thorough renunciation of every false way? No motive is so effectual to divorce our affections from the abominations to which we have formerly cleaved, and turn our feet from every evil way, as the powerful persuasion that Christ died for us, that we being dead unto sin should live unto righteousness.

Would we be induced to practise all that is comprehended in the duties of benevolence, kindness, charity and brotherly love? No persuasive so endearing as the kindness and love of God our Saviour; "walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us." When we are exhorted to relative duties, it is in the same style. "As the church is subject unto Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." When we are urged to an entire devotedness to God, we are told, that "we are not our own, but bought with a price," and therefore, should "glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are his;" that we should "live, not to ourselves, but to him that died for us, and rose again."

Talk they of morals, O thou bleeding love,
Thou maker of new morals to mankind,
The grand morality is love of thee,
Here strongest motives sting,
Here sacred violence assaults the soul,
And nothing but compulsion is forborne.

The cross of Christ is then the spring of true holiness; the incentive to every virtue. Jesus died to redeem us from all iniquity, to purify us to himself, and make us zealous of good works. What are naked instructions, what are abstract reasonings, in comparison with the astonishing love of our dying Lord? It invites us, it urges us, it constrains us to all holiness, that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. May his love be ever warmly impressed on our hearts! May we live by that faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us, which is an ever active principle of cheerful and grateful obedience.

THE
CERTAIN EFFICACY
OF
THE DEATH OF CHRIST
CONSIDERED,
IN A LETTER ADDRESSED
TO
A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY:
WITH
SOME REMARKS ON A PAMPHLET,
ENTITLED
PLAIN REASONS, &c.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.
JESUS CHRIST.
Who is he that condemneth? It is CHRIST that died.—PAUL.

TO THE
CHRISTIAN SOCIETY,
ASSEMBLING AT ****,
GRACE AND PEACE BE MULTIPLIED.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

SOME weeks ago a pamphlet was industriously circulated in this neighbourhood, under the title of *Plain Reasons, &c.* In this performance some things are asserted, which, though very plausible in the estimation of multitudes, are, I apprehend, liable to exceptions. This writer's opinions are quite popular, and are sure to meet with the approbation and applause of a great number of readers. On the other hand, what I have to advance, I well know, will be displeasing to many. I do not address my opponent, because I have no hope of making any impression on his mind; neither do I address the world at large, because I apprehend the men of the world, as they will not believe the truths delivered by Moses and the prophets, would not be persuaded even though one rose from the dead; but I humbly submit what I have to say to your candid and impartial consideration, whose spiritual and eternal welfare it is my sincere and constant desire to promote.

The voice of mercy and salvation is the sweetest voice that ever reached the ears of sinners; and blessed are they that know the joyful sound; they shall walk in the light of God's countenance, and in his righteousness shall they be exalted. It is the unspeakable privilege of enlightened and convinced sinners, to have their views directed to that complete salvation, which is exhibited with resplendent lustre in

every page of the gospel. This salvation is every way adapted to give relief to the wounded conscience, and is pregnant with the strongest and clearest demonstrations of the love and mercy of the blessed God, towards those who are humbled by the power of his hand, and brought to see their absolute need of the remedy he has provided.

The messages of grace contained in the gospel are, in themselves, plain and intelligible; yet I cannot believe, with this author, that they are so to men in common. They who are destitute of the wisdom which cometh from above, are as incapable of forming a right judgment of those truths which are purely evangelical, and of entering into the genuine nature of divine objects, as a blind man is incapable of forming a just idea of colours, or a deaf person of the harmony of musical sounds. When Nicodemus heard the words of everlasting life from Jesus Christ himself, "he answered and said unto him, How can these things be?" John iii. 9. Saul of Tarsus, before his conversion, verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus; but he tells us, that this was through ignorance and unbelief, 1 Tim. i. 13. "The natural man," the man unenlightened by the grace of the gospel, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14.

The peculiar doctrines of distinguishing grace, and of complete salvation by the Redeemer's cross, are so humiliating to the human mind, so opposite to carnal reason, and the common and natural conceptions and prejudices of mankind, that, for proof of them, we never think of making our appeal to the multitude. The men of this world, by all their boasted wisdom, know not God. If the author of the Plain Reasons wishes to secure the approbation of these, he is right in referring to them the cause he pleads. He does indeed say, 'If they are sincere, and willing to know the mind of God; but to be willing and sincere in this matter is not natural to men, but the effect of divine power; "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,"' Psal. cx. 3.

He proposes to 'examine the extent of the kindness and love of God to man.' We perfectly agree with him when he says, 'The bible is not silent on this subject; it represents the great Fountain of goodness branching itself out into a thousand streams, and reaching to the utmost parts of the earth.' He seems to suppose himself equal to the task of 'examining' this subject, though an inspired apostle thought it unsearchable, a vast abyss, without a bottom or a shore. "The love of Christ," says he, "passeth knowledge," Eph. iii. 8. In contemplating the wonderful and mysterious displays of it, he owned himself utterly lost and confounded, exclaiming, as in a rapture of profound astonishment and delight, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. xi. 33. This author is not so diffident of his own powers.

He undertakes to prove that God willeth the salvation of all mankind, by what was said to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" But it may be asked, Does not this inquiry proceed on the ground of a covenant of works? Is it not of the same import with that declaration, "The man that doth these things shall live in them?" Gal. iii. 12. Was not this question intended to convince this unhappy man, that the misery and torment he felt within himself were the fruit of his own sin? I would ask one question more, Will this author say, that the doings of apostate creatures are the ground of their everlasting acceptance with their Maker? If not, this instance cannot be to his purpose.

That the ministry of Noah, while the ark was preparing, was an instance of the patience, forbearance and long-suffering of God, is most certain. But Noah's preaching was confined to the place where the ark was made; as such, it was a discriminating favour, and not enjoyed by all the inhabitants of the earth. The ark itself, a type of Christ, was not prepared for the reception of the whole world, as it must have been, according to this author's system. The ways of the Almighty are manifestly inscrutable.

Life and death, blessing and cursing were set before the Israelites, by the ministration of Moses. God had entered into a national covenant with them, in which long life and prosperity were promised on condition of their obediences, and desolation and national ruin threatened in consequence of disobedience. All the dispensations of God towards this people were conformable to this covenant. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," Isa. i. 19, 20. These words fully explain the address of Moses to this people; and multitudes of passages might be cited to the same purpose, which cannot be applied to the eternal salvation of the soul, without a manifest violation of their genuine sense and meaning, and an utter subversion of the gospel system, of salvation by grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.

That the Lord is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works, no man, surely, can be supposed to deny. The instances given for the illustration of this assertion shew, that we are to understand it of God's providential goodness. "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the soul of every living thing," Psal. cxlv. 9, 15, 16. It is properly explained by the poet;

Thy providence is kind and large,
Both man and beast thy bounties share;
The whole creation is thy charge,
But saints are thy peculiar care.

The "light which the Son of God giveth to every man which cometh into the world," cannot be the light of grace; for there are many nations of men in the world who never heard of his name; it must therefore intend the light of reason and natural conscience. But we cannot suppose these to be sufficient guides to final happiness, without denying the necessity of divine revelation, and even the necessity of that

glorious remedy which is therein exhibited, namely, the redemption of our souls by the blood of Jesus.

"God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." We are more disposed to admire the gracious intention of the Redeemer's coming, than to dispute about it. His merciful design will never be frustrated. He explains his meaning in the above-cited passage, by what he says in other places. "The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world," John vi. 33. To the world whom he came to save, he gives spiritual and everlasting life. "Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

This author proceeds to say, that Paul exhorts us to offer up prayers and supplications for all men. As we believe this to be our duty, we would not at any time neglect it in our solemn acts of worship. Yet it may be observed, that in the passage in question, by *all men*, the apostle certainly means all ranks and degrees of men; for he particularly mentions kings and all in authority; and to excite us to the practice which he recommends, he assures us that God will have all men, that is, all sorts of men, to be saved; and that Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. The certain efficacy of the Redeemer's death is here very properly asserted; for the benefits of his redemption are to be *testified*, not only preached to them, but witnessed, and experienced by all his ransomed ones, though not at the same period, yet most certainly they shall be so *in due time*, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 5, 6.

The author of the *Plain Reasons* proceeds to prove, that provision is made for the salvation of all men, by the death of Christ, but has he forgotten, that even the means of salvation were not granted for many ages, to any nation upon earth but the Jews? Does he not know, that under the present dispensation, the gospel is sent to one nation and not to another? Zealous and faithful ministers are raised up to preach it in one place, and not in another. Where it is

preached, some are providentially brought to hear it, and not others. And among those who hear it, it is to some the savour of life unto life, to others, of death unto death, 2 Cor. ii. 16. These are facts which cannot be denied. The Sovereign of the universe, no doubt, is just and wise in all these his mysterious dispensations. But to say that provision is made by the death of Christ for those who never heard of his name, seems not to correspond with the wisdom of him who is supposed to have made that provision. Nor does it appear to us, what end can be answered by such provision, in respect to those who never have the opportunity of hearing or knowing any thing about it. In the passage mentioned above, we are assured, that the ransom paid for sinners was to this very end, that it might be *testified in due time*.

The destruction of men is entirely of themselves; no man perishes but for his own sin. For "the wages of sin is death," Rom. vi. 23. The ruin of those that are lost, can never be justly imputed, either to any divine purpose concerning them, or to the want of provision for their salvation. The Judge of all the earth will do right, and, in the issue of things, vindicate his own character. Every man's misery will be found to be the proper fruit of his own folly, the just reward of his own works. But the salvation of men is not of themselves. It arises from a source entirely different; for it is "the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The *provision* made by the death of the Redeemer, does not barely render salvation possible, but makes it absolutely certain. The redemption he hath obtained, is an eternal redemption, Heb. ix. 12. By one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, Heb. x. 14. Deliverance from the power of sin is as certain a consequence of it as deliverance from its guilt. Freedom from the power of unbelief and impenitence, from this present evil world, from the dominion of Satan, and from the wrath to come, are the necessary branches of redemption. By the blood of the covenant, the prisoners are sent forth out of the pit wherein is no water, Zech. ix. 11.; by it, we are washed from our sins,

made kings and priests unto God and the Father, and shall reign with him, Rev. i. 5.; Satan's head is effectually bruised, Gen. iii. 15.; principalities and powers are spoiled, Col. ii. 15.; death and the grave are overcome, 1 Cor. xv. 57.; we are justified by the blood of Jesus, and shall be saved from wrath through him, Rom. v. 9. This is the account which the sacred scriptures constantly and invariably give of the 'provision' made by the death of Christ. Our holiness is as certain a consequence of it as our happiness; for "he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14. The price which the divine Redeemer paid was of infinite value. His blood is called the blood of God, his righteousness the righteousness of God. Had it been the good pleasure of the Most High, no doubt it would have been sufficiently efficacious for the complete redemption, not only of all the fallen race of man, but even of apostate angels too.

'A thousand worlds so bought, were bought too dear.'

No man, no minister, has any authority to say to his fellow-sinners, 'Christ did not die for you.' The apostles themselves had no such authority. I do not know that there is one man living on the face of the earth for whom the Redeemer did not shed his blood, because I do not know but the living may be brought to repentance. The same may be affirmed of the primitive, the inspired ministers of Jesus Christ. They were to preach the gospel to every creature; but what is the gospel? "That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." Hence are all those free and liberal expressions with which their writings abound, of which the author of the *Plain Reasons* makes so much use, with a view to support his system. We readily receive them, and rejoice in them. Where the gospel is sent, by the merciful providence of God, what is its language? 'Perhaps Jesus Christ died to save you; it may be he has shed his blood for you.' Is this the message? No, by no means. None of his apostles ever delivered such a message. They asserted this

plain fact, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; through this glorious person is preached the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses," Heb. ix. 26.; Acts xiii. 38, 39.

When the sacred writers would inform us concerning the certain efficacy of Christ's death, they describe the persons who enjoy the benefit of it. In general, they are all of every nation, kindred, tongue and people, who are blessed with that faith in his name which is of the operation of God. As in the passages just mentioned, In him, all that believe, are pardoned, are justified, are saved, Acts xiii. 38, 39.; John iii. 14—16. There is no difference of Jew or Gentile, high or low, rich or poor, in this behalf. They are enabled to "put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him; where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all," Col. iii. 9—11. Jesus tells us, he "laid down his life for the sheep, whom he knows, who follow him, to whom he gives eternal life, who shall never perish, and whom none can pluck out of his hands," John x. 15, 16, 27—29.

As the Captain of salvation, he was made perfect through sufferings, that he might bring many sons unto glory, and gather together in one, the children of God, Heb. ii. 10.; John xi. 52. He is the Saviour of the body, Eph. v. 23. and of every individual member of it; for he, by the grace of God, tasted death for the whole body, and every part of it, as the word signifies which is used by the apostle to the Hebrews, Heb. ii. 9. He "loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it; even the church of the first-born, which are written in heaven," Eph. v. 25.; Heb. xii. 23. They are therefore said to be redeemed *from among men*, Rev. xiv. 4.

It is certain that the term *all men* frequently signifies, in

scripture language, persons of every circumstance and condition. So Paul says, "I have made myself servant unto all," 1 Cor. ix. 19. that is, to men of every state and condition.—They said unto him, All men seek for thee.—All men mused in their hearts of John.—All men will believe in him.—I will draw all men unto me.—The same baptizeth, and all men come unto him.—All men glorified God for that which was done.—Let us do good unto all men.

Great stress is laid on the words of the apostle John, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." But it is certain that the term *world* is ambiguous, and of very different significations in scripture. When our Lord says, "Whom the world cannot receive;" and, "I pray not for the world," John xiv. 17.; xvii. 9. he must be understood with some restriction. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," must be confined to those who are in a state of impenitence, 1 John v. 9. So likewise, when Satan is called the prince of this world, and the god of this world, John xiv. 30.; 2 Cor. iv. 4.

In many places this term is put for the church of God. Abraham is said to be "the heir of the world," which is of the same import with his being "the father of the faithful," Rom. iv. 13. When Paul says, "If the fall of them be the riches of the world," Rom. xi. 13. it can mean only that world which is made rich in faith. So likewise, when it is said, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," 2 Cor. v. 19. it can mean no more than those whose sins are pardoned by the death of Christ; for they are the only persons of whom it can be said, their trespasses are not imputed unto them. When the apostle is speaking of the New Testament church, he calls it the *world to come*; "for unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak," Heb. ii. 5. When our Lord says, that the bread of God "cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world," John vi. 33. he can mean no more than those who have spiritual and eternal life by him. "There went out a decree from Caesar

Augustus, that the *whole world* should be taxed," Luke ii. 1, the term here can mean no more than the inhabitants of the Roman empire. The sense of the passage in question then is, that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for the sins of all those for whom he is an advocate with the Father, as mentioned in the preceding verse; for the sins of all who do now, or shall hereafter believe in him, even Gentiles as well as Jews, wherever they may be scattered through the whole world, or at whatever period of time they may exist in the world.

This passage may have peculiar respect to that glorious dispensation of grace which we are taught to expect, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, when all Israel shall be saved, and when the whole earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, Rom. xi. 25, 26.; Isa. xi. 9.

It may not be improper to observe here, that the same inspired penman, who has told us that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, himself mentions an excepted case. "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for (the forgiveness of) it," 1 John v. 16. This is the case of him who after having had some superficial knowledge of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and making profession of faith in his name, totally apostatizes from that profession, and wilfully, daringly, and finally despises the blood of the covenant, counting it an unholy thing, and treading under foot the Son of God, Heb. x. 26—29. This man's condition is utterly hopeless, and must be so, because there is no salvation but in that which he wilfully and impenitently contemns. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."

But I will venture again to assert what I have suggested before, that, excepting such apostates as we have just mentioned, the apostle John did not know that there were any then existing in the world for whom Christ was not a propitiation; because God might, in their life time, bring them to repentance, and to the knowledge of the truth. It is not necessary that the secret designs of Him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," should be known.

by those whom he has commissioned to preach the everlasting gospel to sinners. Their proper business is to publish it to every creature. John therefore properly executed his commission. The other apostles did the same; and succeeding ministers are to tread in their steps, leaving the event to God. Our believing the doctrine of the certain efficacy of the Redeemer's death, lays us under no sort of confinement or restriction in delivering our message. We declare the glad tidings freely to all whom we have the opportunity of addressing; because "God commandeth all men every where to repent," Acts xvii. 30. With ardent and unrestrained zeal for the salvation of all with whom we have to do, we would lift up our voice like a trumpet, and say with the prophet, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Isa. lv. 7.

The death of Christ is every where in scripture represented as the fruit of his amazing love. "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." This love is spoken of as immense and inconceivable. Its height and depth, its length and breadth are immeasurable. It passeth knowledge. But the fact is certain that many nations never heard of Jesus, or of his death for sinners. Can it be supposed, that he loved them, so as to die in their stead, to whom no discovery should ever be made of his having done so? This author's scheme appears to me to be every way inconsistent with itself. The end of Christ's death, as represented by the prophet, was, that he might see his seed, see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, Isa. liii.; that he might behold them completely and everlastingly happy, and receive an eternal tribute of praise from them, on account of that complete salvation which is the fruit of his love, and of his death.

You know, my dear brethren, that the atonement of Jesus Christ for sin, not only exalts all the divine perfections, but affords effectual relief to the wounded consciences of distressed sinners. It is, to such, the only foundation of hope.

But if sinners perish, for whom this atonement was made; the remedy cannot be said to be complete; and, it will follow of course, that it cannot be safe to rely upon it. I know you will not be able to think of this without horror. And yet, according to the Universal system, for which the author of the *Plain Reasons* is so zealous an advocate, it must be the case. For if atonement were made for the sins of those who finally perish, that atonement was not effectual to save them from their sins, and from that misery which was the just reward of their transgressions. With respect to them, the design of the Redeemer's death is defeated; or, in other words, he died for them in vain. A conclusion so dishonourable to the dignity of his person, so inconsistent with the nature of his sacrifice, and so inimical to our hopes of salvation by his cross, we can by no means admit. Our spirits sink, our minds recoil at the idea, and we are ready to make the apostolic exclamation, "God forbid!"

Our divine Teacher frequently communicated instruction to his hearers by way of parable. No transaction among men can fully illustrate the mystery of our redemption; yet, if the following similitudes be not thought beneath the solemnity of the subject, they may probably afford some little aid to the conceptions of the humble inquirer after truth.

Prodigus, the son of a wealthy citizen, by a course of extravagance, wasted his substance, and, involving himself in debts which he was absolutely unable to pay, was arrested by his creditors, and just on the point of being sent to prison, Benignus, whose riches were immense, out of mere compassion, espoused the cause of Prodigus, and proposed to satisfy all his creditors. Having taken the business in hand, he executed it in a manner worthy of himself; and having faithfully accomplished his voluntary engagements, the poor insolvent was as completely freed from the claims of his creditors as if he had discharged all his debts himself.

Sponsor engaged to perform the like kind office for his embarrassed friend, Debitor. Notwithstanding this, Debitor was arrested, and sent to prison, without any prospect of

being released, unless he himself should satisfy his creditors. In this case it is evident, that the interposition of Sponsor was some way materially defective, as it was of no use to the insolvent.

In like manner, if those finally perish whom the gracious Redeemer has ransomed with his own dear life, will it not follow (but who can bear the thought!) that there must be some defect in his sacrifice? Consequently, that it cannot be safe for any poor impoverished sinner to rely upon it? Thus, the only foundation of hope is taken away.

Let the certain efficacy of the Redeemer's death be maintained, and the controversy ceases at once. Nothing, in my opinion, is of equal importance with this. The completeness of that sacrifice, which Jesus offered up for our offences, is the life and soul of the evangelical system; it gives due honour to all the divine attributes; it is the sovereign remedy provided for the recovery of ruined man, and the only ground whereon we can build our hopes of pardon, of acceptance with the offended Majesty of heaven, and of eternal life. "So shall the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 14—16. But if those perish for whom he was lifted up, the remedy is inadequate to the disease, and a poor sinner cannot rest upon it, with any certain prospect of being saved by it.

Moreover, if those perish for whom the divine Redeemer gave his life a ransom, it must follow, that those who enjoy eternal felicity are saved on account of some meritorious work of their own, without which that remedy would not be effectual. This conclusion cannot be denied. It arises naturally from the premises. If those perish for whose eternal redemption Jesus shed his blood, the heirs of salvation enjoy that privilege on account of some other consideration. Something in themselves, some work performed by their own hands, must be the procuring cause of the benefit, the grand hinge on which the whole turns. But you, my brethren, cannot endure a thought so dishonourable to the Author of

eternal salvation. You know, "that if righteousness," and its consequent salvation, "come by the law, then Christ died in vain," Gal. ii. 21.

These considerations, dear brethren, are of the greatest importance. Christ either suffered in our stead, or he did not. He either acted the part of a Surety to God for us, or he did not. He either suffered the penalty due to us, or he did not. The sacred writers take the affirmative side of all these questions. Let those who choose to take the negative answer for themselves. If Christ has not paid a proper price, a valuable and satisfactory ransom for us, then, no flesh can be saved; for there is no salvation in any other, Acts iv. 12. But to us it appears, that divine justice expects no more for our deliverance and redemption than what Christ has paid. "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him," Rom. v. 9. We judge in ourselves, that it cannot consist with justice and righteousness to inflict the penalty on the Surety, and afterwards on those for whom he actually bore it. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again," Rom. viii. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," Rom. iv. 25.

This, my dear brethren, is that solid foundation of peace and comfort which many of you have long known. The foundation which God has laid in Zion. Your being brought to embrace the message of everlasting life, and to look to Jesus as your atoning Saviour, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, are the effects of that amazing love which should constrain your hearts to suitable returns of affection, of gratitude, and of cheerful obedience. Why should you not sing as thousands have done before you,

How happy are we
Our redemption who see,
And venture, O Lord, for salvation on thee.
In Jesus approv'd,
Eternally lov'd,
And kept by thy power; we cannot be mov'd.

The author's third argument is founded on the exhortations to turn to God, and the invitations given to sinners, to encourage them so to do. These constitute an important part of the sacred word, and they have ever been found of the greatest utility, when properly enforced by those who are wise to win souls, and applied to the heart by the power of the blessed Spirit of God. Their tendency is to root out that despair from the mind which keeps sinners at a distance from Christ, and leads them to say, "There is no hope, no; I have loved strangers, and after them will I go."

The invitations and free proclamations delivered in the gospel, are expressive of the readiness of God to receive returning sinners, and do not, as this author suggests, indicate a conditional provision of salvation, but an absolute certainty of it, upon repentance. His argument, on this head, is evidently defective; for a great part of the world never enjoyed a divine revelation, and, consequently, never had these invitations and exhortations laid before them.

This author suggests, that these addresses to sinners imply, that they have power to repent and to turn to God; but they no more indicate man's ability to do these things, than the command to love God with our heart, mind, soul and strength implies, that we are able of ourselves to do this. It is a strange notion to suppose, that God's commanding authority is to be measured by man's present inability to obey. The entrance of God's word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple. It converteth the soul, and is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth. Faith cometh by hearing; but what is it that should be heard and believed? The messages above referred to, are what God has ordained to be delivered, as a part of that gospel which is to be preached to every creature, where his gracious Providence is pleased to send it.

The Almighty will vindicate his own character from the charge of insincerity which this author exhibits against him. This part of the controversy lies between the Sovereign of the universe and the writer of the *Plain Reasons*. "This is a

faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Wherever this message is sent, there is a *sincere* intention to make it effectual. Let this author read the following passage; "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow, from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it," Isa. lv. 9—11.

In his last argument he speaks of the failure of the means appointed for the salvation of men. Here I would only observe, that it is an awful impeachment of divine wisdom to imagine, that God makes use of means which are not suited to attain the end designed. Let us not impute folly to him who is the fountain of wisdom. The death of Christ is a most glorious, and, at the same time, a most effectual expedient for the salvation of sinners. Redemption, that redemption which is by his blood, consists in the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace, Eph. i. 7. It consists in deliverance from the curse of the law, Christ having been made a curse for us, Gal. iii. 13. The death of Jesus is our reconciliation with God. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. As he underwent the punishment due to us, his death must be satisfactory to the justice of God. The chastisement of our peace was upon him; we have healing by his stripes, Isa. liii. 5. and life by his death, 1 John iv. 9. The end designed in the Messiah's being cut off, was to make reconciliation for iniquity, Dan. ix. 24—26.; and that gracious end is accomplished. For "Jesus hath made peace by the blood of his cross," Col. i. 20.; and we "were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," Rom. v. 10. O, brethren, do not your hearts, like those of the travellers to Emmaus,

burn within you, when you think how gracious, and how wise this expedient is, and how well adapted to answer the designed end! Surely, it is impossible that the blessed Redeemer should be disappointed of the end he had in view; impossible that his design should be rendered abortive; impossible that so glorious a method of salvation should fail.

After all the frightful pictures which have been drawn of the doctrines of distinguishing grace, what is the sum of them, but—"Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord." Pride was the ruin of angels. Pride was at the root of man's apostacy from his Maker; and pride is the reigning sin in every unregenerate heart. The whole scheme of salvation, by Jesus Christ, seems to be levelled against this diabolical temper. The inquiry,—“Who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou that thou hast not received?” 1 Cor. iv. 7. is highly proper to be proposed to every professing Christian. He who adopts the system pleaded for by the author of the *Plain Reasons*, can never consistently answer with the apostle Paul, “By the grace of God I am what I am,” 1 Cor. xv. 10. If nothing is done for him more than what is done for all, it must follow, that whatever difference has taken place in him, must be attributed to himself. If he is a believer, a pardoned sinner, a justified person, while others are yet in their sins, he must ascribe it all to himself. He can never, consistently with his principles, subscribe to the constant invariable declarations of the divine word, “By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.” By the evangelical system of distinguishing grace, boasting is entirely shut out. “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith,” Rom. iii. 27. But the doctrine advanced in the pamphlet before us, does not exclude boasting; since, according to it, he who is finally saved cannot wholly ascribe his salvation to the blood of the Lamb; for that blood was, for many, shed in vain; and it would have been of no avail in his own case, had he not done

something himself, whatever it was, to give it efficacy. He can never ascribe his felicity to the grace of God; for that grace is common to all, and would have left him to perish in his sins, had it not been for his own exertions, his own obedience. "To him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt." Salvation by Christ, salvation by grace can never, with consistency, be adopted into his creed. His language ought to be, 'My own arm hath brought salvation unto me. The difference betwixt me and those who die in their sins is wholly made by myself; since God does for all, what he did for me.'

So long, my dear brethren, as I have any proper sense of the evil of sin, and of my own utter depravity and helplessness; so long as I have any suitable apprehensions of the dignity and glory of the Redeemer; so long as I have any just value for his precious blood; so long as I have any impressive views of the riches of his infinite mercy and abounding grace, I can never adopt this system, however plausible it may appear in the eyes of the multitude. God forbid that I should glory in my own arm! Nay, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

But I humbly hope and trust that all disputes concerning the efficacy of the Saviour's death will speedily come to a happy conclusion, and that the all-conquering Redeemer himself will put an end to the controversy, by the universal extension of his kingdom. The signs of the times indicate the approach of that happy period, when the knowledge of him, and of his saving power and love, shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the abysses of the seas, Isa. xi. 9. His kingdom shall be extended from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, Psal. lxxii. 8. Men shall be blessed in him without distinction; all nations shall call him blessed, ver. 17. For all nations which he hath made shall come and worship before him, and shall glorify his name, Psal. lxxxvi. 9. They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know him, from the least of them unto the greatest of them; for he

will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more, Jer. xxxi. 34. Jesus will soon take to himself his great power and reign; the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever, Rev. xi. 15. The divine promise made to Abraham must have its full accomplishment, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," Gen. xxii. 18.

The prophet Isaiah introduces the Redeemer of men as speaking after this manner; "Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken, ye people from afar. The Lord hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of me.—He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth," Isa. xlix. 1—6. Of this glorious event we have an assured expectation, arising from the purposes, the predictions, the promises, and even the oath of him that cannot lie; for he hath said, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord," Num. xiv. 21. In the prospect of this, the Psalmist cries out in the name of the church, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and amen!" Psal. lxxii. 19.

All the liberal expressions made use of by the inspired writers, to set forth the extensiveness of the blessings of redemption, will be fully explained, when these blessings are generally experienced. God himself will give an indubitable and satisfactory comment on his own word, in the dispensations of his grace among all nations. The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. For all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

In the hope of this, I remain,

Your affectionate brother, and willing Servant,

In the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE DIGNITY

OF

THE REDEEMER

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THE DIGNITY
OF THE
REDEEMER OF MEN.

COL. I. 15—18.—*Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.*

COLOSSE was a large and populous city of Asia the Less, not far distant from Laodicea. A Christian church was established here, at an early period after the first publication of the gospel among the Gentiles; but by whose instrumentality it was gathered we have no account. We are certain, however, that the apostle Paul spent three years at Ephesus, and preached with so much diligence and success, that all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks, among whom the Colossians were included.

It is generally supposed, that this epistle was written about the same time with that to the Ephesians, and it is probable they were both sent together, when the apostle Paul was prisoner at Rome.

It appears from the second chapter, that the Colossians were in danger of being corrupted by the subtilties of the philosophers of that age; as well as by some Jewish zealots who insisted on the necessity of being conformed to the Mosaic ceremonies.

We see in this epistle, and indeed in all the writings of the apostle Paul, the real temper, and the prevailing design of that holy man. The same views which he had given to other churches of the religion of Jesus, and the same kind affections which he had expressed towards those who were the subjects of it, are apparent here.

He wished, as we see in the preceding verses, that to the believing Colossians might be granted, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, grace and peace, as the best blessings he could desire in their behalf. He rejoiced unfeignedly in their faith in Christ, and as an evidence of the sincerity of that, in their love toward the brethren. He tells them, as a farther proof of his affection, that he made continual mention of them in his prayers.

After this short preface, the apostle, with an address peculiar to himself, introduces that glorious subject which was ever most familiar to his thoughts, and on which he always dwelt with the utmost satisfaction, namely, salvation by Jesus Christ, which was to be freely published in the gospel among the Gentiles. The divine efficacy of this message among the Colossians gladdened his heart; for it brought forth fruit among them, from the day they heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth. The first intelligence he had of this, led him to offer up his most earnest and affectionate requests, that they might be filled with the knowledge of the divine will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, through the power and influence of the Holy Spirit of God; that so they might be animated to walk worthy of their relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, in all respects, so as might be well-pleasing in his sight.

He requested that they might be strengthened according to his glorious power, to the most eminent degrees of exemplary patience and long-suffering, amidst all the persecutions and provocations to which they were exposed; that they might endure them even with joyfulness: giving thanks to the Father, who, by his renewing and sanctifying grace, had made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the

saints in light. They were, as such, rescued from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; in whom they had full redemption through the shedding of his precious blood for them; which redemption they had already begun to experience, in the free remission of all those sins, which, if they had not been expiated and put away, would have sunk them to endless perdition.

Having mentioned God's dear Son, and the redemption which is obtained by his blood, the apostle leads the Colossians more attentively to reflect on that glorious person, to whom they were under such infinite obligations. He sets forth the Saviour's dignity in the most lofty terms, in the words of our text. He speaks of him as the image of the invisible God, the first parent of the whole creation, the Creator of all, the last end of all, being before all, the sustainer of all, and the head of the body, the church; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

The right knowledge of the blessed Redeemer is of the greatest importance in our salvation. Ignorance of his person, his offices, and his benefits, is the source of those dreadful errors which have corrupted religion, and by which many are deluded to their own destruction. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The apostle Paul, in whom the Father revealed his Son, that he should preach him among the Gentiles, who was inspired by him to be the minister of truth, the teacher of mankind in what relates to their everlasting life and happiness, was intent on nothing so much, as on making the great Redeemer known. It was his fixed and unshaken determination, to know, and to make known, nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. This was his darling theme. To the displaying of this, in all its fulness and glory, he wisely and happily devoted the labours of his public preaching, of his pen, and even of his whole life. "To me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all

things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

He found in this rich and inexhaustible subject, all that was necessary for the illumination of benighted minds, for the conversion of infidels, for the comfort of wounded consciences, for the relief of the afflicted and the persecuted, for the recovery of those who had gone astray, and for the establishment, confirmation, and fruitfulness of those who had believed through grace. He found in this subject, all that was necessary to confute the vain philosophy of Pagans, to abase the pharisaical pride and presumption of the Jews; and to turn the abandoned sinner from Satan to the living God.

It is the knowledge of Jesus Christ and of his saving power, which delivers men from the kingdom of darkness, sets them free from bondage to this present evil world, and from the tyranny of sin. When the natural sun rises on our hemisphere, the horizon is cleared, and the darkness flies away; so, when the Sun of righteousness breaks forth upon us in his glory, with healing under his wings, diffusing the riches of his saving light, we are made wise unto salvation.

It was, therefore, the constant method of the penman of this epistle, in all those efforts to evangelize the world in which he was so amazingly successful, *to teach and to preach Jesus Christ*: to set him forth in all the dignity and glory of his person, in all the efficacy of his atonement, and in all the richness and fulness of his grace. It is the dignity of his person which gives value to his sacrifice. It is on this account, that his blood is called the blood of God, his righteousness the righteousness of God.

The first part of the divine Saviour's character, given us in these verses is, "He is the image of the invisible God." In his divine nature, he is the exact likeness of the Father, as One with him in essence and perfection. In his office-qualifications and performances, he is the Father's representative image, who, being a pure Spirit is, in his own nature, invisible to mortal eyes. No man hath seen God, or can see

him. His essence is infinite and incomprehensible. His voice was never heard, his shape was never beheld. He never assumed any visible form. It was Christ who appeared and spake to his saints, to patriarchs and prophets under the former dispensation; of whom it is here said, that he is the Father's image, his natural, essential, and eternal image.

This designs more than a similitude, or representation. It implies sameness of nature and perfections. It indicates no inferiority, as is evident from what is afterwards asserted of the Redeemer in these verses. It must be allowed that some images are perfect and complete. They have in them an entire, exact, and adequate resemblance of the subjects which they represent. Thus we call a child the image of his father; because he hath not only the shadow or figure of his father, but his nature and properties. This is the sense of the apostle in this place.

No man surely will dare to say, that Christ is an *imperfect* image of his Father. Who could endure to hear an assertion so full of blasphemy? Since Jesus himself saith, "He who hath seen me, hath seen the Father." What is that image of which it may be said, 'He who hath seen it, hath seen the very subject which it represents?' This can be affirmed of no image but that which is perfect; which fully contains in it all the nature of its original.

It is true, the term sometimes means, an imperfect representation. So man is said to be the image of God, because he hath, as renewed by divine grace, some resemblance of him. But in the text, the term is to be understood in the highest sense. Thus the apostle to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus as the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. The same glory which shines in the Father, is resplendent in the Son. For their essence is forever one.

The Son is the image of his Father, in his nature, in his attributes, and in his works. In his nature he is of the same substance with the Father. Hence the sacred writers con-

stantly testify, that Jesus is God, the true God, and the great God. They speak of him, as their God; they say concerning him to those whom they address, "Behold your God," and they speak of him in the loftiest terms of adoration, as over all, God blessed for evermore. He is held forth as the object of worship to angels and to men. "Let all the angels of God worship him. All men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." And every one knows that supreme adoration is only due to God.

Jesus is the image of the Father in his attributes. The Father is *eternal*, so is the Son. "Before Abraham was, I am." The heavens shall vanish away, and wax old as a garment, but to the Son of the Most High, it is said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." He is the everlasting Father; or, as it may be read, The Father of eternity. *Immutability* belongs to God. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. He knows no change, either in his being or his will. The Father is *infinite*; he fills heaven and earth with his immensity, and is present every where. This is true of the Son. He was in heaven at the same time that he spake with Nicodemus upon earth; "No man hath ascended up into heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." To his ministers and his churches he says, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Where two or three meet in my name, there am I in the midst of them." He is in the midst of our assemblies, even while he sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. The Father hath perfect knowledge of all things past, of all things present, and of all things to come; For his understanding is infinite; that is, his understanding is absolutely without limits. To deny this, is to deny his Deity. The same perfection of knowledge is justly attributed to the Son. "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." He is wisdom itself. It is the peculiar prerogative of God to search the heart of man, to try his reins, and to know what is in him. Of Jesus it is said, that, even in his state of hu-

miliation, he knew what was in man; he knew the thoughts of all with whom he had to do on earth; and whoever deny him this prerogative, he has assured us, that he will make all his followers sensible of it. "I will make all the churches know, that I search the heart and try the reins."

If omnipotence is ascribed to the Father, the same is attributed to the Son, whose name is not only the Mighty God; but the Almighty. In short, the Father hath no essential property but what is found in the Son.

Jesus is the image of his Father in the works of his hands. He has taught us how perfectly he represents his Father in this respect. "What thing soever the Father doth, the same also doth the Son." If the Father governs the world, the Son hath universal empire over all creatures. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom shall never be destroyed. If the Father loved us with an everlasting love; the Son did the same. If the Father chose us to salvation from the foundation of the world; the Son says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you." If the Father gave the Son to die for our sins, and to save our souls; the Son also gave himself. If the Father raise the dead and quicken them; the Son is the resurrection and the life, and will raise us up at the last day.

I would here just briefly mention some of those miraculous works which Jesus wrought on earth. By reviewing these with an attentive and impartial eye, we shall see, that in his works, Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

It must indeed be owned, that in the ages which preceded the Messiah's appearance on earth, there were extraordinary men whom the Lord seemed to make the depositaries of his power. Moses wrought miracles in Egypt, and in the wilderness; heaven and earth seemed to be obedient to his word. Elijah and Elisha were invested with the same power. But how evidently may it be seen, that in their highest and most wonderful operations, they were but men. Their miracles carried in them all the marks of weakness and of dependence in those by whose instrumentality they were effected. Mo-

ses, for instance, performed none of his prodigies but by a mysterious staff, which was called the rod of God. Without that, he was but as other men. The Lord connected the virtue of miracles with this rod, to teach us, that Moses himself was, in his hand, but a frail and weak instrument, whom the Omnipotent employed to perform his great wonders. The Son of God wrought greater miracles even without speaking a single word. The touch of his garment healed the most inveterate diseases. Moses could not communicate to his followers his wonder-working power. He had received it from heaven, and he had no ability to convey it to others. But Jesus Christ could say to his disciples, "The works which I do shall ye do also, and greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father. Moses performed all in the name of the Lord; Jesus Christ wrought his miracles in his own name, testifying that the works of the Father were his works. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." His miracles bore no marks of dependence, or of insufficiency in himself. None of the prophets ever spake the language that he did, when he attributed to himself the great things which were wrought by his hands. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not."

He gave sight to those whose benighted eyes had never beheld the cheering light. The dumb, at his command, opened their joyful lips to speak his praise. He unstopped the deaf ear, to hear the words of everlasting life from his mouth. He caused the lame man to leap as an hart, in transports of joy and gratitude. The loathsome leper was healed by his touch. Yea, all manner of diseases, which mocked the force of medicine, and baffled the skill of the ablest physicians, fled at his rebuke. Diseases blended with the earliest seeds of life, and rivetted in the constitution by long continuance. He removed them, not by tedious applications, painful operations, or costly prescriptions; but in the twinkling of an eye, by a word from his lips, a touch of his hand, or even by the bare act of his sovereign will. Instances of this kind were not few and rare; the whole of his public

ministry was replete with an unintermitted series of those healing miracles, the least of which was enough to bespeak his almighty power and Godhead.

The fig-tree, covered with spreading leaves, but destitute of fruit, withers away at his rebuke, is dried up from the very roots, and perishes for ever.

In the watery deeps, his all-piercing eye discerned the fish which had swallowed a piece of money, and his powerful hand guided it to Peter's hook. How strange, that any fish with money in its mouth should be caught by the angler, with money just of such a value as was wanted, and that this should be the very first fish which offered itself! The eye of omniscience saw these seemingly fortuitous incidents, and the hand of omnipotence over-ruled them all.

He walked serenely on the rolling surges of the deep, as on a pavement of marble. When the waves raged horribly, he spoke their most tempestuous agitations into perfect stillness. The boisterous winds heard his commanding voice, and instantly obeyed their Maker's word. They were awed into silence, and there was a great calm.

He raised the dead to life again. He opened the eyes, which, according to the course of nature, were sealed in everlasting night. The heart, which had forgot its vital motion, at his command, resumed its former active spring. The crimson current, which was not only congealed and stagnated by the cold hand of death, but changed to putrefaction, at his order, begins its wonderful circulation afresh through every vein. The departed soul, which had entered the regions of the invisible world, at the Redeemer's signal, returns to its tenement of clay.

He displayed his omnipotence in respect to those malignant beings, the devil and his angels. At his command, they abandoned their conquests, and relinquished their habitations. They owned his sway, and were constrained to cry, "We know thee who thou art, thou Holy One of God, we beseech thee, torment us not." Whole legions of these fierce and indignant spirits were dispossessed by him, and driven to

seek rest in desert places, or permitted to spend their rage on the most sordid brutes.

These few instances may suffice to convince us, that Jesus is the image of the invisible God in his works.

It is added in the words under consideration, "Who is the first-born of every creature: for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." The word made use of by the apostle, and translated *the first-born*, is sometimes used in an active sense, and ought to be understood in that light here. As such it must signify, the first-begotten or former of the whole creation. The sacred penman puts this out of doubt, for thus he proceeds to explain his meaning. "For by him were all things created." These and the following words contain the reason why the apostle calls Jesus Christ, the first-begotten, or the first parent of every creature.

Without perplexing the reader with tedious criticisms, it may suffice to observe, that the word is used in the sense above explained, by so ancient and correct a writer as Homer, and is the same as the first parent, or the first Creator. Jesus Christ is the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. The dominion of the Redeemer over the world, is founded on his being the Creator of it. His nature has a transcendent excellency, infinitely superior to any thing that is made. This is the sense of the inspired logician in our text, "He is the Parent of the whole creation, producing and giving birth to all, for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers: all things were created by him and for him." This proves him to have had an eternal existence: this shews that he must have the supreme government over all creatures, since they were all formed by him. The words are not to be understood metaphorically, but literally. All things were made by him, not as an instrument, but as the efficient cause, in conjunction with the Father and the

Holy Spirit. He that built all things is that incomprehensible Being whom we call God.

The apostle amplifies this point, he seems to have been animated and ravished with the contemplation of it; and lest we should overlook so important a proof of the dignity of our Redeemer, he dwells upon it. All things were created by him that are in heaven; the celestial luminaries which dazzle us with their splendour, were formed by his hand. The sun, the moon, and all the starry lamps on high, are the production of his wisdom and power. Not only so, but the yet higher glories of invisible and angelic beings, who dwell and reign above, by whatever names, or by whatever honours they are distinguished, were all created by him.

Thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers, with all the various orders of heavenly spirits, are of him. All the inferior, as well as the higher orders of creatures, are his workmanship; even down to the smallest worm, or the minutest atom; they were brought into being by that Jesus in whom we are directed to trust for our everlasting salvation.

All things bear witness to his power as their Creator, and are subservient to his interests as our Mediator. The bright luminaries which garnish the heavens; beasts and creeping things, mountains and hills, fruitful trees and cedars, which replenish the earth; metals and minerals, gems and fossils; the subterraneous riches of nature, or things which are under the earth, are the work of his hands.

If the heavens rolling above our heads serve us for a canopy, if the earth be firm under our feet to serve us for a support, it is he who is the Author of both. For to him it is said, in strains of supreme adoration, "Thou, Lord, hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands." If numberless creatures, near and remote, contribute to the happiness of man, it is he who has formed them. For without him nothing was made that was made. If the Jews received miraculous deliverances in Egypt, if they gained complete victories over the nations, it was he who procured them. The angel of God's presence

saved them. In his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. If we are reconciled to God, it is he who made our peace. If we have received the Comforter, it was he who sent him. These are his gracious words, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

If, after this life, our souls are carried into the bosom of God, it will be by his adorable hands. "Lord Jesus," said one of his exemplary servants, "receive my spirit." If our bodies are raised from their graves, if they be recalled to life, after they have been reduced to ashes, he alone will re-animate them. For he is the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in him, shall never die.

He will make his appearance again at the end of the world; in the clouds of heaven, in all his power and majesty, accompanied with myriads of the celestial hosts. All the nations of the earth shall be assembled at his awful feet, expecting the decision of their eternal destiny. The universal Lord, the Sovereign of the world, will pronounce the decisive sentence upon them all. Men of the greatest name, princes, kings, and potentates will be as nothing before him. Even the venerable prophets of God, the Abrahams, the Moseses, the Davids of his ancient church, and the apostles and evangelists of New Testament times, will bow submissive at his feet. He will be exalted above all power, above all dominion, above all that is called great, in heaven, or upon earth. He will appear, not only as the sole Arbitrator of life and death, but as the King of immortal ages, the Sovereign of eternity. Then will misery and happiness both consume, and both everlasting, be awarded by his sentence. He will condemn the rebellious angels, and the ungodly world, to chains of darkness and dungeons of despair. He will bestow on the righteous, the inheritance of heaven, and bid them enter into the fulness of joy. Then will immutability seal, and eternity execute his sovereign sentence.

But the enraptured apostle is not satisfied with what he has before affirmed, concerning the divine Redeemer's being the Former of the universe; he goes on to set forth the dignity of his person, by asserting, that all things were created for him. The earth which bears us, the plants which nourish us, the sun which enlightens us, the air which refreshes us, and the angels which encamp round about us, were made for him; to serve his designs, to accommodate and supply his family, and in all, to set forth his glory.

The whole world was built, and is kept in being, for him, till he has finished the work of our complete salvation. Then will he dissolve the heavens, and burn up the earth, with all the works which are therein. The universe was brought into existence, and is continued in its present form, for the display of his infinite excellency. How does this consideration bespeak the dignity of him who assumed our nature, who bare our sins, and gave his precious life a ransom for our souls! This all-glorious person is he who bought us with his blood, and obtained eternal redemption for us.

All things, whether high or low, great or small, visible or invisible, were created for him as their ultimate end, that he might, one way or other, be glorified in them and by them. They are made subservient to the designs of his mediatorial kingdom. They exist for this very end, to the present moment. He takes delight and complacency in them, and in the display of his own infinite perfections in their formation and support. Angels were created to worship him, and to be as flames of fire to execute his will. Saints are formed by him, to shew forth his praise. Let not the reader pass over this part of the subject, without particular attention. All things were created for him.

It is added, "He is before all things." Not only in dignity, as has been shewn, but in existence. This must evidently appear from his being the Maker of all. He planned the heavens, he marshalled the stars, he fixed the bounds and the laws of the universe. He was with the Father before the wheels of time began to move, and was daily his delight, re-

joining always before him. With the office which he sustains as Mediator, he was invested from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. He is even called the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

He was predicted and promised to men from the beginning of time. No sooner had man fallen than he was revealed as his great Restorer. In succeeding ages, it might seem, as if the operations of the adorable Jehovah were but to prepare men for the arrival of the Lord of glory. If he manifested himself to the patriarchs, it was to confirm them in the faith of his coming. If he inspired the prophets, it was to announce his approach. If he chose a nation to himself, it was that they might be the repository of this great mystery. If he prescribed sacrifices and religious ceremonies to men, it was with a design that they might be shadows and types of him who was to come. The various occurrences which took place upon earth, seem to have been intended to lead to this event. Kingdoms and empires rose and fell to prepare his way. All nature laboured and travailed in pain for the birth of that Just One, who was to deliver it from its curse.

His coming was foretold for the space of four thousand years, by various prophets and holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. It was, in effect, desired by all nations, prefigured by all ceremonies, spoken of through all successive ages, and waited for by all those who had any true knowledge of God, or reverence for his name. The patriarchs died with this profession in their mouths, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord;" the righteous lived in this expectation. Fathers taught their children to desire it, and this desire was perpetuated, as a most important branch of domestic religion, from age to age. Among the heathens there were some who saw, at a distance, the brightness of the star of Jacob. The all-wise God permitted his name and his coming to be announced by their oracles, who is a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel.

The most illustrious men, who were, from time to time,

raised up in the ancient church, were but so many imperfect types of Jesus, each one of them representing some particular trait of his life, or of his ministry. Melchisedeck prefigured his priesthood, Abraham his being the head of the church, Isaac his sacrifice, Job his sufferings, Moses his mediatorial office, Joshua his leading the people into the promised land, David and Solomon the conquests of his grace, and the glory of his kingdom.

It is still farther added, "By him all things consist." Unsupported by his mighty arm, the universe would immediately fall into confusion, or sink into its original nothing. In him we live, and move, and have our being. Should the reader be disposed to object to this application of the words just cited, and maintain that they are spoken of the Father, let him remember what Jesus says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." That gracious Redeemer in whom all our hopes should centre, is present every where, to sustain the creatures he has formed. His providential influence is all-powerful, and ever active through the universe. The various orders of creatures are continually preserved in being, in regularity, and in harmony by his wise and powerful hand. They keep the station which he ordains. This, and much more is evidently implied in what is here affirmed of our Redeemer, that by him all things consist.

This glorious and adorable Emmanuel hath, in infinite condescension, united poor, miserable and helpless sinners to himself, by ties the most intimate and endearing. For this title is given him among the rest, "He is the head of the body, the church." As the head, he gives animation to the body; for you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. The union subsisting between him and you, who are real believers, is a vital one; so that because he lives, you shall live also. It is an union close, intimate, and indissoluble. As the head, he is the ornament, the defence, and the all-powerful actuator of the body. Without him ye can do nothing; but his grace is sufficient for you, and his strength

is made perfect through weakness. From his fulness ye all receive, and grace for grace. He has a fellow-feeling with the meanest of his members; for he is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and afflicted in all your affliction. As the head contrives and acts for the whole of the natural body, so Jesus acts for you. His life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension and intercession, are all for your interest, in your stead, and for your advantage.

To him with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the one JEHOVAH, let us then ascribe equal and everlasting adoration, Amen.

AN
ESSAY

ON
A N G E R.

Animum rege; qui, nisi pareat,
Imperat——— HOR. EPIST. II. 62.
Be angry, and sin not.—PAUL.

PREFACE.

IN compliance with the earnest solicitation of a few select friends, for whom I have the highest esteem, the ensuing discourse is, with diffidence and humility, submitted to the candour of the public. I am conscious of many defects in it, and wish they may not be found of such consequence as to prejudice the good cause which I desire above all things to promote. The subject is important, and it is hoped the author's aim in treating upon it will be deemed laudable. Those who know his circumstances, may perhaps be disposed to make some kind allowances for the inaccuracies they may here meet with, and peruse these pages with Christian simplicity, rather than the severity of criticism.

THE intelligent reader will observe, that I have availed myself of many hints and observations of the most valuable and approved authors, which I thought pertinent and striking. I have sometimes forborne to mention the names of those authors, not that I might appropriate their labours, or usurp their honours; but that I might not crowd the pages of this diminutive performance by ostentatious quotations. I hope this general acknowledgment will be deemed a sufficient apology for the liberty I have taken in this behalf.

It is not to be expected that many things can be advanced on moral subjects entirely new. The finest and most beautiful thoughts concerning the government of

our passions, and the regulation of our manners, have been carried away before our times; and little is left for us, but to glean after the ancients, and the most approved of the moderns.

I HOPE it will appear that it has been my endeavour throughout the whole to advance nothing on the subject but what is consonant with the sacred oracles, the infallible rule of faith and practice; and that my design is to promote that meekness, benevolence, peace and love, which are the brightest ornaments of the Christian character.

*Brearley-Hall, near Halifax, }
Oct. 30th, 1788.*

INTRODUCTION.

UNGOVERNED anger is a fruitful source of mischief to human life. Many of the scenes of public calamity and private distress, which strike us with astonishment and horror, have originated from this direful spring. It is this which hath overspread the earth with blood and slaughter; it is this which hath so often filled the poisoned bowl, loaded the murderous pistol, and pointed the assassinating dagger. It hath through successive ages furnished ample materials for the poet's tragic muse, and the orator's pathetic declamation.

The wrath of princes hath embroiled kingdoms in war and bloodshed. It hath subjected nations to continual frights and losses, and made death and terror continually to walk about in their most horrid forms. Then what desolation reigns! Rest is disturbed, property destroyed, families are broken, friends are suspected, enemies are feared, laws are trampled upon, commerce is ruined, business is neglected, cities are wasted and filled with heaps of slain.

The wrath of priests hath deluged the church in blood, the blood of those "of whom the world was not worthy:" it hath slain its thousands and ten thousands. Detestable bigotry, what hast thou done! Cruel superstition, unhallowed rage, what havock have ye made in the fold of Christ! Nothing can be more remote from the genius of the gospel of peace, from the nature of the religion of love, or from the precepts and example of him whose name is the Prince of peace, whose nature is love, whose first and great command is charity, and who has left us an example of meekness and lowliness of heart.

The miseries and mischiefs occasioned by lawless anger in private societies, and domestic connexions, are without end. "Where envying and strife are there is confusion and every

evil work." The disunion of churches, the distraction of families, and the disquietude of neighbourhoods, arise in general from ungoverned anger, that root of bitterness, that fruitful source of human woes.

Be this then the subject of our present meditation: and may the light of Divine revelation guide our researches; and the Spirit of peace and love seal instruction on our hearts!

Anger, according to Mr. Locke, is uneasiness, or discomposure of mind, on the receipt of any injury, with a present purpose of revenge.

Anger is displeasure: its opposite is complacency. It is that sensation which we feel when a person seeks to prevent us from obtaining the good we wish to enjoy, when he strives to deprive us of the good we possess, or when he endeavours to bring upon us the evil we dread.

Anger is defined by Mr. Hutchinson to be a propensity to occasion evil to another, arising from the apprehension of an injury done by him. It is accompanied with sorrow and grief, a desire of repelling the affront, and making the author of it repent his attempt, and repair the damage we sustain by him.

In the sacred writings, anger is often attributed to God; "He is angry with the wicked every day." Not that he is liable to those irregular emotions which produce, or are produced by this passion in men; but because he is resolved to punish the wicked with the severity of a provoked father, or an incensed master.

Anger is often joined with fury, even when attributed to the Almighty. We read of the heat of his anger, and the fierceness of his wrath: and how much is the power of his anger to be dreaded! This sets forth the awful, the accursed nature of that which the long-suffering God so much resents; i. e. sin. The impenitent, the obstinate sinner, because there is wrath, should beware, lest he be taken away with a stroke; and then a great ransom cannot deliver him. He should flee from the wrath to come!

Neither every kind, nor every degree of anger, is to be condemned: the passion simply, and in its own nature, cannot be sinful. Two reasons, I think, may convince us of the truth of this:—

1. It seems to have been planted in the original frame of human nature. Every power of the human mind is now perverted by sin. Anger, among the rest, is become a depraved passion; but it existed before it was depraved: and, being the appointment of him who is perfect in purity, must in itself be an innocent passion, allowable on just occasions, and to be exercised in a proper and becoming manner. "Be angry and sin not." To endeavour to banish it entirely from our minds, would be an attempt equally foolish and fruitless.

2. The blessed and holy Jesus himself, that pattern of perfection, who has left us an example that we should walk in his steps, was, when on earth, sometimes angry. "And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith to the man, Stretch forth thine hand," Mark iii. 5. Here is anger without sin; anger in one who knew none, and in whose spirit there was no guile. Nay, it would be no hard task to prove that this anger was a virtue. The hardness of their hearts called for this holy resentment. Their blindness was obstinate, their opposition to him was unreasonable to the highest degree. Such a temper, such a conduct could not be looked upon with coolness and indifference.

If we ourselves were perfectly free from sin, and were to converse only with creatures entirely innocent, it does not appear that there would be any occasion for the exercise of anger. But we live in a world where iniquity abounds, where oppression and injustice are every day practised; and as such there are many occasions for a righteous and holy resentment. "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." God, who does nothing in vain, has implanted in our natures the irascible passions, that we might rebuke those who trample on his laws, and treat their fellow-creatures with cruelty.

But our natures, alas, are so depraved and disordered through our apostacy from God, that in this as in other things, we pervert that which is right. The anger which is exercised in general, is very sinful and mischievous. It is shewn on improper occasions: it is rash, it is cruel, it is outrageous, or it is revengeful. This kind of anger is ranked with malice, wrath, and bitterness; and we are charged, to lay it aside. "He that is (thus) angry with his brother without a cause, is in danger of the judgment."

To consider violent anger as a mere infirmity incident to human nature, is to form wrong conceptions of it. We should remember, that wrath and strife are as expressly enumerated among the works of the flesh, as uncleanness, murder, or drunkenness. The former may be as offensive to God, as ruinous to us, and as hurtful to our fellow-creatures, as the latter.

The suppression of rash anger, therefore, every one must own to be highly conducive to the comfort of human life, the honour of our holy religion, and the welfare and happiness of all societies, whether natural, civil, or sacred.

By a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price, we are enabled to govern ourselves when any thing occurs that is provoking. As temperance serves to check and moderate our natural appetites in regard to what is pleasing to the flesh, so by meekness we govern and guide our resentment of what is displeasing.

One of the seven sages of Greece left this maxim as a memorial of his knowledge and benevolence; 'Be master of thine anger.' He thought, it should seem, that he could not lay on posterity a stronger obligation to revere his memory, than by leaving them a salutary caution against furious and unguarded anger.

Rage, peevishness, and implacable resentment, can never be vindicated. They are so hateful and diabolical in their nature, and so mischievous in their effects, that they can never admit of any defence: every wise man condemns them. "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous: and who is able to stand before envy?"

Violent anger, it has been observed, makes itself visible by many outward signs. It renders the countenance sometimes red and fiery, sometimes pale and wan; it flames or scowls in the eyes, it wrinkles the brow, it enlarges the nostrils, and makes them heave; it fills the tongue with short spiteful words, or noisy threatenings, and the hands with weapons of violence to assault the offender; and sometimes it causes a tremour through all the limbs.

'There is (says an excellent and judicious author) no passion properly so called, and considered in itself as belonging to man, which is absolutely sinful in the abstract nature of it: all the works of God are good. But if passion be let loose on an improper object, or in an improper time or degree, or for too long a continuance, then it becomes criminal, and obtains sometimes a distinct name. Esteem, placed upon self as the object, and in an unreasonable degree, becomes pride. Anger, prolonged into a settled temper, often turns into malice; and if it be mingled with vices of the will, it becomes sinful also under that consideration.'

The mettle of a young and vigorous steed is not only harmless, but serviceable, when under due regulation. Much the same may be said of anger in the mind of man. When meekness is the bridle that restrains it, and wisdom the hand that guides it, we are safe; but if it be not under proper government, it breaks through all decorum, grows headstrong and outrageous, and threatens mischief to ourselves or those about us. So the unmanageable horse tramples on those who stand in his way, and perhaps throws the rider headlong on the ground: it should be restrained, therefore, with bit and bridle. We are not to submit to anger as to our master, but to govern it as our servant. It should never appear but on proper occasions, nor then but under the strictest guard. We should never suffer it to carry us beyond the bounds of decency: our resentment should never be either deep or lasting.

My design in this essay is, (1.) To point out the springs and causes of sinful anger—(2.) To consider with what we

may lawfully be angry—(3.) What restrictions should attend our anger, that we offend not God by it—(4.) To consider when it is sinful—(5.) To give some cautions against that anger which is violent and criminal, and to prescribe some rules for the suppression of it.

AN

ESSAY ON ANGER.

CHAPTER I.

THE SPRINGS AND CAUSES OF SINFUL ANGER.

THE irregularity of all our passions originates in the depravity of our nature. In the moral as well as the natural world we may plainly perceive the indications of some violent convulsion which has shattered and disordered the workmanship of the great Former of all things. The history of the several nations of mankind, through successive ages and generations, does but present us with a view of the follies and crimes of the descendants of Adam: the whole is a continued tragedy. On this habitable globe, as on a spacious theatre, the same repeated scene hath been exhibited of depredations, wrath, strife, debate, tumult, cruelty, oppression, and bloodshed; the follies of mankind breaking forth in a thousand guilty forms, and their passions hurrying them on to wretchedness and ruin. Hence the necessity of that wonder of omnipotence, unbounded wisdom, and love divine—the *redemption of the world by the blood of the Son of God*. The greatness of the remedy indicates the depth of the disease.

The nature of man cannot be supposed to come forth from the hands of its glorious and gracious Former in the state in which it is at present; far be it from us to admit a thought so dishonourable to him who is glorious in holiness. He formed man *after his own image*: but that image is defaced. He *made man upright*: but we have sought out *many inventions*. Nothing impure could come out of his hands: but we are now *all as an unclean thing*. It is true, amidst this wreck of human nature, there still remain some

traces which bespeak its Author: Man has not lost all his original brightness: some faint rays break through the horrid gloom in which he is involved, and indicate his ancient splendour. But all the disorder which reigns within us, and the follies which constantly appear in our outward demeanor, arise from an impure original, a nature deeply depraved, as the streams which issue from a corrupted fountain. To this general source we may trace violent anger: But to be a little more particular:—

1. A choleric habit of body seems to dispose some men to be always of a froward humour, and perpetually hard to please: this is their settled temper.—Their anger and resentment are ever ready to rise on the slightest occasion: they are angry with the work they are performing, or the instrument in their hands, when they cannot succeed to their wish: they are often out of humour they know not why, and angry with they know not what; like Jonah, who was angry with the wind. The reverse of this character is the man who is slow to anger: such a one, says Solomon, *is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his own spirit, than he that taketh a city.*—The temperament of the body may have considerable influence in disposing us to irascibility, or to natural mildness, since the passions are not merely the operations of the mind: they are mental exertions, in conjunction with the ferments of the blood, and the commotions of animal nature. The passions are those powers in man which are of a mixed nature, and belong partly to the soul and partly to the body. When we see an object for instance, that provokes our resentment, we not only feel some impression of mind, but some kind of commotion in our bodies, which we are not well able to explain: the animal spirits are agitated, the blood is thrown into a fermentation, the effects of which are very apparent to those who observe us, and cannot be concealed. Our brow, our eyes, our nostrils, our cheeks, our voice, all betray us on this occasion. Now since it is evident that our natural constitutions are very different, it must be allowed that some habits of body are

more disposed to irascibility than others. Something like this, indeed, is very evident in brutes: among those of the same species, some are much more disposed to anger than others. And hence it is that we see among men an hereditary tendency to some prevailing passion. The hot and choleric propensity predominates in some families, and runs in the blood from father to son. This may be termed a natural cause, or spring of excessive anger.

2. Pride.—A contentious spirit, inspiration assures us, originates in pride. “Only by pride cometh contention. Proud and haughty scorner is he who dealeth in proud wrath.” It is pride that makes men passionate. They cannot bear the least slight, or that which hath the appearance of it, because they think themselves of so much importance. We have a remarkable instance of this in Haman: he is enraged, filled with indignation, and breathes nothing but revenge. The life of an individual cannot suffice; the blood of a whole nation must be shed to cool his wrath, and lay his vengeance to sleep. What is the cause of this desolating decree? An individual fails to pay him that idolatrous obeisance of which he thought himself so worthy: but this was an act of obeisance to which Mordecai in his conscience could not submit. Who does not see that if it should be asked, “What meaneth the heat of this great anger;” the answer must be, it originates in pride? Pride keeps men in continual vexation, while the meek and lowly possess their souls in peace and patience. The proud man’s character is so odious, that he meets with more affronts than other men; and indeed he has so good and so high an opinion of himself, that he considers those things as affronts of which an humble man would take no notice. He finds not that submission in his dependents, or respect from his equals to which he thinks himself entitled: hence his life is made up of disquietude and distraction. Angry, resentful, malevolent passions, torment his soul, haunt him like spectres, and rob him of repose. So just is the remark of the wisest of men: “It is better to be of an humble spi-

rit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud."

It is pride that fills the world with so much animosity. We forget what we are, in the fulness of self-esteem. We claim attentions to which we are by no means entitled, and we are rigorous to offences as if we ourselves had never offended. If pride were subdued, passion would quickly subside. It is hard for a haughty man ever to forgive one who has caught him in a fault: his resentment will hardly cool till he has regained the advantage he has lost, and provoked the other to do him equal wrong. He hates the man he has once offended.

3. Ignorance is frequently the cause of sinful anger.—A weak mind is easily kindled into resentment. A wise man may be angry when there is a sufficient cause for it, but his anger is restrained by prudence and discretion. It is therefore a necessary qualification in a Christian minister, that he be "not soon angry. A fool's wrath is presently known;" it rises and flames on the slightest provocation, it flashes in his countenance like lightning, and breaks out into such indecent expressions and behaviour as betray his weakness and folly. A prudent man covereth shame, by suppressing his resentment, maintaining possession of himself, and keeping his mouth as with a bit and bridle. The man of ungoverned anger saith to every one that he is a fool. "Nabal is his name, and folly is with him." He is jealous and suspicious, ready to catch at what he calls an affront, sudden in resenting it, and unguarded in expressing his resentment. Solomon therefore gives us this necessary caution: "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. The discretion of a man deferreth his anger:" it disposes him to be cautious of giving ear to false accusers and slanderers of his neighbours, who, as Satan's instruments, would incense him against others without just grounds. A discreet man defers the admission of anger till he has thoroughly considered all the circumstances of what, at first sight, appears to be a provocation, till he has seen it

in a just light, and weighed it in an even balance. Nor will such a one be over nice and critical in his resentment of what may be really deemed an offence against him: he knows that "it is the glory of a wise man to pass over a transgression."

The bluster and noise of some men seem to indicate a consciousness of the narrowness of their own understandings. They feel their own ignorance and insufficiency, and appear determined to gain by their clamours, that regard of which they know themselves to be undeserving. How much are the servants and domestics of such men to be pitied! They are all the day long stunned with the bawlings, and terrified with the fury of one whom they cannot but be tempted to despise. Seneca justly observes, that this passion indicates weakness. Little children, aged men, and such as are infected by disease, are most subject to it.

4. Covetousness is likewise a cause of sinful anger.—When the covetous man is crossed in his designs, blasted in his hopes, or disappointed in his wishes, he sinks into impatience and fretfulness. Ahab coveted his neighbour's vineyard; and on Naboth's refusing to comply with his unreasonable desire, he came to his house, "heavy and sore displeased, laid him down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread," 1 Kings xxi. 1—4. He had all the delights of Canaan at his command, all the wealth, the honour and the power of a kingdom, and a throne in his possession: but the covetous man, like the grave, never saith, "It is enough." Inordinate desire is never satisfied. Ahab is sick with vexation, he pines away with resentment, and breathes revenge and slaughter. "In his anger he slew the man, in his self-will he digged through the wall," and took possession of his innocent neighbour's estate: but the curse of God blasted his enjoyment. He pierced himself through with many sorrows, being caught in those temptations and snares which drown men in destruction and perdition. If we attach ourselves to present objects as if we were to derive our whole felicity from them, it is no wonder we

are thrown into frequent distraction; because we are sure to meet with continual disappointment. We easily grow impatient when we are crossed in the pursuit of those things of which we are over fond. Jonah's excessive pleasure in his gourd laid the foundation for his grief and anger when he was deprived of it. "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house" with impatience and fretfulness, when he cannot obtain what his soul lusteth after, or when he loses what he has already gained.

5. Not duly watching over our own spirits.—The word of command given us by the Captain of our salvation is, "Take heed to your spirit," Mal. ii. 15. They that would be kept from sin, must keep a jealous eye upon their hearts; for there all sin begins. "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently," was the charge which God gave to his ancient people, Deut. iv. 9. The motions of the inward man should be carefully and constantly guarded. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." Our lives will be regular or irregular, comfortable or otherwise, according as our tempers and passions are guarded or not. This is the reason the wise man gives, why we should keep our hearts "with all diligence," Prov. iv. 23. It is not enough to guard our eyes, our ears, our tongues, our hands or feet; the heart itself should be carefully guarded and kept with all keeping, as the word there signifies. There are many ways of keeping things; as by care, by strength, by calling in assistance; and all are necessary to be used in keeping the heart from violent and angry passions. The man of moderation is certainly of a more amiable character than he who is rash, unguarded, and inconsiderate.

He who is of a testy humour, who takes no care to govern his own spirit, is boisterous and gentle by turns: he is either all storm, or all sunshine; and as such, his life is divided between guilt and repentance; one moment he is affronting and abusing you, the next he is asking you a thousand pardons. In conversation with his associates, his jealousy suspects some insult to be offered where all is perfectly inno-

cent; he is up in arms in an instant, without any opponent but his own suspicions. He answers the matter with hasty resentment before he hears it; and this is a folly and shame to him.

Those who are particularly addicted to this weakness, should watch and pray that they enter not into temptation. If at any time, when an affront is given, they find themselves unable to govern their spirits, it may be best to leave the ground, to withdraw from the company, and retire into their closets. Let them there bewail their pride and ungovernable passion, ask forgiveness of God, and implore the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, to subdue their irregular tempers, and teach them to imitate their divine Redeemer in meekness and lowliness of heart.

6. Not considering the evil of sinful anger.—A meek and quiet spirit is of such real value, that God himself beholds it with delight, and puts a high value upon it: it is "in the sight of God of great price," 1 Pet. iii. 4. Rash anger, as Seneca observes, is the most outrageous, brutal, intractable, and dangerous of all passions.—Homer represents the wrath of Achilles as the source of unnumbered woes to the Greeks.

We always blame rash anger in others; and though we are prone to think too favourably of our own conduct, we are frequently ashamed of this passion in ourselves. It is therefore very common to hear men exculpate themselves, and solemnly declare, they are not angry, when they give undeniable proofs that they are. Scarcely any thing lessens us more in the eyes of those about us, than violent anger. It exposes us to the derision of those who are not in our power, and to the hatred of our inferiors and dependents. If the angry man gains any influence by his bluster and noise, he pays dear for his power. He forfeits his own tranquillity, he loses the friendship of his equals, and incurs the hatred of his dependents. Solomon's counsel is in this, as in other things, highly worthy of attention. "Make no friendship with an angry man;" he is a churl, a Nabal, a man cannot speak to

him with safety; "and with a furious man thou shalt not go, lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul."

The torment attending this passion is strongly expressed in scripture. "A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment." He not only affronts his neighbour, and disquiets his family, but he "teareth himself," his own heart, his own bowels, "in his anger." "He taketh his flesh in his teeth, and putteth his life in his hand." Now did we consider these, and such like bitter fruits of anger, we should take more care to watch and pray against it.

An all-wise Providence has so ordered the succession of causes and effects, that the wrath which was meant to be poured forth upon others, frequently recoils, by its effects, on the wrathful persons themselves. "In the net which they had laid for others is their own foot taken; they fall into the pit which they had digged." This is evidently seen in the case of Haman: he is hanged on the gallows which his furious heart had prepared for the destruction of Mordecai.

7. Not duly considering the object which provokes us.—The circumstances of that which we apprehend to be a provocation, should always be attentively viewed. Nothing can be a stronger proof of a man's weakness, than his suffering his fiery passions to rise and flame before he knows whether there be any occasion. We should never be angry at a child, a servant, or a friend, till we see from a clear and impartial survey of circumstances, that we have just reason to be so. How much sinful anger would be prevented by a little deliberation! Were we but, when we suppose an affront is given us, "swift to hear and slow to speak," we should be "slow to wrath," James i. 19. We are often deceived with what at first sight appears to be a provocation. Anger should not be cherished till we are well assured that there is an offence committed. We should take time to deliberate on the merits of the cause, and forbear to be angry till we are well satisfied that it becomes us to resent what is done or said: otherwise we shall disquiet ourselves in vain, sink our own character, and expose our own folly, whilst we are pretend-

ing to correct what we often erroneously suppose to be amiss in others.

Human life, unhappy as it is, cannot supply great evils so often as the angry man thinks proper to fall into his fits of madness and fury; and therefore his rage frequently breaks out on trifling occasions. A little reflection afterwards must shew him his own meanness. In vain does he plead, that his passion is soon over; that he cannot help it, that he harbours no malice, and the like. These, says an ingenious writer, are arguments for pardoning a bull or a mastiff; but shall never reconcile me to an intellectual savage. He is ready, perhaps, to do the very next moment, something that he can never repair; and has nothing to plead in his own defence, but that he is apt to do mischief as fast as he can. Such a man, adds he, may be feared, he may be pitied; but he can never be loved.

These are some of the causes of sinful anger. A choleric habit of body—pride—ignorance—covetousness—unwatchfulness—not considering the evil of sinful anger—not considering the object which provokes us.

CHAPTER II.

WITH WHAT WE MAY LAWFULLY BE ANGRY.

I APPREHEND it is lawful for us to be angry:

1. With our own sin.—To be displeased with ourselves seems necessary to true penitence. The repenting sinner is grieved at his own folly: he is angry with himself that he has acted so unbecomingly, so unworthily, and in a manner so dishonourable to God. Thus Job declared he "abhorred himself:" he saw his own vileness, and was filled with indignation against his sin. The sons of Israel were "grieved and angry with themselves" when they were made sensible of the evil they had done in their cruel and unnatural treatment of their brother. Thus we may be angry and not sin.

Let us turn our indignation against that evil thing which stirs up the displeasure of the Almighty, and is the source of all our woe. We have done ourselves more injury by sin than all other persons could ever do us. 'Let a man,' says Seneca, 'consider his own vices, reflect upon his own follies, and he will see that he has the greatest reason to be angry with himself.'

2. We may lawfully be angry with the vices and follies of others.—That quietness of spirit which is in the sight of God of great price, is not a passive tameness of mind, where all steadiness of principle is renounced, and where a sinful conformity to the world vitiates the whole character. It is no part of Christianity to yield an unlimited compliance with the manners of mankind. As we are surrounded with those who work iniquity, and walk in the ways of death, the worst maxim, perhaps, which we can adopt, is that of always assenting to what we hear or see, and complying with what is proposed or done by others. The purity and dignity of the Christian character can never be maintained, without resolution to oppose what evidently appears to be wrong. Nehemiah's anger was just and reasonable when the Jews uttered their impatient complaints: "I was very angry when I heard their cry," Neh. v. 6, 7. He was not guilty of that rashness, which betrays men into the mischiefs of ungoverned passion. He "consulted within himself" before he expressed his displeasure: he took time for sober thought, and then rebuked the nobles. 'A good man (says Theophrastus,) must be displeased with the vices of the wicked.'

The meekness recommended in the word of God, is not a sinful easiness and indifference with respect to the abominations which are practised by those about us. It is not to act the part of Ephraim, who "willingly walked after the commandment" of idolaters, Hos. vii. 11. Where is our zeal for God, if we be entirely calm and unmoved when we see his laws trampled on, and hear his name dishonoured? In the case of the obstinacy and perverseness of the Jews in shutting their eyes against the clearest evidence, and hardening their

hearts against the tenderest love, to have felt no grief, no resentment, would certainly have been a defect. When a friend is ill-treated, or a brother unjustly reproached, it would be criminal to sit by in silence, and without concern: for, "as the north wind driveth away rain, so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." When an innocent person is injured, the defenceless widow oppressed, or the helpless orphan trampled upon, generosity and compassion call for some degree of resentment: but in this generous resentment, the mind, if awed by the majesty of God, and duly cautious, may still retain her own tranquillity and peace.

In some circumstances it is necessary to resent the injuries done, or the insults offered to ourselves: but the greatest caution is necessary here. If the offence be slight, and the damage we sustain trifling, it is better to pass it by in silence. The Christian is forbidden both by the precept and example of his Lord and Master, to render "railing for railing," or "evil for evil." But when the injury is great, or the offence often repeated, our silence would have the appearance of stupidity, and despicable meanness, in the eyes of those who are not to be influenced by any thing but their fears of falling under the scourge of justice, or the lash of the law.—The abominations of hardened transgressors, committed against God, should excite our holy resentment. "I beheld transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not thy law." Moses's anger was kindled when he saw the people given to idolatry. Thus Lot's "righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:" and he who is glorious in holiness, by a strong figure, is said to have been "grieved at his heart, when he saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth."

3. With the disorders found in the house of God.—In the Corinthian church there was a notorious offender, an incestuous person. Christianity being but in its infancy among them, the members of that church did not see the evil of this conduct, till the apostle laid it open before them. They immediately, on receiving proper information, took the ne-

cessary measures to express their detestation of the offender's conduct: they "put away from among them that wicked person;" and the apostle commends their holy "indignation and zeal," 2 Cor. vii. 11. The ancient Jews were censured that they were "not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph;" the sins, the disorders, and consequent calamities of the people professing to be the chosen of God, Amos vi. 6; Moses was the meekest man of all the earth; yet when God's honour was concerned, none more warm and resolute than he. Hence his resentment of the golden calf; when in holy indignation at that abominable instance of apostasy in a people so remarkably favoured and distinguished by the Almighty, he deliberately broke the tables at the foot of the mount. And when Korah and his company presumptuously offended, Moses, in pious displeasure, said unto God, "Respect not thou their offering." When the house of prayer was profaned, and made "a house of merchandize, a den of thieves," the precious Redeemer of mankind, who was "meek and lowly in heart," corrected the abuse with holy resentment: "he made a scourge of small cords, and drove them out of the temple." The apostle Paul was a pattern of meekness: he bore the greatest injuries and indignities with astonishing patience, both among heathens, Jews, and false brethren; yet in the government of the church, whenever there was occasion, he zealously used the rod of discipline.

4. With the disorders of our own families.—To preserve due authority in our families, so as to prevent or suppress disorder, negligence and vice, without forfeiting our own peace of mind, is, perhaps, in our present state of imperfection, as difficult a branch of duty as any assigned us by Providence. To "train up our children in the way in which they should go," to have them "in subjection with all gravity," to "teach our households the way of the Lord, and command them to keep it," is enjoined upon us, as heads of families, by the Sovereign of the universe. To "put away iniquity from our tabernacles," to stir up the slothful and negligent, to rouse the inattentive, and to restrain and correct

the vicious and unruly, is absolutely necessary. This cannot be done without manly resolution, constant circumspection, sobriety and gravity. Without a certain degree of courage in insisting on what is right, and in resenting and opposing what is wrong, a family would soon be ruined with licentiousness and disorder. The censure passed on Eli was very heavy: his "sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." In a family where no just authority is maintained by those whom God has placed at the head of it, every one will "walk in the way of his own heart;" and confusion, mischief, and ruin, will inevitably follow. The great secret of family-government lies in maintaining authority without moroseness, discipline without tyranny, and resentment of disorder without rash anger; in preserving decorum and regularity without wounding our own peace of mind. The wise and virtuous parent or master is armed with sedate resolution, and a proper firmness of soul. He knows that if his children and servants once conclude him to be incapable of resentment, they will deny him that regard which is his due, and indulge themselves in such liberties as good order forbids. The words of the royal Psalmist are so apt to our purpose, that to omit the recital of them could hardly be excused. "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart: I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight," Psalm ci.

We conclude then, that it is lawful for us to be angry with our own sin—with the vices and follies of others—with the disorders found in the house of God—and with the irregularities of our own families.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT RESTRICTIONS SHOULD ATTEND OUR ANGER THAT WE OFFEND
NOT AGAINST GOD.

THOUGH we are not absolutely forbidden to be angry, yet happy is he who has the least occasion for it. When the affairs of life seem to require a just resentment, we should consider it as a dangerous moment, and watch against such an excess of it as would be displeasing to God, hurtful to ourselves, and injurious to our fellow-creatures. The word of God spends its curses on those whose wrathful passions lead them on to cruel practices.—That our anger may not be offensive to God,

1. It should not be partial.—We should hate every false way. To resent some branches of vice, and connive at others equally pernicious, would be to incur the censure passed on the ancient Jews, who were “partial in the law.” To frown upon one offender, and spare another altogether as deep in guilt, would be to have respect of persons; and to be a “respecter of persons,” we are assured, “is not good,” Prov. xxviii. Such a conduct would leave ground of suspicion with regard to our sincerity. It might easily be inferred that our zeal was selfish, that our views were sinister, and that our resentment did not arise from a just sense of the evil of sin in its own nature. “Let nothing be done through partiality.”

2. It should be attended with pity and sympathy.—It has been observed that even when a public ruler puts the vengeance of the law in execution, and takes away the life of a malefactor for the good of the rest of the world, it should be done without the passion of private anger. He should rather exercise his own pity to the offender, even when he condemns him to die, and make him a sacrifice to the public vengeance. If private persons then so far give way to resentful passions, as to divest themselves of pity and sympathy towards an offender, they know not what manner of spirit they are of.

The apostle Paul highly resented the conduct of some who were “enemies to the cross of Christ, whose god was their belly, who minded earthly things, and who gloried in their shame;” but at the same time, his resentment was tempered with such a degree of pity and compassion, that the very mentioning of their names drew tears from his eyes, Phil. iii. 18.

Our reproofs and admonitions, though plain and faithful, should be tender and affectionate. The nature of the case may sometimes make it necessary to reprove with warmth; yet we should never do it with unfeeling resentment. “Restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” It is needful to be cautious, lest sinful anger shelter itself under the cover of zeal, against iniquity. “The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” A tongue “set on fire of hell” is not likely to promote the cause of heaven. To a man “overtaken with a fault,” we should shew that sympathy, kindness, and tenderness of heart, which we could wish might be shewn to us in a similar case. When we are clearly and fully convinced that there is just cause for our resentment, we should as much as possible let it appear that our anger is directed against the sin of the offender, rather than against his person.

3. It should be attended with proper arguments and endeavours to convince and reform.—When a man grows so violent against his fellow-creature as to seek and contrive to bring evil upon him, without any design or endeavour to reclaim him from his misconduct, it is properly termed revenge: this is always criminal. The laws of Christianity entirely forbid such a disposition. “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” Before we give way to our angry passions, we should take time to consider, as has been observed, whether there be any real offence committed, or any injury done; and whether it were accidental, or done with deliberate de-

sign. Things appear to a ruffled and heated mind very different to what in reality they are. When Julius Cæsar was affronted, he repeated the alphabet before he would open his lips to speak on the occasion. A little deliberation may set things before us in a juster light. If indeed we find on reflection, just cause for resentment, let the resentment be tempered with the kindness of friendly admonition. Let the offender see that we have his good at heart, and that all we wish to obtain is his conviction and reformation. We should not eagerly contend about matters of little moment, nor be unguarded and intemperate in our zeal.—The heathen moralist observes, that we should endeavour to reclaim an offender, not by the violence of anger, but by forcible, yet friendly admonitions: for surely the physician will not be angry with his patient whom he wishes to recover. Socrates finding his resentment too keen against his servant for an offence he had been guilty of, first corrected himself for that heat of temper, which his philosophy taught him to condemn, and deferred the attempt to reclaim the delinquent to a cooler hour. This precaution was truly commendable, and worthy to be imitated by those who call themselves Christians.

4. It should be attended with no rash or unwarrantable words or actions.—When anger rises to a high degree, it swells into wrath, fury, and rage: in that state it is termed a short madness. The furious man rages like a wild bull in a net: reason quits the helm: and some, by an excessive indulgence of this temper, pour out the most horrid language, fling about every thing that comes in their way, and act in other respects, for a time, the part of madmen. Nay, it is recorded of some that they have cherished this frenzy as fast as that they have actually grown distracted. Furious anger, say some philosophers, is the boiling of the blood about the heart, the fumes whereof rise so fast into the brain, that reason is for a time dislodged.

If we have just cause to be angry, which is far from being so often the case as we are ready to suppose, discretion should teach us to guard our tongues and our hands, till there

be no danger of running into indecencies: we should give our anger time to cool. Plato said once to his servant, who had been greatly wanting in his duty, 'I would beat thee but that I am angry.' The passionate man is provoked on every trivial occasion, and sometimes vents his rage in fierce vociferations, furious threats, and cutting reproaches. It is true his rage often fumes away in outcries of injuries done him, and protestations of vengeance: but if a child, a lackey, or an apprentice, be the object of his resentment, he will not be sparing of his blows, nor merciful in the use of his cane.

While we are in this world of sin and disorder, we must meet with provocations: but the frailty of the weak, the omissions of the negligent, the follies of the imprudent, and the levity of the fickle, should not so far ruffle our spirits as to cause us to use rash words, or to break forth into sudden acts of violence.

"What meaneth the heat of this great anger?" If fire be not kept in its proper place and degree, it may do great mischief to ourselves and those about us. Anger is fire, and may be serviceable under due regulation: but it requires strong restraints. Behold how great a matter a little degree of immoderate anger kindleth! When this passion is unguarded, it is the great disturber of human life, the enemy of private tranquillity, and of public happiness. The wise man tells us that anger is *outrageous*; when it rises to a high degree, it is like a breaking out of waters. It breaks through the bounds of reason, of conscience, of the laws of God and man, of friendship, and even of natural affection; as in the case of Cain, who slew his brother. "Cease from anger," therefore, "and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil."

What a frightful and odious spectacle is the man who delivers himself up to the tyranny of his violent and wrathful passions! What ridiculous airs he gives himself; what a storm appears in his disfigured countenance; what fury, what flames and fierceness in his eyes! He breathes out

direful threatenings; he abuses the wife of his bosom; he flies upon the children of his own body with the rage of a lion or tiger. He spares not his dearest and most valuable friends; tumult and disorder appear in his whole nature; distraction tortures his soul; his reason is beclouded; neither truth nor virtue, law nor justice, are any longer regarded by him. The man is transformed into a brute, or rather into a fiend and fury. Detestable sight! Who can behold him without horror? Fly from him; he is a disgrace to human nature. He is now only a fit companion for devils, and ought to be shunned and dreaded by human beings. Leave him to be scourged by the rage of his own diabolical passions; he is not fit for the society of reasonable creatures. He is so far from having any claim to the character of a Christian, and a child of God, that he is unworthy the name of a man.

Oh how necessary it is to suppress the first motions of immoderate anger; to quench the spark before it becomes a flame, and breaks through all bounds; Give the latent fire no vent, that it may be smothered and stifled, ere it break out to do mischief. Command your tongues to silence, and your hands to stillness, till your spirits are cooled; till calm and sober reason shall preside at the helm, and direct your operations. Have patience a little while, and the illusion which passion always raises, will vanish; you now behold every thing through a false medium.

It is recorded to the honour of Edward the Third, commonly called the Confessor, that one day being laid down upon the bed, one of his domestics, who did not know he was in the room, stole some money out of a chest he found open, which the king let him carry off, without saying a word. Presently after the boy returned to make a second attempt; the king called out to him without any violence of passion, 'Sirrah, you had best be satisfied with what you have got; for if my chamberlain come and catch you, he will not only take away what you have stolen, but also whip you severely.' The chamberlain coming in and missing the

money, fell into a great rage: but the king calmly said to him, 'Be content; the chest should not have been left open, the temptation was too strong for the poor youth; he wanted money more than we do, and there is still enough left for us.'

5. It should not be lasting.—When anger continues so long as to be fixed and rooted in the heart, when we refuse an accommodation, and are determined not to be reconciled, it is rancour, it is hatred, it is fixed malice. This kind of anger is slow, secret and revengeful, like that of Esau to Jacob: "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother." Anger may enter into the bosom of a wise man, but "in the heart of fools it rests," it resides, it remains; the fire continues to burn. Such a man gives place to the devil, to irritate and inflame him, and keep up turbulent and revengeful passions in his mind. He gratifies that malicious spirit by yielding to his destructive designs. He meditates revenge, and is pushed on to execute some dreadful purpose of sin and mischief. What need have we therefore to beware of lasting anger, and to stand on our guard whenever we find our spirits heated! "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," to unfit you for your evening devotions, or to disturb your sleep in the night: much less should it remain with you the following day.

Pythagoras, a heathen philosopher, recommended to his disciples, that if any quarrel should arise, or any degree of anger be cherished, they should, before the sun went down, shake hand and become friends again. Dr. Watts, in his excellent discourse on the passions, has given the following description of that slow and inveterate anger which is most of all to be dreaded. 'Sometimes it spreads paleness over the countenance; it is silent and sullen, and the angry person goes on from day to day with a gloomy aspect, and a sour and uneasy carriage, averse to speak to the offender, unless it be now and then a word or two of a dark and spiteful meaning. The vicious passion dwells upon the soul, and frets and preys upon the spirits: it inclines the tongue to tease the

offender with a repetition of his crime in a sly manner, upon certain seasons and occurrences, and that for weeks and months after the offence, and sometimes for years. This sort of wrath sometimes grows up into settled malice, and is ever contriving revenge and mischief. May divine grace form my heart in a better mould, and deliver me from this vile temper and conduct!—As we should seldom suffer our anger to be awakened, so the continuance of it should always be very short. The sullen and long continued resentment above described, is as much contrary to the grace of meekness as a sudden fit of rage and fury. And as it is a settled and deliberate passion, the guilt of it is more heinous, and marked with deeper aggravations in the sight of God.

That we offend not God by our anger, it should not be partial—it should be attended with pity and sympathy—it should be accompanied with proper arguments and endeavours to convince and reform—it should express itself in no rash or unwarrantable words or actions—it should not be lasting.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN OUR ANGER IS SINFUL.

ANGER is not absolutely forbidden to a wise and good man; yet the greatest care is constantly necessary, that we give not a wild and unwarrantable liberty to our anger. We must hold the reins of government with a strong and steady hand, lest our wrath should break out into forbidden mischief. In no part of our conduct are we more prone to offend. The divine rule is short, but very comprehensive: "Be angry and sin not." Our present business is, to consider when we transgress this royal law.

1. When we are angry with the providence of God, our anger is sinful and unwarrantable.—The events of providence are sometimes grievous and afflictive: they cross our inclinations, and seem to oppose our secular interests. Yet it

becomes us not to be angry, sullen, and impatient; to strive with our Maker, and to rage like a wild bull in a net; or to struggle and fret like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Humility and meekness would teach us to kiss the rod, to "bear the indignation of the Lord, because we have sinned against him." When Aaron beheld that awfully severe dispensation which cut off his two sons under the manifest displeasure of God, he "held his peace;" he uttered not a murmuring word, Lev. x. 3. On the other hand, the man after God's own heart was displeased on an occasion somewhat similar, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah, 2 Sam. vi. 8. Much happier was he when on a more trying occasion he uttered these words; "Behold, here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good in his sight," 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. Amiable temper! Submission and meekness here reign and triumph over every evil disposition. When Caius Caesar's banquet was interrupted by lightning, and his diversions spoiled by thunder, he was angry with the heavens, and reproached the Deity. Let us not resemble that impious monarch.

We have not, I think, a more striking instance of the power of anger against the conduct of Divine providence, than what appears in the character of Jonah. We wonder at the patience of Job; but the impatience of Jonah is not less surprising. That angry prophet was displeased with the forbearance and long-suffering of the Almighty. He was sent to preach to the Ninevites, and to declare to them, that within forty days their city should be destroyed. This declaration implied the idea of their continuing impenitent; Jonah's reluctance to deliver the message prevailed so far that he fled from the presence of the Lord—A storm is raised to chastise his disobedience—Jonah is cast into the sea, and swallowed by a great fish which God had prepared for that purpose. Miraculously preserved in the belly of the fish, he humbled himself, and offered up strong cries and tears to him that is able to save. God had respect to his humiliation; and commanded the fish to vomit him up on dry ground. He went,

at length, to deliver the awful message. The Ninevites repented, and God spared them; for great are his mercies. Jonah, instead of rejoicing at the success of his ministry, was displeased, and full of that restless impatience which always accompanies unreconciledness to the dispensations of Providence. While he sat in anxious expectation, waiting to see the issue of his prediction, the Lord provided a gourd, and made it come up over Jonah, to protect him from the heat of the sun: but all earthly enjoyments are transient, and of short duration. "Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd." When we set our hearts on any earthly comfort, we have reason to expect its speedy removal: the days of mourning for its departure are at hand. God prepared a worm and it smote the gourd, that it withered. No gourd can flourish, no worm can smite, but at his word. The prophet's joy was short indeed: while he rejoiced in the shadow of the gourd, he knew not what was doing at the root of it. Created comforts are withering things: they perish while we admire them: they come forth like flowers and are cut down. That proves least safe which is most dear.

But whether God gives or takes away; whether he sends a gourd or a worm to destroy that which he has sent, still he is carrying on the same design of good to us. His intention is to humble and instruct us, and confirm our hearts in his service. Jonah was to learn, by the loss of his gourd, compassion and tenderness. If we are morose, unkind and resentful towards our neighbours, the infinitely wise Disposer of events will find a way to teach us more of that temper and spirit in which he delights. And yet, who would have thought it; we find the prophet lost in impatience, and hurried away with angry passions for the loss of his gourd! Astonishing! This potsherd of the earth strove with his Maker, and yet was not broken to pieces! Seasons of trial are allotted us to show us what is in our hearts. If the private history of any of us were written by an inspired pen, and every secret thing laid open, how should we blush and tremble at the thought of its being made public to the world! Jonah

wished in himself to die, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." The God of patience asked him, "Dost thou well to be angry?" And he said, "I do well to be angry, even unto death!" Strange! to be angry at God, and angry too for a gourd; and still to justify his passion in the face of his Maker! How unaccountably anger blinds the mind, that a man under the influence of it should make light of sin, and bid defiance to death; nay, should even in the presence of the Divine Majesty, justify his rage, and wish to die under the influence of so bad, so shocking a disposition!

It is the unhappy conduct of some, that when the Almighty brings them under any sore affliction, they are fretful and angry with their relatives and friends around them. Patience would teach them to be calm and easy toward their fellow-creatures, while they endure divine chastisement: but instead of this, they scatter abroad their discontents in their own families, and many times make them fall heaviest on those who do all in their power to comfort and relieve them. Should these discontents be searched to the bottom, perhaps it would be found, that the spring of them is anger and impatience at the chastening hand of God. They are not so daring as to vent their uneasiness at Heaven in a direct manner; the thought of this would shock and terrify them: the stream of their resentment is therefore diverted from the Most High, and directed towards their fellow-creatures. This anger, as it is distressing to the friends and attendants of the afflicted, so it must be displeasing to Him who searches the heart, and knows the true spring and cause of it.

2. When we are angry with the laws of God.—His laws are holy, just and good; and every disciple of Jesus delights in them after the inward man. They are esteemed by him above gold and silver, and preferred in sweetness to honey or the honey-comb: yea, says the psalmist, "by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward." But rebellious minds dislike these restraints: instead of quarrelling with themselves, they are displeased with the

laws of their Maker. "They say unto God, depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him; and what profit shall we have when we pray to him?" If anger be, as Aristotle describes it, a desire to displease those who are displeasing to us, how hateful is this passion when it has the laws of God for its object! When its language is, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us!"

3. When we are angry with the doctrines of the gospel.—We see this kind of anger in the Jews, when they heard the preaching of Jesus. He spake as never man spake. Words of peace, pardon and salvation flowed from his lips: yet some of his hearers exclaimed, "These are hard sayings; who can hear them?" Sometimes they were "filled with indignation, and sought to lay hands on him," and destroy him, Luke iv. 28: In after days, they were grieved that the disciples taught in the name of Jesus, and some of them "contradicted and blasphemed." The wrathful man, says Seneca, is angry with truth itself, when it is opposite to his inclination, or his humour.

4. When we are angry at the good we see in others.—Thus Jonah was angry with the Ninevites for that which was pleasing to God, their repentance and humiliation. The psalmist speaks of some who "requited him evil for good, because," says he, "I follow the thing that is good." Joseph was hated for his dreams, and for his words; and Daniel for his continuance in prayer and supplication to his God. Cain, the wicked one, slew his brother, "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Perhaps there is no species of anger so diabolical as this—to be angry with others because of their excellencies.

5. When we are angry with those who differ from us in religious sentiments.—The church of God, since the days of its infancy, has been always more or less exposed to the wrath of the world. This wrath has frequently broke forth into all the rage of persecution: the godly have been pursued with fire and faggot, racks and tortures. They have "had trial

of cruel mockings, and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They have been stoned, they have been sawn asunder, they have been tempted and slain with the sword:" the very persons "of whom the world was not worthy, have wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they have wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth," through the fury of the oppressor. But the anger of persecutors, through the over-ruling power of the church's Head and Governor, has ever been made to turn against itself, to the destruction of its own purpose. The rage and policy of men have in vain united their efforts to extinguish the light of divine truth: the constancy and fortitude of those who have suffered in defence of it, have always had a much greater effect in promoting the good cause, than all the rage and cruelty of persecutors in diminishing it.

The heat of persecution on a religious account, is, in these our happy days, very much abated: if the fire be not quenched, at least it is smothered. The natural rights of mankind, of searching the Scriptures for their own direction in matters of religion, of thinking and judging for themselves, and acting according to the light they have, in what relates to conscience, the worship of their Maker, and the salvation of their souls, were never better understood than they are at present. Even in popish countries, some are beginning to emerge from the abyss of darkness, to assert their native rights; and by little and little, to shake off the fetters of religious tyranny. May their exertions be animated with increasing vigour, and their efforts crowned with success!

Why should I be displeased with any man for his differing from me in religious opinions? He has the same reason to be angry with me for the liberty I have thought proper to assume. The right of private judgment is the very ground of the reformation. Without maintaining that right in the fullest sense, we condemn all that was done in that glorious revolution, as nothing more than a faction in the state, and a schism in the church.

This right was asserted by our Lord Jesus Christ in the whole of his ministry. He charged his disciples to "call no man master on earth;" and exhorted the people to "search the Scriptures," and so to judge for themselves. Such an exhortation would have been full of impertinence, if the right of private judgment could be supposed to have been denied. The apostle Paul, and his fellow-apostles, maintained this right. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say." Their hearers assumed this privilege, "and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so."

Let us not therefore thunder out anathemas against those who may differ from us in some points of doctrine, or branches of worship; neither let us pass angry censures upon them. Let us remember, that meekness and love are essential to Christianity. Without these, "though we speak with the tongues of men and angels, though we have all knowledge, and understand all mysteries, we are nothing." Love is the "fulfilling of the law;" love is also the spirit and tendency of the gospel. Its author is the Prince of peace; and its sum and substance, "peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is nigh." What pity it is that Christianity should ever have been so explained as to promote all the violent and resentful passions that human nature in its deepest depravity is capable of; and to patronize the bloodiest cruelties that the world ever beheld! Surely there can be nothing more diametrically opposite than religion and revenge, piety and persecution, prayer and plunder, the service of God, and the slaughter of those who bear his image. Heat and violence, anger and resentment in religious disputes naturally lead on to persecution. "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water; therefore leave off wrathful contention before it be meddled with. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

One of the disciples of Jesus said to his Master, "We saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followed not with us." Jesus said, "Forbid him not." Afterwards, when the Samaritans did not receive him, John and James being too violent in their resentment, and having but a scanty acquaintance with the genius of the gospel, spoke of "commanding fire to come down from heaven to consume them;" Jesus turned and rebuked them, and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," Luke ix. 49—55. We pretend respect and zeal for the religion of Jesus; and shall we at the same time suffer ourselves to be carried away with that harshness and severity which are so opposite to its very nature and tendency? Shall we give all men reason to conclude, that whatever we may profess, real Christianity has no power over our hearts or lives? Let us not presume to retain the Christian name, if we are so entirely destitute of the Christian spirit, lest we draw upon our heads that awful censure, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, but thou art dead."

A meek and gentle disposition, amidst the strife of interfering interests, prevents the violence of contention, renews endearments, softens animosities, and keeps alive the seeds of harmony. Banish this temper of mind from a religious society, and suppose a body of men of angry, resentful and contentious spirits; and you have, instead of a Christian church, a house of strife, "a den of wolves ready to bite and devour one another," and in danger of being "consumed one of another." The solitude of a desert is preferable to such a society.

In respect to those who differ from us in religious opinions, we should make allowances for their education, the power of the prejudices they have early imbibed, and the influence of others over them. We should not exclaim against every mistake as heresy, or every error as blasphemy. This is harsh and unchristian-like treatment, more likely to irritate and harden, than to convince or inform. Religious disputes are seldom managed with that coolness and calmness of temper

which become the gospel of Christ. In those points of doctrine wherein wise and good men are differently minded, meekness and modesty should teach us not to be too confident; nor to censure and condemn those that differ from us, as if "we were the people, and wisdom should die with us." It is a humiliating consideration, and cannot be thought of without grief and shame, that there never have been greater, more outrageous, or more inveterate and lasting dissensions in the world, than among those called Christians, and upon the ground of their religious differences. The most inflexible animosities from age to age have been kept up on this score. Nothing, I am ready to conclude, hath brought greater scandal on the good cause, or tended more to prejudice and harden the infidel race against our holy profession. Merciful God! Thou author of peace, and lover of concord, forgive the angry contentions of those who call themselves thy children!

Angry zeal for the popish cause made dreadful havoc in the Irish massacre, in the reign of Charles I. The Papists resolved to cut off all the Protestants in Ireland at a stroke; and neither age, sex nor condition had any pity. In this indiscriminate slaughter neither former benefits, nor alliances, nor authority were any protection: numberless were the instances of friends murdering their intimates, relations their kinsmen, and servants their masters. In vain did flight save from the first assault; destruction met the hunted victims at every turn. Not only death, but studied cruelties were inflicted on the unhappy sufferers. The very avarice of the enraged revolvers could not restrain their thirst for blood; and they burned the inhabitants in their own houses, to increase their punishment. Several hundreds were driven upon a bridge: and from thence obliged, by these barbarians, to leap into the water, where they were drowned. In some places the Protestants were driven from their houses, to meet the severity of the weather, without food or raiment; and numbers of them perished with cold, which happened at that time to be peculiarly severe. By some ac-

counts, those who perished by all these cruelties are made to amount to an hundred and fifty or two hundred thousand: but by a moderate computation, they could not be less, according to our most impartial historians, than forty or fifty thousand.

I cannot wholly suppress, though I am unwilling to enlarge upon, the persecutions which the nonconformists, or dissenters from the establishment underwent in England for many years; when ministers and persons of private character lost their all, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, by heavy fines. Many were put in close confinement, their houses rifled and plundered, and not a few had their habitations burnt to the ground. The remembrance of those days of affliction is far from being pleasing. It has been computed, that among those who suffered for conscience-sake in this kingdom, the loss of near twenty millions sterling was sustained by one means and another. Ten, or according to the lowest reckoning, eight thousand persons, imprisoned for non-conformity, lost their lives in prisons and dungeons in those afflictive times.

6. When we are angry at reproof.—The wrathful man flies in the face of his reprover, and says with the Egyptian to Moses, "Who made thee a judge over us?" Exod. ii. 14. We should not fall upon our admonisher with railing speeches, fretting that he has found out our sore; but submit with meekness, and lay our souls under conviction, provided the reproof be just. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil that shall not break my head." It will heal the wounds that sin has given, and make my face to shine. It is most ungrateful to be angry with a kind reprover, who has our welfare at heart, and warns us of that which would be pernicious to us; then, if ever, our anger is to be condemned. When he that reproveth in the gate, is hated for his faithfulness, it may truly be said that iniquity abounds, and love waxeth cold.

A good man, says Seneca, rejoices when he is admonish-

ed: a wicked man cannot endure a reprover. If we do that which deserves a rebuke, and our friends are so just and kind as to deal faithfully with us, we ought not to quarrel with them, and return hatred for their love: we should suffer the word of exhortation, and take it patiently and kindly. Thus David blessed God for Abigail's counsel, and thanked her as his messenger: he hearkened to her voice, and accepted her person. The reprover may magnify the offence; his admonition may be defective in point of prudence; yet in the main, it is a real instance of kindness, and it would be highly criminal to resent it. It was no disparagement to Naaman to hearken to the reproof of his servant, when he turned away from the prophet in a rage: it is recorded to his honour. "As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear." These two excellencies are rarely to be found, a wise reprover, and an obedient ear; but when found they are of great value.

7. When our anger provokes us to wish or desire any thing unlawful.—When we are provoked to wish that the object of our anger may suffer some considerable inconvenience, our anger rises to malevolence; especially when we desire that some lasting mischief may attend the offending party. Perhaps the tender and affectionate parent, who on some just ground is angry with the child whom he dearly loves, may lawfully wish his child some present pain, in order to amend and cure his folly. This seems to be implied in the nature of parental correction; and the end of it is the child's real advantage: but to wish some lasting mischief to befall the object of our resentment, is base, malicious and wicked. Nor can those sudden wishes for our own death, which violent anger sometimes produces be at all excused. "It is better for me," said the angry prophet, "to die than to live: I do well to be angry, even unto death." Moses is celebrated for his meekness: and yet some expressions he used on certain trying occasions, indicate a defect even in that, for which he is most commended, Num. xi. 15. "If

thou deal thus with me, kill me I pray thee, out of hand, and let me not see my wretchedness."

8. When we use unlawful means to avenge ourselves, we sin in our anger.—It is defined to be a desire of revenge for some injury offered. Though this definition perhaps may not be accurate, yet it is certain that men of hot and heady tempers are too often desirous of vengeance, as soon as ever they fancy themselves injured: hence punishments are inflicted disproportioned to the offence. This is criminal; and the error is still more aggravated when the offence is only imaginary. Where a real injury of consequence is sustained, religion forbids us not to seek proper and adequate reparation: but calm and cool deliberation is necessary in order to this. To have a secret fixed resolution to avenge ourselves, is base and diabolical. A celebrated moralist has expressed himself with great energy on this subject: 'What shall we think of him who has a soul so infected, that he can never be happy till he have made another miserable! What wars may we imagine perpetually raging in his breast; what dark stratagems, unworthy designs, in human wishes, dreadful resolutions! A serpent curled in many intricate mazes, ready to sting a traveller, and to hiss him in the pangs of death, is no unfit emblem of such an artful, unsearchable projector.'

Condemned for ever be that false notion of honour which introduced, and still supports the practice of duelling. Who can think without horror of two rational beings, settling with cool and deliberate preparation, the circumstances for murdering each other! True courage enables a man rather to suffer than to sin, to pass by an affront than to destroy a soul, and plunge a man into eternity with all his loads of folly and fury about him. He that accepts a challenge is therefore a coward, dreading the reproach of fools more than the wrath of heaven: he that refuseth a challenge, lest he should sin against God, and injure his neighbour, despising the shame that might be cast upon him by the thoughtless rabble, is the truly valiant man. He who can deny the brutal

lust of revenge rather than violate the law of love, is truly resolute and courageous. Mildness and fortitude are not inconsistent; they may dwell together in the same breast. Moses confronted Pharaoh in his own court, "not fearing the wrath of the king;" yet he was the meekest of all the men of the earth; "for he endured as seeing him who is invisible."

It never can be esteemed in the judgment of sober reason, an instance of wisdom or true courage for a person to hazard his life, at the mere caprice of an inconsiderate and barbarous ruffian, who neither fears God nor regards man. On account of some mere punctilio, some trifling affront, he would take a savage pleasure in spilling my blood, cutting me off from all my dear social connexions, and plunging me into eternity in a moment. Shall I put my own welfare, and that of my parents, my wife, my children, and other relatives, on a level with that of an impetuous barbarian, who gives me a challenge? Because he is desperate enough to risk his life, shall I put mine in his hands, and give him leave to gratify his brutal humour, by lodging a ball in my breast, and leaving me weltering in my blood? If *he* has no regard for his family, shall *I* have none for them, or for my own? What an endless train of calamities might they be involved in, by a compliance with the diabolical challenge? To give a challenge is murderous, to accept it is to drink into the same spirit; since the latter implies a willingness either to fall a sacrifice to the challenger's rage, or to imbrue our hands in his blood, and perhaps plunge his soul into everlasting darkness. He that gives the challenge makes an attempt on the life of his fellow-creature, and thirsts for his blood; as such, he is a great enemy to society, and commits a more flagrant outrage, than he that stops a passenger on the high-way only to take his money from him. For what is a little present cash, that a man may chance to have in his pocket, in comparison of life, precious life, and the continued comfort of our family and friends! Such a one, therefore, ought to be treated as an enemy to society, as a disturber of the peace, or as a felon.

In such a light the mischievous practice we are speaking of was held by PHARAMOND, king of the Gauls, whose edict against duels I beg leave to recite.

Whereas it has come to our royal notice and observation, that in contempt of all laws, divine and human, it is of late become a custom among the nobility and gentry of this our kingdom, upon slight and trivial, as well as great and urgent provocations, to invite each other into the field, there, by their own hands, and of their own authority, to decide their controversies by combat; we have thought fit to take the said custom into our royal consideration, and find, upon inquiry into the usual causes whereon such fatal decisions have arisen, that by this wicked custom, maugre all the precepts of our holy religion, and the rules of right reason, the greatest act of the human mind, *forgiveness of injuries*, is become vile and shameful; that the rules of good society and virtuous conversation are hereby inverted; that the loose, the vain, and the impudent, insult the careful, the discreet, and the modest; that all virtue is suppressed, and all vice supported, in the one act of being capable to dare to death. We have also further, with great sorrow of mind, observed that this dreadful action, by long impunity, (our royal attention being employed upon matters of more general concern) is become honourable, and the refusal to engage in it ignominious. In these our royal cares and inquiries, we are yet farther made to understand, that the persons of most eminent worth, of most hopeful abilities, accompanied with the strongest passion for true glory, are such as are most liable to be involved in the dangers arising from this licence. Now, taking the said premises into our serious consideration, and well weighing, that all such emergencies (wherein the mind is incapable of commanding itself, and where the injury is too sudden or too exquisite to be borne) are particularly provided for by laws heretofore enacted; and that the qualities of less injuries, like those of ingratitude, are too nice and delicate to come under general rules; we do resolve to blot this fashion, or wantonness of anger out of the minds of our subjects, by our

royal resolutions declared in this edict, as follows:—No person who either sends or accepts a challenge, or the posterity of either, though no death ensues thereupon, shall be, after the publication of this our edict, capable of bearing office in these our dominions:—The person who shall prove the sending or receiving a challenge, shall receive to his own use and property, the whole personal estate of both parties; and their real estate shall be immediately vested in the next heir of the offenders, in as ample a manner as if the said offenders were actually deceased:—In cases where the laws (which we have already granted to our subjects) admit of; an appeal for blood; when the criminal is condemned by the said appeal, he shall not only suffer death, but his whole estate, real, mixed, and personal, shall, from the hour of his death, be vested in the next heir of the person whose blood he spilt:—That it shall not hereafter be in our royal power, or that of our successors, to pardon the said offences, or restore the offenders to their estates, honour, or blood, for ever. Given at our court, at Blois, the eight of February, 420, in the second year of our reign.

Our anger is certainly criminal when it excites us to render evil for evil to him who has injured or offended us: this is constantly condemned by the rules of our holy religion. Let the man be a friend or a foe who has acted an unrighteous and injurious part towards us, we should beware of giving way to revengeful or passionate resentments, which may lead us to seek the hurt of the offender by way of retaliation. This would be to imitate his evil example, and to become sharers in his guilt. No provocation should ever irritate us so far as to abate our concern for peace; we should keep so strict a watch over our angry passions as never to meditate and contrive, much less to attempt any thing by way of private and personal revenge. If we be under the necessity of seeking satisfaction from those who have injured us in a due course of law, we should never do it from a litigious spirit; but from a desire to preserve peace and good order in society, and to obtain justice to ourselves from the

affronts and injuries we have received from unreasonable and wicked men.

Vengeance belongs to the supreme Ruler and Judge of the universe: it is his right and prerogative to inflict deserved punishment. Let us never therefore presume so far as to attempt to wrest the sceptre out of his hands; but, leaving our cause with him, let us be ready to do every office of kindness and compassion, even to the worst of our enemies. Let us “bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us.” Let no ill treatment we meet with from others, so far inflame our angry passions as to make us desirous of rendering evil for evil, or even cause us to grow weary of shewing love and kindness to them. Let us evidence the power of divine grace on our hearts, by exercising meekness, kindness and forbearance, under the highest provocations: this is the way not to be “overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good,” Rom. xii. 21.

9. When our anger unfits us for the discharge of duty to one another.—Violent anger ruffles our temper and disturbs our reason, and as such unfits us for the duties of life. It darkens the mind, burdens the conscience, and puts the whole soul out of frame. Giving and receiving reproof are duties of great utility. If a brother be overtaken with a fault, we should “restore such a one;” but this can only be done “in the spirit of meekness.” Reproof should never be given with a wrathful heart and angry tongue; for “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” In like manner, it should be received with humility and gratitude; we should be thankful to our kind reprover for his care, and offer up our prayers to God for him. We are commanded “to be pitiful and tender-hearted; to bear one another’s burdens; to weep with those that weep and rejoice with those that rejoice; to love as brethren; to follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another;” and whatever temper of mind unfits us for those duties, it is wrong, it is offensive to God, it is mischievous and hurtful.

Some men confess themselves negligent on slight occasions, and in the ordinary course of life, of the government of their temper; but they are attentive, as they pretend, to the great duties of charity and beneficence, whenever any remarkable opportunity presents itself of performing important services to society. But let such persons remember, that virtue must be formed and supported, not by unfrequent acts but by continual and daily exertions. It should not, like the blaze of a comet, break forth only occasionally with a transient lustre; it ought to be regular in its course, like the light of day. In the common transactions of life and the intercourse of domestic society, the government of our temper is absolutely necessary for promoting the happiness of those with whom we daily converse. In the conjugal relation, the care of the husband is to please his wife, and the care of the wife is to please her husband; this mutual endeavour to oblige is of great importance, and highly conducive to domestic happiness. No man who is hurried away by ungovernable passion, can perform the duties of his station with regularity.

Our anger is sinful when we are displeased with the providence of God—when we are angry with his laws, or with the doctrines of the gospel—when we are angry with the good we see in others—when we are angry with those who differ from us in religious sentiments—when we are angry at reproof—when our anger provokes us to wish or desire any thing unlawful—when we use forbidden means to avenge ourselves—and when our anger unfits us for the discharge of duty to one another.

CHAPTER V.

CAUTIONS AGAINST VIOLENT AND SINFUL ANGER.

I. **It destroys our own peace of mind.**—How serene and peaceful a region would every man's soul be to himself, if

heavenly meekness did but reign in his breast, to the suppression of anger, wrath, malice, and bitterness! The heathen moralist represents this to us by a comparison drawn from the celestial region: 'The upper and better ordered part of the world next the stars is driven together into no cloud, hurried into no tempest, never tossed about in any whirlwind, but is ever free from any thing of tumult. Only the inferior regions throw about thunder and lightnings. So is the sublime mind always quiet, in a state of undisturbed tranquillity, sober, venerable, and composed.'

It is true, there may be a quiet behaviour outwardly, either through constraint, or with some base and disguised design, while in the mean time the soul is rough and turbulent; the words may be "softer than oil, while war is in the heart." But if our carriage be stormy and morose, we cannot have peace within.

By the frequent indulgence of this furious passion, it gains strength, and becomes habitual; and then a man's internal tranquillity is nearly at an end. He will kindle into a flame at the first touch of provocation: he will not be able to retain his resentment, even till he have full proof of the offence; neither will he proportion his anger to the cause which excites it, or regulate it by any decency or discretion. A man thus enslaved is to be ranked among the unhappiest of mortals. He grows still more miserable as he sinks in years; disease and infirmity increase the distemper of his mind. His friends desert him, being weary of his peevishness: and he is left, as one of the ancients strikingly expresses himself, to devour his own heart in solitude and contempt. He may disguise his sufferings before the world: but to be inwardly torn with wrathful and revengeful passions, is to be truly miserable. Thus the punishment is connected with the crime: "Thy own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee. It is an evil thing and bitter that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord."

When humility and meekness reign within, we are least in hazard of being ruffled by outward occurrences; but if the

clouds of disgust and ill-humour gather on the mind, every object is blackened to our view, and the slightest accident heightens our disquietude. That inward serenity which is the first requisite of every pleasurable feeling, is destroyed, and we behold every thing in the most unfavourable light. The meek and patient man is happily superior to all those slight provocations and trifling offences which wound the tranquillity of others. He is exempted from numberless disquietudes which agitate those of a contrary disposition.

As fire kindleth fire, so that which provokes anger is the anger of others: but meekness enables us to turn away the wrath of our neighbour, and to keep possession of our own souls. It teaches us either not to speak at all, to curb the tongue, and to "keep the mouth as with a bridle;" or to give a "soft answer." It is said of Naphtali that he "gave goodly words," and as such he had the happiness to be "satisfied with favour." "For every man will kiss his lips that giveth a right answer." The meek man's thoughts are calm, his purposes composed, his prospects rational, and his affections regular. He is free from many of the pains and tortures of those angry souls who vex themselves with trifles; whose reason is bewildered, and whose affections are hurried on with an impetus as uneasy as it is hazardous. He has that peace which the world can neither give nor destroy; while the fretful and passionate eat the bread of sorrow, in pursuit of revengeful projects. He "delights himself with the abundance of peace;" he has ten thousand times more satisfaction in forgiving injuries than others can have in revenge.

The character which is given of that cruel and furious monarch, King Henry VIII. towards the latter part of his life, is very striking. 'When bodily disease prevailed upon him, and particularly a pain in his leg, he was more furious than a chained lion. He had been ever stern and severe, but he was then outrageous. In this state he continued for nearly four years before his death, the terror of all, and the torment

tor of himself. As his end approached, his anguish and remorse were such as cannot be described.'

2. It hurts the unity of spirit among brethren.—Were but the minds of Christians more eminently clothed with humility, and habited with the meekness and gentleness of Christ, what a blessed calm would it introduce into religious societies! It might then be truly said of the Christian church. "This is the house of God, this is the gate of heaven." A learned, pious, and candid writer on the absurdity and injustice of religious bigotry and persecution, has these words: 'Could we see the members of Christ's mystical body divested of bigotry and prejudice, no longer divided by parties and factions, nor stained and sullied by viciousness of life; joined together by a union of friendly dispositions and kind affections, and vying with each other in the promotion of mutual benevolence and good-will, this would give us the strongest idea we can at present have of the happiness of the future world, and of those sublime social pleasures which the righteous shall enjoy when they come to the *city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to God the judge of all, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.*'

Some men seem to be of such a disposition, that they are not only careless of pleasing, but studious to offend. They imagine that they aggrandize themselves by mortifying those about them, and teasing them with affronts: they delight in wanton provocations, and contemptuous insolence. This is tyranny: it arises from that excess of pride which can never be quietly endured by mankind. It provokes the resentment of those about us; and thus the peace of society is disturbed.—Some are so morose and ill-natured, so sudden and so noisy in their resentment, that there is no peace or rest to be enjoyed near them: they interrupt the quiet of all who are so unhappy as to be within the reach of their clamours. Among the disciples of the lowly Jesus, "nothing should be done through strife, or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind,

Each should esteem others better than himself."—Some good men are so unhappily addicted to warmth of temper, that the poet's inquiry concerning his angry deities, seems applicable to them: "Can so much wrath be found in heavenly minds?" When we meet with provocations from men of this cast, it is most eligible and honourable so far to suppress the heat of our own temper, as to endeavour to turn away their wrath with a soft answer, Prov. xv. 1. "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." If we intemperately and unseasonably set ourselves to oppose them, we shall but irritate them more and more. If mildness will not overcome them, it is best perhaps, to "give place to wrath," by leaving them room and time to cool, in keeping out of their way. Escape to a calmer shore.

Without a degree of candour, forbearance and mutual love, the peace of Christian societies cannot be maintained. There must be reciprocal endeavours to "maintain the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace." When the members of a religious community are meek and lowly, full of kindness and benevolence one towards another, then and then only, they "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour," and exemplify the true spirit of Christianity. They are then cautious of inflicting the least wound on a brother's mind: they are affable in their address, and mild in their behaviour; ever ready to oblige, and as willing to be obliged by others. Reproofs are administered with the greatest tenderness; and good offices performed with ease and modesty. No one is assuming in his opinions, or intemperate in his zeal about lesser matters; no one is self-willed; forward to contradict, or eager to blame. Every one thinks it is his duty and his honour to be "clothed with humility, and to put on," in his whole behaviour, that "charity which is the bond of perfectness." Every one seeks to "please his neighbour, for his good unto edification;" to conceal that superiority of rank or talents which might be oppressive to the weak of the flock; to be kind and tender-hearted, to be pitiful and courteous; and in a word, to evidence himself to be under the influence of the "wisdom from

above, which is pure and peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Of such a society it may be said, the beauty of the Lord our God is upon them.

With some persons to speak and to offend are but one and the same thing: their words are fraught with gall and wormwood, from a proud and malevolent disposition. The dull, the stupid, and the mute are to be preferred to these. They are not satisfied with giving sharp answers; they insolently attack the present, and wound the character of the absent.—Some domestic connexions are dreadfully disturbed by feuds, jealousies, and antipathies, at the same time that they outwardly seem easy, affectionate and cheerful; and we suppose they enjoy a quiet to which they are strangers. Your visit which you make them, only suspends a domestic quarrel, which waits but for your absence to be renewed. Or if you are so unhappy as to reside with such persons as are engaged in perpetual quarrels, they will tease you to hear their mutual complaints; and you will live, as it were, in a court of justice, and be pestered from morning to night with pleadings.

3. It blocks up our way to the divine throne.—If we attempt to draw near to God with rancour and wrath in our hearts, he will not hear our prayers. First "go and be reconciled to thy brother: then come, and offer thy gift." No wrathful temper must be indulged, if we would "lift up holy hands" to God, 1 Tim. ii. 8. Bitterness, wrath, and evil-speaking must therefore be laid aside, if we desire to hold converse with God, and to have fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. We are not to expect forgiveness with our Maker, "unless we from our hearts forgive others." So far does a wrathful temper unfit us for devotion.—Can we "come boldly to the throne of grace" so long as we cherish wrath in our bosoms? It indisposes us for the duty; and renders it, if performed, unacceptable to God. The tumult of our passions makes us both unable and unwilling to pray; and should we attempt it in such a spirit, God will not hear.

4. It frequently exposes a man to danger.—When an angry man meets with a fury like himself, they frequently fall into mischief. A rude hectoring fellow lately passing through the streets of a certain town, jostled another who stood in his way: the offended party, equal to him, in brutality, drew his sword and spilt his blood. "It is an honour to a man to cease from strife; but every fool will be meddling to his hurt." Wise men turn away wrath, but "a fool's lips enter into contention: his mouth calleth for strokes;" and he sometimes receives them, as the just reward of his insolence. No one draws his sword, or cocks his pistol at the meek and inoffensive lamb; but the noisy barking cur frequently feels the lash. The dispassionate escape many troubles which the angry and revengeful pull down on their own heads. "A soft answer turns away wrath; a soft tongue breaks the bone." The kindness of David overcame Saul; and the meekness of Jacob melted the heart of Esau.

5. It makes work for bitter repentance.—We frequently hear of parents who, undertaking to correct their children in a fit of passion, have been so unhappy as to occasion irreparable mischief to their helpless offspring. What must they feel on every sight of their afflicted children, thus disabled by their fury! What stings of remorse must attend them through every succeeding day of their lives! Who can think of the condition to which Cain had reduced himself by his rage and murder, without horror! Stung with the keenest anguish and remorse, he was a terror to himself wherever he came, and dreaded by all who knew him. He cried out in the bitterness of his soul, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" No sorrow can repair the mischief: an age cannot recompense what has been done in an instant in wrath and fury. 'There are a thousand evils, (says Seneca) included in this one of anger, and diversified into a thousand different branches.'

The greatest part of the disasters which men suffer in this life, are brought upon them by their own ungoverned pas-

sions. Should they escape the external mischiefs which these passions naturally occasion, they cannot shun the internal misery which they certainly produce. The government of the world is maintained with such depth of wisdom, that the divine laws execute themselves against the sinner, and carry their sanction along with them: there is no need for the prison of hell to be unlocked, or the thunders of heaven to be poured forth, in order to punish the wrathful and the cruel man. It is enough that those furious passions which render such persons the disturbers of others, be suffered to burn and rage within them, and that they be delivered up to the horrors of their own guilty minds. "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

6. It prevents us from doing or receiving good.—A drunken man in the height of his intoxication is looked upon as so far from being fit to receive or impart instruction, that he is considered as no longer master of his own conduct. He seems to act without consciousness, and to rush into mischief without apprehension of danger. As such, he is either pitied or despised by those about him: and for the time, is hardly entitled to the rank of rational beings. It is much the same with him who is intoxicated with passion. Such a man cannot gain much influence over any but those who are necessarily his dependents. He may frighten his children or his servants; but if his eyes were open, he might easily see, that while he tramples on those who cannot resist him, he is not revered for his virtue, but dreaded or despised for his brutality; and that he lives only to excite the contempt or hatred of society. He that has his "hand against every man," need not wonder if "every man's hand is against him." He lives in a state of war with mankind, as he is destitute of that meekness which is the cement of society, that love which is the "bond of perfectness," that "charity which covers a multitude of sins." In the present state of imperfection, mutual allowances are necessary to mutual usefulness. Without such allowances, variance, strife and contention will keep

us perpetually at a distance from each other; and prevent us both from doing good to our fellow-creatures, and receiving good from them.

7. It fires the minds of those about us.—The associates and domestics of an angry man live with suspicion and solicitude, as in the presence of a tame lion or tiger, watching the capricious savage, and expecting the moment when he will begin his tremendous roar: and when he breaks forth in unreasonable reproaches, it is no wonder that the breasts of those about him are kindled into resentment. Hence mutual animosities prevail; and who can tell where the mischief may end? It is better to dwell in the corner of a house-top, than with such a one in the most splendid and spacious palace. “Grievous words stir up anger.”

Meekness prepossesses and gains the hearts of our opponents. It persuades when every other argument proves ineffectual: it disarms the violent, and softens the stubborn mind. On the other hand, the heat of anger confirms the opposition it intends to subdue, raises the resentment of those who were indifferent, and even turns our very friends into enemies. A judicious writer on this subject has justly observed, that in the ruffled and angry hour, we view every appearance through a false medium. The most, inconsiderable point of interest, or honour, swells into a momentous object; and the slightest attack seems to threaten immediate ruin. But after passion or pride is subdued, we look round in vain for the mighty mischief we dreaded: the fabric which our disturbed imagination had reared, totally disappears. But though the cause of contention has dwindled away, its consequences remain. We have irritated the passions of others; we have alienated a friend; we have embittered an enemy; we have sown the seeds of future suspicion, malevolence, or disgust. “He that is hasty in his spirit, exalteth folly.”

8. It makes us unlike the meek and lowly Jesus.—That mind which was in him should be in us. He was patient under the rudest injuries and most barbarous treatment: the vilest affronts were offered to him, and yet he was meek as

a lamb. “When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not. He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; he did not hide his face from shame and spitting.” For the greatest evil he returned the greatest good; he shed his blood, and gave his life to redeem those from hell who treated him with disdain. And while they mocked his dying agonies, “shot out the lip, and wagged the head,” he cried, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” While we admire this amiable and lovely part of the dear Redeemer’s conduct, let us remember that “he has left us an example that we should walk in his steps.” But ah, how unlike him are we, when we suffer angry passions to rise on the most trifling occasions!

No harshness, no pride, no stately distance of behaviour appeared in our divine Master, during his intercourse with men upon earth. He was easy of access, mild in his answers, condescending, lowly and obliging in his whole demeanour. This distinguishing trait of his character was so generally known, that the apostle Paul, in order to gain the hearts of his followers, and engage them to a compliance with what he proposes, uses this form of address: “I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” Let us cultivate a humble, kind, gentle temper. This was the temper of our divine leader: this is the temper of the inhabitants of heaven. Let this temper also be in us: then shall we escape the miseries which always accompany an arrogant and resentful mind.

The religion which Jesus established has this distinguishing peculiarity, that it teaches all who profess it to forgive their enemies, and to love those that hate them. How unworthy shall we be of the name of Christians, and followers of Christ, if we give way to fretfulness, anger, and a revengeful spirit! Let us “love our enemies, bless them that curse us, and pray for them who despitefully use us, and persecute us.”

9. It makes us resemble madmen and devils.—The Latins call a meek person *mansuetus*; q. d. used to the hand. The

allusion is to the nature of the contrary disposition, which makes a man like a furious wild beast, a lion, or a tiger, or the "swift dromedary traversing her ways," Jer. ii. 23, 24. Whereas, when the grace of meekness reigns, it transforms the lion into a lamb: we then are used to the hand, we submit to management; "the leopard lies down with the kid, and a little child may lead them, Isa. xi. 6.

Saul, the king of Israel, when the violence of his passion prevailed, appeared like a fury. When David was absent, he stormed and raged with the fierceness of a lion; when present, he whirled his javelin at him to smite him against the wall. We see also the distraction which violent anger occasions in the character of Haman. We can scarcely conceive a person more thoroughly wretched than he appears to have been, even when surrounded with power, opulence, and pleasure. One private man, who despised his greatness, and disdained submission; while a whole kingdom trembled before him, made him completely miserable. He was lost to all enjoyment, through the fierceness of his passion; he was stung by disappointment, torn and distracted by rage, beyond what he was able to bear. He made that humiliating confession: "All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate." This was not a private soliloquy of Haman's within himself, but a confession which he made to others; and as such, it proves that his misery was become insupportable. Every man strives to conceal such shocking agitations of mind, as he must know they are a dishonour to him: the violence of anguish alone can drive him to confess a passion which renders him odious and despicable. Yet Haman breaks through all restraints, and publishes his shame even to his own family and friends, from whom every man is naturally disposed to conceal his dishonour; a striking proof of the height of his distraction and disorder.—Violent and unguarded anger makes a man a fool, to cast "firebrands, arrows and death," in the sport of his fury.

10. It is cruel and murderous.—We have a striking instance of this in the first family of mankind. Cain was an-

gry with his brother Abel, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Heaven smiled upon the one, and frowned upon the other. Cain cherished his resentment to that degree, that he thirsted for Abel's life, and at last imbrued his hands in his own brother's blood. Many of the evils to which the life of man is exposed arise from anger protracted into malevolence, and exerted in revenge. Many of the dreadful calamities which fill the histories of past ages have originated here. We could scarcely read these accounts without some doubt of the veracity of the historians, did we not see the same causes still tending to the same effects. What tides of human blood have been shed, how many cities have been subverted, how many countries have been desolated, and how many nations massacred to gratify this cruel and furious passion!

How solemn and striking is the exclamation of the dying patriarch Jacob, concerning his two sons! "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. Oh my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel," Gen. xlix. The wrathful man is cruel, to his neighbour; as in the case above, and in that of Jezebel with Naboth. He is cruel to his children and servants: he is cruel to the very beast which carries him, and does his drudgery. "A good man regards the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." Thus Balaam only wished for a sword that he might slay his innocent beast. How many excellent and useful creatures groan under the cruelty of furious men! When they exert themselves to the utmost stretch of their ability, they are still beaten without mercy. We need not indeed wonder at the wrathful man's cruelty to his beast, since his cruelty has been displayed against his Saviour, in whom innocence and perfection shone in their brightest lustre. "When they heard these things,

they were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill, that they might cast him down headlong," Luke iv. 27—29. The wrathful man is cruel even to himself: many have died in a fit of rage. The tortured soul has rushed forth from his clay tenement, among fiends and furies, its fittest companions. Thus it is said by the inspired penman: "Wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one," Job v. 2.

Let us learn to suspend our violence, and govern our tempers when causes of discord arise. Let us allow ourselves time to think how little prospect we have of gaining by fury and rage, and how much of the true happiness of life we are sure of throwing away.—"Wrath is cruel." Astyages, king of Persia, being displeased with Harpagus, invited him to supper, and caused that miserable parent to feed on the flesh of his own son; and then asked him how he liked the repast.—When Darius had subdued Scythia, Oebasus, a nobleman whom he had conquered, requested of the tyrant that he would leave one of his three children to comfort his distressed father, and content himself with the service of the other two. The conqueror promised that he would dismiss them all; and hereupon caused them all to be slain, and the dead bodies to be cast at the feet of the unhappy father.—Alexander, at a festival, murdered his own friend Clitus, because he would not flatter him in his follies; and exposed Lysimachus to the fury of a lion.—Nebuchadnezzar being full of fury against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, caused them to be cast into a fiery furnace, heated to seven-fold rage.—Lucius Sylla in his anger against Marcus Marius caused his legs to be broken, his eyes to be pulled out, his hands to be cut off, and his body to be torn asunder.

The honourable Commodore Byron was an eye-witness to the following shocking scene of brutal rage, on the coasts of Patagonia. I beg leave to present the reader with it in his own words:—'Here I must relate a little anecdote of our *Christian* cacique. He and his wife had gone off, at some distance from the shore, in their canoe, when she dived for

sea-eggs; but not meeting with great success, they returned a good deal out of humour. A little boy of theirs, about three years old, whom they appeared to be dotingly fond of, watching for his father and mother's return, ran into the surf to meet them. The father handed a basket of sea-eggs to the child, which being too heavy for him to carry, he let it fall; upon which the father jumped out of the canoe, and catching the boy up in his arms, dashed him with the utmost violence against the stones. The poor little creature lay motionless and bleeding, and in that condition was taken up by the mother; but died soon after. She appeared inconsolable for some time; but the brute his father shewed little concern about it.'

Thus have we seen, that sinful anger destroys our own peace of mind—hurts the unity of the spirit among brethren—blocks up our way to the divine throne—exposes us to danger—makes work for bitter repentance—fires the minds of others—makes us unlike the meek and lowly Jesus—causes us to resemble madmen and devils—and is cruel and murderous.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARACTER OF PROTERTVUS.

PROTERTVUS was notorious in his childhood for his genius in pranks of mischief and malevolence: his fond and foolish parents instead of restraining him, praised his parts, admired him for his address and courage, and prided themselves in what they called the seeds of heroism and prowess; finding this the road to honour and applause, young Protertvus was quickened in his course, and proceeded from one degree of malignity to another, till he became the scourge of society. When arrived to years of maturity, the rashness and ungoverned passion of Protevus pushed him on to a hasty and irregular conduct: his lips often poured out foolishness, and through the impatience of his spirit, he rushed into many

snares, and sometimes involved his best friends in the same mischief. It is confessed, Protervus had sometimes honest and honourable projects in his head: but the violence of his temper was such that he was easily diverted from the point he should have kept in sight. He pursued nothing with that steadiness which is necessary in order to success. He was very easily offended; and his resentment was consequently often founded on misunderstandings, and wrong interpretations of words or actions. That which a small share of humility and charity would have passed over in silence, Protervus swelled into a great and heinous provocation. He never could suspend his anger till facts were ascertained, and the truth examined. When once displeased he was inflexibly severe, and resolutely implacable. The truth of this will appear from the following relation:

The unhappy *Ærumnosus* offended his neighbour Protervus. I do not now perfectly recollect the circumstances of the case: but *Ærumnosus* soon found that he had incurred the resentment of one whose tender mercies were cruel. A rigorous prosecution was entered against him. His humiliating confessions, his willingness to make all the satisfaction in his power, the earnest supplications of his distressed wife and seven helpless children, were of no avail. *Ærumnosus* was sent to the county jail; he was tried, cast, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment. On the side of Protervus there was power; but the unfortunate *Ærumnosus* had no comforter. I had the following account of his distressed situation, from one who saw him in his confinement.

‘I was told by the keeper that that was the cell of *Ærumnosus*. I looked through the twilight of his grated door, and saw his body half wasted away with long expectation and confinement; and felt what kind of sickness of the heart it was which arises from hope deferred. Upon looking nearer, I saw him pale and feverish: in twelve years the western breeze had not fanned his blood—he had seen no sun, no moon in all that time—nor had the voice of a friend breathed through his lattice.

‘He was sitting upon the ground on a little straw, in the farthest corner of his dungeon, which was alternately his chair and bed: a little calendar of all small sticks were laid at the head, notched all over with the dismal days and nights he had passed there—he had one of these little sticks in his hand, and with a rusty nail he was etching another day of misery to add to the heap. As I darkened the little light he had, he lifted up a hopeless eye towards the door, then cast it down—shook his head, and went on with his work of affliction. I heard his chains upon his legs, as he turned his body to lay his little stick upon the bundle—he gave a deep sigh—I saw the iron enter into his soul—I burst into tears, and withdrew, deeply impressed with the propriety of petitioning the Father of mercies to have compassion on all prisoners and captives.’ But the unfeeling heart of Protervus was incapable of commiseration, and the unhappy *Ærumnosus* languished away in his fetters till death released him.

Protervus looked upon himself as a man of consequence, and would assume overbearing and lofty airs, because he had more money than his neighbours. He was better dressed, and better fed than many of his fellow-creatures; and he loved to aggrandize himself in his own esteem, in his language, and in his behaviour on that account. His vanity, his haughtiness, and insolence were insufferable. He would treat his servants as if they were dogs; he forgot that a poor man was made of the same clay, and descended from the same common parent with himself. His servants hated him, and seldom continued long under his roof. When he stood in need of any assistance from them, he could brook no delay; he would make no allowances for the various accidents which always attend human life, and may stop the speed of the most diligent and active servant. He would be perpetually railing at them, or backbiting them: and on the slightest failure in their duty, he would storm and rage like a chained lion.

Protervus was captious, and ready to take exception and offence without just ground: nor would he give up a prejudice once entertained, upon the best reasons offered, or the most

condescending steps taken to satisfy him. He was so far from being won by kindness, that it only made him more insolent: every concession emboldened his impetuosity. There was, in fact, no peace to be had with him, but by ceasing to have any thing to do with him. He would treat those with whom he had dealings, with insolence and rudeness, with injuries and reflecting words. His language was indecent, provoking, and often outrageous: he was froward, and sowed strife.

He was unmercifully rigorous with those who were so unhappy as to stand indebted to him for sums of money which they were not immediately able to pay. He took a malicious pleasure in causing such to rot in the jail, as he used to express himself, though he would sometimes pray at church that God would forgive his debts as he forgave his debtors; and he now and then heard the lesson read in which it is solemnly declared, that "he shall have judgment without mercy who hath shewed no mercy." Debitor, one of his poor tenants, was by the loss of his cow and the blighting of his corn, rendered absolutely incapable of paying his annual rent in due time: the sum was but three pounds two shillings and sixpence*. Protervus went out one morning, and found this poor sufferer in the fields; he seized him by the throat as if he would have strangled him, and severely demanded immediate payment; saying, 'Pay me that thou owest.' Debitor fell down at his feet, and besought him saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all; only grant me a little forbearance, and I will discharge the whole sum; but at present, through the loss I have sustained, I am unable to do it.' But Protervus had no tenderness toward him; he was deaf to his entreaties, he would not hear his cries; but went and cast him into prison until he should pay the debt.

Here this innocent but unhappy man was secluded from the common comforts of human life, oppressed with the corrosion of just but unavailing resentment, the heaviness of sorrow, the corruption of confined air, the want of usual exer-

* An hundred pence. See Matt. xviii. 28, &c.

cise, and sometimes of food, the contagion of diseases, from which there was no retreat, with all the other complicated horrors of a prison; while his wife and children, deprived of the support of his industry, and the consolation of his company, languished in wretchedness and misery because of the fury of the oppressor.

Protervus seemed to delight in vexing his fellow-creatures; he took a kind of malicious pleasure in giving them pain and torment. He was regardless of his neighbour's welfare and lived only to himself. If he had but wealth and ease, it was no matter of concern with him what calamities should befall the rest of mankind. He was rough, quarrelsome, ill-natured, sullen, and greedy of revenge. Death at length, that king of terrors, rid the world of this enemy of society. A raging fever seized his frame; and in a few days he breathed out his indignant soul, in distraction, horror and despair!

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHARACTER OF EUGENIUS.

As soon as Eugenius had a house and a family, he erected an altar in it; there the word of God was read, and prayers were constantly offered. These were not omitted on account of any guest whom Providence might conduct within those happy walls; for Eugenius esteemed it a part of due respect to those who were brought under his roof, to take it for granted they would look upon it as a very bad compliment, to imagine they would have been obliged by neglecting the duties of religion on their account.

His character was uniformly regular and amiable; but he particularly excelled in that self-government which this essay is designed to promote. His meekness of temper was not a mere natural disposition: it was a Christian grace; a fruit of the Spirit. It arose from religious principles; a regard to God's authority as enjoining it, and a sense of the evil and

sinfulness of the contrary. He knew that to bear a hostile and revengeful disposition towards our neighbour, is highly offensive to God: on this ground, he constantly embraced all becoming methods for the cultivation and promotion of meekness and gentleness in himself and others. He followed peace with all men, and avoided every thing which might have a tendency to break it. He was so far from allowing himself to do his neighbour a real injury, that he constantly endeavoured to conciliate and secure his affection, by all the offices of friendship and humanity. He was solicitous to make all about him easy and happy. It was a pleasure to him to contradict his own inclinations, and to deny himself, that he might serve the interests of his friends. It was not indeed always possible for him to live in peace and amity with his neighbours. He sought peace, and pursued it, but it sometimes could not be attained.

In the course of his life he had to do with some of a perverse humour, and of unreasonable obstinacy. They were so captious as to take offence without any foundation: they would catch at the most innocent occasions to work up their minds to resentment. This made him very uncomfortable. He was often, in such a case, heard to cry, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war." Some would not be at peace with him, unless he would violate a good conscience. He could only do what he might do lawfully; he acted conscientiously towards God; he could not wound his conscience for peace. If men were displeased with him for that, he could not help it: he would neither sacrifice truth nor holiness, though all the world should be angry with him for his zealous attachment to them. But in what concerned himself, Eugenius was willing to sacrifice little things, and to recede from what was strictly his right in some cases, rather than make a breach, or perpetuate a quarrel with his neighbours. He took this to be one part of our Saviour's meaning in that remarkable injunction: "Who-

soever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also; and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." He would meekly pass these things over for the sake of peace, especially when he had any reason to hope, that such soft treatment would make a good impression on those who should at any time treat him ill. He used frequently to speak of Abraham's mild and gentle carriage towards Lot. When the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot had quarrelled, the father of the faithful, instead of saying, "I have as much right as you to the country, or I have a superior right, as I am the elder, and the uncle;" he spoke as follows, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? If thou wilt take the left hand, I will go to the right; or if thou wilt depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Eugenius was deeply sensible, that when a quarrel is begun, however innocently at first on one side, yet it scarcely ever happens but there are faults on both, in the progress of the contention. Mutual usefulness is obstructed; mutual reflections, evil surmises, undue resentments, and indecent sallies of passion can hardly be avoided in such a case. Therefore Eugenius thought it best, in many circumstances, to "leave off contention before it were meddled with." His soul was calm and composed. He breathed love and peace: and as such, he made it his study and business to be quiet, to promote the peace and welfare of mankind; and so far as it was in his power, to compose and settle his associates in amity and love.

He was endowed with many divine gifts, he was adorned with virtue and merit, and yet he always seemed insensible of his own superiority; he was mean in his own eyes, and drew a curtain of concealment before himself, that men might not observe him. If any were inclined to draw aside the veil, and make his merit visible, it gave pain to his modesty. —He condescended to men of low estate, would hear their requests and complaints, and converse familiarly with them

on matters of importance. He remembered that the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, visits the afflicted, and dwells with the poor and lowly. He was far from sinking his character by these condescensions, or doing any dishonour to his station in the world; for all good men were constrained to love and honour him; and indeed, it is difficult to determine whether he was most honoured, or most beloved.—If at any time, in conversation with his friends for mutual improvement, a debate arose, he would manage it with a liberality and calmness of mind which were truly amiable and edifying. If the power of the argument lay on his side, you would see nothing in him like insult and triumph. When his opponent had the advantage, he would readily acknowledge it, and modestly yield to the force of reason. He could sit and hear violent opposition made to his sentiments without kindling into flame and fury: he could bear to be contradicted without resenting it as an affront.

He was compassionate and merciful to the poor, afflicted and distressed. Their pains and diseases of body, their sorrows and troubles of mind, their necessitous circumstances, their unjust sufferings from those who oppressed them, and even the miseries brought upon themselves by their own imprudence, excited his sympathy and tenderness. In the distribution of his bounty, he was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the poor and the afflicted. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came on this amiable man, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. Those whom it was not in his power to relieve, were interested in his tender sympathy, his good wishes, and affectionate and fervent prayers. It was his meat and drink to be engaged in contriving, endeavouring, promoting, and rejoicing in the welfare and happiness of others. He lived not to himself: he sought not his own things, but the things of others. He studied not to please himself, but to please his neighbour, for his good unto edification.

Some, who were themselves unacquainted with the power and comforts of religion, were ready to charge Eugenius with

enthusiasm. I beg leave to say, that the charge was altogether unjust: and yet it must be owned, that if habitual love to God, firm faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, a steady dependence on the divine promises, a high esteem for the blessings of the heavenly world, and a sincere contempt for the vanities of this, can properly be called enthusiasm, then was Eugenius one of the greatest enthusiasts our age has produced; and in proportion to the degree in which he was so, I must esteem him one of the wisest and happiest of mankind. I mean not to say that Eugenius was perfect in love and meekness. It belongs not to human nature to possess these qualities in perfection: but it was his study and endeavour to come as near to the pattern of perfection exhibited in the character of the Saviour of mankind, as the frailty of a human being would admit; and he often mourned in secret on account of the defects of which he was conscious. Thus he gained the esteem of his friends and associates. He was consulted by them as an oracle; and he saved many from distress, and even from ruin by his counsel and advice, as well as by his prudent and amiable example. Thus his conduct in life was of singular advantage to others as well as to himself. When he saw oppression and violence practised among men, he always took the part of the injured person, and acquitted himself in such a manner, as to calm the resentment of the oppressed, and soften the oppressor, if not into pity and tenderness, at least to a compliance with the rules of equity.

He lived in a neighbourhood where he saw several sects of Christians carried away with the furious torrents of rigorous notions, and where some were addicted to several practices bordering on superstition. They were frequently engaged in fierce contentions, and angry disputes: they could not live in peace, nor judge favourably of one another's state, motives or conduct. Eugenius beheld them with concern; and one day, falling into the company of several of these zealots, who belonged to different parties, he addressed them in the following manner:—'My friends, I esteem and honour you all. Your zeal for truth and holiness is, in many re-

spects, laudable: but the matters wherein you differ are not, perhaps, so very important as you may imagine. The great truths and necessary duties of Christianity should be very dear to us. We ought, if Providence call us to it, to contend earnestly for the essential articles of faith once delivered to the saints: but it appears to me that the points of difference among you are not of this kind. There are some truths, and some practices of less importance to the Christian life. The things you dispute about are not of such a nature as that they should engross your chief attention. Your different conceptions about these things, since you are of one mind concerning matters of far greater consequence, should not lead you into these hot and angry disputes. You plainly see that your contentions are to no profit; they sour your minds, they embitter your social interviews, they cool your affections to one another, and leave your souls barren and uncomfortable. The cultivation of meekness and mutual love, is of far greater importance than the peculiarities about which you contend. Let me entreat you to cease from strife, and to follow after the things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another.

I do not exactly know what success he had at this interview; but many have heard Eugenius pathetically lament the general unsuccessfulness of all endeavours to promote peace among those who are lovers of contention. He would often say, 'How sadly do these persons mistake the nature and design of Christianity! Were they worshippers of Moloch, or the advocates of Mahomet, their animosities might admit of some excuse.' Thus did this amiable man seek peace and pursue it; and the blessing pronounced on the head of the peace-maker rested upon him. His own soul was tranquil and serene as the unruffled ocean. He was no enthusiast, as we have observed. He made no boast of his internal consolations; yet neither his eyes nor his aspect could restrain the expression of that celestial peace which reigned within.

Eugenius held himself and his abilities in very low estimation: a sense of his own meanness prevented him from being

moved by any affront. He was so far from seeking the honour which cometh from men, that he seemed to take pleasure in being little and unknown. It is rare to meet with an eminent person who can bear an equal; but it was Eugenius's choice and delight to prefer every one to himself; and this he did in a manner so remote from affectation, so free and easy, that in him it appeared perfectly natural. He would not suffer any unkindness shewn to him to be mentioned again: if any instance of this happened to be named, he would say, 'I beg we may let that drop, and enter on a new subject of conversation.'—From this root of genuine humility sprung that patience which disposed him to submit to every cross with alacrity and pleasure. For the good of his neighbour nothing seemed hard, nothing wearisome. He never thought any thing too mean but sin: he looked on nothing else as beneath his character. In bearing afflictions he was most exemplary, and continued more and more so in his last illness, of which we shall give a brief account by and by.

It is true, Eugenius was naturally a man of strong passions, and prone to anger in particular: but he humbled himself on this account, and implored with many tears and supplications victory over his own spirit. He did not seek in vain: he obtained what he sought and laboured after in a very eminent degree. For many of the latter years of his life no one ever saw him out of temper, or heard him utter a rash expression on any provocation whatever. The testimony which Dr. Burnet bears of Archbishop Leighton, might be borne of Eugenius with equal propriety:—'After an intimate acquaintance with the archbishop for many years, and after being with him by night and by day, at home and abroad, in public and in private, on sundry occasions and in various affairs, I must say I never heard an idle word drop from his lips, nor any conversation which was not to the use of edifying. I never saw him in any temper in which I myself would not have wished to be found at death.'—He was ever ready to bear with the weaknesses, and forgive the failings of others. He never mentioned the faults of an absent person, unless abso-

lute necessity required it; and then he spoke with the utmost tenderness, extenuating rather than aggravating the offence. His courtesy was pure and genuine, without any art or affectation, constraining him to behave to every one with an inexpressible mixture of humility, love and respect. This directed his words, the tone of his voice, his looks, his whole attitude, his every motion. His behaviour was suited with a peculiar gracefulness to the persons and the occasion.

Eugenius treated the wife of his bosom with a manly tenderness, giving her the most natural evidences of a cordial habitual esteem; and expressing a most affectionate sympathy with her under all her infirmities. He had at all times a most faithful care of her interests, and especially those relating to the state of religion in her mind.—He took great care to instruct and admonish his children, and train them up in the way in which they should go. He thought an excess of delicacy, and of indulgence, one of the most dangerous faults in education, by which he every where saw great numbers of young people undone; yet he was gentle towards his dear offspring, as a nurse cherisheth her children. He was ever solicitous to guard against a severity which might terrify or discourage; and though he endeavoured to take all prudent precautions to prevent the commission of faults, yet when at any time they had been committed, and there seemed to be a sense of them, he was always ready to make the most candid allowances for the thoughtlessness of unripened years, and tenderly to cherish every purpose of a more proper conduct for the time to come.—His behaviour to his servants was full of condescension, humanity and kindness; he would lay no heavier burdens upon them, nor exact any harder labour from them than they were able to bear. In case of slight miscarriages, he would forbear threatenings, and not gall and irritate them by words of abuse. He was sometimes heard to say among his particular friends, that he thought nothing could be more odious, or more contemptible, than for a man to pretend to be a disciple of Jesus, while he is a lion in his own house, and frantic or tyrannical over his ser-

vant, and other domestics: and that the most melancholy and most mischievous object on earth is a selfish, passionate, unmerciful governor of a family; calling himself a Christian, and valuing himself on that account. 'Surely, (he would say) the domestics of such a man, and all who observe his carriage towards them, will be tempted to despise that religion which they see joined with such rank and loathsome hypocrisy.'

He kept in view the transitory nature of all earthly glory, human distinctions, and worldly honours. He remembered that the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; that the rapid stream of time is carrying its proudest sons away, and burying them in oblivion; that the hour is approaching when all shall stand on a level, and the servant be free from his master; and then it will appear, that only he who hath done the will of God, whether in a humble or higher station, abideth for ever.—'The firmest human establishments, (he would say) the best laboured systems of policy, are of no long duration. The mightiest states and nations perish like the individuals that compose them. In one leaf we read their history, we admire their achievements, we are interested in their successes; but proceed to the next, and no more than a name is left. The Ninevehs and Babylons of Asia are fallen; the Sparta and Athens of Greece are no more; and the monuments that promised to endure to eternity are erased, like the mount of sand which yesterday the children cast up on the shore.'

It is but justice to observe, that Eugenius was careful to give to all in their several stations the regard and respect which they might justly claim. He paid a cheerful submission to lawful authority: he abhorred the murmurings and complaints of discontented minds against those in power, when any steps in the administration appears dubious to them. Eugenius had modesty enough to be tender in judging of things above him. It was a pleasure to him to render to all their dues; custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.

I cannot prevail with myself to conclude this sketch of his character without giving a hint at his candour in judging of others. He knew it was no act of charity to strengthen the profane in their vices, by flattering them; or leaving them to flatter themselves that they shall have peace, though they walk in the way of their own heart. He knew that this would but be joining issue with Satan, and lending him aid to ruin their souls for ever. He was deeply sensible, that because of drunkenness, whoredom, fraud, lying, covetousness, and the like offences, the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. At the same time he knew that a considerable part of the conduct of men is of a doubtful cast; and here Eugenius would exercise his candour, by thinking, judging, and hoping the best. The commission of a single offence, contrary to the general course of a person's life, he could not admit as a proof of that person's insincerity. He knew that the best of men, even those on whom God has put the highest honour in his word, did not always persevere in a uniform course of obedience, without falls and blemishes. He likewise considered himself as weak and liable to temptation. He was not suspicious of bad designs in any, unless he had the clearest grounds to go upon. The words of Jesus were often repeated by him, and no doubt had great weight with him, to dispose his mind to candour and charity: "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

This amiable man was at length visited by a heavy and long-continued affliction, the forerunner of his great change. He patiently and quietly submitted to his heavenly Father's will, and bore the awful trial with resignation and fortitude. His flesh upon him, and the multitude of his bones were in pain, and his soul mourned within him; yet his passions were calm. He took kindly all the relief that his friends attempted to afford him: he gave them no uneasiness but what they felt through the force of sympathy and compassion. His carriage in the midst of his calamities was so full of meekness,

tenderness and love, that the hearts of his friends were still more firmly united to him, as the season approached when he must be taken from them.

That which alleviated his affliction, and afforded him rational tranquillity in the prospect of his dissolution, was the gospel of Him in whose hands are life and death; and the assurance of another and better state, in which all tears will be wiped away, and the whole soul filled with ineffable joy. Supported by these hopes and prospects, the latter end of this amiable man was peace: the peace of God which passeth all understanding possessed his mind, and disarmed the king of terrors. Philosophy may infuse stubbornness, but religion only can give divine tranquillity in a dying hour. The precepts of Epicurus, who teaches us to endure what the laws of the universe make necessary, may silence, but cannot support us in that important hour. The precious gospel in which life and immortality are brought to light, was the sovereign consolation of Eugenius to the last moment of his existence. When his heart and his flesh failed, he knew that God was the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever. His last words to his friends were, "Behold, I die; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME RULES FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF SINFUL ANGER.

1. **LET** us study the importance of domestic happiness and tranquillity.—Husbands should not be bitter against their wives; parents should not provoke their children to anger; masters must forbear threatening. The intemperate passion of superiors is often veiled under the excuse of necessary strictness, and maintaining of authority. But we should not ruin domestic peace by being always chiding; every little default should not put us into a flame; we should

not be easily provoked; small offences should be passed by, and when such are committed as call for reproof, it should be given without heat and fury. Fiery and hasty carriage, scurrilous and indecent language, will at once sink our character, lessen our authority, and wound our family peace: noise and clamour will render us contemptible and ridiculous, and convince our domestics, that we are so far from being fit to govern others, that we are unable to govern ourselves.

A due expression of displeasure against what is wrong, and such as is necessary to the reformation of the offender, will very well comport with the meekness of wisdom. Awful gravity and composedness, tempered with mildness and goodwill, would preserve our authority, and command that respect which we wish to secure, more than noise, bluster, and wrathful chiding. We were once inferiors ourselves; and should treat those who are now under us, as we then wished to be treated. The happy medium between Eli's indulgence, and Nabal's brutish churlishness, should be studied by us; if we would preserve peace and good order in our dwellings. Of the latter it is said, "He was such a churl, such a son of Belial, that a man could not speak to him." Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man rather than such a fury. There is no peace where he comes.

Inferiors in families should be mild, gentle, teachable, and submissive; not answering again; not sullen or froward; not giving way to unjust and unreasonable murmurings, or complaints without a cause. Equals should study to please, and endeavour to oblige one another for mutual advantage. For "behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the dew of Hermon, which descended on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord commanded the blessing."

There is not, perhaps, a more mischievous source of anger and resentment in families, than the fond partiality of parents to their children. Of all the infirmities (says Dr. Hunter) to which our nature is subject, none is more common, none is more unreasonable, unwise, and unjust, none more fatal in its

consequences to ourselves and others, than that of making a difference between one child and another. It discourages him or her who is slighted, and it frequently ruins the favourite. It sows the seeds of jealousy, anger, discord, and malice, which frequently produce innumerable mischiefs in families, which embitter the lives of both parents and children. It sets the father against the mother, and the mother against the father; the sister against the brother, and the brother against the sister. Parents ought to examine, and to watch over themselves carefully on this head. If they are unable to suppress the feelings of their own hearts, the expression thereof at least is in their power: and both policy and justice demand of them an equal distribution of their affection, their countenance, and their possessions. If there be a folly which more certainly than another punishes itself, it is this ill-judged distinction of which we are speaking.

Some of the best and wisest of men have erred in this particular. In the patriarchal age, we find both Isaac and Jacob caught in the same snare. Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison; and Rebekah loved Jacob: this disturbed the repose of Isaac's family. It was not long before the effect of parental partialities appeared: a competition for precedence and the rights of primogeniture engaged the attention of the two brothers, and inflamed their minds against each other from their earliest years. The claims of each were supported respectively by the parents, according to favour; and the family was torn and distracted with internal dissension.—The trifling circumstances of personal likeness, of beauty, and the like, which in themselves have neither merit nor demerit, have been known to establish distinctions in families which have been destructive of peace, and promotive of ruin. It is difficult indeed to bear an even hand between one child and another, and to prevent jealousies and animosities; but the difficulty makes it more necessary to be prudent and circumspect.

How shocking it is to live a life of tumult and contention in our own families; to have perpetual inquietudes in our

own houses, where above all other places we should be concerned to maintain peace! If a man has not peace at home, where can he expect it? Neither sacred nor civil concerns go on well amidst strife and contention. Our prayers will be hindered, our converse and mutual edification prevented, our convivial repasts embittered, our rest discomposed, and our comforts destroyed. Let us study to be quiet, let us be of one mind, let us live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with us. His blessing which maketh rich shall rest upon us. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."—Some are complaisant, gentle, and good-humoured among strangers, but morose and ill-natured at home: this is hypocrisy. It shows how little they are concerned for the comfort of their families, and that the fear of man has a greater restraint over their passions than the fear of God.—Great prudence and patience are often called for in relative life. Socrates had his Xantippe, Abigail her churlish Nabal, Job a wife who tempted him to curse God, Moses a Zipporah, averse to duty, and David a scoffing Michal.

2. When we have given just offence to any one, we should be ready to acknowledge it.—When we have committed an error, our pride prompts us to vindicate it, and to stand it out. We fancy our honour is concerned: but penitence and humble submission would, in such a case, be a thousand times more to our credit. Yielding pacifieth great offences. Most men are sensibly touched with the ambition of credit and reputation, yet few consider properly either wherein these lie, or what is the right way of obtaining them. Meekness and gentleness in the point of true honour have the preference to resentment and obstinacy, both in the sight of God and men. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." More honour is due to him than to an Alexander, or a Cæsar: a rational victory is more honourable than a brutal one. To govern an enemy within us is more glorious than to kill an enemy without us: the former is certainly more difficult than the latter. To quiet intestine broils, to still an insurrection

of passions in our own bosoms, is a harder and a nobler effort than to trample on an outward opposer.

3. Let us ever remember, that passion has a direct tendency to trouble the understanding, and darken the mind.—The fumes which arise from a heart boiling with anger, becloud reason: nothing is in reality what it appears to be in that unhappy moment. Perhaps not two persons can differ more from each other than the same man differs from himself, when heated with anger, and when calm and composed. If wrath bear rule, our judgment of the case before us can neither be sound nor true: the consideration of this should excite us to be continually on our guard. There cannot be a greater proof of the tendency of passion to blind the mind, than the disposition an angry man generally discovers to justify his extravagance. "I do well to be angry," is the language of most when their minds are heated. Certainly Jonah could not think so when his mind was cool, and when he poured out his soul in humble supplication to God. There is nothing said or done in anger but it may be better said, and better done when the storm is over.

4. Let us consider that anger indulged may do us more mischief than he that offends us.—He that can endure to have his bosom torn, and his peace of mind destroyed by this passion, might with much more ease overcome an injury, and possess his tranquillity of mind. It is a thousand times better to suffer two injuries than to revenge one. If any man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. To preserve our spirits calm, easy and innocent amidst injuries and insults, is honourable to ourselves, to God, and his cause.

An angry man, to justify his own resentment, magnifies a slight offence, and sets it forth with every possible circumstance of aggravation. It is much the wiser part to extenuate and qualify the provocation; to suppose that it was an oversight, that there is no harm done, or at most, that there was none intended. When the disciples of Jesus slept in the garden while their divine Master was in his agony, he gent-

ly rebuked them: "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" Yet he kindly made this allowance for the infirmity of nature: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

5. Let us consider the circumstances of the person who has offended us.—Is he a child? His youth will plead in his defence. Is he an aged person? Allowance must be made for his years and infirmities. Is he poor? His poverty should move our compassion. Is he rich? His wealth lays him under a temptation to forget himself. Is he a wise man? Let respect for his abilities soften our resentment. Is he a weak and foolish man? He knows no better. Is he a wicked man? We need not wonder at his ill-treatment of us; it is his general character. He fears not to offend God; and why should we think it strange that he offends us? Is he a good man? It is a pity to harbour resentment against a worthy character.

To contend with our equals is dubious; with our superiors, is madness; with our inferiors, is meanness. When Pisistratus was reviled by a drunkard inflamed with wine, his attendants urged him to avenge the insult: but the chief replied, that he was no more moved with his reproaches than he should have been with a blind man who had happened to run against him without design.

6. Let us keep in memory our own errors and follies.—We resent the miscarriages of others, because we forget our own. When I am informed that a man has spoken evil of me, let me recollect whether I have not given him just occasion so to do. If another treats me with disrespect, before I kindle into resentment, let me remember how I have treated others. Clemency and kindness may melt the heart of an enemy, and transform him into a friend. And a ready forgiveness of an offence committed by an intimate friend, will strengthen the ties of his friendship towards us.

When any one offends us, it may be proper to reflect, that we ourselves either have done, or might have done the like. We use long forbearance towards ourselves, and are always ready to excuse ourselves: let us learn to love our neighbour

as we love ourselves. We have been guilty of a thousand miscarriages towards those with whom we have to do. We wish them to bear with our infirmities; let us remember that divine rule; "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." Surely we should not be so hot in resenting the faults of others, since we have so many of our own.

7. Neither is it enough for us to bear in mind our offences directly committed against our fellow-creatures; we should also remember, and be deeply humbled for our sins against God.—A deep sense of sin, and inward shame, are inseparable from a penitent frame of heart. A view of what passes in our own hearts, and of the miscarriages of our lives, tends greatly to subdue haughtiness of spirit; and consequently, makes it easy to pass by those provocations which set the proud and self-admiring all on a flame. The truly penitent are not readily moved to resentment, or kindled into passion, whatever is said of them, or done to them. A man truly humbled for his sin before God, will be ready to reflect, when a provocation to wrath is before him, 'The heart-searching God knows all my foolishness, and that I am deserving of far worse treatment.'—This inducement to suppress anger, the apostle Paul urges in all its force. He founds his exhortation to guard against every violation of the law of meekness, solely on the sinful state in which we are all by nature: "Put them in mind," says he to Titus, "to be gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men; for we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."

8. Let us every evening review the conduct of the past day, and see what progress we have made in meekness and patience.—'When the candle is withdrawn, (says the heathen moralist,) I review the day that is past, and ruminate on my words and actions. I hide nothing from myself; I let nothing escape me. In that dispute, I say to myself, I was too warm, I spoke rashly; I will hereafter be more cautious. I

admonished a friend; but doing it with too much severity, I offended instead of reforming him.' 'I resented an injury; (may the Christian say) but I did it with so much heat, that my own mind was thrown into tumult and disquietude; I exposed myself to shame, I wounded my own conscience, and acted unworthy my Christian character and profession: the recollection confounds me. I pray God to forgive me what is past, and grant me the meekness of wisdom, that I may demean myself more suitably for the future.'—We should inquire what ground we have gained in the government of ourselves; what advancement we have made in meekness and patience. Seasons of self-examination, in which our past actions pass in review before us, to be condemned and rectified where they appear to have been wrong, are highly requisite to moral improvement.

9. If we would keep our resentment within due bounds; let us accustom it to know the reins.—Self-government should be habitual. In vain shall we endeavour to obtain the conquest, if the attempt is only made when some violent provocation has inflamed the mind. If it is not our aim at other seasons, and on less trying occasions, to rule our own spirits, it can hardly be expected that we shall succeed when some remarkable temptation presents itself.—When at any time we feel the risings of anger, we should do well to put that question to ourselves which was pronounced to Cain: 'Why am I wroth? Is there any cause for it? If a slight provocation has been given me, why should I suffer my thoughts to dwell upon, and magnify it in my imagination, so as to nourish the resentment I feel rising in my bosom?'—We must deny ourselves early and inflexibly, if we would have the government of our own souls, and not be slaves to passion.—It is necessary for the health of our souls, at some seasons, to forbear to do what may innocently be done, that we may, through grace, be better able to resist the temptation when interest and other deluding inducements shall lend their charms to guilt.

Let us therefore live in the continual practice of self-denial,

and not suffer ourselves to be humorous or hard to please in our meat, drink, clothes, or attendance. Let us learn to subdue our fondness for those things which suit our humours, and our aversion to those we dislike; otherwise we shall meet with frequent occasions of resentment.—It is not enough to repress those passions which are directly criminal. Even innocent gratifications must be sometimes foreborne: for he who complies with all his lawful desires on all occasions, will lose his empire over himself. That is an excellent rule which Plutarch gives for the preservation of meekness: 'Be not curious in diet, clothes or attendance; for they who need but few things are not liable to anger, if they be disappointed of many.'

10. Let us be clothed with humility.—Pride, we have seen, is the parent and nurse of passion. The humble soul is meek and patient: what others call affronts and wrongs, give the humble man no pain or uneasiness. He knows that every other person has his own opinions, desires and inclinations as well as he: and he is not so weak as to think it reasonable for them to yield up their sentiments and will to his humour and gratification. He does not readily suppose his neighbour has a design to affront him: he is kind and candid, and takes every thing in the most favourable light. If injuries are done him, he does not immediately resent them; but takes pains with himself to forget by degrees what at first wounded his mind.

Humility is an ornament which becomes sinners well. It should be put on with our daily raiment, and we should vie with each other which shall shew it in its greatest perfection. As pride is the source and spring of wrathful passions, so to have this evil subdued and to learn the practice of humility, is the only successful way to attain true meekness.

11. Let us ever be ready to forget and forgive injuries.—The answer of Cato to him who had struck him in the bath, and came to acknowledge his offence, was worthy of so great a man. 'I do not remember it,' said Cato. It is the part of a great mind, the glory of a man to pass over a trans-

gression. A certain noble courtier being once asked, by what means he had continued so long in favour; replied, 'By being thankful, and patiently enduring injuries.' Socrates having without any provocation received a rude blow on his head by an insulting bravado, bore it with that patience which may put Christians to the blush. Among us, such an affront would have been followed with a challenge; and perhaps, issued in death. But Socrates kept his temper, and only made this calm and humorous remark on the insult he had received: 'It is pity that a man cannot know when he ought to come abroad with a helmet on his head.'

We are commanded to "show all meekness unto all men;" bearing, forbearing, condescending and forgiving meekness; the meekness which will endear our friends and reconcile our enemies. The law of love should be written on our hearts, and the law of kindness expressed by our lips. Meekness should not only be shown to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.—A spirit of forgiveness is essential to Christianity; and the consideration of God's forgiving us our great and manifold provocations, should induce us to a ready forgiveness of those who have injured us. "As God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," is the grand argument the gospel makes use of, to soften the rigour of our resentment to an offending brother, and dispose us to forgive him.

12. Let us consider of what importance it is for us to endeavour, by a kind, gentle and obliging behaviour, to conciliate the affection and esteem of those with whom we have to do.—Our great Creator has formed us for society: he has made it natural to us to desire that our neighbours should wish our welfare, and treat us with decency, kindness and love; that they should promote our interest, and lend us assistance when we stand in need of their help. Consequently, he hath laid us under obligations to treat them as we wish they should treat us: and the more meekness and gentleness we show to them, the greater reason we have to expect the same returns of love and good-will from them. When we fall under affliction, or are overtaken by distressful calamities,

we need the sympathy, counsels, prayers and other friendly aids of those in the society of whom providence has placed us: but how can we expect any of these instances of kindness from them, if we have made them our enemies by our own morose and unfriendly carriage? If we have seemed to take pleasure in vexing them by our peevish or furious passions, what kindness can we expect from them?

Although the blessed God supremely regards his own glory, yet he is so far from requiring any kind of homage from us his creatures, which is in the least detrimental to the interests of society, that it is impossible to please him without showing kindness, love and good will to one another. No parent ever more affectionately sought the happiness of his offspring, or delighted more in their harmony, than our Father who is in heaven seeks our mutual welfare, and delights in seeing us obey the great command of loving our neighbour as ourselves. It is evidently his will, that as Christians, we should stand as much distinguished by the amiableness of our deportment towards men, as by faith, devotion, and zeal towards God.

13. Let us remember that men can proceed no farther in their insults and injurious treatment of us than divine wisdom permits them.—The wicked are his sword. Shimei curses not without his permission. Men's affronts are God's chastisements; their reproaches are his rebukes. Job kept his eye more fixed on the permissive hand of God than on the instruments of his affliction, the Sabeans and Chaldeans. Instead of venting his rage in fruitless exclamations at their cruelty and rapacity, he humbles himself and says: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" He hath wise and gracious purposes to answer in suffering men to treat us as they do: he means to humble and to prove us, that he may do us good in our latter end. Ye thought evil against me, said Joseph to his brethren; "but God meant it for good."

14. Let us live under an habitual sense of the divine presence, and be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.—By

the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. "Thou God seest me," is a proper and suitable reflection at all times, and especially in times of temptation and danger.

15. Let us learn to expect injuries and affronts, that we may not be surprised when they occur.—We do not live among angels, nor among men free from perverseness, and unspotted with impurity; we dwell among a people of irregular tempers and unclean lips. If we would have no provocations, we must needs go out of the world. In all connexions and relations we may justly look for something displeasing. How can we expect to be perfectly at ease in this restless world? "Offences will come" among those whose natures are depraved, and whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? "If thou seest the violent perverting of judgment and justice, marvel not at the matter." Be not surprised into disquietude and passion, when you meet with provocations from corrupt and fallen creatures. The briars and thorns are with us, we dwell among scorpions. We should keep our mouth as with a bridle, while the wicked are before us, and be cautious, as those who walk with a lighted candle among barrels of gunpowder. There are savages in this wilderness through which we pass to the heavenly land, and we need not think it strange if we sometimes hear them roar against us. Meekness will teach us to pass on without resentment, and courage will embolden us to proceed without fear or dismay. If fiery tongues set on us, we should not be like tinder, ready to catch the flame, and render evil for evil.

The patriarch Isaac grew rich and great in the land of Abimelech; but the Philistines envied him. They were angry with him because God prospered him. The wells which his father's servants had digged, the Philistines stopped, and filled with earth. Resentment considers that as gained to itself which is lost to the object of it: it enjoys the mischief which it works merely for mischief's sake. Isaac prudently gives way, and pitches his tent in the valley of

Gerar: but the unrelenting rage of the Philistines pursues him thither. No sooner has he by industry procured water for his family and flocks, than they endeavour, by violence, to possess themselves of it. Isaac, fond of peace, chooses rather to recede from his just right, than to support it by force; and still retires, seeking relief in patience and industry. He finds himself still pursued by the pride and perfidiousness of his neighbours; but at length he conquers by yielding. A victory the most honourable, and the most satisfactory. He went up from thence; and to remove as far as possible every ground of quarrel, he fixed his residence at Beersheba; where feeling himself at home, he at once pitches his tent for repose, and builds an altar for devotion. Here, as one well observes, the hatred, resentment, and violence of man are lost and forgotten in communion with God. His meek and placid behaviour, together with the smiles of Providence upon him, rendered the patriarch so respectable, that Abimelech felt himself impelled at length to court his friendship, and to secure it by a solemn covenant. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him."

16. Let us pour out our souls in humble supplications to that Almighty Being whose grace alone can effectually subdue our irregular tempers.—To rectify them without his aid, is absolutely beyond our power. His aid is graciously promised to those who seek it with humility and fervour: he will subdue our iniquities. Let us fly to his throne, confess and bewail our weakness and folly, and ask help of him who gives liberally to all men, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given us. Intercourse with God in its own nature softens that hardness of heart, that moroseness of spirit which we are apt to contract from converse with a perplexing world. It humbles, it elevates and refines the soul: it makes us averse to give offence, and careful to cultivate harmony and promote peace among our fellow-creatures. He that lives near to God will be unwilling to contend about trifles: he will be disposed to live peaceably with all men. He will be, in a great mea-

sure, exempted from that continual irritation which imaginary injuries raise in suspicious minds; and that God who knows the frailties of the human heart, and hears the prayer of the humble, works in him that which is well-pleasing in his sight. If any man lack the meekness of wisdom, let him ask it of God. Sudden ejaculations to God, when provocations occur, are of special service to cool and calm the mind, and prevent the out-breakings of anger to our fellow-creatures. When David's heart was hot within him, and the fire burned in his bosom, the first words he uttered were those of fervent prayer: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days!"

17. Let us cherish good humour and Christian cheerfulness.—Let us endeavour to shake off that sullenness which makes us so uneasy to ourselves, and to all who are near us. Pythagoras quelled the perturbations of his mind by the use of his harp: and David's music calmed the distraction of Saul, and banished the evil spirit from him. Anger, fretfulness and peevishness prey upon the tender fibres of our frame, and injure our health. Why should we delight to punish ourselves because some one has done us an injury, or is supposed to have treated us unbecomingly?

The man who is of a sour, morose, malevolent temper; looks only on the defects and imperfections of his neighbours. He is ignorant of the art of combining their weaknesses with their virtues, and of rendering the imperfections of others supportable, by a just and humiliating reflection on his own. Such a one exclaims against society, because due attention is not paid to his capricious humour. He tells you, there is very little in human society that is desirable. We own this is too true; it would however be incomparably less desirable, if all men were of this sour and unkind disposition. A society composed of persons of such a cast, would bear a striking resemblance to the infernal regions.

18. Let us avoid the company of passionate and furious men.—We learn the manners, and drink into the spirit of those with whom we are conversant. Like theameleon, we

take a tincture from that which is near us. The wise man's advice is therefore salutary: "Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul." Familiarity with drunkards endangers our sobriety: with the lascivious, our chastity; with the proud, our humility; and with the angry, our meekness and gentleness. Let the meek and lowly be our chosen companions. The wolf is no fit companion for the lamb, nor the leopard for the kid. Let the quiet of the land be the men of our council, that we may observe in them the excellency of meekness, learn their ways, and copy after their example. We shall find from them that none live so happy as those who have the government of their passions; that none are so amiable as those who have the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. The peevish and feeble pieces of human nature take offence at trifles, and often make their own jealousies a sufficient ground for their indignation: let us withdraw from them.

19. Let us labour to have our hearts continually affected with a sense of the love and kindness of God towards us.—If we be Christians indeed, we shall often be saying within ourselves, "What manner of love hath the Father bestowed on us!" How great, how free, how undeserved! He gave his Son to be a sacrifice for our offences, that we might be reconciled to him; and shall we be unwilling to be reconciled to an offending brother? He pardons our blackest crimes, our numerous and enormous transgressions; and shall we be full of anger and resentment against a brother for some petty offence? And an offence too, of one with whom we hope to dwell in the regions of peace and felicity for ever? He tells us, if we forgive not such a brother, he will not forgive us; and can we still be implacable? He gives us the spirit of peace and love to dwell in our hearts; and shall we be deaf to his benign injunctions? "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye

kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. The love of Christ is the sweetest and happiest constraint we can possibly be under; the kindest and most efficacious incentive to love and good works.

Dr. Cheyne, who has done honour to his profession as a physician, has observed, that love to God, as it is the sovereign remedy of all miseries, so in particular it prevents the bodily disorders which the passions introduce, by keeping the passions themselves within due bounds. And by the unspeakable joy, and perfectly calm serenity and tranquillity it gives the mind, becomes the most powerful of all means of health and long life. The object of this love is infinitely perfect. If we are properly affected with his love, so as to be engaged to love him in a supreme degree; anger, hatred and malice will be suppressed. Love is the noblest, and most joyful affection of the mind: our joy and happiness will always rise in proportion to our love to Him in whose presence is fulness of joy. Placing our supreme love on him, and preferring his favour above all, will render us serene, calm and pleased; and, as such, most effectually subdue our angry passions. Let us be firmly persuaded then that the enjoyment of inward tranquillity and a sense of the divine favour, form the chief happiness of our rational nature. It is for want of adverting to this, that our passions are thrown into tumult by outward occurrences. Where we expect too much, we are sure to meet with disappointment, and disappointment involves us in vexation. All immoderate attachments to creatures are to be considered and avoided as acts of idolatry: but a small degree of regard should be entertained for those objects, which, at most, can afford us but a momentary felicity.

Love to God is the foundation of all holiness. He is supremely lovely, and should be supremely loved by us. His favour is life, and ought to be preferred to every other enjoyment. Our hearts should adopt the language of the pious psalmist: "It is good for me to draw near to God. Whom

have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee!" Then will our bosoms glow with the lambent flames of mild benevolence. Our souls will be absorbed in tender sympathy with the distressed; we shall feel a brother's woe, and hasten to his relief: we shall bear with his infirmities, and cover them with the mantle of charity.

The pleasure which affects a human mind with the most lively and transporting touches, and which has the happiest influence over all its passions, is what arises from the favour of the Most High, and the prospect of being crowned at length with a happiness large as our desires, and lasting as our immortal souls. This is a perpetual spring of cheerfulness and gladness in the mind. It softens the asperities of our tempers, and clothes us with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. It lessens the calamities, and doubles the joys of life. Without this, the highest state of worldly advancement is but vanity and vexation; and with it the lowest condition is a paradise. Where this happy state of mind prevails, the rest of the soul is undisturbed; its comforts are not plundered, its government is not disordered; the laws of reason and religion bear the sway, and communion with God and his saints is enjoyed. In such a man, there is the joint concurrence of all the affections to the peace and quiet of the soul, every one exerting itself in its own order for the good of the whole. "The kingdom of God" there prevails, which "is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."—"The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

20. Let us set before us, and as much as possible keep in sight, the shortness of human life, and the certain approach of death, judgment and the eternal world.—What avails this turmoil of passion, this hurry of spirits about things which will presently come to an end? If eternity lies open to view, with all its awful concerns, what can appear so considerable in present occurrences as to agitate our passions, and discompose our minds? Shall we, instead of preparing for a higher

existence, absurdly waste the few moments allotted us here in contending about trifles? Eternity, eternity is at hand!

Let us not add to the troubles of the present hour, the mischiefs and miseries of strife and contention. Let us study to smooth the rugged path by meekness and gentleness, as much as in us lies, living peaceably with all men. Let us "study to be quiet," and finish what remains of life in peace and love. When we are disposed to be angry with a fellow-creature, let us remember, that we know not but he and ourselves too may be summoned to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ within the present hour. This night our souls may be required of us. Were we sure that this would be the case, our angry spirits would be cooled, and other concerns would engage our thoughts. And since every moment's existence here is uncertain to us, why should we cherish any disposition which is unsuitable for a dying man? Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

21. Let us keep in view the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.—It was the design of God to set his Son before us as the model of Christian virtue. I am far from asserting that this was the only, or the chief errand on which he was sent into our world. Jesus himself tells us, that he came to give his life a ransom for many, to seek and to save that which was lost, and to lay down his life for the sheep. But a subordinate end of his mission was, to give a living representation of those dispositions, graces and virtues for our imitation, which are pleasing to God, profitable to us, ornamental to our character, and edifying to those with whom we have to do. We are directed to imitate inferior examples, so far as they are good. A cloud of witnesses is set before us, to animate us in the Christian race: we are to be followers of them who through faith and patience do now inherit the promises. God has not only shown us our duty in his laws and commands, but he has made known his will to us in the more striking, the more engaging way of living examples.

The life of Jesus is particularly designed for our imitation:

we have a fair transcript of the law in his amiable temper and conduct. A minute account is given us of his whole behaviour by the four evangelists, that in the mouth of so many witnesses every word might be established. His cheerful obedience to his divine Father, and regard for his glory; his zeal against sin, his love to mankind, his patience, his meekness and lowliness of heart, shone with such splendour as may justly engage us at once to learn and love the way of holiness. Our Lord himself took care to lead his disciples to consider him as their pattern. He tells them that he who would claim relation to him, or interest in him, must follow him; that they who would find rest in him, must learn of him; and that they must love one another, as he has loved them. Hence, our abiding in him is to be proved by our walking as he walked.

We readily and naturally imbibe the spirit of an intimate friend, and run into a similitude of mind and manners with him. We say of Jesus, 'This is my Friend,' and he vouchsafes to call us his friends. A relation so intimate and endearing should engage us to follow his example.—We profess to be his disciples; we call him Master and Lord; and as such, it is highly reasonable, that we should imitate him. The several sects of philosophers among the heathens were influenced by the practice of their leaders and founders, as well as by their precepts: they were censured or applauded as they degenerated from the virtues of their masters, or copied after them. "Ye call me Master and Lord," says our gracious Redeemer, "and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet: for I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." His doctrine and practice were in perfect unison, we should therefore regard him and follow him in both.

We hope to be like him hereafter: he is the model of our final happiness. If we are now in reality the sons of God, the heirs of promise, we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. If we take

delight in the prospect of future conformity to him, we certainly should be aspiring after it now: we should be pressing towards the mark. Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure. In vain do we flatter ourselves with the hope of being with Jesus hereafter, if we are not like him here. Let us study his example, as it is drawn in the gospel history with care and attention. No part of Scripture is more proper for our search and meditation, than that which gives us the picture of the temper and life of our divine Saviour. Let us never allow ourselves to rest contented without a real and growing conformity to him. The more we contemplate his lovely example, the more we shall be charmed with it; and while we steadfastly behold in the glass of the gospel, the glory of the Lord, we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the agency and operation of the Spirit of the Lord. Our rough, morose and angry dispositions shall be subdued, and we shall be more and more assimilated to the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

The divine Redeemer always preferred truth, and obedience to his Father, to the pleasing of men: yet as far as was consistent with his Father's will, he constantly shewed a strong disposition to prevent angry contentions. Instead of offering injury to any, he went about doing good to all. It was foretold of him in prophecy, that he should not strive nor cry, neither should any man hear his voice in the streets. He acted correspondent to this prediction, pursuing the great design upon which he came into the world, without noise or contention, disturbance or tumult. He checked the first appearances of strife among his followers. He paid tribute to the exactors of it, though it was not due from him: this he chose to do, as himself declares, "lest they should be offended." When he had miraculously cured a leper, rather than displease the Jewish priests, he ordered the man whom he had healed, to go and carry the gift to them, which God had ordained to be given to the priests, when they were concerned in the cure of the leprosy. But I forbear to enlarge, and shall close this essay with a few brief remarks.

CHAPTER IX.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS.

1. **WE** see from what has been said on this subject, sufficient evidence of human depravity.—The history of mankind is in every page demonstrative of our original apostacy. Whence is it that men are agitated with such lawless passions as set them at continual war with each other? Whence is it, that not content with the evils which nature has entailed upon them, they exert all their talents for multiplying and speeding the means of perdition to one another? Whence is it that we see half the world employed in pushing the other half from the verge of existence? Whence is it that even in their religious contests, such wrathful and malevolent passions reign among men as are disgraceful to humanity? The cause of all this disorder is, alas, but too evident; "We are by nature children of wrath!" We are naturally the subjects of enmity to God and his law: this is evident from the confessions and complaints of those who have the justest and truest acquaintance with their own hearts. The sacred Scriptures abound with the groans and cries of those who have felt themselves infected with the loathsome disease. "Behold I am vile," says holy Job. "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts," says David, the man after God's own heart; "but behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Nay, it is the acknowledgement of holy men in general: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

This depravity is total and entire, diffusing itself through all the powers of the soul. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. It is universal; involving all nations, both Jews and Gentiles—all ranks; the high and the low, the rich and the poor. Whatever difference there may be as

to birth or blood, nobility or baseness, education, place or office; "all flesh have corrupted their way." What nation, what tribe, what kindred, what family, what people or language can be produced, before or after the flood, under the law or under the gospel, who have escaped the direful infection? Happy were the man who could make the pleasing discovery.

The disease is likewise constant. Blindness in the understanding, impotence in the will, disorder in the affections, are not visitants, but inhabitants. They are interwoven in our constitution. This fatal distemper is more deeply rooted than the Ethiopian's sooty complexion or the leopard's spots. Hence no ordinary means will take effect for the removal of it. The most awakening threats and thundering menaces, will not rouse us from our lethargy. The heart is stony, the neck an iron sinew, the brow brass. The most pathetic entreaties, and moving expostulations cannot entice the mind to close in with that which is absolutely necessary to its own solid peace and final happiness. Divine power alone can make the sinner willing.

2. Our natural depravity strongly bespeaks the necessity of our renewal by grace.—We must have a new and a better life than that we drew with our first birth. The stream will not rise higher than the fountain; nature can produce no more than that which is natural. If in our first birth we are children of wrath, what but a being born from above can make us the children of God? I know this remark will be deemed by some, the cant of enthusiasm; but should the fear of incurring such a censure impose silence upon me, I should think myself unworthy of the Christian name, and much more unworthy to sustain the sacred character of a minister of that Jesus, who has taught us all, that "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Unless a new heart be given to us, and a new spirit put within us, we shall ever be strangers to true Christian meekness. The apostle of the Gentiles carefully informs us that meekness is "a fruit of the Spirit." The pruning of the

branches is not sufficient; the tree itself must be made good. An outward reformation is not enough; we must be "renewed in the spirit of our minds. Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but a new creature." Grapes will not grow upon thorns, nor figs upon thistles. The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which are in the sight of God of great price, are only found in him who is created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

To deliver us from the guilt, pollution and misery of our lapsed state, was the end of our blessed Redeemer's coming into this world. He gave himself for our sins; he submitted to a state of poverty and meanness, to reproach and shame, to incessant labour and toil; he yielded and delivered himself up as a willing victim, into the hands of avenging justice, and was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; he was exceeding sorrowful, sore amazed, and very heavy; his heart melted like wax in the midst of his bowels; he was in an agony, and sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground; he gave himself up into the hands of cruel and wicked men, and underwent the bitter pains and horrors of an accursed death; and all this, that he might make reconciliation for our iniquity, satisfy for our offences, and procure the full remission of them all. "Without shedding of blood there was no remission; but we have redemption through the blood of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

"With his stripes we are healed," says the evangelical prophet. He did not die for our sins that we should live in them, and under the power of them; but that he might free us from their tyranny, and release us from their captivity; that henceforth we should not serve sin. He was "manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil," reduce us to subjection to himself, reign in our hearts by his spirit and grace, maintaining his throne there in righteousness, peace and joy. On this subject, reader, may your thoughts delight-

fully expand! Here is the remedy for all the evils which sin has introduced: here is the destruction of sin itself, the cause, the direful, the fatal cause of all our woe: here is the sovereign cure for the disorders of your mind; the precious balm for a wounded conscience. This, this is all our salvation, and should be all our desire. Blessed Jesus, may we look to thee and be healed of all our maladies! We who have been "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another;" may we, as the happy consequence of thy atoning sacrifice, be saved "by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost!" Thus shall our angry passions, on account of which we are compared to lions and tigers, wolves and bears, be all brought into subjection and obedience to thee! The lion shall become a lamb, the churl shall become liberal, and the fierce and furious be clothed with gentleness. Conquer by the omnipotence of thy grace, our perverse affections, and reign in us, that we may conquer and reign with thee. Let our rebellious powers hear thy voice, tremble and obey!

How astonishing is it that the wonders of saving love should so little engage the attention of mankind. The salvation of a lost world has employed the thoughts and counsels of Jehovah from everlasting. At how many times, in how many different manners, did he speak of this subject unto the fathers? How many embassies of angels did He send to give intimations of it? How were all the designs of the Most High in the course of his adorable providence, and the execution of them, rendered subservient to this one glorious purpose, which rises superior to, and absorbs all the rest—the plan of salvation by a Redeemer! As if the great God had been carrying on no design from the beginning but one, a design of love to ruined men: that one, which of all others, these ungrateful creatures treat with the greatest slight, indifference and neglect. And shall that which thus occupied the Eternal Mind; to mature and execute which the world was created; which has been declared to man by so many

signs in heaven above, and on earth beneath, by the tongues of so many prophets, by so many oracles; to announce which angels and archangels have descended from their thrones; and to accomplish which, "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, preached unto the Gentiles, received up into glory"—shall it be announced, unfolded, executed in vain? Shall men make light of it all, and treat it as a cunningly devised fable? Shall they still regard it as a thing of nought? Reader, whatever you approve or reject in these pages, neglect not this great salvation. But renouncing your sins, and embracing the messages of life and peace, enter cordially into the views of God your Maker and Redeemer, and earnestly pursue the same object with him, the salvation of the soul!

Should you be disposed to say, What connexion has this with your subject? I answer, a very intimate connexion. Were I to trace out the disease without once hinting at the remedy, I should acquit myself but poorly in this business. Like a surgeon who probes a wound, but leaves it open and bleeding, without the necessary dressings. The whole, indeed, need not a physician, but they that are sick. Here then,

—————Survey the wond'rous cure;

And at each step, let higher wonder rise!

Pardon for infinite offence! and pardon

Thro' means that speak its value infinite!

A pardon bought with blood! with blood divine!

With blood divine of him I made my foe!

Persisted to provoke! tho' woo'd and aw'd,

Bless'd, and chastis'd, a flagrant rebel still!

A rebel 'midst the thunders of his throne!

Nor I alone! a rebel universe!

My species up in arms; not one exempt!

Yet for the foulest of the foul he dies!

Most joy'd for the redeem'd from deepest guilt!

As if our race were held of highest rank:

And Godhead dearer as more kind to man! YOUNG.

3. What shall we think of those mighty heroes who have

been so unjustly celebrated in every age for their prowess and valour?—Were not many of them the oppressors and butchers of mankind? And yet poets, painters, sculptors, statuaries and historians have united their efforts to make them famous. Themistocles spoke the language of sober reason, when, being asked whom he considered as the greatest of heroes, he answered, ‘Not him who conquers, but him who saves; not the man who ruins, but the man who erects; who of a village can make a city, or turn a despicable people into a great nation.’ Yet the serene acts of benevolence, the small still voice of goodness are neither accompanied by noise nor ostentation. It is uproar and tumult, the downfall of sacked cities, the shrieks of ravished matrons, and the groans of dying nations, that fill the trumpet of fame, and gain the plaudit of the world. Men of cruelty and blood, of ambition and power, find distinction and glory very easy to be attained in this way; as it is indisputably more easy to destroy than to create, to give death than to give life, to pull down than to build up, to bring devastation and misery, rather than plenty, peace and prosperity upon earth. But let us not ascribe honour and acclamation to deeds which call loudly for infamy and the gibbet.

Henry the IV. of France, just before a battle, in which he obtained an entire victory, devoutly poured out his soul in prayer to the God of armies, to the following purpose:—‘O Lord of hosts, who canst see through the thickest veil and closest disguise, who viewest the bottom of my heart, and the deepest designs of my enemies; who hast in thy hands, as well as before thine eyes, all the events which concern human life; if thou knowest that my reign will promote thy glory, and the safety of thy people; if thou knowest that I have no other ambition in my soul, but to advance the honour of thy holy name, and the good of this state; favour, O great God, the justice of my arms, and reduce all the rebels to acknowledge him whom thy sacred decrees, and the order of a lawful succession, have made their sovereign; but if thy good providence has ordered it otherwise, and thou seest that I

should prove one of those kings whom thou givest in thine anger, take from me, O merciful God, my life and my crown; make me this day a sacrifice to thy will; let my death end the calamities of France; and let my blood be the last that is spilt in this quarrel!’

4. Whatever be our different conceptions as to matters of speculation, let us be very assiduous to cultivate a Christian temper.—Let us be careful to give evidence of a ready and hearty submission to the word of God, and a cheerful resignation to his providence. Let us be modest, humble and lowly in our behaviour towards men, cautious of giving offence, and not hasty to take offence at others. Let us learn to be calm under real provocations, and always in readiness to be reconciled when the offence is acknowledged. In all our religious connexions and concerns especially, let us wear the garment of humility, and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit: this will be more to the honour of our divine Saviour, more to the credit of our holy religion, than the exactest orthodoxy in doubtful matters without it.

We may err in lesser concerns, and yet be safe as to our final state; but if we are destitute, wholly destitute of a true Christian temper, the mind that was in Christ Jesus, we are in the gall of bitterness, in the bond of iniquity. It matters not by what name we choose to be distinguished, or to what sect of Christians we professedly adhere; if pride, anger, wrath and malice reign in our hearts, and govern our lives, all our religion is hypocrisy. “If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, he deceiveth his own heart,” betrays the perverseness and malignity of his disposition, “that man’s religion is vain.” Let no man deceive himself.

5. What care is necessary that the tempers of children be not spoiled by an improper education!—The severity of a tyrannical parent, or master, may be productive of much mischief to his tender charge. After having devoted many years of life to the important task of cultivating youthful minds, I hope I may be allowed to speak what I have learned by experience. Youths of a generous disposition may be in-

duced to do any thing by kindness; but severity would rouse and harden them into opposition. To be perpetually chiding them, or frequently beating or scourging them, would have a natural tendency to stir up their resentment against us, and lead them to consider us as their greatest enemies.

The infliction of chastisement requires great prudence, and a happy command of temper.—That it may produce the desired effect, it should at least appear to flow from a just displeasure at the offence committed: but for a parent or tutor not to be able to command his passion, would be to set a bad example before children. It would lessen his authority, by shewing his weakness before them; for it is great weakness in an instructor to be often carried away by the impulse of anger. Few persons meet with more frequent provocations than those who have a number of children to manage and govern. If such do not check the risings of anger, they will find it grow upon them, and become habitual: this would make their own lives very unhappy, and lead them to sudden acts of cruelty and barbarity, which they might immediately repent of, but in vain. Slight expressions of displeasure or approbation, will produce happy effects on youths of a meek and tender disposition. A frowning look, or a sharp word will succeed better with such as a corrective, than many stripes with others. Praise and shame will frequently be found sufficient to answer the governor's purpose: but vice and immorality, idleness and mischief will, at times, require the rod of correction. It would be awful to suffer children to walk in the way of their own heart. The fertile soil must not lie uncultivated, and overrun with weeds.

As severity is ever to be condemned, so an excess of lenity is not less pernicious. It is an ancient observation, and which has received the sanction of experience in every age: "He that spareth his rod," i. e. when absolutely necessary, "hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him beatings." When lenity and softness are ill-judged and excessive, they are in effect cruelty. 'Impunity (says Cicero) is

the greatest enticement to the commission of offences.' A wiser than he has told us, that "a child left to himself brings his mother to shame."—I lately heard of a certain youth, of a hot, malignant, fiery disposition, much addicted to quarrelling with his companions when at school; and who being always accustomed to be treated with indulgence, grew up to such a degree of self-willedness, that on meeting with some opposition from his parent, in an affair he had in hand when grown up to years of maturity, he could not bear to be controlled, but took a loaded pistol, and shot himself dead.

Experience shows that the tempers of children may be spoiled, either by an excess of lenity, or of severity. The golden mean between the two extremes is the safest path. Severity may break the spirits: "Provoke not children to anger, lest they be discouraged." Lenity on the other hand is amiable: the motives to it are noble; much may be said in its praise; and the advocate for it will find an attentive audience. Yet lenity carried to an undue degree, frequently involves the object of it in misery and perdition. Human nature is, at every stage of life prone to evil; and particularly so at a time, when, to inherent depravity are added, weakness of understanding, and want of thought and experience. Proper methods must be devised of influencing the hopes and fears of children; and these methods must be accommodated to their different dispositions. Wisdom is profitable to direct.

6. Let aged persons be particularly on their guard against angry, fretful, and perverse passions.—The many disappointments we have met with through life, the coldness and neglect with which we begin to be treated, together with the load of infirmities incident to those who are advanced in years, have a tendency to sour our tempers, and make us uneasy to ourselves and those about us. Our old friends are many of them gone down to the grave before us; and those who survive, perhaps, have almost forgotten us. Some of our children are taken away by death, others removed to a distance from us; or, which is still more afflictive, there may

be others of them who prove ungrateful and disobedient. In such circumstances we stand in need of great grace to enable us to possess our souls in patience, and to keep us serene, gentle, and composed. We are apt to be too soon thrown out of humour, to assume an angry look, and to utter the language of perverseness. But let us remember, that we stand in need of help and assistance: we should therefore, for our own sakes, avoid every thing that would disgust and drive away our friends, from whom we may still hope for some comfort. Let us especially watch against a positive, supercilious, overbearing temper: a fretful, uneasy, discontented spirit. Let us not be always complaining of slights and neglects. Let us not be continually finding fault with those in younger life; for these are the persons chiefly from whom we may expect consolation: and it must be a very extraordinary degree of piety, or good nature, that will incline persons to help those who are always uneasy, cross, peevish, and perverse. If we drive away those who could help us, and would do it with pleasure, if we were meek, patient and obliging, we may stretch out our hands in vain, and hope for friendly assistance and sympathy without success. Nay, we may thank ourselves for it, if we are deserted, overlooked, and neglected still more and more, and if the world appear desirous to be rid of us.

But nobler motives than these should excite us to meekness and patience: the hopes, prospects and comforts of Christianity should calm our spirits, and sooth our hearts to rest. All true Christians know, that the gospel and the religion of Jesus afford a rich profusion of solid peace and consolation, amidst the sorrows, disappointments, and afflictions attendant on our pilgrimage state. Instead of repining at any humiliating circumstances that may be allotted to us in our declining years, let us my aged and honoured friends, "draw water out of the wells of salvation." By patience and comfort of the Scriptures, let us embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life. This, if any thing, will smooth our ruffled tempers, relieve our fatigued spirits,

and check our petulant humours. This will dissipate the gloom of our solitary years; and support our weary steps in the last stages of our journey. Let the blessed gospel be our constant theme: the dignity of its Author, the evidence of its arguments; the gentleness of its injunctions, the nature, extent, and duration of its promises—these, and innumerable other blessings, make the richest provision for rational consolation, and refined joy.

Religion! Providence! an after state!
 Here is firm footing; here is solid rock;
 This can support us; all is sea beside;
 Sinks under us; bestorms, and then devours.
 His hand the good man fastens in the skies.
 And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl.
 Religion! thou the soul of happiness!
 And groaning Calvary of thee! there shine
 The brightest truths; there strongest motives sting;
 There sacred violence assaults the soul.

YOUNG.

7. I have already recommended Christian cheerfulness as an antidote against that evil which this essay is humbly intended to suppress and correct.—A celebrated author has given us his thoughts on this subject with a justness and propriety peculiar to himself. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of presenting a few of his observations to the reader: nothing, I apprehend, can be better adapted to my purpose. I shall not therefore crave my reader's pardon for the liberty I am going to take, because I am very much mistaken if he will not think the following extracts the most valuable part of the *Essay on Anger*.

'I have always preferred cheerfulness to mirth: the latter I consider as an act, the former as an habit of the mind. Mirth is short and transient, cheerfulness fixed and permanent. Those are often raised into the greatest transports of mirth, who are subject to the greatest depressions of melancholy. On the contrary, cheerfulness, though it does not give the mind such an exquisite gladness, prevents us from falling into the depths of sorrow. Mirth is like a flash of

lightning, which breaks through a gloom of clouds, and glitters for a moment; cheerfulness keeps up a kind of day-light in the mind, and fills it with a steady and perpetual serenity.

Men of austere principles look upon mirth as too wanton and dissolute for a state of probation, and as filled with a certain triumph and insolence of heart, which is inconsistent with a life every moment obnoxious to the greatest dangers. Writers of this complexion have observed, that the sacred person who was the great pattern of perfection, was never seen to laugh. Cheerfulness of mind is not liable to any of these exceptions; it is of a serious and composed nature; it does not throw the mind into a condition improper for the present state of humanity; and is very conspicuous in the character of those who are looked upon as the greatest philosophers among the heathens, as well as among those who have been deservedly esteemed as saints and holy men among Christians.

If we consider cheerfulness in three lights, with regard to ourselves, to those we converse with, and to the great Author of our being, it will not a little recommend itself on each of these accounts. The man who is possessed of this excellent frame of mind, is not only easy in his thoughts, but a perfect master of all the powers and faculties of the soul; his imagination is clear, and his judgment undisturbed; his temper is even and unruffled, whether in action or in solitude. He comes with a relish to all those goods which nature has provided for him, tastes all the pleasures of the creation which are poured forth about him, and does not feel the full weight of those accidental evils which may befall him.

If we consider him in relation to the persons with whom he converses, it naturally produces love and good will towards him. A cheerful mind is not only disposed to be affable and obliging, but raises the same good humour in those who come within its influence. A man finds himself pleased, he does not know why, with the cheerfulness of his companion: it is like a sudden sunshine that awakens a secret delight in the mind without attending to it. The heart rejoices of its own

accord, and naturally flows out into friendship and benevolence towards the person who has so kind an effect upon it.

When I consider this cheerful state of mind in its third relation, I cannot but look upon it as a constant, habitual gratitude to the great Author of nature. An inward cheerfulness is an implicit praise and thanksgiving to providence, under its dispensations. It is a kind of acquiescence in the state wherein we are placed, and a secret approbation of the divine will in his conduct towards men.

There are but two things, which, in my opinion, can reasonably deprive us of this cheerfulness of heart. The first of these is the sense of guilt. A man who lives in a state of vice and impenitence, can have no title to that evenness and tranquillity of mind, which is the health of the soul. Cheerfulness in an ill man deserves a harder name than language can furnish us with, and is many degrees beyond what we commonly call folly and madness.

Atheism, by which I mean a disbelief of the Supreme Being, and consequently of a future state, under whatsoever title it shelters itself, may likewise very reasonably deprive a man of this cheerfulness of temper. There is something so particularly gloomy and offensive to human nature in the prospect of non-existence, that I cannot but wonder, with many excellent writers, how it is possible for a man to out-live the expectation of it. For my own part, I think the being of a God so little to be doubted, that it is almost the only truth we are sure of; and such a truth as we meet with in every object, in every occurrence, and in every thought. If we look into the character of this tribe of infidels, we generally find they are made up of pride, spleen, and cavil; it is indeed no wonder that men, who are uneasy to themselves, should be so to the rest of the world. The vicious man and atheist have therefore no pretence to cheerfulness, and would act very unreasonably should they endeavour at it.

After having mentioned these two great principles which are destructive of cheerfulness in their own nature, as well as in right reason, I cannot think of any other that ought to ba-

nish this happy temper from a virtuous mind. Pain and sickness, shame and reproach, poverty and old age, nay death itself, considering the shortness of their duration, and the advantage we may reap from them, do not deserve the name of evils. The tossing of a tempest does not discompose him who is sure it will bring him to a joyful harbour. The consideration of that Being on whom we have our dependence, and in whom we see every thing that we can imagine as great, glorious or amiable, is a source of cheerfulness to a good mind. We find ourselves every where upheld by his goodness, and surrounded with an immensity of love and mercy. We depend upon a Being, whose power qualifies him to make us happy by an infinity of means, whose goodness and truth engage him to make those happy who desire it of him, and whose unchangeableness will secure us in this happiness to all eternity.

Such considerations, which every one should perpetually cherish in his thoughts, will banish from us all that secret heaviness of heart, which unthinking men are subject to, when they lie under no real affliction; all that anguish which we may feel from any evil that actually oppresses us; to which I may likewise add, those little cracklings of mirth and folly that are apter to betray virtue than to support it; and establish in us such an even and cheerful temper, as makes us pleasing to ourselves, to those with whom we converse, and to Him whom we are made to please.

May this happy temper be cultivated by us, and this advantage among many others will be sure to follow, we shall not be *soon angry*.

I shall now put a period to this essay, humbly submitting it to the candour of the public. I wish it may in any degree answer the expectations of my friends, who have been so kind as to favour its publication with their encouragement. May the God of love and peace seal instruction to all our hearts, and render this feeble effort to promote his glory in the present and everlasting welfare of his creatures, happily conducive to the answering of the desired end! May we, by

putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and learning of him to be meek and lowly in heart, be formed to a meetness for, and finally by his saving mercy be brought to the possession of the regions of perfect peace and purity, where friendship, harmony and love flourish and reign through immortal ages! Amen.

THE
IMPORTANT JOURNEY
FROM
THIS WORLD TO THE NEXT;

CONSIDERED IN

A SERMON

DELIVERED AT AN ASSOCIATION AT BRADFORD,
IN YORKSHIRE, JUNE 13th, 1810.

When a few years are come, I shall go the way whence I shall not
return.—JOB.

THE
IMPORTANT JOURNEY

FROM
THIS WORLD TO THE NEXT.

JOSH. XXIII. 14.—*And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth.*

JOSHUA was now an old man ; and as he felt in himself the decays of nature, he reminded the people of his charge concerning it, and took his leave of them in a farewell address, assuring them that he could not be much longer with them as their teacher and governor. The apostle Peter speaks much in the same manner, 2 Pet. i. 13, 14: "I think it meet as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance ; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." As if he had said, I must soon be dismissed from my present state of service, and therefore I would stir up your minds by way of remembrance, that you may be quickened in preparation to quit this world, and to enter into the joy of your Lord. We have another instance somewhat similar in the apostle Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 6: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." Death is dreaded by many as a most terrible event ; but these holy men were enabled to contemplate it with tranquillity and composure. They all considered it in the same point of light, as the finishing of their course of activity here, and as taking a journey into the other world,—the heavenly country. And, my honoured friends, since you will not excuse me from addressing you at this time, I now stand up before you, though

it is not with the full approbation of my own mind; because I am conscious of my many infirmities, and find my spirits very much broken, by the loss of one who has long been dear to me. I have chosen a subject somewhat congenial to my own circumstances and feelings, and through divine assistance, would suggest a few hints unto you as a dying man. "I am this day going the way of all the earth." This plain observation arises from the words, that *to die is to go a journey to the other world*. We shall endeavour to consider the subject in this light.

1. When a good man contemplates death as a journey, several pleasing ideas present themselves to his mind.

We often think of a journey with pleasure, and anticipate the enjoyment long beforehand. So a man of elevated piety, and a heavenly temper, at some seasons rejoices in hope of the glory of God, or in expectation of being brought into his presence.

Perhaps there is nothing more pleasing in the prospect of a journey than the hope of having an interview with those valuable friends to whom our hearts are united, and from whom we have been long separated. This is applicable to the journey of which we are now going to speak. Many are now gone to the celestial country, whose departure from life we have deeply and sincerely lamented. But the hope of meeting them again to part no more, affords peculiar pleasure. On earth we lived with them in harmony and love; but this was but a shadow of what we shall then enjoy, in the regions of immortality and unfading felicity. We were enabled to live together as heirs of the grace of life, but then we shall be advanced to the summit of celestial glory. We prayed, we wept, we rejoiced with one another upon earth. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God as friends. We loved one another sincerely; but then our affection will be refined and exalted to the highest degree. Our mutual prayers will be answered, and our felicity will be complete, in the everlasting enjoyment of God, and of one another. The parting stroke was painful, but we shall then

be happily united again, where there will be no more death, and where the fear of separation can have no place.

There we shall see a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. Men of all ranks and degrees; from the east and the west, the north and the south; from the populous city, and from the solitary desert. The heavenly country already abounds with inhabitants, and innumerable multitudes more are still hastening to it. Nor will this blessed assembly ever break up, but continue through everlasting ages. The children of God who have lived in different periods of time, are there assembled together, and without doubt, have that knowledge of one another which will be productive of mutual satisfaction and delight. How must the Christian rejoice in the prospect of being introduced into the society of the best and holiest of men that ever existed since the world began! He will there hold familiar converse with the first parents of mankind; with Enoch who walked with God, and was translated that he should not see death; with Noah, the founder of a new world, who was an upright man, and perfect in his generation; with Abraham the father of the faithful; with Jacob, who as a prince had power with God, and prevailed; with Joseph, more glorious than when he shone in all the splendour of the Egyptian court. He will there see Moses, the Jewish lawgiver, the meekest of men, who, while on earth, conversed with God face to face; and Aaron, the saint of the Lord. He will be introduced into the company of Job, renowned for his patience in tribulation; of Elijah, who was zealous for the Lord of hosts, and was caught up to heaven in a fiery chariot; of the seraphic prophet Isaiah, who saw the Redeemer's glory, and spake of him with so much clearness and energy, many hundred years before he made his appearance on earth. He will be the companion of David, the man after God's own heart, the sweet psalmist of Israel, whose compositions have often elevated his soul to heaven. He will be in the society of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and hear from them a full explanation of those su-

blime passages in their writings which he could hardly understand on earth. John, who leaned on the Saviour's bosom, will clearly unfold his mysterious visions; and blessed Paul lay open more at large the unsearchable riches of Christ. It is surely worth while to go a long journey to be introduced into such society as this.

The believer will see those saints above in their own glorious forms, see them made perfect in knowledge and holiness, and fully refined from all the dregs of impurity, and disorderly passions. He will see them in no more danger of giving and taking offence. He will see Paul and Barnabas perfectly satisfied with each other. Discord will have no place there, nor any resentment ever rise. No jarring string will ever interrupt the melody of the celestial regions. Calvin and Luther, Melancthon and Zuinglius, Whitefield and Wesley, Conformists and Nonconformists, will there entirely accord. They will then see eye to eye; they will, in the fullest sense of the words, "all speak the same things, and be perfectly joined together, of the same mind, and of the same judgment."

The believer will there see that minister whose labours, through grace, have been savingly beneficial to his soul; and he will have the happiness of seeing and of thanking those excellent men whose writings have contributed so much to his instruction and edification in this world*.

But after all that can be said about the pleasures which the Christian expects from society, at the end of his journey, it is necessary to observe, that it is the presence of the Lord of

*I beg leave to say, that I do not know of any individual to whom the church of Christ in modern times is more indebted, under God, than to the excellent Dr. Watts, whose Psalms and Hymns are so wonderfully calculated to aid our devotions, both in public and private. Christians of various denominations, and thousands of religious assemblies, make melody in their hearts to the Lord, in singing his divine compositions. They never tire us in the perusal; but the more they are known the more they are admired. What an honour has God conferred upon the author!

glory that makes this society so delightful. We talk of being introduced into the company of patriarchs and prophets, of apostles, martyrs, and confessors, with all the glorious angels of light: but to be with Jesus is more than all the rest. Many have languished to behold him, and been willing to die for the sight; languished to see the King in his beauty, and to be in his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand where there are pleasures for evermore. The apostle Paul longed to go the journey we speak of, for this very end. "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" than any thing else that can be mentioned: Phil. i. 23. The words in the original are so very emphatical, that it is difficult to translate them literally. The apostle seems to labour for expression here, as much as in any part of his writings. "It is better beyond all comparison." The sight of him is indeed well worth dying for. David's language resembles that of Paul: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: When shall I come and appear before God?" Psal. xlii. 2. But farther,

When we have a journey in view, we please ourselves with the hope of seeing the beautiful face of nature. At some seasons of the year, especially in the spring, every part of creation is decorated with attractive charms. Fruitful meadows, covered with flocks and herds, flowery lawns, majestic woods and forests, spacious valleys, lofty hills and mountains, rocks and precipices, purling streams, flowing brooks and spacious rivers, charm the eye, and inspire the heart with vernal delight and joy. It might seem as if the bountiful Creator had adorned the surface of the earth with this profusion of beauties, on purpose to give us pleasure in beholding them, and to excite in us the sentiments and sensations of wonder, gratitude, and love. The prospect of a journey is highly pleasing, because we hope to have our senses gratified with the sight of these objects. There are other scenes with the view of which we hope to be indulged in a journey. Peaceful cottages, splendid villas, flourishing towns, and wealthy cities, afford a rich variety of entertainment to him

that travels. But none of these things will bear any comparison with the beauties and glories of that celestial country to which the Christian is journeying. It was typically represented by the land flowing with milk and honey, of which Moses had a pleasing view before his death.

Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dress'd in living green ;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood
While Jordan roll'd between.

Who can attempt to describe that garden of delights, the Paradise of God, in which our first parents were placed before the fall? All the beauties and blessings of creation were united there. It was a type of heaven, that blessed place to which the Christian is journeying. This is often called Paradise; but no doubt it excels the earthly one as far as heaven is higher than the earth. Do we talk of being pleased with the sight of villas, towns, and cities.—What are these in comparison with those heavenly mansions of which God himself is the architect? What is the finest and fairest city in the world, when compared with the heavenly Jerusalem? Its gates are pearls, its foundations precious stones, and its streets are paved with gold; the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!"

Thus when a good man contemplates death as a journey, many pleasing ideas present themselves to his mind.

2. This is a journey which may be near at hand. "I am *this day* going the way of all the earth." For any thing we know, the journey may be just before us; there may be but a step between us and death. We have perpetual admonitions respecting the shortness and uncertainty of life. The word and the ministers of God unitedly call our attention to those subjects, and we ought earnestly to pray that the Lord would teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. "Make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days what it is, that I may know how frail I am." Our days are but a span, a hand-breadth, an inch or two of

time. Life is but a vapour that appears for a little season, and vanisheth away. It is but like a flower of the field, which quickly fades, withers, and dies away. Our breath is in our nostrils, ever ready to depart, and any motion of our lungs may be the last. What numbers do we hear of who are cut off by sudden death! Many are called to set out on this journey at a moment's warning. The messenger comes, and they must go, whether they be prepared or not. Ready or unready, the summons must be obeyed. Whether they be busy or indolent, active or negligent, they must immediately set out on this important journey. The call is often given at an unexpected moment. While the man is vainly dreaming of years of felicity on earth, God says unto him, 'Thou infatuated mortal, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.' Thus the words of inspiration are verified: "In an hour when ye think not the Son of man cometh." The living know that they must die. All men are sensible that they must go this journey sooner or later; but the general part of mankind consider it as at a considerable distance. This is a fatal source of security, forgetfulness of God, and neglect of the great salvation. When the Holy Spirit awakens you to a sense of your sinful and miserable condition, he will set death, judgment, and eternity, before your eyes. He will remind you, that you should not boast of to-morrow, for you know not what a day may bring forth. Hence he is said to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. O that every one in this assembly may leave the house of God under a deep conviction, that the journey he has to go may be very near. Then he will begin to be seriously attentive to everlasting things, and will no longer sit idle in the market-place, no longer trifle with God, and with the eternal interests of his own soul.

3. This is a journey which we cannot avoid. It is the "way of all the earth." Those who forget God, and live wickedly, must go this journey. If they are unwilling to set out in it, they must be driven away. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." Some journeys may be

put off to a future time. They may be deferred for a day, a week, or even a year. But this is not the case with the journey to the other world. Thousands could wish to defer it, at least for a little while, if it were in their power. Could they bribe the messenger who is sent to call them away, by the largest gifts they have in their power to bestow, it would be done. They are eagerly attached to present objects, and unwilling to leave them. They have their portion in this life; they have looked for nothing better than that which this world can give. It is no wonder, therefore, that they are unwilling to relinquish all that which they have loved, desired, and sought above every thing else. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Hence they are so earnestly and eagerly desirous of living a little longer. But their wishes are vain and unprofitable. They are conscious that they are unready for the journey, and they dread the consequences. Hence death is to them the king of terrors, more to be feared than any thing else. But he is a messenger that will not be denied, an enemy that cannot be resisted. All the earth must yield to him. The high and the low, the rich and the poor, the prince on the throne, and the beggar on the dunghill; all must go the journey of death; whether willing or unwilling; whether full of hope or sunk in despair; whether elevated with the joy of faith, or distracted with the terrors of approaching destruction. In some journeys a man may engage a servant or a friend to go in his room; but this is a case inadmissible here; for no one can engage another to go the journey for him. It is so absolutely impossible, that no one ever thinks of proposing it to his servant, his friend, or relation. Nor can any one in this respect "redeem his brother, nor give unto God a ransom for him, that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption," Psal. xlix. 7, 9. The veracity of the divine word is demonstrated in millions of instances: "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return." You cannot say that proper warning has not been given you; since every instance of mortality with which you are acquainted has this voice in it; "Prepare to

meet thy God." This warning is felt in the ties of friendship when broken; it may be seen in the widow's tears, and heard in the cries of orphans. Graves are opened around us to devour their prey, and multitudes are lodged in them, of every age, rank, and degree. "Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets." You cannot avoid the journey.

4. It is of great importance to be prepared for this journey.

When a journey of consequence is before us, a great deal of thought and care are employed, and much time spent in making preparation for it. But though to be properly mettened and prepared for the journey of death is the greatest of all concerns, few, alas! are attentive to it as they ought to be. The Redeemer of our souls most solemnly addresses us all upon this subject, Luke xii. 40: "Be ye therefore ready also, for in an hour when ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." The Colossians were made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. And the apostle gave thanks to God for this blessing, on their account, Col. i. 12. They were ready for the journey, whenever the signal was given. The Corinthians were in the like happy state, and he that "had wrought them to the self-same thing was God;" 2 Cor. v. 5. A very weighty question hence arises: What is the true, the best preparation for the journey of death? I answer in a few words; a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The voice of the gospel every where is, "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life." The complete atonement of Christ, received and trusted in, is that which disarms death of his sting, which silences the thunders of the law, and brings us to the enjoyment of peace and reconciliation with God. Hence the apostle Paul tells us what was the prevailing desire of his heart, Phil. ii. 8: "That I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ; the righteousness of God by faith." I would meet death at my

Saviour's side, who has abolished it, and brought life and immortality to light. Or, like Simeon, I would meet death with the Saviour in my arms, the arms of faith. Then I would say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." I dare thus venture on the awful journey. The valley of the shadow of death is dark and gloomy; there are a thousand terrors there; but I would say, "Lord, I fear no evil here, for thou art with me!" Psal. xxiii. 4. Hence said the apostle Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day;" 2 Tim. i. 12. Being interested in Jesus Christ by faith, death is ours, it is a part of our patrimony; so that to die is gain. Whatever makes this journey an object of terror and dread, a lively faith in Jesus Christ removes it, and takes it away.

Death's terror is the mountain faith removes;

'Tis faith disarms destruction;

Believe, and look with triumph on the tomb.

Sin is the sting of death; it is that which gives it all its destroying power; it is that which makes us afraid to go this journey; it raises a thousand terrors in the mind. But he that believes in Jesus, beholds him as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, or puts it away by the sacrifice of himself. Hence the believer triumphantly cries, "O death, where is thy sting?" It is drawn, it is gone, and thou art become harmless. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57. A sense of the want of a proper righteousness wherein to appear before the bar of God will make us fear to die. But the believer can say, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." A consciousness of impurity makes death formidable; since "without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" but the heart is purified by faith in that precious blood which cleanseth from all sin. A lively faith sanctifies the mind, by leading it to

the fountain set open for sin and uncleanness.—A prospect of the judgment to come makes a man dread to enter on the journey of death; since after death comes the judgment. But the believer in Jesus knows that the Judge is his friend and Saviour, and as such he loves and longs for his appearing. For "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." The judge will say to them; "Come ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."—The fear of the divine displeasure makes men shudder at the thoughts of death. But the believer beholds his reconciled face in Christ; and says, "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The gloominess of the grave makes some men afraid to die. It is indeed a dwelling of darkness and corruption. But he that has said, "O death, I will be thy plagues," has also said, "O grave, I will be thy destruction." Let his own precious and animating words never be forgotten, John xi. 25, 26: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die: believest thou this?" Yea, Lord, we believe it: 'Thou shalt change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto thy own glorious body, according to the working whereby thou art able to subdue all things unto thyself.' In short, faith is connected with that love to God, without which no man is prepared to die, or fit to go to heaven. Can you suppose that any man will be admitted into the regions of immortal love and purity, whose mind is alienated from God, and full of enmity against him? To imagine this would be to dream of impossibilities: the kingdom was prepared for them that love God, and for none else: Jam. i. 12. But then, love to him is the certain attendant of faith in his name; for "faith worketh by love." Faith is also productive of that deadness to the world which is necessary as a meetness for heaven. " whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." My brethren, you cannot go this

journey safely, unless you are thus prepared. Above all things be attentive to this, for nothing can be of equal importance with it.

Let me then address every individual in this large assembly, and beseech you to be seriously attentive to the things which belong to your peace. You know that you must go this journey, but are you prepared for it? The message of God to Hezekiah was, "Set thine house in order, for thou must die, and not live." You must soon leave all the pleasures, endearments, and advantages of your present state, and launch forth into an unknown eternity. Let it be the uppermost concern of your minds to be found in a state of happy preparation for the journey.

5. This journey is to be taken but once. "It is appointed unto men once to die." The body indeed will be raised again, at the resurrection of the just it will return to life. But then he that goes the journey of death never returns to this world again: his place shall know him no more. He returns not to the same condition, to the same work, to the same sufferings, the same weaknesses and sorrows: Job x. 20: "Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return." This holy man kept in mind the idea of the journey which we are now representing, and profited by it: Job xvi. 22: "When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." Thousands are going this journey every day, of all ages, of all ranks, and of all conditions; but no one of them returns again to tell us what he has met with, or where he has been. Brethren, we ourselves must soon visit that undiscovered country, from the confines of which no traveller returns. For,

6. This journey is to an everlasting dwelling. It is a journey to heaven, if we be the children of God, to the regions of immortal light and felicity; to "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." But if we are the children of the wicked one, it is a journey to hell; to the abodes of darkness, horror, and black despair, "prepared for the devil

and his angels." The broad way of self-indulgence, folly, and wickedness, most certainly leadeth to destruction. At death our state is unalterably fixed, fixed for ever. There is no repentance in the grave, nor are pardons dispensed to the dead. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal:" Matt. xxv. 46. This will be the sentence of the great Judge of quick and dead; a sentence which we must all shortly hear. Can we conceive any thing more dreadful than the doom of a dying sinner? To be driven from the presence of Christ as accursed, and to be consigned over to everlasting misery, who can, for one moment, bear the thought! If a man knows himself to be in danger of this, in danger every hour, every moment, should he not eagerly and earnestly cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" O Lord, make speed to save me; make haste to help me; lest I be like them that go down into the pit.

O, what an awful journey is that which we have before us! A journey to eternity! A journey which will bring us where we must be, not for an age only, but for millions of ages; more millions of ages than there are sands on the sea shore; more millions of ages than there are piles of grass on the surface of the earth; more millions of ages than there are atoms in the universe! If we are uncertain what the end of this journey will be, with respect to ourselves, how can we be at rest about it? Let the negligent professor bestir himself without delay, and "give diligence to make his calling and election sure." Since the journey is of such importance, and for so long a stay, surely it is needful to know where you are going: especially since the knowledge of this is an attainable privilege. "We know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens:" 2 Cor. v. 1. O remember, remember, my dear fellow-creatures, the journey you have to take, is a journey to eternity. No journey can bear any comparison with this, in respect to importance. It ends in eternal joy or everlasting woe; in consummate felicity, or in unutterable and unceasing anguish. "O earth,

earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!" Hear, that your souls may live.

7. The expectation of this journey should loosen our hearts from earthly things.

What is this world to us, or all that it contains? We are going a journey to another world, and the time of our departure is at hand. Why should we cleave to that which we are just going to leave, and to leave for ever? "Arise, and depart; this is not your rest," your abiding place, "because it is polluted," and will shortly fall a sacrifice to devouring flames. "You have here no continuing city," and therefore should be seeking one that is to come; "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." This is not your home; you should consider yourselves as strangers and pilgrims, travelling towards the heavenly country. On due reflection, it must appear a great impropriety to be eagerly attached to the vain objects around us, in the present world. Naked we came into it, and naked we must depart out of it, without the possibility of taking any thing along with us, when we go our journey. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out; therefore, having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." Whatever we have in this world, be it more or less, it will presently be no longer ours. Be it silver, or gold, house or land, pleasant gardens, or growing plantations, they will presently be left to successors.—We have acquired them, but we scarcely know who shall gather or possess them: much less do we know what use shall be made of them when we are gone. The consideration of the journey which is before us, should check our eager pursuit of such uncertain enjoyments, and prevent us from setting our hearts upon them. We have concerns upon hand of infinitely greater importance. We have possessions in prospect, as far surpassing what this world can afford, as heaven is higher than the earth. Be dead our hearts to all below, and may our affection be set on things above, and our conversation be in heaven, that better country to which we are going, and where we hope to dwell for ever.

At thought of this, each sublunary wish
Lets go her eager grasp, and quits the world.

So it certainly ought to be.

8. Lastly, the prospect of this journey should moderate our sorrow under present afflictions.

What though we have many and severe trials in the course of our pilgrimage here, we are going to leave them all, and to give our enemies the slip for ever. "And our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We have just reason to "reckon, that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed" in us, if we are the disciples of Jesus.

Are we deprived of our dear pious relatives and friends? Let us remember, that we too are "going the way of all the earth." We shall so soon follow them, that it is scarcely worth while to take our leave, or to bid them farewell. Yet we feel the parting stroke to be a severe trial. The death-bed of those whom we dearly and tenderly love is the most interesting scene with which we are acquainted in this world. All that was excellent and amiable in the departing character, rises to the recollection with thrilling energy. The solemnity of that point of time which closes mortal life, and opens upon an untried eternity; and that point once passed, the consideration of the sure and eternal blessedness of those that die in the Lord, for ever released from all pains of body and mind, is affecting beyond what language can describe. We seem then indeed to feel that this world is a land of shadows. That

All, all on earth is shadow, all beyond is substance;
How solid all where change shall be no more!

A few more intervening days, and we also shall stand on the verge of time. May divine grace enable us to cast the anchor of faith and hope firm on the Rock of ages, and though the storm may be severe, we shall get safe to land, and our landing will be triumphant. And how soothing is the reflection, that those whom we have deposited in the

tomb are sleeping in Jesus? The breathless clay is in his custody, waiting for the final manifestation of the sons of God. Could we but more frequently and more fully realize the great subject of the Christian salvation, we should be perfectly convinced that the grievous sufferings which sometimes attend our dying friends and relatives, are, comparatively, as nothing, when considered as introductory to a state of eternal glory and blessedness. A period is approaching, "when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality." Then shall be brought to pass the saying which is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory," completely, entirely, and eternally overcome. We see our beloved relatives, and our dear friends in Christ, "going the way of all the earth;" but we know where they are going, even when they walk through the gloomy valley of the shadow of death.*

If we have to drink deeply of the cup of sorrow, we are going where we shall drink the cup of consolation; where everlasting joy shall be upon our heads, where all tears shall be wiped away, and there shall be no more sorrow nor crying. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

If losses and poverty attend us in this world, we are going where all the riches of heaven are to be enjoyed. A throne and a kingdom are prepared for us, and being faithful unto

* It will perhaps be understood that the author, in this part of the discourse, wishes to pay a tribute to the memory of his beloved partner in life, of whom he has lately been deprived by the stroke of mortality. She died March 30, 1810, in the seventy-fifth year of her age. After a life of activity and usefulness, distinguished by strict integrity, and conscientious piety, she gradually sunk under a load of infirmities and afflictions, which she was enabled to bear with Christian patience and fortitude, till at length she finished her course with as much tranquillity as could be desired. Her bereaved husband severely feels the vacancy which death has made, after an happy union of more than fifty-one years. But he too is going the way of all the earth.

death, we shall receive the crown of life. Every want will be removed, every wish fulfilled, and every desire granted; for "he that overcometh shall inherit all things;" he shall possess the riches of heaven to the full extent of his most enlarged desires; and the Lord says concerning him, "I will be his God;" I will be to him a source of complete and everlasting blessedness; "and he shall be my son," to inherit my kingdom, and dwell with me in it through eternal ages: Rev. xxi. 7.

If we groan in this tabernacle under a load of bodily afflictions, we are going to that land where the inhabitants shall never more say, "I am sick." Mark yon poor cottager; his dwelling is mean, and ready to fall. The windows are shattered, the roof is broken, and in the walls are many chinks and openings; you pity him, and tell him that his house is sorely out of repair; he answers, with composure, I know it is so, but that gives me little concern; for I am going to fit: I shall soon remove into a most comfortable and commodious dwelling, which my kind benefactor, as an act of unmerited love, has built, furnished, and prepared for me. I shall therefore joyfully quit this crazy abode in which I suffer many inconveniences. Apply this to the afflicted Christian. His body is enfeebled, shattered, and broken by disease, but he knows he is going to leave it, and this expectation supports and relieves him. "We know that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have" a better to go to, "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." With this consideration our blessed Redeemer comforts the hearts of his followers: John xiv. 1, 2: "Let not your hearts be troubled:"—look forward to the heavenly world; "in my Father's house" from whence I came, and whether I am going, "there are many mansions," where there will be every thing to accommodate you in the most delightful manner. "If it were not so, I would have told you," and not permitted you to impose on yourselves by any airy dream. I am now going, not only to receive my own reward, but to "prepare a place for you," and to dis-

pose every thing for your most honourable reception into that world of glory and felicity.

Thus we have briefly considered death as a journey. When viewed in this light, it affords some pleasing ideas to a good man. It is a journey which may be just at hand. A journey which we cannot avoid. It is of great importance to be prepared for it. It is to be taken but once. For it is a journey to an everlasting dwelling. The consideration of it should loosen our hearts from earthly things, and moderate our sorrow under present afflictions.

Let us now close our meditations on this subject.

This journey, I fear, will be a dreadful one to some here present. O ye that forget God; ye that strive to banish the thoughts of death and eternity far from your minds; in what language shall I address you? What words shall I adopt in order, if it shall please God, to rouse you from your insensibility? The messenger will soon arrive to call you away. Youth, and health, and strength are no security. If none went this journey but those who had reached threescore years and ten, the case would be very different. But perhaps far more die before they have arrived at the meridian of life, than those who have passed that period. O, ye young people! may God give you an ear to hear his voice to-day. If the aged are past feeling, we would hope better things of you. If they are like the beaten anvil, hardened by repeated strokes, surely this is not your case. If they are like the deaf adder which stoppeth her ear, surely God will give you an ear to hear, and an heart to understand, that your souls may live. But he can rouse the most insensible, whether old or young. Unto you, O men; do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Prepare to meet your God. You will soon be called to meet him; and woe unto you, if ye are not prepared. Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light. He stands with open arms, ready to receive the returning sinner. Let none say, "There is no hope." A foundation is laid in the Redeemer's death, for the hope and encouragement of the most

guilty and the most miserable of mankind. Without one moment's delay, begin to cry for mercy; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Once more I say, since this journey is unavoidable, and the time of it is uncertain; since endless felicity, or everlasting misery are depending; let it be your first and chief concern, through grace to be prepared for it. This is the voice of Christ himself: "Be ye also ready, for in an hour when ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

Let no one in this congregation rest one day longer, without knowing where he is going. Negligence in this argues a state of insensibility that wants a name.

Christian brethren, wait for the signal to go this journey. Have your loins girt, and your lights burning, and be ye like men that are looking for their Lord's coming. Remember he hath said, "Behold, I come quickly." Let your answer be, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Amen.

SUBSTANCE

OF THE

LAST SERMON

PREACHED BY THE

LATE REV. JOHN FAWCETT, D. D.

FEBRUARY 26th, 1816.

PRINTED FROM HIS OWN NOTES.

SUBSTANCE
OF THE
LATE REV. DR. FAWCETT'S
LAST SERMON.

NAHUM I. 7.—*The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.*

THE name of the penman of this prophecy signifies *consolation*: and though many parts of it chiefly relate to the overthrow of the Assyrian empire, and the destruction of Nineveh, its capital; yet these events, however calamitous in themselves, were encouraging to the Jews; because assurances were at the same time given them of their deliverance from the yoke of the Assyrians, their powerful and inveterate enemies.

It is very probable that Nahum was contemporary with king Hezekiah; and that he delivered this prophecy after the ten tribes were carried away captive by the king of Assyria. Josephus relates that he foretold the destruction of Nineveh more than 115 years before it took place. In the beginning of the chapter, the prophet sets forth the majesty of a jealous and sin-avenging God: dwells upon the displays of his power, which is irresistible, in that he hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storms, where, to an eye of sense, all is confusion—he describes the methods of his providence, which to our view are awfully grand and unaccountable; and then, as in the words of the text, he exhibits the milder aspect which he wears, and the gentle, condescending attention which he shows to his people. “The Lord is good,” &c. ‘The same almighty power which is exerted in the destruction of the

wicked is employed for the protection and defence of those who trust in him.' This is the doctrine contained in the text, which naturally divides itself into three parts: I. The Lord is good. II. A strong hold in the day of trouble. III. He knoweth them that trust in him.

I. The Lord is good—

Goodness is inseparable from the conceptions we have of God. Sometimes it intends, or is intimately connected with his glory. Thus when Moses desired to see the glory of the Lord, the Almighty tells him, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." God is sovereignly and infinitely good. His goodness comprehends all his *relative* perfections—all the acts of his grace and mercy. These are the expressions of his goodness, and they are distinguished by different names, according to the objects towards whom the goodness is exercised. When it supplies the indigent, it is *bounty*—when it relieves the miserable, it is *mercy*—when it bestows blessings on the unworthy, it is *grace*; and as the term in this acceptation is often applied to spiritual blessings, it is that grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. When goodness imparts blessings according to what is promised, it may be denominated *truth* or *faithfulness*.

Whatever comfort the glorious attributes of Deity afford to us, we are indebted for it to his goodness. When his *wisdom* contrives that which is for our *advantage*, it is his goodness—when his *power* is employed in our protection, it is his goodness. In short, his goodness renders all his other attributes subservient to our advantage. We admire and adore the Almighty for his *other* perfections; but his goodness allures and draws our hearts to him. For this we love him. As the apostle says, "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." By this we are encouraged to make our addresses to him, and to ask help at his hand. His goodness emboldens us to come to him for all that we need: Heb. iv. 16.

That divine Being who is the object of our adoration, and

whom we, as Christians, delight to worship, is a good and gracious God—he is *essentially* good. In this sense there is none good but one, that is, God. There is none good in comparison with him.

We might enlarge on his goodness as it is shown in *providence*, and then a large field would open to our view. In this sense the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. Ten thousand times ten thousand instances of his goodness are daily seen in his dealings with his creatures. But let it be observed, that his goodness is most gloriously manifested through Christ. *Good-will* towards men was proclaimed at the Saviour's birth: Luke ii. 14. O what astonishing goodness it was in the Father to give his only-begotten Son to sorrows, agonies, and death for us. This was no other than his goodness, under the appellation of love; "God so *loved* the world," &c. Herein the love or goodness of God was commended; Rom. v. 8. It was infinite and unbounded goodness imparted through Christ alone, as the Mediator between an offended God and offending sinners. Does not this goodness shine most conspicuously in pardoning all our crimes? "I, even I, am he that blot-teth out thy transgressions." Is it not displayed in raising us from a death in sin, to a life of righteousness; in accepting us as righteous through the obedience of Christ; in answering our poor, imperfect prayers; in directing and guiding us with his counsel; supplying our temporal and spiritual wants; and in keeping us by his power, through faith unto eternal salvation?

We might here remark, in the first place, that this goodness is *greatly diversified*; its blessings are of various kinds. It is described as sparing, pitying, supporting, relieving, restoring, and consoling goodness. We may say of the blessings of God's goodness that they *cannot be reckoned up in order*. The language of the psalmist, Psal. cxxxix. is applicable to them; "If I would declare and speak of them, they are more in number than the sand. How precious are thy thoughts of love unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them—they

cannot be numbered." Eternity itself will be too short to utter all thy praise.

2. This goodness is, in its nature, *satisfying* to the soul.

It is so abundant in measure, that it replenishes and satisfies him who has an interest in it. Divine goodness gives the invitation to us; "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." "Eat, O friends! drink abundantly, O beloved!" It is adequate to fill the most enlarged desires of the longing soul; he who is parched with thirst, and fainting with hunger, when enabled to have recourse to these supplies, with joy draws water out of the wells of salvation, drinks of those refreshing streams which make glad the city of our God, and eats of that bread which cometh down from heaven; and thus it is that the divine Being even makes our cup to run over with his goodness. The Lord's people have often found this to be the case, in attending to the ordinances of divine appointment, and have been filled with holy confidence in this goodness. Hence we find them using the following exulting language: "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."

3. It is *great* goodness; and in this respect it is like himself—correspondent with the dignity of his character. It is great beyond all expression, beyond all comparison, beyond all comprehension: Psal. xxxi, 19: "O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee," &c. The apostle Paul seems unable to find out words sufficiently strong to set forth its greatness: "God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he hath loved us," &c. It is goodness which passeth knowledge. It bestows the greatest and best of blessings on the greatest of sinners.

4. It is *free, undeserved* goodness; hence the Almighty declares, "I will love them *FREELY*."

5. It is goodness which *exactly answers our needs*. It removes all our sins and all our miseries, supplies all our necessities, lightens our burdens, and makes the path of duty our delight; so super-eminent is it, that it is life, nay better than life. Hence the psalmist uses this enraptured

language: "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed are all they that put their trust in him." God grant that the experience of those who now hear my voice may correspond with these animated views of divine goodness!

6. It is *continued* goodness: Psal. lii. 1. The goodness of God endureth continually: in health, in sickness, in life, and in death itself, it is still the same; his mercy endureth for ever:

Good when he gives, supremely good,
Nor less when he denies;
E'en crosses from his sov'reign hand
Are blessings in disguise."

This goodness heals our backslidings, and saves us with an everlasting salvation. It is laid up here for them that fear God, and shall be enjoyed through eternity itself:

O Goodness infinite, Goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which by creation first brought forth
Light out of darkness.

II. "The Lord is a strong hold in the day of trouble."

It is evident, from this clause of the text, that though God's people are partakers of his goodness as before described, and interested in his favour, yet they have often here *a day*, or rather *days of trouble*. For instance: 1. There is sometimes a day of *public* national trouble, which they, in some respects, share with their fellow creatures. When the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, laying all waste before them; when wars, pestilence, famine, earthquakes, and other desolating calamities prevail—then indeed is a *day of trouble*. But in these circumstances "the Lord is a strong hold." He says, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself for a little moment, till the indignation be overpast:" Isa. xxvi. 20. In that day of trouble, when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone, angels were commissioned to lead Lot to a place of safety. God remember-

ed Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.

2. There is a day of *family* trouble, when those near and dear to us afflict us by their ungodly ways, as was the case with Jacob, Eli, and David; or when they are visited with heavy afflictions, their years cut off in the midst; when we see them in the agonies of death, and are ready to exclaim, "O Absalom, my son, my son, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"—Or when the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke—this is a *day of trouble* indeed; but "the Lord is a strong hold" in such a time of domestic trouble. This the psalmist David found by happy experience, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5: "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure; it contains all my salvation, and all my desire."

3. There is likewise a day of *soul trouble*—when we are under conviction of our sins—oppressed with the weight of them, as a burden too heavy for us to bear—when our hearts are sore pained within us—when we are feeble and sore broken. Is there any relief in such a case? O yes. "The Lord is a strong hold." The conscious sinner is directed to fly for refuge to the hope set before him. In Jesus Christ there is protection, relief, and deliverance. "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins." Are any of you, my fellow sinners, experimentally acquainted with this day of trouble? Let me direct you to a sure, a substantial place of refuge. "Turn to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." Hear the invitation of him who in prophetic language is styled "a refuge from the storm, a covert from the tempest, when the blast of the terrible ones is like a storm against the wall:" "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." O that you may have faith to believe the *Divine Word*. Through every age it stands recorded in this Word, for the encouragement of those who are exercised with soul trouble: "Believe in

the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses."

4. A time of *severe temptation* is a day of trouble. This the apostle feelingly describes when he complains of a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him. There are seasons when the enemy comes in as a flood; but in these overwhelming circumstances, "the Lord is still a strong hold" to his people: "The spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." That Jesus, in whom is all our salvation, was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; for this very end, that he might know how to succour them that are tempted.

5. The time of *inward darkness* and *desertion* is a time of trouble—when we walk in darkness, and have comparatively no light—when our souls are full of trouble, so that we are ready to say, "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted." Such a day of trouble has often been known; but in this time of need, "the Lord is a strong hold." Destitute of relief and comfort elsewhere, the soul, in the exercise of trembling hope, exclaims, "I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob; and I will look for him. When I walk in the darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

O what encouragement have we both from the promise of God and the experience of the pious, in every age, to fly to him as our strong hold. They looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him from all his fears. "Why then art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God." The prophet Jonah was once in a very low state of mind, but he fled to this strong hold: "I said I am cast out of thy sight, nevertheless I will look again towards thy holy temple."

6. The season of inward conflicts with the power of sin,

is a day of trouble. Of this the psalmist David often complains: "Iniquities prevail against me; my loins are filled with a loathsome disease." The apostle Paul was so oppressed with a sense of it, that he bursts forth as in an agony: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But he found the Lord to be a strong hold in this day of trouble, for he immediately subjoins: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He will subdue our iniquities; he will bruise Satan under our feet: "Lift up your heads; the time of deliverance, the time of redemption draweth nigh."

7. The period of *persecution* is a day of trouble. Such days there have been in past ages, both under the former and present dispensation, as is evident from Heb. xi.: "They wandered about in sheep skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Our blessed Saviour endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; he was treated with insult, exposed to cruel mockings, scourges, and at length nailed to the accursed tree; and "the servant is not greater than his master, nor he that is sent greater than he that sent him." He plainly told his disciples, that they must be exposed to persecution for his sake. "The time will come when he that killeth you will think that he doth God service." This was soon after verified in their experience: and in how many instances, have the faithful witnesses to the truth been exposed, not only to bonds and imprisonment, but have been brought to the gibbet or the stake, and sealed their testimony with their blood. But "the Lord is a strong hold in the day of trouble:" "Blessed are ye," says the compassionate Saviour, "when men shall revile you," &c. "Rejoice ye, and be exceeding glad in that day." Saints amidst the heaviest sufferings have experienced extraordinary support; never known so much inward comfort, so much peace and joy, as when persecuted by men; never so happy as when in prison, in chains, or brought to a stake: "We glory in tribulation also; for when tribulation abounds, consolation much more abounds." Thus it was with primitive Christians. They rejoiced that

they were counted worthy to suffer shame and reproach for the sake of Christ.

8. A season of *sickness*, and *approaching death*, may justly be denominated a day of trouble.

This is a day which we must all know; and it surely approaches to every one of us. But O how dreadful to have no shelter then! He that has lived without God, without Christ, without hope in the world, will be in a situation more deplorable than language can express, in that day of trouble and consternation. What will you, O thoughtless sinner, do in the day of visitation? where will you flee? where will you leave your glory? But the Lord to his people is a strong hold, even in this extremity of nature. An Old Testament saint could say, "My heart and my strength faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Need we then to wonder at the holy composure and confidence with which a Christian is enabled to contemplate the same scenes, in the believing views of that Jesus who is the resurrection and the life, and who, having abolished death, hath brought life and immortality by the Gospel:

Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life be past;
Safe into the haven guide—
O receive my soul at last.

The triumphant language of an apostle expressive of his own sentiments, and those of his fellow-Christians, is the best comment and illustration of this part of our text: "The Lord is a strong hold in the day of trouble." He says, with holy confidence, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God—an house not made with hands." "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?—Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Finally, The *day of judgment* will be a day of trouble; such a day as was never yet known. The Lord Jesus himself will descend from heaven in flaming fire; "the heavens shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat.

Every eye shall see him, and all nations shall wail because of him." The great day of wrath will then be come, and who shall be able to stand? Who but he who has been enabled to flee to the Lord as his strong hold. Mountains, rocks, and hills, will then afford no shelter. But they who love and wait for the appearance of Christ, will be screened, protected, owned, acquitted.—They will have the smile of approbation from the great Judge: "Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

Such are the days of trouble, which God's people know, and such is the protection which they shall experience.

But we must not forget to notice, in a more particular manner, the figurative, metaphorical language of the text, which is very striking: a strong hold is a *place of defence and safety in danger*. Here they who fly for protection are furnished with armour; here they have stores of provisions; they have every advantage against an assailing enemy; here they encourage and comfort one another; for till the strong hold be demolished, none can hurt those who are within—they are safe as long as that stands. Now all these particulars may be applied here. The Lord is the rock and refuge of his people. "Salvation is appointed to them for walls and bulwarks;" their place of defence is the munition of rocks; they have a fulness of provision—"bread shall be given them, their water shall be sure;" here they are furnished with armour of proof, the whole armour of God: the helmet of hope, the breastplate of righteousness, the girdle of truth, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and, above all, the shield of faith, whereby they may quench the fiery darts of the enemy. Here they have great advantage against the enemy. The saints are safe so long as this refuge stands. He that would overcome THEM must first break down the strong hold. While that stands they are safe, being kept by the *power of God*, through faith, unto salvation.

III. *The Lord knoweth them that trust in him.*

The former idea of God's being our *strong tower* implies a *betaking* ourselves to him: and an important observation here presents itself, namely, that a strong *tower* is nothing to us, unless we fly to it for safety. It affords protection to none but those who are in it.—This is highly necessary to be attended to. Hence the apostle speaks of "flying for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."—So of old the manslayer was not safe from the avenger of blood till he got within the city of refuge.—He who is safe through our Lord Jesus Christ must be *personally interested* in him. This clause of the text therefore is very important. "He knoweth them that trust in him." Two things are here observable.

1. Their *trust* in the Lord, a term very often used in the holy scriptures. This trust is so intimately connected with faith in the divine word, that it seems inseparable from it. Hence the apostle Paul says, "In whom ye also trusted after that ye believed." *Trust in the Lord* denotes a clear discovery of the insufficiency of every other defence; they who trust in him no longer go about to establish their own righteousness. It has *cost* them much to be brought off from every legal ground of hope; but they now "willingly suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that they may win Christ, and be found in him." This *trust in Christ* arises from a spiritual and scriptural knowledge of him.

2. He *knows* them that trust in him. He knows them so as to distinguish them from all others, and so as to *approve* of them. "The Lord knows them that are his." "Who then shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again." He takes care of them in all times of danger, trouble, and distress; he *knows* them in adversity, as well as in prosperity, in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Thus we see the truth of what is here asserted confirmed by every

part of scripture. "The Lord *knoweth* them that *trust* in him." Let us close with a word or two by way of use.

1st. How deplorable is their case who have not the Lord for their refuge! They are exposed to the greatest danger, from sin, from the curse of God, and his law, and from their being exposed to his eternal displeasure, without any refuge to fly to. O sinners! that you did but know your danger: "How shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation?"

2dly. Let us learn to betake ourselves to the "strong hold;" security is only to be found there. This refuge should be particularly fled to in the time of trouble. We are encouraged to trust in the Lord *at all times*; and happy, thrice happy, they who are enabled to devote their youth, and the vigour of their days, to the service of God; he will not forsake them when old and grey headed; in public trouble, domestic calamities, soul troubles, and all the disquietudes they may feel from *outward* temptation, and the power of *inward* sin; in the day of personal affliction, and in the hour of death, he will not leave them destitute, "he will be a wall of fire about them, and the glory in the midst of them."

3dly. How safe then are they who are in that strong hold referred to in the text: "The Lord is good, he is a strong hold in the day of trouble, he knoweth them that trust in him." "Who shall separate them from the love of Christ—shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or peril, or sword? nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, "be ye stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord."

THE END.