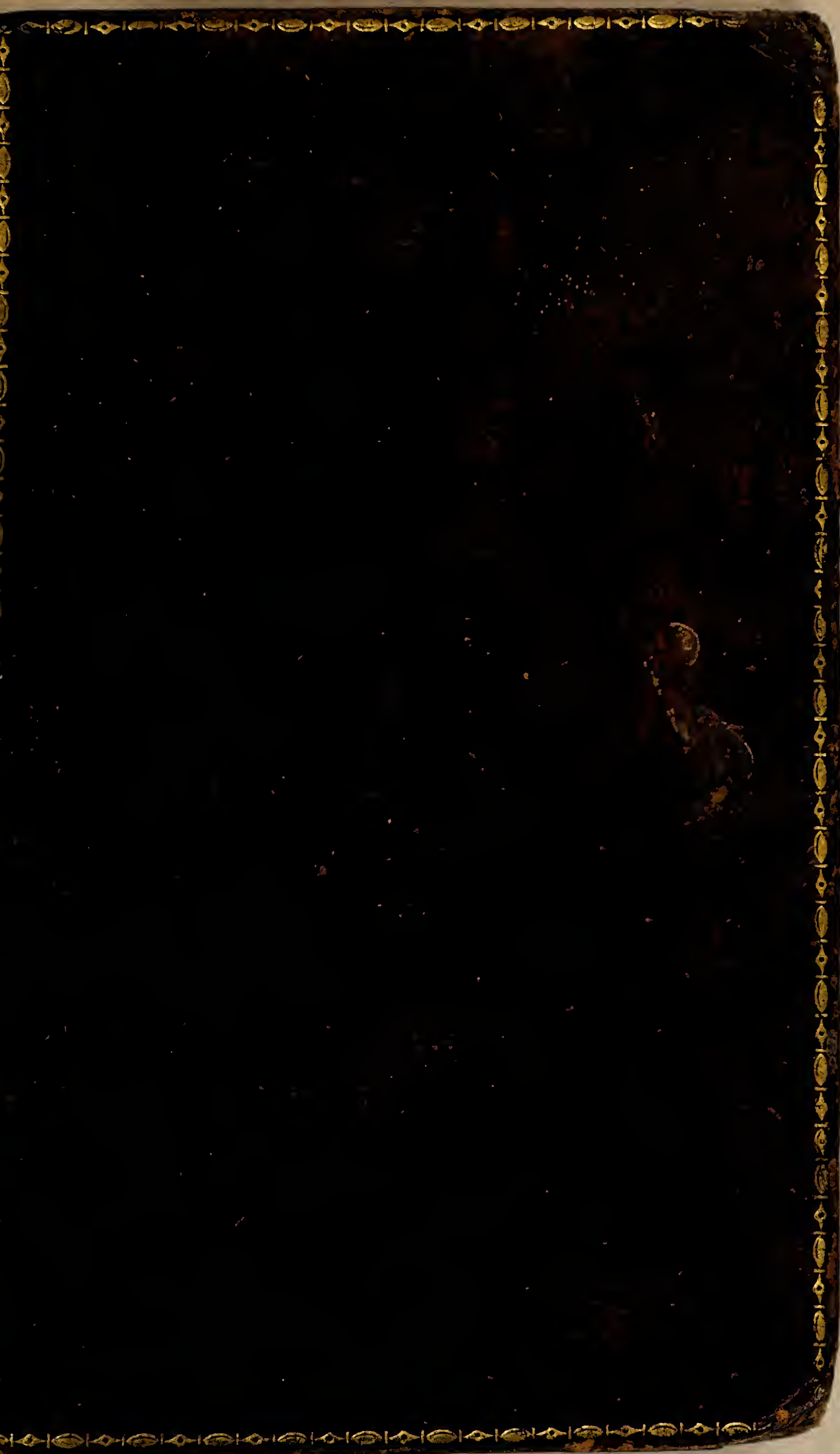






John Carter Brown
Library
Brown University

3
R4e
S E R M O N S

H I S T O R I C A L

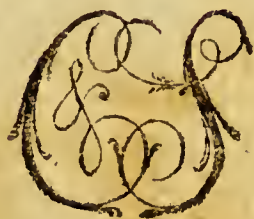
A N D

CHARACTERISTICAL.

By W I L L I A M L I N N, D. D.

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH

IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK.



NEW YORK:—PRINTED BY CHILDS AND SWAINE.

[*With the Privilege of Copy-Right.*]

P R E F A C E.

THE following Sermons were preached in the evenings of the Lord's Day, and were generally well received. The plan of them is not entirely new; nor, on the other hand, is it very common.—Whatever success has attended this attempt, it is certain, that such discourses, properly executed, would be both entertaining and instructive. The Author has not been able to come up to the idea which he had formed in his own mind, or to finish all which he had originally intended.

THIS specimen is now published, in hope that it will be useful, especially to youth, by inciting them to read the Holy Scriptures, and by instilling into their minds moral and religious truths.

NEW-YORK, September 6, 1791.

C O N T E N T S.



S E R M O N I.

Character and Death of Abel.

GENESIS iv. 8. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. Page 5

S E R M O N II.

Character and Translation of Enoch.

GENESIS v. 24. And Enoch walked with God, and he was not: For God took him. 17

S E R M O N III.

Character of Noah.

GENESIS ix. 20. 21. And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard. And he drank of the wine and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent. 37

S E R M O N IV.

Character of Abraham.

GENESIS xxiv. 1. And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. 53

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N V.

Abraham Offering up Isaac.

GENESIS xxii. 12. And he said lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him : For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, [thine only son from me.

Page 71

S E R M O N VI.

History and Character of Jacob.

GENESIS xlvii. 7. 8. 9. And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh : And Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou?

And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years ; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.

89

S E R M O N VII.

History and Character of Joseph.

GENESIS l. 20. But as for you, ye thought

evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is at this day, to save much people alive.

Page 109

S E R M O N VIII.

Birth and Education of Moses.

Preached for the Benefit of the Charity School.

Exodus ii. 10. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses; and she said, because I drew him out of the water.

129

S E R M O N IX.

Character of Moses.

Numbers xii. 3. Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.

145

S E R M O N X.

History and Character of Samson.

Judges xiii. 24. 25. And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: And the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

163

S E R M O N XI.

History and Character of Saul.

- 1 SAMUEL x. 24. And Samuel said to the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the King.

Page 185

S E R M O N XII.

Friendship between Jonathan and David.

- 2 SAMUEL i. 26. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: Very pleasant hast thou been unto me: Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

205

S E R M O N XIII.

*History of the Widow of Zarephath.**Preached for the Benefit of the Charity School.*

- 1 KINGS xvii. 12. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: And behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.

225

S E R M O N XIV.

Children's Mockery of Elisha.

- 2 KINGS ii. 23. 24. And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: And as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up thou bald head, Go up thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord; and there came forth two she-bears out of the wood; and tare forty and two children of them. *Page 243*

S E R M O N XV.

David's Charge to Solomon.

- 1 CHRONICLES xxviii. 9. And thou Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever. *259*

S E R M O N XVI.

*Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery.**Preached near the close of the Year.*

- ISAIAH xxxviii. 7. 8. And this shall be a

sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken. Behold I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

Page 281

S E R M O N XVII.

History and Character of Daniel.

DANIEL vi. 19. 20. 21. 22. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel, and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou serveest continually able to deliver thee from the lions?

Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever.

My God hath sent his angel and hath shut the lions mouths that they have not hurt me: Forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me, and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

S E R M O N XVIII.

Character of Nebuchadnezzar.

DANIEL iv. 37. Now I Nebuchadnezzar, praise, and extol, and honour the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

Page 321

S E R M O N XIX.

History and Character of Jonah.

JONAH iv. 9. 10. 11. And God said to Jonah, Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry even unto death.

Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?

SUBSCRIBERS.

xiii

His Excellency John Adams, L. L. D. Vice-President of
the United States, and President of the Senate.

Members of the Honorable Senate of the United States

Hon. Richard Bassett
Pierce Butler
Charles Carrol, of Carrol-
ton
Philemon Dickinson
Oliver Ellsworth
Jonathan Elmer
Theodore Foster
William Few
James Gunn
John Henry
Benjamin Hawkins

Hon. Ralph Izard
Samuel Johnston
Wm. Sam. Johnson
Rufus King
John Langdon
Wm. Maclay
James Monroe
Robert Morris
George Read
Caleb Strong
Jes. Stanton
Philip Schuyler
Paine Wingate.

Members of the Honorable House of Representatives of the United States.

Hon. Fisher Ames
Egbert Benson
Elias Boudinot
Benj. L. Burdett
Lambert Cadwalader
Wm. Floyd
Thomas Fitzsimons
Benjamin Goodhue
Jonathan Grout
Samuel Griffin
Elbridge Gerry
George Gale
Nicholas Gilman
Thomas Hartley
John Hathorn
Benjamin Huntington
George Leonard
Richard Bland Lee
John Laurance
James Madison jun.

Hon. F. A. Muhlenberg, Speaker
P. Muhlenberg
George Partridge
Wm. Smith, S. C.
Wm. Smith, M.
Jonathan Sturges
John Sevier
Thomas Scott
Theodore Sedgwick
Roger Sherman
Peter Silvester
Joshua Seney
James Schureman
M. J. Stone
Thomas Tudor Tucker
George Thatcher
Jonathan Trumbull
Jeremiah Van Rensselaer
Jeremiah Wadsworth
Henry Wynkoop.

LEGISLATURE of NEW-YORK.

Members of the Senate.

James Carpenter
James Clinton

John Cantine
Leonard Gansevoort

Alexander Webster
David Gelston
Ezra L'Hommedieu
Isaac Roosevelt, *President*
Edward Savage
Thomas Tillotson

Philip Van Cortland
Stephen Van Rensselaer
Peter Van Nefs
John Williams
A. B. Banker, *Clerk*

Members of the House of Assembly

John Watts, *Speaker*
Cornelius L. Bogert
Isaac Bloom
Leonard Bronck
Sidney Berry
Samuel Augustus Barker
John Carpenter
Nicholas Cruger
John D. Coe
John Delamater
Matthew Dubois
John Frey
Aquila Giles
John Gelston
Wm. W. Gilbert
Stephen Hogeboom
Joseph Haufbrouck
James Watson

James Kent
N. Lawrence
Seth Marvin
Alexander Macomb
Samuel L. Mitchell
Eben. Purdy
John Pintard
Gozen Ryers
Henry Schenck
John Schenck
James Savage
Jonathan G. Tompkins
Peter Vandervoort
David Van Nefs
Cornelius Van Slyck
Jacobus Van Schoonhoven
Peter Winant
John M'Kesson, *Clerk*

** * Those persons who have no place of Residence affixed to their
Names, reside in the State of New-York.*

A

Richard Anderson
Capt. Nicholas Anthony, 2.
Peter Ammerman
Thomas Ammerman
John Addison, Esq.
Jacob Abramse
Garrit B. Abeel
Prudden Alling, Esq. N. J.
Andrew Adgate, Philadelphia.
Rev. James F. Armstrong, Tren-
ton, New-Jersey, 6.
Mrs. Sophia Anderson, N. J.

Gilbert Aspinwall
Isaac Alling N. J.
Allard Anthony
Jacob T. Arden
John Ashfield
John Audreance.

B

Jasper D. Blagge
Evert Bancker Esq.
Abraham Bloodgood
Wynant Bennett

SUBSCRIBERS.

xv

Isaac Bates
 Col. James Bruyn
 Philip D. Beriet, Esq.
 Benj. Bogardus
 Henry Brodhead
 William Brodhead
 Wm. Baley
 John Bush
 John Barrow, jun.
 Abm. Brouwer
 Calvin Bateman
 Abm. Brower,
 Abm. Brinckerhoff, 2.
 Rev. Matthias Burnet, Conn.
 Cornelius J. Bogert
 Peter Byvanck
 Peter Bogert
 Jacob Brower N. J.
 John Bartholf do.
 John D. Berdon do.
 Wm. Bell do.
 John Burchan, Philadelphia.
 James Bogert, jun. Do.
 Herman Bake, Do.
 Mrs. Catharine Bogert
 Mrs. Philander Brasher
 David S. Bogart A. B.
 Cornelius N. Bogart
 Doctor Samuel Borrowe
 Wm. Brookins, Pennsylvania,
 Thomas Buchanan, Esq. Do.
 Wm. Barr Do.
 James Bayly N. J.
 John R. Bleecker do.
 Joseph Bonney do.
 Richard Baffet
 P. Butler
 David Ritzema Bogert
 Rudolphus Bogert
 Nicholas C. Bogart
 Robert Benson, Clerk of N. Y.
 George Barnes
 T. B. Atwood Bridgen
 James Barclay
 John Baker
 John Bayard, Esq. N. J.

John Wm. Baxtor
 Nathaniel Beach N. J.
 Peter Bryant do.
 Samuel Broome, New-Haven,
 Samuel P. Broome, Do.
 Isaac Beers Do. 6.
 Capt. Adam Beam
 Wm. Beekman
 Mrs. Mary Beekman
 Abm. Van Beuren, jun.
 Walter Bicker
 Garry Brower
 Peter Bertine
 George Bunce
 James L. Bogart
 Adrean Bogart, jun.
 Herman Bennett
 Samson Benson
 Samson Benson, jun.
 Peter Benson
 Gasperie Brasher
 Cornelius Bergen.
 C.
 Matthew Clarkson, Esq.
 John Clark, jun.
 John Cozine Esq.
 Peter Cole
 Dewitt Clinton
 John Cuthout
 Stephen Cortland
 Nicholas Carmer
 Richard Cannegem
 Col. James Chryslie, 2.
 Moses Cantine, jun. Esq.
 Patrick Conolly
 Henry A. Coster
 Streatfield Clarkson
 John Crolus, jun.
 Jacob Conkline
 Johanna Candle
 John Campbell N. J.
 John Cornelison do.
 Cornelius Cooper do.
 Silas Condict, Esq. N. J.
 John Craven, Trenton, N. J.
 Columbia College Society

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Josiah Crane, Esq. | John Day |
| George Clinton, jun. | Philip Durell N. J. |
| Cornelius Clopper | George Dooremus do. |
| John F. Child | A. Dubois, Philadelphia |
| Abm. Child | Cornelius Decker, jun. |
| Francis Child | R. B. Davis |
| John Crolius, Sen. | Samuel Degroodt |
| Ebenezer Campble, Pennsylvania | John De Lanoy |
| Thomas Cummins Do. | Joseph Duncan, Pennsylvania |
| Nicholas Clopper Do. | James Dunlop, Esq. Do. |
| Robert Colwell Do. | Robert Donovan Do. |
| Adam Cliland Do. | Samuel Sharp Dickinson N. J. |
| James Campbell N. J. | Robert Deas do. |
| Wm. Chetwood do. | James W. Depeyster |
| Joseph Caldwell do. | John Depeyster |
| James Chesnut do. | Nicholas Depeyster |
| Rev. Elias Cooper | Hon. Judge James Duane, 2. |
| Cadwallader D. Colden | Jacob Decker, jun. |
| Thomas Cooper Esq. | Thomas Durie |
| Rev. John Close | John Dow N. J. |
| Robert H. Chapman, Brunf- | James Dana, D. D. New-Haven |
| wick, New-Jersey | David Daggett do. |
| David Crane do. | Moses De Witt |
| George Codwise, jun. | Jacob De la Montagnie |
| Nicholas G. Carmer | Henry Dawson |
| Garret Cosine | George Duryee, jun. |
| Augustus Cregier | Charles Duryee |
| Jacob Covenhoven | Rev. Petrus De Wit |
| Nicholas Cowenhoven, Esq. | Johannes De Wit |
| Nicholas R. Cowenhoven. | Richard Duryee |
| Capt. Jehofakam Borgh | Wm. Depeyster |
| Simon Cortleyou | Michael Depeyster, 2 |
| Col. Richard Carey | James Dailey |
| James Calhoun, jun. A. B. | Henry Didier Baltimore |
| D. | George A. Duryee |
| David A. Demarest | B |
| Rev. John Donlap, Mass. | John Elsworth |
| Joshua Danforth do. | Henry Elting |
| John Dawson | William I. Elsworth |
| James Doyle | Peter Elting 2 |
| John De Witt, Esq. | John Elting 2 |
| Egbert Dumond | John Ewing, D. D. Philadelphia |
| John Dry, Esq. N. J. | Miss Hannah Exceen |
| Daniel Dodge | Nicholas Evertson |
| Jacob Duryee, jun. | Bastian Ellis |
| John Duffie | John Elmendorf, Brunswick, |
| Abm. I. Duryee | New-Jersey |
| John T. Duryee | Mathew Egerton, Do. |
| Peter Dumont | Conrad T. Elmendorph |

SUBSCRIBERS.

xvii

Capt. Cornelius C. Elmendorph
Rev. Marmaduke Earle,

William Gravan
Roswell Graves
John Gates,

F

Cornelius Fish
Richard Furman
Gabriel Ford, Esq. N. J.
David Ford do.
Richard Fullerton Philad.
Samuel M. Fraunces, do.
Andrew G. Fraunces Do. 2
Nathaniel Furman, Do. Do.
Robert Finley do.
Jacob Fero do.
Robert Field do.
Frederick Frelinghuysen, Brunf-
wick, New-Jersey
Isaac D. Fowler
Sarah Fonda
John Fish.

G

James Gray
John Goodwin
Robert Giles
Thomas Greenleaf
Aaron Gilbert N. J.
Rev. Ashbel Green, A. M.
Philadelphia
Peter Gordon, Trenton, N. J.
David Godwin
David Gardiner, jun.
Levi P. Graham
M. Gelston N. J.
Charles Gerritsen
Hendrick Garretson, Esq.
John Garretson
Harmanus Garretson
Rev. Thomas Grant, Brunswick
New-Jersey
Lewis A. Gautier, jun.
Peter Garbrance
Nathaniel Gardiner
Joseph Griffiths
John Lyon Gardiner
George Gilfert
Henry Gilland
Capt. Wm. B. Gifford

H

Walter W. Heyer
Elias Hicks
Nicholas Hoffman, Esq. 12.
Mrs. Henshaw.
Daniel Hewlet
Jacob Hoombeck
Johannes G. Hardenbergh Esq.
Cornelius P. Hoorenbeck
Robert Hyflop
Isaac Heyer
John Hone
Jacob I. Hermance, 2
William Hendell
Abraham Herring
Israel Haviland
James Hodge N. J.
Ebenezer Hazard, Esq. Philad.
Samuel Hodgdon Do.
Caleb Haviland
Capt. Thomas Hook
John Heap, Pennsylvania
John Heister N. J.
Richard H. Harwood do.
B. Goodhull
Wynant Haughwout
Nicholas Haughwout
Josiah Ogden Hoffman, Esq.
Thomas Hicks
Andrew Hamersley
Daniel Harrison N. J.
William Hornblower
Joseph Hurd, Mass.
George F. Hopkins
Capt. Jacob Hagadon
John Hendricks, Eliz. Town
Rem Hageman
Adrian Hegeman, Esq.
Capt. Elias Hubbard
Benjamin Havens
Thomas Hun, Esq.
R. R. Henry

John Haycock
Moses Haslet, D. M. Baltimore
Peter Haughwout

I

Robert Johnston
H. Ivers
Elbert N. Jones
George Janeway
Wm. Janeway
Timothy Johnes D. D. N. J.
Doctor Timothy Jones, jun. do.
Doctor Gardner Jones
Samuel Jones, jun.
John Johnson
David Jones, Esq.
James H. Inalay N. J.
David Jones, jun.
Thomas Johnson
John Johns
George Johns
Capt. Jeremiah Johnson

K

Burnet R. Kingsland
Isaac L. Kip
James S. Kip
Doctor Luke Kingsland
Benjamin Kiffam M. D.
Isaac A. Kip
James L. Kip
Samuel Kip, jun.
Elbert Kip
Richard Kip
Ann Kirsted
Abraham Kittell, Esq. N. J.
Henry King do.
James Kent
James Kelfo, Pennsylvania
Mrs. Elizabeth Kelsey N. J.
Rev. Gerardus A. Kuypers
Oliver L. Ker, Esq. 3
Henry Klapp
Joseph Kimball N. J.
Joseph Kettle, Mass.
Capt. Ruliff A. Kipp
Isaac L. Kipp
Henry H. Kip

James H. Kip
William King
Aaron King
John Knot
John H. Kip
James Kelfo, Esq. Maryland
John Herring, Esq. Pennsylv.

L

Brockholst Livingston, Esq.
Edward Livingston Esq.
Jacob Lefferts
John Leacock
John R. Livingston
Gilbert R. Livingston, Esq.
John Low
Andrew Lott
Abraham Lott
Mrs. P. H. Livingston
Jacob John Lansing
Robert Lenox
Christopher Lott
Joshua Lathrop, Connecticut
David B. Lynsen N. J.
Joseph Lewis, N. J. 2
John Lockwood, Philadelphia
William Lupton, jun. A. B.
William Livingston Esq.
John C. Ludlow Esq.
Francis Lynch
James Lowrey, Pennsylvania
James Linn do.
William Linn, sen. do.
Charles Leiper Esq. do.
Mrs. Grace Little N. J.
John I. Long do.
J. H. Livingston, D. D. S. T. P.
William Lupton
Hon. John Lansing, jun. 2
Peter R. Livingston
Ephraim Lorce, Brunswick N. J.
John Larkin, Mass.
S. Latham
Dirck Lefferts, Esq.
Henry Lenberrow
Jeremiah Lott
Matthew Lane
Rev. Peter Louw

Johannes E. Lott, Esq.
 Leffert Lefferts
 Barent Lefferts
 Charles Lapatt 2
 Garret A. Lanfing
 Thomas Langdon
 Samuel Lewis
 Rev. George Luckie, Hertford
 County, Maryland
 William Luckie do.

M

Jacob Morton Esq.
 Anthony Marvine
 Rev. John M'Knight, 2
 James M'Master
 Martin Morrison
 Miss Gitty Montagnie
 John Merier
 Samuel Monson
 Stephen M'Crea
 Patrick M'Faddin N. J.
 John Mersereau do.
 John H. Meyer do.
 John M. Mason A. B.
 John W. Mulligan A. B.
 Henry Masterton
 Isaac Mead
 Frederick Mabye
 Samuel Mitchell, Pennsylvania
 David M'Knight do.
 David Mahon do.
 James M'Clintock do.
 James M'Kee do.
 John M'Kee, Sen. do.
 Mrs. Maria Minto N. J.
 G. W. Morton do.
 Rev. Richard C. Moore
 Peter Mesier, jun.
 Thomas W. Morris
 Quintin Millem
 Tyon Merrel
 Cornelius Mercereau Esq.
 Col. Jacob Mercereau
 William Mooney
 Rev. Walter Monteath, Brunf-
 wick, New-Jersey

Robert Manley
 John Moore
 Daniel Meeker N. J.
 Rev. Jedediah Morfe, Mass.
 John A. Morris
 Jacob Morris
 Rev. Dr. John Mason
 Miss Susannah Martense
 Rem Martense
 William Merrill
 Leffert Martense, jun.
 Abraham Meserole
 William Maxwell, Esq.
 John Myer
 Andrew M'Gown
 Charles Morgan
 John M'Burney
 Robert M'Mennomy
 James Martin, Baltimore
 John Martin do. 2
 John M'Clellan jun. do.
 Robert Mickle do.
 Abdiel M'Allister, merchant,
 Hanover County, Maryland,
 12.
 Duncan M'Intosh, Baltimore

N

New-York Society Library
 John L. Norton
 David Noble, Esq. Mass.
 Valentine Nutter
 Joseph Nourse, Philadelphia
 Gabriel Nourse do.
 James W. Nicholson
 James H. Neilson N. J.
 Col. John Nielson, do.
 John Neilson, jun. do.
 Capt. Anthony Neill
 John Neilson, Brunswick, N. J.
 Abraham Nortling
 David Nichols
 Matthias Nack

O

Marinus Oudenaarde
 John Outhoudt

Rev. Uzal Ogden, N. J.
 Stephen Osbrander do.
 Charles Ogden do.
 Michael Ortley
 Richard Oliver
 Henry Ortley
 Israel Ogden
 Peter Ogilvie, Esq.
 Adrian Onderdonck

P

His Excellency Wm. Patterfou,
 Governor, New-Jersey.
 Garret Peterfon
 Abraham Polhemus
 Abraham Prall
 Daniel Phœnix, Esq.
 Alexander Proudfit
 Robert Peebles Esq. Pennsylv.
 Robert Peebles, do.
 Joseph Potter do.
 William Potter do.
 Lewis S. Pintard N. J.
 Col. Richard Platt 3
 John Pool, jun. Brunswick N. J.
 John Plum do.
 Jabez Pierfon do.
 Jeremiah Platt, New-Haven
 John Parker
 John P. Pearfs
 Daniel Parcutt
 Jacob Polhemus, Esq.

Q

Capt. John Quackenboss

R

Walter Rutherford Esq.
 Abraham Riker
 James Roe
 Jacobus Rasbouck, jun.
 James Roosevelt
 Nicholas Romaine
 Anthony B. Rutgers
 Joseph Robinson
 John Roosevelt
 Gerard Rutgers
 Cornelius C. Roosevelt
 Nicholas I. Roosevelt
 Albert Rutan N. J.

Abraham Retan N. J.
 Caleb Russell, Esq. do.
 John R. Rofs, Philadelphia
 Michael Roberts do.
 Nicholas Rouffelet do.

Jacob Roome
 Cornelius Ray, Esq.
 Henry Remsen, Esq.
 Henry Roome

John Repose

Mrs. Mary Read N. J.
 James Ruan do.
 John P. Ryerfs do.
 Ebenezer Rhea do.

Peter Roosevelt
 Henry Rutledge
 Aris Ryertz

Elijah Rosegrant, Brunswick N. J.
 Rev. F. Rowland, N. Hamp.
 Jeremiah Remsen
 John Russell, Baltimore
 Rev. Lewis Richards, do.

S

John Slidell
 Benjamin Strong
 Comfort Sands, Esq. 12
 Dennis Striker
 Daniel Stanbury
 Doctor Henry Sleight
 Oke Snidam
 Miss Eliza Southworth
 Joseph Strong, Esq.
 Isaac Stoutenburgh, Esq.
 John Stagg
 John Stoutenburgh
 Cornelius B. Sebring
 Melancton Smith, Esq.
 George Snowdon, jun.
 John I. Staples, jun.
 Peter Smith
 John Suydam
 Frederick Steymets
 William Steymets
 Jacobus Swartwout
 Isaac Sebring

Joseph Stringham
 William Ross Smith, N. J.
 William Sickels do.
 Rev. Henry Schoonmaker
 Jonathan Sturges, jun.
 James Stephenson, A. B. N. J.
 Rev. James Sproat, D. D. Philadelphia
 John Shepherd, Philadelphia
 Robert Smith do.
 Henry Stuber do.
 John Stagg, jun. do.
 Isaac Snowden do.
 Jacob Servofs do.
 B. Smith, Esq. Trenton, N. J.
 Richard Smith jun.
 James Stuart
 Henry Snyder
 Mrs. Ann Smith N. J.
 Mrs. Mary Stockton do.
 Miss Mary Stockton do.
 John T. Sayrs
 Joseph Stanton
 John Rutledge Smith
 Benjamin Burgh Smith
 Peter Gerard Stuyvesant
 Rev. Peter Stryker
 Isaac Simonson
 Simon Swaim
 Augustus Sacket
 Doctor Moses Scott, Brunswick
 New-Jersey
 Abraham Schuyler Esq do.
 John Schureman do.
 Edward Stevens do.
 Capt. John Stryker do.
 Solomon Smith
 Uzal Sayre N. J.
 John Sleight, Esq
 Capt. Egbert E. Schoonmaker
 Isaac Stoutenburgh, jun.
 Doctor William Pitt Smith
 Edward Shepherd
 William Shute, Elizabeth-Town
 Mrs Catharine Stonehouse
 Andrew Stockholm
 Henry Sanders
 Rev. John Stanford, M. A. 2

Peter Stryker
 Christopher Sweedland
 Hendrick Suydam
 Capt. Lambert Suydam
 Martin Schenck
 Lambert Schenck
 Francis Skilman
 Fernandus Suydam, Esq.
 Peter T. Schenck
 Teunis Schenck
 Isaac Snediker
 John B. Schuyler, Esq.
 Rev. Samuel Smith
 Maria Evan Schaick
 Robert Stewart
 Rev. Martinus Schoonmaker
 Sarah Smith, Baltimore.

T

Mrs. Mary Teller
 Peter Thompson
 Christopher Tappen Esq:
 Matthew Ten Eyck, Esq.
 Peter Tappen, Esq.
 John Thomson
 Abraham Tallman
 Stephen Thorne
 Jacob F. Tuthill N. J.
 James Teller
 Robert Troup, Esq.
 Ahafuerus Turk,
 Robert Tate, Pennsylvania
 John Thompson do.
 William Turner do.
 Jesse Taylor N. J.
 John Tyfen, jun.
 Cornelius Ten Broeck, Brunswick, New-Jersey
 John Ten Broeck
 Thomas & Andrews, Boston
 Charles Titus, Esq.
 Francis Titus
 John Taylor, Esq.
 Dirck Ten Broeck, Esq.
 Charles Tarrence, merchant,
 Baltimore
 John Terhune
 James Todd

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Capt. John Titus | | Barent Van Benthuyzen | |
| U | | Peter Van Gaasbuck, jun. | |
| Uranian Society | | Capt. John Van Luven | |
| V | | Mrs. A. Vergereaux N. J. | |
| Frederick Van Horne | | Isaac Vervalen | |
| Daniel C. Verplanck | | Simon Van Antwerp | |
| Cornelius C. Van Allen | | John Vanderhoof | |
| Gulian Verplanck Esq. | | John Vreeland | |
| John Vanderbilt, Esq. | | Cornelius Van Aulen | |
| Mary Vermillyea | | Isaac Vredenburg | |
| Jacob Vermillyea M. | | Daniel Van Antwerp | |
| James Valentine | | Rev. Rynier Van Nest | |
| Hon. Richard Varick, Esq. | | Jeremiah Vanderbilt | |
| Mayor | | Matthias Van Dyck | |
| Jacob Van Buskirk | | Francis Vandervoort | |
| John Van Kirk | | Miss Nelly Van Dyck | |
| Rev. Abraham Van Horne | | Philip S. Van Rensselaer, Esq. | |
| Theodorus Van Wyck | | Abram Van Bramer | |
| Henry Van Harlingen | | Garrit I. Van Alen | |
| Rev. John M. Van Harlingen, | | Rutgert Van Brunt | |
| New-Jersey | | R. J. Vanden Broeck, Philad. 6 | |
| Edward Van Harlingen, do. | | W | |
| Rudolph Van Dortsen | | Tunis Wortman | |
| John P. Van Nels | | Sarah Williams | |
| Abraham Varick 2 | | William Walton, jun. | |
| Garrit Van Horne | | Henry Walton | |
| John Vernon | | Abraham M. Walton | |
| Andrew Van Buskirk, jun. | | Albert Wyckoff | |
| Michael Vandervoort | | Peter Wynkoop | |
| Tobias Van Zandt | | Dirck Westrunck, Esq. | |
| Peter Van Zandt | | William Williams | |
| John Van Winckel | | Peter Wilson, Esq. professor | |
| Albert Van Voorhis N. J. | | Columbia College | |
| Richard I. Van Horne do. | | Silas Wood, N. J. | |
| Benjamin Vancleve, Trenton, | | John W. Watkins | |
| New-Jersey | | Henry Will, Esq. | |
| Thomas Vermillyea | | John C. Wynkoop | |
| John Vandervoort | | John Waldron | |
| John Van Dyke N. J. | | Miss Jane Waldron N. J. | |
| Doctor John Van Beuren | | Miss Eliza Waldron do. | |
| Jacob Vreeland | | Adolph Waldron do. | |
| William Van Nest | | Resolve Waldron do. | |
| William Van Deusen, Brunf- | | Alexander P. Waldron | |
| wick New-Jersey | | John Woodward, Philadelphia 2 | |
| David Voorhees do. | | Joseph Wheaton do. | |
| John Voorhees do. | | Nathaniel H. White | |
| Jaques Voorhees do. | | Miss Kitty Warner N. J. | |

SUBSCRIBERS.

xxiii

Joshua M. Wallace	N. J.	David Waldron
Alexander White 3	do.	Y
James Woods		Moses Yeomans, Esq.
Abraham Wood		Capt. Edward Yard, Brunswick
Gershom Williams, Brunswick,		New-Jersey
New-Jersey		John Young
William Woodbridge Mass.		
Gen. Samuel B. Webb, 2		Z
Rensselaer Westerlo, Esq,		John J. Zabriskie. N. J.

 A complete return of the Subscribers not being obtained in time, and it being difficult to give all of them their proper titles, it is hoped that errors and omissions will be excused.

S E R M O N I.

CHARACTER AND DEATH OF ABEL.

GENESIS IV. 8.

And CAIN talked with ABEL his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God, and designed for our instruction and improvement. In this light we are to consider the lives and characters of men which are recorded, as well as the precepts, promises and threatenings addressed to us. They all teach, that our duty and happiness consist in the love of God and the love of man.

I HAVE in view to call your attention to certain characters, both good and bad; to connect with them their history, as far as is needful for illustration, and to make such observations and reflections as may naturally arise. Some advantages will attend this manner of

preaching : Besides not being common, it will better disclose to us the secret and deceitful windings of the human heart ; and interest us more by exhibiting virtue and vice in real life. When these are made to move before us, we cannot well be inattentive to the beauty of the one, and the deformity of the other. As the impression is the more strong, so it is always the more lasting.

THE subject now chosen will not admit a full specimen of what is intended. The history of ABEL is short, and his character marked only by its being righteous. This is too general to give his peculiar qualities, or show wherein he was distinguished from other good men ; and therefore it will be necessary in this instance, and all of the like kind, to take a larger scope. We know nothing of those remote ages, except what is found in the sacred volume. This emits a ray of light which enables us to distinguish a few great and important objects, but all the rest are buried in the thickest darkness. The death of Abel is the most remarkable event recorded from the fall to the deluge ; and, short as his history is, we find him several times mentioned with approbation in the New Testament. He stands foremost in that list of worthies celebrated in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews ; and is declared, though *dead*, yet to *speak* by the testi-

mony which he received from God. One would have supposed from this, that he would have been early enrolled in the Christian church among the ancient patriarchs and prophets, and yet it is remarkable that the Greek churches, who observe the feasts of all the others, have not done him the same honor; and that his name is not to be found in any catalogue of saints until the tenth century. If this may be called neglect, it was unjust; he was surely entitled to a place. At the same time, it is to be lamented that any names have ever been abused to the purposes of superstition and idolatry. Let us attend to the history and character of Abel, together with the occasion and circumstances of his death.

HE was the second son of Adam and Eve; and, as to his occupation, a shepherd. At a certain time, Cain, his eldest brother, who was a husbandman, brought an offering unto God of the fruits of the ground. Abel also brought an offering of the firstlings of his flock. God was pleased to manifest his disapprobation of the one, and his acceptance of the other, which so exasperated Cain, that, some time afterward, he slew Abel his brother. This is the history, in few words, as related by Moses. The story is greatly amplified by many fabulous circumstances in the Jewish writings, which have laid the foundation of that

poem in the German language by Gessner, called “the Death of Abel;” a work more of fancy than of truth; admissible in a poet, but improper in a historian.

It is not my purpose to go into a critical explanation of the words of scripture, save only to remark on the meaning of the names of these two brothers. Cain signifies *gotten*, or a *possession*; and the reason of this name is added, *I have gotten*, said Eve, *a man from the Lord*;* by which she designed to express, either her thankfulness to God for his goodness, or her hope, that this son was the promised seed. Accordingly the words might be translated, *I have gotten a man, the Lord*; meaning the Saviour promised. Abel signifies *vanity*; and the name was designed to express, either the low esteem in which she held him compared with the other, or, in general, the vain and transitory state of man; a name prophetic of the short life of him to whom it was first given. Let us enquire, why God accepted the offering of Abel and not that of Cain? And what was the reason of Cain’s wrath against his brother?

THESE things we learn with certainty from the writings of the New Testament. The Apostle expressly

* Verse 1.

informs us, that, *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.** Some, particularly among the Jews, have alledged, that Cain did not bring of the best of his fruits, or that he did not bring them in proper season, and that therefore, God rejected his offering. But the Apostle gives no other reason why Abel was preferred, than that of his being the subject of faith. It was not the quality of the offering, but the disposition of the offerer to which God had respect. This is also plainly implied in these words of the Lord to Cain—*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.†* He did not present his offering with purity of heart, and faith in the promises of God: whereas Abel was righteous in his temper and conduct. He believed in the promised seed of the woman, and that on his account God would graciously pardon and save. For the sake of this mediator the person of Abel was justified, and consequently his offering was accepted. Of this approbation, it is generally thought, that the Lord gave some visible token, by consuming the sacrifice by fire from Heaven, as we read of his doing on subsequent occasions.‡ To this the Apostle may refer, when he says of

* Heb. xi. 4. † Verse 7. ‡ Lev. ix. 24. 1. Chron. xxi. 26.

Abel, *He obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.*† Cain, seeing this, was filled with envy and rage. Being the first-born, and enjoying certain privileges, he thought that he was likely now to be held in lower estimation than his brother. His heart rose in immediate opposition to him, and indeed to God himself. This wicked temper led him, in the end, to perpetrate the horrid murder. The Apostle John ascribes it to this very principle. *Cain, says he, was of that wicked one, and slew his brother: and wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*‡

WERE it not recorded, and found by observation on human nature, one would think such a degree of depravity incredible. Is it so that one man can hate another because he is good and approved of God? No man will venture to profess this. Hatred always finds some other colour or pretext; but there is in the corrupt human heart, however disguised, this root of enmity. If man be opposed to the perfections of the great God, he will also to his fellow-men, as far as they resemble God. In the very first person descended from our fallen parents, this principle appeared in its most hideous shape. Mankind were now few on the earth; there were no examples to infect; there could be lit-

† Heb. xi. 4. ‡ I John iii. 12.

tle or no cause of competition among them, and they needed the counsel and assistance of one another : and yet in these circumstances we behold this malignant disposition producing the most direful effects. No man, as has been said, will profess this, and most deceive themselves by imputing their conduct to other motives ; but this hidden enmity of the heart against holiness has occasioned the effusion of all the righteous blood which has been shed upon the earth. We find it operating in a lower degree constantly among men. *Their eyes are evil, because God is good.* They envy others, their character, their gifts, and even their goodness, as far as it tends to promote reputation. Cain cared nothing for the approbation of God ; his sole desire was to be esteemed of men. He would have been willing, on this account, that they should have thought him chiefly beloved of Heaven ; and therefore, when God publicly gave a token in favor of his brother, he was provoked to desperate wrath.

HE *talked with Abel his brother* ; whether in a friendly manner, the better to conceal his intention ; whether by way of expostulation on imagined injuries ; or whether in insulting language to provoke him, thus seeking an excuse to kill him, is not certain. It is remarked that in the Hebrew text, after the words, *talked with his brother*, there is a pause extraordinary, which

seems to imply farther matter. The Greek version supplies it with the words, *Let us go out into the field.* In the Jewish writings, is added the conversation which should have passed in the field ; and Cain is supposed to have said, that “there was no judgment, nor judge, nor other world to come, nor good reward for justice, nor vengeance for wickedness,” and more to the same purpose ; all which Abel contradicted, and then Cain slew him. Whatever might have been the subject and the nature of their discourse, we are told, that *when they were in the field*, whither Cain might have enticed the other, or where he waited an opportunity to find him, removed from the sight and interposition of any of the family ; there, hurried on by his diabolical passions, he stretched forth his hand and slew him ; there the envious and furious monster, with a stone, club, or some other instrument, shed the blood of a man—of a righteous man—of a brother : there was the new earth first stained with human gore, and death first entered after sin, and began its horrid depredation on human kind. It did not make a slow and gradual approach, but the tempter who seduced men, instigated them to inflict by violence death upon one another.—If any enquire why God suffered Cain to live when guilty of murder, a crime which was afterward, by the divine law, punish-

ed with death ; and what was the mark which was set upon him ? To the first, it may be answered briefly, that the small number of men as yet upon the earth, might be a reason why his life was prolonged ; and that he might notwithstanding be punished by the anguish of his mind, and afford an awful warning to others.

As to the second, it is a matter rather of curiosity, than of instruction. If it were some mark on his body, or any token by which he was distinguished, God hath not revealed what it was, and it does not concern us to know. The conjectures have been various, and many of them too fanciful to mention. It is thought by some learned commentators that the words ought to be rendered thus : *God set a sign before Cain, to persuade him, that whoever should find him should not kill him.* Agreeably to this translation, which is countenanced by the Septuagint, and seems natural and obvious enough, the meaning is, that God, in order to convince Cain that no one should be permitted to hurt him, gave him a sign, or wrought a miracle before him. If this interpretation be not admitted, but some external mark is thought to have always accompanied him, it is unedifying to waste our time in the pursuit of what is uncertain, and respecting which there has been such a diversity of opinions.—When this history is

considered complexly, it gives rise to the following reflections :

FIRST, How often are parents mistaken as to the future character and condition of their children ! From the names given to these two, it would appear, that much higher hopes were entertained of the one than of the other ; and yet, in process of time, the case was exactly reversed. He of whom least was expected, was amiable in his temper and righteous in his conduct ; was a comfort to his parents and approved of God ; while the other, at first a favorite, caused exceeding grief by abandoning himself to the commission of wickedness.—This shows also the danger and folly of making partial distinctions between children ; and ought to excite to a careful performance of every duty towards them, depending upon the blessing of God for success. Without the concurrence of his providence they will become neither good nor great ; but this does not supersede the necessity and advantage of human endeavors. In this, as in all other things, we ought to adhere strictly to duty, leaving the event wholly to God. Sometimes our hopes may be disappointed, and again our fears may be removed ; but it is only a consciousness of having faithfully performed our part, that can give us true and lasting satisfaction.

SECONDLY, How great the danger of indulging sinful passions! We know not to what length they may hurry the subjects of them. It is not to be supposed that Cain's anger became, all at once, so ungovernable, or that he meditated at first the destruction of his brother; but that his passions encreased by constant indulgence; that suspicion grew into coldness; coldness into hatred or envy, which kindled at last into jealous rage. *When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.**

Happy are they who obtain the mastery over their passions in younger life, or who are enabled by grace to subdue them! When these usurp dominion over reason, they are, in their effects, most pernicious to others, and render the subjects themselves completely miserable. As all require care, so particularly, are the approaches of a sullen, discontented and envious disposition to be avoided. Persons grow dissatisfied with the dealings of providence, with the prosperity and happiness of others, and by constantly brooding over their own misfortunes, soon become incapable of tasting the comforts of life. Satan, who ever watches for the ruin of souls, takes this opportunity of suggesting temptations to them.

THE words used by the sacred historian with respect to Cain are few, but highly descriptive of his temper.

* James i. 15.

*Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.** He could not dissemble his resentment. It was visible in his countenance. Anger, at first, burned on his cheek and darted from his eye; it gradually settled into looks betokening envy, melancholy and discontent. He wore no cheerful smiles of complacence; he sought no company; but, wakeful at night, fled to the desolate wood, torn with the horrors of a still more dark and desolate mind. This temper, thus indulged, drove him to commit the atrocious deed; and is a dreadful warning to all to resist the onset of sinful passions, and to cherish by every mean, benevolence to all men. *Who-soever, says the Apostle John, doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.** As we ought to cherish benevolence to all mankind, so especially, ought those who are connected by ties of blood, to live together in peace and amity. Contentions among such cause shame and grief, expose them to the censure of the world, and prove a fruitful source of misery.

THIRDLY, We are not to judge of the special favor of God towards men, by their long continuance and prosperity in this world. The life of righteous Abel

* Verse 5.

† 1 John iii. 11. 12.

was indeed vanity. He was cruelly murdered in his prime and vigor, while wicked Cain survived to build a city. He who confines his views entirely to this world, would be ready to doubt of a providence which directs and governs the affairs of men; but if he take into consideration a future state, in which good men are perfectly happy, he will praise Abel dead more than Cain living. He will see that God is a rewarder of the righteous. This seems to be the true meaning of these words of the Apostle on this subject, *By it, he being dead, yet speaketh*;* that is, by the testimony which he received from God, that he was righteous, though he was slain, yet he is an evidence that God rewards the righteous. Seeing he was not rewarded in this world, it follows, that he had his reward in the other. This, perhaps, is the real spirit of the words; though they likewise imply that Abel is still celebrated for his faith, and loudly proclaim that only this can render us acceptable to God.

WHILE we behold in the death of Abel the first glaring instance of human depravity, we behold also the grace and power of the Redeemer promised to man. The soul of Abel, so far as we know, was the first that was perfectly washed and sanctified in the name of Christ, and by the spirit of God; the first admitted

* Heb. xi. 4.

into the paradise above, and began there this song—
*Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.** He early saw and felt the dire effects of sin on this earth, and surely God was good in granting him so soon a release from what must have been a long and wearisome pilgrimage.

It is the want of faith which often makes us bewail the death of the righteous. *We look at the things which are seen, and which are temporal.* Were there no other state than the present, we might well sorrow as those who have no hope; but when we consider that here is not the place of our abode, and that the righteous enter upon an infinitely better state, it should silence our grief. Their death may be loss to us, but it is gain to them. Faith looks not for Abel in the field of blood, but sees him, in a glorious company of martyrs, around the throne of God.

ONCE MORE, We learn, that it is faith which renders our persons and services acceptable to God. The first pair in innocence were acceptable to him on account of their personal obedience; but after their fall they could be saved only by faith. In this way Abel was righteous, and his sacrifice was accepted. He believed the promises of God, and relied on the merits of

* Rev. i. 5.

Christ, who was *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

OF this faith, we, my brethren, must be partakers, if ever we be saved. We have now the clearest discoveries of that method of salvation which the patriarchs and prophets saw but dimly. *We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.** Faith is that act by which we receive him for our salvation. Be persuaded to seek this faith ; to ask it of God, whose gift it is ; to apply to *the blood of sprinkling*, for cleansing from all your guilt. *It speaketh better things than that of Abel.†* Entreat also the influences of the holy Spirit to renew and purify your hearts. We have no righteousness of our own to recommend us. God will be well pleased with us, only for the sake of Christ his son. In him there is complete redemption.

To this foundation for the pardon and favor of God, I wish to lead you in the close of this discourse ; and to leave you with this impression, that *without faith it is impossible to please him.‡* Though you may never feel, like Cain, the turbulence and guilt of hellish passions ; nay, though you may be amiable in your natural disposition ; affectionate to your relatives ; kind and

* John i. 45. † Heb. xii. 24. ‡ Heb. xi. 6,

courteous in your behaviour to all; yet, unless you be united to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, as the living principle of a holy obedience, you will not with righteous Abel meet the final approbation of your Maker and Judge.

S E R M O N II.

CHARACTER AND TRANSLATION
OF ENOCH.

GENESIS V. 24.

And ENOCH walked with God, and he was not : for God took him.

YOUR attention has been lately called to the character and death of the righteous Abel ; with which was connected the history of Cain, as far as it related to the other. I shall not follow the *fugitive and vagabond*, or show the horrors of mind which accompanied his guilt ; and that though God suffered him to live, yet it was for an awful spectacle to deter others from the same crime.

THE sacred historian, after mentioning the place whither Cain wandered, and the invention of several arts by his descendants, drops them in oblivion, except some brief account of their extreme degeneracy of

manners, insnaring at length, by intercourse, the worshippers of the true God and producing a general corruption.

IN this chapter, he gives the genealogy of the first ten Patriarchs. Among these, ENOCH is particularly celebrated for his eminent piety and extraordinary end. He was the seventh person in a direct line from Adam, by Seth who was a *substitute* for Abel; and he is thus distinguished from Enoch the son of Cain, and the third person in the other line. He stands next to Abel in that catalogue recorded in the epistle to the Hebrews, and is mentioned with approbation in the epistle of Jude.

Two things offer themselves to our consideration on this subject;

FIRST, The piety of Enoch; *he walked with God.*

SECONDLY, His extraordinary end, or the reward of his piety; *he was not; for God took him.*

I. THERE is no metaphor more frequently used in scripture to point out the conduct or manner of life, than this taken from the motion of the body, and called *walking*. It signifies a good or a bad life, according to the manner in which it is connected. Thus, to *walk after the flesh*, is to gratify its evil inclinations;

and to *walk in the ways or commandments* of God, is carefully to observe them. The propriety and force of the metaphor need not be particularly shown; it is perhaps more easily conceived than explained. We can hardly express ourselves on spiritual subjects but by allusion to material things. The phrase to *walk with; or before God*, is designed to express a singular and eminent degree of piety, manifested by a regular and uniform conduct; by a persevering progress in all the ways of a holy obedience. The same words are used in describing the character of Noah. *Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.** The command of Almighty God to Abram was, *Walk before me and be thou perfect.†* And this was the resolution of the Psalmist, after his experience of divine goodness, *I will walk before the Lord.‡* We are to understand then, that Enoch gave evidence of a life peculiarly and remarkably devoted to the service of God. Let us inquire what is implied in this character.—It is proper to observe,

FIRST, That Enoch was the subject of faith in the Redeemer. The Apostle, when showing, on purpose, the glorious effects of faith, mentions him as an example among many. He declares that Enoch *had this testimony, that he pleased God;§* and immediately adds,

* Gen. vi. 9. † Gen. xvii. 1. ‡ Psalm cxvi. 9. § Heb. xi. 5.

Without faith it is impossible to please him. What discoveries he had of the way of salvation cannot be known. Though they were, in many things imperfect, compared with those which believers have under the gospel, yet, we know that his person must have been accepted as righteous, only through the merits of a Saviour who was promised, and that faith in him was the living principle from which his obedience flowed. No sinner can be admitted to the favor of God but through the Mediator, and no sinner will love and serve God without hopes of his pardoning mercy. Enoch was the subject of faith, and his heart was changed and sanctified by the spirit of God, otherwise he could not have walked with him. *Can two walk together, except they be agreed? **

It is of the greatest importance that we attend to this in delineating every religious character, lest we err in building on a false foundation. It ought to be inculcated first and last, that true holiness in man is attainable only in the way which God, in his infinite goodness, hath provided. The religion of nature, though good in itself, is now defective and unavailing for salvation.

SECONDLY, Enoch did not join in the wicked devices and practices of the men of his age; he was incor-

* Amos iii. 3.

rupted by these. Their example did not draw him aside, but, on the contrary, excited his indignation and abhorrence. This showed his piety to be sincere, and made it the more conspicuous. He associated with those who adhered to the true worship of God, of whom, there were in his day, still a number; and he opposed, with all his might, that torrent of wickedness which began to overspread the earth. Ever since the beginning, even in times of the greatest and most general corruption of manners, God hath raised up witnesses for himself. There have been those who vindicated his honor, and were obedient to his will; those who bore testimony against the degeneracy of the world, and set a noble example before it. The more profligate the day in which they lived, the more distinguished indeed, has been their pious zeal; nor is the benefit of eminent men confined to their own generation, but extends to all future ages. Such was Enoch; and this leads me to say,

IN the third place, That with courage and zeal he admonished and reproved others, endeavoring their reformation. It appears from the epistle of Jude, that he was a prophet, and discharged his office with great boldness and faithfulness. The words are, *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are un-*

*godly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.** There was formerly extant what was supposed to be the prophecy of Enoch, and which was highly esteemed by the ancients; but, it is now thought to have been the work of some later hand; and that the Apostle did not quote this passage from any book, but, by inspiration, speaks of Enoch as having been a prophet, and as having denounced the judgments of God against the wickedness of the times. Holding this public station, it became his duty to teach the will of God, and declare, as from him, the vengeance which would overtake ungodly sinners. Every pious character, indeed, will be attentive not only to his own conduct, but anxious for that of others; and will contribute, as far as in his power, to the promotion of religion. He will be actuated with zeal for the glory of God, and a tender concern for the welfare of his fellow-men. While some are called by their station to bear a public testimony, all who walk with God, will exert their influence for him, and feel themselves deeply interested in supporting and recommending his laws.

FOURTHLY, Enoch considered himself as being always in the presence, and under the observation of a

* Jude xiv. 15.

righteous God. This is, no doubt, an important thing in the description of his character. He *walked with God*; that is, the whole of his conduct was ordered as in his sight; not only that part of it which was visible to men, but the very thoughts and desires of his heart, as being all open to the divine inspection. This would lead him to set a strict guard on his heart and life; it would influence him both in his private and public character; it would ensure the faithful discharge of all the duties of his several relations; and it would bring him to commit his ways to God, trusting in his protection, and acquiescing in all the disposals of his providence.

HE who constantly realizes the presence of God will be chiefly desirous to please him. He will not be so much solicitous what men will think or say, as how he shall approve himself to the great Judge of all. This is the consideration which prevails in his mind and directs his actions; and perhaps nothing more certainly marks a pious temper. What is the secret motive of all our conduct? Is it that we may gain a name and confidence among men? Or, is it that we may have the approbation of God? When engaged in the public duties of religion, what is it that fans the flame of devotion? Is it the breath of mortals? Or is it the spirit of the Most High? Do we view

ourselves as standing only before men? Or do we consider ourselves as in the presence of a great and holy God? The first is the principle of action in the formalist and hypocrite; the last, of him who loves the Lord. The Pharisees, of old, performed their duties to be *seen of men*, that they might *have glory* of them; but our blessed Saviour directs us to regard supremely the approbation of our Father who *seeth in secret*, and will judge us according to our real character. Though the pious man is not totally regardless of the opinion of others, yet he wishes ever to preserve a good conscience before God; and though he may sometimes be improperly swayed by the sentiments of the world, yet the glory of God is his great design. As long as he walks with God, he seeks this principally, and all other things are of inferior concern.

WITH respect to Enoch, the Apostle assures us, *that he pleased God*. To whatever ridicule his singularity might have exposed him, and however grating his counsels and reproofs might have been to sinners, he acquitted himself before God, and obtained from him an honorable testimony. Let me only add,

FARTHER, That Enoch maintained constant communion with God; and in this sense, is said to have walked with him. He carefully attended the public

assemblies for worship, and all the ordinances of divine institution. He embraced the opportunity of going into the special presence of God, and bowing before him. He observed times of examining his own heart ; of placing himself as in the immediate sight of God, and pouring out his supplications to him. Whether in private or public ; in the house, or by the way, his heart was with God.

NOR was he a stranger to those methods in which God then revealed his will to men ; by heavenly messengers, dreams and visions. In these ways he learned the divine will and was obedient to it. These have long since ceased, and are not now to be expected ; but there is still enjoyed converse or communion with God, by the desires of the heart going out to him, and by his manifestations of himself. Piety is the same in every age, though the dispensations be different. There are always the same adoring views of the perfections of God and the same desire of conformity to him. When a person has great and constant discoveries of divine things, and his heart is continually under the influence of them, he is said to walk with God ; and this was the happy condition of Enoch.

THESE particulars which have been mentioned, enter into the description of the character given him ; and

they will be found in every godly person. Though the exercises may not be in the same degree, yet they will be of the same nature. This patriarch was favored above many other saints, in the greatness and constancy of them; for he *walked with God*. I proceed now,

II. To consider briefly the extraordinary end of Enoch, or the reward of his piety; *he was not, for God took him*. Some have interpreted these words to signify no more than his sudden and early death; or, as if they informed us only of his short life when compared with the other patriarchs; he not living more than three hundred and sixty-five years. But, it is very evident from the words in the epistle to the Hebrews, that God translated him; removed his body as well as his soul into Heaven, as was the case afterward with the prophet Elijah. *By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him.** In these words we are told plainly, that he *did not see death*. There was no separation of his soul from his body, which makes what is called death.

BESIDES, as one has justly observed, if we interpret the words to mean only his death, we will find an use-

* Heb. xi. 5.

less tautology or repetition in them. *He was not, for God took him ; that is, he died, for God removed him by death.* But, if interpreted the other way, they have great propriety and force. *He was not ;* he continued no longer upon this earth ; he was not to be found either among the living or the dead, *for God took him ;* conveyed his whole person into Heaven. There is no need to dwell longer upon this, the words which have been quoted from the New Testament being sufficiently clear and explicit. They are the best and the only comment which can be admitted. God was pleased as a reward of the singular and remarkable piety of Enoch, and for other wise purposes, to show this great token of his kindness to him.

IN what manner he was taken up is not related. We know that at the ascension of our Lord *a cloud received him,* and that Elijah was borne away by *horses and chariots of fire.* In some such way, we may conceive that Enoch, by the ministry of angels, was raised from earth and carried into Heaven ; his mortal being changed into immortality, and his corruptible into incorruption ; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, similar to the change which shall pass upon those found alive, when the trumpet shall sound.

As his translation would be a convincing and instructive lesson to mankind, it is reasonable to think

that it was public and visible ; at least, that there were a number of credible witnesses who could attest it. By this God assured them of a future and immortal state of bliss ; where the bodies as well as the souls of the righteous should dwell and be forever happy. Such an example they needed, when we consider that they had seen the body of righteous Abel return to the dust ; and that about fifty-seven years before this, Adam, the father of all living, had yielded his breath, and his body had been sorrowfully committed to the ground, out of which it had been taken. God, who suits his dispensations to the necessities of his people, gave them, therefore, an instance of a human body triumphing over death, and prepared to inherit everlasting joys. He thus supported them under their fears, animated their hopes, and strengthened their faith.

THE translation of Enoch may likewise be considered as a confirmation of his mission. Admitting that he wrought no miracles while he lived, his extraordinary removal from earth, was an evidence, that he was a true prophet, and that the things which he had declared, required the most serious attention and consideration of men. Amidst the general corruption of the age, it loudly testified, that there is a God who judgeth on the earth, and who will reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

SUFFER me now to turn your attention to some reflections arising from this subject.

FIRST, We learn, that it is piety which gives any character a real value. There are traditions which ascribe to Enoch great learning and knowledge ; but whatever might have been the natural and acquired endowments of his mind, he is celebrated in the scripture, only for the conformity of his heart and life to the will of God. For this he stands on record and is proposed for imitation.

THAT human acquirements are to be sought, and are serviceable to mankind, is, no doubt, true. We condemn not the race of Cain for building cities, and for the invention of the arts of civilized life ; but when these are separated from an attention to the duties of religion, we cannot praise their characters, nor think them happy. It is infinitely better to be good than to be great ; to have the favor of God than to command the world. Though extraordinary gifts may excite the admiration and envy of men, yet they are of little account in his eyes, who seeth not as man seeth. And of what advantage are they to the possessor, when he must leave all earthly scenes forever ? Can they procure him admission into the joys of Heaven ? No ;

*without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.** While we acknowledge this truth, it should, at the same time, afford us consolation. Few can expect to attract the notice of men, but all may obtain the favor and approbation of God, by faith in the Saviour, and a life devoted to his service. Let this then, my brethren, be the main object of our pursuit; this, the height at which our ambition aims. We shall, thus, be truly great here, and eternally happy hereafter.

IN the second place, We see how different are the dealings of God with respect to the removal of his people from this world. As in treating of the death of Abel, it was observed, that we must not judge of the special favor of God towards men, on account of their long continuance and prosperity on earth; that Abel was early cut down, while Cain survived; so it may be observed here, that the circumstances attending the death of the saints themselves are various. Abel suffered a violent death, but Enoch was translated. Though Cain might be miserable while he lived, and his very living be a punishment for his crime, yet as his case compared with Abel's afforded some foundation for a remark which is, in itself, certainly just; so the translation of Enoch compared with the murder of Abel affords foundation for this remark no less just; that the time and manner of death to the saints are ex-

* Heb. xii. 14.

ceedingly various. Some die early, others live long ; some die suddenly, others linger under disease and pain. None ought to expect an exemption from the evils necessarily attendant on the state of mortality ; nor ought they to be very solicitous about them. We may not choose the time, nor the manner of our death ; but leave these to the direction of a wise and merciful God, being assured that, if we love him, it shall be well with us, happen when and how it will.

MOST men seem to shrink at the thoughts of a sudden death, and to deprecate its coming upon them unawares ; and yet to the pious man, it is certainly a favor. He is freed from tedious pains, from the fears of dissolution, and from the distress of weeping friends. Like Enoch, he sees not death, when the transition is almost imperceptible from this earthly tabernacle to the house in Heaven.—The reason why it is dreaded is, besides the natural aversion, a consciousness of unfitness to appear before a holy God. The great concern then is, to labour for a state of habitual preparation ; to be found in the commission of no sin, and in the omission of no duty ; to walk with God ; to commune with him upon earth ; to have our *loins girt and our lamps burning* ; that so we may be ready to go forth to meet the bridegroom, whenever the cry is made, *Behold, he cometh !* Then, if it should be at *midnight* ; at a time

of all others the most unexpected, instead of surprise and confusion, composure and joy will attend us.

THIRDLY, Let this subject be improved by way of examination into our own characters before God. The description of Enoch's character is a description of true religion. Persons often give peace to their consciences, by alledging that the same degree of grace found in the saints recorded in scripture, is not necessary nor attainable by all. Beware of deception on this head; for it is always a bad sign when persons rest in any attainments, or what they suppose a sufficiency of grace to secure their happiness. This temper is opposed to the very nature of true grace, which reaches forth unto the things which are before, and presses towards perfection itself. Besides, grace is always distinguished by the same marks, and attended, in some degree, by the same exercises. It is not one thing in Enoch, another in David, another in the Apostle Paul, and still another in the Christian at this day. It invariably, in every age, consists in obedience to the laws of God, from a principle of love to him, and assurance of his favor through the merits of the Redeemer.

HAVE we reason to think, that we are the subjects of faith in Christ? That we are conformed in heart to God? Do we abstain from all the ways of sin? And do we, as far as we have opportunity, reprove and

endeavour to reform transgressors? Do we act as in the presence and under the observation of God? Do we seek communion with him in his word and in his ordinances? Surely these things are true of every child of God. Are they true of us? Be afraid, my brethren, lest any of you be deceived in this matter. Pray to God to search and try you; to teach you both your danger and your remedy, while you are still in the place of hope.

ALAS! Are there not many who seldom have God in their thoughts? Who behold the works of his hands, enjoy the bounties of his providence, and never lift their hearts to the beneficent Author of all? Are there not many who live in peace, if they can keep their sins concealed from men? Who, if they can support an unblameable character with others, are not attentive to maintain purity of mind? Were you to be judged by men, this might avail you; but remember that *God searcheth the heart and trieth the reins*. No disguise can cover from him; no darkness through which his eye does not penetrate. Are there evils which men are ashamed to commit before the sun? Faint image of its Maker! Do you shun the face of day? And will you not regard God who *is light, and in whom is no darkness at all*?—Sinners, be entreated, while in the land of the living, to *acquaint yourselves*

now with God, and be at peace with him ; that good may come unto you. Behold his glory in the Heavens above and in the earth beneath. Behold it especially, in the face of his son Jesus Christ. Out of him God is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity ; but in him he can be reconciled to you ; and while his justice is satisfied, his mercy be extended to the guilty and miserable. Betake yourselves without delay to this blessed door of hope opened unto you in the everlasting gospel.

To conclude, How far do those of you, my brethren, who have devoted yourselves to God, come short of what you ought to be ! What ground of shame, that you are so much affected with the sentiments of men, and so little with the judgment of God ! How cold in your affections ! How backward to your duty ! Be exhorted to double your diligence. Cultivate an impression of the divine presence, as the best preservative against temptation, the surest support under affliction, and the strongest motive to duty. Be encouraged by the promises of God, by what he hath done for his people from the beginning, and by the glorious reward in prospect, to persevere amidst all the difficulties to which you are exposed. The grace of God is sufficient for you. Jesus Christ will make you more than conquerors. How glorious the time, when *the*

*Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God; when the dead in Christ shall rise first, and those which are alive shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then innumerable believers, like Enoch, shall ascend to be ever with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.**

* 1 Theff. iv. 16. 17. 18.

S E R M O N III.

C H A R A C T E R O F N O A H.

GENESIS IX. 20. 21.

*And NOAH began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard.
And he drank of the wine and was drunken, and he was uncovered
within his tent.*

THE choice of these words would seem singular, were it not in prosecution of a plan to delineate certain characters in the scriptures. Those ancient worthies Abel and Enoch, have already passed in review; and the next presented to our particular attention is NOAH, the venerable father of that race of men which re-peopled the earth after the flood. The exceptionable part of his character is not chosen, because it is agreeable to dwell on the failings of men, but because, if rightly improved, it will afford an instructive lesson. While the virtues of others call for our imitation, their failings serve to warn us of danger. Had we fixed on the description of his general character, we would have

been led to the same truths which were suggested by the character of Enoch; for both these persons have this excellent testimony, that they *walked with God*.—It is not my purpose to attend to the history of the flood, or to the prophecy of Noah concerning his sons which follows the passage now read, farther than they may tend to illustration.

NOAH, the son of Lamech, and the tenth person in a direct line from Adam, lived at a time when the wickedness of men was great and general on the earth. Amidst this almost universal corruption, he adhered to the worship of the true God, and exhibited an example of piety and virtue. He is called by the Apostle Peter, *a preacher of righteousness*.* He, no doubt, in words, warned men of the judgments which their sins would bring upon them; as well as by the building of the ark, in which he was a long time employed; and which was a constant, and ought to have been an affecting lesson on this head, *By faith, says the Apostle, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*† This righteous person, having found favor in the eyes of the Lord, was preserved with his family, together with such animals

* 2 Pet. ii. 5. † Heb. xi. 7.

as he was directed to take into the ark ; while all the rest of mankind, and every living creature were destroyed by the flood.

AFTER the waters had subsided, and Noah had come out of the ark, we find an evidence of his piety. He built an altar and offered sacrifice, with which God was pleased ; who, besides several other instances of his kindness, promised, that all flesh should no more be destroyed with water ; but that *while the earth remained, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night should not cease.** As a token of this covenant to all generations, God set his bow in the cloud.

THE flood had not so destroyed the roots or seeds of trees, plants and other vegetables but that when the earth was dried, and felt the genial influence of the sun, they again sprang up. The black and dismal waste was succeeded by verdant spots, until the hills and valleys gradually smiled on every side. Noah, invited by pleasure, as well as led by necessity and duty, betook himself to the cultivation of the ground. He bestowed a fostering care on the rising plants, removed them to a more favorable situation, and cherished the growth of such as were most serviceable to the support and comfort of life. *He began, says the sacred histo-*

* Gen. viii. 22.

rian, *to be an husbandman* ; by which we are not to understand, that he had not been one before, the word *begin* being often applied in scripture to him who continues, or repeats an action begun formerly. He resumed that occupation in which he had been employed previous to the flood, and was interrupted only during the time of preparing the ark. Being a good man, he did not lead an idle or inactive life, but contributed his share to the welfare of society. In ancient days nothing was esteemed more honorable, and more worthy of attention than the art of agriculture. Our first parents were placed in a garden in order to *dress* it. Noah, the father of the new world, cultivated a plantation, and the examples of the greatest men, and the encomiums of the finest writers in every age, might be added in favor of this employment.

AMONG other improvements, Noah planted a vineyard ; and was probably the first person who pressed the juice from the grape so as to make wine. Here, we would willingly stop, were it consistent with truth and duty ; but Moses, who was a faithful historian, informs us, that Noah *drank of the wine and was drunken*. In tasting the fruit of his labours he went to such excess, that he became intoxicated, as it would seem, to a shameful degree. This is the extraordinary account given of a preacher and a prophet, of one who walked

with God, and received from him repeated tokens of his special favor. Instead of mocking, like wicked Ham, at the situation of our father, let us, like his dutiful children, Shem and Japhet, cover his failings as far as we can. When persons have a due sense of themselves, it will soften their rigour towards others. They will be disposed to pity and forbear, rather than to censure and condemn. Especially will the sins of the professors of religion excite sorrow and fear in their hearts; sorrow for the dishonor done to God, and fear lest they also be tempted. They will not rejoice like the profane, but mourn the transgression, and resolve to put a double guard on themselves. Let us then, if we cannot totally excuse Noah, ingenuously confess and lament his crime, and improve it to good purposes. Interpreters have offered several excuses for his conduct.

FIRST, It has been said, that he might have been unacquainted with the nature and strength of the liquor; that though the world was now more than one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years old, yet wine had never been made before; or that this was, at least to him, the first experiment. It is certain, that this is the earliest account which is come down to us; and if this were really the first time wine was made, or the first time ever Noah had any experience of its nature,

the excuse may be admitted. We can easily conceive how one, who had never tasted any thing of this kind, never felt the effect of it on himself, or seen it in another, might be betrayed and overcome. We know that children become intoxicated in this way, and we do not call them drunkards; yea, we hold them, in the first instance, innocent; especially, if they were not forewarned. A person seems no more guilty in this case, than he who unwarily chews a poisonous herb, or drinks a deadly potion. It is to be observed also, that Noah stands charged only once; and, if we attend to the scope of the historian, his great design is not so much to inform us of the drunkenness, as of the occasion on which the Canaanites were cursed. This excuse will receive additional force, if we can believe the Jewish tradition, that the vine which Noah planted was not of ordinary growth, but had been carried down the river out of paradise and found by him. Though, indeed, there be a similarity between Adam and Noah, the one having transgressed by eating, and the other by drinking the fruit of a tree, and the shame of both discovered, yet we cannot certainly infer, that the *tree of knowledge of good and evil* was a vine; that it was of this kind which Noah found and planted; and that it had a peculiar quality with which he was entirely unacquainted. This is rather inventing an excuse, and one too which has little probability.

AGAIN, It has been said, that he was the more easily overcome by reason of his age and infirmities. We know that he came out of the ark in the six hundred and first year of his age, and that he died when he was nine hundred and fifty years old ; but, at what particular time this affair happened, cannot be known ; probably a considerable number of years after the flood. If he were now old, and the vigour of his nature had greatly declined, a small quantity of wine would prove injurious to him ; especially, if we consider him as wholly unaccustomed to it. Add too, that he might be allured by the refreshment and spirits which it would at first impart. His infirmities might encourage the draught, and finding them alleviated, he might be led to repeat it to a measure, which his strength could by no means bear. It is found by experience, that in the decay and weakness of old age, intoxication is more easily produced, than when the body is in its prime.

AGAIN, It has been said, that he might have been led to commit excess through the grief and melancholy of his mind. He had had long experience of the wickedness of the old world ; he had seen them irreclaimable, and at last destroyed by the just judgment of God ; he was left almost solitary on the earth ; and gloomy reflections would naturally arise in his mind.

In this situation he might have sought to bury his cares in wine, and was carried to an unjustifiable length.

BUT though the temptation, in this respect, might have been strong, yet it does not acquit him of guilt. He sought consolation from a wrong source. To misfortunes and depression of mind, is intemperance in men frequently to be ascribed. Finding a temporary relief from their miseries, or an elation of spirit, they repeat the draught, until it becomes almost necessary to their happiness. At the same time, such are to be condemned, who, thus fleeing from their sorrows, plunge themselves into still greater, and waste the flame of life by producing an immoderate and unnatural heat. Infinitely better the conduct of those who engage their attention by some useful business; and above all, those who seek a refuge in the comforts which religion affords!

THERE is another light in which this conduct of Noah has been set, and equally inexcusable; and that is, that it happened at a feast made for his sons; that on the vintage, he assembled them in order to rejoice; and then, after the example of other patriarchs, to bless them. This is placing the temptation to the account of joy and not of sorrow. From both these causes indeed excess often arises, and the heart of man needs to

be guarded. The remembrance of the dangers through which they had passed during the flood ; the renewal of the face of the earth ; the new privileges conferred by Providence ; and a plentiful harvest may be supposed to have filled them with gladness, and made the heart of the ancient patriarch overflow with joy. His intemperance is still inexcusable. Though men are found to plead feasts and other joyous occasions as warranting their excesses, yet they are guilty before God. It can never be lawful to debase our nature and violate the divine command. Innocence ought ever to unite with cheerfulness, and moderation to be observed in all things.

ONCE MORE, It has been said, that there is not all the reason, which some have imagined, to conclude that Noah was drunk to an excessive degree. It has been alledged, that the same word used here, occurs in the place where it is said, that Joseph's brethren *drank and were merry with him ;** and yet we cannot think, that they indulged themselves to excess in the presence of him whom they supposed to be no other than the Governor of Egypt. This interpretation is strengthened by the consideration, that the design of Moses, as has been already observed, is not professedly to accuse Noah of intemperance, but to relate the occasion on

* Gen. xliii. 34.

which the Canaanites were cursed.—If this opinion be admitted, then we are to think, that though he drank freely, and afterwards slept, yet he was not guilty of any shameful excess, and his sobriety is still unimpeached. Fatigued with labour, and worn with the infirmities of age, he might have retired from the heat of the day, and having taken a plentiful refreshment, laid him down to rest in his tent; where mantled with some of the vines he had planted, and fanned by the breeze, exhausted nature sought to recruit itself by sleep. How profane the foot that intrudes on his retirement, or disturbs his repose!

THESE things have been mentioned by way of excusing the patriarch, or alleviating the crime imputed to him. The history is so short, that they must rest chiefly on conjecture. Taking the words in their strictest sense, they contain an imputation of guilt, and have been generally so understood, whatever palliations have been invented.—This reflection strikes us here; that the excuses offered for him show how careful a saint ought to be in his walk, and how lamentable when he falls into gross sin! The character before us was such, that we are surprized to find so great a stain, and afraid lest it be perverted by many to the disadvantage of religion, and to their own ruin.

LET us now see what lessons this part of sacred history teaches us.

FIRST, We learn, that a man's character is not to be determined by a single act, but by the tenor of his life. View the general conduct of Noah before and after the flood, and you find it pious. He was a subject of faith in the Redeemer, and devoted to his service. He was a *perfect* man; not indeed wholly without sin, for there is no such perfection on earth; but he paid a sincere and universal obedience to the commands of God. His heart was sanctified by grace, and this appeared in holy actions. The offence of which he was guilty is a spot on his character, but does not deface it. The habitual temper and practice constitutes a man either righteous or wicked.

It is necessary, however, to remark the danger of comparing ourselves with others; or, of what is called balancing our virtues against our vices; for there is no perfect standard but the law of God, and one failure will as effectually condemn a man, as ten thousand. To entitle us therefore, to acceptance with God, we must be united to Christ, who hath fulfilled this law for his people, and purchased grace to enable them to obey it. This being the case, and their lives being generally conformed to the will of God, their failings

do not prove them ungodly. We may not hastily condemn a man, because in one instance he was blameable, when his conversation, on the whole, is known to be as becometh the gospel.

SECONDLY, The conduct of Noah should be a caution and warning to us. This is one reason why the falls of the saints are recorded. They point to danger, and should put us on our guard. Their language is, *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.** We inherit the same depravity of nature, and may be left to fall into the same, or even greater faults. Have we arrived at high degrees of grace? Noah was an eminent saint. Have we often withstood the power of temptation? Noah was incorrupted in the old world with temptations daily before him. He notwithstanding fell, and you may fall likewise. He fell in time of security. After opposing great temptations, he yielded to a small one. Let us therefore not be confident, but watch and pray. Our enemies are many and powerful. We ought not, on the one hand, to despise them; nor, on the other, to despair of overcoming them, through the grace of the Redeemer.

NEED I say any thing by way of caution as to the particular sin of drunkenness? Need I paint it in its

* 1 Cor. x. 12.

true and odious colours? The history of Noah preaches loudly to us on this head. It addresses us in the words of Solomon, *Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.** Drunkenness is a sin which leads to the commission of many others; for it leaves the person defenceless and open to temptation. It is punished even in this world; for it brings with it disgrace and ruin. It debases the soul, destroys the body, and unless repentance prevent, damns both for ever. What should deter men from all approaches to this sin is, that it is seldom known to be forsaken; and that, when persons acquire the habit in younger life, small hopes remain that they will ever become useful and respectable.—We ought to be particularly cautious of all occasions, where the sole purpose is eating and drinking; or, as some have not improperly called it, *feeding*. Here, excesses are committed and habits gain strength. To those who give themselves up to such things, these words of the Apostle are applicable: *Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly: And whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.†* Let us be afraid of entering into the way of temptation. Let us abstain from all appearance of evil.

F

* Prov. xxiii. 31. 32.

† Phil. iii. 19.

THIRDLY, It may be necessary, on this subject, to warn those who turn the failings of good men to a wrong purpose; even to the excusing of themselves in sin: Those, who, because others have been guilty, take peace to themselves when they commit the same things. This is a bad sign. Though the sins of believers should keep us from despairing of the mercy of God, if we repent; yet they afford us no ground of hope, if we continue in sin. How can their faults excuse ours? We are to be followers of such persons so far as they are of God. They are not our pattern in all things, because they are not perfect.

How great the deceitfulness of the human heart! On the one hand, from the holy exercises of believers, sinners reason, that these are too high to be expected by them; that they can be saved by a lower degree of grace: And, on the other hand, from their failings, they reason, that themselves are excusable in the same or greater. On this false and dangerous ground do they strive to maintain their peace. But know it, O sinners, that *the wages of sin is death*; that *except ye repent, ye shall perish*; and that it is written, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*† Look not for salvation in any other way than that which God hath appointed, through the obedience and death of his

† Gal. iii. 10.

own Son. A perfect righteousness is provided, on the account of which you can be justified; and in which, if interested, you shall never fall into condemnation. This will not free you from a personal obedience. Grace is likewise provided to sanctify the heart. When persons are brought to embrace this salvation offered in the gospel, they are so far from allowing themselves in sin, or seeking to extenuate it, that it is their greatest burden, and the cause of their deepest sorrow and humiliation.

UPON the whole, We see from this subject, how carefully and tenderly the professors of religion ought to walk. Their falls bring a reproach upon it, and do great disservice to its interests.—If you have then any regard to the glory of God, to your own peace, and to the welfare of your fellow-men, endeavour to set a holy example; to comply with this direction of our blessed Lord; *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.**

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy: To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.†

* Matt. v. 26.

† Jude 24. 25.

S E R M O N IV.

CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM.

GENESIS XXIV. I.

And ABRAHAM was old, and well stricken in age; and the LORD had blessed ABRAHAM in all things.

IN delineating the characters of the ancient patriarchs, ABRAHAM demands peculiar attention. He is the boast of the Jewish nation, celebrated by heathen writers, frequently and most honorably mentioned in the New Testament. He is stiled *the friend of God*, and *the father of all them that believe*. He is exhibited to all ages, as a pattern of unshaken faith in the promises, and of cheerful obedience to the will of God.

THE sacred historian, after a concise account of the transactions and characters of the preceding ages, is very minute, in describing the character of this patriarch, and relating the circumstances of his life. This was necessary, as he was the great stock of that people who were to be separated from all others as a *chosen*

*generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, and from whom it was designed that the Messiah should spring. In the first revelation of a Saviour, it was declared, that he should be the seed of the woman ;** but to Abraham, it was promised, that particularly in *his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed.†* Accordingly God separated him and his posterity in Isaac for that very purpose.

IN the characters which we have already considered, the history afforded so few hints, as to straiten the execution ; but here the difficulty is, what to choose, and how to arrange to the best advantage. From confinement in narrow and obscure paths, we are got into an open and level country ; and the danger now is, of missing the most agreeable road, and the finest prospects with which we are surrounded. As we cannot turn aside to every thing, we must put a restraint upon ourselves. Let it be remembered, that it is the character of Abraham we are in quest of, and his history, only so far as this illustrates the other. I shall consider his character as drawn in the sacred writings, under these two general heads ; FIRST, as a *man* ; and SECONDLY, as a *saint*.

I. As a man. Abraham was the son of Terah, in the line of Shem, from whom he was distant nine

* Gen. iii. 15.

† Gen. xxii. 18.

degrees. His first residence was in the city of Ur, of Chaldea. From this he removed, by the express order of God, into the land of Canaan; where he continued in rather an unsettled state until his death. In considering him as a man, it will be proper to attend to his external circumstances in the world, or the temporal blessings which he enjoyed; and to the qualities of his mind.

WITH respect to the temporal blessings which he enjoyed, they were many and great. *The Lord blessed him in ALL THINGS.* Though he was a sojourner, rather than a proprietor in the land of Canaan, yet he was assured, that his posterity should actually possess it; and he himself so far enjoyed it, as to become rich and mighty. The manner of living in those days, when wealth consisted chiefly in flocks and herds, rendered a fixed habitation less necessary. We are informed that *Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold*; that he and his nephew Lot, who came with him from Chaldea, so increased in substance, *that they could not dwell together.** For the convenience of feeding their large flocks and to avoid strife between their herdsmen, they were obliged to separate, each to different parts of the country.—When Eliezer, Abraham's steward, was sent to treat for a wife for Isaac, he was attended with no inconsiderable retinue;

* Gen. xiii. 2—6.

nor was he forgetful to display the riches of his master in the family where he solicited. *The Lord*, said he, *hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great; and he hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and men-servants and maid-servants, and camels and asses. And Sarah, my master's wife bare a son to my master, when she was old, and unto him hath he given all that he hath.*†

WE also learn from the conduct of the neighbouring princes towards him, the power which Abraham had, and the great esteem in which he was held. The children of Heth, when he was in treaty with them about a burying-place, addressed him in the most respectful terms, calling him *a mighty prince*. Abimelech, king of Gerar, earnestly courted his favor, and entered into a strict alliance with him. Such was the rank and influence which Abraham had, from the greatness of his possessions, and the number of his domestics, that his cotemporaries deemed him a dangerous enemy, and a powerful friend.

AMONG his temporal blessings we must reckon likewise, a numerous offspring. Though it was late in life before he had an heir, and we may suppose, that this circumstance was an abatement of his happi-

† Gen. xxiv. 35. 36.

ness, yet in this, at length, he was favored. Of his son Isaac sprang the Jews; of his son Ishmael the Arabians: Besides those born of Keturah, after the death of Sarah, and who were the heads of tribes. Thus, agreeably to the divine promise, was he the *father of many nations; his seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore.** On this account, his name was changed by divine order, from *Abram*, which signifies *an elevated father*, to *Abraham*, which signifies *the father of a great multitude*; and the name of his wife from *Sarai* to *Sarah*, which signifies *princess*.

It may be observed farther, that Abraham enjoyed length of days. Though he attained not to the years of his fathers, nor to those of his son Isaac, being only one hundred and seventy-five years old when he died; yet considering that human life was now greatly shortened, he is reckoned to have been *old and well stricken in age*. It was one of the promises to him, that he should be *buried in a good old age*; and we are expressly informed, that he did die *in a good old age, an old man and full of years.†* Though the number of his years was not as great as that of some others, yet it is probable, that he retained the exercise of his faculties longer, and was useful and respectable to the last.

* Gen. xxii. 17.

† Gen. xxv. 8.

THIS patriarch then, was blessed in all that this world can afford. He had great possessions; and these went not into the hands of strangers, but descended to his posterity. He enjoyed a healthy old age, had the prospect of his name being perpetuated to all ages, and successive generations of men boasting that Abraham was their father.

BUT, merely for these things, he is not the object of admiration and praise. Wealth is wholly external to the man, and can make him neither virtuous nor wise; and if we except the promise to Abraham, that the Messiah should descend from him, and consider him only as a father, his character does not stand higher than others. Had he had nothing else to recommend him; though his riches had been unbounded, and though kings had bowed down at his feet, it would be worse than mispending time to extol him. The temporal bounties of Providence, indeed, are to be thankfully received and rightly improved; but we know that they are often bestowed on worthless and wicked men, and abused by them to their own ruin. To the pride of such we offer no incense. The real character is the same, whether the man is clad in an humble garb, or glitters in an embroidered coat; whether he hardly earns a daily subsistence, or rolls in the greatest affluence.—What are the qualities of his

mind?—Abraham, we know, as far as we have light from scripture, was *gentle, hospitable, courageous, disinterested and generous.*

HIS *gentleness*, when a contention had arisen between his herdmen and those of Lot, was very remarkable and exemplary. Servants who often, by their quarrels and tales, cause misunderstanding between families, had no influence in this case. The mind of Abraham was too noble to take part in their debates, too mild and condescending to insist upon what was even due to his age and character. *And Abram said unto Lot, let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen ; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee ? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me : If thou wilt take the left hand, then will I go to the right ; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.†* How amiable was his conduct, and how deserving of imitation !

AN instance of his *hospitality*, we find in his entertaining three angels under the appearance of men, who came to his tent, when he dwelt on the plains of Mamre. He ran to meet them, pressed them to come in, and provided for their comfort and refreshment. He bestowed, with a liberal hand, and with an engaging

† Gen. xiii. 8. 9.

behaviour, of the good things which he enjoyed. He thought himself obliged, when his guests partook with him.—To this transaction the Apostle refers, when he says, *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers ; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.**

AN instance of his *courage*, we find in his victory over the five kings, who came against Sodom and Gomorrah, and having plundered them, carried away, among other prisoners, Lot, his brother's son. When Abraham received the intelligence, he instantly armed his *trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen* ; and with his confederates, pursued the enemy. After a long and rapid march, he overtook them ; divided his forces into several parties ; and falling upon them in the night, recovered the prisoners and all the spoil. It is true, that Abraham was not a man of war ; that he was rather the contemplative and philosophic man ; engaged, as will afterward appear, in the *good fight of faith* ; but this instance, shows him to have possessed a bold and enterprising mind, capable of planning and executing great and difficult undertakings.

AN instance of his *disinterestedness and generosity* occurs in this very transaction. The king of Sodom, who came out with others to meet and congratulate

* Heb. xiii 4.

him on his return, wished him to keep the goods he had retaken and deliver up only the prisoners. Hear his princely reply; *I have lift up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich.** He was of too independent a spirit to be laid under any particular obligation; too generous to take advantage of the calamities of war; and too disinterested to prefer his private emolument to the public good. He fought not for dominion or fame, but against the unrighteous encroachments of oppression and rapine.

NEED I mention again, as an evidence of his openness and boldness, his reproof of king Abimelech, *because of a well of water, which his servants had violently taken away?* Or, show his independent conduct in the purchase of the field and cave in Machpelah for a burying place, when he refused to accept them as a gift, but directly paid the price which Ephron had named, and weighed him *four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant?* In these instances, he supported, not only the character of a bold and independent mind, but acted with great circumspection and

* Gen. xiv. 22. 23.

prudence ; like one who understood human nature, and wished to prevent any future litigation.

BUT though we have reason to believe, that the qualities of his mind were excellent ; that he united the great with the amiable, yet it was not on this account, that he was so distinguished. Many extraordinary qualities are found in wicked men. Whatever might be said of Abraham's gentleness, hospitality, courage, disinterestedness and generosity, it may be alledged, that he is eclipsed by the superior lustre of others. In estimating his character, however, due allowance must be made for the age in which he lived, and the theatre on which he acted. We find in him evidences of that greatness, which, had opportunity been afforded, would have entitled him to a place among the wisest sages, and the greatest conquerors in the world. Happily, he has a better name, and a juster title to praise. It is time to introduce him to your view in his proper light ; to consider him,

II. As a saint. Here he shone with distinguished and unrivalled lustre. His name is come down in the church loaded with honors, and will continue to astonish and teach while sun and moon endure. There are so many testimonies in his favor, so many evidences of his piety, that we know not where to begin.

Is it an evidence of piety to enjoy repeated favors and manifestations from God? Abraham was used to commune with him, to receive intimations of his will by heavenly messengers, who frequently appeared to the pious in those days. When the Lord was about to destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, he revealed the design to Abraham, and heard his humble and earnest intercession. *Shall I hide, said the Lord, from Abraham, that thing which I do?** Can any words convey an idea of more full and intimate communion? The Lord condescended also to enter into covenant with him; promised that his seed should be innumerable; and particularly, that the Messiah should descend from him. *Fear not Abram; I am thy shield and exceeding great reward.†*

Is it an evidence of piety to pay constant attention to the worship of God? Abraham, in whatever place he abode, erected an altar; in the plain of Moreh; on a mountain between Bethel and Hai; in the plain of Mamre; and in Beer-sheba he planted a grove, and *called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.* In the midst of idolaters he adhered to the worship of the living and true God, serving him according to his appointment, and yielding him the homage of an upright heart. To what place did he remove, and not

* Gen. xviii. 17.

† Gen. xv. 1.

consecrate it to Almighty God, imploring his blessing and direction?

Is it an evidence of piety to be tenderly solicitous for the best welfare of children and those entrusted to our care? Hear the testimony of God concerning Abraham; *I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment.** How affectionately did he intercede for Ishmael! *O that Ishmael might live before thee!* How careful was he lest Isaac should connect himself in marriage with one of the Canaanites! In this case he took an oath from Eliezer, and sent him *to his own country and to his own kindred*, to bring his son a wife from thence. Beside the care necessary in this respect as to the promised seed, he well knew how dangerous would be a connection with those who served false Gods; and that this would prove, at least a snare, if not the destruction of his son. In this we see the care of a pious parent.

FARTHER, How immoveable was his faith in the divine promises! For this he is peculiarly celebrated. This, indeed, was the great principle of his actions. This the victory over every difficulty and discouragement. The trials of his faith were many and great;

* Gen. xviii. 19.

and it proved superior to all. Among his trials we need take notice only of those mentioned by the Apostle. *By faith, says he, Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and went out not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country.* Against hope, he believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; and being not weak in faith he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform.† By faith Abram when he was tried, offered up Isaac: And he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.‡* This last trial is justly reckoned the greatest of all, and is well worthy of a particular consideration in the life of the patriarch; but to which we cannot at present attend. For this act of obedience he received the approbation of God, and stands renowned to all ages. Others had faith, but the faith of Abraham was singularly great. It was not inactive, but exercised by encountering the most pressing difficulties. As the strength of a man is discovered by the weight which he is able to raise, or the purity of gold

* Heb. xi. 8. 9. † Rom. iv. 18.—21. ‡ Heb. xi. 17.

by its passing through the fire, so did the power and genuineness of Abraham's faith appear by the number and greatness of the trials which it endured.

AFTER this cursory view of his character, may it not be said that he was a hero? A conqueror? What are the most rapid and extensive conquests among men, compared with the spiritual victories of Abraham? What the sublimest triumph ever obtained by mortals compared with the triumph of his faith? His glory and happiness as far exceed any thing human, as celestial are above earthly things; and as the approbation of God transcends the applauses of men. To Abraham, however, we must ascribe no merit. The grace of God is entitled to the praise. *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.** The righteousness of the Redeemer was the only ground of his justification before God, and faith in this the living and powerful principle of all his obedience.

IN drawing the character of Abraham, the faults imputed to him are not to be concealed. It is proper to view him in every light and attitude.

HE has been blamed for dissimulation in pretending that Sarah his wife, was only his sister; two instances

* Rom. iv. 3.

of which are recorded: One with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and another with Abimelech king of Gerar. The best apology for this conduct is what Abraham himself offered. *Indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother.** This being the case, he only concealed the circumstance of her being also his wife. Some interpreters have endeavored to vindicate him on this ground; some have acknowledged him to have been very guilty; while infidels with a foolish sneer have attempted to turn the whole into derision. Perhaps, it is best to allow that in this instance, he departed from his usual faith in the divine care and protection.

It has been objected against him, that he set an example of polygamy, by taking Hagar to wife in the life time of Sarah; and again, he has been accused of inhumanity in turning her and her son from his house into the wilderness, and that too without a provision for their subsistence.—These objections, if fairly examined, would be found rather plausible than solid. We cannot judge well of any matter until we consider every circumstance. Instead of discussing these things at large, suffice it now to offer two remarks. The one is, that we must not expect to find the characters recorded in scripture, perfect. They are drawn such as

* Gen. xx 12.

68 CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM.

they were. Their excellencies are proposed for our imitation, and their faults for our warning. The other remark is, that this very circumstance is an argument in favor of the truth of the scripture. Moses is a faithful historian, because he relates the failings as well as the virtues of men; even of the most eminent men of his own nation.—Admitting then that Abraham stands charged with some blemishes, he was, notwithstanding a great and excellent character. Had he had no faults, he would have been more than man; and yet the faults he had, may be said to be like the spots in the sun, not discernible on account of the dazzling flame.

SUFFER me now to turn your attention to a few short reflections on the whole.

FIRST, How sovereign is the grace of God! To this is to be ascribed his choice of Abraham rather than of another. Early did God give intimations of his distinguishing love. Cain the first-born was wicked, and Abel righteous. Shem, the second son of Noah was preferred; and now Abraham before the other sons of Terah. *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?** Let us own and adore the

* Rom. ix. 21.

sovereignty of God. He chooses whom he will, and bestows his gifts and graces in various degrees, according to his own good pleasure. Whatever we are, or hope to be, is all derived from him.

SECONDLY, How unsettled is the state of believers in this world! Like Abraham they sojourn in a strange land, and like him *they desire a better country, that is an heavenly. God hath prepared for them a city*, at which they shall in due time arrive, and find all those things realized which faith now but dimly sees. This is an argument, why they should not be anxious as to the things of this world, but contemplate their portion beyond the grave.

THIRDLY, How many and how necessary are trials here to the children of God! All must expect to meet with them; not all indeed with so great as Abraham did, for the Lord will not suffer his people to be tempted above that which they are able to bear. Trials are necessary to teach them their dependence on God; to exercise their graces; and to quicken their desires after that happiness which is reserved for them. Let it not therefore, seem as though some strange thing had befallen them, but improve their afflictions of whatever kind, to the glory of God.

FOURTHLY, How amiable and desirable is religion! This gives a lustre to human nature, and prepares it for the service and enjoyment of God. Labour then for this, my brethren, above all things. Seek an interest in the merits of the Saviour, and obey his commandments. This is your glory and your happiness. Remember that there is no salvation in any other but Christ; and that unless united to him, whatever are your outward circumstances in this world, and whatever agreeable qualities of mind you possess, you must be eternally miserable hereafter. While time and opportunities last, O see that you make your peace with God.

To conclude, Let those who are partakers of the same precious faith with Abraham, pray for its increase. It is the great principle of your spiritual life. It is your shield against all dangers. It is *the victory that overcometh the world*. The faithfulness of God to his people in former times should encourage you to trust in him. *Be not slothful; but be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**—Your pilgrimage will soon be at an end, and you will be permitted to come home. A few more changes; a few more difficulties and trials; and all will disappear forever. Death will bring you the news of deliverance, and angels carry you *into Abraham's bosom*.

* Heb. vi. 12.

S E R M O N V.

ABRAHAM OFFERING UP ISAAC.

 GENESIS XXII. 12.

And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him : for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy SON, thine ONLY son from me.

IN a former discourse, the character of Abraham was delineated under these two general heads ; as a man, and as a saint. Though as a man, the qualities of his mind appear to have been extraordinary, yet it was said, that peculiarly as a saint, he shone with distinguished and unrivalled lustre. Among the evidences of his piety, and indeed as being the great principle of all his conduct, was mentioned his unshaken faith in the divine promises, amidst trials which were many and great. The last and most signal trial of his faith in offering up his son Isaac, in obedience to God, was then said to be worthy of a particular consideration.

THIS is the subject now before us ; a subject not chosen for a topic of mere declamation, but as being a remarkable dispensation in the life of the patriarch, and full of important instruction.

You are not to expect from me a pathetic description of the circumstances of this transaction. Though something of this kind might be naturally expected where there is such ample scope, yet were it attempted I must fall short of what others have done, and thus occasion a disappointment. To aim solely at touching the passions, is as useless as it is improper. Besides we would not do justice to the character of Abraham, did we consider him as overwhelmed with distress, and pouring forth a flood of tears ; for whatever may be our feelings when we place ourselves in his situation, he was enabled by faith speedily and cheerfully to obey the command. Let us FIRST, attend to the history. SECONDLY, consider some difficulties and objections which seem to occur. And, THIRDLY, make such improvement as the subject directs.

I. THE history is simply this. After Abraham had lived for a length of time in a fixed habitation, and enjoyed greater tranquillity than in the former part of his life, God was pleased to *try* or *prove* him, (for this is the true meaning of the word translated

tempt,) in an extraordinary manner; not that God needed to be satisfied as to the sincerity of Abraham, but that he might exercise his grace, and exhibit him as a pattern to all ages. He commanded him to take his only son Isaac and offer him for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains of Moriah. In performing this he must necessarily destroy his son with his own hands, cut him to pieces, and consume him to ashes. Abraham, without expostulation and without delay, made the necessary provision for the sacrifice, and with Isaac and some servants, set out on the journey. On the third day, having come in sight of the appointed place, he ordered the servants to remain behind, saying, that he and his son would proceed on to worship, and come again to them. Then, laying the wood prepared for the sacrifice upon his son, and taking the fire and a knife in his hand, they went both together. As they went on, Isaac, knowing that it was the professed intention of his father to worship, and seeing also the fire and the wood, but no victim provided, very naturally asked his father where one would be found. He received for answer, *My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.** In this, as well as in his saying, that they would return to those whom they had left, Abraham spoke prophetically.

* Verse. 8.

It was so that God did provide, and that they both returned, though when he uttered the words, he might not have understood, or had any clear view how they would be accomplished. It appears from the words of the Apostle, that Abraham expected God would restore Isaac from the ashes of the sacrifice. *Accounting*, says he, *that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.* † He believed that the same power which gave him a son in a miraculous manner, could also raise him from death. Accordingly the Apostle adds, *from whence also he received him in a figure*; which some interpret to mean, that the birth of Isaac, contrary to the course of nature, was a *figure* of his resurrection; or that Abraham thus reasoned concerning it, and confided in the almighty power of God.

WHEN they came to the place of sacrifice, Abraham still resolute on executing the command, *built an altar there, and laid the wood in order; and bound Isaac his son, and laid him upon the altar upon the wood.* ‡ He took the knife, and was just about to give the fatal blow, when, at this critical moment, an angel interposed and stayed his hand. Calling to him from heaven, he commanded him to proceed no farther, for that he had given full evidence of his obedience. The eyes of Abraham were directed to a ram, which the

† Heb. xi. 19.

‡ Verse 9.

providence of God had ordered to be entangled there in a thicket, and designed as a substitute for Isaac. This he took and offered up for a burnt-offering. In memory of this important transaction, he called the name of the place Jehovah-Jireh, in allusion to what he had before said, that *God would provide himself a lamb*. On occasion of this name, the historian makes a judicious and pious reflection; but the meaning of which is not easily discovered from our translation. The words might be more clearly rendered thus: *In the mount the Lord will be seen*, or, *In the mount the Lord will provide*; that is, in time of great difficulty or necessity, the Lord will afford relief. The case of Abraham was an instance of what is found to be a truth at this day, that *God is a very present help in trouble*.

WHAT has been related is, in few words and without colouring, the history of Abraham offering up his son Isaac, for which example of heroic faith and obedience, he was highly approved of God, and, is renowned in the church. No instance exactly parallel is to be found in history, either sacred or profane.

To see properly the greatness of the trial, and the strength of that faith which overcame, we must consider that Isaac was the only son Abraham had by Sarah,

or ever expected; that he was given by the promise of God in an extraordinary manner; and as one in whose line the Messiah was to descend. A less faith than Abraham's would have staggered at the apparent contradiction between the former promise and the present command. It would have started a difficulty as to reconciling the descent of a numerous offspring and the Messiah himself from Isaac, and the express order to take away his life. Of this the Apostle makes particular mention: *He that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son: Of whom it was said, that in Isaac, shall thy seed be called.**

Not to dwell on the tender love which he bore to a son endeared by so many circumstances, there were other considerations which greatly aggravated the trial. What must his own family have thought of him, what the nations around, when they heard that Abraham had coolly and deliberately killed his own son? After having supported for many years, the character of a kind husband, a merciful master and a tender parent; after being long and justly revered by his neighbouring princes for the great and amiable qualities of his mind, by this single act, he was in danger of being reprobated as an inhuman monster. Reputation is as dear as life to every good man, but he was called to do what was

* Heb. xi. 17. 18.

likely to stab it forever. This reputation was still dearer as being connected with the interests of religion. Abraham professed the worship of the true God in the midst of idolaters ; and the God whom he worshipped called him to do what they would esteem most cruel and horrid. How should he vindicate his profession and the honor of his God? What could he say in defence of that religion which required the violation of the laws of humanity, and all those tender ties which bind society together? These were reflections, which we may suppose, would occur to his mind, and called for every resolution to surmount. In short, the slightest consideration of the circumstances in which he received this command must convince us, that the trial was inexpressibly severe, and that nothing but the fullest assurance that it was from God, and the firmest confidence in his wisdom, power and goodness, could induce him to comply. I proceed,

II. To take notice of certain difficulties and objections. We find that Abraham did not slay his son, and yet the Apostle says, *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac,** as though he had actually done it.—It is a sufficient answer to say, that he did offer him in his will or intention, and this was accepted

* Heb. xi. 17.

78 ABRAHAM OFFERING UP ISAAC.

of God as much as though he had performed the very act.

WE find God first commanding him to offer up his son, and again, an angel forbidding it. Did not Abraham obey the angel and not God?—It is answered, that the command and the prohibition were both equally from God. Angels are the ministers of God, and act according to his order. He speaks by them, and they speak from him. Besides, the angel here was the angel of the covenant; the Messiah, as appears more clearly from the subsequent history, in which we are informed that he called out of heaven a second time, and said, *By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord.*†

THERE are some objections of a more serious nature than these, and which have been made by the enemies of revelation. Indeed, when the history is considered in all its parts, it appears so consistent, beautiful and instructive, that objections can arise only from a disposition to find fault; and to take notice of them, may seem almost unnecessary.

It has been said, that Abraham, who interceded so earnestly for the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomor-

† Verse 16.

rah, never expostulates with God, when he orders him to slay his own son, an innocent person, and a dutiful child. Is not this an evidence of uncommon inhumanity in the parent, or does it not render the history incredible?—In answer to this it may be observed, that with respect to Sodom and Gomorrah, there was a liberty given, and a propriety for the intercession, because God is represented as being undetermined as to their overthrow; but in the case before us, the command was most express and precise. Abraham was fully assured that it was from that God, who had frequently revealed himself to him; with whose manner of manifestation he was well acquainted; and whose direction he had always followed. Though the command then might appear strange, yet he ought not to have expostulated with God, who is infinitely wise and good, and can accomplish his purposes by ways utterly beyond the comprehension of mortals.

It is observable too, that the arguments proper for Abraham to have used against the measure were taken from him, by the very words in which the command was delivered. What could he have said, but, “He is *my* son,—my *only* son,—*Isaac*,—whom I *love*”—These being the first reflections which would start in the mind of the father, and remonstrate against the deed, they were wholly silenced by these words of God;

80 ABRAHAM OFFERING UP ISAAC.

*Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering.** So far is the want of expostulation on his part from being an argument against him, or the credibility of the history, that it shows his obedience to have been of the right kind, speedy and cheerful. Had it been dilatory and reluctant, his faith would have appeared proportionably weak and unsteady.

ANOTHER objection is, that the Lord of the universe can neither act himself, nor command any thing contrary to the eternal rules of reason; that therefore this command could not be from him; and that it is more likely to have been the suggestion of some evil spirit. Are not parents obliged to preserve the lives of their children? Did not the command contradict this law? How can it be reconciled to the justice and goodness of God? To this purpose the objection runs. In answer, it may be observed,

1. THAT we speak at random when we pretend to say what God can or cannot do. *As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.†*

2. THOUGH it be the duty of parents to preserve

* Verse 2.

† Isaiah lv. 9.

the lives of their children, yet there are cases, when without impeachment of parental affection, or violation of the divine law, they must deliver them to death; yea, order it to be inflicted upon them. Need I instance in the case of a judge or general, whose son has transgressed the law, or the military discipline? Shall we say then, that a parent is justifiable in this case, and that he is guilty, when the order comes from the supreme and almighty God? For observe,

3. THAT he who gives life has an undoubted right to take it away when, and in what manner he pleases. Had God therefore designed that Abraham should slay his son, we could not impeach his justice and goodness. Abraham knew that his son was given in an extraordinary manner, and might therefore be taken away in an extraordinary manner. He believed that God was wise, just and good in all he commanded; and though his dispensations appeared strange and mysterious, yet they would be unfolded in due time, in their consistence, propriety and beauty. But,

4. GOD never designed that this command should go into full execution. When the end was answered, he prevented it. So that upon the whole, this objection which has been urged by infidels, is founded upon this mistaken principle, that God governs him-

self by our notions of right and justice; or, that we are able to comprehend the propriety and equity of all his dealings with men. It is granted, that the case of Abraham was singular and strange, but in no part of the history is any thing contradictory to the perfections of the infinitely great and glorious God.

ANOTHER objection is, that the example of Abraham gave rise to, or at least countenanced that horrid practice of sacrificing human victims.—One would suppose that it would have had a direct contrary effect; to abolish them, if they then existed, or to prevent their introduction in time to come. Was it not published abroad, that Abraham, having an intention to sacrifice his only son, was expressly prohibited, and that God ordered and accepted a different victim? Is this countenancing and establishing the shedding of human blood? Is it not rather a declaration that with such sacrifices God is not well pleased? Even admitting that this conduct of Abraham gave rise to the practice which existed afterward, it was certainly the innocent occasion. The example set was not imitated, but abused.

I SHALL mention only one other difficulty or objection which occurs, and that is the submission of Isaac, who was of sufficient age and strength to have made

resistance. Josephus says, that he was at this time twenty-five years old, and many suppose him to have been above thirty. It is generally acknowledged that he might have successfully resisted his father, who was now old; and yet it appears that he quietly suffered himself to be bound, laid on the altar, and that he offered his throat to the knife.—All that is necessary to say on this is, that he gave an evidence that he was a partaker of the same precious faith with the father. He was a bright example of filial reverence, and of profound submission to the will of God.

HAVING now considered this transaction, solved the difficulties, and answered the principal objections, does not the character of Abraham appear in the most favorable light? His conduct towards his son instead of reflecting any dishonor, does it not throw a glorious lustre around him? Was it not his chief glory? Many were the trials of his faith, but here was its triumph. Here was a victory on mount Moriah, greater than that which he obtained over the five kings; yea, greater than all the victories recorded in the historic page.

PERHAPS it is as well to observe here as in another place, that the command of God to Abraham to offer up Isaac, is to be considered not only as a trial of his faith and obedience, but as conveying to him in

a figurative manner most important instruction concerning the Messiah. What views Abraham had cannot be precisely ascertained, but we have reason to believe, that God by this transaction displayed to him the way of salvation, by the substitution and sacrifice of his own son. *Your father Abraham*, said Christ to the Jews, *rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad.** Probably these words refer to what was represented on mount Moriah. To the same purpose also, may these words of the Apostle be interpreted; *From whence also he received him in a figure*; that is the deliverance of Isaac from death, and the substitution of another victim was figurative of the salvation of sinners by the atonement of Christ. But, whatever interpretation is put upon these words, it is certain that the whole affair was typical, and that Abraham so understood it. This being the case, it obviates every objection which has been, or can be mentioned. God never intended that Abraham should slay his son, but only to try him, and in the very trial, to exhibit to him in a most striking manner, the astonishing mystery of redemption. This is no doubt an important idea on this subject, and renders the whole affair at once, worthy of an infinitely perfect God. In this view, how strange, but at the same time, how wise and merciful does the dispensation appear! Whoever pro-

* John viii. 56.

perly considers it in every part, and views its ultimate end, must be affected, pleased and edified.

It not being the intention of these discourses to trace minutely the resemblance of certain persons and events to our Lord Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation through him, the resemblance will be mentioned only where it is obvious and remarkable. This is peculiarly the case in the subject under consideration.— Abraham cheerfully offered his only son. God, the Almighty Father *gave his only begotten son: He spared him not, but delivered him up.* Isaac quietly submitted to the stroke; emblematical of the readiness and patience with which Christ suffered. Isaac carried the wood for his sacrifice, and Christ bore his cross. Isaac was bound, and so was Christ. Isaac lay on the altar on Mount Moriah; on Calvary, a part of this very mount, did Christ afterward die. It was the third day on which Isaac was delivered from the sentence of death; it was on the third day that Christ arose. Isaac did not die, but Christ did; here the resemblance seems to fail, but only to render another part the more striking; for as a lamb was substituted for Isaac, so Christ was substituted for his people. He was the *Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* Every circumstance speaks clearly and forc-

86 ABRAHAM OFFERING UP ISAAC.

bly. We indeed see them so, because they have been fulfilled, and, no doubt, by Abraham and other saints even of that day, their meaning was understood. In no way could the satisfaction of Christ have been so well represented, as by this memorable and typical transaction.

THOUGH this subject would admit a very large and useful improvement, yet I shall confine myself to a few points expressed in few words.

FIRST, Believers should never think themselves secure, or exempted from trials in this world. Their warfare will never be at an end while life is continued. Abraham, when he was old, and perhaps expected that his troubles were ceased; that the storms which ruffled the noon of life were blown over; and that the evening would be calm and serene, was, on a sudden, involved in a tempest. We know not what God may call us to do or suffer. Often before death he leads his children in ways, and brings them into trials little expected by themselves or others. It ought to be our great consolation and support, that *all things work together for good to them that love God.**

SECONDLY, The consideration of Abraham's example should silence our complaints and murmurs under

* Rom. viii. 28.

the adverse dispensations of Providence. His trial was uncommonly great, but he was enabled to sustain it. His faith gave him the victory. When we faint under conflicts less severe, it is a sign that our strength is small. If we cannot bear even the common evils incident to this mortal state, how should we bear if tried as Abraham was? If torn with anguish at the natural death of a beloved child, what if called to offer up an Isaac? Too often do our tender connections in life prove a snare, by engrossing the affections, and leading us away from the duties of religion. A supreme regard to the divine will should be the leading principle of our conduct. No affection for relatives, and no counsels or entreaties of the dearest friends should interfere with the love and service which we owe to God. Hear the words of our blessed Saviour; *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.** It is very common for persons under affliction to say, that their situation is peculiarly grievous, but surely few or none can be compared with the one before us.

THIRDLY, Let believers learn from this subject to trust in God in all his dealings with them, however dark and intricate. *In the mount the Lord will provide;*

* Matt. x. 37.

in time of your greatest need God will appear for your deliverance. Have you not found this in your past experience, and should not this encourage you still to wait upon him? Adhere steadily to the path of duty, and leave to God the care and management of all your concerns.

In the last place, From this subject considered with respect to the way of salvation through Christ, let us learn to adore the infinite wisdom and mercy of God. Behold the eternal Son of God voluntarily offering himself up as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice! Behold in the lamb substituted for Isaac a representation of the atonement which Christ hath actually offered; of that infinite wrath which he endured on Calvary, when it pleased the Father to bruise him — O sinners, come and plead this sacrifice before God. There is no other of value sufficient to procure the pardon of your sins. By faith in this you can be admitted to the favor of God, and to dwell in his presence for ever.—Believers, strive to know still more and more the love of Christ. Let the lives which you live, be by the faith of the Son of God. This precious grace will support you under all the trials which you may be called to endure; will make you more than conquerors over all your enemies; and finally, bring you to complete and eternal salvation.

S E R M O N VI.

HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF JACOB.

GENESIS XLVII. 7. 8. 9.

And Joseph brought in JACOB his father, and set him before PHARAOH : and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou ?

And JACOB said unto PHARAOH, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years ; FEW and EVIL have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.

AFTER the life of Abraham, that of JACOB is very particularly related. This was necessary, because in him the promise of a numerous offspring began to be fulfilled. Immediately from him sprang the heads of the several tribes of the Jewish nation ; and the removal of him and his descendants into Egypt

introduces the account of their bondage, and wonderful deliverance by God, which form so splendid a part in the sacred history.

JACOB, the son of Isaac and Rebecca, was the younger of two sons at the same birth. From this circumstance he had his name, which signifies one that *supplants*, or *takes hold of another's heel*, in order to overturn him. His conduct towards his elder brother was agreeable to this name; and to the import of it, Esau referred, when he said, *Is he not rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times.**

WHATEVER may be said with respect to this conduct of Jacob towards his brother, it is certain, that God chose him as the person in whose line the Messiah was to descend, and confirmed the blessing which he obtained from his father.

THERE is something in the history of this patriarch very interesting and affecting. While we admire the man, we are touched with tender sympathy for the variety and weight of his afflictions.

THE passage which has been read contains the circumstance of his interview with Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and from which I shall take occasion to give

* Gen. xxvii. 36.

a summary account of his life, and delineate his character, as far as we have lights to guide us.

THE reply which the patriarch made to the monarch was not only descriptive of human life in general, but particularly so of his own. *Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.* His years were *few* compared with those of his progenitors. Though he lived seventeen years after this, yet he fell considerably short of the age of Abraham and Isaac. The length of human life being greatly reduced since the flood, was still gradually shortening; and it is not improbable, that the hardships of Jacob's life, and the many troubles with which he had been harraffed, contributed to wear it out. Accordingly he adds, that his days were *evil*; full of trouble; and he likens his life to a pilgrimage, in which a person has no settled habitation, but is continually removing from one place to another. The propriety of this description will appear from a cursory view of his life.

JACOB, by reason of the displeasure of his brother Esau, was obliged to flee from his father's house and remain for a long time in a state of exile. He travelled into the country where his uncle Laban lived, with whom he continued for many years in no better condition than that of an hireling; and experienced re-

peated instances of unkind usage. The deceitful behaviour of his uncle, in giving him Leah instead of Rachel, contrary to express stipulation, is well known. Though he served faithfully, and was true to the interest of his master, yet he received, in return, unfriendly looks and injurious treatment. Jacob, when complaining to his wives, says, *Your father hath deceived me and changed my wages ten times.** Again, in chiding Laban, to his face, he tells him, *This twenty years have I been with thee. That which was torn of beasts, I brought not unto thee, I bear the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was, in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away empty.†* A state of servitude to one born to better prospects was humiliating; but was still more grievous, when aggravated by insult and injury; from those, too, who were connected by ties of blood.

* Gen. xxxi. 7.

† Gen. xxxi. 38—42.

NOTWITHSTANDING, however, the unjust dealings of Laban, the Lord made Jacob to prosper; and, at length, ordered him to return into his own land. Jacob, with his family, his cattle, and all his goods, took his departure unknown to his uncle, fearing, no doubt, lest he should by some means seek to detain him; or rob him of the property which he had acquired. Laban, as soon as he had notice pursued; but whatever might have been his intentions, God warned him in a dream to do no harm to Jacob, whom he overtook the seventh day on Mount Gilead. Here, after some expostulations had passed between them, they agreed to enter into an alliance of friendship, and parted with affection and mutual good wishes.

JACOB proceeded on his journey; and as he advanced towards the country where his brother Esau dwelt, he had many fears, lest the old resentment might still be retained. He prudently sent messengers to inform Esau of his prosperity, and that he was now on his return. His uneasiness was increased, when he heard that Esau had set out to meet him with four hundred men; not knowing but that he was coming with a hostile intention. Before this, in order to show Jacob that he was under the divine protection, he had a vision of a great number of angels at a place, which on this account, he called Mahanaim; but his fears

still continuing, he sought to conciliate his brother by presents.

HAVING made all his people pass over the brook Jabbok, he remained alone on the other side; where an angel in the form of a man, wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. This was designed to remove his fears; for the angel *blessed* him, and gave him the name of Israel, which signifies *a man that has prevailed with God*; importing, that with men, he should also powerfully prevail.*—Not to be particular in this history, suffice it to say, that the two brothers met upon the most friendly terms, embraced with the greatest tenderness, and wept with tears of joy. Thus ended the unnatural dissension which had caused so much unhappiness in the family of Isaac. *How good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

AFTER this interview, Jacob came to a place called Succoth, where he built a house, booths for his cattle, and dwelt for some time. From this he removed to Shalem, a city of the Shechemites, where he bought a piece of ground. Here he might have lived peaceably and happily, had not the bad conduct of his children exposed him to the resentment of the people of that place, and occasioned his removal. His sons

* Gen. xxxii. 28.

having taken desperate revenge upon the Shechemites for the dishonor done to Dinah, their sister; having killed the men, pillaged their city, and carried their wives and children captive, Jacob was afraid to continue any longer in the place, lest a conspiracy should be formed among the inhabitants against him. This is, no doubt, to be numbered among the afflictions of the patriarch. The reproach which Dinah brought upon the family, and the bloody revenge of the sons, particularly of Simeon and Levi, who were the chief actors, gave him pungent distress. Of this conduct he reminded his sons when he foretold their future condition in the world. *Simeon and Levi are brethren: Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O 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.**

JACOB, according to the direction of God, went now to Beth-el, the place where he had lodged at his first leaving his father's house; where he had seen the remarkable vision of the ladder; and where he had vowed unto God. Here he performed his vow; and

* Gen. xlix. 5—7.

God appeared unto him again, confirmed the change of his name, assured him of his design to multiply his posterity, and to give him the land of Canaan for an inheritance. Not continuing long here, he set out to visit his aged father, who was still living, near to the valley of Mamre. On the way, a fresh and great affliction befel him; even the death of his beloved Rachel, after the birth of her second child, named Benjamin. He buried her at Bethlehem, and erected a monument to her memory.

ABOUT this time he experienced a distress of another nature, which was the incest of Reuben, his eldest son. This sorely grieved him; and he took notice of it in his dying hour. *Reuben, unstable as water, thou shalt not excel, because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: He went up to my couch.†*

JACOB, after these sorrowful events, at last arrived at Mamre; and had the satisfaction to find his father alive. The two brothers, twenty-two years from this time, paid the last kind offices to the aged and respectable man.

THE troubles of Jacob did not now end. One, the severest he had yet felt, considering that he was now

† Gen. xlix. 4.

old, and had promised himself some respite, befel him. This was the loss of Joseph, his most beloved child; who was taken away, not by an ordinary death; but, as he supposed, was devoured by a wild beast. On this occasion he indulged his grief; and never ceased mourning until he heard that Joseph was alive, and advanced to high honor in the court of Egypt. A famine then prevailing in the land of Canaan, he was induced by Joseph to remove with all his family into Egypt; where he continued until his death.

UPON this general view of his life, how just does his description to Pharaoh appear! Was not that life with propriety called a *pilgrimage*, which was so unsettled? Were not those days *evil*, which were marked with so many scenes of adversity? In which he experienced the resentment of a brother; the ingratitude of friends; the loss of his dearest relations; and, what is worse, the wicked conduct of some who survived? Though the distresses of others may have been greater and more singular, yet did not his sufficiently authorize him to say, *Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been?*

LET us now see whether we can delineate his character. He appears, as far as we can collect from the

sacred records to have been of a disposition remarkably *mild, humble, affectionate, pious*, and inclining rather to the *sorrowful or melancholic*.

WE are expressly told, that *Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents*.^{*} It has been alledged, that he was rather cunning, than plain or open; and therefore these words have been interpreted to signify that he was of a peaceable and courteous disposition. Perhaps there is no sufficient reason for such an opinion; the great instance of subtilty which is imputed to him, in the case of obtaining the blessing, being the device of Rebecca, and undertaken by Jacob, agreeably to her desire. It is evident, at any rate, that his disposition and manners were mild; and these led him to a different occupation from Esau, who was rough and turbulent. Esau delighted in an active and boisterous life; his soul was in the chase, while Jacob chose the still life of a shepherd, and preferred the crook to the bow or the lance.

AGAIN, He was *humble*. He entertained no aspiring or ambitious views, but was contented if Providence pleased to bestow upon him what was barely necessary for the support of life. If by purchasing the birth-right from his brother, and deceitfully obtaining

^{*} Gen. xxv. 27.

the blessing of his father, he grasped at power and respect, this was not his prevailing temper, and he soon learned to think more justly. Hear his vow at Bethel ; *If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on ; so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God.** He asked not for riches and honor, but for health, peace, and competency ; all indeed that are necessary for the happiness of life, though so few restrain their desires within these bounds. And when the Lord had given him many temporal blessings, far beyond his expectation, with what humility and gratitude does he make mention of them ! *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant ; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.†* So far was his prosperity from producing an elation of heart, or causing him to arrogate any thing to himself, that he acknowledged his utter unworthiness, and ascribes his blessings solely to the goodness of God.

JACOB was farther distinguished by a temper highly *affectionate*. The tender passions predominated in his soul. This is evident from many circumstances in his life. When he first met Rachel with her father's

* Gen. xxviii. 20. 21. † Gen. xxxii. 10.

flocks at the well, we are told, that he *lifted up his voice and wept*. The joy he felt on his safe arrival, after a tedious journey, and on meeting one of that family to which he was related, greatly moved him. We are also told, that he *served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her*. His attachments were sincere, strong and constant. How remarkably does this appear in the love he bore to his son Joseph! Here indeed he seems to have approached to partiality; but it is no evidence that he did not care tenderly for his other children, because he loved Joseph most. He was the son of his deceased Rachel; a youth of an extraordinary genius, united to great goodness of heart. Who can read Jacob's lamentation on the supposed death of this son, and not sympathize in tears? When the bloody coat was presented to him, *he knew it, and said it is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him: Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.*†—How strongly is parental affection represented when his sons brought him the news that Joseph was alive and governor over Egypt! His heart at first fainted within him. When he revived, and was well assured of the truth, he exclaimed with all the warmth of passion, *It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die*. Perhaps it is impossible for words more forcibly to express a fa-

† Gen. xxxvii. 33.

ther's fondness. No description, in any language, equals this, in simplicity and beauty.

THE words of Jacob when he met with Joseph need hardly be added to prove his affection, *He fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.** He reckoned it the summit of his earthly happiness to find his beloved child still alive, fulfilling all the hopes he had once entertained concerning him; and he even wished, in the transports of joy, to expire in his arms.

It may be remarked in this place, that the tender feelings of Jacob were the source of many of his distresses. So great was his sensibility, that he felt at every touch. While this gave a high relish to the joys of social life, it was easily hurt, on every adverse circumstance. This extreme sensibility seems to have been a peculiar trait in the character of Israel, and rendered him truly amiable. Had he possessed more apathy or stoicism, he had been more secure from affliction; but we would have admired and loved him less.

* Gen. xlv. 29. 30.

AGAIN, It was the glory of his character that he was *pious*. Instances of this are too numerous to be mentioned at present. We can take notice only of two different transactions, at different periods of his life; the one at Beth-el, on his way to Haran; and the other on his return at the brook Jabbok. The one he called *the house of God and the gate of heaven*; the other, Peniel; for, said he, *I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved*. From these, it is manifest, that he was admitted near to God, and had intimate communion with him. He was indeed a favorite of heaven; he lived and died in the faith of the Messiah. On his death-bed he was endued with a prophetic spirit, and delivered these remarkable words concerning the Messiah: *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*†

I SHALL only add on the character of Jacob, that his temper inclined to the *sorrowful* or *melancholic*. This was not the effect of his piety, but the natural cast of his mind, increased by the many evils he endured. Witness his continued sorrow for Joseph; and his expostulation with his sons, when they sought to take Benjamin from him into Egypt; *Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not,*

† Gen. xlix, 10.

*and ye will take Benjamin away : all these things are against me.** Something of a melancholy air appears too, in the words he uttered before Pharaoh, and which have been read as the foundation of this discourse. At the same time, nothing morose or disagreeable is evident, but such a seriousness or thoughtfulness, as renders his character the more amiable and interesting. His interview with Pharaoh is a highly finished picture. Who does not see the venerable father of twelve sons, with his hoary locks, furrowed brow, and eyes beaming with benevolence, introduced into the presence of the monarch, and wishing him all prosperity? Who, acquainted with his history, hears him say, *Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been*, and recollects not the adverse circumstances of his life? Yea, sees in imagination the lines of sorrow which these had deeply drawn in his face?—This mournful air seems to have been a distinguishing feature in the character of Jacob; and yet, as has been said, it was not downright gloom or melancholy; but may rather be called an humble and affectionate seriousness, arising from the sensibility of his heart, wounded by repeated blows of affliction.

THE historian has exhibited him in a truly respectable and engaging light. Did we consider his history

* Gen. xlii. 36.

in no higher view than a mere human composition, it has more tender touches, more real description of human life, than thousands of those novels or romances which corrupt the heart and vitiate the taste of our youth. In the sweetened pill they swallow poison. Under the specious gilding of generosity and friendship, vice loses its ugly form, and finds an easy avenue to their hearts.—From such things, my brethren turn away. They were not written from a good principle, and are adapted to the vicious taste of mankind. Remove them from your pillows; and above all, let them never come near your hearts.—But when we consider this history as given by inspiration, and written for our instruction, it has additional weight and influence. Surely he has poor discernment and a cold heart, who is not affected and improved.

It might be expected that I should now say something on the exceptionable parts of the character before us; but for this, time will not admit, as well as that, in whatever he was to blame, we freely give him up to censure. It is not pretended that he was perfect. His fraudulent behaviour was punished by long banishment from his native land, and by subjection to a cunning and selfish man; and his polygamy, as well as that of Abraham, was discountenanced by jealousies and contentions in the family; so true is it, that every

deviation from rectitude leads to misery, and that God shows his displeasure against sin in the dispensations of his providence. To consider particularly, the objections made to this and other characters by infidels, would lead to a discussion of some length; therefore omitting these, I shall conclude with a very few reflections.

FIRST, The reflection made on a former occasion, that God chooses whom he will, occurs also here. The younger brother was preferred to the elder. Of this the Apostle takes particular notice, when he says, *The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.** The gifts of nature and of grace are all from God; and he bestows them according to his good pleasure. He makes one man to differ from another.

SECONDLY, The shortness of human life and the evils to which men are liable, have been often the subject of complaint, and the fruitful source of declamation. Though these evils may be easily painted in too strong a light, and complaints may originate from

* Rom. ix. 11—13.

envy and discontent, yet it cannot be denied that man is subject to many troubles. While these should not sink us into despondency, or cause us to murmur against Providence, it is our wisdom frequently and seriously to meditate upon them. This will bring us to make a proper estimate of life, and excite us to improve it to the best purposes. This will keep us from being unduly elated in prosperity, or cast down in adversity.

ONE thing which distinguishes a believer is, that he does not expect a place of residence or rest in this world ; but looks for an inheritance reserved in heaven for him. David said, in the name of the people of God, *We are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers : our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.** The Apostle speaking of the ancient patriarchs, says, they *confessed* that *they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth ; that they desired a better country, that is an heavenly.†*

THIRDLY, Are the days of man on earth *few and evil*? How comfortable the prospects which the gospel affords! By this *life and immortality are brought to light*. It reveals a future and unchangeable state, in which all who are united to Christ shall live in perfect

* 1 Chron. xxix. 15. † Heb. xi. 13—16.

happinefs. Let it then, my brethren, be our earneft defire and main purfuit to live with a conftant reference to eternity ; to fecure by faith in the Redeemer and obedience to his commandments, *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* That life is, of all others, the moft comfortable, where there is a reconciled God, an approving confcience, and an affurance of endlefs joy in heaven.

BELIEVERS, be not difcouraged under any evils you either feel or fear. The very confideration that your days are few may adminifter comfort ; for they will foon be numbered, and every evil will ceafe with them. *Our light affliction, fays the Apoftle, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are feen, but at the things which are not feen : for the things which are feen are temporal ; but the things which are not feen are eternal.**

* 2 Cor. iv. 17. 18.

S E R M O N VII.

HISTORY AND CHARACTER
OF JOSEPH.

GENESIS L. 20.

But as for you, ye thought evil against me ; but GOD meant it unto GOOD, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

THESE were the words of Joseph to his brethren, and were designed to remove their apprehensions concerning any resentment on his part for the wrongs they had done him. When he first discovered himself to them, they were troubled ; and now, after the death of their father, their fears recurred. Guilt is ever suspicious and easily alarmed. The injury committed had been so great, that they could not persuade themselves but Joseph waited only a favorable opportunity for revenge. On this occasion as on the

former, Joseph gave them the fullest assurance of his forgiveness, and his intention to treat them with respect and affection. He particularly directed their minds to the wonderful providence of God, in overruling their wicked conduct for great good.

*YE thought evil against me. Your intention was to destroy me ; but God meant it unto good. He purposed by this very action of yours, to accomplish a wise end. What it was, you now see ; to save much people alive ; to prevent the dismal effects of famine in Egypt, and relieve you and the family from sore distress.—Thus, while he holds up their guilt to view, he suggests an argument of comfort, and directs them to a proper improvement. It is worthy of notice, that though Joseph suggested this same argument when he first discovered himself to his brethren, yet he kept any charge against them out of sight ; because he would not then add to their severe remorse. He then gently and kindly said, *God did send me before you to preserve life. It was not you that sent me hither, but God.***

THE words of the text cannot be better illustrated than by a relation of the principal circumstances of Joseph's life ; in doing which, there will be an opportunity of remarking also, the distinguishing parts of

* Gen. xlv. 5—8.

his character. The sacred historian in giving us so fully the life of Joseph, has rendered the history of the Jewish nation more perfect and intelligible; and at the same time exhibited to us a bright example of many virtues.

THE great affection which Jacob bore to Joseph excited envy and jealousy in his brethren. It would appear too, that Joseph had accused some of them to their father, of improper conduct; but what provoked them most, was his relation of certain dreams, betokening his future and superior greatness. He dreamed that while he and his brethren were binding sheaves in the field, his sheaf arose and stood upright, and their sheaves stood around and made obeisance to it. He dreamed again, that the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to him. These dreams, which he told in the openness of his heart, were plain indications of his advancement above his brethren; they were so understood by them, and occasioned an irreconcilable hatred against him. They called him in derision, *the dreamer*.

ABOUT this time Joseph was sent on a visit to his brethren, who, except Benjamin, were feeding their flocks at Shechem. This was the place where they had some time before taken cruel revenge on the inha-

bitants; and on this account Jacob was solicitous lest some combination should be formed against his sons, and sent Joseph in order that he might be made acquainted with their condition. Joseph did not find them at Shechem as he expected; and being informed by a person whom he met, that they had removed to a place called Dothan, he directed his course thither. His brethren, who only waited a favorable opportunity to show their hatred, when they saw him approaching, took the horrid and unnatural resolution, first to slay him, and then pretend that he had been devoured by a wild beast. The execution was prevented by Reuben, the eldest brother, who persuaded them not to imbrue their hands in his blood, but to throw him into a pit, which was near; his design being, when he had an opportunity, to take him up, and convey him privately back to his father. Accordingly, when Joseph came up, they took and stript him of his coat of many colours, threw him into this pit or well, which had no water in it, and then sat down to eat and refresh themselves.

In the mean time, they espied a company of Ishmaelites and others, merchant-men, who were carrying spicery from Mount Gilead into Egypt. Upon this Judah proposed to the rest of his brethren, that they should sell Joseph; and particularly urged as an argu

ment, that if they flew him, no profit would arise; besides, that the action was barbarous and unnatural. To this proposal they agreed, and having drawn Joseph out of the pit, they sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who carried him into Egypt, and sold him again unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, and captain of the guard. Reuben it seems was not present at this last transaction of his brethren; for returning to the pit, he was greatly affected at not finding Joseph, and probably concluded at first, that they had executed their purpose of murder; or at least, he was grieved at being disappointed in his design of sending Joseph back to his father.

ALL they now thought of was how to conceal their wickedness, by inventing some plausible story. For this purpose they killed a kid, dipped Joseph's coat which they had retained, in the blood, and sent it to their father; leaving him to conjecture, what had become of his son. He readily and naturally conjectured, as they intended, that a ravenous wild beast had devoured him. Cruel men! Who while they conspired against the life of a brother, seemed determined with the same blow, to break their aged father's heart, by sending him, instead of his beloved child, the coat rolled in blood!

IN this part of the history, we may remark the wonderful providence of God. We cannot doubt that the dreams which Joseph had, were sent for a wise end, and encouraged him in all his adversity; and yet the relation of them at first stirred the envy and malice of his brethren. Instead of keeping his thoughts to himself, it was so ordered that he revealed them. By this, indeed, he might have indicated a degree of youthful indiscretion and vanity, but it shows him, at the same time, to have been of an unsuspicious temper. Innocent himself, he did not easily harbour distrustful thoughts of others.

REUBEN's character was not good; and yet we see that in this case, he acted the most upright and tender part. Providence used him as an instrument to save Joseph's life. And to remark no more at present, how providential was it, that his brethren should have removed to Dothan; that he should have wandered in the field so as to arrive at the juncture, when the merchant-men passed this way; and that they should carry him into Egypt, the scene of all his future greatness and glory? *We shall see*, said his brethren, *what will become of his dreams.* While they meant to defeat them all, they prepared the way for their accomplishment. While they fought against God, they promoted his purposes. Let us follow Joseph into Egypt.

FROM the time that he entered into the service of Potiphar, he behaved with such wisdom, prudence and fidelity, as to gain his entire confidence. He was soon made steward, or overseer. No words can more strongly express the unlimited trust which his master reposed in him, than these: *He knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat.** That household is favored, in which is such a servant. Human life, however, is seldom uniform; it is a mixed scene of prosperity and adversity. The peace of the family was broken, and Joseph's happiness interrupted by a singular adventure, but which, like all the rest, contributed in the end to his still greater advancement. The story of his mistress is so well known, that it need not be particularly related. The sacred historian informs us, that Joseph was *a goodly person, and well-favoured*. He is supposed to have been at this time, about twenty-seven years old. His youth and the beauty of his person, added to manners peculiarly sweet and engaging, kindled a criminal flame in the breast of this unhappy woman. How often does beauty prove a snare to the possessor, and a temptation to others! His answer to her solicitation, is worthy our particular notice, as containing the chastest, the noblest and the most disinterested sentiments. *He refused, and said unto his master's wife, behold, my master*

* Gen. xxxix. 6.

*wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand. There is none greater in this house than I, neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but thee, because thou art his wife; how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?** Notwithstanding this just and pious remonstrance, she indulged the irregular passion, until at length throwing aside the delicacy of her sex, on a certain occasion, he had no other way to escape, than by tearing himself from her, leaving his garment or cloak behind. She, highly enraged for her despised love, and perhaps, fearing that Joseph would accuse her, immediately determined to effect, if possible, his destruction. Her love was turned into fury, and vented itself in bitter accusations and reproaches. Suffice it to say, that by the time her husband came home, she had planned her story, and to make it the more plausible, produced Joseph's garment, as an evidence of violence intended against her. Potiphar, wrought up to jealousy and rage by this strange tale of his wife, ordered Joseph instantly into prison.—Such is the account given of this woman; guilty in cherishing an improper passion, and still more so, by her malicious defamation; an example, we believe rarely to be found. Those who are disposed to cast indiscriminate censure, only betray the baseness of their own hearts, and manifest that

* Gen. xxxix. 8. 9.

they have conversed with the most worthless of the sex; for in general they are patterns of conjugal fidelity and affection.

IN the whole of this transaction, how amiable does the character of Joseph appear! He was actuated by a sincere regard to the honor of his master, and to the law of his God. His conduct was truly heroic. He obtained the greatest of all victories, a victory over himself.

WHEN he was in prison, his upright, wise, and obliging behaviour, gained him the same confidence with the keeper, that he had before obtained with Potiphar. During his confinement, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, put two of his officers, the chief butler and the chief baker into the same place. Each of these in the same night dreamed a dream, which gave them great uneasiness. Joseph observing them in the morning to *look sadly*, enquired into the occasion, and requesting them to relate their dreams, informed them that he was endued with divine wisdom to interpret them. The one he interpreted to signify a restoration to the favor of the king, and the other an ignominious death; all which was strictly fulfilled. Joseph requested of the butler, that when restored, he would remember him, mention his situation to the king, and endeavour to procure his

enlargement ; for that he had been stolen from his native land, and now suffered unjustly. But, as it too often happens, the butler, when in prosperity, forgot the sufferings of him, who had been his fellow-prisoner, and the obligations he owed.

CONCERNING dreams, it may be remarked, that though most of them are wholly the illusions of fancy, yet God formerly did, and may still reveal by them, future events ; and though there has been in every age a great deal of superstitious regard paid to dreams, and pretended interpretations, yet this does not hinder their genuineness in many cases. Revelations of this kind must always have in view some object of importance, and worthy of God. The design must likewise be attended with a degree of certainty, otherwise they can be of no use. The dreams of these officers seem to have been ordered on purpose to introduce Joseph to the notice of the king, who, two years after, had a very remarkable one, and which was intended in providence for a great and benevolent purpose.

NONE of the magicians and wise men could give any satisfactory interpretation. The butler now became sensible of his ingratitude to Joseph, recollected the circumstances which happened when in prison, and told them to the king. Joseph, as soon as he could

be put into a proper condition, was by order of the king, brought into his presence. He related his dream. Joseph disclaimed all the arts then practised to interpret dreams, and declared that whatever gift he possessed in this way, was from God, and that to him belonged the glory. *It is not in me ; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.** Not to be particular in mentioning the circumstances of the dream, which are well known, it was interpreted by Joseph, as foretelling that there should be seven years of great plenty in the land of Egypt, followed by seven years of famine. The same spirit which interpreted the dream, gave Pharaoh a most salutary advice, to gather and lay up the food of the good years, in store, against the seven years of famine. Pharaoh, highly pleased with the interpretation, and with the uncommon wisdom and prudence which appeared in Joseph, judged him the only proper person to superintend this business, and accordingly he constituted him his vice-roy or deputy over the land of Egypt. The power with which Joseph was intrusted is well expressed in these words of Pharaoh to him : *Only in the throne, will I be greater than thou.†* He changed his name to Zaphnath-paaneah, which signifies *prime minister, or revealer of secrets*; as it is most generally interpreted; and to attach him the more

* Gen. xli. 16.

† Gen. xli. 40.

clófely to the interests of the kingdom, he formed a connection for him in marriage with a noble family.

JOSEPH was now thirty years old; an age, when perhaps, the strength of body and the powers of mind are in greatest perfection; when the impetuosity of youth is restrained by experience, and its vivacity tempered with wisdom. The noble qualities with which he was endowed, were now displayed to view. Like the sun after being covered with clouds, he seemed to shine the more bright.

Who can help remarking the singular providence of God in all these events! Potiphar when he cast him into prison, might have put him to death, had not his heart been softened, or his hand restrained. Though the butler forgot him, yet it was wisely so ordered. He thought of him at the very moment, when he could perform an essential service for him. Besides, the disappointments and sufferings of Joseph, prepared him for his future prosperity. His head would have grown giddy, had he sooner rode in a chariot; but now he had learned the vanity of earthly things, and humility was added to all his other graces. He began his career with more discretion and sobriety than most men end theirs, and was wiser at thirty, than others at sixty.

THE famine which followed the years of plenty, was felt not only in Egypt, but in other countries. It is said to have been *over all the face of the earth*.* As soon as it was known that provisions had been stored in Egypt, they came from all countries to buy, and among others came the ten sons of Jacob, and the brethren of Joseph. The dream of the sheaves making obeisance, was now fulfilled, for his brethren *bowed down themselves before him, with their faces to the earth*. *He knew them, but they knew not him.*†

OMITTING a particular account of his conduct towards them; his putting them into prison for a time; his binding Simeon and detaining him, when he sent the others away; his insisting that they should bring Benjamin down; his restoring their money; his putting his cup, on a certain occasion, into Benjamin's sack; all which seemed rough treatment to them, and to his aged father; it need only be remarked, in general, that Joseph acted not from cruelty or revenge, but designed to bring his brethren to a sense of their crime, try their disposition, and prepare them for a discovery of himself. While he thus treated them, he was obliged often to withdraw, and weep. While his countenance was stern, and his words rough, his heart melted

* Gen. xli. 56.

† Gen. xlii 6—8

within him. The circumstances which attended Joseph's discovery of himself to his brethren, you may read in the forty-fifth chapter of Genesis, from the beginning to the fifteenth verse. Never was a more affecting story, nor one better told. That person is void of all true taste and sensibility, whose heart is not touched with this tender scene. How amiable does Joseph appear, as a son, a friend, and a brother! The first minister of Egypt forgets not his father's house! He feels and acknowledges the tender ties of nature! To such a heart, who would not wish to be united! A heart arrived at the sublime of humanity!

THE rest of his history may be comprised in a few words. Having brought his father and brethren down into Egypt, he continued to treat them with unintermitted tenderness and affection. When he was about to die, he foretold that God would bring them out of that land; and took an oath of the children of Israel, that they should carry up his bones from thence. He died, being an hundred and ten years old, and was embalmed. When Moses delivered the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt, the body of Joseph was carried away and buried near Shechem, in the field which Jacob had given him as his particular inheritance.

THE character of Joseph finishes the patriarchal age.—How far the specimens already exhibited, have been acceptable and edifying, I do not certainly know; but they have cost me some pains to collect and arrange them; perhaps more than discourses of another nature. Many characters still rise to our view. With some of these, I may hereafter occasionally present you; not considering myself as under obligation to perform this regularly, or in that order which they stand in scripture; there being no inseparable connection; but each character making a perfect whole. At present I shall conclude with some reflections on the one before us.

FIRST, We learn how mysterious are the ways of divine Providence! This is so principal a thing on this subject, and of so great importance, as should frequently call our attention. It is a pleasing and profitable exercise to trace the dealings of God with ourselves and others. It affords a continual source of wonder and praise. God accomplishes his purposes by ways far beyond the comprehension, and contrary to the expectations of his creatures. The Psalmist, in celebrating the wonderful works of God, says, *Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.** The ways of God are mysterious, in his works both of nature and of grace;

* Psalm lxxvii. 19.

in his government of the world, and in his redemption of sinners ; in his dealings with particular nations and societies, and with individuals. There is a connection and a subserviency of one part to another ; *a wheel within a wheel* ; all forming one intricate, certain, and perfect plan, which none but the infinite mind can guide and comprehend. We see light often arising from apparent darkness ; order from confusion ; and good from evil. On a review of our past lives we will find that God has led us in ways which we thought not of ; and what, at the time, we deemed our greatest affliction, wrought in the end for our real benefit. We should therefore, carefully mark the dispensations of God, as displaying his infinite wisdom and goodness, calling forth our praise, and encouraging our trust in him.

SECONDLY, The history of Joseph, affords an instructive lesson to those who are young, and entering upon the world. It teaches them not to despair of success, however low and afflictive their circumstances are. If virtuous, industrious and prudent, they may hope for the blessing of God. *Seest thou a man, diligent in his business ; he shall stand before kings ; he shall not stand before mean men.**

* Prov. xx. 29.

JOSEPH was hated of his brethren ; sold as a slave into a strange country ; there unjustly accused and cast into prison ; without fortune or friends ; and yet by a wife and persevering conduct he rose into great eminence and usefulness. He was at first sold for twenty pieces of silver, but when he lay in fetters in Egypt, few perhaps would have valued him at one ; yet this was the man in whom the spirit of God was, and who became a blessing to many nations.

THERE is something in examples of this kind, which highly pleases and interests us. We are not surprized to see one advanced with every wordly interest to support him ; but we glory in the man who is raised by his merit alone, and whose life is a constant scene of usefulness. It is true that time and chance happen to all men ; or, that our affairs are all under the direction of Providence ; but in the use of lawful endeavours, we may and ought to hope for success ; at least, that we shall fill some sphere with reputation among men, and the approbation of God.

THIRDLY, We behold in Joseph the power of religion. He endured adversity, and what is still greater, he endured prosperity. He was incorrupted amidst those scenes, which prove so fatal to many. In this

view he is a noble example for imitation. In Jacob we saw religion shining in the cottage and the field; in Joseph we see it amidst all the gay and splendid scenes of a court. It exerts its influence in every station of life. This was his greatest ornament. Much to be pitied is the man, who becomes intoxicated with the honors and pleasures of this world; and to be condemned is he, who for these neglects the duties of religion. Be assured, my brethren, that to fear God and keep his commandments, is the highest glory of any character, and the only road to happiness.

FOURTHLY, Allow me to turn your attention to Joseph in one other view; as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without being particular here, suffice it to say that as Joseph was greatly abased, so was Christ, even unto death; that as Joseph was afterwards exalted, so was Christ, at the right hand of God; that as Joseph preserved the lives of his brethren, and received and treated them kindly, so Christ saves from eternal misery all who believe on him.—To him then, O perishing sinners, you must apply. He will forgive all your past offences, and bestow on you an unspeakable happiness. Neglect not the precious season of grace; but return unto the Lord.—Let those who have experienced the mercy and loving-kindness of Christ, show their gratitude, by devoting their lives to his service. He

hath already done much for you. He hath gone to
prepare a place for you ; and he will come again and re-
ceive you unto himself, that where he is, there ye may be
*also.**

* John xiv. 2. 3.

S E R M O N VIII.

BIRTH AND EDUCATION OF MOSES.

Preached for the Benefit of the Charity School.

EXODUS II. 10.

And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name MOSES; and she said, BECAUSE I DREW HIM OUT OF THE WATER.

IN searching for a subject of discourse, none seemed to promise more instruction, and to be more suitable to my present purpose, than that I have now read. We are about to contribute to the benevolent design of educating poor children, and perhaps, no instance found in the sacred records can afford us greater encouragement in this undertaking than the history of MOSES. I cannot promise you that the execution will

be worthy of the subject, or will answer your expectations ; but you may be assured that my heart is anxiously desirous of success.

I SHALL first, give you the history of the circumstances which attended the birth and education of Moses, as related in scripture, and particularly in this chapter; and then make some reflections naturally arising from the history, and suitable to the present occasion.

MOSES was born in Egypt, in the year of the world two thousand four hundred and thirty three; in the period when the children of Israel were held in grievous bondage by Pharaoh, the king of that country. His parents were Amram and Jochebed, both of the tribe of Levi, and related to each other before marriage. Before his birth they had two children; a daughter named Miriam, and a son named Aaron. Miriam is supposed to have been about five or six years elder than Aaron, and Aaron was three years elder than Moses. Previous to the birth of Moses, Pharaoh had issued a cruel edict, that every male child born of the Israelites should be cast into the river. The reason given for this was, lest they should become *more and mightier* * than the Egyptians; and in case of an inva-

* Exod. i. 9. 10.

sion, should join with the enemies, overthrow the kingdom, and recover their liberty. At first, the king sought by the most severe and unintermitted servitude to break their spirits; but finding that they still prospered, he determined on this last and more summary way of proceeding, by destroying all the males. In the very time of the execution of this barbarous decree, Moses was born; and though parents are generally pleased with their own children, and apt to imagine them endowed with amiable qualities, yet in this child there really appeared something more than commonly fair and beautiful. He is said to have been a *goodly* child. The Apostle, in speaking of him, calls him a *proper*,* or *comely* child; and Stephen says, that he was *exceeding fair*.† The person of Moses, indeed, is celebrated both by Jewish and Heathen writers for extraordinary elegance of form. This, as well as natural affection would induce the parents to endeavor his preservation; and accordingly they concealed him in their own house for three months. It is probable also, that they had a persuasion, that this child would, in time, effect the deliverance of their nation. Jewish historians assert, that this was revealed to them; and that they had such a foreknowledge, seems, at least, intimated by these words of the Apostle, *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his pa-*

* Heb. xi. 23.

† Acts vii. 20.

rents, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. * Though the decree was vigilantly and carefully executed, yet they believed, that this child would be preserved to accomplish some great design.

WHEN they could no longer hide him without the greatest hazard and difficulty, they resolved to expose him, trusting him wholly to the care of divine providence. Whether in this, their faith wavered, or they acted the most rational part, it is certain, that the event was favorable beyond any expectation. They might have reasoned thus; “ Dwelling, as we do, among the Egyptians, we cannot always elude the search and enquiry of the king's officers, and there is no hope of saving our child; but if we put him away from us, it cannot be certainly known to whom he belongs, and some one may take him up: God will not suffer him to be lost, unless we be greatly deceived in our expectations concerning him.”

THEY accordingly made an *Ark*, or small vessel of bulrushes, of which the Egyptians used to make light boats; and having secured it well against the water with slime and pitch, they put the child into it, carried it down to the side of the river Nile, and laid it among the flags. Solemn and silent, no doubt, they

* Heb. xi. 23.

were, as if they had carried their dear boy to his long home. They did not however, then relinquish their care. The sister Miriam, either by order of her parents, or moved by her own tenderness, withdrew to such a distance as to avoid suspicion, and there waited to see the fate of her little brother.

THIS transaction is not unlike what is related, after the late conquest of Zettin by the Austrians, to have been done by the Turks. Being constrained in their flight to abandon a great number of children, they fastened round the necks of these little unfortunates, a note, on which was written as follows; “ May the
 “ God of mercy inspire with pity, those into whose
 “ hands this innocent child may fall. Praise and glory
 “ to thee, all-merciful God : Thou hast formed man
 “ for life. Wherefore dost thou suffer thy children to
 “ destroy each other ? Ah ! miserable orphan ! abandoned by the authors of thy existence—God alone
 “ can be thy guide and thy protector,”

SAY, ye yearning mothers, what anxiety, what suspense, what fears, as to the propriety of her own conduct, did Jochebed at this moment feel ! Her goodly child exposed and helpless ! Some cruel hand may soon cast him into the river, or he may be washed

away by the flood, or he will perish with hunger!—Come hither all, and behold an over-ruling providence in the surprising deliverance which followed.

AT this juncture, the daughter of Pharaoh, as a wife and merciful God was pleased to order it, came down with her maidens to bathe; an exercise necessary and pleasant in all warm climates like that of Egypt. Passing along the river's side, the daughter of Pharaoh spied the ark or chest among the flags, and sent one of her maidens to fetch it. On opening it, she was struck with the beauty and cries of the infant, and immediately suspected it to be one of the Hebrew children. This she would naturally do from the circumstances in which it was found, as well as from the fairness of the complexion, which shewed it not to be of Egyptian parents. What curiosity, what conjecture, what remarks, may we suppose this incident gave rise to, in the female circle!—What a fine child!—He starves with hunger!—Poor babe, how he weeps! The Princess herself, moved with compassion, resolved, notwithstanding the orders of her father, to save him. Miriam who had now approached near, asked, if she should find one of the Hebrew women for a nurse, and having obtained permission, she went and called her own and the child's mother. To her he was delivered with the promise of wages. She once more clasped

the child to her bosom, and had no longer occasion to conceal him. How different the feelings of the parents now, and when they left the ark at the river! they return with triumph. They learn to trust in God. If before they believed, that this child was born for the noblest purposes, now their faith is confirmed.

THE *child grew*; and at a certain age, probably when he was fit to be weaned, the mother *brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter*, and she solemnly and publicly adopted him for her own son. She gave him the name of *Moses*, which signifies *drawn out*; designing thereby to perpetuate the memory of the situation in which she had found him. Whatever name his parents might have given him, Moses soon became the most famous, and by this name only, is he known in the sacred writings.

No particular account can be given of his education farther than we must believe, that it was the best which that age and country afforded. In Egypt, at this time, the arts and sciences flourished more than in any other part of the world. While his parents took care early to inform him of his parentage, and imbue his mind with the knowledge of the true God, the princes spared neither pains nor cost to furnish him with all human learning. As soon as his capacity would

admit, he went to school; had the instruction of the most approved masters; and made uncommon proficiency in his studies. We are assured by the highest authority, that he *was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.** He continued at the court, and was its greatest ornament, till he was *full forty years old*, when the Lord commenced, by this his servant, a scene of wonders, which must astonish the world to the latest ages.

I COULD here almost pronounce an eulogium on Pharaoh's daughter, for her kind assistance to this poor out-cast; for snatching him from a watery grave; it may be, from the jaws of some devouring crocodile; and for providing him with the means of education. Josephus tells us, that her name was Thermutis; that she was the only child of her father; and being herself childless, that Moses was designed for a successor to the throne. She, no doubt, had her reward. It must have been no small satisfaction to see her pains so well bestowed; to be complimented on the beauty and genius of her son; and as often as she saw him, it must have occurred with rapture to her mind, "I drew this fine boy out of the water."—This charitable action, O Thermutis, gave thee more joy than all the gay pleasures of a court; added more charms to thy person

* Acts vii. 22.

than the sparkling eyes, the curling tresses, or all the jewels which can cluster in the bosom. Though thou hadst no child of thine own, yet by educating this single one, the son of a slave, thou didst perform greater service to mankind, than thou wouldst have done, hadst thou been the fruitful mother of a numerous offspring.—Detract not from her merit, by saying, that she was wholly guided by her feelings; for what is human nature destitute of these, but a cold and stony mass? We will cheerfully help you, in ascribing the supreme glory to God; but we will also strew flowers in the way of Pharaoh's daughter, whenever she walks with her maidens along the banks of the Nile. She was honored of God, in being the preserver of his servant Moses.

It is time to turn our attention to some reflections naturally arising from this history, and suitable to the present occasion.—Many useful reflections arise from the several parts of the history; and particularly, it might be profitable to point out the resemblance between the circumstances which attended the early years of Moses, and those of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom he was a very eminent and remarkable type. But omitting these, it is to the present purpose to remark,

FIRST, That whenever God in his providence designs to effect some great revolution, he raises up and qualifies instruments for the work. A slight acquaintance with history is sufficient to convince us of this truth. Instances need not be produced, when the one before us speaks so loud. Just such a man as Moses, remarkable for his meekness, disinterestedness and perseverance, was necessary to deliver the children of Israel, and conduct them in their tedious marches through the wilderness. God usually works by means, and he does not multiply miracles unnecessarily. Were former ages indeed silent, the late revolution in our own country must witness to the truth of the remark; especially when we have at this day, so great and living an example.

SECONDLY, Many of those whom God hath raised to the highest honor and usefulness have been taken from the humble walks of life. How great the contrast between Moses in the marshy weeds, and Moses leading the people of Israel through the red sea! The Lord *chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds: From following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.** Here too it is needless to burden you with examples. Your own observation and

* Psalm lxxviii. 70. 71.

acquaintance with human affairs will easily supply them.

THE divine portion of genius is diffused equally among the poor and the rich; and requires only means to draw it forth. The disparity arises not from the want of gifts, but from education and other circumstances. Who has not seen, in the untutored croud, evidences of real ingenuity? Who does not believe that the Indian who traverses the wilds of America, and knows no other joys than the chase and his pipe, has as good blood as a Cæsar or a Trajan? Man, by nature, is like a slab of marble just taken from the quarry; and 'tis education which gives the use, the form, and the polish.

IN the celebrated Elegy of Gray, "written in a country church-yard," these lines have been always admired for the just sentiment, and the fine strain of poetry :

" Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
" Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire ;
" Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
" Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.

- “ But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
“ Rich with the spoils of time did ne’er unroll ;
“ Chill penury repress’d their noble rage,
“ And froze the genial current of the soul.

“ Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
“ The dark unfathom’d caves of ocean bear ;
“ Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
“ And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

It is of the utmost importance to cultivate these latent sparks of genius, and turn them to the benefit of society. There are none but who, by diligence and perseverance, under the blessing of God, may fill the highest places of honor and trust; particularly in this country, where property is so equally distributed; where birth and titles give no pre-eminence; and where merit alone has the surest claim.—This brings me to remark,

In the last place, That the institution of charity-schools, is highly and extensively useful. In this way instruction is conveyed to the children of the poor, which they would not otherwise enjoy. We can extend no greater kindness to them; we prevent their own misery and ruin; and we render, at the same time, an essential service to the community. How much

more encouraging to assist the young, in preparing them for usefulness; affording them the means of helping themselves hereafter, than to throw our charity at those grown old in ignorance and vice!—The more true knowledge can be diffused among all ranks, the more true happiness, the more safe is liberty, and the more likely will men be to embrace the holy religion of our blessed Saviour. It is the boast of America that her citizens are enlightened and free. The only way to keep them such, is by rendering the means of education general and attainable by all. Learning is the most effectual balance against great wealth and power; and it is of singular advantage, that it pervade the lower classes of the people. Leaven this lump, and you prevent ambitious and designing men from causing undue fermentations in church or state. Tyranny and superstition are supported by gloomy ignorance. These, whenever the divine ray of knowledge illuminates the corners of the earth, will flee, like Satan, “with the shades of night.”

THIS city, famous for its many charitable institutions, has not been forgetful of that concerning which I now speak. Who has not read with pleasure the accounts published by a sister church, year after year? Who does not wish them prosperity and success? Who would not emulate their virtuous deeds, and be fellow-

workers with them? This would be a noble strife, and worthy the christian name.

THE charity-school under the care of this church is indeed, yet in its infancy. We have just drawn the children from the *flags*; and we need much the bounty of some one like Pharaoh's daughter. We have begun with thirty; but their number shall be increased as soon as you afford the ability. We are not ashamed either of their appearance, or their proficiency in learning. They have done well for the time. There may be, even in this small number, some of the future divines and statesmen of America; and, if they should not rise to this eminence, we trust, they will make useful citizens and honest men.

MORE than enough has been now said to show the propriety of these charities, and the encouragement which we have to proceed in the advancement of them. It is unnecessary to go about to prove what is so plain, and what every one's feelings alone must dictate. Nor can it be expected, that by some secret magic, your money is to be allured from you. No; I address you as men, as citizens, and as christians. I tell you plainly, that we have need of what you can easily spare, and ought freely to give; that it shall be faithfully applied for one of the most laudable purposes in

the world.—If you have the feelings of humanity, give. If you are patriots, give. If you are christians, give. If you seek your own satisfaction, give. If you would be blessed in your basket and in your store, give. If you would have the prayers of the poor; if you would be pitied yourselves when in distress; and if you would obtain the mercy of God in Christ, in a dying hour, open your hearts and your hands to these little ones. They are brought to your door this evening, and will you shut it against them? They are harmless strangers, cast into a difficult and ensnaring world, and if you refuse to assist them, they may wander into the paths of misery and ruin. They ask not to continue upon your bounty; but that you who are experienced in the world, and who have it in your power, would be pleased for Christ's sake to direct them, and teach them to live to God, to their COUNTRY, and to THEMSELVES.

AND now, brethren, having pled the cause of the poor and innocent, hear my best wish for us all; it is, that God would always give us an inclination to do good according to our ability; that he would graciously pardon and accept us for the merits of the blessed Redeemer; and prepare us for *fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.*

S E R M O N IX.

C H A R A C T E R O F M O S E S.

 NUMBERS XII. 3.

Now the man MOSES was very meek, above ALL the men which were upon the face of the earth.

ON a former occasion, the birth and education of Moses were particularly treated. I proceed now to consider the distinguishing trait in his character, and that is his *meekness*. This properly falls under that mode of preaching which has, now and then, been attempted for your instruction.

HOWEVER Moses might be celebrated as learned and wise, as an able statesman, a disinterested patriot, and a successful leader; yet his meekness is mentioned as that quality of mind for which he was unrivalled. *Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.*

THOUGH he was the writer of this history, yet we are not to apprehend, that this commendation of himself proceeded from ostentation or vain-glory. He wrote *by inspiration of God*; and this testimony is to be considered as divine. It was no more than what was due to his own character when aspersed; and we find the great Apostle of the Gentiles commending himself in like circumstances. In opposition to the calumny of his enemies, he mentions the gracious manifestations which he had enjoyed from God, his great and constant labours in the ministry, and says, *I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.** Humility, and a proper regard to character, are perfectly consistent.

It is an evidence of the truth and impartiality of Moses, that he relates his own faults and those of his nation. In the present instance, he hides not the faults of his own family, whatever discredit might arise from them. Perhaps a fear of reproach has prevented Josephus, the Jewish historian, from recording the quarrel of Miriam and Aaron with Moses; which, as we learn from the first verse of this chapter, occasioned the commendation in the text. *And Miriam and*

* 2 Cor. xii. 11.

Aaron spake against Moses, because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married : for he had married an Ethiopian woman. The generality of interpreters suppose that this woman was Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, whom Moses had married, long before this, in the land of Midian. She is called an *Ethiopian*, or, in the original, a *Cushite*. Cush and Midian, if not used as synonymous, bordered on each other, and lay eastward of the Red-sea in Arabia. The only difficulty is, why they should, after such a length of time, abuse him for his marriage.

As Miriam was the chief aggressor, so it is not improbable that the difference originated between her and Zipporah ; in which Aaron became at last engaged.—Whatever might have been the beginning of the quarrel, reflections were cast upon Moses ; and there is great reason to believe, that the marriage was only a pretext, and that envy and jealousy were at the foundation. They saw the honor which God conferred upon Moses, and his influence with the people ; they saw him, by the advice of his father-in-law, and without consulting them, appoint judges to assist in the government ; and they found their own authority and reputation lessened. These things excited their jealousy ; but not daring to make a direct attack on Moses, or wishing to conceal the true cause of their resentment,

they speak against him as having disgraced his family, and done what was odious in the sight of the nation, by entering into such an alliance. They might have supposed also, that he was too much swayed in his conduct by her connections, and treated his own with disregard. The spring of their conduct appears plain enough from the second verse: *And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?* “Are not we prophets as well as he?” “What pretensions then has he to all the power, and “to set up other rulers independent of us?” This was their language; and it was the more dangerous as coming from such characters, and from persons so nearly related to Moses. When his own brother and sister make opposition to him, how likely was it to infect the ambitious and rebellious spirits throughout the camp? Having the appearance of a personal quarrel, he showed no resentment; but God, who knew their hearts, severely punished their mutinous disposition, and vindicated the honor of his servant.

WHAT is farther intended, is to describe the quality of meekness, and illustrate it in the character of Moses. This subject will appear very important and useful, if we consider that meekness is one of the fruits which the holy Spirit works in the hearts of his people; that

it is often recommended in scripture ; and promotes our peace and happiness in the world.

MEEKNESS signifies mildness, or gentleness of temper, and is a frame of spirit not disposed to wrath, even when provoked by injuries. It does not imply a want either of sensibility, or nobleness of mind. These may be united with the greatest meekness ; and certainly were so in the character before us. Nor does it exclude anger on every occasion, and in every degree. We read, in several places, of Moses being angry. We read of our blessed Saviour, who was the pattern of all perfection, *looking round about on the Pharisees with anger.** But, the man who is meek, is,

FIRST, Not angry except on just occasions. These are such as deserve and call for his resentment. *Be ye angry,* says the apostle, *and sin not ;†* the meaning of which is, avoid sinful anger ; or, see that when you are angry, the circumstances will justify you. The passions implanted in our nature, are designed for wise purposes ; but since our fall, they are become disordered, and apt to be exerted on improper objects. The evil consists not in their exercise, but in their irregular indulgence. Thus, for a man to be angry at irrational creatures, at certain adverse circumstances

* Mark iii. 5.

† Ephes. iv. 26.

or disappointments, which have befallen him, and at those persons who were the innocent cause of them, is highly improper. These are not objects which warrant his resentment. Cain was *very wroth*, because the Lord had respect unto his brother's offering and not to his; Balaam's *anger was kindled*, because his ass fell down under him; and Jonah was *angry even unto death*, because a worm smote his gourd that it withered. All these were guilty of sinful anger.

WHEN we examine the occasions on which Moses was angry, we find them great and important. When some of the children of Israel, contrary to express direction, left of the manna until the morning, and it *bred worms and stank*, we are told that *Moses was wroth with them*. Their conduct justified his resentment; because it showed distrust in the providence of God to make daily provision for them. He was wroth because they dishonored God and injured themselves by their disobedience. Why did his *anger wax hot* when they made them a molten calf and worshipped it, but because they robbed the true God of his glory? This appears from these words of his to Aaron; *What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?** And also by his words afterward to the people; *Moses said unto the people, ye have sinned a great*

* Exod. xxxii. 21.

sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.† Why was he angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron, but because they had not eaten the sin-offering in the holy place, agreeably to the law? It is to be remarked too in this instance, that when Aaron offered an excuse which seemed reasonable, or at least was some mitigation of his fault, Moses was satisfied. His anger subsided when the cause was removed. Why was he very wroth with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but because they blasphemed and provoked God, by their insidious and mutinous speeches?

IN short, in every instance in which we read of his being angry except one, which will be mentioned in its proper place, the occasion was just. God was dishonored and offended, and his servant did well to be angry. The people were punished in the divine displeasure for these things, for which Moses was angry; and we learn from his example, that the great cause of our indignation ought to be sin; that we ought to be stirred with jealousy when the service and glory of God are concerned.

† Exod. xxxii. 30. 31.

SECONDLY, The meek man is moderate even in that resentment which is lawful. It does not take the ascendancy over his reason, or rise to an excessive degree. It does not vent itself in indecent expressions and extravagant actions. How often are men seen transported beyond themselves, incapable of directing their words or conduct, and seem under the influence of a temporary madness! This is far removed from the spirit of meekness, which gives a man dominion over himself, and suffers him to hearken to the dictates of wisdom and prudence.

WHEN Moses *cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount*, it would seem, at first view, an act of rash anger, or a fall of passion. There is sufficient reason, however, to think, that greatly as he must have been moved, he did not lose self-command, and that he brake the tables by divine impulse; partly to punish the people for their idolatry, and partly to show by this significant sign, that the covenant between God and them was broken by their sin, and not to be renewed without bitter repentance. He had been informed by the Lord of the transaction of the people before he left the mount, and had earnestly interceded for them; and therefore, he was not now taken unawares. Besides, it is not to be supposed, that so soon after his converse with God, and the exercise

of holy affections, he should fall into rage, and behave contrary to his usual character. As the circumstances warranted his indignation, so he maintained the composure and dignity of his mind.

In the third place, The meek man is actuated by proper motives. To this we must carefully attend on this subject, for it distinguishes true meekness from a temper naturally easy and mild. That some by their very constitution are not much inclined to angry passions is certain ; and good nature wherever found is no despicable quality. It renders persons happy in themselves and agreeable to others. Moses, no doubt, was such an one, distinct from the influence of grace ; and to this, his manner of life had greatly contributed. After he fled from the court of Pharaoh, he spent forty years in a retired and philosophic life.

To human wisdom it would appear, that he would have been fitter in earlier days for the arduous enterprise of delivering the children of Israel from their slavery. It seems indeed, that he had thought so himself, and had revolved in his mind the mighty work ; for the sacred historian informs us, that *when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and*

*smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood, how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not.** The time was not yet come; and God saw meet to mature Moses by age and experience. At forty he might have been more active and enterprising, but at eighty he was more wise and patient. By so long a continuance in Midian, engaged in the pastoral life, he had dismissed all ambitious views, and grown fond of retirement and contemplation. This may be a reason, besides his extreme diffidence, why he wished to be excused from the undertaking. The caution, the timidity, and the aversion to noisy and tumultuous scenes natural to age began to creep upon him. At this period, rather than at any other, God saw him the fittest to accomplish his designs.

BUT, though Moses, by nature, was mild, and this temper was nourished and strengthened by his age and manner of life, yet it is to be ascribed to more noble principles. Divine grace subdued the inordinate affections of his soul, and brought him under the influence of religious motives.—The meek man acts from a regard to the pardoning love of God. He forgives, because he has been forgiven. Because God loves him, he loves his brother. The law which enjoins this, is

* Acts vii. 23—25.

the law of his God, and which he knows to be *holy, just and good*. He imitates God, who is *slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy*, who *deals not with men after their sins, nor rewards them according to their iniquities*. Take my yoke upon you, says the compassionate Redeemer, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. * The christian is under the power of the truths of the gospel, and copies the example of Christ. This, as has been said, is to be carefully observed, otherwise we shall mistake the workings of nature for the gifts of grace; and the semblance for the reality. The principle from which this meekness springs, and the motives by which it is guided, are the great things which evidence its genuineness and sincerity.

FOURTHLY, the meek man is not soon angry. He is patient and forbearing. He is not like flax or powder which kindles at the slightest touch, but rather like green wood which must be long blown, before you produce a flame; or like a flint which emits no sparkles unless it be often and violently struck. This is verified in the character of Moses.

WHEN we consider the multitude of people with whom he had to deal, not an army, but a nation; when we consider their untractable disposition, and the straits to which they were reduced; their frequent

* Matt. xi. 29.

murmurings and rebellions, and the great length of time he led them, how admirable does his meekness appear ! How just the description which Josephus has given of him ! “ He was,” says he, “ so great a master of his passions, that he lived as though he had none ; or as if he knew them only by their names, or by observing them in others.” During the whole forty years he led this rebellious and stiff-necked people in the wilderness, there is only one instance recorded, in which he was not meek, and by which he displeased God. This was at Meribah Kadesh, where the people murmured for water, and where taking his rod, he said, *Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock ? and he smote the rock twice.** On this occasion he behaved amiss, either by impatience, or by distrust, or both ; and God testified his displeasure by declaring that Moses and Aaron should not bring the congregation into the land of Canaan. To this the Psalmist refers, when he says, *They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes ; because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.†* This instance shows, that though he was meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth, yet he was not blameless. No other man in his situation, would have exhibited

* Num. xx. 10. 11.

† Psalm cvi. 32. 33.

the same patience and forbearance, under such multiplied provocations ; and even he fell short of perfection.

As the meek man is not soon, so neither is he long angry. He is incapable of harbouring in his breast the desire and intention of revenge. *Anger*, says Solomon, *resteth in the bosom of fools*.* Meekness will dispose to remove, as soon as possible, the cause of offence, and to effect a reconciliation. *Let not the sun*, says the Apostle, *go down upon your wrath*.† When the christian pays his evening devotion, he ought to *lift up holy hands without wrath*. More especially, is it the case, that in all injuries merely personal, the meek man is not soon or long angry ; and this is,

THE last observation, I shall make in describing the character. He is not concerned for his own honor and advantage separate from the interests of religion. This is evident from what gave rise to the words of the text. The quarrel of Miriam and Aaron was particularly with Moses, and therefore, he took no notice of it. He left it with God to vindicate his character, and frustrate any evil consequence.

HERE is certainly an important distinction. Personal injuries we may bear ; but, when the glory of

* Eccl. vii. 9. † Eph. iv. 26.

God is in question, we must not be silent. In the latter case, we see Moses bold as a lion ; but in the former meek as a lamb. Indeed the honor of God was wounded in the conduct of Miriam and Aaron ; because they spoke against one who held a public station ; and therefore we find that God suffered them not to go unpunished. This is a warning to such as make free with public characters. As far as they lessen them in the eyes of the people, they injure their usefulness. It is difficult to speak against their failings, without hurting them in their official character ; nor is it less difficult for official men themselves to distinguish between what is merely personal and what is not. This is certain, that the glory of God is the chief end which all ought to seek, and their own reputation as subordinate ; and if these are steadily pursued, God *shall bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day.*

By way of improvement of this subject, I remark as before,

FIRST, That God bestows upon persons such gifts and graces as qualify them for the work they are called to perform. Who does not see that meekness was necessary in one employed in so tedious and laborious a business, as leading the Israelites in their

marches through the wilderness? That on this account, this grace was given to Moses, in an eminent degree?

AGAIN, as Moses was a remarkable type of our Lord Jesus Christ in many other things, so also in meekness. To point out those things in him which were typical of Christ, would alone furnish matter sufficient for a discourse. Let me rather, at present,

URGE you, my brethren, to seek to obtain this spirit of meekness. Those in younger life ought to endeavour to bring their passions under due government. By long indulgence they grow stubborn and unruly. Sudden gusts of anger are often excused on account of their short continuance. It is common to say, that "such a man is hasty, but his anger is soon over." This, however, is no sufficient excuse, and such sudden and frequent starts make a man miserable in himself and dangerous to others. He is liable to speak and do wrong things, which it is impossible for him, however desirous, to repair. This is the *angry man*, with whom Solomon advises *to make no friendship*; the *furious man* with whom he says, *thou shalt not go*.^{*} If in his paroxysms he always wound your feelings, what avails it though he be afterwards prodigiously sorry?

^{*} Prov. xxii. 24.

Let a fresh occasion offer, and as usual, he *casteth fire-brands, arrows and death.*

EVEN reason and constant attention will teach you self-command ; but let me direct you to the never failing remedy, the grace of God. Apply to the merits of the Saviour for the pardon of your sins, and to his Spirit to sanctify your natures. Without these you cannot obtain salvation. Depend not on any thing you find in yourselves. The best natural disposition and the best works are not meritorious in the sight of God. True meekness and every saving grace are not the fruit of our own endeavours, but of the Spirit of God ; and therefore, his agency you must seek, and on this rely.

MECKNESS might be recommended to you by its several advantages in this world ; such as, keeping you from the attempts of the injurious ; rendering your reproofs successful ; giving you self-enjoyment, and promoting your temporal interest. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth ;** by which is not meant that they shall inherit a large portion of earthly things ; but that they shall have the surest enjoyment of these, as far as they are needful and convenient ; that they shall enjoy them with the least strife and anxiety ;

* Matt. v. 5.

and with the truest satisfaction in their own minds. In short, meekness is that quality which makes us most happy in ourselves, and most acceptable to others.

LET me conclude with exhorting believers to cultivate this divine temper. Come to the fulness of Christ and receive *grace for grace*. Hearken to the words of the Apostle, who had learned of Christ, and in his name addresses you ; *Put on, therefore, (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering ; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another ; if any man have a quarrel against any : even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**

* Col. iii. 12. 13.

S E R M O N X.

HISTORY AND CHARACTER
OF SAMSON.

JUDGES XIII. 24. 25.

And the woman bare a son, and called his name SAMSON : and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the SPIRIT of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Zorab and Eshtaol.

THOUGH every part of scripture is not equally essential, yet none is useless or unnecessary. The sacred historian spends no less than four chapters in giving the life of SAMSON ; and he is enrolled by the Apostle in his catalogue of ancient worthies. In presenting you then with characters, I may not omit his, for it is written as well as the others, for our instruction. The dispensations of Divine Providence towards him were various and remarkable ; no man ever lived his equal in bodily strength, and of whom

such extraordinary achievements are related. He was himself an army. With his single arm he spread destruction among the enemies of his nation, and put hosts to flight.

HE lived at a time when the children of Israel were under the dominion of the Philistines, and was raised up by God for the express purpose of beginning their deliverance. He was one of those supreme magistrates, called judges, who governed that people after the death of Joshua, until the time of Saul, their first king. This office was not hereditary, and was not always continued or uninterrupted. Though the authority of judges was not much inferior to that of kings, yet they had no revenues, and lived without pomp or splendor, guards or equipage. They were commonly appointed by God, and were his vice-gerents; for He alone was to be considered as sovereign of the nation. Let us first attend to a brief history of Samson; then, to some questions which occur; and lastly, to such improvement as the whole will suggest.

SAMSON was the son of Manoah, of the tribe of Dan. His mother whose name is not mentioned in scripture, having no children, an angel appeared to her and foretold the birth of a son, giving her at the same time, particular directions, that she should drink no

wine, nor strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing ; to let no razor come upon her son's head, for that he should be a Nazarite unto God from the womb.

NAZARITES were persons who brought themselves under a vow of observing a more than ordinary degree of purity. Besides the laws already mentioned, they might not come near a dead body, or assist at a funeral. So rigidly was this observed, that if any happened to die suddenly in their presence, they began the whole ceremony of separation anew. Samson according to divine order was consecrated by his parents, and while the vow lasted only a short time with some, he was to continue a Nazarite the whole term of his life ; and yet one would think that, by reason of his frequent intercourse with the Philistines, and the slaughter often made among them, he must have been exempted by particular dispensation, from the observance of some of the rules.

THE mother of Samson having informed her husband of what the angel had told her, he requested of God another visit, which was accordingly granted, and the former directions were repeated. Manoah then took a kid and offered it in sacrifice to the Lord, who testified his acceptance by the ascent of the angel in the flame of the altar.

As the angel had foretold, the woman bare a son, whom she named Samson. Very early in life, the *Spirit of the Lord* began to move him; to infuse into his mind heroic thoughts, and enable him to display uncommon strength and courage.—Perhaps it is not going too far out of the way for a remark to say here, that strong liquors are by no means necessary to the health and strength of the body. The free and constant use of them weaken and destroy. Samson quenched his thirst with pure water, and where was the arm nerved like his? His strength indeed, as will be afterward seen, was miraculous; but may we not suppose, that his mode of life was best adapted to the purpose, and infer that plain food and drink make the body most active and vigorous? It is a mistake too prevalent, that men cannot sustain hard labour without the aid of distilled spirits. Experience might teach that those who abstain, or at least use them with great moderation, endure fatigue better, are more free from diseases, and escape the danger of contracting the pernicious and detestable habit of intoxication.

WHEN Samson was come to mature age, he was very desirous of obtaining for a wife, the daughter of a Philistine at a place called Timnath. This choice his parents did not approve, but wished him to avoid a connection with idolaters and enemies, and to marry

among his own people. They knew not that this very thing would introduce a quarrel between him and the Philistines. It is thought that Samson had some foreknowledge that this marriage would eventually prove of advantage to his nation, and that this made him so anxious to accomplish it. *Get her for me,* said he, *for she pleaseth me well.** Though matches are generally made through mutual good liking, yet something more than the gratification of his fancy, is expressed in these words, if we consider what immediately follows; *He sought an occasion against the Philistines*; by this mean he hoped for opportunities of checking their insolence and oppression. But in whatever light we view this, and other parts of his conduct, we must remark and admire the wisdom of God, in over-ruling every event for the fulfilment of his purposes. What to man seems calamitous, is often in the end happy; yea, out of the worst actions, he brings great good.

THESE indulgent parents consented so far as to go with their son and treat about his intended marriage. On the way he gave the first instance that is recorded, of his amazing agility and strength. Having departed a little from his company, a lion, young, furious and roaring, was ready to spring upon him. Though he

* Chap xiv. 3.

had no weapon in his hand, yet he received the lion, and rent him, with as much ease as if it had been a kid.

WHEN he passed this same way, at the time appointed to celebrate his nuptials, his parents being again with him, he turned aside to view the carcase of the lion, which he found dried up, and a swarm of bees with honey in the skeleton. He ate of the honey, and gave some to his father and mother: but, as he had not before informed them of his exploit in killing the lion, so neither did he now inform them whence he had taken the honey. Though bees are known to avoid disagreeable smells and to abstain from flesh, yet if we consider that nothing remained of the lion but dry bones, it will not seem incredible that they settled in his skull; especially as they have been sometimes found in the skulls and tombs of men.

ON this circumstance, Samson formed the riddle which he proposed to the young men, who bore him company, as was then the custom, at his marriage feast. He engaged, if they could explain it, during the time of the feast, to give them *thirty sheets, and thirty change of garments*, or suits of clothes; but if they failed, they were to forfeit an equal number to him. The words of the riddle were, *Out of the eater came forth meat, and*

*out of the strong, or sharp, came forth sweetness.** Not being able to expound this riddle, they applied to Samson's wife, threatening her grievously, if she did not obtain the secret from him. So early had they learned on what side he was vulnerable, and how they might assail him to the greatest advantage. She beset him with great importunity, and with tears, the most powerful of all female weapons, until at length, on the seventh, or last day of the feast, he revealed it to her; she told the young men, who before the expiration of the limited time, answered the riddle, by saying, *What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?†*

SAMSON greatly enraged at their unfair conduct, went immediately to Ashkelon, a city of the Philistines, and having slain thirty men, brought their clothes; but resenting the treachery of his wife, he left her, and returned to his father's house. In his absence she was married to one of the young men who had been his companions at the wedding; so that when some time after he took a present, and came with a view of being reconciled to her, her father refused him admittance to her chamber, informing him of

* Chap. xiv. 14.

† Chap. xiv. 18,

what had happened, and thought to satisfy him by offering a younger and fairer sister in her stead.

SAMSON construing this into a designed affront to him by the Philistines, determined on revenge, which he executed in a very singular manner. Having collected three hundred foxes, and tying them two and two, he put a lighted fire-brand or torch between them, and letting them go in their fields, in time of harvest, burnt up their corn, both that which was in the shocks, and that which was still standing, as well as the wine and olive yards. When the Philistines understood that Samson had done this, and the occasion of his offence, they burnt his wife and father-in-law, through vexation. Upon which, not contented with burning their fields, and to vex them still more, he assaulted their persons, and made a prodigious slaughter among them.

It has been objected as incredible, that Samson should have been able to procure so great a number of foxes. Infidels in particular, have been pleased for want of better arguments, to turn this history into ridicule; for so nice is the faith of these men, that though they believe some things much more difficult, yet they cannot believe this, because recorded in what is called a divine revelation.

SOME have solved the difficulty by giving another translation of the words, and some by calling in the aid of a miracle. But without having recourse to either of these, there is nothing unaccountable in the transaction as here related. We know both from sacred and profane history, that foxes abounded in this country, and that some places had their names from this very circumstance. We read of the land of *Shual*, or the fox, of *Hazar Shual*, or the fox's habitation, and of *Shual-abbim* in the very tribe to which Samson belonged. It is not said in what space of time he collected these foxes. It is not said they were taken by hunting, and by a single hand. He might have been collecting them for some time; they might have been taken in nets, and by many hands. We know further that foxes are very mischievous animals, and the design in taking them might have been, as well for their destruction as for injury to the Philistines.—It is asserted in history that Lucius Sylla, when he was prætor, ordered to be shown on the amphitheatre, an hundred lions; that Julius Cæsar, when he was dictator, four hundred; and that the Emperor Probus, at one spectacle, exhibited a thousand ostriches, a thousand stags, a hundred Lybian, and a hundred Syrian Leopards, and a vast number of other strange-creatures. Did these collect and bring from afar such a multitude of creatures, rare and difficult to take,

and shall it be thought romantic, or incredible, that Samson, a judge of Israel, should collect three hundred creatures, easily managed, and which abounded in his neighbourhood? Is it not a strange faith that swallows the one, and strains at the other?

NOR let superficial thinkers imagine, that this stratagem of Samson was ill-chosen. Nothing could have answered his purpose better. To have employed hands was not so likely to have spread the fire, and would have brought upon them the vengeance of the Philistines; but the foxes turned out in different parts, tied in pairs, running swiftly, and now and then drawing contrariwise, were likely to spread the fire over the whole country, as the event fully proved.

IT is not the design at present to vindicate Samson in this proceeding, but to show that what he is related to have done, was neither impracticable nor foolish. What he did, and his righteousness in doing it, are two different things. This very story of the foxes is in some measure confirmed by heathen testimony. It was commemorated at Rome, on every return of their harvest, by the ceremony of tying foxes, and letting them go. It is true, that one of their poets has given another reason for this custom, but it is

highly probable, that the true origin was this stratagem of Samson. Let us return to his history.

AFTER the great slaughter of the Philistines, which has been mentioned, he retired to the rock Etam, a place of security in the tribe of Judah. The Philistines having suffered so many injuries, came in armed force to demand that he should be delivered up. The people of Judah fearing their wrath, sent three thousand men, who expostulated with Samson, on the dangerous consequences of his conduct; and told him, that they were come to bind and deliver him up into the hands of the Philistines. To this he submitted, on their solemn promise, that they themselves would not join with the enemy against him. They bound him with two new cords, brought him to the camp of the Philistines, who shouted with joy, to see their destroyer as they thought, under their power. Samson, filled with the spirit of heroism, and endowed with amazing strength, brake the cords from him as a thread touched by the flame, and finding the new jaw-bone of an ass, he slew with it a thousand men. They only escaped, who came not within his reach. Upon this the warrior triumphantly sang, *With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass, have I slain a thousand men.* In commemo-

ration of this astonishing victory, he called the place, *Ramath-Lehi, the lifting up of the jaw-bone.**

THIS is the highest instance of personal strength and prowess any where recorded, and can be accounted for only by supernatural aid, and that wonderful strength which God, at times, diffused through all his sinews, joints and bones. It is to be considered that in this age, fire-arms were unknown, and bodily strength always gave the superiority in battle, and was highly prized in a warrior. We can easily conceive too that certain circumstances might have favored this terrible slaughter. The Philistines, seeing Samson bound, might have run out to meet him in a disorderly manner, leaving what arms they had behind; when at once, his bursting his cords, coming forward with the utmost fury, and spreading havoc all around, might have thrown them into total dejection, confusion and straggling flight. Important victories often depend on small circumstances, which are under the direction of God, and which men can neither foresee nor prevent.

SAMSON greatly fatigued, and finding no water in the place, was ready to perish with thirst. He made his supplication to God, who caused a fountain to

* Chap. xv. 16. 17.

spring up, of which Samson drank and revived. In our translation it is, *God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout*;* but some suppose, that it should be, *He clave a hollow place in Lehi*. The miracle is the same in both cases, for it was as easy to bring water from the bone, as from a rock, only the latter interpretation seems to agree with what is afterward said of its being *in Lehi unto this day*; where we can more easily conceive a spring, than the jaw-bone to have remained.

How forcibly are we taught here the frailty of man, and his entire dependance upon God. Samson, invincible by hosts, faints with thirst! After a most remarkable conquest, he is in danger of falling into the hands of his enemies! His arm is unstrung, his countenance pale, and his tongue parched! Surely no man has reason to boast of what he is, or what he does; but all the glory is to be ascribed to God. We are also taught that God is near to help his people in time of need. Samson called upon him in distress, and found relief.

AFTER this, Samson, encouraged by his success, went boldly and lodged in Gaza, one of the Philistian cities, where understanding that they laid wait for him

* Chap. xv. 19,

till the morning, he rose in the night, plucked up the gates of the city with the two posts and the bar, and laying them upon his shoulders, carried them as far as the top of a hill, in sight of Hebron. At length, a most fatal adventure befel him. *It came to pass, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.** Whether this was a woman of Israel, or one of the daughters of the Philistines; whether she was his wife, or only a harlot, is not said in scripture. Some have been of opinion that Samson was married to her; but others, because there is no mention made of any marriage rites, and because the Philistines bribed her to betray him, have been of a different opinion. Certain it is, that she was of a mercenary disposition, and whatever charms and allurements of person she possessed, had a very base and treacherous heart. She undertook for a sum of money promised her by the Lords of the Philistines, to obtain from Samson, and discover to them, the source of his uncommon strength. She beset him with all her arts and wiles; he evaded, but in vain; she redoubled her diligence; she teased, wept and upbraided. *She said unto him, how canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth.†* Samson feared not his enemies in the field,

* Chap. xvi. 4.

† Chap. xvi. 15.

though an host encamped against him; but here was an enemy he could not withstand. At the name of Philistine, every nerve was stretched and every muscle swelled; but before Delilah he was tame, submissive, and cringing. “Blandished parlies, feminine assaults and tongue-batteries,” were more dangerous to him than would have been all the sons of Anak. The renowned foldier, softened with pleasure, and vexed to death, laid the pledge of his strength in her lap, suffered his locks to be shaven, broke his vow, and the Lord departed from him. *The Philistines be upon thee Samson.* Arise, foldier, arise! Weak now as other men, the Philistines came upon him, put out his eyes, carried him to Gaza, bound him with fetters of brass, and made him grind at a mill, like an abject slave. Ask now, where is Samson, the Judge of Israel, the terror of his enemies, and the bulwark of his nation? Betrayed, captived, blind, insulted, a despicable drudge.—Besides the many useful reflections which occur here, who does not see the awful consequence of sinning against God? This reduced Samson into all his misery and distress. Ye unwary youth, learn from this example to shun the fascination of unlawful pleasure. See how it debases the soul, and at once blasts every useful and honorable pursuit in life. Harken to the salutary instruction of Solomon; *Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For*

*she hath cast down many wounded; yea many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.** But it is time to hasten to the concluding scene.

SAMSON continued in this deplorable situation, until his hair began to grow, and God, on his repentance, and renewal of his vow, was pleased to restore his strength. About this time, the Lords of the Philistines came together to rejoice, and offer sacrifice to their god Dagon, for having delivered their worst enemy into their hands; and when they had grown merry, they sent for Samson, that they might divert themselves with him. The building where the feast was celebrated, and which held a vast number of spectators, is generally supposed to have been of wood, and erected after the form of the theatres among the Romans. It is also supposed, that about the middle of the building were two large beams upon which the weight of the whole structure rested, and that these beams were supported by two main pillars contiguous to each other. There are accounts in ancient history of more capacious buildings of this sort, than what is here mentioned.

AFTER Samson had made sport for them, he asked the person who led him, to suffer him to lean upon

* Prov. vii. 25—27.

the pillars. Having laid hold on them, one with his right hand, and the other with his left, and supplicating God for strength, he shook the house, so that it fell, and crushed no less than three thousand persons to death, and himself in the midst of them.

Thus died this extraordinary man, of whom, what is fabled of Hector, Achilles, or Hercules, was true, and more. Indeed it is probable that the heathen Hercules was the Samson of sacred writ.—Time will scarcely admit, to introduce even in the briefest manner, some questions which arise from this history.

i. Was Samson of vast bulk, or gigantic size of body?—Had this been the case, the Philistines would have been at no loss to discover wherein his great strength lay; but seeing such astonishing feats performed by a body not uncommon, it might well excite their wonder. His strength was evidently miraculous; perhaps not always inherent, but bestowed as the occasion required. Thus we find it said, when he performed his exploits, that the *Spirit of the Lord moved him; came upon him; and came mightily upon him.* By these expressions we are not to understand the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, but the communication of extraordinary bodily strength; for we must distinguish between the gifts and the graces of the Spirit.

2. Was his hair the natural cause of his strength?—This is not to be supposed. His strength depended upon the covenant between God and him, the sign of which was his hair. When therefore he suffered this to be cut off, he broke this covenant, and forfeited his right to the blessing.

3. A MORE important question than either of these, respects the manner of his death. Ought he to have died in that manner? Was he not chargeable with the spirit of revenge and self-murder?—He is acquitted by casuists on these principles; that he was moved thereto by the great Arbiter of life and death; that as the judge and defender of Israel, he devoted his life to the public good; that he did not intend his own death, any farther than as it was the inevitable consequence of destroying so many of the enemies of his nation. In this view he died like a conqueror in the field of battle. By the sacrifice of his life, he wrought deliverance; and in this view especially is he reckoned a type of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; who by death overcame the enemies of his people, and obtained a complete salvation for them.

It is worthy of remark in considering this and other characters, that to constitute a proper type, it is by no means necessary that the person be perfect; nor

that every particular incident of his life be taken into the account. It is sufficient that the resemblance hold in great and leading circumstances. Though it would be impious to apply every article in the history of Samson to Christ, yet in some respects he was remarkably typical.

Do we admire the man who nobly ventures his life for his country? Surely infinitely more ought we to admire him, my brethren, who endured for us the avenging wrath of an offended God. What are any privileges that can be enjoyed in this world, compared with freedom from sin and Satan, and restoration to the favor and enjoyment of God?

INSTEAD then of calling your attention any farther to the character of Samson, and pointing out the particular lessons his history teaches, let me spend the few moments that remain, in recommending to you the glorious and almighty Saviour. When there was no eye to pity and no hand to save, he voluntarily undertook the redemption of sinners. It is impossible that he should fail in the execution of his design. Though Jesus died, yet he rose again. Samson could not rise from the ruins in which he was buried; but Jesus burst the bands of death, and lives for evermore: and to

him can his people look as a powerful King in heaven, managing and directing all their affairs. It is to make us wise unto salvation, that these sacred pages are written; to teach us to fear and trust in God, that the ways of his providence in former ages are recorded; to insill the lessons of virtue, that characters are exhibited with their virtues and their vices.—Let us remember, that faith in Jesus Christ is the foundation of all true religion, and the principle of all obedience acceptable to God. This only can save our souls, and this we ought to seek more than remarkable gifts or distinctions among men. Where now are all the high-sounding names of old? Death has laid them low, and they live but in the breath of others. Even the mighty flame of Samson was soon extinct, and his body moulders in the dust *between Zorah and Eshtaol*. His name stands recorded only to show the power of God, the vanity of human glory, and how much weakness is often united to the greatest strength. *Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.** To the free mercy of God through a Sa-

* Jerem. ix. 23, 24.

CHARACTER OF SAMSON. 183

viour, was Samson, and must all be indebted for salvation. Whoever is united to the Son of God, shall be made to triumph over death, and be admitted to live and reign with him, when this earth and time shall be no longer.

S E R M O N XI.

HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF SAUL;

I SAMUEL X. 24.

And Samuel said to the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, GOD SAVE THE KING.

THESE words refer to a transaction of the children of Israel at the election of SAUL their first king. Having been governed a long time by judges, a revolution now took place.—When the prophet Samuel had become old, he committed the active part of the administration to his two sons, who greatly abused their trust, and caused general dissatisfaction among the people. This corrupt conduct of their officers, the frequent and distressing wars in which they were engaged with the Philistines, together with a national pride, excited an earnest desire for a change in their form of government. Accordingly the elders of

Israel assembled, made known their grievances to Samuel, and requested that a king should be appointed, as in other nations. This request was displeasing to Samuel. He consulted the Lord on the occasion, who directed him to comply, at the same time declaring that their conduct was not so much an affront to Samuel, as rebellion against himself. *They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.**

THE guilt of that people appears, when we consider that their government was a theocracy. God was their king, in a more peculiar manner, than he was of any other nation; and therefore, in the desire of change, they evidently cast an indignity on his government. It is not agreed how long the theocracy lasted; some thinking that it ceased on the commencement of regal power, founding their opinion on these words, *They have rejected me*; and others, that it continued until the coming of our blessed Saviour; founding their opinion on these words, *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh come.†* It is certain that the nation of the Jews was under the peculiar care of God, until the days of the Messiah, and except that their kings imitated the

* Chap. viii. 7.

† Gen. xlix. 10.

splendor of the eastern monarchs, the government did not differ much from that under the judges.

THOUGH Samuel faithfully told them of the many inconveniencies which would attend kingly power, yet they abjectly were contented to submit, and peremptorily insisted on their request. *Nay, but we will have a king over us ; that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.** They sinned not only in desiring a king, but in asking one in so improper and absolute a manner.—When people grow discontented and uneasy under the government of God, he sometimes punishes them by fulfilling their wishes.

THE person whom the Lord ordered Samuel to anoint, was Saul the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin. After he had anointed him, informed him of the design, and given him several signs in confirmation, Saul returned to a private life. The prophet thought it necessary to have the consent of the people, and therefore called an assembly at Mizpeh, where they proceeded to an election by lot. The lot being cast for every tribe separately, it fell upon Benjamin ; being cast next for all the families of this tribe, it fell upon the family of Matri ; and lastly being cast for all the

* Chap. viii. 19. 20.

persons of this family, it fell upon Saul. He chose to be absent during the election, but when afterwards found and ushered among the people, he appeared so tall and well proportioned, his countenance so comely and dignified, and he moved with such majesty and grace, as to be received with high acclamations. *See ye him, said Samuel, whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted and said, God save the King.*

To the character of Saul your attention, my brethren, will be now called; a character in which we will find something to praise, and much to blame; a character unstable, and which appears different at the beginning, from what it does at the end of his reign; but from which, we may derive many useful lessons for our guidance in life.

THE sacred historian mentions more than once, the uncommon stature and comeliness of Saul, as no small recommendation. He was *a choice young man, and a goodly, and there was not among the children of Israel, a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upwards he was higher than any of the people.** This was a qualification of more importance, than at first view we may imagine. They desired a king *like all the nations;*

* Chap. ix. 2.

and the Eastern people had always regard to the external appearance of their monarch. An advantageous stature was greatly esteemed ; and if this had not been attended to, the wishes of the children of Israel had not been gratified. This is, at this day, desirable in a soldier, and was still more so in early times, when success depended chiefly on bodily activity and strength. This however is certainly far from being the most important requisite in a prince ; and we value a cabinet not so much for its outward decorations, as for the curiosities within. Great and excellent minds are often connected with small and even deformed bodies. When the Lord sent Samuel to anoint David, and Eliab was presented before him, whom he concluded from his stature was the person designed, *the Lord said, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature ; because I have refused him ; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.**

His person was not the only recommendation of Saul. He was the son of *a mighty man of power*, and inherited, in a large measure, the martial qualities of the father. The many battles he fought, and the victories he won, show that he possessed great bravery and was skilled in the art of war. These were his chief ex-

* Chap. xvi. 7.

cellencies. As the necessities of the kingdom required these, so they were the only things to support his power and increase his fame. He was constantly attentive to the improvement of his military force, and to the means of annoying his enemy. When *he saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him into the service.** For these things he is entitled to praise ; or rather it is due to God, who qualifies men for the part they have to act. From him proceed the gifts of nature as well as of grace,

Soon after his appointment to the throne, an occasion offered on which he distinguished himself, and established his authority among the people. Nahash the Ammonite laid siege to the city of Jabesh-gilead, and insisted on the most cruel terms of surrender, even that they should consent that he should *thrust out all their right eyes*, and he allowed them, at their request, seven days to consider of this condition. The tidings were carried to Saul, who was moved with extreme indignation. He promised assistance to the besieged, instantly dispatched messengers throughout Israel, collected a large army, and before the expiration of the seven days, disposed his troops and attacked the enemy with such prudence and courage, that, of those

* Chap. xiv. 52.

who escaped, *two were not left together.** This action gained him great popularity. At his election, there were some male-contents, who despised him on account of the smallness of the tribe to which he belonged, and the obscurity of his family, but now they were over-awed. The people were for putting to death those who had spoken disrespectfully of him. Saul, on this occasion, discovered a greatness and generosity of soul by preventing their design. He would not suffer them to sully the glories of the day, or cause mourning to any, when the Lord had called them all to rejoice in the salvation he had wrought for them.—The opinion of the populace is very fluctuating and uncertain. A man to be famous, must be prosperous. Merit is always supposed, where there is the glare of success.

TIME would fail to rehearse all the achievements of Saul. It is sufficient to adduce, on this part of the character, the words of David, when he lamented over Saul, and Jonathan his son. *From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.*†

SAUL had not only those qualifications which constitute the soldier and the leader, but at his first acces-

* Chap. xi. 1.—11.

† 2 Sam. i. 22, 23.

sion to power, he appears to have been modest, humble and prudent. When Samuel disclosed to him the prospect of the kingdom, he answered, *Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?* When the people were assembled to make a choice, he hid himself from the public view; and when some spoke contemptuously, and refused to bring him the usual presents, he took no notice of their conduct, but quietly retired. At this time, he gave no evidence of ambitious views, and there was nothing assuming or haughty in his demeanor. Some may ascribe this to policy; but why not rather believe, that he was, as Samuel afterward told him, *little in his own sight*; that he felt not at present, the working of those principles which power and success, in process of time, called forth.

MEN differ greatly from themselves, according to the circumstances in which they are placed. Not only does a high station render their virtues and their vices more conspicuous, but, on too many, has a baneful influence. It affords the means of sensual gratification; and it begets in the heart desires still more corrupt. No one can certainly say, if unrestrained by grace, of what he will not be guilty. He not only deceives others, but is often deceived himself. One deviation

from the law of God may lead to another, until he become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and at length rush into the commission of crimes, the very thought of which at first made him tremble. In one situation of life, he may observe the precepts of religion, and in another, totally disregard them. *Is thy servant a dog,* said Hazael, *that he should do this great thing?* And yet, he afterwards did it. *The man that hath done this thing,* said David, *shall surely die*; not knowing that he pronounced his own sentence; that what he so severely condemned in another, he himself had committed. We need not therefore, be surprised to see an inconsistency of character in men, when placed in different circumstances, and when opportunities serve to excite their various passions. Had Saul remained in private life, he would not have been guilty of so many crimes. He would have been more virtuous and more happy.

PERHAPS, indeed, his excesses are, in some degree imputable to the most dreadful disorder incident to human nature, and with which he was often afflicted. This was a deep melancholy, approaching to downright frenzy or madness. Some have supposed from these words of scripture, *an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him*, that he was really possessed with a devil; but if we consider that the word *spirit*, in the sacred

language, denotes the disposition of the body, as well as of the mind and that it was common among the Jews to impute every affliction, when ignorant of its cause, immediately to the hand of God; and if, besides, we consider the frequent returns of this malady in Saul, the symptoms, and the remedy used, we will rather believe, that it was melancholy; which, though not without the direction of Providence, may yet be ascribed to a natural cause. The mind and the body strangely and mutually affect one another. A disordered body produces evil passions, and evil passions disorder the body. We have an account of this distemper coming upon Saul, after his disobedience to God, in the case of the Amalekites, and for which sin, Samuel plainly told him, that the *Lord had rejected him from being king*. He had been formerly threatened for presuming to offer sacrifice at Gilgal, before the arrival of Samuel, and by this last act of neglect to obey a positive and divine command, he lost the favor and protection of God. The kingdom was taken from him, and another appointed in his room. This and the remorse of his own conscience, probably brought him into a melancholy state, which was nourished by his jealousy of David, and his continual apprehensions.

It was not, however, without intervals. He was advised to try the power of music, and by this, at times, his temper was sweetened, and his passions allayed. At the melody of David's harp, he *was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.** Examples might be produced both from sacred and profane history of the happy influence of music. It was an art of early invention. *Jubal*, one of the descendants of Cain, *was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.*† At this time, David was a great proficient, and struck his harp with such wonderful skill, as to compose and delight the king; who conceived, on this account, a love for him, made him his armour-bearer, and retained him for some time at court.—Music ought to be cultivated by all, who would render the worship of God pleasing and edifying. The singing of praise is a principal part of divine service on earth, and is represented to us as the employment and happiness of heaven. When public worship is introduced with a psalm well sung, all joining and bearing their parts, it induces a happy frame of spirit, and prepares for the exercises which follow.

HAD David possessed no other talent, he would still have remained in favor; but unhappily for Saul, David was, in every view, the greatest character of

* Chap. xvi. 23.

† Gen. iv. 21.

that age, and soon excited in him the highest envy and jealousy. This jealousy broke out in the most outrageous manner, knew neither bounds nor decency, and settled into an implacable hatred. From this time he was no longer the same man, *lovely and pleasant*, as David celebrates him. His temper became sour, reserved, and subject to frequent starts of passion. From this time, we date his most cruel and wicked acts. Several times he attempted to kill David with his own hand. He openly affronted him, by marrying his eldest daughter, contrary to his promise, to another, and then gave him his second, with an evil intention. He spoke to his officers to kill him; and once, in his rage, aimed a blow at the life of his own son, because he pleaded in David's behalf. David having fled from his presence, and sought security where he could find it, Saul pursued him from place to place, and *hunted him like a partridge in the mountains*. Casting of all respect to Samuel, and disregarding the service of God, he came against David when under protection of the prophets.* He slew Ahimelech and the priests of the Lord, in all eighty-five persons, because Ahimelech had afforded some relief to David in distress.† And he was guilty of all this bitter persecution against a man who did him no injury, who fought his battles, and who spared his life more than once, when in his

* Chap. xix. 18. † Chap. xxii. 9.

power ; only because he had the happiness to be endowed with extraordinary talents, had the love of the people, and was appointed by God to succeed to the throne.

THIS persecution however, had some intermission. The heart of Saul sometimes relented, and this affords still more insight into his character.

SAUL going alone into a cave, where David and his men had concealed themselves, his men urged him to embrace that opportunity of killing his enemy ; but he rejected their proposal with abhorrence, and approaching him privily, cut off the skirt of his robe. When Saul had left the cave, David called to him at a distance, showed him the skirt of his robe, and so tenderly expostulated with him on his conduct, that he wept aloud, confessed David's innocence, and his own guilt, and after making David swear, that when he came to the throne, he would not injure his family, he returned home.*

ON another occasion, when Saul came out with three thousand chosen men, David went with Abishai into their encampment by night, and finding them buried

* Chap. xxiv.

in sleep, though Abishai asked leave to kill Saul, yet David peremptorily forbade him, telling him of the evil of it, but he brought off the spear and the cruse of water, which lay at Saul's bolster. When David had retired to a convenient distance, he upbraided Abner, the captain of Saul's host, for his negligence, and again expostulated with Saul on his conduct, who shewed the same compunction as before, and promised David to make no more attempts on his life.* David, however, knowing the instability of his temper, and how little dependance was to be put in his declarations, thought it safest to flee out of his dominions.

IN how pitiable a condition does Saul appear! The wretched slave of base passions! O sinner, see in him thine own picture! Thy conscience reproves thee at times, for thy transgressions, and fills thee with shame and sorrow; thy judgment approves what is right, and thou formest resolutions to amend; but, at the onset of temptation, they are all broken, and thou art hurried away as with a torrent. Thus thou wilt go on sinning and repenting, unless grace seize thy heart, until thou liest down in endless horror and despair.

WE find no amendment in Saul as he approached nearer to the end of life. The cloud grew still thicker

* Chap. xxvi.

and darker. About this time, the Philistines invaded the land of Israel, with a very formidable army. They encamped at Shunem, and Saul with his army encamped on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines being more numerous, and better prepared for war, Saul was exceedingly afraid as to the issue of a battle. What increased his fear and perplexity was, that Samuel was now dead, and God would not be consulted by him, or give him any instructions. In this exigence, though he had before banished all the wizards, and those that dealt with familiar spirits out of the land, yet he had recourse for consultation, contrary to the express law of God, to a woman of this character, at Endor.—It has exercised both ancient and modern writers to determine, whether Saul saw a real apparition, or whether he was deceived by the woman; whether it was the ghost of Samuel, or some evil spirit which was conjured up. Suffice it to say, that from the circumstances of the relation in scripture, the opinion that it was a real apparition, and that this was the ghost of Samuel, which God permitted to appear, is most probable, and is best defended.* But whatever we may think of this, the conduct of Saul was weak, inconsistent, and highly displeasing to God. We are informed that *Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he*

* Chap. xxviii. 7.

*kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; and enquired not of the Lord.**

MANKIND have in all ages discovered a disposition to pry into futurity, and there have been some, artful enough to take advantage of this disposition; who pretended to reveal what shall happen to men. Were it possible to obtain this knowledge, we are certainly better without it, as it would unfit us for the duties of life, and entirely destroy our happiness. When Saul heard his doom he fainted away; yet he afterward joined his army, and probably the very next morning engaged in battle. In this he displayed uncommon resolution. He believed that he must die, and yet he led on his troops and acted as bravely as man could do. His army soon gave way, and were pursued with slaughter, as far as Mount Gilboa. His three sons were among the slain, and he himself was sorely wounded. All was dismay and confusion, beyond remedy. Saul finding that he was unable to escape, requested his armour-bearer to kill him, which being refused, he fell upon his own sword, and thus died. Here he failed of true magnanimity, and acted more like the coward than the hero. He had courage enough to die, but not enough to live. He had courage enough to

* I Chron. x. 13. 14.

face his enemies in the field, but not enough to bear the triumph and insults of a victorious enemy. This shows that his courage was rather constitutional, than the effect of innate greatness of mind; that he deserves rather the name of a desperate man, than of a hero.

THE manner of his death is also to be considered in a more serious light, as an act of atrocious guilt, and depriving him of the time and means for repentance. Indeed the character of Saul, in a religious view, appears, through his whole life, unfavorable, and most of all in the concluding scene. The proverb, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* is no evidence of his early piety. He is seldom found to acknowledge God in his victories. We are told that he *built an altar unto the Lord*, and the historian is careful to remark, that it *was the first*, which implies an inattention to sacred things. What allowance is to be made, by reason of his melancholy, is known only to Him, who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of men; and he stands or falls, by his sentence, *all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment.*

SUCH, my brethren, was Saul; high in station, but debased by his crimes. He commanded armies, but could not command himself. In the possession of a kingdom, a successful warrior, and surrounded with

courtiers, his envy and jealousy gave him continual torment. Alas! poor, wretched human nature! Such we all are, without restoring and sanctifying grace. The same principles are within us, and need only the same circumstances to bring them into exercise. Nothing can save us but the free mercy of God; nothing preserve us from evil, but his protecting hand.

In some characters, you are called to imitate their virtues, and in others to shun their vices. Some go before to lead you in the way of happiness; and others, by taking the road of misery, call aloud to beware. If we mark the beginning of Saul's downfall, we find that it was in neglecting God, in disobeying his commands. If we mark the progress of his crimes and attendant miseries, we find that they followed on the loss of the favor and protection of God. Ought not we, therefore, to be deterred by this example from all the ways of known sin, and fear lest, by repeated provocation, God withdraw from us his gracious influence? And that then we shall go on to fill up the measure of our iniquities? Let sinners take warning in time. Let them comply with these words of the Apostle, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called, To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.**

* Heb. iii. 13.

SUFFER me to direct the attention of all, to the fulness of grace, treasured in our blessed Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ. Religion is begun by an application to him, and it is carried on by strength continually derived from him. In all our addresses, we must point you to him as your only hope for this world, and for that which is to come. He is the *way, and the truth and the life*. He is made of God unto all who will receive him, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*. It would be in vain to call you to subdue your lusts, and to obey the law of God, unless grace was promised in the Saviour. Reason and philosophy may do much, but the malady of our nature is too deep for them to cure. We must be renewed by the Holy Ghost. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.** May the Lord, in his abundant mercy, grant us all this spirit, to quicken, to guide, to comfort, and to work every good work within us, that so, at last, we may be prepared to dwell with him in mansions of eternal holiness and peace.

* Gal. v. 22.

S E R M O N XII.

FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN JONATHAN
AND DAVID.

2 SAMUEL I. 26.

I am distressed for thee, my brother JONATHAN : very pleasant hast thou been unto me : thy love to me was WONDERFUL, passing the love of women.

THE holy scriptures not only make us wise unto salvation, but they exceed all other writings in the variety and excellence of the composition. In them we find all sorts of style ; the historical, the poetical, and the didactic ; the simple, the pathetic, and the sublime. Distinct from their main design, they are calculated to improve the understanding and refine the taste.

THE words now read are part of the finest elegy any where to be found ; an elegy written by David on the

mournful occasion of the death of Saul, and Jonathan his son. Surely we may say, that by these lines he has erected a monument more durable than marble, than brass ; nay, which will only fade with time itself.

It is worthy of remark, that while he laments the death of Saul as a public loss, and mentions with tenderness what was amiable in both father and son ; yet the loss of Jonathan most deeply wrings his heart. After celebrating him as the prince and the warrior, he pours forth his whole soul, when he speaks of him as the friend. Here no words could equal the subject ; nor would the fulness of his heart permit him, indeed, to seek for fine figures ; but he exclaims in the artless language of grief, *I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan.* This was the most melancholly part of the theme. When he struck this slow, solemn, and plaintive note, it shivering went through all his frame. We scarce know whether to admire most the deceased, or the surviving friend ; the one who was worthy to be thus lamented, or the other who poured his grief in such strains as these. The friendship which had subsisted between them is not equalled by any other example in sacred or profane history, and is hardly exceeded by romance itself.

WHAT I have in view is to make some general observations on friendship ; to mention the qualities necessary in a friend ; illustrating these things by the example before us ; and then to make a natural and very serious conclusion.

THIS is a subject which has been treated by some of the best pens, and is often the topic of conversation. To do full justice to it at present, is not pretended ; but, it is hoped, that something may be suggested tending to direct our conduct, and promote our happiness in life.

FRIENDSHIP is an union between two persons, founded on mutual esteem, and cemented by mutual affection and kind offices. Some mean by friendship, only that benevolence which unites virtuous minds, without confining it to individuals. Thus, christian charity has been called " friendship to all the world." But, what is properly called friendship is not so extended. The heart does not admit all equally. One, or at least a few are singularly chosen and singularly beloved. At the same time, a general benevolence is an excellent preparative, and the best foundation for friendship. It likewise differs from the pleasure we have in an entertaining companion, from the affection we bear to a relative, and from the gratitude we feel to

one who has laid us under obligation. In neither of these cases, may the esteem and confidence be such as to constitute a perfect friendship.—We may observe, on this subject,

FIRST, That friendship, as now stated, is not enjoined as a duty. It is a matter of choice, and must ever depend upon the circumstances in which we are placed. Had it been commanded, then it would have been indispensable, and by the neglect we would become criminal. For want of attending to this distinction, a certain writer has cast an unjust censure upon the gospel of Christ, as if it were extremely deficient “in having no where enjoined and required the exercise of friendship; a virtue,” says he, “the most amiable and excellent.” Now, though it be allowed that friendship is amiable and excellent, and the source of our greatest pleasure and advantage, yet it could not properly be commanded in any system of religion or morals; because we may be in such circumstances, as never to meet with a friend. Such a thing must ever be rare in the world. David found only one Jonathan. The peculiar temper, and other accidents combined to form this friendship, which, probably, never happened in his life again. It is observed of the Emperor Augustus, when lamenting the death of his friends, “That though he could instantly repair the

destruction of whole fleets and armies ; and bid Rome, after a general conflagration, rise out of her ashes even with more lustre than before ; he was yet unable, during a whole life, to fill up those lasting vacancies in his friendship.”

BUT, though friendship be not enjoined in our holy religion, yet it is recommended by the example before us, and by the example of our blessed Lord himself. He had a disciple whom *he loved*.* He also distinguished Lazarus whom he raised from the dead with a peculiar love ; and was more than commonly attached to that whole family ; for we are expressly told, that *he loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus* ;† by which we are to understand, that though he loved all mankind, yet these persons shared greatly in his affection and attention. Besides, he hath, by precept, enjoined love to all in the most plain and forcible terms ; and this, as has been said, is the only sure and lasting foundation for particular friendships. This leads me to observe,

AGAIN, That particular friendship, or an attachment to one above another, does not lessen, but rather promotes universal benevolence. The heart most full

* John xiii. 23.

† John xi. 5.

ceptible of friendship will ever be the most charitable to mankind in general. We do not find that the affection we bear to family and kindred hinders a regard for others. The social affections increase by exercise. The heart expands; and by attending to those with whom we are more particularly connected, we learn to pity and relieve those who are strangers to us. While, therefore, friendship is to be distinguished from a general good will, it is by no means incompatible with it; but, on the contrary, that heart capable of those finer feelings which are exercised in friendship, will be most apt to embrace human kind. Surely the blessed Saviour loved all, and was constantly employed in doing good offices; and yet we see that some received most of his attention and care.

A THIRD observation is, that friendship is most apt to be contracted in younger life; and is most firm and lasting between those of the same age and engaged in the same pursuits. In youth the affections are warm, and the heart is unsuspicious; and therefore, at this season a connection of this kind is most apt to begin. Then, indeed, through want of judgment, very improper ones may be formed, which more experience will correct; and which, perhaps, different pursuits in life may wholly destroy.

THE first account we have of the attachment between Jonathan and David was, when David appeared before Saul with the head of Goliath in his hand. They were both young, and probably, there was but little disparity in their age. Besides their amiable qualities, they were both remarkable for their valour, which, from the continual wars in which the nation was engaged, was highly prized. The courage which David had shown in accepting the challenge of the giant, and his noble conduct on this occasion, no doubt, drew the attention of so brave a prince as Jonathan; and finding many other accomplishments united, he immediately conceived the highest affection for him. This was returned on the part of David. The language of scripture is very strong and expressive; *The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.* We are also informed that *they made a covenant.** They professedly entered into an alliance of friendship, and, probably, confirmed it by a mutual oath, as we expressly read of their doing afterwards. We may well apply to them, the lines applied to two heroes in later days:

“Great souls by instinct to each other turn,

“Demand alliance, and in friendship burn.”

It was on this occasion that Jonathan presented David with his *robe*, his *sword*, his *bow*, and his *girdle*. These

* I Sam. xviii. 1—3.

had graced the side of the princely Jonathan, and they no less graced the side of his elegant and sprightly friend. This example shows that lively friendship is generally conceived between the young, and those having the same prospects and pursuits in life. In advanced age the affections cool and disappointments sour the temper. The knowledge and the distrust of mankind too often go together.—It is necessary likewise, in order to be firm and lasting, that friendship be between equals, and those agreed in great and leading sentiments. Though it may subsist where there is no striking similarity of temper and accomplishments, yet if persons be of different parties in religion or politics, this will produce debate and animosity, which must soon cool, if not extinguish the sparks of affection.

ONLY another observation need be added, and that is an important one; that all true friendship must be founded on virtue. The unions which have not this for their foundation, and are not designed to promote each others real happiness, (and this can be found only in the paths of religion and virtue,) deserve rather the name of conspiracies or confederacies. Such are to be found among men, and preserved too with great fidelity; and if in a good or just cause, would deserve commendation. We admire the principle, but detest the end. A virtuous friendship has not only temporal,

but spiritual advantage in view. It looks forward to eternity. It is not dissolved even by death; but shall glow with more ardent flame in the pure realms of everlasting bliss and peace.

THE first quality therefore in a friend is, that he be virtuous; or, in other words, that he love God, and pay the strictest regard to his laws. Among christians, that he be a professor of the religion of Christ; and, according to what has been already said, that there be an agreement in great and leading sentiments. Not that friendship cannot and does not subsist in other circumstances, but that it is less frequent, or at least, is not without danger. But however this be, virtue, or religion is absolutely necessary to render it useful and lasting.

AGAIN, It is required in a friend that he be disinterested. Though advantage and pleasure result from friendship, yet these are not the main objects in the union. Mutual attentions and kind offices nourish and strengthen it; but it is formed distinct from any consideration of this kind, and is disinterested in its acts.

IN the example before us, the greatest disinterestedness appears, particularly on the side of Jonathan. His many acts of kindness were not performed because

he hoped to derive any profit, but because he loved David; nay, they were performed at the evident risque of his father's displeasure, his own popularity, and the loss at last of the kingdom. David continually grew in favor with the army, nor was it unknown to Jonathan, that he was appointed by God to succeed to the throne. There were more reasons why David should be attached to Jonathan, and yet he appears to have been also disinterested. Why else did he so unfeignedly mourn for his death? Why afterward so amply provide for his helpless son? It was not because Jonathan was necessary to him in a time of distress, that he professed friendship; nor did he secretly rejoice at his death, while he shed a few hypocritical tears; but he loved the man as himself, and had Jonathan lived he would have shared the kingdom with him. The advancement of one was the advancement of the other. They had no separate interests, and it may be said, that one soul actuated both bodies.

AGAIN, It is required in a friend that he be zealous and active; and that he be, at the same time, prudent and discreet. Zeal without prudence may do injury when a benefit is intended. For this reason some have preferred a prudent to a zealous friend. It is certain that much noise and ostentation are not commendable qualities.

ZEAL and prudence were remarkably united in Jonathan. He was unwearied in his endeavours to serve David. He repeatedly pleaded his cause in the most affectionate manner with Saul, and never failed to give notice of his success. Let me produce only one instance. At the feast of the new-moon, David, knowing Saul's hatred against him, was afraid to take his seat. Jonathan undertook to find out the temper of his father, and give David notice, while he lay concealed in a field, by certain signs agreed upon between them. Faithful to his trust, having discovered to his sorrow the implacable resentment of his father, he repaired to the field, gave the sign appointed, and having dismissed a young man he took with him, and who was an utter stranger to the business, there commenced a scene between the two friends the most interesting and affecting. The sacred historian informs us, that *as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place towards the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times : and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.**—In the words of the text, David mentions the love of Jonathan to him as being *wonderful, passing the love of women*. It exceeded the love of even these, who usually love with more ardency and anxious concern than men, those with whom they are connected. No greater en-

* 1 Sam. xx. 41.

comium could be bestowed on his love, than by comparing it with that sensibility, warmth, and delicacy which are peculiarly characteristic of, and which beautify the other sex.

NOR was the love of David less tender and vehement. It is said, in the passage just quoted, that in tenderness he *exceeded*. It was not indeed in his power to be so serviceable to his friend, as his friend was to him. The cruel jealousy of Saul prevented his presence at the action on Mount Gilboa. David was the only man likely to have retrieved the honors of the day. But alas, when his friend sunk under superior numbers, he was confined to his tent at Ziklag. Had David been there, Jonathan had not fallen, or they had fallen together. Distant from the bloody scene, unable to support his friend, or rally the dispirited troops, and avenge his death, he raises loud, but unavailing lamentation. He makes Gilboa, however, famous to the latest ages. At the moment he blasts it in poetic vengeance, and renders it a dry and barren spot, by his verse, he entwines an immortal wreath for his friend, or causes ever-greens to shoot up all around and shade the dusky hill.

BUT, to mention farther the qualifications of a friend, it is necessary that he have a frankness or open-

ness of temper. He ought to be free from reserve, suspicion, or jealousy; for where these subsist they destroy confidence. That maxim which some adopt, "that a man ought so to converse with his friend, as if he was one day to become his enemy," is the bane of real friendship. When this is the case, there cannot be freedom, confidence, and an unreserved communication of sentiments. As a friend will not betray, so neither must he harbor the suspicion of being betrayed. He is another self who may be freely trusted. To this quality ought to be added faithfulness in mentioning the faults of his friend, and patience in hearing his own. This is a difficult part in friendship, and requires to be managed with prudence, mildness, and tenderness.

ANOTHER important quality is evenness and constancy of behaviour. An unequal temper, and especially one subject to starts of passion, is opposed to a friendly union; and an inconstant temper which is ever subject to change from caprice, to hearken to the whispers of slander, and to be allured by new objects, will not encourage dependance.

PERHAPS these are the most striking features in a friend, with which the others will be found always

united. These qualities are so rare, and there are so many chances, if we may so speak, that the person who has them, may not meet with another, that it is easy to see that real friendship can seldom be found. It is said of Socrates, that when "building himself a house at Athens, being asked by one, that observed the littleness of the design, why a man so eminent would not have an abode more suitable to his dignity;" he replied, "That he should think himself sufficiently accommodated, if he could see that narrow habitation filled with real friends." Such was his opinion of the smallness of their number. So many disappointments are experienced in this matter; so much insincerity and selfishness appear in the world; so many are found to profess friendship in a day of prosperity, and hide themselves in a day of adversity; that some in mortification and chagrin adopt the words of the poet:

"And what is friendship, but a name,
 "A charm that lulls to sleep;
 "A shade that follows wealth or fame,
 "But leaves the wretch to weep?"

WHAT an inestimable blessing have they found who have a friend! What pleasure and advantage result from an union such as has been described! O Jonathan, we envy thee not that thou wast the son of a king; a successful warrior; and that thou diedst

fighting the battles of thy country ; but we envy thee thy generous, honest, and disinterested heart. Thou wast the friend of distressed innocence ; the friend of mankind. Envy thee, did we say ? Rather we desire to esteem and emulate thy virtues, that like thee, we may live beloved, and die lamented.

ARE any of us, my brethren, disposed to complain, that men appear so much guided by interest and prejudice, to say nothing of baser passions, as to be unworthy of our love and confidence ?—To know the corruption of the human heart, and especially to feel our own, is doubtless important and useful, as it teaches us the dreadful effects of our apostacy from God and the necessity of regenerating grace ; but this knowledge is converted to a bad use, and proves injurious to our happiness, when it leads us to hate and despise human nature in general. Bad as it is, there are still found, particularly under the culture of education and the influence of religion, some amiable dispositions. Perhaps in every man there is somewhat to praise, as well as somewhat to blame. We would be better employed, if instead of complaining of others, we would more study to watch over and correct our own failings ; for often our mistake and our misery arise from this quarter ; not that others, but that we ourselves are bad. We ought to cultivate diligently those qual-

ities which attract the esteem of the virtuous and the good. This will retain our friends, if we have them; and if we have not, it will render us worthy of them.

*A man that hath friends, must shew himself friendly.**

I PROMISED to conduct you on this subject to a natural and very serious conclusion.

Is it not natural in considering the imperfection of men here below, to turn our attention to a future state of existence; to reflect on the glorious prospects which the gospel affords? It reveals a heaven of complete holiness and happiness, where all the redeemed shall be united; where those things which now prevent friendship, or interrupt it when formed, shall no more be found; but harmony and peace shall forever reign. There all will be sincere; no competitions and jealousies can arise between them; but they will love as children of the same father; united in heart as in voice in ascribing praise *unto him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood.*

NOR is it, my brethren, a foreign consideration on this subject, that friends, who in this world took sweet counsel together, shall meet again. Death makes only a temporary separation. In this view, the gospel of Christ exalts and perfects friendship. It is not an union

* Prov. xviii. 24.

for a few days, but the beginning of an eternal one in heaven. We ought not therefore to sorrow at their death, *as those who have no hope*, but consider them as having gone a short time before us ; and it may be, that they will be employed soon to welcome us to the same place. We know so little of the world of spirits, of their society, condition, and employments, that we ought to speak with caution ; and yet so much of our happiness here depends on society, and particularly on the company and conversation of friends, that we cannot help extending the idea beyond the grave. At least this is certain, that all who die in the Lord are forever happy. Were our friends amiable here ? It is our unspeakable consolation, that they are now freed from all sin and sorrow ; that they have joined a purer society, with which, if we are partakers of the same faith, we shall be united before long.

SUFFER me now to introduce to your view something more serious still ; to carry you from Mount Gilboa to Calvary ; to turn your attention from Jonathan to the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you admired a mortal love ? What think you then of the love of the Son of God ? Have you admired the qualities of an earthly friend ? What think you of Him who is altogether lovely ? Have you lamented the rich blood shed on

Gilboa? What think you of the blood divine which streamed on Calvary? And for whom did he die? For sinners of our race; not for his friends, but his enemies. For this he left the glories of heaven, and veiled himself with flesh; for this he suffered the reproach and contempt of men and devils; and for this he underwent the most cruel death. See him stretched, not on the bed of earthly honor, but bound as a criminal and delivered up a victim to divine justice! Here was love. Here is a friend; a friend you all need; and without whom you must be forever miserable. One able and willing to save you. One, whose favor not only alleviates the evils of life, but whose glory makes heaven itself; whose dominion extends to all worlds. He hath *the keys of hell and of death*. He rose from the dead by his own power, and is now exalted as a Prince and a Saviour. He is a friend in heaven to manage the concerns of his people; he tenderly sympathizes with them; and will bring them through all their tribulations to eternal rest and peace. O sinners, make the Lord Jesus your friend. Dying men, lay hold on the Saviour. Are you poor and defenceless? Behold one ready to help you; one who will never forsake you, in sickness or health, in prosperity or adversity; one who will guide you with his counsel, and afterwards receive you to glory. In this

state of affliction you need something to cheer and support you. Where can you find this, except in the joys of religion? Did all the world court and applaud you, you would be still friendless without the favor of God. After a few short and unsatisfying pleasures, you must lie down in endless sorrow. Only a God reconciled in Christ will sweeten friendship and every earthly blessing; and bring you at last to fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

HAPPY beyond expression are you, my brethren, who have chosen Jesus as your friend; who are saying of him, *This is my beloved, and this is my friend; my beloved is mine, and I am his.* From other friends you may be separated; but he is always with you; they may be unfaithful, but of him you are never ashamed; they may not be able to help you, but he is infinitely wise and powerful. *The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.* Did you dwell under the burning line, he would be there to refresh you; or, were you buried in snows and darkness under the pole of the earth, his presence would afford you light and heat. *The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.**

* Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

S E R M O N XIII.

HISTORY OF THE WIDOW OF
ZAREPHATH.

Preached for the benefit of the Charity School.

I KINGS XVII. 12.

And she said, As the LORD thy GOD liveth, I have not a cake, but an HANDFUL of meal in a barrel, and a LITTLE oil in a cruse: and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in, and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.

IT is difficult to say any thing new on so common and beaten a subject as charity. The most that can be expected at this late hour is, either novelty of manner, or warmth of address.

THE texts which offer themselves on occasions of this kind are, indeed, many and important. To a people so well instructed as you are, they must be very

familiar; and from your readiness to perform your duty in this respect, there needs little more than to remind you of it, or afford you the opportunity of doing it.

THE words now chosen as the foundation of a discourse will not appear unfuitable, if properly treated. They are the answer of the WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH to the prophet Elijah, and descriptive of the extreme distress to which she and her son were reduced. No person of sensibility can hear them without being interested and affected.

IT will be necessary, first, to relate the history with which they are connected; and then to make such reflections as this may suggest, and as may tend to call our benevolence into real exercise.

DURING the wicked reign of Ahab king of Israel, when a general corruption of manners prevailed among the people, the Lord was pleased, in order to awaken them to a sense of their idolatry, and bring them to repentance, to withhold rain for the space of three years and six months. Of this judgment Elijah the Tishbite forewarned Ahab. Zealous for the true worship, he prayed earnestly, that God would show this evident token of his displeasure, as a mean of vin-

dicating his own honor, and reclaiming the people from their wickedness. The prayer of Elijah was answered, and *the windows of Heaven were stopped*. The springs of water soon failed ; verdure disappeared from the face of the earth ; and a distressing famine pervaded the whole land.

IN this general calamity the prophet himself would have been involved, had not the Lord, in a miraculous way, made provision for him. He stood exposed too, to the cruel resentment of Ahab, who sought to punish him as though he had been the author of misfortunes to the kingdom. The prophet, therefore, according to the command of God, concealed himself by the brook Cherith near Jordan. Here he dwelt a whole year, secure from the rage of his enemies, and unhurt by the famine. The brook supplied him with drink, and ravens, by divine direction, brought him his daily food. These creatures, naturally voracious and untender to their young, the Lord made to administer to the necessities of his servant. Thus, *under the shadow of the Almighty*, he cheerfully and safely abode, and, perhaps, expected still to continue ; but, through the excess of the drought, the brook at length dried up. And though God could as easily have furnished him with drink as with food, yet, in order to exercise

his faith, and fulfil the designs of providence, he was ordered to repair to another place.

WERE it proper to make reflections here, we might observe, how uncertain all earthly comforts are! They may well be compared to the brook of which the prophet drank, and which dried up. While we are looking forward to many days of satisfaction and pleasure, we meet with sudden and grievous disappointment. It is thus wisely ordered, that so we may not rest here, but betake ourselves to a living fountain, and, *with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation.*

ELIJAH was now directed to go to Zarephath, and informed, that he would find there a widow woman who should sustain him. He obeyed; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, he met this woman gathering a little fuel to dress her last morsel. Though this city, called, by the Evangelist Luke, Sarepta, lay without the confines of Israel, between Tyre and Sidon, yet the effects of the famine had reached there. If we even suppose that rain had not been withheld from them, yet the failure of corn in the land of Israel, from which they were wont to be supplied, would produce a scarcity. It is probable, that this woman was not, at any time, in affluent circumstances, and having no warning of the famine, she had taken

no precaution against it. Besides, being deprived of her only support ; in a solitary and helpless condition ; unable to travel abroad, or not knowing where to apply for relief, she was reduced to the verge of despair, and apprehended but a step between her and death.

ONE less acquainted with the ways of providence, and having less trust in the wisdom and power of God, than Elijah, would have concluded that he had come to an improper place. The person he found, stood equally in need of assistance with himself. He thus addresses her, *Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her and said, bring me I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.** To his first request for water, she was about instantly to comply ; but to his second for bread, she returns this answer in the words of the text ; *As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse : and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in, and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.* Her words do not contain a refusal, but are a declaration of her distress, and the impossibility in her present circumstances to afford the desired relief. They manifest a

Verses 10. 11.

heart sensibly touched with her own miseries, and disposed to sympathize with others. Of the little she had, she was willing to impart, as appears when Elijah repeated his request, and promised her that she should not want. *And Elijah said unto her, fear not : go and do as thou hast said : but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah.**

SURELY, if ever a case admitted of good excuses for a refusal, this was one. She might have argued, “ Shall I give that away which is absolutely necessary for my own support ? Will I not then sin against the most powerful law of nature ? Will I not be accessory to my own and my child’s death ? If this man be able to give me the assistance he has promised, can he not as easily relieve himself ? ” Such reflections as these might have naturally arisen in her mind ; and these would have preponderated in a hard and selfish heart ; but, she was guided by nobler feelings. Pity rose in her breast, and was more than a balance to every other consideration. It does not appear that she was influenced by the promise of an immediate recompence,

Verfes 13. 14. 15.

but by a principle of pure humanity. Living without the bounds of Israel, and probably, brought up in idolatry, she would not therefore, readily believe the assertion of the prophet. To the mere workings of compassion, we are rather to ascribe her conduct; and though this is not the noblest motive from which we ought to give, yet it is far superior to a selfish one. She saw presented before her a stranger, who had come a long journey through a sultry climate, and a barren country; and who must perish, unless some friendly hand afforded him sustenance. To such an object her nature was too gentle to deny what was in her power. She belonged to that sex in whom sympathy and tenderness are most remarkable; and her heart had been mellowed and softened by affliction. The description of the virtuous woman, given by Solomon, suited her; *She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.** Though her kindness was disinterested, yet it received an immediate reward. By saving the life of Elijah, she saved her own. He abode in her house, and provision was miraculously supplied; for we are informed, *that the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Elijah.†*

* Prov. xxxi. 20.

† Verse 16.

SEVERAL reflections occur here which might be profitably pursued.—One is, the care of God in providing for the wants of his people. *Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.* If one door of hope be shut, another is opened. If one spring be dried up, other streams are made to flow in this parched wilderness. When the brook Cherith failed, Elijah was hospitably entertained in the house of the widow of Sarepta.

AGAIN, relief often comes in the very hour of distress, and in a way unexpected. With a heavy heart this woman went about to dress her last morsel; when lo, she is eased of her burden. One from a strange country, altogether unknown to her, and whose first salutation is to ask an alms for himself, is the appointed mean of her preservation. *How unsearchable are the judgments of the Lord, and his ways past finding out!*

WE learn, moreover, that the favor of God is free and distinguishing. Our blessed Lord teaches us this by the very example before us. *I tell you of a truth, saith he, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land: But unto none of them was Elias sent save unto Sarepta,*

*a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.**

This person was singled out from others, and to her alone was relief sent.

WHAT follows in the history is no less affecting and instructive. Some time after Elijah had been taken into her house, her son fell sick and died. In the first frantic emotions of her grief, she bitterly accused the prophet, as though this evil had befallen her, on his account. He, on the other hand, was truly concerned for the honor of that God whose servant he was, lest it might be said, that she had met only with grievous affliction in return for all her kindness. He took the child from her bosom, carried him to his own apartment, and addressed God in the most earnest manner, for the restoration of his life. His *effectual fervent prayer* availed. The child revived. He brought him, and delivered him unto his mother, saying, *See, thy son liveth.†* What holy pleasure may we suppose, beamed in the face of the prophet! And how sudden the transition in the mother, from the most excessive grief to the highest transport of joy! It was a scene which none but those who have been tried with such afflictions, can properly realize; or none but those who have benevolent hearts can feel. It was like saying to the raging waves, peace, be still; or like pouring oil into the deep and recent wound.

* Luke iv. 25. 26.

† Verse 23.

How improperly do we often judge of the dealings of Providence towards us ! We imagine evil when God intends good. What we account afflictions prove blessings in the issue.—By this dispensation, this woman had a fresh proof of the power and goodness of God, and was encouraged to believe and trust in him. If, by the first extraordinary interposition in her favor, she had been brought to believe in the true God, yet on the death of her son, her faith might have been shaken ; but now she was fully persuaded and confirmed. Her words to Elijah, on the occasion, were, *Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.** Her unfavorable opinion of Elijah was turned into the highest esteem ; her reproaches into blessings ; and she learned to trust in that God who had miraculously preserved her from famine ; and who was able and willing to help in every time of need.

SUCH, my brethren, is the history with which we are presented. Some reflections which forced themselves on the mind, as we passed along, have been already made ; and you will allow me farther to direct your attention to some arising from the whole ; or which more immediately refer to the important business before us.

* Verse 24.

FIRST, There are many in adverse circumstances, yea, reduced to poverty and distress, not by vices or follies of their own, but purely by the course of Providence. Though it be true, in general, that *the hand of the diligent maketh rich*, yet there are instances where the greatest foresight, prudence, and care are unsuccessful. We see in the history now considered, virtuous and worthy persons ready to perish by reason of famine. But, without admitting such an extraordinary case, how many ways are there by which persons may be prevented from obtaining a tolerable subsistence, or deprived of what they had obtained! So changeable is the state of things in this world, that poverty may soon succeed affluence; and those who have assisted others live to stand in need themselves.—Poverty is not disgraceful unless it be the consequence of vicious pursuits; and even then it ought to be pitied and relieved. The virtuous poor are the most deserving objects of charity; but we may not *hide ourselves from our own flesh*. To every human creature we are allied, and may not show contempt or neglect.—Such being the situation of many in the world, and which, for any thing we know, may be our own, we are called,

IN the second place, To encourage the emotions of pity in our hearts, and to extend our beneficence to

all within our power. We ought to accustom ourselves to think of the miseries of human life; of the solitary cottage, the dying parent, and the weeping orphan. The condition of the widow of Sarepta is not uncommon. It is no fanciful picture. May we not find in this city persons in almost as deplorable a situation? Not with one child, but many? No sufficient shelter or clothes in this stormy season? Hovering over two sticks; and it is well, if they have, at all times, an handful of meal and a cruse of oil? Before the winter is past, and the snows are over and gone, the barrel may waste and the cruse fail. They shall not fail! exclaims the benevolent heart—Blessed be God, there is this difference between us and the city of Zarephath, that we are full and abound. Instead of famine we have had a most fruitful season, and there need be no complaining in our streets, if we have only the goodness to pay God with his own.

LET me recommend it, particularly to young persons to habituate their hearts to melt at scenes of distress. Check not the rising sigh and the falling tear. Compassion is congenial to your nature. Seek not to eradicate, but to confirm it. It will render you amiable and lovely; and with this principle other virtues are most likely to be united. A hard and selfish heart in youth is very unpromising. It is a stony piece of

ground that will not repay the husbandman his toil. Soon enough, my dear and unsuspicious youth, whose hearts now expand, and would share with a friend your last morsel, soon enough will these contract; soon enough will your fine feelings be blunted, by the repeated disappointments and mortifications you will meet with; by the pride, insincerity and censoriousness of the world. Cherish them, therefore, while you may. Be virtuous and be generous.

THIRDLY, We learn that acts of beneficence do not go unrewarded. *He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he. He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed: for he giveth of his bread to the poor. Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard. He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse. He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again.** Instead, however, of producing the many and plain declarations of scripture, let the example before us witness. Were not two miracles wrought in behalf of her of Sarepta? Was she not a gainer by her kindness to the prophet? To say nothing of another world, or the recompence at the resurrection of the just, God can easily, and doth often repay with temporal good

* Proverbs.

things. Is not this found in your own experience? Do you suffer by your weekly contributions to the poor? Or have you failed since you contributed last year, to the support of our school? Nay, have you not prospered as individuals? Have we not prospered as a church? Is it not since the establishment of the school that the Middle Church has been repaired and beautified? Never till then did God give us heart and ability to accomplish that great work. Never till then, was it fully pronounced, *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.** To the support of our school we are again called. To afford the children of the poor the means of instruction, is the most excellent and the most successful of all charities. It enables them to provide a subsistence for themselves. It rescues them from ignorance and vice. It sheds a benign influence on church and state. It lays the foundation of their present and future happiness. It is as much superior to common charity as the soul is to the body; or rather, it is the compendium of all charity. By instructing the child of an indigent parent, we may say, in the truest and noblest sense of the words, *See, thy son liveth.* By this he is prepared to live to God, to his country, and to himself.

* Psalm cxxii. 7. This was the text of a sermon, preached on the first Sabbath of August, 1790; after this church had been repaired and dedicated anew to God.

Much might be said on the advantages of institutions of this kind ; but much to you would be needless. With the state of our own school you are already acquainted ; and with what is expected from you the ensuing year. It is the earnest desire of the Consistory to increase the number of scholars ; and I appear now as their advocate for that purpose. We will not doubt of success. Our assembly indeed is comparatively small, on account of the intense cold ; but the fewer persons the greater share of honor.—Were arguments necessary, they might be arranged in powerful form. You might be told the importance of the duty in itself ; the pleasure arising from it ; and the reward which attends it in this life, and the life to come. You might be urged even by the character which you have to support ; and you might be provoked to jealousy by the conduct of other churches around you ; but the brave man, and the generous, needs no words, the one, to make him fight, and the other to give. The noble steed requires a curb, but disdains the spur. Could we suppose that there are any here whose hearts are locked, I boast of no charm to open them. Nothing is painted, but a scene which nature presents, and dressed in the colours which she gives. As this is sufficient, so it is ever the most agreeable to the humane and benevolent heart ; and to such only I appeal.

MANY of us have lately contributed, and we are ready to do it again. We will thus enjoy a double pleasure. Our feelings will thus be wound to the highest pitch, and produce the finest of all harmony. It was a common saying of one, "that no music was so charming in his ears as the requests of his friends, and the supplications of those in want of his assistance;" meaning that the opportunity of obliging and relieving them excited more agreeable sensations than the soft and thrilling strains of the most enchanting melody.—Ye lovers of music, do you wish your hearts to vibrate with extatic joy? Stretch forth your hands this day to the indigent. This will exceed the voice of man, mixed and softened by the sweeter female note; yea, it will exceed both these, even when joined with an instrument, like David's harp, of sweet and solemn sound.*

BRING forward then, my brethren, your offerings. On a late occasion, we gathered the first-fruits. To-day we gather the second crop. Or, will you allow me to compare myself to one who *gleans and gathers* in the harvest field, after the reapers? Will you suffer me, as the generous Boaz did Ruth, to *glean even among the sheaves*? Will you let fall, as his reapers did, *some*

* There is an allusion here to the taste, which lately prevails in the congregation, for sacred music; and the introduction into the Middle Church of a handsome organ, in order to lead and assist the voice in praising God.

*of the handfuls of purpose, and leave them that I may glean and rebuke me not ?** Every thing is hoped from your generosity ; not a gleaning only, but a harvest itself.†

BUT last year you took these little ones under your protection ; when Pharaoh's daughter drew Moses from the flags on the bank of the river Nile.‡. They now thank you for your care and attention. O spare them the pain of telling what they farther want. Wound not the feelings of poverty by insisting on their mournful tale. Let your own imaginations paint it all ; and heaven-born compassion plead aloud in your breasts.—Of the little some of you may have, you can spare a part. Benefits well-placed are a treasure that is laid up ; and you will enjoy what remains with more abundant satisfaction. It was the saying of one, “that he could not relish a happiness which nobody shared in but himself.” Let the poor then cast in their mites. God, who is the friend of the distressed,

* Ruth ii. 16.

† This was the last sermon preached for the school this year ; and though in a different church, yet the assembly was chiefly composed of the same people. The collections made in the three churches were so liberal as to enable the Consistory to add twenty scholars.

‡ See Sermon viii.

accepts and rewards the willing mind. *The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail.*

O YE rich, if you feel any gratitude to God who hath made your cup to run over ; if you have any sympathy for the sons and daughters of affliction ; if you would wipe the tear that in secret wets the widow's and the orphan's eye ; if you would render an eminent service to the church and to the state ; if you would eat your own bread with gladness and singleness of heart ; and if you are influenced by the grace of the Lord Jesus, who for your sakes *became poor* ; yea, who so loved you, that he *became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross* ; who hath enjoined love in his word, and powerfully enforced it by his own love in thus dying for sinners ; if under the power of any, or of all these considerations, let your hearts expand, and your hands be liberal. Let humanity triumph.—Charity ! Charity ! Divine Charity ! Hasten from the sultry land of Tyre and Sidon ; and in these frozen regions sustain our fainting widows, and raise their children to life !

Go, worthy Deacons, and receive from Charity's soft and open hand, *good measure pressed down and running over.*

S E R M O N XIV.

CHILDREN'S MOCKERY
OF ELISHA.

2 KINGS II. 23. 24.

And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, GO UP, THOU BALD-HEAD, GO UP, THOU BALD-HEAD. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD; and there came forth two she-bears out of the wood; and tare forty and two children of them.

I HAVE not chosen these words merely from an affectation of singularity, which is often the token of a vain or a weak mind; but from an apprehension that they will suggest some truths useful and important. Though it is, doubtless, the business of a preacher to dwell more especially on the great and leading doctrines of the gospel, yet he ought to take notice also

of what is more remotely connected ; and nothing belonging to godliness is unworthy of his attention.

THE holy scriptures convey instruction in various ways ; sometimes by precept ; sometimes by parable ; and sometimes by the description of real characters, or the relation of certain occurrences in human life. Of the latter sort are the words now read. They do not paint what might be expected to happen in particular circumstances ; but inform us of what did really happen ; and which is recorded for the reproof and admonition of all ages. We have here related a memorable passage in the life of the prophet ELISHA, the disciple, and successor of Elijah.

THE prophets were extraordinary persons whom God, in those days, inspired and commissioned to make known his will to his people Israel. About the time of Samuel there were schools erected, where young persons were instructed in religion and piety, the better to prepare them for receiving the prophetic spirit. Over these, called *sons of the prophets*, some venerable prophet presided ; at whose feet they sat ; and at whose mouth they received prophecies. This superintendence, on the removal of Elijah, devolved on Elisha. The principal schools were at Beth-el, Jericho, and Gilgal. When a prophet first entered upon

his office, he was cloathed with the prophetic mantle, which was an upper garment made of lamb-skin, and thrown over the shoulders. When Elijah was taken up into Heaven, Elisha received his mantle as a token of succession, and that he should be endued with a double portion of his spirit. Of this he soon gave evidence; for, standing by the bank of Jordan, he smote the waters with the mantle, calling upon the Lord God of Elijah, and they parted hither and thither. When the sons of the prophets of Jericho saw this, they said, *The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha; and they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.**

AFTER this, we read of his healing the unwholesome waters of Jericho, at the request of the inhabitants, and ascribing the miraculous power to God. From thence he went up to Beth-el, where was another school of the prophets, though the place was, at this time, greatly addicted to idolatry. Here, Jeroboam had set up a golden calf; and instead of Beth-el, the name which Jacob gave it, after his remarkable vision, and which signifies *the house of God*, it was afterwards called by Hosea, Beth-aven, *the house of vanity*, or *idols*.† On his way up to this place happened that which comes now under our particular consideration.

* Verse 15.

† Hof. x. 5.

THERE *came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him.* It is remarked that the word translated *little children* signifies *youths*, or those come to considerable maturity. Though they might have been excited to this insolent behaviour by their parents, yet, it is probable, that they were old enough to discern between good and evil; and that many of them might have engaged in it, of their own accord. Their reproach shows them not to have been destitute of some information, and that they were actuated by a malicious spirit. Their crime was base and aggravated, in that they mocked one whose age ought to have commanded reverence. This circumstance alone might have been expected to ensure better treatment. A certain respect is ever due from the young to the aged; and where it is not paid, it manifests a froward and bad heart.

BUT when we consider the sacred character of *Elisha*, the conduct of these youths appears extremely wicked. It was his office more than his person which they despised. By insulting him, they dishonored *God*, whose prophet he was, and on whose errands he was employed. This seems to have been the case, from the words which they uttered: *Go up, thou bald-head, Go up thou bald-head.* Interpreters alledge, that by this, they meant to mock that glorious work of

God, the assumption of Elijah into Heaven. As though they had said, "Go up into Heaven, whither thou pretendest that Elijah is gone. Why didst thou not accompany thy friend and master thither? O, that thou also wert taken away, that so we might be troubled no more." It is true, that they meanly reflected on his person, but it was the execution of his office, which they hated and dreaded. The profane will seldom dare to vent their malice immediately against sacred things. They first charge those who officiate in them with crimes, or represent them in a ridiculous light, that so they may have some colour or pretext.

VIEWING then the conduct before us in its proper light, it was not only very indecent, but highly profane; not only an insult on human nature, but a mockery of God himself.

WE can scarcely help painting in our imagination the venerable Elisha wrapt in his prophetic mantle; his locks thinned by time, and those which remained, hoary; travelling along on his way up to Beth-el.—What mind that knows thy business and thy worth would not welcome thee! What pious children, who observe thy approach, would not cry, "Here comes Elisha the prophet of the Lord!" and run to touch his mantle and ask his blessing! Such a reception his

person and his character demanded ; but behold him surrounded by profane boys, who came out of the idolatrous city, and who mock him, saying, *Go up thou bald-head, Go up thou bald-head!* To have seen an old man thus treated must have excited indignation in every generous breast ; but to have seen a prophet and the glorious works of the Most High God turned into ridicule, must have chilled the blood ; and every pious mind would anticipate some awful judgment.

LET us now view the conduct of the prophet. *He turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord.* This was not the effect of human passion, or revenge. Instances are recorded which prove him to have been of a most merciful and benevolent temper. Witness his increasing the widow's oil ; his gratitude for the kindness shown him by the Shunamite ; and his restoring her dead son to life. That he felt an indignation against profanity, and a real concern for the glory of God, is not to be doubted. He cared not so much for any indignity cast upon his person. Perhaps the expression, *he looked on them*, teaches us that he first sought to abash, or make them ashamed. He reproved them by turning his countenance full upon them ; or he looked with pity and concern that they should thus provoke the divine anger.

They still persisting, he then *curfed them in the name of the Lord.*

THIS passage, with others of the same kind, has not escaped the animadversions and sneers of infidels. "The prophet," says one, "was more zealous in his own cause than he was in God's, otherwise he would not have cursed so many little children." So say we, if it be ascribed to passion, or revenge. But this and the like things in scripture are to be understood as predictions of the judgments which will come upon the enemies of the Lord. *He cursed them in the name of the Lord*; that is, by the motion of the Spirit of God, he denounced the punishment which was to come upon them. That it was so, is evident from the concurrence of Providence. Had it been the ebullition of human vengeance, God would not have countenanced it; and the children would have escaped unhurt. The quarrel was between God and them; between the holy One of Israel and dumb idols.

THIS accounts for the justice and severity of the punishment; which let us now consider. *There came forth two she-bears out of the wood: and tare forty and two children of them.* These bears had probably been bereaved of their whelps, and were therefore the more fierce and outrageous.

HERE, again, the writer already referred to, hints, that it is very wonderful that two she-bears should so immediately come out of the forest, and destroy so great a number.—Without having recourse, however, to a miracle, there is nothing incredible in this. It was a surprizing event, but one which, on rational principles, may be readily believed. The strength and ferocity of two such animals falling on boys crouded together, having no way of escape, or whose fears might render them motionless, can be easily conceived capable of committing this dreadful havoc.

It may be objected again, that the punishment was too severe for the offence. But it is answered, that considering every circumstance, it was worthy of a holy and wise God. By this he asserted his own honor against these idolaters. The parents were punished in the loss of their children. It was a solemn warning to all offenders; and a sanction was likewise given to the mission of the prophet. Besides, those guilty of idolatry were condemned to death by the law, and the sentence was now no more than executed. To this some add, that if many of these children sinned through ignorance, their death might have been in great mercy to them. They were taken away from an idolatrous education, which exposed them both to temporal and eternal destruction. It is enough for us to know, that

it was the hand of God, who hath a right to dispose of his creatures, when and in what manner he pleaseth ; and who ever executeth righteous judgment.

How easily and suddenly doth he often vanquish his enemies ! A few minutes ago and we saw the man of God beset with an insulting croud, striving who should vex him most, and drive him, if possible, from their borders. Now we behold the instruments of vengeance spreading terror, confusion, blood, and carnage all around. Like silly sheep, they are devoured by the ravenous jaws of bears. Parents who connived at their children's wickedness, now loudly wail, when they gather the fragments of the mangled bodies. Surely we may say unto God, *How terrible art thou in thy works ! through the greatness of thy power, shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.**

WE are now prepared for some reflections on this piece of sacred history.

ONE reflection which will readily strike us is, the difference between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensation. Under the former, crimes were suddenly and remarkably punished ; but under the latter, God exercises greater patience and forbearance. Under the former, which was comparatively dark, this was

* Psalm lxi. 3.

necessary to keep alive on the minds of men a reverence for God and divine things ; but under the latter, though God will as certainly punish sin, yet he delays it, *Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.** When the disciples James and John requested Christ to command fire to come down from heaven, and consume certain Samaritans for their inhospitality, as Elias had done on another occasion, he rebuked them, and said, *I know not what manner of spirit ye are of ; for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.†* We know that a greater than Elisha, even our Lord Jesus Christ was most shamefully and cruelly treated, and no present vengeance overtook his persecutors ; yea, we find him praying for those who with wicked hands crucified and slew him. The apostles and primitive christians underwent all kinds of sufferings without any immediate and visible judgments from God on those who destroyed them.

WITHOUT endeavouring to account for this, it is certain, that sentence against an evil work is not now executed speedily. At the same time, it is to be remembered, that God is as holy and just as ever he

* Acts xvii. 31.

† Luke ix. 55. 56.

was ; and that he will for every thing bring us into judgment. Though it come slowly, yet it comes surely ; and the longer the patience of God is abused, the more severe will condemnation be at last.

SECONDLY, Let us learn from this subject not to despise, or reproach others, on account of any natural defects or infirmities. Nothing is real cause of shame but what is sinful ; or what we have brought upon ourselves by our own folly and wickedness. To mock another for some infirmity of body is not only indecent and cruel, but is to reflect on the glorious Maker. This is a sin which is sometimes punished in this life ; and hence the very old and vulgar proverb, “Mocking is catching.”

Who can help despising the childish taunt to Elisha respecting his bald-head. He might have had few hairs, but they were all numbered ; and they were touched at dreadful peril.—Let youth beware ; and see that they rise up before the hoary head. Time will thin even the locks of an Absalom ; draw furrows on the smoothest brow ; and blast the roses on the finest cheek. We must all ere long say *to corruption, Thou art our father ; to the worm, Thou art our mother*

*and our sister.** They are truly beautiful, whose minds are adorned with the graces of the Spirit, and whose bodies shall hereafter be fashioned after the glorious body of Christ.

THE last reflection I shall make, and indeed the principal one which offers itself on this subject is, the sin and danger of mocking at holy things. To this let me call, especially, the attention of my younger hearers. Though none of you may be guilty in this respect, yet you need to be warned. You will mix little with the world, if you do not see and hear sacred things turned into ridicule. The infection is dangerous. Go not in the way of it. Never use your wit in profane jests, or in ridiculing any thing deemed sacred. Treat not with contempt the religious rites and ceremonies of any denomination. In whatever light they appear to you, to others they are important, and christian charity should lead you to meekness and forbearance.

TURN not into mockery the persons or expressions of the professors of religion; nor take delight in the company of those who do so. The greatest and best have their weaknesses and infirmities; and there is no man but may be placed in an unfavorable light. The

* Job xvii. 14.

transition is short from jesting on their foibles, to despising their persons, and even to disregarding that religion which they profess.

WITH respect to those who are officers in the church, and act worthy of their character, any thing which would lessen them in the esteem of others is of the worst consequence ; as it renders their administrations ineffectual. Let it be remembered too, that Christ resents such conduct as though done to himself. We may flatter ourselves that we mean no harm ; but under the cloak of mirth there is often concealed enmity to God. The instance considered at this time is sufficient to convince us of the awful danger of this sin. Other shocking instances of profanity might be produced ; and it would be found that the persons engaged in them have been as despicable, as their end has been sometimes miserable.

You will allow me to remark here, that many stage-plays are so filled with profane and obscene jests ; and with improper allusions to sacred things, as to render them unsafe, either to be read, or heard.—This other remark is perhaps well-founded, that a clergyman is never personified on the stage but to his disadvantage. He is exhibited as a laughable, or at least as an insignificant, rather than as a serious and respectable cha-

rafter. Is not this mockery? Has it not a direct tendency to bring the office into contempt? Is there not danger of associating the idea of the person who has been ludicrously exhibited with the office, and thus of holding both in derision?

LET me warn you then, my hearers, against every act which would lessen your reverence for divine things. *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.** Advances in sin are gradual. From occasional intercourse with sinners, you may come to take pleasure in their company, until at length, they are chosen as your only associates.

PITIABLE is the condition, and dreadful will be the punishment of professed mockers. They have arrived at the highest pitch of wickedness; and are preparing, by swift degrees, for that place where is perpetual cursing and blasphemy. Though God command no bears from the forest to rend them, while in this world, yet, if they continue impenitent, they shall not escape his righteous judgment. Terrible is the threatening of God by the prophet Hosea; *I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the*

* Psalm i. 1.

*caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion.**

To conclude, Let us all be persuaded to seek the favor of God through Christ; to reverence his word, his ministers, and his ordinances, that so it may be well with us here, and in that future state to which we are all fast hastening.

* Hof. xii. 8.

S E R M O N XIV.

DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON.

I CHRONICLES XXVIII. 9.

And thou, SOLOMON my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind ; for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts : If thou seek him, he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.

THIS was the solemn and affectionate charge of king David, delivered a little before his death, to his son Solomon. Perhaps in no instance did David appear in a more amiable light, or give greater evidence of his piety. When about to finish his course upon earth and to sleep with his fathers, he assembles the chief men of Israel, and after informing them of certain affairs respecting the kingdom, he impresses upon their minds the duty and advantage of keeping

all the commandments of the Lord their God. He is tenderly concerned that he who was to be the successor to the throne should so conduct himself as to promote his own happiness, the prosperity of the nation, and the glory of the eternal God.

MANY were the brilliant actions of David's life ; but none was brighter than the concluding scene. We admire him in those days, when impelled by heroism, he slew *his ten thousands* ; we admire him when filling and dignifying a throne. See him now just ready to resign the earth forever, and say, if he be less the hero. Before we pronounce on his character, see him die. Behold in the decline of an active and troublous life, the warm affection of the parent, and the sublime principles of the saint. To Solomon he left a great and powerful kingdom, but his last counsel was more than all ; and, could he have ensured it, was the richest legacy,

THIS dying charge expresses the wish of every pious parent for his child ; and it is chosen at present as the foundation of a discourse to the young people of this congregation. Soon, my young friends, will you be forsaken of your earthly parents, of those who have toiled and provided for you ; whose fondest desire was to see you act your part usefully and honorably in the

world; and who, whatever temporal things they have to leave you, are zealously concerned, if they themselves be pious, that you should possess the riches of divine grace. If ever you stand around their death-bed, they will address you in words of the same import with these in the text.

I SHALL first, show you what is implied in the duty here enjoined; and secondly, consider the motives to the performance.

I. THE duty enjoined. *Know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.* These words include the profession, and the punctual observance of all the precepts of true religion. By *knowing* God we may understand an acknowledgment of him as our God, and paying him that homage which is due; or such a knowledge of his being, perfections, and laws, as will influence our practice. Accordingly David adds, *serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.* Solomon, no doubt, had been instructed in the knowledge and worship of the true God; but as he might notwithstanding swerve, or make a profession merely from temporal views, we are to understand the charge as extending to a constant acknowledgment of God, and such an attention to his service as would manifest sincerity of

heart. *The Lord, says he, searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts.* "Though you may put on a garb of sanctity to answer political purposes, yet you cannot deceive God. He sees through every disguise, and nothing short of unfeigned love and obedience will receive his approbation."—It will be proper that what has been now mentioned generally, be more particularly treated. Let me ask your attention, my young friends, to the following things, as being implied in the duty here enjoined.

FIRST, That you diligently apply your minds to obtain the knowledge of divine truths. There can be no rational and acceptable service of God without a knowledge of his nature, perfections and will; of what he is in himself, and what he requires of us. It is of the utmost importance that you be instructed in the great principles of natural and revealed religion, in the earlier part of your lives. While these will prevent the reception of false and dangerous principles, they will have a happy tendency in regulating your behaviour. It will be found that most of those who run into vicious courses, are greatly defective as to a religious education. Whatever promptness of parts some of them may discover and high conceit of their own accomplishments, they are generally destitute of the very

rudiments of divine truths. Had these been the subjects of their serious and attentive consideration, they would have been more restrained from the ways of sin. It is true that some are exceedingly vile, after the best education; but this, instead of weakening, corroborates the remark, that its influence is powerful. Why are they reckoned so vile, and why do they come under such particular observation? Only because they sin against light, and break through barriers deemed effectual. They must first have severe struggles, and waste conscience by repeated acts of iniquity, before they can enjoy quiet. On the contrary, ignorance gives security in wickedness. *Every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.**

ARE not many of you desirous of acquiring human learning? Alas, of what real service will this be, if ignorant of God and yourselves? Unless taught of God you cannot be called truly wise; the endowments of mind, either natural or acquired, which you possess, are not likely to be well directed; they will not secure to you the favor of God and promote your eternal happiness in another world. Remember then, that while you *covet earnestly the best gifts*, there is a more excellent way, by growing in *the knowledge of our*

* John iii. 20.

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To this divine wisdom Solomon refers when he says, *Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding.** In order to obtain the knowledge of religious truths, search the holy scriptures, frequent the places of instruction, converse with the wise and pious, and give yourselves to serious meditation and earnest prayer. Under all the excellent means which you enjoy, you will not improve without your own attention and care.

SECONDLY, To your knowledge join practice, otherwise it will be unavailing; yea, it will bring upon you at last a more terrible condemnation. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.*—To know God aright implies love and obedience. They are connected in this charge of David to his son. Endeavour then to contemplate the perfections of God, in order that you may adore them; to learn his commandments, in order that you may obey them. Be not found in the commission of any known sin, or in the omission of any known duty. Let the *grace of God* teach you to deny *ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and to live *soberly, righteously and godly in this*

* Prov. iv. 7.

present world. If any of you should imagine, that it is enough to know the truths of religion, to be able to discourse well upon them, while they have no effect in directing your life and conversation, you would be fatally mistaken. The end of all the means of instruction is, to bring us to act well in our several stations and relations here, to conform us to the moral image of God, and to train us up for the employments and enjoyments of another and better state hereafter.

THIRDLY, Beware lest your religion be merely formal and customary. *Serve God with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind;* with sincerity and with cheerfulness. Though in our present circumstances, modes and forms are necessary, yet these are only the shadow or image of religion. If the spirit be wanting, they are unacceptable to God. *Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new-moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: I am weary to hear them.** Why doth God declare that he is displeased with those things which were of his own appointment? Was it not because his professing people made a mere form and parade of them, not attending to

* Isaiah i. 13. 14.

their meaning and intention? Because they hoped thus to recommend themselves to his favor, though they were guilty of heinous immoralities?—Learn then, my young friends, to distinguish between the form and the power of religion. Be afraid of contenting yourselves with the former, while you neglect the latter. Let nothing satisfy you short of a real change of heart and faith in the merits of the blessed Redeemer. *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth not, is condemned already.* Though it be your duty to attend upon all the means of grace, and to use endeavours of your own, yet the assistance of the holy Spirit is necessary to render these successful. He must work in you *both to will and to do*, if ever you be saved.

THIS is a matter of such infinite importance, that I wish your attention to be fixed upon it, and must again warn you to beware of a mere outward show in religion. Enjoying the instruction and prayers of pious parents, and living under the privileges of the church, there is danger of taking up an opinion that we are religious, and of performing duties from habit or custom only. See that your piety be seated in the heart. See that you serve God willingly. Unless your hearts be changed, and you be united to

Christ as the fountain of all grace, the duties of religion will be irksome, and you will fail at last of the divine approbation. Rest not short of a scriptural ground to hope that you have given yourselves away to God in an everlasting covenant, and that his service is become to you perfect freedom.

FOURTHLY, There is implied in knowing God, that you acknowledge him in all your ways. Not only that you feel your dependance upon him for all you need, submit to his chastisements, and praise him for his mercies, but, that you make public profession of attachment to his cause; that you be not ashamed of religion, but openly and constantly avow, that as for you, you will serve the Lord. This is often a difficult part with those in younger life. They are afraid of the charge of singularity; of the reproaches of their thoughtless and giddy companions. Be persuaded that it is your honor and glory to serve God. Who are they would hold you in derision? They are ignorant and wicked. They are dangerous associates. Break off at once from them. Will you set their favor in competition with the peace of your own consciences and the approbation of almighty God? Even they will confess that you have chosen the good part. They must approve your conduct, however for certain reasons, they wish now to ensnare you. *If the Lord be God, follow him.*

He will protect you. His favor is more than that of all the world.

WHEN we consider the words of the text as addressed to one who was to fill a high and important station, how significant and weighty are they ! How necessary that persons in power and trust be examples of piety and virtue. Yet alas, it is too often found that those whom Providence hath exalted, act as though they were ashamed of, or disregarded the hand which raised them. When this is the case, the example has an evil effect upon the lower ranks of men, and produces a dissipation of manners unfavorable to good government and happiness. In whatever station you are, my young friends, *know God* by a public profession of religion.

THERE is one thing under this particular with which it were happy, if you could be impressed ; and that is, the necessity and importance of attending on the holy ordinance of the supper. You have been baptized in infancy, and by this rite acknowledged as visible members of the church. Your parents did then dedicate you to the Lord ; they engaged in your name that you would serve him. As soon as you come to years of understanding, it is incumbent upon you personally to renew these engagements. What is the language

of your conduct if you do not? Is it not that you disapprove of what was done? That you will not have the Lord to reign over you? Do you not cast yourselves out of the church, and forfeit your right to the divine blessing? Lay your conduct in this respect seriously to heart. Your excuses are well known, and be assured that they are ineffectual for your justification. You are not urged to approach in a thoughtless and unprepared manner; but where does the want of preparation rest unless with yourselves? Though grace is free and sovereign, yet do not your own consciences condemn you for wilful neglect to seek it in the use of means which are not beyond your power? May God teach you that in this way you are living in ignorance of him, and bring you so to know him as to unreservedly comply with all his commandments.

ONCE more, It is necessary that you make choice of, and adhere to some denomination in the church of Christ. What this shall be depends on the circumstances in which you are placed, and your own judgment as to the purity in which the ordinances are administered. When you fix, a steadfast adherence is perfectly consistent with a charitable disposition towards others. An unsettled conduct, or a wandering from one to another will not promote your edification. *Know thou,* says David, *the God of thy father,* which we cannot in-

terpret as though we were to worship precisely as our fathers did ; but that we embrace and profess the true religion which may be found under different modes of worship. Indeed, it is to be expected that early impressions in favor of any particular mode will always have a great influence on our choice. What is intended here is, not to recommend bigotry, or a censorious temper towards those who may differ from us, but that one denomination be chosen with which we may steadily associate. You will not be surpris'd if it be said, that it is better to belong to any denomination in the christian world than to none at all ; for though undoubtedly one is to be preferred to another, yet in the worst of them, there is more probability of happiness here, and eternal salvation hereafter, than by an open disavowal of them all. A person without any profession of religion is a monstrous and miserable creature. As you cannot well make a public acknowledgment of God without joining a particular society, so your choice and adherence are necessarily implied in it.

It cannot be called the result of blindness and prejudice to say, that God hath cast your lot in a land where civil and religious liberty is fully enjoyed ; and in a church where the great doctrines of revelation are constantly explained and inculcated ; so that on the account of means you need not forsake it, and it is pre-

sumed, that by reason of your early education you will not. Let me beseech you then, to know the God of your fathers, by frequenting the public assemblies, and maintaining the divine worship and ordinances, when your fathers are removed hence. I proceed now,

II. To lay before you the motives to the performance of these things. There are two mentioned in the text; first, an encouragement, *If thou seek him, he will be found of thee*; secondly, a threatening, *If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever*.

As to the encouragement, though it may be said, that while our lives are continued in this world, if we seek the Lord he will be found of us, yet there is greater prospect of success as to the young than any others. Among many reasons which might be mentioned, the season of youth is the fittest, the most acceptable to God, the most comfortable to yourselves, and is the only season you may ever enjoy.

FIRST, Youth is the fittest season. Your nature is then most soft and pliant. It can more readily be bent in any way, or moulded in any form. It has not as yet contracted the stiffness of age. Habits of some kind will be formed, and when these are bad and of long continuance, it is difficult to change them. *Can*

*the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.**

It is of the utmost importance then, that you early learn to subdue your lusts, moderate your passions, and submit to the discipline of religion. The first seeds which are sown are most likely to take root and flourish. If good seeds are not sown, noxious weeds will spring up and exclude the others.

You are also, at this age, free from those cares and perplexities which disturb riper years. You are more lively and vigorous ; more able to encounter with difficulties ; more full of hope as to success in your endeavours, which is a great spur to action. None of you will understand by what is said on this, that you can be fashioned to religion without supernatural grace. You were *shapen in iniquity*, and you must *be born again* ; but surely, the dominion of sin strengthens by habit, and we become less able and less inclined to leave it. Is there not hope that early impressions of religion will be most efficacious and lasting ? Nothing is too hard for almighty power, but who promise best ? Those who begin with attending to the duties of religion, or those who run in the ways of wickedness ? The former most certainly. They are most likely to be religious and happy.

* Jer. xiii. 23.

AGAIN, To know God in the days of your youth is the most acceptable to him. The first of your lives is the best; to this God claims a right; and we have reason to think that this part he most approves. There is something exceedingly engaging in early piety. Mankind admire and applaud; and if there be joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner, may we not conclude that the young believer is an interesting spectacle? To see one whose spirits are yet warm and lively, nobly resisting those temptations which prove so fatal to many; encountering difficulties with resolution and perseverance, is worthy of high approbation. It is true that none merit any thing from God; that after they have done all they are unprofitable servants; but it may be safely asserted notwithstanding, that they who seek the Lord while young, are most acceptable to him and most likely to obtain his favor. Hath he not enjoined this very thing? Hath he not forbidden a delay? And is not obedience more pleasing to him than disobedience? Is it not highly disengenuous, after refusing God the first and best of our lives, to offer him the dregs? Have we not reason to believe that he will resent this? To fear that he will not then accept of us?

AGAIN, Early religion will be most comfortable to yourselves. It will prevent you from entering upon

the paths of sin and misery. Admitting that after a course of iniquity, you should be reclaimed to the service of God, your repentance must be bitter. The reflection upon your past sins, the dishonor you have done to God, and the injury to yourselves and others, must give you many painful moments. Though God should forgive you, yet you never will be able to forgive yourselves; nor to enjoy that peace and serenity of soul which an attention betimes, and an uniform course of obedience would ensure.

PARTICULARLY, this is the best provision you can make for times of affliction, for old age, and for the trying hour of death. To be able to look back at the close of life and see it spent in honoring God and promoting the welfare of men, must give unspeakable satisfaction. All indeed will have reason to lament that their talents had not been improved better; but where they have wholly run to waste, or been employed to bad purposes, shame, confusion, and remorse must be the consequence. Who can describe the pitiable condition of that man who, engaging in the ways of sin, has neglected the means of grace, despised admonitions and reproofs, and is arrived at old age! What small hopes remain that his peace will then be made with God! *The evil days are come, and the years are drawn nigh, when he says, I have no pleasure in them.* When

he stands most in need of comfort, he is destitute. To the natural evils of this time of life, are added stings of conscience for what is past, and afflicting fears as to that eternity upon which he must soon enter. Nothing in this world or the other affords him one cheering ray of hope. On the contrary, how happy they, who having remembered their Creator in the days of their youth, support old age with cheerfulness and dignity, wait with calmness and resignation for their release from all diseases and infirmities, anticipate an entrance into everlasting rest, and the time when their bodies shall be raised spiritual and immortal, fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ!

IN the last place, Youth is the only season you may ever enjoy. Your lives are very uncertain. You may never see manhood, much less pass into old age. Is not this a powerful reason why you should seek the Lord now? At present you enjoy the opportunity, but how long it will be continued, is only known to him who hath made and placed you here. He may recall you soon. Even now, while you are dreaming of long life and looking forward through many years with conscious rapture, the decree may be ordered into execution, *Return, ye children of men.* Why then will you flatter yourselves? Why delay to seize the present opportunity? You may never enjoy another; and if

you should, you have seen that the time of youth is of all others the fittest, the most acceptable to God, and the most comfortable to yourselves.

ANOTHER motive to excite you is the threatening mentioned in the text ; *If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.* On this, time will not allow me to dwell. If you refuse to acknowledge God he will cast you off, notwithstanding the instructions and prayers of pious parents ; notwithstanding all the privileges you may have enjoyed. He will cast you off, and that *for ever.* How terrible are these words ! *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof ; I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh : When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel ; they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.**

* Prov. i. 24—31.

Be persuaded, my young friends, by these considerations to begin the work of religion. You have, at times, impressions made upon your hearts, and you form resolutions; but the former are weakened, and the latter are broken, by the force of those temptations which surround you. When this is repeatedly the case, there is danger that your consciences will become less tender, sin assume a less frightful aspect, and you be emboldened to venture on its ways. Cherish, therefore, those tender emotions of soul, and hearken to the voice of conscience within you. They are the call of God, and speak the same language with the text. Unless you live to God, you live to no purpose, and worse than none. Only religion can make you truly respectable here, and eternally happy hereafter. This is infinitely better than riches, honors, and all that this world can afford.

My young hearers, you are the hope of the church. On you the eyes of your ministers, your parents, and your christian friends are placed, to support the cause of God when they are removed hence. Shall we be disappointed? Will you give us no encouraging tokens before we leave you? Let each of you now paint to himself the scene of a pious parent on his death-bed, his children gathered around him, receiving his last

advice, and taking the solemn farewell. “ My dear children, it is the will of God that I leave you ; be not cast down, but resigned. What little of earthly things I possessed, and for which I labored principally on your account, I have divided among you. My great concern has been, not that you should be rich and honorable, but that you might have the favor of God in Christ. I have instructed you and prayed for you. I have recommended religion to you by precept and example ; and wish to impress you now with its awful importance in my latest moments. *Know the God of your father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.* Though less than the least of all his mercies, he hath distinguished me by his grace ; he hath guided me through life, and will now receive me to glory. From long and happy experience, I recommend him to your choice.—O should you forsake this God, how many witnesses will rise up in judgment against you. The counsels, the admonitions and the reproofs will aggravate your condemnation. The dwelling-house where we bowed the knee together, the church to which we resorted, and every thing which calls you to my remembrance, will reproach you, if you live ungodly. Bear with the earnestness of a father who loves you, and must see you no more. Harken to his last words, and may they be engraven on your

hearts; *Fear God and keep his commandments.*"——
Surely, my young friends, your hearts are too tender to be unaffected with a scene like this. It has been introduced to your view, that while your parents yet live, you may afford them hope concerning you; or, if they be already dead, that you may recollect what passed in your minds and the feelings you had, so as to excite you to a careful attention to the duties of religion. May God, by his grace, qualify you to serve him better in your generation than your fathers have done; to outstrip them in knowledge, in zeal, and in every good work.

WHILE this subject is addressed more especially to the young, it speaks in a very alarming manner to you, my brethren, who have let the season of youth pass unimproved, are arrived at middle, it may be, at old age, and have no well grounded hope of an interest in the Saviour. Ought not you to make speed? To carefully improve what remains of life? Through the forbearance of God, you are yet spared. There is yet hope concerning you, if you will, at length, turn unto the Lord. Repent that you have so long forgotten him, and forget him no more. It is the eleventh hour. *Why stand ye all the day idle?* Begin, begin the work of religion before it be too late. *The night cometh, when no man can work.*

To conclude, This subject ought to excite the thankfulness of those of us who were brought to know God in the days of our youth. Of whom was it that your parents were pious ; that you had early instruction in the truth ; and that your hearts were inclined to embrace it ? Of whom that your vicious inclinations were restrained and subdued ; that you have been kept from gross sins, and delivered from the snares in which others have been taken ? Was it not of God ? Praise him ! Praise him ! You have been distinguished above others, and you ought to be distinguished by bringing forth much fruit unto God. Let all who have known his love in Christ, be exhorted to diligence and zeal in his service. Recommend religion by the exemplariness of your walk. Show youth by your conduct, that religion is not that gloomy thing they are apt to suppose it ; but, that their chief happiness, as well as their duty, consists in *knowing God, and serving him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.*

S E R M O N XVI.

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS AND RECOVERY.

*Preached near the close of the year.**

ISAIAH XXXVIII. 7. 8.

And this shall be a SIGN unto thee from the LORD, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken. Behold I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned TEN DEGREES, by which degrees it was gone down.

THESE words are the record of a miracle wrought for the confirmation of the faith of HEZEKIAH king of Judah. They are chosen as the

* On this day, being the 26th of December, 1790, died the Rev. Dr. EILARDUS WESTERLO in the 53d year of his age; a man highly and justly esteemed. In the papers which announced his death was given the following character: "This gentleman was called by the Reformed Dutch Church of Albany, from Holland, and during the space of 30 years, has been distinguished as an able, zealous, and successful minister of the

foundation of some reflections, at all times profitable, but to which we are more naturally led, at this season of the year.

LET us, first, attend briefly to the preceding history which will teach us the occasion of the miracle ; and then, to the difficulties which occur, with the various opinions of interpreters.

THE history as related in the twentieth chapter of the second book of Kings, and more minutely here, is this. About the time that Sennacherib king of Assyria invaded Judea, Hezekiah was taken with a

“ Lord Jesus Christ.—In few men did greater and more amiable qualities unite. He possessed an excellent understanding, solid learning, and fervent piety. As he experienced the power of truth upon his own soul, so his life was an evidence that he loved the Saviour, whom he served and preached to others. A meek and benevolent disposition recommended him to all his acquaintances; and his widow and children, his numerous friends, a large congregation, and all the churches with which he was connected, bewail in his death, the loss of a great and good man.”

Though the author, in choosing this subject, had no particular reference to Dr. Westerlo, yet, having heard of his dangerous illness, and prayers being this day offered up for his recovery, he could not help remarking, in the time of delivery, and after, how suitable the subject was to the occasion. Had he been informed of his death, he could not have refrained then to have deplored the loss. God, who spared Hezekiah, was pleased, in the exercise of the same wisdom and sovereignty, to remove the other.

very dangerous sickness. The prophet Isaiah was sent to him with this solemn and alarming message: *Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live.** This declaration, like some others, is not to be understood in the most absolute sense; but signified that his sickness was beyond the reach of human art to heal, and would, according to the course of nature, prove mortal. Of the same kind was this declaration of Jonah, *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*; and yet God spared this city upon its repentance: so in the case before us, he was pleased to restore Hezekiah upon his deep humiliation and earnest prayer.—We are informed that Hezekiah was exceedingly affected, and that he *wept sore*. Death was unexpected and grievous to him.

It may well be inquired, why Hezekiah was so much concerned at the prospect of death, seeing he was a good king, had been zealous in reforming the abuses of former reigns, in establishing the worship of the true God, and has this testimony, that *he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did.†* This is not to be ascribed entirely to that love of life which is natural to us; for, though there is interwoven in our very frame a fear of

* Verse 1.

† 2 Kings xviii. 3.

death, and a desire to prolong our existence ; yet good men have often died not only with composure, but triumph. Indeed, where there is no settled hope of well-being hereafter, the thoughts of death must be terrible. There were, however, beside the infirmity of human nature, several reasons why Hezekiah might desire the continuance of his life.

LENGTH of days was promised as a reward of obedience ; and Hezekiah would be apt to look upon so sudden and premature a death, as an evidence of the divine displeasure. He was as yet in the prime and vigor of his life. Accordingly we find him pleading thus ; *Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight : ** by which we are not to understand, that he boasted of his works, or pled them as meritorious ; but that he besought God to confer the reward he had graciously promised to those who walked in his statutes ; that he would afford this token of his approbation.

WE are to consider likewise the great danger to which the kingdom, at this juncture, was exposed by the powerful invasion of the Assyrian army. In such circumstances, Hezekiah would view his own death,

* Verse 3.

as a great and public loss. This would afflict him the more, as at this time he had no son to succeed to the throne. How strange and mournful must this dispensation have appeared to him, when in himself the royal family of David was about to become extinct, and all hopes of the Messiah being born of his race, vain ! In this light then, in asking for life, he only pled the promise which David and Solomon had pled before him, *That there should not fail a man to sit on the throne of Israel.** In short, when these things are considered, we may account for the concern of Hezekiah, and see that he might desire life from the purest motives ; not so much for his own sake, as for the glory of God in the world.

HIS earnest entreaty was heard, and Isaiah was sent to inform him that he should recover from his present disorder ; that his cure should be so sudden and complete, as to enable him, on the third day, to go up unto the house of the Lord ; that fifteen years should be added to his life ; and that he should be delivered out of the hand of the king of Assyria. By the direction of Isaiah, a plaister of figs was applied to his boil, and he recovered. What his particular disorder was, is no more than conjectured from its being called a *boil*, and from the remedy used. The original word signifies an

* 1 Kings viii. 25.

inflammation ; and figs are said to have a softening and ripening tendency. It might have been an imposthume, quinsey, or plague-fore. Whatever fitness there was in the means used, the cure was evidently miraculous ; and we are taught here, that we ought not too readily to despair of life, but use all proper remedies, depending upon God for success. Miracles, indeed, we may not expect ; but it becomes us to acknowledge an overruling Providence in all our concerns.

HEZEKIAH, in order that his faith might be strengthened in the promised deliverance, piously requested Isaiah for a sign from the Lord, which was granted. What this was, we read in the text. Let us now attend to the difficulties which occur, with the various opinions of interpreters.

THE first difficulty is with respect to the sun-dial of Ahaz. There is no mention in scripture of any such instrument to measure time, as a dial, before the reign of this king ; and it is not certain that the Jews, before the Babylonish captivity, divided their day into hours. The first place, in the Old Testament, where we meet with the word *hour*, is in the book of Daniel. It is not easy to determine who were the first inventors of instruments to measure time in this manner. The Egyptians pretend that such machines were used

among them, long before they appeared in other nations. The Greeks confess that Anaximander first divided the time by hours, introduced sun-dials among them, and that he brought this invention from Chaldea; but Anaximander flourished about two hundred years later than the days of Ahaz. Hence some very considerable writers suppose that the invention of sun-dials was much later than this period, and they give the passage a different translation. It is observed, that the word rendered *degrees*, signifies *steps*, or *stairs*; and it has been alledged, that this measurer of time, “was nothing but a flight of stairs leading up to the gate of the palace; and according to the projection of the sun, marked at proper distances with figures denoting the divisions of the day; and not any regular piece of dial-work.”

NOTWITHSTANDING this apparent difficulty as to the place and time of the first invention, no reasonable objection can lie against the truth of this history. In Chaldea, astronomy is known to have been early studied; and as an intimacy subsisted between Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and Ahaz king of Judah, it is not improbable that Ahaz had the model of a dial from thence, and had one erected in his own palace. Of what form it was, and in what manner graduated,

is little to the purpose. Inventions of this kind are not, all at once, the most convenient and perfect. Some contend, from the signification of the original word, that it was not horizontal, as dials now commonly are, but hemispherical and concave. Of whatever form it was, it measured time by a shadow cast upon it.

THE next difficulty is with respect to the miracle itself. Did it consist only in the recess of the shadow; or did the body of the sun recede in the heavens? On this there is a diversity of opinion. It is of no consequence in treating of this, whether we use the common language, or speak according to the present received philosophy; because whether we suppose the sun to turn round the earth, or the earth to turn round the sun, the apparent effects are the same.

THE ancients, both Jews and Christians, because it is here said, that *the sun returned ten degrees*, were of opinion, that the miracle was wrought not upon the shadow, but upon the body of the sun; or, that "the sun and all the heavenly bodies went back, and as much was detracted from the next night, as was added to this day."

SOME respectable names have maintained, on the contrary, that the miracle was occasioned only by a recess of the shadow, while the sun proceeded in its ordinary course. In support of this, they say, that in the book of Kings, mention is made only of the shadow's going back ; and though in Isaiah the sun is said to return, yet, that to put the sun for its beams, is a common mode of speech in all languages. They urge also, that on the supposition that the recess, and advance of the sun was gradual, great inconveniencies must have arisen to mankind ; for, if every degree were an hour, then the sun in returning, and again advancing, would have made that day twenty hours longer than usual, and thus would have scorched the inhabitants of some parts of the earth, while others would have been frozen by so long an absence of the sun. On the other hand, if the recess and advance of the sun be supposed to have been instantaneous, they say, that this would have been seen and felt all over the world, been observed by astronomers, and recorded by historians. They urge farther, that as the design of the miracle was not to lengthen the day, as in the case of Joshua, there was no necessity for such a change in the motions of the heavenly bodies, when the design could be answered as well by a change of the sun's rays

on the dial. This is the substance of their reasoning, which though plausible, is not conclusive.

WE are expressly told, that the sun *returned ten degrees*, and why should not this be understood strictly, as well as that the sun *stood still*, in the days of Joshua? That each of these degrees was an hour, is not said; nor, whether the change was gradual, or instantaneous. That we do not find it recorded by historians, is no argument that it was not observed; for the records of those early days are not come down to us. We have, at least, an intimation that it was observed at Babylon; for, after Hezekiah's recovery, we are informed of the king sending ambassadors to congratulate him, and *to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land.** To what is this wonder so likely to refer, as to some astonishing change observed in the heavens? The Chaldean astrologers accurately studied the motions of the celestial bodies; and it is probable, that this retrogression of the sun would engage their attention, while they found themselves unable to account for it. As the sun was one of their deities, we may see, likewise, the wisdom of God in this miracle. While it was a sign to Hezekiah, it proclaimed to these idolatrous nations, the power and glory of HIM who made the sun, and to whom all worship is due. Had Hezekiah im-

* 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

proved this dispensation, by directing the attention of the Babylonish ambassadors to this, instead of showing them his great treasures, he would have performed an acceptable service, and avoided the displeasure of God.

UPON the whole, though we are not to look for a miracle, where there is none ; and though God doth not work any unnecessarily ; yet there is nothing here too great for our faith. Was it impossible ? Who shall limit the Creator of the ends of the earth ? Was not the return of the sun as easy, as that of the shadow, to an omnipotent hand ? Can a human artificer move and guide his machine as he will, and cannot the almighty Architect move and guide the fabric of the universe ? Cannot he who fashioned the glorious luminaries of heaven ; who continually impels and guides them through the vast expanse ; cannot he arrest them in their course, or change their revolutions, without confusion in the system, or injury to the creatures he hath made ? Surely, no one who acknowledges an infinitely wise and powerful Being, will deny this.

THOSE who contend that the change was only in the shadow, still admit a miracle ; and indeed, which ever side we take, it amounts in the end to the same. The sign was from God, and afforded to Hezekiah full assurance of what was promised. Observing, it may be,

from the window of his chamber, the shadow recede on the dial; he confidently believed his recovery, and his deliverance from the meditated invasion of the king of Assyria. He who turned the sun from his course, could remove the most inveterate disease; he, on whom creation rests, could easily frustrate all the designs of men.

I PROCEED now to what was mainly intended; to make some serious and useful reflections. It was necessary, in considering this passage of scripture, to introduce the things you have heard; and let us now endeavour to draw from them lessons for our own instruction.

FIRST, We ought to live in continual expectation of death, and preparation for it. No time of life, and no strength of constitution is secure against its attacks. Hezekiah had arrived at little more than the meridian of human life, and was in the midst of his usefulness, when seized with a mortal disease. But why do we point to him, when we see daily witnesses of this truth? " 'Tis but a few whose days amount to three-score years and ten." Much the greater part die before they have attained to half of that age.

By realizing death, and bringing it near to us, it will appear less terrible when it actually comes. But, when seldom in our thoughts ; when we are deeply immersed in the cares and pleasures of this world, the message, *Set thine house in order ; for thou shalt die and not live*, must strike terror to our hearts. Hardly any situation can be conceived more pitiable than his, whom death unexpectedly overtakes loaded with guilt. If it be alarming to even the best, what horrors must overwhelm such an one ! If the good king *turned his face toward the wall and wept sore*, what confusion and dismay, may we suppose will attend him, whom death surprises in riot and profanity ; him, whose exaltation is abused by the indulgence of unlawful pleasures, and who is chargeable with blood-guiltiness by the oppression and murder of his subjects !—But whatever are our circumstances in life, it is our wisdom and duty to consider our latter end ; to prepare for that solemn and inevitable hour, by making our peace with God through a Mediator, and by obeying all his commandments.

SECONDLY, The length of our lives is determined by God. There is an *appointed time* beyond which we cannot pass, and until which we are safe from every mortal accident and disease. Though this truth ought not to encourage the neglect of ourselves, or cause us to rush upon danger, for the means and the end are

connected, yet it ought to keep us from anxious and distressing fears. By these we cannot prolong our lives, but we may render them uncomfortable. Though Hezekiah was dangerously ill, and had solemn warning from the Lord, yet he lived fifteen years after this. Such, from the beginning, was the council of God; but he was pleased for wise purposes to threaten him with death. To Hezekiah was afterward known, the precise limit; but as to us, it is wholly concealed. Some, indeed, are for ever prophesying as to this event; hearing noises, feeling impressions, dreaming dreams, and seeing visions; thus, vainly tormenting themselves and others by anticipation. That God can reveal to persons the time of their death, and that he hath done it in other instances, as well as the one before us, is certain; but, it may be asserted that some important end is always to be answered by it; and that when he does it, the person is not left to mere conjecture. In general, however, we know neither the day nor the hour, that so it may be always present with us; that so our houses may be *kept* in order, and we prepared to die.

THIRDLY, Are there not some of us, my brethren, whom God hath snatched from the very mouth of the grave? Whose lives have been despaired of, and yet God, in his abundant mercy, hath restored to health?

In so large an assembly, some such, probably, are to be found, whose preservation, though the sun turned not back, seemed almost miraculous to themselves and others. It becomes such seriously to inquire, what improvement they have made of life since? What requital to God for his sparing goodness? It is remarked of Hezekiah that he *rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up.**

He went up on the third day to the house of the Lord, to return thanks, and his song of praise is recorded in this chapter; but, when the mercy was no longer fresh, he forgot the obligations he owed. Alas, this is too commonly the case with many. How has it been with you? Have you broken off your iniquities? Have you performed your resolutions? Or, have you returned to your former ways, and are, perhaps, more secure and thoughtless than ever? Beware of un sanctified afflictions. *He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy†.*

Remember that you are respited, not pardoned; it may be for fifteen years; and it may be for a much less period. Remember that death will inevitably come at last; and if, instead of repentance, you have added to the number of your sins; if you have thus despised the *goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering* of God, you will have treasured up unto yourselves *wrath*

* 2 Chron. xxxii. 25.

† Prov. xxix. 1.

against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Nor only do finners harden themselves under the chastenings of the Lord, but there is danger that saints do not improve them as they ought; and though these shall not finally perish; yet, by their forgetfulness, they dishonor God and bring upon themselves other afflictions from his hand. Let me beseech all then, of whatever character, *to render again according to the benefit done unto them*; to devote themselves to the service of that God who hath made them, restored them from sickness, preserved them in many dangers, and to whom, at last, they must account for all their actions.

FOURTHLY, We are come, my brethren, near to the close of another year. This circumstance led me to the choice of this subject, and produced the present train of reflections. The sun will soon have finished another revolution, never to measure back the space. The time we have lived is gone as to us; as much so, as the years before the flood. Whatever we have been doing, we have been borne steadily and irresistibly along.—How many years have we lived? Fifteen? Twice fifteen? Have not some of us seen four times this number, and more? To allude to the figure of a

dial ; while the shadow shows that it is morning with some, noon with others ; does not, to a third class the shadow lengthen, and the evening fast approach ? Must they not soon, very soon, be enveloped in thick darkness ? What changes will fifteen years make in the circle of our acquaintance ? What changes in the face of this assembly ? Nay, who is there among us will venture to claim so long a time ; or say, that even a day, or an hour, is his own ?—Perishing creatures, on the verge of another year, and, it may be, on the verge of eternity, will you admit the solemn reflection into your breasts ? Will you be advised to secure an interest in the Saviour, that so you may live in glory hereafter ? *Life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel of Christ. It reveals a better country, that is an heavenly. Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation.* Turn while you may. Come to the blood of Christ for cleansing from your sins ; and seek his purifying grace to prepare you to live and reign with him when time shall be no longer.

FINALLY, let those whose hopes are truly fixed on the mercy of God in Christ, seek, by a *patient continuance in well doing, for glory, and honour, and immortality.* Through the merits of your exalted Redeemer, death is your friend ; the grave is a bed of rest. *It is appoint-*

ed unto all men once to die ; but you will rise again. God hath prepared a city where Hezekiah, and all the redeemed shall dwell. The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it ; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. There is no measurement of time as upon earth, but one bright and eternal day.

S E R M O N XVII.

HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF DANIEL.

DANIEL vi. 19. 20. 21. 22.

Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel, and the king spake and said to Daniel, O DANIEL servant of the living GOD, is thy God, whom thou serveest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever.

MY GOD hath sent his angel and hath shut the lions mouths that they have not hurt me: Forasmuch as before HIM innocency was found in me and also before THEE, O king, have I done no hurt.

THERE are some passages of scripture, which we read in early life, and which make so deep an impression, as never after to be effaced from our remembrance. Who is not acquainted with the story of Joseph and his brethren? With the combat of David and Goliath? With Samson and the foxes? And with

the circumstance of Daniel being thrown into the lions den? This is an argument of the utility of history, and of the wisdom of God in using this method of communicating instruction.

BUT, though the facts which are related engage our attention, and are imprinted on the memory, we do not always, at the time, attend to the lessons which they teach. This is the work of maturer years, of greater discernment and reflection.

To prepare the way for some improvement of the passage before us, it will be necessary to take a short view of the principal actors in the scene.

THE prophet DANIEL, was descended from the family of David. In the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, having invested Jerusalem, took it, and carried Daniel when he was yet young, with other captives, into Babylon. He and three of his companions were selected by direction of Nebuchadnezzar, were instructed in the language and learning of Chaldea, in order that they might be qualified to serve as officers at court; and, agreeably to the custom of conquerors in those days, new names were given to them. Daniel was called Belteshazzar.

THEY continued under tuition for three years, and the king appointed them a daily provision of meat and wine from his own table. Daniel now manifested the most conscientious regard to that religion in which he had been initiated. He refused to partake of the provision allowed, lest he might defile himself with meats which were forbidden to the Jews, and part of which might, in this case, have been offered to false gods. Surely this conduct in one so young and under so many temptations, was a presage of future greatness and usefulness. Miserable is that education in which no attention is paid to the duties of religion. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: And the knowledge of the holy is understanding.**

DANIEL requested and obtained for himself and his fellow-students a sufficient quantity of water and pulse; with which, being *proved ten days, their countenances appeared fairer, and fatter in flesh, than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.†* If this circumstance be supposed to have been extraordinary, it shows us that God will not let those suffer who are actuated by a sincere attachment to his law. He will defend and support those who are engaged in a righteous cause. But when we consider that these persons

* Prov. ix. 10.

† Chap. i. 15.

were young, and employed in severe studies, vegetables and water were, perhaps, the most suitable for them. They were already so much of philosophers, as to know that high seasoned food and luxurious wines would be very prejudicial; that these would produce a feverish habit of body and stupify the mind. One reason why they outstripped all the other students in Babylon may be, that they were more abstracted from sensual pleasures; when others thought of eating, and drinking, and sleeping, they were busy in conning their lessons. Superiority in learning does not arise so much from a difference in genius, as from a closer attention and application.

WHEN these young men had finished their studies, and were examined by the king, he found them, *in all matters of wisdom and understanding, ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.** They discovered more wisdom, and had made greater progress in learning, which in that country consisted chiefly in politics, the art of war, and the motions of the celestial bodies. Upon Daniel, besides his natural acuteness and his acquired knowledge, God was pleased to bestow supernatural gifts. He *had understanding in all visions and dreams.* This soon appeared by his revealing and interpreting a remarkable

* Chap. i. 20.

dream, which had greatly troubled Nebuchadnezzar, and as to which, none of his wise-men could give him any satisfaction. Though the dream had made strong impressions upon his mind, yet he could not recollect the circumstances of it; and on this account his diviners told him that he required of them what was impossible. The king, naturally haughty and unaccustomed to disappointment, having first threatened and reproached them, became now *very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise-men of Babylon.** The decree was issued for that purpose.

At another time, we may consider particularly the character of this king, and his singular punishment: At present, we cannot forbear reflecting what a dangerous influence power and flattery have on the corrupt human heart. How absolute and cruel was the proceeding here mentioned! *Ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill.†* *If ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you.‡* He had forgotten that he himself was mortal. He imagined that all things were made for his use. He punishes men, not for disobeying a lawful command, but for not performing what was beyond their power. How often have mankind tamely submitted

* Chap. ii. 12. † Chap. ii. 5. ‡ Chap. ii. 9.

to such kings; and when shall they be cursed with them no more!

DANIEL and his three friends were included among those doomed to die. Daniel obtained a respite of the execution of the sentence, on a promise, that he would give the king satisfaction as to his dream. Having acquainted his companions with what he had undertaken, he requested them to unite in supplication to God that he would be pleased to reveal to him the great and important secret. It was accordingly revealed to Daniel in a night-vision, for which he returned praise to God; and the next morning, being brought into the presence of the king, he revealed to him the dream with the interpretation. The king surprised and pleased at the wonderful discovery, showed Daniel the most profound reverence, *and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler of the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise-men of Babylon.* He also, at Daniel's request, promoted his three friends to places of honor and trust.

WE see in this transaction the great piety of Daniel, the exceeding goodness of God, and the mysterious ways of his providence.—Where is the refuge of the pious man, in the day of trouble, but in his God? He is a helper when every earthly mean fails. Daniel was

mighty in prayer. Nor was he forgetful of thanksgiving. The mercy which he obtained by supplication, he returned in grateful praises. When he stood before the king, he was jealous for the honor of the true God, and to him he ascribed all the glory. *There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar, what shall be in the latter days**

How great was the goodness of God in revealing this secret to Daniel ; in so ordering it, that the king forgot his dream ; by this divine dispensation taking the greater glory to himself, and making it instrumental in the promotion of his servant !

How mysterious the ways of Providence, that in the interpretation of this dream, should be found a prediction of the kingdom of the Messiah ! By the image composed of different materials, are here represented the same events which Daniel afterward saw in vision, under the emblem of wild beasts. In the one, the kingdom of the Messiah is represented by the *stone that smote the image, and became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth* ;† in the other, by the *thrones being cast down*, by one coming *with the clouds of heaven* and

* Chap. ii. 28. † Chap. ii. 35.

having given to him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion being an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

But the nature of the discourse will not allow us to pursue these things.

DANIEL interpreted a second dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and which was sent as a warning to him for his pride and wickedness. The king still continuing in his impiety, the judgment which was foretold came upon him.

AFTER the death of Nebuchadnezzar, his son Evil-Merodach succeeded to the throne. His reign and that of his immediate successors were so short that no notice is taken of them in this history. Belshazzar the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar soon began to reign. To this king, Daniel interpreted the writing upon the wall, which none of the wise-men could read, much less interpret. Being slain the same night on which the writing appeared, the kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Darius the Mede now came to the throne. He is the same person who is called by the Greek historians Cyaxares, and was the

* Chap. vi. 9—14.

uncle of the renowned Cyrus. Under the reign of this last king happened that which has been read as the foundation of this discourse.

DARIUS divided the empire into an hundred and twenty provinces, over which he set governors, and over these, three presidents, of whom Daniel was chief; so high was his reputation, and such was the opinion which this king entertained of his wisdom and integrity. This distinction, however, drew upon Daniel the envy of the other princes, and they carefully sought matter of accusation against him.—“Censure,” says one, “is the tax which men pay for being eminent.” Whoever is exalted above others either in gifts or station, must expect to be envied and opposed. This evil principle is always found working in the human breast. On this account, were it not that men may not withdraw from any place or duty to which Providence calls them, they would be more easy and safe in a humble station. They who restless climb the slippery ascent of honor, and are ambitious to stand before kings, are in danger of being pushed down by more successful rivals; and at any rate, they will find vanity and vexation of spirit.

HAPPY Daniel, who, as we have reason to believe was neither covetous of honor, nor ever sought to retain it but with a good conscience. His enemies *could find none occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.** His administration being blameless, they had recourse to another stratagem. They knew that he constantly resorted to God in prayer; and therefore, on consultation, they requested that the king would *make a firm decree, that whosoever should ask a petition of any god or man, for thirty days, save of the king himself, he should be cast into the den of lions.†* Horrid plot! Impious in its very nature, and malicious in its design! But it was a dose sweetened with flattery, and therefore swallowed by the king. He *signed the writing and the decree.*

DANIEL must now, either cease to pray, or lose his life. If he pray, one would think that prudence would direct him to do it in a more concealed manner than heretofore. Mark his conduct. Though he was aware of what was intended, yet *his windows being open in his chamber, toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God.‡* This was a noble testimony. It mani-

* Chap. vi. 4. † Chap. vi. 7. ‡ Chap. vi. 16.

tested the sincerity of his religion. A false professor would have dissembled; would have apostatized; but Daniel had withstood the temptations of a licentious court, nor was he now to be affrighted by a lions den. He was at this time old, and he might have reasoned thus; "I have loved and served my God for many years, he hath promoted me to high honor in a strange land, and given me favor with several princes; and shall I for the poor remnant of my days forsake him? No; if I am to be devoured by lions, I will leave to idolaters an example of that steadfastness and fortitude which my religion inspires. Or, if it be the will of God that I should continue longer here, a witness for him, and a benefit to my nation; he hath formerly delivered, and he can still deliver me. Into his hands I wholly commit myself."

His enemies, having observed him praying to his God, accused him to the king, pled the decree, and urged that the transgression was the more heinous in Daniel, as being a foreigner. They wished to represent him as one who showed disaffection to the king, and who contemned his authority. The king now saw the evil consequence of his decree, was displeased with himself, and sincerely endeavoured to save Daniel. His ministers alledged, that by the law of the Medes and

Perfians, the statute was unalterable. Probably these statutes were confirmed by the king's oath, and therefore thought unalterable; or being made by the advice and consent of a council, they could not be revoked except in the same manner; for we find that the stone which was laid upon the mouth of the den, was sealed not only with the king's own signet, but *with the signet of his Lords.**

THESE wicked men, by their importunity, prevailed upon the king to deliver up Daniel to their mercy, and they cast him into the den of lions. The king, when he submitted, expressed a hope that the God whom Daniel continually served would still preserve him; and such was his concern and anxiety that he spent the night sleepless and fasting. He was sensible that he had been shamefully betrayed into the commission of a cruel and unjust action, and one which was likely to deprive him of a faithful and useful servant.

Who does not pity the situation of this king, surrounded by ambitious and designing courtiers who strive to impose upon him? Who does not lament his want of firmness and resolution? He approves the right and does the wrong. Could an oath oblige him

* Chap. vi. 17.

to the performance of that which was in itself sinful? Could the law of the Medes and Persians change the eternal law of justice? No, his compliance was unwarrantable. With firmer nerves he ought to have stemmed the torrent. Herod, for his *oath's sake*, beheaded John the Baptist. Pilate pronounced sentence against our Saviour, though he declared that he found *no fault in him*. From similar motives did Darius condemn Daniel to death, though his conduct in yielding to the importunity of insidious men, appears more excusable than that of the others. Early in the morning, he hastened to the den of lions, and to his great surprise and joy found Daniel unhurt. The God whom he served had indeed delivered him, and his innocence before God and man was remarkably made manifest. This deliverance was obtained by his faith; for it is said, *no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in God.** To this instance the apostle particularly refers, when describing the powerful effects of faith, he says, that it *stopped the mouths of lions.†*

DRAW near all of you, my brethren, to the mouth of the den, and behold the power and goodness of God in this wonderful deliverance. The lion is the strongest and most terrible beast that roams the forest. He drinks the

* Chap. vi. 23. † Heb. xi. 33.

blood and feeds upon the flesh of animals. His voice is tremendous, like the noise of thunder. He springs upon his prey, tears it to pieces with his claws, and devours it with his teeth. Into a den, where a number of lions were confined, was Daniel cast; probably in the night when these beasts crave their food; and as the furnace was heated *seven times* for Daniel's companions, so it is probable that the lions had been kept from their usual provision, in order to make them the more voracious. Into a den of beasts which naturally thirst for blood, and whose appetites are now whetted with hunger, and dreadfully growl for food, is Daniel cast; his body not a morsel for each, and instead of allaying their hunger, fit rather to excite a furious contest in the angry den. Behold the raging lions are tame! They growl not, they spring not! The meat offered they will not touch! An angel shut their mouths! Here Daniel continued all night, and instead of the hungry lions roar, the den sweetly sounded with the praises of the living and everlasting God. Animated were the salutations which passed between the king and him in the morning. Daniel was taken out of the den; and he returned to his office with increased reputation, and with infinite cause to love and trust the Lord.

SHALL we now retreat from the den of lions? Or, will curiosity lead you to witness a dismal scene, the

execution of Daniel's accusers? *The king commanded and they brought them, and cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came at the bottom of the den.** By this transaction the preservation of Daniel appeared the more evidently miraculous. As to his accusers, the mouths of the lions were unstopped, and they acted agreeably to their nature.--From this bloody fight let us turn away, reflecting on the justice of God in bringing these men to the same death which they had meditated for Daniel. The law which condemned the wives and children, was no doubt cruel; but it seems reasonable that those persons should suffer the very punishment to which they had unjustly and maliciously sought to bring another. God ordered that their wicked devices should return with vengeance upon themselves. In like manner, was Haman hanged on the very gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai.

DANIEL continued at court and in favor under the reign of Cyrus, who succeeded his uncle. To the Babylonish empire this king united the kingdoms of

* Chap. vi. 24.

Persia and Media, and the whole dominion was afterwards called the Persian empire.

NEITHER time nor propriety will admit to enter fully upon the prophecies of Daniel.

SOME of the later Jews have denied that he was a prophet ; but the words of our Saviour put this matter out of all doubt, by whom he is expressly called a prophet ;* and it is an evidence too that he spoke the sentiments of the Jews in his day. Indeed, when we consider the greatness and clearness of his prophecies, especially those concerning the coming and sufferings of the Messiah, he must be esteemed one of the first rank. Josephus reckons him among the greatest of the prophets, and says of him, " That he conversed familiarly with God, and not only foretold future events, as other prophets did, but determined likewise the time when they should come to pass." So clear are his predictions, and so exactly fulfilled, that Porphyry, a bitter enemy of the christian religion, has acknowledged that they were written by some later hand, after the events took place. The modern Jews, on the one hand, are not willing to admit his authority, on account of his predictions respecting the time of the Messiah ; and infidels on the other, oppose him,

* Mat. xxiv. 15.

lest they should be obliged to acknowledge the truth of divine revelation. The objections of both, if examined, will be found weak and absurd.

PART of this book, from the fourth verse of the second chapter to the end of the seventh, which treats of Babylonish affairs, was originally written in the Chaldean language, and all the rest in Hebrew.

DANIEL is supposed not to have returned with the Jews from captivity, but to have died in Chaldea in an advanced age.

THUS have we taken a cursory view of the life of Daniel; who possessed an extraordinary genius, improved by much learning and long experience; who lived in great worldly prosperity; who was bold and unshaken in the duties of the true religion; and who enjoyed peculiar revelations of the divine will. What Joseph was in the court of Pharaoh, Daniel was under the kings of Babylon; only the latter prophesied more clearly and fully of the Messiah. How plain is the following prophecy! *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the*

*most holy. The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.** The time and the design of his coming are here fixed. According to the prophetic style, the seventy weeks are to be taken for weeks of years, every one of which contained seven years; and so the seventy weeks will amount to four hundred and ninety years. So many years being reckoned back from the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, will bring us to the very year and month in which Ezra had his commission from the king of Persia for returning to Jerusalem and restoring the church and state of the Jews.

So many reflections have been already made on this history, that there is the less necessity to be particular now.

WE see that the great design of God in raising up prophets, and in all the revolutions of the kingdoms of old was to prepare the way for the introduction of the Messiah. We believe that he hath indeed come; and that he hath been cut off; that his kingdom is long since begun; and that to promote and establish this every event and revolution yet to take place shall be made subservient. This being the case, it will not be deemed an improper digression, or too forced an appli-

* Chap. ix. 24.

cation of this subject, to preach to you *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. We have come up in vain this evening, unless we return more disposed to know and do the will of God.

WE are all by nature, in worse than Babylonish captivity; exposed to more frightful dangers than a den of lions. These can only rend our bodies; but there is one who seeks to devour our souls; to draw us from allegiance to our Maker, and involve us in remediless perdition. What is the most abject slavery among men compared with the slavery of sin? What the most excruciating bodily pains, to the unquenchable fire and the never-dying worm? What is banishment from our native land to eternal exclusion from the comfortable presence of God? These are things which we have all reason to fear, and which will certainly come upon us, unless we betake ourselves to that way of escape which God hath provided. Behold, a mighty deliverer, who was early revealed; time after time described; and who hath long since appeared in our world. By death, he hath conquered him that had the power of death. He hath triumphed over all the enemies of mankind. He hath led captivity captive. He is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. Will you, my

brethren, become the subjects of his kingdom? Will you submit yourselves to his laws? Now is the time to make your peace with him; to lay hold on his righteousness by faith. Dying sinners, by the death of the Saviour, live! Miserable captives, by the strength of the Saviour, break your chains and be free! Rise, rise, from the ruins of this world to glory and immortality!

LET those who are the subjects of Christ's kingdom be exhorted, under all their dangers and difficulties, with Daniel to *believe in God*. Trust his power and his faithfulness. Adhere to duty, and commit all your concerns to his care. He will support, guide and protect you. This discourse cannot conclude better than by offering to your meditation those glorious truths sublimely expressed in the prophecy before us. *I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued, and came forth from before him: Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: The judgment was set and the books were opened.* And many of them that sleep in the*

* Chap. vii. 9. 10.

dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.†

† Chap. xii. 2. 3.

S E R M O N XVIII.

CHARACTER OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

DANIEL IV. 37.

Now I NEBUCHADNEZZAR praise, and extol, and honour the KING OF HEAVEN, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride, he is able to abase.

THESE words are the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, in favor of the true God. They are the more remarkable as being uttered by a heathen, and one who had been educated in an idolatrous worship. In considering their occasion and force, we will be led to attend to some of the principal occurrences in the life, together with the character of this king.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR was one of the most powerful and successful monarchs of the East. Having succeeded

to a vast kingdom, he enlarged and strengthened it by new acquisitions. His armies were victorious, his dominions extensive, and his revenues immense. In the great image, which he saw in a dream, his kingdom was represented by a *head of fine gold*. It was so interpreted by Daniel. *Thou O king, said he, art a king of kings : For the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all : Thou art this head of gold.**

A CONSTANT scene of wordly prosperity is always dangerous. It produces in most men a forgetfulness of their dependence on divine providence, and an arrogant demeanour unbecoming the state of mortality. On Nebuchadnezzar it had the most baneful influence. *His heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride.†* His disposition, naturally haughty, had been nourished by a courtly education, by the prospect of a flourishing kingdom, by the absolute command of armies, by repeated victories, and by the continual incense of the minions around him. Pride was his predominant sin and manifested itself in all his actions. To this

* Chap. ii. 37. 38.

† Chap. v. 20.

we are to impute his unreasonable anger, his cruelty, and his abjectness of spirit, on several occasions.

HIS peremptory command to the diviners concerning his dream, his excessive anger, and his cruel decree have been mentioned in a former discourse. Pride cannot bear to be contradicted or disappointed. Its claims are extravagant, and if denied, it breathes certain vengeance. We find a similar instance in the conduct of Nebuchadnezzar, towards the three Jews who refused to worship the golden image which he had set up in the plain of Dura. The behaviour of these Jews was as noble, as that of the king was mean. They said to him, *Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.** A generous master would have admired and applauded such integrity in his servants; he would have thought them the more worthy of his love and confidence; but the proud king construing it into disrespect and contumacy, debased himself by outrageous passion. *He was full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed.* So fierce was his wrath that it heated for these men a furnace *one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.†* How little and contemptible does pride sometimes make men! In the very act of supporting what they call

* Chap. iii. 18.

† Chap. iii. 19.

their dignity, they discover their weakness.. Such passion was unbecoming a man, much less Nebuchadnezzar the great ; much less a judge, in pronouncing sentence upon his fellow-men.

THAT there is a meanness in pride which will, at times, stoop low, appears from the conduct of this king when Daniel interpreted his first dream. He *fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him.** Before this, his looks were lofty and his commands absolute. He acted as though heaven and earth were obliged to comply with his wishes. But now he prostrates himself before one whom he had lately sentenced to death. He pays that homage which he himself had exacted from others. From the extremity of pride, he descends to the extremity of abasement. Daniel deserved his thanks and his favor ; but there was a meanness in humbling himself in this manner ; and it proves that pride is wholly different from true greatness and magnanimity.

THE time at length approached when God, who *resisteth the proud*, by a singular dispensation, punished this king ; and held him up as a dreadful example to

* Chap. ii. 46.

future princes, and an affecting lesson to all generations of men. In mercy to the king, and that it might be the more observable by others, God was pleased to forewarn him in a dream. Though he had forgotten the former dream, yet this he was able particularly to relate; and therefore expected that his own magicians would be able to interpret it. In this they failed, and he was obliged again to have recourse to Daniel.

THE providence of God is very remarkable in these transactions. Though Nebuchadnezzar was favored with dreams, yet the ability to interpret was vouchsafed to a prophet of the true God. They were thus, properly divine predictions, and the king was used only as an instrument to make them the more public, and to excite the attention of mankind. In the first dream, the magicians pleaded the impossibility of interpreting what could not be remembered; but behold, a second dream, in which this excuse is removed, and still they are perplexed to no purpose. God confounds all their wisdom, and in the sight of these heathen, asserts his own glory. We do wrong in confining the design of God in the wonders he hath wrought to particular persons or objects. Who may not see, that while the captivity of the Jews was a punishment for their sins;

that while the exaltation of Daniel in the court of Babylon, and his prophecies were a source of comfort to his own nation; these events tended to diffuse the knowledge of the true God among other nations, and recover many from their superstition and idolatry

THE substance of the dream as told by the king was this; "I saw," said he, "a tree exceeding great and
"lofty; and which increased so fast that it seemed to
"reach unto the very heaven. It was luxuriant in
"leaves and fruit. It afforded shelter to the beasts
"and fowls, and sustenance to all flesh. As I won-
"dered at the greatness and utility of this tree, I saw
"an angel descending from heaven, who cried with a
"loud voice, Hew down the tree, cut off the branch-
"es, shake off the leaves, scatter the fruit, and let all
"creatures depart from it; but leave the stump in the
"earth, with a band of iron and brags, in the tender
"grafs of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of
"heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in
"the grafs of the earth; let his heart be changed
"from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto
"him; and let seven times pass over him."—When Daniel heard this dream, he was struck with the awful portent of it, and remained silent for an hour. Being encouraged by the king, he at last declared that this great tree signified the king himself; that the hew-

ing down of the tree and what followed, signified his being driven from men to herd with the beasts of the field, exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather ; and that the leaving of the stump signified his restoration, in due time, to his former state.

DANIEL accompanied the interpretation with the most faithful and salutary advice to the king to forsake his sins, that so the judgment might be averted or delayed. How happy had he complied with this advice ! Some think that, alarmed by this warning, he did reform for a time, and that, on this account, he was respited for a year. Sinners, when threatened with immediate danger, often leave their sins, and form resolutions to lead new lives ; but when the danger is removed or forgotten, they return to their former courses. Whatever outward and temporary reformation might have appeared in Nebuchadnezzar, the bitter root of pride still remained in his heart.

WHEN his prosperity was at the highest ; when his enemies around were all in subjection and tributary ; and when he had greatly enlarged and beautified the city of Babylon with the spoils of conquered nations, his pride swelled beyond all bounds, and vented itself, on a certain occasion, in the most arrogant language. *As he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and*

viewed the amazing extent and magnificence of this building, which he had planned and executed; or, probably, as he walked on the uppermost terrace of the famous hanging-gardens, from which he had a prospect of the whole city with its palaces, walls, turrets, brazen gates and canals, he *spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?** Was there ever a more daring instance of pride? Who is not shocked to hear a mortal assume the prerogative of Deity? Who does not tremble lest divine vengeance suddenly burst from the clouds upon his presumptuous head? Of whom are these words in the prophecy of Isaiah more descriptive than of this king? *Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God? I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most High.*† Though judgment be delayed, yet it will surely come. *While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice from heaven pronounced that the measure of his iniquities was full, and that now the sentence was to be executed. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: And he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles feathers, and*

* Chap. iv. 30.

† Isaiah xiv. 13. 14.

*his nails like birds claws.** He who aspired to be as God, was degraded to the condition of a beast.

VARIOUS have been the opinions concerning this punishment inflicted upon Nebuchadnezzar, and which it is needless to treat at large. Some have supposed the whole to be an allegory, and intended to give us a representation of the fall of lucifer; some, that the king was really changed into an ox, or, at least, that the spirit of an ox was infused into him, or substituted in the place of his own; and some, that it was a fascination in the eyes both of the king and his subjects, by which they imagined that there was a real change into the form of this animal. Neither of these opinions can be admitted. The most general and the most probable opinion is, that, by the judgment of God, Nebuchadnezzar was deprived of his reason, or struck with madness; that in this state he fancied himself an ox, and imitated the actions of one; that, having fled from the habitations of men, he associated with beasts, fed upon grass, lay exposed on the ground, and, in short, seemed to have all the inclinations and actions of a beast. His own words intimate his punishment to have been of this sort. *Mine understanding, says he, returned unto*

* Chap. iv. 33.

me. And again, *My reason returned unto me.** The only difficulty then is, to see in what his punishment consisted; for if he all the time imagined himself a beast, or was in a state of insanity, he would not be unhappy. This difficulty is removed, if we suppose that he had at certain intervals, a consciousness of his misery, but was so hurried by a brutal appetite as to be unable to extricate himself. He might see his error, and not be able to avoid it; be sensible of his disgrace and not capable to redress it.

NOR is it any objection to this history, that Nebuchadnezzar, accustomed to the softness and delicacy of a court, could not live seven years on the raw fruits of the earth, and his body too exposed to external injuries; for, persons infected with his distemper are well known to be excessively strong, and able to undergo hardships which would prove fatal to them in a sound state of mind.

AT the expiration of the limited time, God was pleased to restore this king to the exercise of his reason and to reinstate him in his kingdom. His words on this occasion are very remarkable, part of which has been read as the foundation of this discourse. With what temper he continued to demean himself afterwards we are not particularly informed. It has been alledged

* Chap. iv. 34. 36.

that his repentance was insincere, and that his dedication of the golden image in the plain of Dura, was subsequent to his punishment. This, however, is contrary to the order in which the narration is given by Daniel. It is certain that he was now more effectually humbled than ever he had been heretofore, and that he more explicitly paid homage to almighty God. Before this, he acknowledged him as the God of Daniel, and as the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, while he himself continued to adore the false gods of Chaldea; but now his language is, *I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the king of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.* Charity therefore will lead us to believe, that if he were not sincerely converted to the true worship, that, at least, he feared hereafter to glory in himself; or assume, by his words or actions, what belonged to the living and eternal God, the creator and governor of all things.

How powerfully does this history teach us the sin and danger of pride! How forcibly inculcate this truth, that *pride goeth before destruction; and an haughty spirit before a fall!** It prepares for destruction, and is a token of its approach. Pride is said to have been the sin of fallen angels. Our first parents affecting to

* Prov. xvi. 18.

be as gods, brought misery on all the race. Many are the instances recorded for our admonition ; and this of Nebuchadnezzar speaks to us in the most alarming manner. Let none say they are uninterested in the subject, for pride is deeply rooted in our nature, and discoverable, in one shape or another, in every human being. It is not confined to any station or condition in life. It is found in the monarch, and in the beggar. It inhabits the palace and the cottage. It rolls in a chariot, and it walks on foot. It is cloathed in purple and fine linnen, and it is covered with rags and filth. It talks, and it is silent. It is on the bench, at the bar, and in the pulpit. It judges, and it pleads. It preaches, and it prays. Let us beware then of deceiving ourselves in this matter. Let us seek an intimate acquaintance with our own hearts, and keep a strict guard over them, lest we be tempted, in any case, *to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.*

ARE we inclined to boast of birth and titles? Behold in Nebuchadnezzar their vanity. What did it avail him in his degradation, that he was descended from kings, and once swayed the sceptre of the greatest kingdom in the world ! Do we confide in the multitude of our riches ? How useless were all the revenues of the east to Nebuchadnezzar, when his dwelling was with the beasts of the field ! Are we pleased with

splendid houses, with costly furniture, and with all the delicacies which gratify the senses? Let us be warned by the man who strutted in the palace of Babylon, called it his own, and who, afterwards, felt the inclemencies of seven winters and summers, grazed in the field, and gathered fruits on the hedges! Do we pride ourselves in personal beauty and the decoration of our bodies? Alas, look at yonder frightful object;—naked, —tanned,—filthy,—haggard,—his hairs like the feathers, and his nails like the claws of an eagle! Are our hearts apt to swell with a conscious superiority of understanding, and acquirements in learning and knowledge? Accident or disease may soon bring us from these exalted heights to the low and pitiable condition of an idiot. Though the endowments of the mind, more than external things, may be called our own, yet they are uncertain in this fallen and miserable state of man. What a spectacle does Nebuchadnezzar exhibit, deprived of his reason! The crafty politician, the skilful soldier, and the magnificent prince is, at once thrown from his pre-eminence, and instead of commanding respect, provokes disgust. See him, through a disordered imagination, with his face prone to the earth, feed, bellow, and toss his head like an ox! Human nature recoils at the thought of owning kindred to him. *How art thou fallen from heaven, O lucifer,*

*son of the morning ! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations ! They that see thee, shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms ?** This mournful example should affright us from all inordinate self-esteem and vain-glory. We are continually dependent on God, and it becomes us to walk humbly and thankfully before him. We are guilty in his sight, and instead of cause to vaunt, we lie at the feet of divine mercy.

WHAT disorders has sin introduced into this world ! How has it defaced the noblest works of God ! Man, made at first *a little lower than the angels*, sin depresses beneath the very rank of beasts. It renders man unsafe to man ; it sends him to wander among the tombs ; and it confines him to the cells of a bedlam.—O sinners, madness, in part, has seized all of you. Though you may never be driven from men, and the world may call you wise and happy, yet while you transgress the law of God, and refuse to glorify him, you are foolish and miserable. His law is eternal reason ; and his glory is your chief end and only happiness. Return, therefore, to him in that way which he hath provided for your recovery. Apply the remedy, that so your understanding may return unto you ; that so you may

* Isaiah xiv. 12. 16.

bles the Most High for his perfections displayed in the works of creation and providence, and especially in the redemption of sinners through the obedience and death of his only-begotten Son.

THIS subject deserves the serious attention of those in younger life, who, from want of experience in the world, and knowledge of themselves, may not be aware of the beginning and tendency of pride. There is a caution, modesty and diffidence, exceedingly becoming youth, and indicating their future usefulness and worth. On the contrary, pride, or a high conceit of yourselves, will effectually prevent your improvement. He that thinks himself already very wise, is in a fair way to know nothing. Pride fills all the empty space, and excludes the entrance of true knowledge. As pride arises greatly from a comparison with others, to check it, compare yourselves with those who are your superiors. There are many wiser, better, and more learned than you. On what then do you value yourselves? Where is the ground for your elation of heart? Though some be your inferiors, yet whatever things you possess, either of an external or internal nature, are all the gifts of divine providence. *Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.* * If the distribution be in your favor,

* James i. 17.

God is entitled to all the glory. At the same time, you should observe that pride is to be distinguished from a just estimate of a person's abilities, and a proper value which he may put upon himself ; and likewise from the spirit of one's station, and a due regard to decency. Pride consists in a too high opinion of our merit ; in a swelling of the heart on account of our superiority ; and in the exaction of homage from others. As far as this disposition prevails in any character, he is offensive to God, and unacceptable to men.

AGAIN, this subject should cure us of envy, and reconcile us to our circumstances in life, even though mean and indigent. Power and riches bring with them great temptations, and we are better and safer without them. Like Nebuchadnezzar, we might abuse them. Who would not rather be a poor child of God, than a rich and ungodly king ? Who would not rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than Nebuchadnezzar in the palace of Babylon ! Yea, who would not rather be an heir of eternal glory, than possess all the kingdoms of the world ? Envy not the great. Call not the proud happy. Say not with the multitude, *Who will shew us any good ?* But let your constant prayer be, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* *

* Psalm iv. 6.

UPON the whole, humility, my brethren, is our greatest ornament and our strongest defence. The increase of this always marks the progress of grace in the soul. *The high and lofty One dwelleth with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit.* Surely the consideration of the deplorable state in which grace finds a man, the sovereign and infinite love displayed in his salvation, the depths of corruption still unsubdued, and for which he needs the constant influence of grace, ought to hide pride from his eyes, and sink him into entire self-annihilation. Let us all be persuaded to seek an interest in the merits, and to copy the example of the meek and lowly Jesus. We must be clothed with his righteousness, and the same mind must be in us which was in him, before we can inhabit the pure and celestial abodes. To save us from the guilt of our sins, and to rectify our disordered natures, Jesus Christ hath satisfied the justice of God, and purchased the influences of the holy Spirit. To this glorious remedy freely offered in the gospel, let us make speedy application, that so we may enjoy a happiness inconceivable and eternal.

S E R M O N XIX.

HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF JONAH.

JONAH IV. 9. 10. 11.

*And GOD said to JONAH, Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd?**And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.**Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the GOURD, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night :**And should I not spare NINEVEH, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle ?*

TH E S E words are the expostulation of God with the prophet Jonah, for his displeasure at the Ninevites being spared, on their repentance. They inform us of the method used to reconcile him to this dispensation, and exhibit, in a striking manner, the forbearance of God to his impatient and disobedient servant. I purpose, from them, to take occasion to consider the history and character of Jonah.

WE find our blessed Lord so often referring, in the New Testament, to Jonah, as must confirm our belief of his history, and show us that it contains some important instruction. Profane wits, indeed, both of former and latter days, have treated this part of scripture as a wild romance, and made it the subject of their ridicule. But, though it must be allowed to be very surprising, yet, when fairly considered, nothing will be found absurd or incredible.

LET us, first, attend briefly to the history; then to the difficulties and objections which have been raised; and finally make such reflections as the whole may suggest.

JONAH the son of Amittai was one of the most ancient among those usually called prophets. The opinion of some, that he was the son of the widow of Sarepta, and whom Elijah restored to life, appears to be without foundation. He lived in the reigns of Joash and Jeroboam the Second, kings of Israel; but the first of these did not reign until sixty years after the translation of Elijah. Besides, Jonah was an Hebrew, as he himself informs us; * a native of Gath-hepher, † in the tribe of Zebulon; whereas Sarepta was a city of Sidon, which lay without the confines of Israel.

* Chap. i. 9.

† 2 Kings xiv. 25.

THIS prophet being ordered to go to Nineveh, and denounce against the inhabitants the judgments of God for their great wickedness, and exhort them to repentance, refused to obey the divine command. We are told that he *rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord*; * not that we can suppose him to have been ignorant of the universal presence of God; but, that by fleeing from the place where God more peculiarly manifested his gracious presence, he hoped that the Spirit of prophecy would no longer move or urge him to a business which he wished to avoid. He accordingly embarked at Joppa for Tarsus, a city in Cilicia. How vain were his imaginations! And how bitter the fruit of his disobedience!—The vessel had no sooner put to sea, than the Lord caused a mighty tempest to arise; so sudden, so furious, and so incessant, as to threaten immediate ruin. All on board were in the utmost consternation, save Jonah, who, strange to tell, amidst the tossings of the vessel, the hurry, confusion, and cries of the mariners, was fast asleep. A deadly slumber, both of mind and body, appears to have seized him. In such circumstances, well might the ship-master with surprise and indignation address him, *What meanest thou, O sleeper! Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.* †

* Chap. i. 6.

† Chap. i. 6.

THE storm was of so uncommon a nature, as to lead the mariners to suspect, that for the great crime of some person on board, it was sent as a judgment from heaven upon them. To find out the guilty person, they cast lots, and Providence was pleased to point out Jonah. They then interrogated him as to this matter, and he freely confessed what he had done. They farther asked him, in what way they should proceed with him, in order to appease Heaven. He advised them, as the only mean of their preservation, to *take him up and cast him forth into the sea*. This they were unwilling to do; but finding that their most strenuous exertions to gain a harbour were ineffectual, and that they were all likely to perish, they complied with his advice; praying, at the same time, that any guilt as to his death might not be imputed to them.—The winds ceased to blow, and the billows to rage. A calm instantly succeeded. All were struck with the power and goodness of the Lord; they offered sacrifice to him for their deliverance, and made vows.

THEY, no doubt, considered Jonah as now lost; but his preservation was effected in a wonderful manner. *The Lord had prepared a great fish*, which swallowed up Jonah unhurt; and in the belly of which he continued three days and three nights. In this dark and dismal abode, he made his voyage not on, but un-

der the water. He spread no canvass to the gale ; nor did he steer by a helm, or direct his course by a compass ; but a mighty whale of the ocean conveyed him through the watery deep.

THE prophet, being brought to a sense of his sin and folly, made his supplications to God, and the fish, by divine order, returned him safely to shore. He praised God in solemn and lofty strains for his deliverance. *The floods compassed me about, all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. The waters compassed me about even to the soul ; the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains : The earth with her bars was about me forever : Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.**

JONAH, no longer now disputed an obedience to the divine command. Punished and humbled for his error, he went straightway to Nineveh, and delivered his message with firmness and resolution. The Ninevites believed God, proclaimed a fast, and turned from their evil ways ; and God, seeing their humiliation and repentance, was pleased to respite the doom pronounced against them.

* Chap. ii. 3—6.

THIS forbearance, however, of God, *displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.** He prayed that his life might be taken from him. Retiring to some little distance from the city, he erected a booth, to shade him from the scorching sun, and there waited to see the event of his prediction. The Lord, still bearing with the infirmities of his servant, by a circumstance in providence pacified and reconciled his disturbed mind. In the sandy and parched soil, the Lord caused a plant to spring up; called in our translation a *gourd*; by some translated *ivy*; and by others thought to have been a plant different from either of these, and peculiar to that country, which afforded Jonah a salutary shade. He was pleased and thankful. But this, like all temporal blessings, was of short continuance. The very next morning, a worm gnawed it, so that it withered. When the sun arose, which is, at any time hot in that country, and was now the more intolerable, by reason of a vehement east-wind, which the Lord directed to blow;—the united force of both beating upon Jonah's head, *he fainted*, grew weary of his life, and again *wished in himself to die*. The Lord now taught him the unreasonableness of his temper and conduct. He expostulated with him in the words of the text. As though he had said, “If thou wouldst

* Chap. iv. 1.

have spared the gourd, a short lived plant, and which thou hadst no care or trouble in rearing, canst thou arraign my conduct for sparing the large and populous city of Nineveh, containing more than one hundred and twenty thousand innocent children? Is the one to be compared with the other? Are not even the lives of the cattle much superior to the weed for which thou mournest? What unreasonableness, selfishness; yea, what cruelty is discovered in thy temper!"

AFTER this we have no certain account of Jonah. The history begins and ends abruptly. This much is written for our instruction.—Before we make any uses of this history, let us attend to some difficulties and objections which have been raised.

THE two main difficulties are, first, in respect to the unwillingness of Jonah to go to Nineveh; and secondly, in respect to the fish which swallowed him, and his continuance so long in such circumstances.

FIRST, As to his unwillingness. Why did he decline the errand? Can any probable reasons be given for this strange conduct?—It might be said, that, in case his preaching to the Ninevites should be successful in bringing them to repentance, he was afraid of the reproach it would be to his own country-men. The Jews had

long enjoyed means above other nations; they had prophets continually among them to instruct them in the will of God; and yet they discovered an irreclaimable temper. If then these Gentiles should hearken to the admonitions of God, it would cast a reflection upon that nation to which the prophet belonged, and for the honor of which he was jealous.

THE prophet himself has suggested another reason for his unwillingness, and that is the great mercy of God to sinners on their repentance. His words are, *O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.** Jonah considered his own reputation too much. He was afraid of being accounted a false prophet; of having no regard paid to his predictions hereafter. To this his conduct is generally imputed.

PROBABLY, however, a great cause of his unwillingness was the difficulty and danger which he apprehended from the undertaking. He was in danger of being ridiculed and abused, whether he was believed or not, for being the messenger of such unwelcome tidings. We find Moses and Gideon making their several ex-

* Chap. iv. 2.

excuses, when employed by God on important undertakings. *Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips*, says the one, *and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me ?** *I am the least in my father's house*, says the other, *wherewith shall I save Israel ?†* So Jonah might have thought, that he was wholly unequal to the work ; a stranger without authority, or any thing to command notice ; and wished that some other prophet of superior talents and influence might be employed. He distrusted the power of God, and this led him into disobedience of his command.

WHILE these things are mentioned as reasons which might have operated in his mind, they are not offered as excuses for his conduct. They show, indeed, that he was not without some temptation ; but his conduct in the whole business was peevish and refractory. His character appears in a very unfavorable light. He was *proud, passionate, peevish, and cruel*.

WHAT *pride* appears in setting up his own honor in opposition to that of God ! In preferring his own character as a prophet to any other consideration !

WHAT *passion* appears in wishing more than once for death ! In daring to reply to his Maker that he did *well to be angry even unto death !*

* Exod. vi. 30.

† Judges vi. 15.

WHAT a picture of *peevishness* does he exhibit in the whole of his behaviour! Under the slightest evils, fretful and impatient!

WHAT cruelty is evident in desiring the destruction of the great city of Nineveh! It is supposed, by the best computation, to have contained six hundred thousand inhabitants. Their numerous flocks and herds were not victims sufficient, but so vast a number of human beings must be sacrificed to gratify his humour! *I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful*; as though he had found fault with the attributes of Deity; with that mercy, which, at the very moment, was exercised towards himself.

BUT while we thus paint the character, let us admire the freeness and sovereignty of divine grace which dwells with so much imperfection. This man, with all his infirmities, was the object of God's special favor, and was employed in carrying on his gracious designs. Another prophet might have been sent; but the more unfit the instrument, in human view, the greater glory redounds to God. The more conspicuous is his power in thus accomplishing his purposes. We may apply here the words of the apostle, when speaking of the propagation of the gospel; *For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not*

*many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which 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.**

A SECOND difficulty is, in respect to the fish which swallowed Jonah, and his continuance there for so long a time. What was this fish? In the New Testament it is expressly said to be a *whale*.† But it is immaterial to insist here. Whatever was the species, it was *a great fish prepared by God*; and therefore competent to the purpose.

As to the continuance of Jonah for so long a time in the belly of the fish, instead of philosophizing on this, it is at best at once to resolve it into a miracle. There is the same reason for believing this, as any other miracle. What is a miracle, but a deviation from, or an alteration of the general and stated laws of nature? Is it said that Jonah could not live so long in the stomach of a fish? I answer, that even admitting he could not in the ordinary course of things, yet

* 1 Cor. i. 26.—29. † Mat. xii. 40.

God could with infinite ease suspend the laws of nature, and preserve his life in this unnatural habitation. Was not this as easy as to preserve the three young men cast into a burning fiery furnace? *Upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.** Was it not as easy as to stop the mouths of the lions when Daniel was thrown into their den? Or to raise Lazarus after he had been dead four days? Where is the objection to the one, that will not apply to the other? Yea, to all miracles whatsoever? Cannot he, in whose hand our breath is, preserve it in the water, as well as in the fire? Hath he not *made the sea and the dry land*? Hath he not formed the whale which *maketh the deep to boil like a pot*, as well as the lion which *roareth after its prey*? Doth the prison of the grave give up at his command? And shall he not imbar his servant in the ribs of a whale?—None who admit the existence of a God will deny, that with him all things are possible.

BUT, another objection has been raised here. It has been said that God doth not work miracles unnecessarily; that the one contended for appears to be too great and expensive for the occasion; that no end

* Dan. iii. 27.

was to be answered, except to save Jonah, who was undeserving, and whom God could have arrested before he went to sea.

Now, though we go beyond our depth, when we attempt to account for the works and designs of God; yet several important ends present themselves, to be answered by this miracle. We must not confine it merely to the preservation of Jonah. Though this appears to be the immediate design, yet, it is probable, that it was intended for other purposes more remote.

It was a punishment to the prophet for his disobedience, and it brought him to sincere confession and repentance. It was to him mercy mixed with judgment. That he viewed his confinement in the fish as a chastisement is plain from his own words; *I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.**

BESIDES, there is no reason to confine the benefit of this miracle, either to the preservation, or the punishment of Jonah. It might have been farther intended for the conversion of the mariners; especially, if we suppose that they were made acquainted with the singular deliverance. They had been already witnesses of the power of the true God, in the prodigious

* Chap. ii. 2.

tempest which had overtaken them, and of his goodness in the calm which succeeded. These circumstances had made the most favorable impressions upon them. How great must have been their surprise, to see the man whom they had cast into the midst of the sea, safely arrived at land; and to hear from him the astonishing method of his preservation! Must it not have convinced them, that the God of Israel was *a great God and a great King above all Gods?* That he was able to do *whatsoever he pleased in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.**

MOREOVER, this wonderful work which God wrought would give weight and authority to the predictions of Jonah. If we suppose, what is indeed probable, that the Ninevites were informed of this miracle, either by some of those who had been witnesses of it accompanying Jonah, or by other means, we will see a good reason why they attended to his message and repented at his preaching. This sign displayed the power of that God from whom Jonah came; and while it manifested his mercy in sending them warning, it loudly proclaimed his justice and power to take vengeance for their iniquities.

COULD no other reasons be mentioned for this miracle, these are sufficient to show that it was necessary, and worthy of an infinitely wise God.

* Psalm cxxxv. 6.

BUT the most weighty reason remains yet to be added, and which throws a lustre upon the whole transaction. This is mentioned by our blessed Saviour. *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* * Jonah, then, was a type of Christ; and his abode in the belly of the whale, a prefiguration of our Lord's continuance in the heart of the earth. There is some reason to believe too, that the type and the antitype agreed in this respect, that as our Lord was but one whole day and part of two more in the grave, so Jonah continued no longer in the deep; and yet, according to the Hebrew way of computation, both can be truly said to have been *three days and three nights* in their respective confinements.

“ THE great design then of this miracle, in the person of Jonah, was to confirm in future ages the important and fundamental article of our faith, upon which the Christian religion depends—the resurrection of Christ: And that whenever the reality of that fact, as it is related in the New Testament, came to be called

* Matt. xii. 39. 40.

in question, we might be furnished with a parallel instance of the mighty power of God, recorded in the old."

HAVING considered this extraordinary history with the principal difficulties and objections, as briefly as the subject would admit, let us now attend to a few reflections upon the whole.

FIRST, We learn that the grace of God is bestowed on men of all sorts of disposition ; on the fierce as well as the mild, on the froward as well as the gentle, on the fretful as well as the patient. The name Jonah signifies a *dove* ; but it was far from indicating the temper of this prophet. Though religion corrects and regulates the natural temper, yet it does not eradicate it. The original cast of the mind still remains, and will discover its proneness to certain things, when not immediately under the influence of grace. Hence it is, that religious persons are sometimes found less agreeable in their manners, than others of a different character. This being the case, it ought to lead us to the exercise of patience and forbearance. We ought not to expect perfection in any, but make due allowance for those infirmities which cleave to human nature. We are to consider, that if God bear with such, much more ought we, who may be liable to the same, or greater infirmities.

SECONDLY, Let none hope to escape unpunished, who act in direct opposition to the will of God. Let the example of Jonah be a warning to all the children of God, to yield a ready and cheerful obedience to his commands. Their own reputation, ease and safety, are of little or no weight in the scale. These, they ought to commit into the hand of God, who is able and faithful to guide and protect them. Afflictions are the certain consequence of their disobedience. Though they cannot fall into final condemnation, yet they will be chastened for their sins. *If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, saith the Lord, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.** This leads me to observe,

THIRDLY, The benefit of afflictions to the people of God. These bring their sins to remembrance, and awaken a sense of their duty within them. Jonah slept soundly, as though he had had a good conscience, until the billows threatened to overwhelm him. Then he saw and confessed his error. After he had been cast into the dark and awful dungeon, he fled from the execution of his office no longer, but hastened to ful-

* Psalm lxxxix. 31,—33.

fil it.—While we remark in him the necessity and benefit of afflictions, we discover also a temper truly pious. With all his failings, he loved the Lord, and returned to obedience. Wicked men harden themselves under affliction, and ascribe their deliverance to human means ; to accident or fortune ; but Jonah's heart was softened, and he gave to God the glory which was due. In the midst of wrath, he still looked for mercy. Though he had fled from the presence of his God, and was, therefore, By an awful providence, excluded from the light of day, buried alive in the midst of the sea, yet he raised his desires to the throne of grace. *I am cast out of thy sight, said he, yet will I look again toward thy holy temple.** Here was the exercise of his faith and hope. Though pressed low, yet his confidence in God was not destroyed. He trusted that a calm would succeed the tempest, and morning light remove the black and thick darkness.—Believers, in all your afflictions, how long continued and grievous soever, put your trust in God. He will not cast you forever from his sight. Wait upon him, and he will, in due time, lift you up.

FOURTHLY, We learn from the character of Jonah, that the desires of death in good men, may proceed from improper principles ; from an unwillingness to

* Chap. ii. 4.

encounter the difficulties to which they are called; from undue passion; and from a dissatisfaction with the dealings of Providence. These are signs that grace has not, at the time, its just influence. What were the difficulties with which Jonah had to struggle, compared with those of the apostle Paul? Was Jonah afraid of his reputation or person? The apostle suffered in both. Did Jonah endure the temporary inconvenience of a hot sun and a sultry wind? The apostle endured *stripes, bonds, and imprisonments*. And yet the apostle, under all these sufferings, was contented to abide in the flesh, that he might promote the glory of God: Whereas Jonah, in a peevish humor, wished to die. How noble and disinterested the conduct of the one! How little and selfish that of the other! In the one we behold the genuine effect of grace; in the other we have to lament the want of it.——My believing friends, harbour no repining thoughts in your minds; much less, let rash expressions escape your lips. Remember that you perform the will of God, by living, and by patiently suffering, all that he is pleased to bring upon you. The evils of life are greatly increased by our impatience and ill-humor. What are the little ruffles we meet with, that they should disturb our peace? What the little comforts of which we are deprived, that we should repine at the loss of

them? Like Jonah's gourd, we are to expect them to be of short continuance. Some worm is always ready to gnaw the root. While, in the mean time, we rejoice in the shade, let us remember, that it may wither ere 'tis night. Though the sun should beat upon us, it is still better to *live* than to *die*, if this be the will of God. Let us sustain with christian fortitude and patience, the evils which befall us; neither invoking death before the time, nor anxiously shunning its approach.

I HAVE one other use to make of this history; and that is, to call your attention to the repentance of the Ninevites. The words which our blessed Lord addressed to the Scribes and Pharisees are, with equal force and propriety, addressed now to us; *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here.** If those, who enjoyed only the light of nature, repented at the preaching of a prophet sent to them from a strange nation, what might be expected from others who enjoy greater light and superior privileges? Are not those who are favored with a revelation most inexcusable, if they continue in impenitence? Will not

* Matt. xii. 41.

the heathen appear as witnesses against such, and prove their condemnation just?

WHAT shall the infidels of our day say for themselves? *The people of Nineveh believed God; they acknowledged the mission of Jonah and hearkened to his message; but the faithless generation of which I speak will not hearken, though a greater than Jonas, even the Son of God hath spoken to them. They reject both the type and the antitype. They equally disbelieve the miracle wrought upon Jonah, and that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the grave by his own power. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with them, and shall condemn them.*

WHAT must be the condition of those among us, who, under all the means we enjoy, are still in their sins? How often have we been exhorted to repentance? How often warned of that destruction which awaits us?—At length be persuaded to confess and forsake your sins. *God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. There is redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. The way of salvation is clearly revealed to you. O, perish not by your own obstinacy and folly. There is an appointed time beyond which God will have no longer patience with you. The*

city of Nineveh was now respited ; but, having relapsed into its former sins, God executed his threatening ; and he will, in the other world, pour out his wrath upon all impenitent sinners. While then the day of grace lasts ; while God is warning you, and inviting you by his ministers to turn and live, improve the precious season. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.**

* Isaiah lv. 6. 7.

F I N I S.

DA791

L7583

