
Mr. *McGregor's*

S E R M O N

On the DEATH of

The Rev. Mr. *Moorhead*



An ISRAELITE *indeed*

A

S E R M O N,

Occasioned by the DEATH of
The Rev. Mr. JOHN MOORHEAD ;

Preached at the *Presbyterian* CHURCH in BOSTON,

To the bereaved FLOCK,

The first SABBATH after his FUNERAL.

By DAVID M'GREGORE, A.M.

PASTOR of a CHURCH in LONDONDERY.

Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for
the end of that Man is Peace. PSAL. XXXVII. 37

*Integer vitiæ sceleris que puræ
Non eget, &c.*

HOR.

[PUBLISHED AT THE DESIRE OF THE HEARERS.]

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M,DCC LXXIV.

A

Funeral S E R M O N.

J O H N I. 47.

*---Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is
no guile.*

UPON the news of the death of your beloved Pastor, together with your invitation to keep the sabbath with you on that mournful occasion, the text now read came ~~repeatedly~~ into my mind.

To throw together a few hasty thoughts upon it, is all that the short time, and other circumstances would allow. In which, though I do not expect to please curious, critical, dainty hearers, yet I am not without hope of saying something that may prove a word in season, to serious, hungry, weeping christians.

The sacred historian in the context, gives an account of the calling of *Philip*.

On

On the manner and circumstances of this call, at present, I shall not detain you. I shall only notice, that *Philip*, coming to know Christ savingly, is all impatience, till he have communicated the precious and important discovery to his friend *Nathaniel*.

Carnal men are for monopolizing the riches of the world ; they would have all to themselves. Is it so with respect to spiritual riches ? Quite the reverse.

The happy person who has found Christ, would gladly have his friends, his acquaintance, have all to come and be joint partakers ; or as it is expressed, *heirs together of the grace of life*.

We find *Nathaniel* at first, objecting against *Philip's* important discovery, in these words, *can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* If *Nathaniel* by this objection, means that the *Messiah* could not come out of *Nazareth*, so far he was right ; for he knew, or might know from the scriptures, that the *Messiah* was to come out of *Bethlehem*. But if *Nathaniel's* objection arose from a rooted prejudice against *Nazareth*, as a place so mean, so obscure and contemptible, that ~~nothing~~ good or great, or excellent could be expected to come out of it, (as some are prejudiced against this place, that city, or nation,) herein he was wrong.

Efficacious grace can, and often does produce excellent pieces of workmanship from the meanest materials.

We find that *Philip* himself was as yet, ignorant of the true place of our Lord's nativity ; thinking that he had really originated from *Nazareth*,
and

and therefore could not fully remove *Nathaniel's* objection. But in answer to his question, he invites *Nathaniel* to *come and see*. q. d. my dear friend, let not you and I stand here arguing and raising difficulties, which neither of us can fully clear up ; rather let us by joint consent go immediately to Jesus himself. I am confident that on conversing with him, the difficulties which at present exercise our minds will soon vanish. If those persons who are full of prejudice against inward vital religion, would be prevail'd upon to try and judge for themselves ; if they would be persuaded to comply with the *Psalmist's* pathetick request, *O taste and see that the Lord is good ;* * they would quickly change their mind ; they would soon find that what they treated with contempt, *was more to be desired than gold, than much fine gold ; sweeter than honey, or the honey comb.* || But alas, such is the power of their unhappy prejudice, that it is to be feared the most of mankind refuse to take this wholesome advice. *Nathaniel* however, is not one of that number : For any thing that appears, he readily accepted of *Philip's* invitation, and went with him to Jesus.

The sacred history informs us, that Jesus seeing *Nathaniel* coming, meets him with that honorable character in my text ; saying publickly, and in *Nathaniel's* hearing, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* We are told *Rom. ix. 6.* *That they are not all Israelites, which are of Israel.* And elsewhere, we have a distinction between *Jews* outwardly, and *Jews* inwardly. ‡ The character
given

* Psal. xxxiv. 8. || Psal. xix. 10. ‡ Rom. ii. 28. 29.

given of *Nathaniel* by our Lord, implies that he was a *Jew* inwardly ; which (if I mistake not,) is the same with *an Israelite indeed*.

Our Lord adds, *in whom is no guile* : I am not to criticize on the word *guile* ; let it suffice to say, that it is an expression several times used in scripture, in a figurative sense : I take it here, as well as elsewhere, to signify *duplicity* or *deceit*. When our Lord says of *Nathaniel*, *in whom is no guile*, it is q. d. he is not one of those double persons, who pretend one thing, and intend another ; but he is a plain, down right honest man ; one whose inside is of a piece with his appearance ; whose actions and heart do tally. We find the same character, *Psal. xxxiii. 2*. We are not to understand the character, in any of these places, as if the persons were absolutely perfect ; not in that high sense in which it belongs to the followers of the Lamb in heaven ; of whom it is said, *in their mouths was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God* ; * but in a lower sense. When our Lord says, *behold him*, tis q. d. take notice of him, so as to approve of him in your judgment ; so as to imitate him in your practice, and in the temper of your heart : Behold him as a wonder, as a rare sight, as a kind of prodigy, at a time when there is so much paint, so much hypocrisy and deceit ; so little *truth in the inward part* ; so little *simplicity and godly sincerity*.

In speaking more largely on the subject, I shall endeavour

First, to explain at a greater length, and with
all,

* Rev. xiv. 5;

all, somewhat to illustrate the character in my text.

Secondly, to shew the powerful and happy influence, which this character will be apt to have on a christian, and particularly on a gospel minister.

And finally, to make some improvment suitable to the subject, and the present mournful occasion.

I am then in the first place, to explain more fully, and to illustrate the character in my text. The importance of this head would have required more time for mature thought : Nevertheless, with humble dependance on the Father of Lights, let us attempt some delineation.

By an *Israelite indeed*, if I take the matter right, is to be understood the same with what is meant in common speech, by a good man, a real christian ; one who has been the happy subject of a work of effectual grace : In a word, I take the character in my text to belong to a regenerate person, and to be peculiar to such an one. Let us suppose any unregenerate person, who pretends to the character of an *Israelite indeed*, and let us examine with what ground he makes this pretence. Perhaps he is one whom the world calls an honest man, and he may be so in a certain sense, but not in the strict sense, not in the sublime sense of my text. If honesty consists in rendering to all their dues, then it is a character which the unregenerate man has no just claim to. Either he is *partial in the law*, has an apparent regard to one precept, while he lives in the open violation of another ; it may be abstains *from filthiness of the flesh* ; but indulges *filthiness of the spirit*. For instance, will not be guilty of drunkenness or uncleanness ; but

will allow himself in malice and revenge : The several parts of his moral conduct are like *the legs of the lame, not equal* ; he cannot with truth adopt the *Psalmist's* words, *I have respect unto all thy commandments.* * Either this is the case, or if we suppose the unregenerate to go futher, so as to pay an apparent regard to all second table duties ; yet does he perform these duties from the heart ? Is he carried above self-love ? In the doing of them, has he a supreme regard to God ? Alas no ! God is scarcely in all his thoughts. He may from some sinister principle draw out his purse, but he does not *draw out his soul to the needy* ; he is not a *cheerful giver* ; so that he bestows alms without charity : To be brief, whatever good thing he does to his neighbour, he is under the influence of some sinister motive in the doing of it ; so that he is really a *double minded man* in the sight of that eye which sees things as they are ; so far is he from having any just claim to the character of an *Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* His best actions are destitute of the essence of virtue ; have no real goodnets in them ; are so many splendid *peccata shining sins* in the sight of the omniscient and holy Lawgiver, who *weigheth the spirits.*

In a word, whatever second table duty is not founded on the first table of God's holy law, is spurious. There can be no true love to our neighbour, but what proceeds from love to God.

But an unregenerate man has no true love to God ; he has no single eye to the divine glory in what he does. He does not so much as know
what

* Psal. cxix. 6.

what this means. It is impossible such an one should have any true love to God ; for he has no true knowledge of him ; he has never had that spiritual view of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, which attracts and captivates the heart ; Hence he hates God ; has an aversion to his original ; is under the power of *a carnal mind, which is enmity against God.* * As the scripture phrase is, *he does not like to retain God in his knowledge ;* || so far from this, that he says to God, *depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* † It is granted that unregenerate men may make a shew not only of morality, but of religion ; yea some of them may be very exact in the duties of instituted worship : They may come before God as his own children come ; may sit with them in the same seats ; may ask of God *the ordinances of justice* ; may *take delight in approaching to God.* ‡ The Pharisees fasted often, and made many prayers : But whatever appearance of religion may be in such persons, it is no more than appearance ; it is hypocrisy at bottom ; the heart is not right with God : For instance, the person may pretend to pray, but he has no knowledge of the true God, nor of Jesus whom he has sent. With the *Atbenians*, he ignorantly worships the unknown God. The God *who is near in his mouth, is far from his reins.* |||| He may in prayer pretend to confess sin, to beg that God would separate his soul from the love of sin, but herein his heart and lips are at variance ; for really he is not willing

* Rom. viii. 7. || Rom. i. 28. † Job, xxi. 14.

‡ Isa. lviii. 2. || Jer. xii. 2.

willing to part with sin ; he cannot, or he will not do without it ; he hugs the traitor in his bosom ; *wickedness is sweet to him, and he hides it under his tongue* : * And hence no marvel, that his sacrifice is an abomination ; his prayer sin. He may attempt covenant duties in a solemn manner ; may go to the communion table, and there pretend to seal the contract, to give his hand to the Lord by a solemn oath ; but is there not reason to fear that in an unregenerate person, all this is hypocrisy ; that they only *flatter God with their mouth, and lie to him with their tongue*. ||

Let it suffice at present to say, that though an unregenerate person may perform all the outward acts of religion, as well as morality, yet there is no *truth in the inward part* ; no gracious sincerity : The fountain is corrupt, the streams are of a piece ; so that he does nothing to divine acceptance ; has no claim to the character of an *Israelite indeed*. Such persons whose consciences tell them they are unregenerate, might do well to consider with seriousness, *Tim. i. 15. Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled*

But a regenerate person through grace, has a just claim to the character of an *Israelite indeed*. The happy person has a spiritual knowledge of the blessed God, which has conquered the native enmity of his heart ; he is glad there is such a being as God ; he cordially adopts the *Psalmist's* words, *but our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased*. † He ever trusts in the divine sovereignty ;

* Job, xx. 12. || Psal. lxxviii. 36 † Psal. cxv. 3.

sovereignty ; sincerely rejoices to see himself, and all creatures in the hand, and at the disposal of such a God : To contemplate the perfections of God, especially as a God of grace, is his favourite subject ; he would give the created universe, if he had it, to know more of God, to get nearer him, to love him in a higher degree : *The law of his God is in his heart* ; he has received a new edition of it *from the hand of a Mediator* ; ‡ ever since which, the yoke which was formerly galling, becomes soft and easy, so that the person finds it pleasant to draw in it : He feels in his heart the words of the beloved Disciple, *verily his commandments are not grievous* ; * through grace he can make the *Psalmist's* words his own, *O how love I thy law, it is my study all the day* ; † yea he not only loves the divine law, but the purity of it is the formal reason of his love, as *Pla. cxix. 140. Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.*

The person sees the stamp of divine authority on one precept, as well as another ; and hence his obedience is coextended with the commandment, which is *exceeding broad*. || Altho' the person fails of absolute sinless perfection, yet he does not contentedly rest short of it ; perfection is the *mark*, the thing he has in his eye ; he aspires after it with a generous ambition ; he would fain be perfect, as his father in heaven is perfect ; he *forgets the things that are behind, and reaches forward* ; he is by no means satisfied with himself, unless on the most accurate and impartial inspection, he finds he is making some sensible advances towards perfection :

‡ Gal. iii. 19. * Joh. v. 3. † *Psal. cxiv. 4* || *Psal. cxix. 96.*

perfection. Moreover, his obedience is not only universal, but spiritual ; he acts like one who is sensible that the secret movements, or hidden springs of his whole moral conduct, are perfectly known to God ; *that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do.* * I have no doubt but *David was an Israelite indeed* ; we have a devotional sentence drop from him, which I think is very expressive of this character ; the expression I refer to, is 2 Sam. vii. 20. *thou Lord knowest thy servant* : He was glad that God knew his heart, which no hypocrite ever was, or can be. The person not only does what God commands as to the matter of it, but he does it from a gracious principle of religious honor, and child-like fear, and so can answer that divine demand, *Mal. i. 6. If I be a father, where is my honor ; if a master, where is my fear ?* He knows from happy experience, the difference between the spirit of a slave, and the spirit of a child ; that the *Son has made him free, and he is free indeed* ; || and the happy consequence of this glorious liberty is, that *being made free from sin, he becomes the servant of righteousness, and has his fruit unto holiness.* The person cleaves to God and his law, with a cordial and chearful subjection of the whole soul, which no unregenerate man ever experienced : He is like the servant who being offered his liberty at the year of jubilee, would not accept of it ; but chooses that his master should carry him to the door post, and pierce his ear through with an awl, in token of his being his servant forever. I might have

* Heb. iv. 13. || Joh. viii. 36.

have added, that the person is one who has renounced his highest attainments ; every thing wrought in him, as well as done by him in point of merit, and acceptance with God : In a word, he is one of those who can say as *Phil. iii. 19. We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

Thus I have endeavoured as I proposed, to give a delineation of the character in my text.

The second head was to shew the powerful and happy influence, which such a character will be apt to have upon a christian, and particularly on a gospel minister.

This head naturally divides itself into two parts : I shall endeavour to say something on each of these distinctly. With respect to christians in general, I shall exemplify the influence which the character will be apt to have upon them, in a few particulars, among many. And,

1. It tends to bear up the christian under the heaviest load of affliction. If you would see this exemplified in a very striking instance, turn your eye upon *Job* ; view his case ; observe how thick the messengers of heavy tidings come ; the last always with the worst news. See him stripped of his great wealth ; reduced from a state of opulency, to extream indigency, all on the sudden ; and what was heavier, his whole family^{re} of dear children violently cut off by one awful tremendous blow : See his poor body in the mean time, covered with loathsome painful ulcers from head to foot ; his wife instead of an help-meet, acting the
part

part of a devil, by tempting him to shoot the arrow of scorn against the throne of God, and to make a desperate exit : His friends, though good men, yet from a mistaken apprehension of his case, stinging him with their keen reproaches ; representing him as an odious hypocrite, thereby adding grief to him, whom God had already wounded : And what was heavier than all the rest, hear him crying under a heart-felt sense of the divine displeasure, *the arrows of the Almighty are in me, the the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit ; the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.* *

In fine, if we take a complex view of the whole case, it would seem that Job had a burden too heavy for a mortal, and that frail nature must needs sink ; and yet Job did not sink ; and if we enquire what was it supported him under all his complicated distress ? We may find it in those words, Job x. 7. *Thou knowest I am not wicked ; q. d. altho' I be a poor imperfect creature, and have abundant reason to abhor myself, yet O thou heart-searching and holy God, thou knowest I am not a hypocrite, am not a wicked man, as these my friends take me to be.* Let a person with Job be conscious of integrity of heart ; let him have the *mens sibi conscia recti* ; let him know that he loves God, and he will live in a tempestuated sea of calamity ; he will be able to bear up his head bravely above the highest surges ; *when the floods of great waters swell, they shall not overwhelm his soul.* This consciousness of integrity, has often made the happy subject of it, smile in agony ; *glory in tribulation, and greatly*

* Job vi. 4.

greatly to rejoice, when for a season they were in heaviness, through manifold temptations. But,

2. The character in my text will naturally lead the person to an habitual, upright conduct. He lays it down as an incontestible maxim, that *he who walketh uprightly, walketh surely*. And hence, let the case be what it will, the question with him is not, what is the most cunning step, or what seems best in a political view? But what is duty? What will be most pleasing to that God who is delighted with truth in the inward part? Thus the person's eye is single, and his whole body is full of light; he has this for his rejoicing, the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, he has had his conversation in the world.

3. The character in my text is an excellent antidote against *slavish fear*. There is nothing so much intimidates a person, as a consciousness of guilt; an apprehension that all is not right within; that God is his enemy. Such an one, to use the scripture phrase, *is in great fear, where no fear is*; he is apt to look on all mankind as commissioned by God against him; and hence to say with Cain, *every one that findeth me shall slay me*; so that he starts at his own shadow; is afraid of the sound of a shaken leaf. On the other hand, let a man know that his heart is right with God; that God in Christ, is his reconciled father and friend; and this knowledge furnishes him with undaunted fortitude; renders him bold as a lion. Let it be never so dark and stormy out of doors, it is lightsome and calm within; and hence, *when he hears of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord*. || This steady trust makes him like
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*mount Zion, which at no time can be moved ; * he feels the Psalmist's words, the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear ? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid ? And a little after, though an host shall encamp against me, my heart shall not fear ; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. †*

Other particulars I might insist on, but I hasten to the

Second branch of this general head, i. e. to shew in some particulars, the happy influence the character in my text, will have on a gospel minister.

1. It will inspire him with an honest and earnest desire to know the truth, particularly in the doctrines of the gospel. It will make the person in reality, what many make high pretences to, without any just ground ; i. e. *a sincere votary to truth*. The main question with him is not, what is esteemed the orthodox doctrine, or what the fashionable divinity ? Which is esteemed the most popular, or the most polite ? What does *Augustine*, or *Luther*, or *Calvin*, or *Arminius* say ? But the question is, what doth the spirit of Christ, speaking in his word, say ? Says the person, amidst so many jarring schemes, and high sanguine pretences, when one says *to here is Christ* ; and another, *to he is there* ; let me carefully endeavour to find out which is the bible scheme ; which is that scheme, that most evidently falls in with the genius of the christian religion ; which is, *to hide pride from man ; to humble the vain creature, while it saves him ; to empty him of himself ; to exalt God ; to promote uni-*
vafal

‡ Psal. cxii.

* Psal. cxxv.

† Psal. xxyii. 1. 3.

versal holiness. When he has found this, he will adhere to it with an unshaken stability.

2. It will tend to make him a great proficient in the discovery of religious truth. The *Israelite indeed*, has a mind disposed for the investigation of divine truth. He is got free in some good measure, from his shackles; and so will be apt to make a swifter progress in the knowledge of the truth, than a greater genius which is fettered, or sticks fast in the bird line of prejudice. He seeks knowledge in order to practice; and therefore seeks to have a peculiar claim to this promise, *Job. vii. 17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God:* He seeks the knowledge of divine truth, not only from books, and conversation, but on his knees, in his closet; hence, he appears directly in the way of that promise, *the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant;* || or that of the apostle James, *if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, to all men, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* The bible is his favourite book; and hence, it is the more likely he shall be able to say, *I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation.* *

3. It will be a good preservative to keep the minister from what is generally understood by trimming. By this I mean, when a minister conceals his own sentiments, and this in some of the momentous points in religion; to the end he may keep well with all parties, and offend none.

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This is a practice as base and cowardly, as it is common. I would charitably hope more so. It is peculiarly unsuitable for a minister of the new testament, now the veil is taken off from the face of *Moses*. Such an one should use *great plainness of speech*. † *If the Israelite indeed* be a minister, he looks on himself as bound by office *to declare the whole counsel of God*; regards himself as a debtor to the wise, and the unwise; and hence, he endeavours to be very circumstantial and explicit; to point out the way of salvation with that plainness, that the way-faring man, though a fool, should not err therein. In a word, he takes the best pattern for his imitation; I mean the first minister of the sanctuary; who being interrogated concerning his disciples and doctrine, says, *I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogues, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.* ‡

4. It will have a happy tendency to keep a minister from cherishing people's prejudices, and falling in with their favourite humors. This is a practice to which some minister's circumstances lay them under a peculiar temptation; and perhaps I might add, that it is a practice of which some ministers are guilty, who make high pretences to ministerial faithfulness. But let who will be guilty of it, it is not quite right; to say the least of it, it is not strictly honest; it but ill agrees with the character of *an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.*

Such an one would it is true, be very loath to offend

† 2 Cor. iii. 12.

‡ Joh. xviii. 29, 30.

send one of the least of these little ones, that believe on Christ ; but yet he values their souls above their smiles : He would *please every man for his good, and to edification*, but no further. He endeavours to extirpate their prejudices with a wise indeed, and tender, yet with a faithful hand. He rather chooses to run the risque of displeasing them, than to build them up in any wrong notions of God, or of religion ; especially if he looks on the thing to be of a dangerous nature, and what is like to draw after it fatal consequence.

5. It is like to make the minister who is possessed of it, a faithful reprover of sin. To reprove and rebuke, is part of the minister's work, as well as to exhort, and perhaps one of the most difficult parts of his work : To do it wisely, seasonably, humbly, tenderly, and yet faithfully, is no easy thing. But difficult as it is, the minister who is *an Israelite indeed*, will attempt it : *He will cry aloud and not spare, shewing God's people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.* To declaim against sin in general, altho' with great severity, he does not think sufficient ; but he endeavours to be particular, and that he may the better do this, he makes it his business to know what are the prevailing sins of the day, and to shew that *for these things sake, the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience.* † Nor does he think it sufficient to be faithful in public reproof ; but will use the same in that which is private and personal, if need so require ; whatever danger he may incur of the person's hatred and resentment ;

resentment : Altho' with the baptist, he have a *Herod*, a tyrant to deal with, yet he will put his life in his hand, and administer the reproof with an honest plainness.

6. It will make him pay a strict regard to truth, in the characters he gives of men : For instance, if he is to pronounce a funeral eulogium, and in it attempt to give a moral picture of the deceased, he will endeavour that it may be a just one.

If in drawing of a picture, a limner should throw into his piece an undue proportion of the lightsome and glorious colours, and make little or no use of the dark ones ; at the same time putting into it every agreeable feature, and concealing the disproportions and defects ; would this be painting to the life ? Would it be a true picture of the original ? I need not wait your answer ; the application is easy. If *an Israelite indeed*, attempts to give a character, he will endeavour that it may suit the person it was intended for. By mentioning what was commendable in the deceased, he willingly gives him his just praise ; and altho' it may be consistent enough with sincerity, to draw a kind vail over his infirmities, shewing them in the shade ; yet he will not wholly conceal them ; he will be apt to have some such model in his eye as that of *Elibu*, *Job xxxii. 21, 22.* *Let me not I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man : For I know not to give flattering titles, in so doing my maker would soon take me away.*

7. The character in my text, will powerfully excite the person to endeavour to exhibit to the
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eyes of spectators, a lovely specimen of that religion, which he not only professes, but which he preaches to others : Even some of the *Heathen* insisted upon it as one essential qualification of an orator, that he should be a good man. The faithful minister considers that as all christians should *cause their light to shine before men*, so a person in the sacred station, should be exemplary ; that his office sets him on an eminence which will render either his virtues, or his vices the more conspicuous : That his preaching christian virtues and graces, without his practicing them, will be like to have but little effect : For instance, in his preaching to recommend truth to his hearers, while himself is known to be one that will wrong the truth : Or justice, while himself is known to be dishonest : Or humility, while he is evidently lifted up with pride : Or a forgiving spirit, while himself indulges an implacable vindictive temper. Hence, he endeavours *to have a good conversation in all things, that the ministry be not blamed ; * in all things to shew himself a pattern of good works*, so as that he may be able to say, *brethren, be ye followers together of me, and mark them that walk so, as ye have us for an example. ‡* Happy minister to whom such a character belongs ! and happy the people, who have such a minister, providing they know how to prize and to improve him.

Having spoken to what I proposed in the doctrinal part, I proceed to some practical use of the subject. And among other reflections which it would afford, I take occasion to observe, that my
text

* 2 Cor. vi. 3. ‡ Phil. 3. 17.

text gives us a rule from the mouth of an infallible teacher, by which to judge of characters, and which character we ought to prefer, viz. that of a truly honest man, in the sense which has been explained. It is a line much noticed, in a celebrated modern poet, that *an honest man is the noblest work of God.* * How mean are the greatest intellectual endowments and human acquirements, if viewed abstractly from the knowledge and the love of God? *How poor a figure* (says a great modern) *must Sir ISAAC NEWTON make, in the eye of the omniscient*; || i. e. on supposition he had only parts and learning, but was destitute of piety? And therefore as the author last quoted adds, *these are not the qualifications which claim the Deity's regard.* Certainly none will deny that *great talents misapplied, is the character of Satan*: And if so, then it evidently follows, that the man who having great gifts, prostitutes them to base purposes, does thereby the more nearly resemble the devil.

Let us suppose two characters; one has great parts, to which he has added many considerable acquirements: He is a great linguist, a great mathematician and natural philosopher; he is well versed in history and chronology, antient and modern, civil and ecclesiastick; he is a good logician and metaphysician; has a considerable insight into those called the fine arts: His outward deportment is courteous, polite, insinuating: But with all these, and perhaps many more agreeable qualities; he never considers what is due to that being,

* POPP. || DUNCAN FORBES LOW, *President.*

being, to whom he owes his all ; he saith not *where is God my maker ? Of the rock that made him, he is unminful, and forgets God that formed him.* † He is a willing stranger to inward religion, and perhaps treats the outward forms of it with great contempt. He hears that man is a fallen creature ; and that there is in the bible a most wise and benevolent method for his recovery ; but with *Gallio*, he cares for none of these things. He will not so much as give himself the trouble to dip a little into this divine book ; or if he does, it is with a proud, sour, prejudiced mind ; so that his natural aversion to the only true religion, is increased. Christ crucified, is to him, as to the ancient *Jews and Greeks*, a stumbling block and foolishness.

The unhappy fine man, with all his accomplishments, after spending a few years here in an inexcusable neglect of that, *which is the beginning of wisdom*, is forced to obey the summons of death : His soul appears before him that made it, to receive the just sentence due to those *who forget God.* ‡

Let us now take a view of another character. The person it may be, has many defects ; not so clear a head ; not so great a degree of metaphysical acumen as the former ; not so much human learning. Perhaps he has not the gift in any eminent degree of ranging his ideas under their proper heads ; so that his discourses labour under some sensible degree of obscurity and confusion : He is neither so accurate in his composition, nor so happy in his delivery. He may have more reason

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† Deut. xxxii. 18.

‡ Psal. l. 22.

than *Moses* had, to say, *O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou spakest unto thy servant ; but am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.* * It may be, the person has somewhat of a natural roughness in his temper, which education has not been able effectually to polish ; which renders him less agreeable. † But with all these, and many other defects, a gracious God has given the person a serious mind : With humble gratitude he has received the glad tidings of the gospel ; and has taken effectual care to avail himself of the great salvation, therein held forth. The native pride of his heart is subdued ; the love of God, of Christ, of heaven, has got the better of sin, of self, and of a present world. He is habitually maintaining a warfare against all sin ; *enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ* ; fighting his way through crouds of external and internal enemies ; *longing to be perfect, as his father in heaven is perfect.* In a word, the person is *an Israelite indeed*, in the sense of my text, which has been explained. Sirs, put these two characters in contrast in your minds for a moment, and you will soon see which of them ought to be preferred.

Whatever the judgment of the world is, I am satisfied what the judgment of God will be : That the day is approaching, *when the righteous will appear to be more excellent than his neighbour : ||* And on the other hand, *when that which is highly esteemed*
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* Exod. iv. 10. || Prov. xii. 28.

† This last was the character of two men, whom a sovereign God was pleased to use as two of the most eminent instruments of promoting religion, I mean, *Luther in Germany, and John Knox, by many called the apostle of the Scotto.*

among men, shall appear to be bad in abomination with God. †

Time will not allow to make several other inferences which the subject would naturally lead to ; I therefore pass on to a conclusion.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

of this Church and Congregation,

You have lately been about a piece of heavy work, i. e. laying in the cold and silent grave, the dear remains of one, who had long sustained the office of a spiritual instructor ; and who with respect to some of you, I am persuaded could say, *though ye had ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. ‡* During so long an acquaintance, as above forty years, between a minister and people, who have been mutually happy, it is natural to suppose the affections have struck deep rooting, that consequently the parting is distressing in proportion. I imagine I see a number of you under a considerable degree of the same affection that *Elisha* was, who altho' satisfied that his master was gone to heaven, yet under a strong affection from a pungent sense of the great loss which the people of God, and himself in particular had sustained, by the prophet's removal, took hold of his own cloaths and rent them to pieces, crying, *my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. ** Beloved, under the present workings of your affections, it is probable you have a strong desire to hear somewhat said to the just praise of the deceased : You think it but right, that

† 1 Cor iv. 15. ‡ 2 Kings ii. 12. * Prov. xxxi. 2, 8.

that *the memory of the just should be blessed*. And with respect to your late pastor, you have the feelings of the children of the virtuous woman toward their mother, when they *rose up and called her blessed*. To gratify your just desire, what greater character can I give him who has now left us, than to apply to him, the words of my text, *behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*. To a considerable degree of this character, I charitably believe he had a just claim. Should I be more particular and say, that he was an honest, upright man ; one that had a just abhorrence of all duplicity and deceit : One who was for going straight forward in that which he took to be duty, leaving events to God : That he not only adhered to true doctrine, but was zealous for it, and appeared to have felt the transforming power of it, on his own heart : That he *considered the poor, and devised a liberal things* : That according to his talent, he was a faithful reprover of sin : That he was remarkably temperate with respect to the gratification of animal appetites : That he was a lover of good men ; *given to hospitality* : That he was a good œconomist : That he appeared to make conscience of family, (and as far as in the nature of the thing could be known,) of closet religion : That *Joshua's* resolution appeared to be his, *as for me and my house we will serve the Lord*. That under a variety of domestick trials, his behaviour was an honour to the christian religion : If I should say all the these things of him, I doubt not, but many of you could say *Amen*, to each particular ; and could from your own personal knowledge,

knowledge, add many other commendable qualities.

I am not afraid to add, and to appeal for the truth of it, to those of his intimate acquaintance, who are competent judges, that far from being a mean scholar, he had a very considerable insight into some of the most useful branches of acquired knowledge. I am far from attempting to represent your minister's character while here as spotless : Perfection is not the lot of mortals in this state of probation. Says a certain author of note, *I never knew a perfect clergyman, more than a perfect layman.* No doubt the deceased, while in this state of minority, had his faults ; but would it answer any good end ? Nay, would it not appear invidious to represent these in their full dimensions and most glaring light, now we hope they are all done away, and he is become one of that glorious company, *in whose mouths is found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God ? **

Beloved, I do tenderly sympathize with you, the bereaved flock, and family, under our common loss. The deceased was dear to me for many years. We were often jointly engaged in what we esteemed the cause of Christ. We were in journeyings often ; exposed to various dangers and fatigues : We frequently joined sweet council, and went up to the house of God in company. But these things are over : He has attained the summit of the heavenly Zion ; we are as yet but climbing the hill ; and it is likely have some very steep and difficult places

places to surmount. Let us then press forward with resolution and ardour : *Let us be followers of them, who through faith and patience have inherited the promises.* †

May I not my dear friends, my age, our long acquaintance, and near connections considered, be allowed the freedom of being somewhat particular in a few hints ?

Then endeavour to have your spirits thoroughly penetrated with gratitude to the great Head of the church, that he was pleased to give you a minister, who obtained mercy of God to be faithful, and to protract his precarious span, untill he had arrived at threescore years and ten, the ordinary date of human life.

Ask yourselves as in the presence of the all-knowing God, what improvement you have made under his ministry ; and be deeply humbled (if you find there is cause for it,) that you have made no better improvement. Labour to recollect as many as possible, of the wholesome and important lessons he often inculcated upon you, with great warmth and with many tears ; and by this means diligently endeavour after his decease, to have these things always in remembrance : Thus you will find from happy experience, *that he being dead, yet speaketh.*

Think how terrible it would be, if the Godless, Christless, prayerless condition of any of you, should oblige your deceased minister to appear as a witness against you, at the judgment seat. I would add, beware of dejection of spirit, under your present

† Heb. vi. 12.

sent bereavement : You may remember these words, *but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.* * It was a time of great extremity when *David* did so. There is always sufficient ground for God's people, to encourage themselves in the Lord their God, let the case be what it will. It is your duty to feel the present stroke, and be deeply affected ; to mourn, but not to dispond. The servant is dead, but the master is alive. Hear this sweet truth from his own mouth, *Rev. i. 18. I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and behold I am alive for evermore.* This is not all ; Jesus Christ not only lives, but in a state of great opulency, honour and power ; so that he has abundant resources richly to supply you, and every bereaved society that put their trust in him. He can make up, yea, more than make up the present breach, great and irreparable as it may seem : Nay, what is more still, he not only can, but he will. The tenderness of his bowels infinitely exceeds that of the most affectionate mother towards her sucking child : † Yea he is not only tender, but infinitely wise : *He knows your frame, and remembereth that you are dust :* He knows how weak and foolish you are ; what dangers you are exposed to, and from what quarter. I would add, see that you love one another : This divine precept is always seasonable, and therefore often inculcated ; but is never more seasonable than in your circumstances. You have seen a family of lovely children, when they have newly lost an excellent parent ; how all bathed in tears, the dear creatures will fly into each others bosoms,

* Sam. xxx. 6.

† Isa. xlix. 14, 51.

bosoms, where they mutually pour out their dolorous complaints. Something like this it seems to me, would be a conduct suitable to your circumstances. Again, *be at peace among yourselves*. How frequent, how pathetick are the apostolick exhortations, to avoid divisions ; to be perfectly joined together ; *to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace* ? How pathetically does our dear Lord ask this, in that specimen which he has given us of his intercession work, as one of the best blessings he could ask of his father on the behalf of his people ? *That they all may be one, as thou father art in me, and I in thee ; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* * And if you would keep united, carefully shun the causes of division, of which perhaps pride will be found the principal. *Solomon* speaks of it as though it were the sole cause, when he says, *only by pride cometh contention.* † Let there be no *Diotrephes*-like spirit among you : *Let no man think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but think soberly.* It is much more easy to avoid contention when people are at peace, (which is your present happy state,) then it is to get out of it; when once they are involved : Hence appears the propriety of the wise man's advice, *therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with.* ‡

Suffer me to add, don't let the desk be unsupplied, at least let it be so as little as possible. In this I am morally certain, that the presbytery to which you are connected, will do what they can that you be agreeably supplied. And while you endeavour

* Joh. xvii. 21. † Prov. xiv. 10. ‡ Prov. xvii. 14.

Endeavour to have frequent, or rather constant
 supplies of preaching, don't be too hasty about a
 settlement: *Make haste slowly*, is a wise old proverb.
 Brethren, the Lord has been kind to you ; so that
 instead of being exterminated in your infancy, you
 have already subsisted as a congregation, upwards
 of forty years ; and from a despicable handful,
 are become a respectable society : And as it has
 pleased Him, who determines the bounds of his
 people's habitations, to situate you in the chief
 town, of one of the chiefest colonies of British
North America ; so the honour of God, and re-
 ligion ; the credit of your particular persuasion,
 and your spiritual education, do all, (under Christ,)
 very much depend on the minister you shall choose.
 As this then is a matter of weight, act in it with
 a proportionable caution : Use the wisest and most
 deliberate steps to secure an happy event. And
 while you endeavour to act wisely ; beware of
 laying an undue stress on your own wisdom. If
 you believe that Jesus Christ is the first minister
 of the sanctuary ; that he has the administration
 of the affairs of the kingdom in his hand ; *that*
He is faithful in all His house ; that He knows
 perfectly what qualifications the minister must
 have, that will suit you ; and also, where to find
 one so qualified, and to send him to you ; I
 say, if you believe these things concerning Christ,
 (all which you must believe if you are christians,)
 there can be no more powerful motives to prayer.
 O then be much in prayer on this important head.
Pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he would send
forth

faithfull and suitable labourer into this part of his harvest.

Let me add, have a suitable regard to every surviving branch of the family of your beloved pastor : In particular, let the melancholy and extremely helpless state of his relict, strongly move your compassion for the living, as well as your gratitude to the memory of the dead. Finally,

To the child of the deceased here present, I would say, if you are the child of God, (as charity bids me believe,) however, the world may forget you soon, yet Christ remaineth your's with an unchangeable and most tender affection. The world is changeable ; but He is immutable. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and forever* : He is the very same compassionate Saviour, as when he groaned in spirit, and wept at the grave of *Lazarus* : *In all your afflictions, he is afflicted ; He puts your tears in his bottle* : If then you put your trust in Him, and have recourse to Him in your distress, you will find Him to be the friend who sticketh closer than a father, than a brother, than all earthly relations. Let me add, in the midst of your mourning be thankful to God that he gave you such a parent ; that he continued him with you so long ; that he was not snatched away from you in your tender infancy ; but that you had the benefit of a genteel, and what was more, a religious education, under his paternal eye. Let this encourage you to put your trust in God. Ungrateful and giddy as the world is, you can hardly lack friends among so many of your father's old acquaintance and friends. But be that as it will,

will, by all means endeavour to ensure the covenant favour of Him, who *loves his own to the end* :
 Who always makes good the promise, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,*