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Communications.

LECTURES ON BIBLICAL HISTORY.

NO. XV.

“ And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went towards Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set: and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and, behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land: for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.—GEN. xxviii. 10—15 inclusively.

We wish it to be recollected, that these lectures are not designed to be a commentary on the whole Bible; but to explain and defend a few of the most remarkable facts and doctrines exhibited in the sacred text,—to trace the history of the church,—to bring into view her form of government, and rites of worship,—to notice the changes made therein, from time to time,—and, particularly, to show the faithfulness of Jehovah, in fulfilling to her his promises, in protecting her, and in augmenting her advantages, increasing her numbers, and extending her influence, through successive generations, for the accomplishment of his great and merciful designs in regard to our guilty race. Our readers are not, therefore, to expect us to give them even the biography of the patriarchs, except in so far as may be necessary to unfold the providence of God, as it has been employed in carrying into effect the stipulations of the covenant with Abraham, respecting the kingdom of our Lord Jesus

capable of believing at first, are we not as much indebted to him for this power, as if he were to give it to us at any future time?

This view of the subject gives no ground for boasting: it encourages the sinner to use means—it increases the value of the scriptures, nor does it lessen the operations of the Spirit. The word is the means in the hand of God; or it is the sword of the Spirit, and is a powerful weapon, when in the hand of so skilled an Agent.

The brazen serpent in the wilderness is a very fit representation of man's lost situation by nature, and of his recovery through Christ. The serpent must represent Christ raised on the pole of the gospel; the persons bitten must represent our natures poisoned by sin; and their looking on the serpent must represent our looking to Christ by faith. Now if the figure is a good one (as no doubt it is), it is as much in our *power* to look to Christ and be saved, as it was for the Israelites to look upon the brazen serpent. And unless this were the case, the figure would not be suitable, nor would it properly represent what was intended. It appears also, that *all* had an equal opportunity to look on the brazen serpent. There was no obstacle in their way either *natural* or *moral*.

INQUISITOR VERITATIS.

Oration delivered before the Somerset County Bible Society, 20th August, 1822, by Samuel Bayard, Esq. of Princeton, N. J.

Fellow Christians—The occasion on which we now assemble justly claims attention and respect. We meet not to celebrate the birth day of some illustrious mortal—not to hail the centennial return of the day on which our forefathers landed on these western shores—not to commemorate the emancipation of our country from civil bondage, or to greet each other on the recognition of our existence as an independent nation: No—we have met in this “building,” which although “made with hands,” is “none other than the house of God and the gate of Heaven,” that we may by our influence, our example, and by the contribution of a very small part of that property which Heaven has intrusted to our stewardship, assist in the good work of advancing the Redeemer's kingdom on earth, by enlarging the circulation of his written word.

Assembled for such an object, it becomes a question how we can most profitably employ the few moments allotted to the exercises of this day. The field before us is wide—it has often been passed by Christian travellers. The flowers it has yielded have been culled profusely on different occasions. To select

and arrange the few that remain untouched, would require superior genius and skill.

To these qualifications, the speaker who is now called to address you, makes no pretensions. His aim is not to amuse you with splendid novelties in matter, or in diction. He solicits your attention merely to a short review of the *nature*, the *purport*, and the blessed influence of this sacred volume.

This, without question, is a subject of great extent. Our reflections will therefore of necessity be general and brief. May they conduce to our mutual advantage, and to the promotion of that great cause—a cause which brought the Son of God from Heaven to earth—which has now brought us together.

In regard to its *nature* and *purport*, we may safely affirm that the Bible is, beyond all comparison, the most important book that was ever composed. Although its penmen are numerous, its author is one; that author is none other than the Deity himself. “*All scripture,*” says an inspired apostle, “*is given by inspiration of God.*” “*Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*”

The Bible contains the history of the creation—the fall, and the redemption of the human race. It furnishes the only authentic history of man, untarnished by falsehood and unmixed with fable. There is no history so ancient, so instructive, or so interesting. There is no poetry so sublime, so pathetic, or so persuasive—no proverbs so just, so apposite, or so useful—no system of morals and duty so rational and consistent, as that which is contained in this sacred volume. Our Lord’s discourse, as recorded in the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of St. Matthew’s gospel, together with the Apostle Paul’s instructions, as contained in the 12th chapter of his epistle to the Romans, and his 12th chapter to the Hebrews, convey more exalted principles, more solid consolation under affliction, and more perfect rules of conduct, than can be found in all the writings of the best heathen authors that have ever lived.*

* The two following facts in relation to Mr Locke and Sir William Jones, must be quite familiar to literary characters; but it was thought adviseable to introduce them into a popular address, inasmuch as they might be new and impressive to many hearers.

The profound and pious Mr. Locke, who spent the last fourteen years of his life in the study of the Bible, being asked which was the shortest and surest way to attain a true knowledge of the Christian religion; recommended the study of the holy scriptures, but especially of the New Testament. “*Therein,*” said he, “*are contained the words of eternal life. They have God for their author—salvation for their end—and truth, without any mixture of error, for their matter.*”

Sir William Jones, who was probably the finest genius of the eighteenth century, who was master of no less than twenty-eight languages, and of whatever

“The Bible (says a late writer) is not indeed a plan of religion delineated with minute accuracy, or arranged in systematic order, to instruct men in something altogether *new*, or to excite a vain admiration or applause. It is something unspeakably more great and noble, comprehending in the most magnificent order, along with every essential of that plan, various dispensations of God to mankind, from the formation of this earth, to the consummation of all things. Other books may afford us much entertainment and instruction—may gratify our curiosity, may delight our imagination, may enlighten our understanding, may calm our passions, exalt our sentiments and improve our hearts,—but they have not, they cannot have that authority in what they affirm, in what they require, in what they promise and threaten, which the scriptures have. There is a peculiar weight and energy in *them*, which is not to be found in mere human compositions. Their denunciations are more awful, their reproofs are more pungent, their consolations are more cheering, and their warnings more alarming. They address themselves to the highest hopes and to the profoundest veneration of the human mind. There are passages in them so sublime, so pathetic, so full of energy on the heart and conscience; yet without the least appearance of labour for that purpose—indeed the design of the whole is so noble, so well suited to the condition of human nature, the morals so pure, the doctrines so excellent, the style so majestic yet so plain, that the more they are read the more the reader is satisfied that they have come from “*the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of changing.*” But what stamps this sacred volume with a value beyond all comparison is, that it *contains the charter of our eternal salvation*. It shows the purposes of mercy that existed in the Divine Mind from the birth of creation—the plan of redemption from the penalty of sin, ever since the fall of our first parents. Every victim that bled—every sin-offering that was made as an atonement for human guilt, through the lapse of 4000 years, pointed to the “Lamb of God,” who came to bleed on the altar of Divine justice—who came to suffer and to die, that he might “*make an end of sin—make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness.*”

valuable learning these languages contained—who was familiar with ancient and modern, with European and Asiatic literature, left on a blank leaf of his Bible the following inscription: “Theological inquiries are no part of my present pursuit; but I cannot refrain from adding, that the collection of tracts which, from their excellence, we call ‘*THE SCRIPTURES,*’ contain, independently of their divine origin, more true sublimity—more exquisite beauty—purer morality—more important history, and finer strains both of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected within the same compass, from all other books, that were ever composed in any age or nation.”

“When stars and suns were dust beneath his feet,
 He seiz'd our dreadful right—the load sustain'd,
 And heav'd a mountain from a guilty world.
 A thousand worlds so bought, were bought too dear.
 Sensations new, in angels' bosoms rise,
 Suspend their song, and make a pause in bliss.”

Such in general is the *nature* and *purport* of this inspired volume. Your attention is now requested to its *influence* and *effects*.

These are various, extensive, and benign. Let us trace them in a few directions. Let us begin by contemplating them in relation to *individuals*. Time would fail us, were we to attempt an enumeration of the instances in which the reading of the Bible alone, without comment, without the agency of human instruction or eloquence, has been made the means of conversion from darkness to light, from vice to virtue; in which it has effected a resurrection from the death of sin to a life of holiness, an emancipation from the thralldom of Satan to the liberty of a child of God, and to all the privileges of an heir of glory. In how many instances has the perusal of the Bible—sometimes of the New Testament alone, and not unfrequently of a small portion of the inspired writings, altogether changed the principles and character of the reader. The good seed of the gospel, scattered by some faithful labourer, perhaps by a humble missionary, or by an obscure member of some Bible association, has taken root in the good ground of honest hearts, has sprung up and borne precious fruit, glorious to God, and incalculably beneficial to man.

Nor is the word of life the means of *conviction* only. It is the germ of correct principles and of exemplary conduct. It is a “well of living water,” a fountain of the purest consolations that ever visited and refreshed the human bosom.

How often in the deepest solitude, where no human eye could behold the humble worshipper, where no human ear could catch the rising sounds of fervent devotion, has the holy soul held sweet communion with her God,—there breathed forth the sorrows of penitence, and there drank deeply of that “river of joy” which flows from the throne on high!

Amidst affliction and penury, in hospitals and prisons, in the chamber of disease and on the bed of pain, the perusal of the sacred volume has afforded a calm and elevated happiness, beyond all the feverish and short-lived pleasures of the senses or imagination. And how often at the close of a well-spent life, when, the summons of death having arrived, the departing Christian was bidding adieu to the dearest objects of his earthly affections, have the hopes and the consolations of the gospel enabled the expiring believer to exult in the immediate pros-

pect of dissolution, and to exclaim, with the inspired apostle, "Oh death, where is thy sting! Oh grave, where is thy victory."*

From the happy influence the sacred scriptures exert on *individuals*, let us next examine their effects on *families*.

It has often been remarked by those who have visited the dwellings of the poor, that wherever they have found the Bible, they have in general found the spirit of the Bible pervading the family; they have found industry, neatness, contentment, mutual affection, harmony and peace. These are the natural fruits of that tree of life.

The grand principle of the gospel is *love*. Wherever this prevails in families, there will be found undisguised courtesy and gentleness: the angry passions will be subdued, and the clamours of contention be unheard: envy, distrust and division will be unknown: the kindest offices of affection will be performed with delight: each member of the family will sympathize in the sorrows and participate the joys of every other, and the household will in miniature represent the "family of heaven." Religion, like the precious oil poured on the head of Aaron, sheds a perfume through all the household where it prevails. On the parent and master, it confers dignity blended

* The pious and excellent Mr. Hervey, in his last sickness, and under a firm conviction of his approaching decease, wrote thus to a friend:

"I now spend almost my whole time in reading and praying over my Bible. I have been too fond of reading every thing valuable in our own language; but were I to renew my studies, I would take leave of these accomplished trifles, and devote my chief attention to the scriptures of truth."

Chancellor Oxenstiern, the prime regent of Sweden during the minority of Queen Christiana, who was at once a great statesman as well as a learned and judicious man, at the close of an active public life said to a friend: "After all my toil and trouble in the world, I find that my private life in the country has afforded me more true contentment than I ever enjoyed in all my public employments. I have lately applied myself to the study of the Bible, wherein all wisdom and the greatest delights are to be found. I therefore counsel you to make the study and the practice of the word of God your chief happiness—as indeed it will always be, to every one who relishes the truth of God—which infinitely excels all earthly things."

To William Penn, the celebrated founder of Pennsylvania, he said: "I have seen and enjoyed much of this world. All the comfort I have now, and which is more than the whole world can give, is feeling the good Spirit of God in my heart and reading this excellent book"—(holding up the Bible).

And the excellent Dr. Leechman, Principal of the University of Glasgow, when lying on his death-bed, is said to have expressed himself in the following manner to a young nobleman, who came to visit him:

"You see," said the dying believer, "the situation in which I now am. I have not many days to live. I am glad you have had an opportunity of witnessing the tranquillity of my last moments. But it is not tranquillity and composure alone. It is joy and triumph—it is exultation. And whence," continued the dying Christian, "does this exultation spring? From that book, (pointing to a Bible that lay on the table) from that book—too much neglected, but which contains invaluable treasures of joy and rejoicing, for it makes us certain that "*this corruptible shall put on incorruption—this mortal, put on immortality.*"

with kindness: it gives weight to authority, and mingles courtesy with command. Among the members of the family it promotes respect and obedience to the head—peace, union and affection with each other—and seems to draw down the benedictions of Heaven on the whole domestic circle. “*The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the just.*”

How interesting is the scene of a pious family assembling at morning and evening to present their united homage to the Great Author and Preserver of life: to hear his word read for their mutual improvement, and to mingle their devotions with the praises of surrounding creation.

The following animated picture of family worship we have from the pen of a celebrated Scottish bard.

“The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How Abr’am was the friend of God on high;
Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek’s ungracious progeny.

Perhaps the *Christian* volume is the theme—
How guiltless blood, for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in heav’n the second name,
Had not on earth, whereon to lay his head!

Then kneeling down, to heav’n’s eternal King
The saint, the father, and the husband prays;
Hope springs triumphant on exulting wings,
That thus they all shall meet in future days;
There ever bask in uncreated rays—
No more to sigh or shed the bitter tear;
Together hymning their Creator’s praise,
In such society, yet still more dear,
While time moves round in an eternal sphere.”

(*To be continued.*)

FOR THE PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.

ORIGIN OF HUMAN AFFLICTION.

When the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, Christian observation ought not surely to slumber. It certainly becomes those who profess to fear the Lord, to inquire, at such a time, why his displeasure is thus manifested against the creatures of his hand. Without such inquiry and observation, Christians can never learn, with profit, those lessons of wisdom and instruction, which the providential dispensations of God are calculated to teach. Should the people of God, therefore, neglect to read the volume of Providence as it is unfolded in the revolution of time, they will deprive themselves of much real comfort and edification. They will thus, unquestionably, rob themselves of that spiritual joy, which the consideration, that the *Lord reigneth*, is capable of producing in the pious breast.

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Communications.

LECTURES ON BIBLICAL HISTORY.

NO. XVI.

“And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you: and they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land; and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”—GENESIS, xlv. 4—8.

The life of Joseph is one of the most interesting and instructive pieces of history in the Old Testament scriptures. The style is uniformly beautiful, the incidents eminently touching, and the moral lessons conveyed in the inspired narrative, are, in a very high degree, practical and useful. But that which principally claims our attention, in this portion of the sacred records, is the providence of God, as it is manifested in the preservation and enlargement of the visible church. To this grand object, indeed, our views are to be chiefly directed in these lectures. We purposely avoid going into minute details, either in relation to characters, or difficulties, which occur in the holy scriptures. Those who have the taste and the leisure for extensive inquiry on such subjects, will find them ably and elaborately discussed, by Dr. Henry Hunter, in his “Sacred Biography,” the Rev. Thomas Robinson, in his “Scripture Characters,” Dr. William Bengo Collyer, in his “Lectures on Scripture Facts;” by Stackhouse and Burder, in their respective “Histories of the Bible;” and by other writers of distinction, that need not be mentioned.

the period, when there shall be no more sea, when his servants shall serve Him, and see his face! Peace be with you!

Your affectionate brother in the Lord,

JAMES HALDANE STEWART.

Oration delivered before the Somerset County Bible Society, 20th August, 1822, by Samuel Bayard, Esq. of Princeton, N. J.

(Continued from p. 495.)

We have now contemplated the influence which the Bible exerts on *individuals* and *families*. Let us next trace its influence on a wider circle—on *neighbourhoods* or larger communities.

Since the origin of Bible Societies, many well authenticated facts prove the extensive and happy influence which the circulation of the scriptures has had on the larger divisions of the human family. Villages and towns that before were infamous for profanity, for drunkenness, gaming and riot, at the approach of the Bible have undergone a total change of character. The drunkard has forsaken the tippling house; instead of oaths and imprecations, the lips of the swearer have uttered only the language of penitence and prayer; the gaming-table has been abandoned for the house of God; and scenes of riot and boisterous festivity have become scenes of order, of peace, and social happiness.

To facts like these, a variety of evidence could easily be adduced. We shall quote but one authority: it is from the Ninth Report of the Hibernian Bible Society. In this report the committee say, "they could mention *entire villages*, formerly the abodes of idleness and immorality, now exhibiting the pleasing aspect of industry and decorum." "The blasphemer (say they) fears an oath; the Sabbath-breaker respects the holy day of rest; the drunkard is sober; and he that *stole steals no more, but labours with his hands to provide things decent in the sight of all men.*" Before triumphs like these, how truly contemptible does infidel philosophy appear! Abashed and ashamed, her proselytes (were they not callous to the sentiment of shame) would shrink from public view, to conceal the mortifying contrast between the effects of their principles and those of the Bible.

These pretenders to superior wisdom may borrow light from the "SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS," and call it the "light of Reason,"—they may boast of scattering the darkness of error, and of freeing the human mind from the tyranny of superstition; but when did they ever reclaim one reprobate from the slavery of vice? when did they ever shed the joys of hope, of content-

ment and resignation on depraved and disconsolate hearts? when did they ever reclaim whole communities from profligacy and wretchedness, and conduct them to industry, order and exalted happiness? when did they ever

“Direct one mortal in the path to heav’n,
Renew one soul, or show one sin forgiv’n.”

But the principles of the Bible have still a wider range. They reach from the cottage to the throne, from the untutored savage to the most polished members of civilized society. There is no rank so elevated, nor any class or condition so humble, which they are not calculated to bless. From individuals, families, and neighbourhoods, they extend to nations and the world. Where the principles of the gospel have their just influence on the rulers of states and empires, they produce equity, order and peace. No maxim is more universally true than that “*righteousness exalteth a nation, while sin is the reproach of any people.*” Where divine truth enlightens the mind and directs the conduct of persons in high authority, there we discern integrity and economy in the expenditure of public money—wisdom and moderation in government—respect abroad and confidence at home: the nation is at once enlightened, flourishing and happy.

But we advance one step further, and assert, that the principles of the gospel are calculated to advance the happiness of *the world*. They tend to promote “peace on earth and good will among men;” they enjoin, under the most awful sanctions, the forgiveness of injuries; they teach nations, as well as individuals, to be contented with the allotments of Heaven, and to cultivate toward each other the affection of brethren. No matter whether they inhabit a torrid or a temperate zone—no matter what language they speak, or what complexion they wear—no matter whether bond or free, savage or civilized, if they are but enlightened by the gospel and live agreeably to its rules, they become reformed, renewed, regenerated beings—they become “heirs of God,” a “chosen generation, a holy nation, a peculiar people.”*

* The great and learned Lord Bacon declares, that “There never was found in any age of the world either philosophy or sect, religion or discipline, which did so highly exalt the public good as the Christian faith.”

And the eloquent Lord Bolingbroke, with all his infidel prejudices, was constrained to acknowledge, that “No religion ever appeared in the world, whose natural tendency was so directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind as Christianity. It is one continued lesson (says he) of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence and of universal charity.”

“No truth (says our own immortal WASHINGTON, in his inaugural address as President of the United States,) is more thoroughly established, than that there exists in the economy and course of Nature, an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness—between duty and advantage—between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy, and the solid rewards of public pros-

Looking forward to that happy period when "*the whole earth shall be given to the Saviour for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession,*" does not the Christian's eye brighten with joy, and his heart expand with a pure and generous exultation?

Happy period! when man shall no longer oppress or enslave his brother man—when war shall no longer desolate the fields of the husbandman, or the abodes of industry and peace—when this earth, so long an ACELDAMA moistened and fertilized by the blood of its children, shall become a second paradise—when angels shall once more visit it on errands of mercy, and all creation join in one sublime tribute of devotion and gratitude to the Redeemer of our race.

"Come then, INCARNATE WORD!
And added to thy many crowns
Receive yet one—the crown of all the earth:
Thou who alone art worthy. It was thine
By ancient covenant ere Nature's birth;
And thou hast made it thine, by purchase since,
And overpaid its value, with thy blood.
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest;
Due to thy last and most effectual work,
Thy word fulfilled—THE CONQUEST OF A WORLD."

We have now given a very brief and hasty sketch of the effects of the Bible on individuals, on families, on society, and on the world. There are however two classes, constituting by far the largest portion of the human race, on whose condition the principles of the Bible have had a peculiar and most salutary influence. These are the *female sex* and the *poor*.

Before the advent of the Son of God, how degraded and miserable was the lot of woman in every state of society, and in every region of the globe!—the subject of brutal and unfeeling power—the slave of passion and caprice—the submissive victim of unchastened and illicit desire. Even under the Mosaic dispensation, under a code of laws that emanated from the Legislator of the universe, how shameless and profligate was the conduct of many of the loftiest pretenders to ceremonial sanctity.*

Among the Jews polygamy was permitted and practised; and the self-righteous Pharisee, without consulting any monitor but his own caprice, thought it no offence against the decalogue, to "*put away*" the most affectionate and obedient wife, and to legalize the atrocious act by "*giving her a bill of divorcement.*"

But among all the heathen nations, ancient as well as modern, perity and felicity; nor ought we to be less persuaded, *that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation, that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which HEAVEN ITSELF has ordained.*"

* See Jeremiah, v. 8. John, viii. 9.

the condition of the female sex has been wretched in the extreme. Among Pagans they are considered as without *rights*; and by the disciples of Mahomet as without *souls*. It is only under the benign radiance of Christian principles that woman has attained her proper rank in society. Here her gentle virtues have been fostered; here all those lovely traits of sympathy, of tenderness, of piety and benevolence, have expanded and elevated her character in many instances to a resemblance of angelic natures.

True, indeed, by the fatal curiosity of our first mother, man forfeited all claim to the joys of paradise; but much have her daughters done, under the light of gospel truth, to compensate us for this loss. Much have they done, in the endeared relations of domestic life, to change this "wilderness of wo into a paradise of bliss."

That such lovely and estimable traits have ever been fully developed in the female character, is owing pre-eminently to the influence of Christianity. To woman, this has been truly a revelation of transcendent mercy. It has raised her from degradation to importance; it has called into exercise all those fine sensibilities, all those sweet charities, which smooth the rugged path of life, which bind society together by silken cords, and which become the foretaste and the pledge of a purer and more permanent felicity in the life to come.

But the gospel is also an incalculable blessing to the *poor*. When these "good tidings" were first proclaimed to mankind, one of their peculiar characteristics was, that "*to the poor the gospel is preached.*" Its divine Author was born of an obscure virgin, and was brought up in circumstances of laborious poverty. HE whose throne was the heaven of heavens, condescended to be cradled in a manger. He who could have commanded the treasures of the universe, had not a spot on earth he could call his own: "*The foxes have holes,*" said he, "*and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head.*"

Long after his reascension to heaven, it is recorded of his followers, that "*not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called;*"* but that "*God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to those that love him.*"†

The extremes of poverty and wealth are both trials of no inconsiderable magnitude. It requires not merely strength of mind, but substantial religious principle, to support the one with patience and fortitude, and the other with temperance and humility. Never was a wiser prayer offered to Heaven than that of Agur, when he asked "*neither for poverty nor riches,*" but for "*food convenient for him.*"

* 1 Cor. i. 26.

† James, ii. 5.

Our blessed Saviour represents the salvation of those who *trust in riches*, as an event next to impossible, while to the *poor* his kindest promises and his richest consolations were addressed. Indeed throughout the Old as well as the New Testament, the *poor* seem to have engaged the peculiar compassion and regard of the Supreme Being.

Those who are in humble circumstances may indeed want some of the superfluities, or perhaps of the comforts of life; but they are exempt also, from the trials and fearful responsibilities of the rich. If they have fewer enjoyments, they have also fewer anxieties and cares. But whatever else they may want, they need not to want a Bible. Here they will find heavenly wealth: here is the pearl of great price: here are deposited the unsearchable riches of Christ, treasures which wax not old, which moth will not corrupt nor rust corrode, and which death itself cannot wrest from their possession.

Christian Brethren—The very brief survey we have now taken of the *nature, purport, and effects* of the sacred scriptures, suggests some precious consolations and some impressive admonitions.

It is delightful to reflect that we live at a period when this inestimable volume is attainable at a small expense, and can be read without any personal risk of liberty or estate. The poorest labourer, from the earnings of a day, can procure a copy of the New Testament, or of the entire Bible; and if from his scanty funds he cannot afford enough for this object, the public liberality will interpose and supply his wants.

It was not always so. Before the discovery of the art of printing, it would have required years of labour to procure a single copy of the Bible. And there are periods in the history of the church, when the possession of any part of the scriptures would have exposed the possessor to persecution, to corporal punishment, or to death.*

For ages it has been the avowed system of one denomination of Christians to keep the knowledge of the sacred scriptures

* By an edict of the emperor Diocletian, all the Christians subject to his authority were required, under the severest penalties, to commit their copies of the scriptures to the flames.

The first translation that was made of the whole Bible into English, was in the 14th century, by the intrepid and zealous John Wickliff, of Oxford. In what light this important work was regarded by the contemporary clergy, may be inferred from what is said by KNIGHTON, a canon of Leicester, who wrote shortly after the death of Wickliff. "Christ (says this zealous priest) entrusted his gospel to the clergy and doctors of the church, to minister to the laity and weaker sort, according to their exigencies and several occasions. But this Master John Wykliff, by translating it, has made it *vulgar*, and has laid it open to the *laity* and even to *women* who can read, more than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy and those of the best understanding; and thus the gospel-jewel, the evangelical pearl, is thrown about and trodden under foot of swine."

from the laity.* And even at the present day, amidst all the science which is diffused through the different ranks of society, the same system is pursued in Italy, Austria, and wherever the influence of the Pope predominates.

So in Pagan countries, the common people are debarred from all access to the light of religious truth.†

How incomparably preferable to this is the condition of the poorest person in countries where the Christian religion, as professed by Reformed Protestants, is in full exercise! How happy the citizens of this land of civil and religious freedom, in the rights and privileges they enjoy, without distinction of sect or class! While more than six hundred millions of the human race are sunk in gross idolatry and superstition, with little enjoyment in the present life, and at death quitting the world shrouded in dark and hopeless delusion; we are cheered with the light of true religion, irradiating all the path of life, and opening to sincere believers the prospect of endless bliss.

Supported by such prospects and animated by such hopes, how diligent should professing Christians be, to diffuse more widely that inestimable book, which contains those instructions and precepts which make us wise unto salvation. And let us be admonished, brethren, that the period for the discharge of this important duty is, to each of us, at once precarious and brief. The members of this society are on the present occasion urged to renew their exertions in this blessed cause, by incidents that cast a deep shade of melancholy over the anniversary we now celebrate. Only two short years have this day elapsed since the worthy and eloquent FRELINGHUYSEN occupied the place where I now stand. He is gone—gone to the land of silence and oblivion, followed by the tears and benedictions of many who now hear me. He is gone from a scene of conflict and of pain, to a “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” to a region where “the wicked cease from troubling and where the weary are at rest.” But this blow, at once so unexpected and so afflicting, in a little more than a year was followed by another melancholy public loss.

“Rare are solitary woes:

They love a train—they tread each other’s heel.”

Since the last annual meeting of this society, its pious and de-

* Under the reign of Henry the Fifth, while England was subject to the spiritual control of the Pope, an act of Parliament was passed, to prevent the reading of the scriptures in English. It enacted that “whosoever they were that should read the scriptures in their mother tongue they should forfeit *lande, catel, lif, and godes, from theyr heyres for ever, and be condemned for heretykes to God, enemys to the krowne, and most errant traytorres to the lande.*”

† One of the laws of MENV, the Hindoo legislator, directs that if a Soodra (a person in one of the inferior casts of India) shall dare to listen to the Veda, (one of the sacred books of the nation) melted lead shall be poured into his ears.

voted president, the beloved pastor of the flock of Jesus Christ, which stately meets for worship and instruction in this place, has been called from his labours on earth to his reward on high. It seems as if but a few weeks had elapsed, since within these walls he joined us in the song of praise, or in our united addresses to the throne of grace. His departure has left a mournful void in this sanctuary: that voice which so often roused the sleeping conscience, which confirmed the faith or relieved the sorrows of believers, will never more be heard from this sacred desk: the clods of the valley will hide the precious remains of this heir of heaven from the view of his afflicted relatives and flock, until they and he shall awake from the long sleep of death, and together shall appear before the Judge of quick and dead.

But we have still another loss to register and mourn. It is that of the respected and venerable president of the New Jersey, and American Bible Society. He too, since we last assembled in this place, has descended to "*the house appointed for all living.*" Through a long period, he had appeared in the Christian horizon as a star of no ordinary magnitude and splendour. Until the latest moment of reason, "his light shone before men" with all the mild radiance of Christian excellence. Pre-eminent for wisdom and learning, for piety and benevolence, this ornament of his country and benefactor of man, having "*fought the good fight,*" having "*kept the faith,*" has now "*finished his course,*" and like the illustrious prophet whose name he bore, has ascended, we trust, in a chariot of light to the paradise of God.

Casting a look of retrospective sorrow over the graves of these lamented and devoted men, we may adopt the language of the pious Montgomery, and exclaim—

"Behold the bed of death!
The honour'd sleeping clay!
Heard ye the parting breath?
Mark'd ye the eye's last ray?
No—life so sweetly ceas'd to be,
It laps'd in immortality.

"Bury the dead, and weep
In stillness o'er the loss—
Bury the dead—in Christ *they* sleep
Who bore on earth *his* cross.
Soon, from the grave their dust shall rise
In his own image to the skies."

In closing the present exercise, allow me to ask you, Christian friends, what is the *chief* motive which has brought this assembly together at this time? It was not surely the pursuit of entertainment—it was not to pass an hour in the indulgence of a fruitless curiosity. No: we trust it was a higher motive. It was a desire and purpose of doing good: it was the determina-

tion to cast your respective mites into the treasury of heaven: it was that by your contributions, your presence, and example, you might assist in scattering through our own and through distant lands the oracles of revealed truth. Connected as this society is, with the national Bible Society, (the noblest institution of pious benevolence that exists in this western hemisphere) let us bear in mind that every dollar now contributed, that is not expended in the purchase of a Bible for the destitute of our own county, will be appropriated to carrying the glad tidings of salvation to some more distant fellow citizen or fellow mortal. Let us remember too, in the exercise of so laudable a charity, that "*he who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord.*" He lendeth to a Being who can either fill his barns with plenty, and make his cup of joy to overflow; or who can deprive him of health, of reason, or of friends, and make every moment of life a burden and a curse.

Nor let us, on this occasion, forget that the period is fast approaching, when all now present shall be summoned to their last account, before the tribunal of Eternal Justice. It will be of incomparably greater moment *then*, that we should have *now* assisted in the circulation of this blessed volume, among the ignorant and needy, than to have filled the highest throne on earth—than to have reared to ourselves the loftiest monument in the temple of Fame, or to have died surrounded with all the wealth and luxury of the richest voluptuary on earth.

Taught by the sure word of prophecy, we know that this section of the universe which we inhabit is fast hastening to an end. The millennial day appears to have begun to dawn. Already in the wide diffusion of the scripture, in the incipient conversion of the Jews, in the abandonment of idolatry and the profession of Christianity by multitudes of the heathen in every quarter of the globe, we hail the first fruits of that vast harvest which will soon be gathered from every region under heaven. Roll on then, ye destined ages, and complete the predicted reign of sin and desolation! Roll on, and usher in the second advent of the Great Restorer of the Universe! And lo! he comes—comes in the clouds of heaven with attending angels, and every eye shall behold, and every knee shall worship him.

" See Heav'n its sparkling portals wide display,
 And break upon us with a flood of day.
 No more the rising Sun shall gild the morn,
 Nor evening Cynthia fill her golden horn:
 But lost, dissolv'd in bright millennial rays,
 One tide of glory—one unclouded blaze
 Shall gladden Earth—THE LIGHT himself, shall shine
 Reveal'd—and God's eternal day be thine.
 The seas shall waste,—the skies in smoke decay,—
 Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away,—
 But fix'd his word,—his saving pow'r remains,—
 His realm forever lasts,—God's own Messiah reigns!"