

T H E

AMERICAN PREACHER;

O R, A

COLLECTION OF SERMONS

FROM SOME OF THE

MOST EMINENT PREACHERS,

NOW LIVING,

IN THE UNITED STATES,

O F

DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS

IN THE

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

VOLUME I.

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S E R M O N XIV.*

THE CHARACTER AND MISERY OF THE WICKED.

B Y

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

One of the Ministers of the Reformed Dutch Church, New-York.

I S A I A H lvii. 21.

There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

YOU will easily remember, my brethren, that some time ago, I had the happiness of addressing you on the prospect of a safe and honorable peace being restored to our distressed land.-- You were then pleased to hear me with attention; and your patriotism kindly approved what was sincerely aimed to express our joy, and excite our gratitude to the munificent Donor of all things. It is hoped that we and succeeding generations, will continue to enjoy temporal peace and prosperity.

NOTE.

* The two following Sermons were written and preached in Pennsylvania, soon after the establishment of peace, in the year 1783. Several reasons have induced the author to retain nearly the original form.

But, while we rejoice in the goodness of the Lord, we ought to remember, that our duration in this world is short—that only they can be happy who enjoy the divine favor—nay, that without this, present advantages will make our condemnation, at last, the more terrible. Let none, therefore, say to their souls, “Take your ease—the desolation of war is now over—our difficulties are removed—and peace and plenty have once more taken up their habitation with us;”—for the Lord declares, in the words of the text, *There is no peace to the wicked*. Though the long and bloody conflict is at an end, yet if we have not a proper temper towards God, we are still in the utmost danger; if not in this world, yet in that which is to come; when he will render to every one according to his works, and pour out his wrath on the wicked without any mixture of mercy.

To alarm our fears, and excite us to seek the Lord while he may be found, I shall, with plainness and freedom, show, *First*, Who come under the description of the wicked; and, *Secondly*, In what respects there is no peace to such.

I. In general, all they are properly denominated wicked who have never undergone a change of heart. Mankind, by nature, have no inclination to the service of God. They are represented in scripture, as *without strength and ungodly—as dead in trespasses and sins—as enemies in their minds by wicked works*, and even as *enmity* itself against God.

Hence arises the necessity of a great and supernatural change; which our Saviour compares to a *second birth*; and it is set forth by other similitudes in the writings of the apostles. It is likened to a *resurrection*—to a *new creation*—to a *translation from darkness to light*; all which teach us, that before we can be accepted of God, and entitled to his favor, some extraordinary work must take place upon us. To deny this, we must reject both reason and revelation; for both conspire in declaring that man is degenerate, and that while he continues in this state, he cannot have communion with a holy God. As soon might we reconcile light and darkness, or bring the most opposite extremes together.

Whatever kinds, and whatever degrees of wickedness there are, they all proceed from an innate depravity of mind. Hear the words of Christ; *For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within.* Every unrenewed person has, in his nature, the seeds of all evil; and which appear more or less in his life, according as opportunities are afforded to nourish and strengthen them. To assist us in judging the better of our own characters, let us attend to the different ways in which this root of bitterness discovers itself.

First, Some are grossly ignorant of the plain and essential doctrines of the Christian Religion,

amidst the best means to gain an acquaintance with them. Though the scriptures are in their possession, together with excellent helps by the writings of pious men, and instructions from the pulpit, yet they are unable to give any satisfactory account of those truths, on which their eternal salvation depends. This is not occasioned by want of capacity, but by utter neglect of divine things, and argues their spiritual death. The holy oracles, which contain the words of eternal life, neglected, gather dust; while books of amusement and earthly pursuits employ the whole of their time. These swallow up their thoughts through the day, and recline with them on their pillow at night. These will not allow them to remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy.

We find many of this character who are wise in their own conceit, for pride and ignorance mostly dwell together. "We have," say they, "a sufficient knowledge of our duty, and we need not be informed of it. If we act wrong, the blame is our own, and we know not, why any one should intermeddle with our business." Well might Solomon say, *There is more hope of a fool than of such persons.* Their minds are dark, and they have closed every avenue by which light might enter. *Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.* Be assured there can be no true Religion without a good measure of knowledge, and a desire of growing in

it. We cannot love and worship an unknown God. Whoever among you are ignorant of the great truths of revelation, are in darkness even until now.

Secondly, Some break out into open acts of wickedness. Such are drunkards, swearers, unclean persons, extortioners, sabbath breakers and mockers at Religion. These are they whose *sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment*. Were we to rank no others, under the gospel, in the class of the wicked, but these, how great a number would be found! Reckon even common swearers; those audacious men, who call for the vengeance of a God upon themselves and others, as well as use the names of Lord and Christ, and sacred things with irreverent lips: and we must reckon—how dreadful to tell it! multitudes, who have been baptized and educated among professing Christians. When to these we add, lascivious talkers and actors, insatiable lovers of strong drink, those who spend the sabbath in sleep, in visiting, in worldly thoughts and conversation, or in worse; those who suppose that *gain is godliness*; who cheat and over-reach their neighbor; and those whose wit never shines but in making a jest of the Bible, and serious persons, how does the dismal catalogue swell! surely it will be agreed that all such characters are wicked; and that none of these *shall inherit the kingdom of God*.

Thirdly, Others, though free from gross immoralities, are yet wicked, because they neglect the

duties of Religion. There are sins of commission and there are sins of omission. We are guilty before God, when we do not perform what he hath enjoined, as well as when we commit what he hath forbidden. All, therefore, who live in the habitual omission of what is required, come short of, and will be condemned by that law which is holy, just and good. Not only is the unjust man a sinner, but the uncharitable also; not only he that curseth his father and mother, but he that honoreth them not; not only the profane but the prayerless. We must not divide the law in our practice. One part must be done, and the other not left undone. *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* "Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others, but every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come." The impious wretch, whose mouth is full of blasphemy and deceit, may deserve a more dreadful punishment; and yet the prayerless person will go down to misery as surely as he.

Having mentioned the important duty of prayer, allow me to say, that it is with an ill face that any, who profess themselves to be Christians, neglect it in their families. Social, as well as secret worship, is indispensably necessary. Those who omit it, do not distinguish themselves from the ungodly world, and are unworthy of the privileges

of the church. Such ought to think seriously of these words of Christ—*Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny me, before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.* What shall be said of some, so destitute of any form of Religion, that they omit, what is called, saying grace before meat, or asking the blessing of God on their food? It is not the sneer of fools, nor the raillery of the profane, should put us out of the practice of what is warranted in scripture; consonant to reason, and customary among all denominations of Christians whatsoever. The person who does not often realize his dependance upon God; who does not in every thing give thanks; and who does not, on proper occasions, openly acknowledge God, by calling on his name, has no title to be thought religious; else, there is no criterion, by which to judge at all.

In former days, many confessed Christ at the hazard, and even the loss of their lives. Have we found an easier way to Heaven? Can we go there, without any confession? Is religion of such a nature that we may mould it as we please? The fashion of this world passeth away, but be assured, God and religion are *ever the same*. The divine precepts will not bend to you. They are fixed and immutable. On no other terms can you, be a disciple of Christ, than by *taking up your cross and following after him*. If the world deride you as stiff and un-

fashionable, it is a persecution you must suffer for his name's sake. He hath said, *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

Fourthly, There are some, who adopt loose and dangerous principles; who alledge, either that the scripture is not true, or that the great doctrines, as generally taught, are not contained in it. These are wicked, and they are corrupters of others. Too commonly they are licentious in their practice, and swelled with a conceit of their own abilities.

It is not easy to persist in a course of iniquity, without something to quiet the conscience; and, therefore, have some endeavored to overturn revelation, or at least to adapt it to their own depraved inclination. The infidel or deist is a person of such great strength of reason, that he sees no need of the scripture, his own reason teaching him all that is necessary; he is of such prodigious modesty, that he views all the world around him, even those of superior talents, as a number of superstitious fools; his genius is so piercing as to discover that the Christian Religion is the device of rulers and cunning priests, to keep the world in awe; and he wishes to perform the mighty service of setting mankind free from the shackles wherewith they have been bound for so many ages. To treat him with ridicule is no more than just retaliation. It is the best weapon the Deist has, and of which he

is extremely fond ; so much so, that one writer has made it the only proper test of truth.* The secret motive however, which leads many of this character to a rejection of scripture, is the desire of being free from its restraints. They are wedded to their lusts, and these and the scripture are irreconcilable. Unhappy men ! engaged in an undertaking desperate and impossible ; like one who attempts to stop the sun, or remove a mountain. The words which are storied of the apostate Julian, when mortally wounded in fighting against Christians, will be the doleful, dying song, of every determined infidel ; “ Thou hast conquered me, O Galilean.” *Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

Though revelation be not altogether denied by others, yet it is wrested to suit the depraved taste of mankind. They set up corrupt reason in opposition to faith, and adopt principles which lead to licentiousness. Not to be particular here, suffice it to say, that the doctrines of man’s depravity, inability, and salvation by grace, through faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ, as they are taught in the divine word, so they have been always successful for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints. They who oppose these set themselves in opposition to God, and seek to lay other foundation than what he hath laid. In-

* Shaftsbury.

deed it is to be expected, that infidelity and dangerous opinions, will have a more rapid growth in this country than heretofore. In every age, have they sprung up to trouble the church. They will be imported from abroad, with other things injurious to our interest and happiness; as well as, that they naturally increase with population and luxury.

Fifthly, Among the wicked, we must also rank the formalist and the hypocrite. Though these are mentioned together, yet they are of very different description. The formalist is one, who has the form of religion; submits to the drudgery of performing duty, which he has no spiritual life or strength; he deceives himself; whereas the express design of the hypocrite, is to deceive others. Of the first the apostle speaks, when he says, *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.* However exact he may be in his cold and even round of duties, yet his heart is not right with God; and perhaps he indulges himself in sin, trusting to his form to save him. Of hypocrisy our Saviour gives a description, when he says, *When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. We have a remarkable instance of it in the Pharisees of old. They devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made*

long prayers. Who would have thought that so excellent a thing as religion would be so basely abused? That men with this cloak, would cover their villainies? Their conduct is extremely foolish and desperately wicked.

Once more, I may mention, as descriptive of the wicked, that they are impatient of restraint and reproof. They cannot bear to be checked in their mad career of sin and folly; and the faithful reprover, if such be found, is hated and avoided. The very sight and example of the godly is a secret reproof to the wicked; it is a contrast to their own conduct; gives them disagreeable feelings; and, therefore, they strive to be out of the way. Sometimes they are so bold as to expose, in a ludicrous manner, every appearance of sincerity; and laugh and jest merely to keep themselves in countenance.

The preacher who seeks to save himself and them that hear him, by telling them plainly of their sins, and denouncing the judgments of God, is thought rigid and severe. Ahab, the king of Israel, said of Micaiah, the son of Imla, *I hate him, for he never prophesieth good unto me, but always evil.* The discourse which flows smooth and even, dwelling on generals, not directed to the conscience, nor sinners pursued in it by the terrors of the Lord, is most applauded. It is related as fact of a preacher, who had arrived at so great perfection in adapting himself to delicate ears, that he once told his hearers, "If they did not vouchsafe to give a new

turn to their lives, they would go to a place he did not choose to name in so courtly an audience." It is no breach of charity to say, that such preachers and their hearers are in danger of going down to hell, and enduring never-ceasing torments, of which, we should now often hear and think, that so we may be excited to lay hold upon the hope set before us. If danger is not known, how shall it be shunned? We do not preach you *to*, but *from* these everlasting burnings. If our own hearts do not condemn us, why should we fear? If they do, O! what madness to shut our eyes, and wander heedlessly on! Will this make the danger less? What fearfulness must seize such, when they come to stand on the brink of the awful pit!

That there is an improper method of reproofing sinners, is certain; a method, tending more to disgust than edify even pious ears. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.* There are many descriptions of Heaven and Hell to no purpose, or worse. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man,* the one or the other. The joys of the one, and the terrors of the other, are best represented in the language of sacred writ. Besides, *the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;* and is that instrument by which, in his dispensation of grace, he wounds and he heals.

S E R M O N XV.

THE CHARACTER AND MISERY OF THE WICKED.

B Y

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

One of the Ministers of the Reformed Dutch Church, New-York.

I S A I A H lvii. 21.

There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked:

HAVING endeavored, in a former discourse, so to describe the wicked, as that we might be assisted in forming a judgment of ourselves, I proceed now to show,

II. In what respects there is no peace to such.

First, There is no peace to them with God. By their wickedness they wage war with Heaven; and the Almighty King is angry with them every day. Man, hearkening to the suggestions of Satan, has thrown off allegiance to his rightful owner, transgressed his holy law, refused that tribute of praise which is due, and engaged in open rebellion. Whatever we may think of the claims of fellow-mortals, surely the great God hath an unquestion-

able right to us and all our service. He hath made, and continually upholds us. Of him we cannot be independent; and our happiness lies in his favor. Having ruined ourselves, he found out a help. He sent his Son to fulfil the demands of the law in our room, and in his gospel he proclaims pardon and peace to all who will return. Only they have reconciliation with him, who have submitted to his terms; who, forsaking their sins, have believed in the name of his Son. The impenitent and unbelieving must fall under the stroke of his justice. To their rebellion they add ingratitude, by making light of the offers of grace.

Having no peace with God, of what advantage are the most flattering circumstances in this world? Of what advantage that we are the citizens of a free state, and the nations around in league with us? These indeed are inestimable blessings, and which we must not tamely surrender to every proud and ambitious spirit; but can they make us happy hereafter? We may not enjoy them a day, or an hour. While we continue under the power of sin, we are the most abject slaves. We do the works of the devil, who delights in the ruin and misery of our race.—Is not the displeasure of our Maker enough to embitter every comfort, or render us joyless in the midst of every earthly good thing? How dreadful to think, that his curse is upon us when we lie down and rise up; and in all our ways! How fearful to know, that we must fall, at last into the hands of the living God! This is

the pitiable condition of the wicked, to whom,

In the second place, There is no peace in their own consciences. The thoughts of what their crimes have exposed them to, often tear them with the most bitter reflections. Some of them have been afraid to be left alone; and dismal spectres, which guilt formed, have haunted them in the midnight hours. It is said of the infidel Hobbes, "that though he would speak very strange and unbecoming things of God, yet in his study, in the dark, and in his retired thoughts, he trembled before him. If his candle happened to go out in the night, he awoke in terror and amazement. He was unable to bear the dismal reflections of his dark and desolate mind; and knew not how to extinguish, nor how to bear the light of *the candle of the Lord* within him."

See the man of pleasure, how gaily he walks abroad! What cheerfulness in his looks! He affects to esteem the more sober part of mankind as precise and supercilious! Talk to him of conscience, and he hardly restrains a burst of laughter! Did you see him in some hour of sickness, gloom and solitude, you might find distress pictured in his face, arising from remorse within. Though repeated acts of sin fear the conscience, and render it less sensible, yet there are few but have their severe twinges and repenting seasons. It is easier to prostitute conscience than to silence it.—
"Whatever there be in the air, there is certainly

an elastic power in conscience that will bear itself up, notwithstanding the weight that is laid upon it to stifle and kill its clamors." Dr. Doddridge, in his life of that memorable convert, Col. Gardiner, informs us, "That still the checks of conscience, and some remaining principles of so good an education as he had received, would break in upon his most licentious hours; and that he told him, when some of his dissolute companions were once congratulating him on his distinguished felicity, a dog happening at that time to come into the room, he could not forbear groaning inwardly, and saying to himself, "Oh, that I were that dog!" Such was then his happiness; and such perhaps is that of hundreds more, who bear themselves highest in the contempt of religion, and glory in that infamous servitude which they call liberty.

If the conscience of the wicked be easy, it must be in one or more of these ways; either by a long course of iniquity; or by adopting false principles; or by a comparison with others who are thought worse; or by resolving to amend in future; or by performing part of the duties of religion. Wo to those who are able to quiet it by any of them. It will some time or other awake to their sorrow. Like a frozen viper laid to the fire, it will recover strength, and sting them to the heart. Take them in their most composed frame, how far are they from that serenity of soul which religion gives. This is a *peace which passeth all understanding*. The minds of the wicked are restless, and hurried by

their lusts and passions. In the verse preceding the text, it is said, *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*: But in the godly soul there is a calm. The contemplation of heavenly things affords complacency ; and in God, the soul can hope and rest for time and eternity. *Peace*, said Christ to his disciples, *I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you*. With this peace, what earthly blessing can be compared ? Could we command every thing our hearts would wish, where is the enjoyment, if the mind be disquieted ? This, like an aching tooth, or a bone out of joint, will disturb us, will break our sleep, and render us unhappy.

Perhaps some may think, that only atrocious sinners are subject to such severe lashes. Generally it is so ; but every person estranged from God is destitute of solid and lasting peace. It is owing to ignorance and mistake, that he has any at all. There are no sins small, considered with respect to God. It is found so in a thorough conviction ; and their being committed against the light and grace of the gospel, highly aggravates them, and is a bitter ingredient to all true penitents. Our hearts condemn us for secret as well as for open sins ; for omissions as well as transgressions. Unless then, conscience is unduly hushed, it cannot otherwise than molest all who are not reconciled to God.

Again, There is no peace to the wicked in a dying hour. By this is not meant that they shall undergo more pain of body than others. The pangs of dissolution are the same to all. Those indeed, of whom the world was not worthy, have often suffered the most cruel and violent deaths. Nor is it meant, that the wicked have never any composure in death, or hope of well-being hereafter:—For though the scripture tells us, *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous bath hope in his death*; yet we are not to understand, that none of them ever entertain, in that solemn hour, expectations of mercy, or that they all anticipate their misery. Some of them die as they had lived, stupid and thoughtless as beasts. Besides, I know not that death shakes every false hope. It is thought that some good men may have fears and perplexities to the very last; and that some bad men, may remain unshaken, and die with more apparent confidence than the others. There are instances of infidels maintaining cheerfulness and resolution in their last moments. With some it has been otherwise, and they have betrayed dreadful forebodings of a wrath to come. Now and then they have retracted their principles, and sought relief in a profession of Christianity. It is said, that the poet Dryden, not being able to fortify himself in infidelity, embraced the Popish religion. Some years ago it was confidently asserted, that Voltaire, at the age of eighty, and being, as he thought, about to die, had felt some strange

qualms of conscience, in consequence of which, he had made a long and goodly confession of the truths of revelation. His followers deem this a slander, and cannot believe that their mighty champion would ever retreat. Having so long edified them by his writings, perhaps there is no sufficient authority to deprive them of their comfort in his death.

The fears of the good man cannot render his state less safe, nor the confidence of the bad, render his less dangerous.. Whatever their own sentiments are, *it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked.* We are, however, compassed about with a cloud of witnesses, who bear testimony that the end of the perfect and upright man, is peace; who have died, not only with calmness and resignation, but have been filled with a joy unspeakable and full of glory; who have met death, not only on a bed surrounded by friends, but in its most horrid form, on a gibbet, or at a stake; not only those of strong and fearless make, but those of a timorous nature, and from among the weaker sex; not only those who had no attachment on earth why to wish for life, but those who had estates, families and friends. It is an observation made, to show the efficacy of grace, that, in suffering times, none went more cheerfully to martyrdom, than those who had numerous families dependant on them. Let the decriers of religion produce us any principle so powerful to bear one up, under the distresses of life, and support

through the valley of the shadow of death ; any thing that will so revive and embolden the soul, as a view of God reconciled in Christ, and the hopes of a blessed immortality. No ; it is only this will disarm death of his sting. It is this will make death not only tolerable, but desirable ; will give not only composure, but triumph ; not only free us from pain, but make heaven beam all around us.

Dr. Young, in his tract on original composition, has given us a precious anecdote of the amiable Mr. Addison. “ After he had dismissed his physicians, and all hopes of life, he sent for a youth nearly related to him, and finely accomplished, yet not above being the better for good instructions from a dying friend. He came—but life now glimmering in the socket, the dying friend was silent. After a decent and proper pause, the youth said, “ Dear sir, you sent for me ; I believe and I hope that you have some commands ; I shall hold them most sacred.” May distant ages not only hear, but feel the reply ! Forcibly grasping the young gentleman’s hand, he softly said, “ See in what peace a Christian can die !”—He spoke with difficulty, and soon expired.” I the rather adduce this instance, because he was a man of genius, of great literary fame, and in high station, with which empty smatterers and conceited fools, are ready to think religion inconsistent. Indeed, the men of greatest talents, who ever adorned our world, were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ;

among whom we may rank a Locke, a Boyle, a Newton, and a Bacon. Perhaps it might be asserted, without extravagance, that these, for strength of mind, and deep research, as far exceeded many of the retailers of infidelity as an angel did them; or as an untutored savage exceeds the beasts below him. They were the glory of Britain, and one half her fame.

What awful spectacles have some of the wicked exhibited on a death bed! How contrary to the example just now adduced! Hell seemed already to have been kindled in their souls. Under the scourges of a guilty conscience, and a fearful sense of impending wrath, they could not contain, but vented their dismal outcry enough to rend the stoutest heart. One, of whom mention is made in a practical writer, "a monument of justice, worn to skin and bone, blasphemed the God of Heaven, cursed himself, and continually cried, O torture! torture! torture! O torture, torture!" Another is said to have cried out, "I have had a little pleasure, but now I must have Hell for ever more. To whatever was spoken, to afford him comfort, he replied, I must to Hell; I must to the furnaces of Hell for millions of millions of ages." The repetition of these expressions is frightful; how much more to have seen the sad objects! Suffer me to say, with the greatest seriousness and affection, that no sinner who goes on against his conscience can expect to die in another manner. Let not the

fright of these examples freeze the blood and make the hair stand an end only, but so impress our minds as to deter us from all the paths of known sin. Should we fall blindfold into destruction, it will not be less terrible in the issue. It must be grievous and distracting to think of appearing before God without some sure and firm hope. To have our peace to make when the body is racked with sore pain, when refreshing sleep has departed, and we know not when the pulse may cease, and we stiffen into cold clay—how affecting, and alas, what prospect that the mighty work shall be done, when years of health and strength have been sinned away! I leave this mournful theme; but for one more mournful still; there is,

In the last place, No peace to the wicked after death. Then their sorrows begin, which admit of no alleviation. In this world they had their good things: They enjoyed with others the common bounties of Providence, and were sensible of pleasure. In these they placed their only happiness; but now all is gone, and they are tormented. Conscience can be quieted no more. It is the worm that never dies. Instead of hope, eternal despair covers them round, and they are pressed under the wrath of a just and sovereign judge. Before the body is conveyed to its cold lodging by surviving friends, the immortal spirit is sentenced and confined to that dismal dungeon which justice hath prepared for all the rebellious; where are,

“Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed.

—— Here their prison ordained,
In utter darkness, and their portion set,
As far removed from God and light of Heav'n
As from the centre thrice to th' utmost pole.”†

Who is able to describe their misery? Who knows the power and vengeance of Almighty God? Future punishment is represented in scripture by the *worm that never dies*, by *everlasting fire*, by a *lake of fire and brimstone*, and by every thing terrible in nature.

That there will be degrees of misery our Saviour has taught us, when he says, that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah than for Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, in the day of judgment, because these enjoyed superior advantages to the others. These words also teach the same: *This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light*. It shall be more tolerable for the heathen world, than for those under the gospel. Wickedness indeed grows to a greater height among the latter. Would you find the most daring and abandoned sinner? Look not for him among the Indian tribes, but among profes-

† Milton's Paradise Lost. Book I.

sing Christians.—Nothing can exceed the anguish arising from the reflection of having slighted offered mercy. This is a misery from which the devils themselves will be exempted. To them no Saviour has been revealed, nor pardon offered. Skilled in the art of torment, they will increase the anguish of our race by insulting their folly. The body having been a partner in guilt, will be raised, reunited to the soul, and both made unspeakably miserable. Our Saviour concludes his awful representation of the day of judgment, by saying, *These shall go away into everlasting punishment.*

The character and misery of the wicked having been now set before us, surely it becomes us to make careful and serious application of these truths.

We see the unhappy condition of such, notwithstanding our political war is turned into peace. To rejoice in it, most certainly they ought, but by no means to view it as an evidence that God is pleased with them. Without repentance, they are only reserved for severer judgments. The dispensations of Providence towards mankind in this world are various, and all designed to bring them to a sense of themselves, and an acknowledgment of the living and true God. He tries us now with affliction, and then with mercy, or he mixes the cup. *They who harden their necks shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* They who have felt the distresses of the war, and have not wept for

their sins; those who have lost their estates, and have not made peace with God, have reason more than ever to fear. There is yet no peace to them. They are not immediately threatened, it is true, with an invading army, or called to change domestic bliss for the hurry of a camp, and jeopard their lives in the high places of the field. They no longer tremble for dear relatives, and sigh for life, liberty and property at stake, but they lie under the displeasure of that Almighty Being, who disposes of them and all their concerns. He hath other ways to punish them even in this world; and they shall not escape his righteous judgment in the world to come. What are all the scenes of terror and confusion we can witness here, compared to that place, where shall be continual *weeping and gnashing of teeth*.

Is it not then of the utmost importance, that we examine whether or not we are numbered with the wicked? If ever we would obtain mercy of God in Christ, we must first be acquainted with our own condition. As some disorders are of the most deadly nature, in which the patients are stupid and insensible of pain, so a sinner not knowing himself to be such, and unconcerned affords but little ground of hope.—Are any of you living in ignorance of divine truths, seldom thinking or caring about them? Are you guilty of great immoralities, secret or open? Do you live in the omission of positive and known duty? How then can you hope that your state is good and safe? Your

state is, beyond all doubt, bad and dangerous.—Believe it to be so, and labor after repentance and amendment.—Neither will a life faultless in the eyes of men, and a regular attendance on outward duties, prove you the subjects of supernatural grace. He is a Christian who is one inwardly. The seat of piety is the heart. If you believe the doctrine of man's depravity and inability, you must, in connection, believe the necessity of being created anew in Christ Jesus. As is the tree, so is the fruit: As is the fountain, so are the streams. Have you then passed from death to life? There is no medium. Either you have been changed, or you are, at this day, *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*. Hear the words of him who came down from Heaven to teach us the way of life: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. Alas, that too many, like Nicodemus, think this a strange and unintelligible doctrine. They alledge that nothing more is necessary than those endeavors and desires which are in their own power. They feel no need of the influences of the holy spirit. O Religion, mysterious in thy nature, giving glory to God and debasing the creature, may we never mistake thee, our eternal concern! Blessed God, dispel the darkness of our minds; give us to know thee; and what we ourselves are, and lead us in the way everlasting!

Our deceitful hearts are too apt to impose upon us, and our adversary the devil, is ever seeking

whom he may devour. The most wicked person flatters himself that he will some time or other mend, or presume on the mercy of God.—Let us try to make a thorough work of religion. Many, who were *not far from the kingdom of Heaven*, will never arrive there. The formalist must lose his soul after all his pains. He needs the new heart, to turn his drudgery into a willing service, and make him happy for ever. The hypocrite, if renewed in the spirit of his mind, will not act the player, or assume a borrowed character; but he will really be, what he appears to be. How vain are all pretences! It is easy to deceive fellow-men; but God, with whom we have to do, searches the heart and tries the reins. What we are in secret, when none but his eye sees us, will determine our true character.

Sinners, of whatever description, open your eyes on your wretchedness! Flattery in your case, would be poison. To hide your danger, or smooth it over, would be monstrous cruelty. Do you ask, is there no hope concerning us? None, while you continue in sin. There is no such salvation in all the scriptures. If you are resolved and permitted to go on in a course of iniquity till the end of life, you are condemned already. *The wages of sin is death.* Nothing but the slight union of soul and body, prevents the flames of hell from kindling all around you. On this precarious tenure you hold any ease and peace you have. A few days sickness may end all your joy for ever; a sickness

in which you may be insensible, and can no more attend to the salvation of the soul, than one already in the grave ; nay, an accident may precipitate you into everlasting burnings. You now live, and have health and reason. If you will leave your sins, there is an ample remedy provided for you in the gospel. There is salvation for the worst of you ; for all of you. O delay not, but break off your sins by righteousness. Be importunate in prayer to God. Bring your polluted soul and body to the blood of Christ, which *cleanseth from all sin*.—Now is your day of grace ; sin it not away. The moments are on the wing.—Improve them before they are fled, and you go down to the dust.

You, my brethren, who have your peace made with God, are happy indeed. I congratulate you on the peace restored to our land ; but I congratulate you much more on this. By the one, the calamities of war are removed, and days of ease and rest are come ; by the other, you have escaped calamities without end, and have found ease and rest to your souls. By the one, you are freed from the oppressive yoke of men ; by the other, from the vilest slavery of sin and satan. By the one, you have prospects of a growing and extensive empire ; by the other, assurance of reigning for ever and ever. You are doubly blest. Peace without, and peace within. Peace here, and peace hereafter. You must not, however, put off the harness. In your spiritual concerns, much remains yet to be done. This warfare is not over. Sin and satan,

though wounded, are not dead; though sorely beaten, they keep the field. Hostilities may cease, but they will be renewed. It is your duty, therefore, to watch, and to put on the whole armour of God. You have the greatest encouragement to stand your ground. You will prove successful, through the strength of your leader. Jesus Christ will make you, at last, more than conquerors.

Exert all your talents, and use all your influence, to promote the declarative glory of God, and the salvation of men. Discountenance, and, as far as in your power, prevent idleness of every kind, excess and profanity, so displeasing to God, and destructive to free and popular governments. We have been brave, and if virtuous, we will be a happy people.

I conclude this discourse with addressing, once more, those of my audience, who may be sensible that they have no peace with God. It were easy to multiply arguments, why you should return to God; but none will prevail unless he make them effectual. I have endeavored to deal plainly and faithfully with you, as knowing that I must give an account. It would be improper to preach my soul away in a smooth and moral harangue. Your own good sense would condemn me for it now, and rise up in judgment against me in the day of the Lord. Have you formed any resolutions, that you will try to be religious? Begin and persevere. You have the greatest encouragement. Let neither the number; nor the aggravation of your

crimes, deter you from an application to the Saviour. On the contrary, if sin be your choice, there is no encouragement. How do you know that God will not leave you to yourselves, to fill up the measure of your iniquity? How do you know that he will not speedily require your souls? Let not a moment then pass without resolving to serve God. Why halt you between two opinions? Reason and conscience say, that you ought to be religious. Follow their wise and sovereign dictate. What pretences does sin bring? She puts on a specious appearance to deceive and ruin. Harken not to her song, for she would entice you to your own destruction. In the end, she will bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder. She rewards all her votaries with unutterable wo and pain. But religion holds out to you every thing good and great. She will perfect and make happy your nature. Through Jesus Christ you may obtain peace with God, and with your own consciences; peace in death and throughout eternity. Why will you not, this day, accept and sign the peace through this Mediator? This would give you a true relish for all the gifts of Providence. Then might you *sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none make you afraid.* May God teach us all our true interest; long continue our national peace; and above all, give us peace with himself, and make us happy, when thrones shall be cast down; through Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father, and the blessed Spirit, one God, be glory now and for ever more.