

MR. MURRAY'S
SERMON

ON THE DEATH OF

Mrs. Phebe Lane.

Lane





A WELCOME to the GRAVE.

A
S E R M O N,

DELIVERED AT THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
NEWBURY-PORT:

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

Mrs. Phebe Lane,

CONSORT OF

Capt. EBENEZER LANE of BOSTON,
who departed this life Nov. 12th, 1781,
in the 33d year of her age.

Published at the request of the Mourners, by

JOHN MURRAY, A. M.
PASTOR OF SAID CHURCH.

EXTREMUMQUE DIEM VITAE INTER MUNERA PONIT.
LUCAN.

NEWBURY-PORT.

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A FUNERAL SERMON.

LUKE II.

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy
servant depart in peace, accord-
ing to thy word ;

30. For mine eyes have seen
thy salvation.

AS every thing in the natural world
proves the being of a God ; so every
thing in the moral evinces the truth
of the bible. The obstinacy of man
in his disregard to that divine book,
appears in nothing more obvious
than in this : he seeks signs when denied ; and re-
jects miracles when granted : *come down from the
cross, and we will believe* is still the cry : he refuses
to credit God's report, and demands something vi-
sible to the eye. Visible proof is still set before
him, in the visible accomplishment of the prophe-
cies and promises of scripture : yet the world re-
mains

mains unconvinced ; it calls for miracles still——
 When the depravity of man is considered ; what
 lets than miracle can make them holy ? Point out
 then the lives of saints, the bold professions made,
 the good works done, the sufferings endured ; infi-
 delity objects that these all were rather specious than
 real—pride and love of fame inducing men to put
 on fair appearances, and try to support them at
 many hazards. And if you reply, that such shews
 might be feigned in times of health and life, it is
 true ; but what think ye of the deaths of the no-
 ble army of martyrs, saluting the faggot, and em-
 bracing the stake ? Unbelief rejoins that these are
 all too long past for us to be able to judge whether
 they were real or fictitious deeds ; and if real, whe-
 ther rational, or under the impressions of enthusiastic
 frenzy : Nothing it seems will convince him if it
 belongs to the times of his fathers ; we must come
 down to his own day, and hold up before him ex-
 amples present : nor is this a task too hard ; for to
 this day tis the rule of Providence to make a differ-
 ence between the righteous and the wicked, often in
 their life-time, by tokens of heaven's favor or frowns.
 So that though generally all things come alike to
 all here, yet sometimes, even in life, we see God
 saying to *the righteous, it shall be well with him, for
 he shall eat the fruit of his doings ;* and pronouncing
*woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the re-
 ward of his hands shall be given.* But however it be
 in life, heaven points us to its end, and bids us wait
the great thicker death. For then the wide difference
 begins emphatically to appear ; *when the wicked
 is driven away in his wickedness : but the righteous
 hath hope in his death :—*Nay, he commands us to
*mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the
 end of that man is peace.*

FROM

FROM the death-beds of saints, are poured on reason and on conscience, such proofs of the truth and reality of the divine religion revealed in the scriptures, as we should conclude would certainly tear up infidelity by the roots, wherever the facts were known, were we not assured, that where the evidence of divine revelation is disregarded, nothing will avail ; and that, if men *believe not Moses and the prophets*, Christ and his apostles, speaking in the scriptures, *neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead* to attest its truth and call them to attend.

NOR is this kind of proof of the divinity of religion confined to the age of miracles :—The Spirit was promised to continue with the church, as a comforter abiding forever. That promise is good. It cannot fail. It is daily accomplishing. And, thanks to heaven, even the present day, dark and cold as it is, has not been left destitute of a cloud of witnesses of that sort, sufficient to compel the rational mind to adopt that ancient prayer, in a better sense than it was first offered, *let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his*. And, to the glory of sovereign grace be it spoken, a striking instance of this kind is furnished us in that adorable providence, which has so lately snatched from the bosom of this church, a dear and precious Sister ; and from the arms of a numerous train of respectable mourners, now present with this solemn assembly, a much loved relative and invaluable friend. Whilst the genuine feelings of my heart would bid me join the mourning throng, and mingle my falling drops with the tide of their sorrows—love to the great cause, which such deaths are pleading ; obedience to the voice, which here echoes from the tombs ; and re-
spect

pect to the earnest and importunate request of the several families, through whose very souls the sword of the Lord has more especially pierced, and with whose bleeding hearts my own does sincerely sympathize ; have overcome, for this once, my old objections against FUNERAL SERMONS, and constrained me to appear at this time, as a mouth for the dear deceased :—To call her friends, and the world in general, to pause, and listen to the language of those lips sealed in death ! To survey the lifeless corpse ; the deep, dark grave ! And then to look inward, mark the countenance of God's vicergerent in their own breasts, whilst from the sleeping dust they hear the cry, *be ye also ready !*

FOR the better favoring of the design of instructing the living, while we embalm the dead ; choice has been made of these words : Than which, none will appear more suitable to the occasion ; whether we consider their true sense, the character of him that spoke them, or the time when they were uttered :

THEY are the words of an aged saint, whose life seems to have been prolonged on purpose to make him a witness of the Messiah's coming. It seems, he in answer to prayer, had received a promise, that he should not die till with his bodily eyes he had seen the Christ. The promise is in the original called an oracle, and its being given by the Holy Ghost is a proof of his Deity, as his coming on Simeon is of his personality : He could not die in peace before he had seen this word fulfilled ; and as he continued waiting upon God, in the use of all his appointed means for this event, he was brought to the temple by the instigation of the Spirit, by which all the good steps of good men are ordered ;
and

and who would still have them go to the temple, when they would have a sight of Christ. He came at the time when the real mother and reputed father of our Lord, had brought him into the house of God to attend the ritual of his mother's purification, forty days after her delivery ; as was commanded in the law (a) : And to present their first-born to God, according to the ordinance for consecrating all such, in return for their being spared in Egypt, at the time when the angel destroyed all the first born of the Egyptians (b). And here the Lord was better than his promise to Simeon.—A sight of Christ was all that was promised ; but an armful of him is given. The Spirit revealing to that good man that now the happy moment was come, and there the blessed object of his faith and hope was before his eyes, he snatched him up in transport ; whether (as Athanasius, Epiphanius, and others suppose) he did it in order to present him in form, being then in the priest's office ; or whether only to embrace him as a testimony of his faith : And he uttered his swan-like dying song :—1 Praising God, as having fulfilled his word ; so that none who ever hoped in it shall be ashamed.—

2. Confessing his faith in Christ, as God's salvation, as the light of the gentiles, and as the glory of Israel.

3. Bidding the world farewell, because he now had seen all he desired to see in it, as Jacob did (c). And indeed the eye that has seen Christ may be satisfied with seeing ; it is no wonder that this world should look mean to one who has the pearl of great price in his arms. 4. Even desiring and expecting present dissolution ; for it seems he understood the

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promise

(a) *Levit. xii. 2—4.* (b) *Exod. xiii. 2. Numb. iii. 13.* (c) *Gen. xlv. 30.*

promise in a sense that led him to conclude he shou'd live till he saw the Messiah, but no longer : And hence he welcomes death ; and any man may, when he has first welcomed Christ. 5. Describing it, as a peaceful death ; in peace with God, with his own conscience, with all men, with death itself. (2.) As a death in the service, (*thy servant*) like dying in the field of battle, the bed of honor. (3.) As a departure from the body ; from a world of sense, to a world of spirits ; from toil to rest. (4.) As a departure by God's permission ; none having a right to depart till God dismiss him, he being the Lord and owner of life. (5) As a departure according to God's word ; first, of precept ; second, or promise. 6. Declaring the sight of salvation to be the ground of his desire of death, and of his peace in it. Salvation is here put for favour, by a figure usual in scripture, putting the abstract for the concrete :— And the word we translate *lettest depart*, may be understood either as the words of a saint resigned to, and in death, knowing himself a dying ; or taking the present tense for the future, with Beza, Erasmus, and Pucator, or for an imperative, with Tremellius, as well as the most of the ancient eastern versions ; it will then represent to us, the language of a saint in the triumphs of faith, longing to die, and praying liberty to depart and be with Christ.—

From the words thus opened, we may raise the following propositions :—

I. ALL men are sinners ; and so at war with God.—

II. THEREFORE, they must all depart this life.

III. God has provided a Salvation for such.—

IV. He

IV. HE will have it known to be HIS Salvation;

V. HE has fully revealed it to men.—

VI. YET they are naturally so blind as not to see it.—

VII. ALL such are far from sound peace in that case, in life or death.—

VIII. DIVINE sovereign grace takes effectual measures to make some men see it.—

IX. SUCH shall surely depart this life in peace.

X. PRESENT death is then a proper object of desire.—

XI. WHEN it comes it shall fully satisfy all their wishes.—

XII. EVERY instance of such death is a fresh evidence of the truth, and reality of the christian religion : *It is, according to thy word.*—

To each of which we shall beg your attention in its order, whilst we endeavour to illustrate and confirm it, and make a brief reflection or two on each as we pass along ; and thus pave the way for some applications, arising from the mournful occasion which now calls them up to our view.

I. ALL men are sinners, rebels, enemies to God. God is. All nature proves it. To reason with the man who sees it not, is irrational and absurd.—He has renounced humanity, and proclaimed himself a brute.

THE existence of God supposed, and his being the creator of all things, taken for granted, his right to govern all his works can no more enter into dispute — His law is his proclamation of that right. The man who violates it in any part, does in effect conspire against his Sovereign, and attempt the actual overthrow of his throne : He cannot then disown the odious name of rebel against the best of kings ; and he that rebels against the authority of the crown, declares himself an enemy to him who wears it. Loathsome as this character may be, it is not calumny to affix it to all the sons of men.

WHILST human nature continued only as the work of God's hands, love supreme was paid as its delightful tribute to him, in whom it found, at once, its supreme ruler and supreme good : All its powers breathed loyalty and affection to the most high ;—obedience and submission were its pleasing employ :

BUT, alas ! How sadly the reverse of this is found, at present, the natural leading bias of the heart of man ! We look into it for love ; and lo ! Enmity against God reigns in every passion, and gives its own complexion to all our inward powers : We search for that innate purity which was originally our diadem of gold ;—but the squalid rubbish, which overspreads all we can discover, might soon convince us how truly the crown is said to have fallen from our heads ; how justly our nature is described, as altogether an unclean thing ; *the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint ;—from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, no soundness in it ; but full of wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores :—That in it dwells no good thing ; that the inmost mind is enmity against God, not subject to his law, and that*
every

every imagination of his heart is only evil continually. Nor is this charge restrained to a few of the most enormous sinners ; for thus *all flesh have corrupted their way ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

NOR can we flatter ourselves that this enmity against God was all confined to the days and lands that were not blessed with gospel-light ; if we impartially examine the exercises of the unregenerate heart, even now, shall we not easily trace the same disease, reigning in our judgments, and dictating all our low opinions of God's glory ; in our moral taste, producing secret dislike to the holiness and sovereignty, to the omniscience, power and justice of Jehovah himself ; and setting our wills, affections, and all our works against him, against his law, his works, his cause and honor ; and thereby shewing that it would not spare even his life, if he were man, or in our power ?

REFLECTION. O my soul, what cause of universal lamentation is here ! To what deplorable depths have we fallen ! How ill does slumbering security become us ! What peace can be enjoyed in such a case ! Must we not expect to find God Almighty in arms against us ? And can our hearts endure to meet him so ?

REFLECTION 2. How great our need of an universal change, to recover us to friendship towards God ! How vain is the hope of salvation without this ! O then let sinners earnestly seek this ; lay down their arms in time ; and saints praise the infinite grace which reconciles them.

II. THEREFORE all must depart. Though the body is properly a prison to the mind, yet, could
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the sinner continue in that confinement forever on the earth, with all its inconveniences he would gladly put up.

BUT with his innocence man forfeited his life :— Death was sin's proper wages ; justice supreme engaged to pay it. Infinite was the evil that broke through obligations infinite ; and the congruity of divine government requires proportion between punishment and crime : It is therefore *appointed unto all men once to die (a)*. Spiritual death sits triumphant on every soul, by nature : this *has passed on all men, for that all have sinned (b)*. The want of God's moral image, and the loss of his favor, are equally apparent in all the exertions of unregenerate hearts : Nor could we expect ever to see depravity, self-moved, take any steps by which a period might be put to this part of his death ; from the same principles must proceed practices the same, continued in one eternal line. No return to real virtue. No ascent to true holiness would ever be beheld in man. The body too was partner in the crime, and it must not escape its share of the punishment :—The entrance of sin instantly withered its primæval bloom ; the lily has sickened ; the rose languished on its face ; mortality is inscribed on its every feature ; *its root is now as rottenness, its blossom gone into dust. What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death ?—* The hoary head bends down to the grave ; the long line of a Methuselah comes at last to a point, and the cradle rocks towards the neighbouring tomb.—Death knocks at every door.—*The fathers, where are they ? The prophets, do they live forever ?—* But must this point be argued, when we are daily called

called to v'sit tombs, and tread on dust, once inhabited by immortal spirits? None are sceptics on this point till the mental lamp is extinguished by a madness, whether religious or not, which calls for the help of medicine more than argument, to effect its cure. Ages and worlds are hidden in the grave. No son of Adam lives but may find in the church-yard, some hillock of dust that may serve at once for a measure of his stature, and a looking-glass to his reason: Here the infant of a span may find a mate; the bloom of youth and vigor of manhood, in this unequal war, prevail no more than tottering infancy or trembling age: A bed of state will not deter the approach of rude disease, nor embroidered curtains repel the shaft of death.—Here majesty is disrobed in common with meanness. Princes are paired with the beggars at their gates: *The great and the small are here (d); and no discharge is found in this war (e).*

ALL must depart; must quit these bodies, become spirits unclothed; and learn to live without these organs of sense; they must depart from all they ever held or knew of earth: The worldling must give up his keys: The rake must soon be debarred of his cups and dalliance; and the ambitious lay down his honors in the dust. Here the rich and the poor are levelled.—The moment they expired, the distinction was lost; lost forever!—What avails it now to yonder breathless corpse, whether it was clothed, yesterday, in robes or in rags; whether its last meal consisted of the most costly viands, or the coarsest crumbs? Or, whether a sceptre or a crutch was most familiar to its hands?

BUT

BUT are they to cease to be when this departure comes ?—Annihilation, even of bodies, was never known. Various changes may be made in the material world ; but amidst them all, not a particle of matter was ever lost : And who can say one particle ever shall ? Our bodies may be resolved into their original elements, *and so the dust return to the dust as it was (a)* ; but still the substance remains entire.—

AND who shall maintain that the nobler part, the spirit of man, must come behind the body in duration ? Shall inert matter be privileged with existence, when a spirit, that being immaterial, was naturally incapable of dissolution, is no more ?—A spirit, that once thought matter into motion, understood and measured, and controuled its qualities, and their effects at will ? Whence then all its ideas of immortality ? All its capacities of living, acting, and enjoying without the body ? Or was its capacity superior to its end ? Why the eager desire of ever-during existence universally felt, and doubtless divinely inwrought in the very constitution of minds ? Or were these desires created, and yet disapproved by him who was their source ? Or were they approved, yet created to be baffled ; to be engines of misery to the noble world ; of the greatest misery to the noblest ; and to be witnesses of inconsistency in the noblest work of the creating hand ?

IF spirits are extinct when they depart from their bodies, when or where shall the moral government of the world be vindicated in the sufferings of virtue and triumphs of vice ? Until it be proved that
good

good and evil are dealt out here to men, with equal hand, according to their characters, shall not reason be compelled to conclude either that there is no God, or that he is unjust, or that there is a future state awaiting men, where the lots of all will be set right?

BUT, blessed be God, we are not left to grope by the twilight of natural reasonings for the path of truth on this point : *Life and immortality are brought to light* in the scriptures ; *the spirit shall return to God who gave it* ; —and by his sentence be awarded to a state of endless bliss, or of perennial woe : Yes, and the body too. The sacred book informs us, that shall one day revive, and be rejoined to its proper soul, in an union never to be again dissolved : For after death the judgment is to be expected ; for this all shall arise, though not all for like portions ; some being waked to life and joy, and others to shame and horror, without end.

NOR is the space between the dying and the reviving moment of the body, past in unconscious sleep by the immortal mind ; for, of the existence of an unextended substance, destitute of conscientiousness, and active powers, we can form no idea : The sleep and non-existence of such beings seems to be the same thing : And truly the matter is so plainly asserted in scripture, *that he that runs may read it*. — These oracles teach us that, being received to glory is a part of the saint's portion that immediately succeed his guidance through life, and the taming of the heart and flesh (a) : That all human spirits return immediately to God when their bodies do return to dust (b) : That *the soul of the righteous, at death,*

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*death, enters into peace and rest (c) : That it possesses a heavenly house, whenever the earthly one dissolves (d) : That dying is present gain to him (e) : That saints dying, commend their spirits to Jesus (g) :— That they, when the body is asleep in death, do live together with Christ (h) : And shall be brought with him when he comes to judgment (i) : That men cannot kill the soul when they do the body (k) : That angels carry the souls of the just to Abraham's bosom (l) : That the dying penitent thief had a promise of being that very day in paradise (m) :— That the moment saints are *absent from the body* they *are present with the Lord*, and therefore, that they desire death (n) as a thing far better than serving Christ here, because when they depart, they are with him (o). And indeed the prayer of the text can by no means be reconciled to nature, to reason, or piety, on the contrary supposition : Death then transports the soul to a state of consciousness of bliss, or woe eternal. For the saint can never be robbed of his inheritance, until some power shall arise mightier than the Almighty Redeemer, who shall prevail to pluck him out of his hand (p) : Nor shall one of the unhappy crew, who died in their impenitence and unbelief, be ever found entering into the heavenly rest prepared for God's people, until the sacred oracles of the unchangeable fountain of truth shall fail, which is solemnly pledged in that case (q).*

REFLECTION 1. THINK then ! O my Soul ! think where art thou ? Thy body crumbling to dust ;
thyself

(c) *Isa.* lvii. 2. (d) *2. Cor.* v. 1—2. (e) *Phi.* i. 21. (g) *Acts* vii. 9. (h) *1 Thess.* v. 10. (i) *1 Thess.* iv. 14. (k) *Mat.* x. 28. (l) *Luke* xvi. 22. (m) *Luke* xxiii. 43. (n) *2 Cor.* v. 6—8. (o) *Phi.* i. 23—24. (p) *John* x. 28. (q) *Heb.* iii. 11—18.

thyself posting to a long, an everlasting abode ;— death stands behind thy curtain, his commission in one hand, his dart in the other ; he waits but for his sovereign's nod, and then, O then, the dye is cast ! The dye that unalterably fixes thy state in consummate holiness and bliss, or plunges thee remediless in the blackest horror of the howling regions of endless despair ! Can this departure be but once taken, never to be repeated, its defaults never mended ? Then, O how needful to be well prepared ! How inexcusable the neglecter of this dread event ! None can plead that he has not had warnings : the passing bell, whose doleful sound daily salutes the ear ; the weekly bill of mortality read from the pulpit or the public prints ; and the instance of it whereon our meditations now sorrowfully dwell ; yea, every head-ach, or other symptom of disease felt in himself, and in fact, every thing in nature, if duly attended to, bids him look forward to another world, and summons him to make ready for his long home : Yes, let my ears attend the cry from yonder hollow, gaping tomb, where sleeps the sacred dust, whose dissolving we deplore ! It is like a Lazarus, sent from Abraham's bosom, to her father's house this day, and to the whole assembly, with which she once mingled, it testifies at large, the vanity of life and all its petty joys ; the importance of eternity, and the nearness with which we all border on it.

REFLECTION 2. Go to, then, all ye who drown your sensibility, and forget that ye are mortal !— Will ye stamp with the honorable name of wisdom or good taste, the favorite and fashionable vices of this degenerate day, when death shall shortly present his envenomed arrow, and point it at your hearts ;

hearts ? will ye boast of your hardness in neglecting all these warnings, when this messenger arrests you ? Remember ye are men, not brutes ; ye are immortals, not butterflies ; ye have intellects capable of reflection, ye cannot die like brutes, even though ye may live like them. Awake, then ye careless ! awake ! and seek to-morrow to-day to comfort in that approaching hour, from which you can neither hide nor flee.

III. God has provided a Salvation for such.— Salvation ! O the joyful sound ! Importing nothing less than total deliverance from every ill present or possible, and complete possession of every good, forever : as the matchless work that purchased and secured this, excels all other works in wonders, to the revelation which announces that work already finished, is the most glorious news that ever rung through the boundless empire of Jehovah.

And it was the bible's errand in our world, to publish such salvation, wrought even for sinners, rebels and enemies ; this it has plainly said. And the saying is not less faithful than surprising : Hark then, ye trembling passengers to the grave ! Hark, the glad some tidings ! A plan was laid in the council of eternal wisdom, by which salvation might be reached, even by the worst of men. A plan, that justifies the wisdom which concerted it : As it secures the wondrous end by wondrous means ; makes God's greatest dishonor the occasion of his greatest glory ; and honors those divine perfections most by saving man, whose glory seemed most concerned to see him sunk in ruin : A plan, by which, the honor of those attributes now craves eternal life for them whose death and woe it once demanded ;
and

and is more promoted by the former, than it ever could have been by the latter : A plan, by which a sinful creature may be found not guilty, by a most holy and omniscient Judge, an unrighteous creature declared righteous, his sin over-ruled, so as to be made, even against its nature, the occasion of his greater holiness, his misery of his bliss, his separation from God a prelude to his nearer union with him : A plan, by which the redeemed find their strength resulting from their Redeemer's weakness, their honor arising from his shame, their ascent to heaven issuing from his descent thence, their blessing the product of his curse, their life the fruit of his death. O stupendous ! O unutterable ! O inconceivable depths of wisdom and of grace ! But let us not forget that though the term salvation comprehends the plan concerted, the work which executed it, and particularly the benefits thereby procured, yet, in the text, it appears to be used especially to point at the person of Immanuel, on whom was devolved the divine task of securing it for men.

AND truly that metonymy, so usual with the sacred writers, never had more ample scope, nor juster application in a single word, than in the use made of it in this text. Jesus may well be called *Salvation*, as he is its author, its purchaser, its giver, and its substance.

1. Its author : To him we are indebted for every ray of hope that has ever darted on our forlorn and benighted world : his freely undertaking to defray the charges of our recovery, opened a free course for the Father's grace to men ; and in his fulfilling in time, what he engaged long before time began, he became of our salvation.

2. THE

2. THE purchaser : His perfect obedience to the precept of the law was the price of life eternal, according to the very terms of the covenant, under whose hand the human race was bound ; and his voluntary submission to the whole of that death, which the penal sanction of the law had threatened to transgression, was a full satisfaction of the sentence.

NEITHER of these could be intended to pay his own debt. Not the former, for he was the Sovereign and law-giver himself, and as such, could not owe the obedience of a subject : His divinity was eternal, independent and supreme ; and even his humanity needed not to work for life ; no sooner was it personally united to the Son of God, than it possessed eternal life already, upon a title indemnifiable. Not the latter ; for he was without sin (*a*), and punishment could not be deserved as the wages, where sin had not first entered and done the work (*b*), and until it was deserved, infinite justice cannot be suspected of a will to inflict it. The Messiah was cut off, it is true, but not for himself (*c*) : All he did was in the character of a surety (*a*). The public head and representative of the people, whom in the eternal Council of peace the Father had given him to redeem : *All we, like lost sheep, had gone astray, and the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all. He was wounded for our transgressions, &c. Hence it pleased the Lord to bruize him* (*e*) : Hence the bloody sweat, the sorrows of his soul ; hence the mantle of the mock robe, the prickling crown, and crowned sceptre ; hence the bloody tree, the nails, the spear ; yea, hence the inward anguish, and that expiring out-cry, which shook earth's central rocks,

cut

(*a*) *Heb.* iv. 15. (*b*) *Rom.* vi. 23. (*c*) *Dan.* ix. 26. (*d*) *Heb.* vii. 22. (*e*) *Isa.* liii. 10.

cut its passage through the clouds, penetrated the third heavens, and reached even to the eternal throne : *For this the Lamb of God was slain, as a passover sacrificed for us :* And therefore,

3. He is the giver of salvation : No merit could be investigated among the race he bought ; nothing was found in them to draw his love : If salvation is ever theirs it must be all a gift, and that gift entirely free. Nothing but sovereign and self-moved grace could give it. And though the infinite dignity of his divine nature, gave such worth to his obedience and death, as made it fully equivalent to the extent of what the law demanded of all whom he represented ; yea, gave the law more honor than the perfect and perpetual obedience of Adam and all his seed could ever have done ; and to justice, fuller satisfaction even than the eternal death of all the human race : So that, in his merit, there was a redundancy in bank sufficient, after paying all demands, to purchase for his people blessings far superior to any which they forfeited by falling (g) :— And all to him was dearly bought, and literally paid for.—

YET to them all is gift, and of that gift it was most meet that the purchaser should be the giver too ; and for this end, our great Redeemer, raised and exalted to the right hand of God, became the treasury of every blessing which salvation, in its fullest sense, contains (h) : All its fulness is centred in him ; to him belongs the honor of giving pardon and eternal life to all for whom he bought them (i) ; and truly, when he gives himself, he gives all this : For,

4. He

(g) *Isa.* xlii. 21. *Rom.* v. 15—21. and vi. 23.
(h) *John* i. 16. *Col.* i. 16, and ii. 9. (i) *John* v. 20.
John x. 28. and cxvii. 2.

4, He is the sum and substance of the whole : In him are met all the rays of glory, in which shines out each of the divine perfections as honored by this work (*k*). In him, deposited, are all the promises of the covenant of grace, as founded on that finished oblation, by which the condition of the covenant of redemption, was on his part fulfilled (*l*). In him is found open *the fountain for washing away the sin and uncleanness of Abraham and his seed* (*m*). In him we see the store of all the graces needed for our warfare ; of all the comforts wanted in eternity and time (*n*) : For him especially, the honor of salvation is designed ; to him is directed every act of faith and love, brought out to exercise in the redeemed, by the energy of influence from heaven : And in the sight and enjoyment of him, is found all the bliss of saints, here or hereafter. Thus Christ is *the pearl of great price* indeed ; concerning him the saint may well say, *he is my salvation, and all my desire.*

REFLECTION I. Astonishing device this ! No wonder *angels desire to look into it* ; but ah ! how little of it can we know in this dark state : Yet from that little we may say, happy the man that inherits this salvation ; he need not envy princes their paulty glitter, nor epicures their spurious delights : *All things are his, since he is Christ's, and Christ is God's* (*o*).

IV. God will have it known to be HIS salvation. And with good reason too ; for even from what has last been offered, we may see, that towards it, not a single

(*k*) Heb. i. 3. (*l*) 2 Cor. i. 20. (*m*) Zech. xiii. 1. Heb. ii. 16. (*n*) Col. iii. 3, 4. (*o*) 1 Cor. iii. 21.

single mite was contributed by any being in the universe beside himself. It was all of his contriving : No created wisdom was his counsellor (*a*) ; nor men could have desired, nor angels conceived of this wondrous expedient. It was all of his effecting ; he borrowed no aids among his creatures.—Man was sunk in sin and woe, and neither will nor power remained with him to help this great work to its consummation ; and angels had no virtue to spare ; all their obedience was due for themselves. It was all of his revealing : Who, by searching, could find out this plan ? It proclaims the height of human wisdom to be foolishness.—Few of those, who were called wise men in this world, ever understood it when revealed : Which of them then would have drawn this water from his own well (*b*) ? It is all of his applying : The means of grace are all of his appointing ; the strength needed for attending on them is his gift ; their efficacy depends all on his blessing : no man ever did that, in his unregeneracy, which could oblige his Creator to create him anew, or entitle himself to any promise of special grace, or recommend himself to divine mercy—all is of God (*c*).

And this once granted, it will appear fit that God should be known to be the alpha and omega in this matter ; and that the honor of this his chief work might not be vested in a rival : This glory he cannot resign to any other (*d*) : The chief business of the gospel is to maintain his claim to it ; and duly to acknowledge that claim, is the main bent of every principle, of every grace in true religion

(*a*) *Rom.* ii. 34. (*b*) *1 Cor.* i. 19—29. (*c*) *2 Cor.* v. 18.
(*d*) *Isaiah* xlii. 8. and lxxiii. 11.

ligion. To vindicate it is the grand work of the last great Allize ; and to recognize it will be the eternal employ of all the redeemed above.

REFLECTION 1. Here then is the grand security of an who embrace this salvation. It is all the Lord's, and, as his own, he will adhere to it. No enemy can frustrate this design, since wisdom infinite has formed it. In vain shall earth or hell attempt to overthrow a fabric of which the arm of omnipotence laid the foundation, and works incessant to raise the superstructure. Here then, let faith anchor, and ride out every storm here. What can separate us from love that has gone all this length to save us !

REFLECTION 2. Abandon, then, O my soul ! renounce, with abhorrence, every doctrine in religion, and every affection of heart that would aim to strip this crown from the head of Zion's King : and be it thy delightful task to pay, without abatement, this debt of justice ; to ascribe, without cessation, the whole glory of this whole work to *him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.*

REFLECTION 3. Detested be that pride which seeks objections against this salvation : and surely, most miserable of all creatures must that sinner be who dies in the attempt to escape while he neglects it.

V. God has fully revealed this salvation to men. Amongst all his works universal harmony prevails. The work which saves men, perfectly accords with that which gave them being. Rational was their nature made : And as such, it is made perfect in holiness

holiness and bliss. Every thing in religion is rational in the highest degree ; hence we see, in order to salvation's being enjoyed, it is necessary it be embraced : Before it is embraced it must be known : Known it cannot be by the mere light of nature ; it must therefore be revealed ; and hence a positive revelation has in fact been given, in which all necessary truth is opened ; all sorts of capable messengers employed—patriarchs, prophets, apostles, yea angels, and the Son of God himself (g). All possible vehicles are used for conveying the knowledge of it ; now a vision and now a voice ; here a type and there a speaking service ; sometimes a dream ; and sometimes a suggestion waking ; oral tradition at one time, and an authentic standing record at another. All the elements too are commanded to concur in the production of the wondrous facts that attest it. All the powers of all sorts of men summoned to give it evidence : The senses are addressed to notice the events ; the reason is bound by arguments that never can be answered ; and every affection touched by the pathos of the sacred oratory it stoops to employ ; while the divine signature gives to all an energy, that, in a manner peculiar to itself, takes hold of the human heart, and bears down the opposition of an angry world. Its purity and perfection proclaim it worthy of God : The miracles wrought and prophecies fulfilled, prove him to be its author. Every age has shared more or less of this celestial light, from Adam to Noah, from him to Abraham, thence to Moses, and thence downward it ran, like the waters of the sanctuary, spreading as it flowed along the line of time, until Christ himself and his apostles, gave it circulation to every coming age ;
and

and every quarter of the world has had a measure of opportunity. Asia was the original theatre, in which these wondrous things were acted : Africa was known, in the very dawn of christianity, to be the seat of some of the most famous churches in the world. Europe has long enjoyed a rich dividend of this invaluable inheritance ; and America, at last, has drank the rays of the Sun of righteousness.

REFLECTION 1. THEN, next to the gift of his only Son, bless the Lord for the gospel.—Prize it highly—consult it daily—it is thy charter for an immortal crown.

REFLECTION 2. WHILE we pity and pray for the nations now destitute of this light, we cannot but cry out, how inexcusable the neglect of the scriptures, or the reader that persists in unbelief.

VI. MEN are naturally so blind as not to see it. We readily allow that, in the primitive state of human nature, the understanding was a lamp divinely lighted up within it ; the moral taste was holy, and holy objects only suited it : In them, it therefore ever found the thing it loved. Hence they were perfect beauty in his eye (*b*). But now we search for such an eye among our race, and while they are in the state that now is natural to them, we search in vain. Whither ? Ah, whither is removed this candle of the Lord ? Alas ! the natural man receiveth not the things of God. Wisdom consummate shines in them all ; but, to his view, they are but very foolishness (*i*). Clearly, it is true, they are revealed ; but the enmity, already spoken of, is a vail
on

on his heart. His innate antipathy to God and holiness has poisoned his taste and jaundiced his eye.—Prepossessed against the divine character, he views its most transcendent beauties in the glass of prejudice. They strike him disagreeably ; they are *without form or comeliness* to him ; he cannot understand them *because they are spiritually discerned*. This is the spring of all the objections, raised in any age, against religion :—Hence originate all the cavils of wicked men against law and gospel, as if the one was too rigid and the other too lax :—Hence all the shifts of delaying sinners, to avoid a present submission to the former, and acceptance of the latter :—Hence the security of carnal minds :—To this we ascribe the deaf ear, usually lent to the joyful overtures of Almighty love ; blind to the beauty of the divine perfections, men can perceive none in the law, which is a fair transcript of them :—Insensible of this, they cannot discover the loathsome deformity of sin that violates it ; and ignorant of that, they cannot see the truth of their own character, and so must be blind to the danger of their case :—Blind to this, their need of God's salvation cannot appear to them ; nor therefore can they see the propriety of so costly an expedient ; and overlooking the propriety, they cannot but miss sight of the beauty and glory of the scheme. And hence they turn away the head, and refuse the offered good.

REFLECTION 1. How deep the darkness of unrenewed minds ! Their very light is darkness : Ah how little reason has man to boast of an understanding that apprehends the merest trifles, but overlooks the greatest realities !

REFLECTION 2. How great the condescension of *the Father of lights* ! to continue all the day-long
stretching

stretching out his hand to such creatures ; to follow them with repetitions of instruction day by day ; to make his light to shine in their darkness so long, notwithstanding his knowledge that the darkness does not comprehend it !

REFLECTION 3. How guilty and inexcusable this blindness ; as all resulting from depravity of taste, and all wilful where it is !

VII. IN this case no sound PEACE can be enjoyed. PEACE, that health of soul, that balm and rich sweetener of life, daughter of innocence, pledge and companion of eternal joy, dwells far remote from the bosom that never opened to the great salvation. *The way of peace they have not known* (a). Its gracious terms they never did accept. They still bear arms against their Maker : Nor lay them down when they lay down their flesh in the dust ; captivated, but not reconciled by death, they go to the tribunal of their incensed conqueror, with all the enemy burning in their hearts. What peace can they taste, while adversaries to the God and father of peace ; while they avow the injuries they have offered him, and bring with them nothing to satisfy for them ? No righteousness have they of their own, and to own themselves debtors to that of Christ, they never would submit !—What peace can be to them who are found, even to the death, trampling on the price of it ; rejecting and opposing the only plan of it, and crucifying the prince and maker of it every day afresh, yea *putting him anew to open shame* (b). Instead of peace, their hearts have cause to meditate terror : Unreconciled to the majesty
he

heaven, they go about every day under his curse (c): Not one of all their crimes has ever been pardoned; they are in his hands, and he is angry with them every day (d); rejecting the great salvation, they are condemned already (e): And their every moment trembles on the brink of execution.

WHAT language then is able to express the madness or mankind? In all this danger, see how careless, how secure, they pass along, like oxen to the slaughter-house! See the promiscuous throng of old and young, of rich and poor, forming their giddy circle! With what ardor and alacrity they dance around the mouth of the dreadful volcano; though at every turn, one or more of the company drops into the pit! Their mirth over, their race run, they are seen no more: The abyss has received them: But scarce sooner are they swallowed up than forgotten: Their companions, far from being disconcerted, continue the chase, while new partners in the play daily come in, join the ranks, and fill up the places of the lost. And is this pleasure? Will its end be peace? Are these the men of sense? Call we truly by the name of riches the heaps amassed by these? Or can real honors deign to sit on and adorn the brow, while madness like this fills the throne in the heart? Admire we the spreading branches of those green bay-trees?—Let us also consider the worm at their root: And put into the account, the horrors of their fall; a fall, how frequently the issue of one sudden stroke of an ax unseen! A stroke, how often felt, while the tree was laden with blossoms; and the balmy breezes of health rustling through its branches, promised abundance of fruit full ripe!

METHINKS

(c) *Gal.* iii. 10. (d) *Psal.* vii. 11. (e) *John* iii. 18.

METHINKS I behold the celebrated beauty, glistening like a Goddess in the midst of her train, conscious of charms sufficient to command the hearts of men ; she expects to find her every glance observed, her every nod obeyed : The glass and the fashion her only study, and the art of killing time her only science : Unacquainted with herself ; utter stranger to thought ; ealy and gay, she glides down the stream of life, unaware of the ocean of eternity, to which it sweeps : But lo ! the moment come, the signal given, the grisly tyrant seizes her in his forked talons, in the midst of her youth, and pleasure ! O ! the consternation, when she finds herself clasped in the icy arms of the king of terrors ; of whom she never thought with seriousness, nor heard with attention ! O what would she not give for a short reprieve ; for one of those hours she has so often cheated away, by the help of the ball, the cards, or the stage ! But the mines of Peru are not able to buy it. The physician's art fails. The tears of friends avail nothing. Her hour is come ; and the gay, giddy, thoughtless creature is hurried to the bar of that God whom she never loved nor knew.

THIS summary method, death oft has chosen, to testify his power : One such instance might awaken and reclaim a world. But the ceremonial of his office is sometimes more tedious ; lingering disease rolls one down to the house of silence, by slow and insensible advances ; while another is pierced with the thunder-bolt from heaven, or buried in the gappings of an earth-quake.

BUT what advantage make we of this delicacy in death's approaches ? See there, the unhappy youth, the only son of his mother, the darling of his family ;
tenderly

tenderly was he reared from infancy ; no pains were spared to provide him the fullest access to all the pleasures of which twenty-one short years were capable ; till, exhausted even by the redundancy of supplies, he falls a victim to his pleasures : A deep consumption has slowly wasted his vitals.—He languishes on a couch.—His pallid cheek, and laboring breath, proclaim the moment of his departure near at hand ; but he cannot bear to be told, that he is a dying-man. His kind relations too, ah ! how cruelly kind, do all they can to conceal the danger from his eyes, which their own clearly see before him : Music is employed to banish inward cares ; diversions, while they can be admitted, are pled to ward off thoughts of death and future worlds ; and when these must cease, the next care is to flatter him with hopes of life, when all that see him know that nothing but a miracle can save him from the grave. Now he is told of one that lately was as far gone as himself, but is restored, and his health as firm as ever : Then he hears of some new remedy or distant physician, to whom all such disorders infallibly give way : And presently it is declared he looks better, and is in a fair way to recover ; and the departing of milder symptoms is pleaded in evidence, though they plainly appear to have only given place to others more violent : And thus is he treated at his latter end, who, ever until that time, lived a life of unremitted rebellion against God ; he was hitherto accustomed to put far off the evil day, and he must now be kept insensible of its nearness, when it is come. He promised to repent when he should be old, and now he must fall in the very bloom of youth. Seldom did he tread the sacred courts of God, where he might have learnt to think himself a mortal ; and now, in his latter hours, he thinks only

of health and all its joyous prospects. He was wont to laugh at serious godliness as whining cant, and its real possessors as despicable fanatics ; and now he sinks into the grave, quite ignorant of the one, and eternally parted from the other : As he lived, he died. His reliques were conveyed to the tomb in all the pomps of funeral parade. But ah ! what pleasure can these afford the lifeless clay, or its tormented ghost ? What avails it to the spirit, wailing in outer darkness, to be told that deceiving and deceived mortals, were weeping round his hearse ; that a monument of marble was reared on his tomb ; and that the partial relative and mercenary sycophant, were loading the air with his praises, and voting him a crown.

GLOOMY and sad as this picture seems, the most peaceful end of unbelievers can afford no better : Let us view it in its fairest light :—Behold the last hours of a worldling, varnished by all the colours of hypocrisy ; colours hardened into the substance, by lying on the surface for threescore years. With the calmness of self-applause, he receives the warning of his approaching dissolution ; executes his last will ; bespeaks his bearers, and points out the formalities of his interment ; hear him address his children for the last time, recount his virtues, and commend his example to their imitation :—“ I have been just to all men ; no fraud was found in my dealings ; I never swore profanely, but oft reprov'd that vice : drunkenness and debauchery I ever shunned ; my pew was seldom empty at church, except when necessary business made my absence inevitable. My seat was duly occupied at the sacramental table ; and in all such duties, I took care ever to be reverent and devout : If I ever sinned, it was not with

a bad heart ; and I always confessed it to God, and asked his pardon ; and sure it would be a great sin now not to believe in the mercy of my maker :—I have been diligent in my business, and God has blessed me in it : This is an evident token of his favor ; and I have little reason to fear death ; I doubt not I shall be well as soon as gone, and now die in peace.” You have heard the dying speech, and all around proclaimed the speaker blessed in his death : The neighbourhood rung with his praises : But had you seen these works, of which he boasted, and on which he leaned to the last, weighed in the scale of scripture ; or had you seen the book of conscience opened, when the lips could open no more ; had you read the language of its reddened pages ; how would surprize have swollen to astonishment, to find all his seeming virtue proved but mere shew ! His whole life turning out no more than a scheme for getting gain : his little deeds of alms only stratagems to raise his fame, or douceurs to wipe off old scores from conscience : His hatred to extravagance to be the offspring of his avarice : His public devotions meant only to merit heaven’s joys ; and not one act of his whole life proceeding from a principle of faith, without which every act is sin ; not one step taken out of love to God, not the least regard to his glory in them all ; no respect to the great salvation to be traced from first to last ; no acquaintance with Christ or his religion ; no experience of its heart-cleansing power ; not one holy aim, not one pure desire. And had you been able to see the last step unveiled, how would it startle the most philosophic mind, to behold the beguiled soul, after taking so kindly its last farewell of the body, come forth, smiling with hopes of joys immortal ; ascending to the lifeless lips, she looks around to
spy

spy some guardian angel in waiting to conduct her to some blessed mansion :—But O the disappointment ! to find no heavenly pilot near ! and her dying bed surrounded with troops of relentless turies, in readiness to seize and hurry her to their seat of horror ! O the dreary distraction of the dismayed spectre, when she finds herself shackled by her tormentors, and carried off their prisoner ! O the wild despair with which she struggles to return into her former tenement—and finds she struggles but in vain ! When she lifts an eye, and no heaven in sight ; but instead of being caressed in the bosom of everlasting love, she is enclosed in the arms of eternal despair ; instead of partaking of the ineffable joys of them *that die in the Lord*, she is precipitately plunged into the gulph of never-ending anguish !—

AND is this the end of the ungodly ? And this their peace in death ? *O my soul, come not thou into their secret ; and unto their assembly be not thou united !*

BUT the truth is, that flimsy as these cobweb-comforts are, they are not always the attendants on the pillows of dying sinners : We grant indeed, that some of that unhappy crew *have no bands even in their death* (a) : Some perish with a lye in their right hands (b), and are never rescued from their strong delusions, until they lift their eyes in torments (c).

YET this is not the case of all. Have we not sometimes seen death-beds, whereon the desponding patients have already begun to *drink deep of the cup of*

(a) *Psa.* lxxiii. 4. (b) *Isa.* xliv. 2. (c) *Luke* xvi. 23.

of trembling ? While convulsive throws distorted every feature, and their rolling eye balls stared on every object near, as if to crave some succours against the strong terrors that beset them :—How have we heard them cry, O that I had been strangled in the birth, or dropped into the grave from my mother's breast, before I had begun this accursed course of life ! How did their trembling knees smite, their teeth gnash, and their lips quiver !——How did their hearts beat thick with horror, while the mortal venom shot through all their frame, and, like a burning arrow, drank up the stream of life :

Nor wondered we at this, when their faltering tongues unfolded the more dreadful cause. Whole blood did not congeal in the canals of life, when they heard a fellow mortal, struggling on the precipice, declare, in his last moments, “ All doors
“ are shut against me, save one dark and dreary
“ gate, which points directly to the bottomless
“ abyss ! I see my sins arranged in terrible battalia,
“ before my eyes—no pardon found ! Do I look
“ upward for pity ? Abused mercy has turned my
“ accuser ! The Saviour himself, has shut his bow-
“ els of compassion against me ! I see him now
“ ready to condemn my wretched soul to the bur-
“ ning Lake ! Look I inward for solace ? A ra-
“ ging conscience now reminds me of my many
“ crimes ; by which I have run out my day of
“ grace, and chased away the Holy Spirit, to return
“ no more for ever : here are corruptions in full
“ strength—my false colours lost, and not a single
“ spark of grace within. Where shall my alarmed
“ soul hide ? If she shrink down into the lowest ca-
“ verns of the heart, there she is naked to the eye of
“ him with whom I have to do ! And if she rise,
through

“ through the lanes of life, and sit trembling on
 “ the dying lips—behold the ghastly train of infer-
 “ nal spirits clustering thick around her, gaping to
 “ devour ! There is no fleeing from these environ-
 “ ing evils. No ! vanquished nature must now lay
 “ down her arms. Above is nothing less, but an
 “ incensed God, loosing his artillery, and begin-
 “ ning to play his flaming indignation against me.
 “ Beneath, nothing but the yawning jaws of an
 “ intollerable hell, extended wide, to receive me,
 “ when I fall ! No sooner shall this heart forbear to
 “ throb, than the tyrant death will display the tro-
 “ phies of his victory in terrors new. I shall hear
 “ the sound, *depart* ; and these messengers of de-
 “ struction here about me, shall drag me away to
 “ the place of despair ! True, I have had a religi-
 “ ous education, but that is now a swift witness
 “ against me. What though I have been under
 “ many moral restraints, and the grossest out-break
 “ ings of vice were not seen to mark my path ?
 “ These were talents which I might have improved
 “ for greater good : but I hid them in the earth,
 “ and now I go to reckon for them. Pangs of
 “ conviction in my conscience, I know, have often
 “ driven me to my closet and my knees—and there
 “ extorted promises of amendment, and resolutions
 “ too : but these were only morning clouds ; soon
 “ did the dog return to his vomit. Fits of sick-
 “ ness sometimes have produced such alterations in
 “ me as made many christians near, hope that I was
 “ a new creature—I attended sermons ; yes, and
 “ sacraments too—and sometimes melted into tears,
 “ and firmly believed myself an elect vessel. But
 “ my heart was never won to God—all my joy
 “ was delusion—sin was never loathed on its own
 “ account, and my glittering religion was a whitened
 sepulchre

“ sepulchre—I grieved the spirit, and grew harden-
 “ ed by the good opinion of others and my own :
 “ the Lord at last forsook me, and nothing could
 “ alarm my mind until now. Now it is alarmed
 “ with a whirl, but too late, I see ! I sink ! I die !
 “ and the weight of all my sins presses me down
 “ to the nethermost abyss !”——And lo ! brea-
 thing out these horrors, he breathes his last.—The
 eye is fixed, the faltering tongue lies still, the con-
 vulsions cease, the curtain drops, and the visible
 part of the shocking scene is finished !

REFLECTION I. SHOCKING scene indeed !—
 and dreadfully it closes. Would the wealth of In-
 dia be sufficient to compensate the horrors of one
 such hour ? Who would accept a Cæsar’s empire,
 an Alexander’s glory, or all the pleasures which
 sense and fancy ever tasted, at the price of one day’s
 anguish like to this ? What pleasure does the con-
 templation of these acquisitions afford their expiring
 owner ? What refreshment can he draw from the
 harvest he must reap from such seed ? O that all
 our ideas of earthly bliss were like our death-bed
 ideas !

NOR may we fancy these terrors to exceed their
 cause. Imagination, it is true, when highly screwed,
 can easily call up frightful objects ; and fear ever
 takes sight of them through a magnifying-glass.—
 But whoever sets himself calmly to consider the na-
 ture, the attendants, and consequents of death to
 unregenerate men, will see there reason sufficient for
 terror and groans which cannot be uttered ; for
 in whatever circumstances of mildness the messenger
 may advance, under whatever advantages the sinner
 may die, he is not at peace with God, nor God with
 him

him. He came into life guilty and filthy ; for that guilt he has no atonement, having never accepted Christ by faith ; and to wash out that filth he has found no laver ; having still rejected the fountain opened in the Redeemer's blood, (a), that double load lies on him still, aggravated with the addition of the accumulated sins of his every hour in life, until death cuts the thread, and ends his wild career. And must not death in this condition, deserve the name of KING OF TERRORS ?—His errand to such souls, is nothing less than to arrest them as the enemies of God, to drive them out of the bodies they had prostituted to Satan's service, to change their skin-deep beauty into deformity itself, to lock up their putrid mias in the dungeon of the grave, to turn the socket from which the sparkling eye once darted its contagion into a triumphal portal for the vermin commissioned to riot on the heart-strings ; and leave the fairest idol of the glads, a loathsome prey for filthier-worms, until the trump of God shall shake it into life, and force its arms open to receive its old comrade in transgression ; in order that it may share in its torments through ages without end.—Yes ! it is his, to chase the hopeless spirit at once from all the pleasures, all the possessions, and all the objects in which it ever took delight (b), to the bar, where the account of them all must be audited ; and to the prison where the chains of justice must be riveted upon them, until they have paid, of its infinite debt, the very last mite (c) : From all means of grace, to a state of obduracy eternally fixed (d), where *be that is filthy must be filthy still* (e) : From the society

(a) 1 John, i. 7. (b) Luke xvi. 25. Psa. xvii. 14.
 (c) 1 Pet. iii. 9. Jude 6. (d) John ix. 4. Eccl. ix.
 (e) Rev. xxii. 11.

society of Christ's sheep, with which he often presumed to mingle, to that of fiends infernal ; under whose custody he is taken the moment he is dislodged from the body, with whom he must mix in tortures from that instant ! forever—and whom he saw in crouds surrounding him at his departure (a) : In a word, this awful moment parts him from all the specious pretexts, of which he had woven a gorgeous robe of tinselled gauze ; and turns him off the stage in the filthy rags of his shame—banishes him from time, and sees the bolt of eternity shot upon him : And to add no more, it separates him from hope, and fetters him down in the darkness of eternal despair (b).—

REFLECTION 2. How great, how serious, how important a work then must it be to die !—And how dangerous that false peace which sinners slumber in ! It is a dead calm before a hurricane, which prevents their fleeing to the harbour, and leaves them exposed to the fury of the storm. Peace with sin is a sinful peace, and proves the possessor to be in a sinful state :—The joys it gives are fleeting vapors ; meteors that vanish into darkness by their own light :—O what need we all have daily to examine the ground of our peace ! The multitude of the deceived, that continue deceived even to the death, the deceitfulness of our hearts, the cunning of our grand adversary, and the easiness with which we indulge to favorable hopes of ourselves ; all, all, cry aloud in reason's ear, *examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith* (c) : For what shall we gain by the name of religion, if the thing be wanting ? What avail

F. our

(a) *Psal.* cxxv. 5. *Luke* xvi. 23. (b) *Prov.* xiv. 32.
(c) *2 Cor* xiii. 5.

our splendid services, our confident hopes, our bold professions, if the hand from above write **MENE, TEKEL**, on them all?—What though we have sober carriage and fair out side, if the heart within is a rotten sepulchre (*d*)? To what purpose, save to multiply our stripes forever, is all our knowledge in nature, in science, yea in religion itself, if it is not attended with love to God, for his known excellence;—and conformity of heart and life to his image and will (*e*)?—What value is there in the highest zeal, if not according to knowledge (*g*); in the greatest gifts, without saving grace (*h*); or in the highest attainments that are destitute of true holiness? Let our legal convictions match those of Judas in the halter; and our terrors outstrip those of a Cain, roaring out his horrors through the earth: Let our humiliations equal that of Abimelech in sackcloth and ashes, and Herod himself be out-done by our reformation:—If the joys of the stony ground-hearers raised us to rapture, on a riddance from the lash of an awakened conscience—if a Balaam's extasy had reconciled us to death (*i*)—had we all the assurance of the Pharisees, that we are Abraham's seed (*k*)—and all their longings for the bread that saves from death (*l*)—were our zeal sufficient to compass sea and land for proselytes, and the gift of miracles conferred to crown all our other gifts;—all this might be without regeneration, and so without faith, and so without a vital union to Christ, and so without peace with God; and therefore all might be **NOTHING**; yea infinitely worse at the last trial.—
O!

(*d*) *Matt.* xxiii. 27. (*e*) *1 Cor.* xiii. 2. *Luke* xii. 47. 2 *Cor.* iii. 18. (*g*) *Rom.* x. 2. (*h*) *1 Cor.* xiii. (*i*) *Num.* xxiii. 10. (*k*) *John* viii. 33. (*l*) *John* vi. 34.

O ! then let us bring our religion to the scripture touch-stone, whilst we are yet in reach of hope ; nor lose by delay the golden moments of our accepted time.—If any value is set on eternal things, trust not a death-bed repentance. This is the phantom that has cast down many wounded, yea many strong men have been slain by it : Many, did I say ? Yes, the sword hath slain its thousands—this its ten thousands.

REFLECTION 3: O THE cruelty of the relatives or friends, who behold the deceived sinner, sleeping on his mast, and give him no warning !—In what colours must themselves and the assembled worlds, one day, view the false, the murderous kindness of those parents, to whom their wretched children shall cry in hopeless anguish—“ Ye concealed from us our state, our danger, and our death ; when the one might have been mended, the other shunned, and the last turned into a blessing : And so have ye tolled us down to this place of torments.” O unnatural ! horrible thought ! Rocks in vain shall be implored to fall on such monsters ; and mountains invoked to cover them, in vain !

VIII. DIVINE sovereign grace takes effectual measures to make some see this salvation : *Are all they lost to whom the gospel is bid (a) ?* then if some had not seen it what had become of the Redeemer’s crown ? heaven had been empty of the human race : Where then the promise that Christ should see his seed ? Or what avails the travail of his holy soul (b) ? Blessed be the unchanged source of grace ; his plan can no more miscarry, for want of power
or

(a) 2 Cor. iv. 3. (b) Isa. xxxiii. 16.

or will to execute it, than for want of wisdom to form it at the first ; and the honor of Jehovah is concerned to see that all his councils stand (*d*) : All that are in the Redeemer's hand, shall find eternal safety there ; no enemy can pluck them thence (*e*), and himself will never cast them out (*g*) :—But in order to this security, they must first come to him ; and for that purpose, they must see safety there ;—their eyes must see him to be God's salvation.—

From the views here taken of the natural blindness of the human mind, it would not be expected that they should come to see this salvation, merely by the dint of their own researches ; no ; in this way it will still remain a truth, that *the world by its own wisdom knows not God* (*b*) ; and if the account already given of our natural enmity to the most high, be agreeable to fact, it cannot be supposed that any doings on our part could induce divine light to come in to our assistance ; and much less could they deserve that favor : It follows then, that if ever any of mankind obtain this sight, nothing but grace, as sovereign as it is free, can be the spring from whence this high privilege can flow. And the sacred oracles inform us, that all such are taught of God (*i*) ; and that by an unction of the Holy one (*k*) : A leading part of the sacred office of the divine Spirit is there set forth to be to open the blind eyes of men, to take the things of Christ and shew to them (*l*) ; and thus to convince of sin, of righteousness and judgment : Agreeably hereto, it is found in fact, that when he is sent down by the Father, in Christ's name—

(*d*) *Isa.* lxvi. 10. (*e*) *John* x. 28. (*g*) *John* vi. 37. (*b*) *1 Cor* i. 21. (*i*) *John* vi. 45. (*k*) *1 John* ii. 20. (*l*) *1 John* xvi. 14 15.

name (*m*), to make ready a people prepared for the Lord, he takes away the evil eye (*n*), and in regeneration gives a new taste, capable of discerning things that are excellent ; and thus he anoints the eye with eye-salve, makes it spiritual, brings the glorious objects of faith near : These possess an innate lustre, which makes them manifest in their own light (*o*) ; and hence, the scales falling from the mental eye, and divine illumination being received, the regenerate soul looks around him, and beholds all things new (*p*) : The book of God, where these things are unfolded, he clings to his bosom ; to this he recurs for every truth ; to this he appeals in every case (*q*) however obscure and unintelligible it had heretofore appeared to him, as it still doth to the wise and prudent of this world ; yet now that he is become a new-born babe in Christ, the seal is broken : In it he finds a complete revelation of his master's will, and a perfect rule of faith and obedience for himself (*r*). This is the glass held by the Holy Spirit to the eye of faith ; and by this he gets a sight of all he needs to know. The law, thus opened up before his eyes, had already shewn him his sin and danger, as in truth they were ; and now the glorious gospel shining into him, discovers to him this great salvation (*s*).

THE souls, thus enlightened from above, perceive first—The nature of this salvation :—A right understanding of the essential doctrines of the gospel is given them, so that in things that pertain to the foundation, it is not possible to deceive them (*t*) :

A

(*m*) John xvi. 8. (*n*) Isa. iii. 23. (*o*) Psa. xxxvi. 9. (*p*) 2 Cor. v. 18. (*q*) Isa. viii. 20. (*r*) 2 Tim. iii. 15. (*s*) 2 Cor. iv. 4—6. 2 Pet. i—19. (*t*) Mat. xxiv. 24.

A just view of the glorious plan of man's redemption opens to their minds, and settles their judgments, so as prevents their being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (a) : To this is added,

SECONDLY—A full assurance of its truth :—The divine light, conveyed into the mind by the entrance of the word there, evinces the impossibility of deception in the matter : He feels its energy making its way to the heart, ensuring its reception there, and bearing down all opposition before it. Many others perhaps, can better argue in their defence, but none is more fully persuaded of the truth of every word these oracles relate ; he sees all things they reveal to be reality indeed ; and on the infallible certainty thereof, he scruples not to pawn his salvation : His assent is secured, for he has within himself the witness of the truth (b), and he now believes it on the authority of God.

THIRDLY. They see the beauty and glory of this salvation, surpassing all other beauty, and transcending all other glory : Its rectitude appears to them without a spot—Its perfection without a flaw—Its wisdom an unfathomable deep—Its goodness unspeakable—Its love beyond conception—Its grace without a bound—and every part of it worthy of God. How glorious does it shine in their eyes, in the harmony of all its parts, each with the other, of each with the whole, and of the whole with its end ! How beautiful in its perfect agreement with the law of God ! How excellent in the discovery of God's face, yea of his very heart, in his own son !—How glorious does it seem in its being all centred in Christ.

Christ ! On the beauties of Immanuel's character, the believer now fixes his astonished eyes ; he traces them in every office he sustains, in every step he took, in every pain he bore, in every word he spake, and every state through which he passed ; and his final verdict is, *yea, he is altogether lovely.*

THESE things are seen in God's salvation, by the eye illumined by a ray from God himself, and seen in a manner totally different from all its former views. This is not mere idle speculation ; or standing aloof and gazing at a distant object, strange and wondrous. No. The sight is such as produces the happiest effects to the beholder : It never fails to carry with it—1. A cordial approbation of all this salvation contains ; the understanding rests in it, as perfectly right, as *well ordered in all things and sure (a).*—2. A willing choice of it as good. He saw it all was needed, he found it all was free, all offered as a gift ; he heard himself invited, and cheerfully his heart consents ; pleased with the plan, delighted with the person that is the central point in it, he closes with the proposal, acquiesces in the scheme, and actually embraces all it offers (*b*).—3. An absolute renunciation of all things that oppose this salvation, or would rival its glory. All other plans and devices are given up. All self-help and creature-help disclaimed. All idols and lusts immediately abandoned (*c*).—4. A resolute adventure to rest on it alone ; and in no case to seek to any other (*d*).—5. A superlative love to it : The heart is charmed with every part of it ; delights and rejoices in it just as it is ; nor would he have it altered in

(a) 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. (b) John i. 12. (c) Jer. iii. 23. H/1. xiv. 8. (d) Psa. lxxi. 16. Phil. iii. 9.—

in the least, for worlds full of silver and gold (*e*).—
 6. Hatred and loathing of all in himself, or in the world, that is in contrast to the beauties shining here. This sight arms him for the war against all his own sins ; he abhors himself for them, and repents in dust and ashes (*g*).—7. Conformity to its nature and design in heart and life : Whoever beholds in this glass, the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image, *from glory to glory*, by the Spirit of the Lord (*h*).—8. Zeal to spread abroad the honor of it, and to draw all men to see it (*i*).—
 9. Weanedness from all other beauty in the world, &c. (*k*).—10. Constant bent after seeing it still ; and that more and more : Hence delight in the word and ordinances, and longing for heaven to see it face to face (*l*).—

REFLECTION 1. How different is this knowledge from all that can be found in unregenerate men ! That may be splendid, but this is substantial (*m*) :—The one is hearsay, the other is sight. There we learn the nature of divine things doctrinally ; here we behold their glory spiritually : That of the natural man is the result of human testimony, that of the spiritual man is divinely inculcated : For the former, he is indebted to natural faculties ; for the latter, to divine illumination : By the one, we perceive probability in the things revealed ; by the other, infallible certainty is received : This may excite the affections, but that transforms the heart :—Hereby we may be puffed up, thereby we shall be humbled to our proper place : This is a flash that
 suddenly

(*e*) 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. (*g*) Job. lxii. 6. (*h*) 2 Cor. iii. 10. (*i*) Deut. xxxii. 3. (*k*) Phil. iii. 8. (*l*) Ps. iv. 6. (*m*) Heb. xi. 1.

suddenly passeth away, but that is the dawn of a day, whose light shall shine brighter and brighter to all eternity. Apprized of this difference, may we never rest on mere natural knowledge, nor be left to mistake it for that which is divine.

REFLECTION 2. INCONCEIVABLY great then, is the privilege conferred on that man, by whom this salvation is seen. The sight itself is an evidence of his heavenly birth :—By it the grace of faith is drawn out to exercise—by it that exercise is continued, is strengthened, and increased until it is lost in open vision :—It is this excites and warms his love to God, and all that bears his image :—Every glimpse of his glory thus received, weans the heart from earthly charms, wafts the affections upward, and fixes them on beauty supreme :—This shews sin in its true sinfulness ; and keeps the soul panting after total and eternal separation from it ; longing for increase of holiness, even to perfect conformity to God :—This is the best preservative of constant communion with God, and a present antidote against temptation :—This is the stimulus to the christian race, and buckles on the armor for the holy war : This is the vehicle of the strongest consolations ; the standing cordial of the fainting saint :—In a word, this sight, with all its imperfections, is heaven come down ; and the perfection of it is the feast on which all the blest inhabitants of heaven above shall live for evermore.

XI. ALL who have seen this salvation shall depart in peace. That these were naturally in the same state with other men, will readily be granted ; the same their guilt, their enmity to God the same ; like others they bore arms against JEHOVAH, and
G. might

might expect with others to share the fate of that unnatural war. But O the wondrous power of love ! It moved the Eternal to entertain thoughts of peace towards them, long before time began : It gave its darling, it gave itself, it descended, it bled, it died, to purchase peace for them. Jesus became their surety for that end ; his death was the purchase of it ; and dying, he bequeathed it to them all. Yes : The heavenly peace-maker himself, became the centre and source of peace for these. With this blessing in his opened hand, he stretches it out in the gospel. There, by authentic proclamation, it is freely offered every day. And to give his word success, he sent the Holy Spirit into their hearts, to draw them to consent : This celestial agent bowed their wills, and brought them to embrace the peace proposed : By faith they gladly received the Saviour, and committed the work of securing their peace with God, entirely into his hand : At that moment, they became espoused to the Redeemer, and, by the marriage covenant, they were entitled to all his purchased, and communicable goods. His righteousness became theirs. Their debts were charged to his account. That righteousness was sufficient payment for all they owed ; and divine justice called for their discharge. Sin, the cause of God's anger, being atoned by a sacrifice, which now is become theirs, the thunder-bolt is laid aside—the frown removed from JEHOVAH's countenance—the storm is over, and the heaven serene—peace is proclaimed by sound of gospel trumpet, and by every promise in the covenant of grace, God gives his word, his bond, his oath, that it shall never be broken off.

A witness and a pledge hereof is given them,
when the Spirit of peace takes possession of their
hearts,

hearts, and leads them to be cordially reconciled to every thing in God they see ; yea brings them to an inward approbation and complacency in the holiness, the justice and sovereignty itself, which are essential to his nature : To a full satisfaction in his law, and hearty well-pleasedness with his salvation, in all its parts. This is that sanctifying work, by which he brings them to be at peace with God, as by the act which justified them, God declared himself at peace with them : This peace is immutable as the oath of God ; it is henceforth the same for ever. It cannot wax and wane as comforts do : It cannot come and go, as a guest who is here to-day, and away to-morrow. No—it is fixed as fate—it is lasting as eternity—it is as good—as perfect—as secure the first moment as ever.

THIS peace extends to every thing but sin and Satan, with all things else they are at agreement :—All the attributes of Jehovah's nature are become its guarantees ; each pledges itself to support it forever : Every part of God's law satisfied with its price, proclaims and ratifies it ; every thing in providence acts upon it ; even the rod and judgments of the Almighty confess themselves bound by this treaty, and death itself cannot intringe it.—

NOR is it agreeable to the kind design of the God of peace, that the soul he has thus accepted, should still go uncomforted by the benefit to which he is an heir. A heaven to come is not all his portion ; a present taste of the first-fruits of his inheritance, as an earnest of the harvest in reversion, is indulged to believers in time. The heaven, which true religion brings, begins below. It is therefore graciously provided that the high favor of peace, ratified

ratified in heaven, shall, in due time be notified to saints on earth : This is necessary to calm the surges of a tempestuous conscience, to make the yoke of religion easy, to smooth the narrow way into a way of pleasurable, and make the promises of the gospel a real comfort to the christian in his pilgrimage, as well as to confute the hell-hatched calumny, that would insinuate that all religion is an enemy to true enjoyment. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, as the spirit of truth, is pleased to deal with them whom he sanctifies in such a manner, as to prove that, as he is not ashamed of either his word or work, so he is as little disposed to disown the one as to deny the other : By his work he attests his word, and by the latter he recognizes the former to be his own. In the scriptures he has left precious promises of life and favor, addressed to certain gracious exercises there described ; these he opens in their true sense to the believer, and brings them home to his heart in all their certainty. In the rational soul, the Creator has implanted a power of consciousness of all its own acts. This power the spirit sometimes routes to do its office ; and in the sanctified, calls up its attention to those present exercises by which he is now influencing the vital principle, infused into the soul in its regeneration, to exert itself in the very line drawn in the gospel, as the qualification of the promises above referred to. But the graces now are not only drawn out to act ; they are shown on too by their great author, and so brought to light. Conscience knows them to be real ; and reason, comparing them with the word, ventures to pronounce them gracious. But thus she utters with trembling voice and quivering tongue ; and in her sentence the heart cannot rest, until the divine Spirit, by a fresh discovery of redeeming love, comforting and rejoicing

cing the soul, encourages the conclusion drawn, and gives his attestation to that gracious act on which it was grounded, as the genuine offspring of his own power — This stamps divine authority on the result, and enables the soul to rise to a full assurance of its peace with God: Hence is shed down on the whole soul of the believer, a blessed calm; a heaven-born peace possesses him within, in which he anticipates the joys of the Jerusalem above; *joys unspeakable and full of glory*: Whereby the man is girded for his journey, and armed for the conflicts before him, borne up in the sharpest trials, and made to triumph over the last enemy. This gives a friendly aspect to every thing in life, and makes him at peace with crosses, afflictions and persecutions; yes, and enables him to welcome death in its most frightful forms.

DEATH indeed awaits him still.—Such is the law of his nature; of this mortal tabernacle he must be unsheathed: Flesh and blood cannot endure the glory in reserve for him. But death comes not as the executioner of the condemning sentence:—The force of that curse was wholly spent on his surety's head; who, by dying, has broke death's arrow, disarmed him of his sting, and destroyed him that had the power of death in his hand: Death is now become a friend. He comes not to renew the war; but as the messenger of heavenly love. Love, that can no longer bear the distance of its object; and dispatches him on the gracious behest to release the beloved soul from its imprisonment in clay, and hatten it to the arms of its best friend.

WHAT then can hinder peace divine from smiling in the face of that saint, in his departure, within whole heart it has reigned until then?—He was entitled

entitled to it by covenant the moment he believed : It is promised by the word of that God who cannot lie ; the divine Spirit has sealed that promise on his heart ; he has already taken possession of it ; God has given him the earnest, and caused him to expect the whole promised good :—Every possible security is put into his hand, and can his faithful Lord frustrate the hope himself has excited and founded on his word ? Has this been his support in six troubles ; and shall it fail him in the seventh ? It has carried him safely on to the birth into the world of glory ; and shall it not then give power to bring forth ? In lesser trials this has been his cordial, and shall it desert him in the greatest ? If we should speak thus, should we not offend the generation of God's children ? When they have passed through the waters of affliction, their God has been with them ; and could they suspect that he would leave them helpless, when overflown by Jordan's flood ? The waters of life flow in the channel of this peace : They are at the option of all that will.—The true believer, who has seen this salvation, has in a day of God's power, been made willing to take Christ the tree of life ; and was he not made willing to take the waters thereof too ? Or, has he relished them in life, and yet can loathe them in the article of death ? Shall he not then thirst for them more than ever ? And if he does, shall not he, who has promised it, now open fountains in this dreary wildernets ; yea, rivers in this darksome desert ? Shall he not now more abundantly than ever, pour this water on the soul that is thirsty, and floods of it on such dry ground ? Yes :—Blessed be God ! Not one of his sheep has ever lacked the glorious Shepherd's care in the dark valley. They have not once been left in that crisis, without his rod and staff to comfort them ; the one to support and the other to clear their way through.

Who then can forbid the waters of his peace, which, *as a river make glad the city of God*, to flow into the souls of saints in their last conflicts ? Shall law forbid it ? No :—Law is satisfied by their surety's obedience. Can justice prohibit it ? No :—Justice is atoned by the sufferings of Jesus ; there the believer's debt is paid to the uttermost farthing. Shall sin remaining within prevent it ? No :—Its power was broken in regeneration ; its dominion overthrown at that moment ; it has been on a cross ever since ; and death now comes to strike at its life the finishing blow, and fully release the soul from all remains of that filthy husk. Shall satan's efforts now break up this peace ? No :—That enemy is fierce, it is true, but Jesus, the conqueror, having destroyed him that had the power of death, has effectually freed all his followers from the bondage of its fear : The roaring lion is chained to the Redeemer's footstool ; his power is limited by a—*bitberto*, but no further.—In a word, all the enemies of the believer's peace are now to be trodden under foot, and nothing left that can destroy it : Since nothing can separate him from the love of Christ. But death, by name, is in the inventory of his goods ; this, as well as life, things then present as well as things to come, shall all conspire to secure his peace, and improve it into everlasting joy.—

OBJECTION.—MAY not a true believer die in terrors ? Answer. The sweet peace which men receive in believing, is the peace of God ; by him bestowed and by him maintained. There is not in sacred writ a declaration more peremptory or unlimited than that which asserts the end of the upright life to be peace. The seeds of light and gladness were sown for them when they were made new creatures.

tures, and now the appointed weeks of harvest are begun. It is however not to be denied, that the evidence is frequently shaken and vanished out of sight, when the saints title remains indeteasible :— This, like the stream of a mighty river, continues to glide on in its proper channel, unaltered by all the changes of seasons and climes ; whilst that, like the waters of a well, rises and falls in proportion to the showers distilled from the clouds : Nor may we surmise that the ebbing of the christian's comforts arises from any want of love in God to their persons ; that love that spared not to give his son, would not grudge to give the sweets of his purchase. Nor can it be owing to any defect in the tenderness of the Redeemer's bowels towards them, if some saints go mourning all the day-long : He poured out his life-blood, in their stead, and would he deny them some drops of comfort in the time of their need ? No : Very often the cause must be sought for in themselves : This is the natural consequence of remissness in our watch, negligence in our warfare, or want of circumspection and diligence in the different duties of life. Those courses naturally lead to terrors in death, even when they are not permitted to lead down to hell. Of this fertile womb, alas ! too fertile in our day, doubts and darknets, with all their sad companions, are the unhappy off-spring, even in life ; and we naturally expect, that it will not fail to produce hard work in death. Nor can we wonder if this should be found to turn the death-beds of saints, from beds of roses to pavements of pointed flint ; heated to burning by the fire of the conflict through which they are saved at last.

But there are other reasons, from which this sad phenomenon may be accounted for ; even when
found

found in the lot of lively and watchful christians : What means more powerful than this to stir up professors to double diligence to make their calling sure ? What more effectual to kill the carnal confidence which, even believers, are too prone to indulge ; whereby they too soon forget, especially after their best frames ; that their strength consists not in the degrees of grace they have already received, but lies all in that fund, which is yet in the hand of Christ ; that all fulness dwells in him, and nothing but emptiness in the best creature ;—therefore, that they are not able to withstand in the day of trial, by any strength in themselves ; and that the strongest christian here must live on Christ ? To teach us this lesson, what mean is better calculated than the providence that sets before our eyes some of the greatest and humblest saints laboring in the dark at the last hour, under the sharp buffetings which never fail to shew the need of reliance on the strength of Christ, our head, and renunciation of all other help ?

It is most certain, however, that the severest of their conflicts are infinitely preferable to the dead calm of careless sinners dying : Nor are they in any one instance, a contradiction to the foregoing assertion, that the end of each upright man is peace. Let us contemplate it in the darkest view the state of saints can admit.—See an aged, humble, watchful christian, after long struggles with the storms of adversity, brought to the bed of death : Hear him in the keenest bodily pain, breathing out the more exquisite anguish of his soul.

“ You see here, my friends, the very chief of sinners.—Oh ! how justly does the Holy One abandon
H dog

don to his woes, at the last, a wretch who has so long provoked him ; so grievously dishonored his most holy name, grieved his gracious Spirit, and crucified his glorious Son afresh ! O what mercies he has bestowed on me ! And O the vileness, the total depravity of my heart ; the wickedness and rebellion of my whole life, that has trampled them all under foot ! My heart bleeds, when I review the one, I abhor myself when I look back on the other. Justly am I now left to the scourge of an evil conscience, and made a monument of the anger of a holy God against sin. What can I expect but eternal banishment from his blissful presence ? And how can I endure that ? Never to see his face ? Never to taste his love ? Never to praise, nor serve, nor love, nor honor him ? O this is intolerable ! I tremble to think of it ; but if I must endure it, it is all my own fault ; I will declare, even in eternal woe, that I have deserved it all ; that it is I, and I alone, who have been my own destroyer ! Why do ye try to comfort me, my friends ? Nothing is more painful than the thought of having so long imposed on you and on the church with a profession, and having made you to think me something ; except that of my having thus wounded religion, and dishonored God so grievously thereby. I know you would have me rely on Christ, and apply the precious promises to myself. But I could as easily remove mountains. I see nothing here within, that looks like religion ; nor any promise in the bible that belongs to me. O for an holy heart ; an heart clean from that abominable thing which God hates ! O for one glimpse of the countenance of God in the face of Christ ! It is the want of this, not the pangs of death, that makes me thus sink in deep waters ! He hideth himself from me. *O that I knew*

*Knew where I might find him, I would come even to his
 seat ! O eternity ! eternity ! how can I venture in-
 to thy boundless darksome ocean !*

BUT what shall I do ? I am in a great strait.—
Ever since I thought I knew any thing of religion,
 when all other doors of hope have been shut against
 me, flying immediately to Christ, as a poor, help-
 less, self-ruined sinner, has been my last resource.
 And where else can I fly now ? He only has the
 words of eternal life. No other hand can help me.
 As it has been in my life, so must it be now in
 death, MY LAST RESORT. I perish, if I trust him
 not : I can but perish if I trust him : At his holy,
 sovereign, gracious feet, will I therefore venture to
 prostrate my sinking soul — If I perish, I perish.—
 And, if I should, I deeply deserve it ; but it shall be
 casting the weight of my eternal concerns on Christ,
 and relying on the virtue of his righteousness and
 blood. He is able to save to the uttermost ; and
 there is, there can be salvation in no other ” — Here
 the death-rattle stopped his speech ; but O had
 you seen and heard what passed in the soul, when
 this conflict was come to its end, when the chained
 tempter was ordered to abscond ; how different
 would appear the colours of this scene ! For, lo !
 the adversary retreating, the mills he had railed va-
 nished with him ; the sun shone out from behind
 the cloud ; all things appeared in their true light ;
 the tempest from Sinai was hushed : — The still
 voice from Zion bespoke the humbled soul, in ac-
 cents such as these, “ Son be of good cheer, thy
 sins are forgiven. I have drawn thee, but it is to
 myself : — I have drawn thee through dark and dis-
 tressful paths, but it is because I have loved thee
 with everlasting love. It was a way which thou
 knewest

knewest not, but thou shalt know hereafter. Now thy warfare is accomplished, I have bruised Satan forever under thy feet. *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*"

How leapt the heart of the dying saint at this reviving message ! How eagerly did he now invite and embrace the angel of death ! How peacefully did he close his longing eyes ; eyes longing to enter on the beatific vision of his best beloved ! The happy moment come—the heavenly convoy of glorious angels, which had been waiting to guard him, though hitherto concealed behind the curtain of his flesh, now threwed themselves : In their arms embraced, the ravished soul springs upward to her heavenly home, and quickly joins her notes with the celestial choir in the anthems of eternal joy !—

I SHALL make no reflection on this case.—It speaks for itself. It uncovers the darkest side of the religious life—and at the dark moment too :—Compare it, even here, with the brightest part of the ungodly's portion, and let right reason determine your choice.

X. PRESENT death is an object of desire to them who have seen God's salvation.—

It is acknowledged that good only, or what is viewed as such, is properly desirable ; and that death, considered as the dissolution of the tie which held the soul and body in their near connection, is so contrary to nature, that it cannot be looked on as good in itself : And therefore, when regarded naked and alone, separate from its consequences, is met with a natural reluctance, even by the sanctified soul.

soul. None ever desired, none ever loved death for its own sake : And when we find dying patients placing all their religion in a willingness to die, and their friends accounting that sufficient proof of their preparation for it, we must conclude that total ignorance of death and of religion too, is at the bottom with them both. Were they acquainted with the former, as it is, the plumes of their supposed willingness would soon drop off ; and the antichristian righteousness they thought to make up by it, stripped of its disguise, would appear in its daring deformity. And did they know the real genius of the latter, they could never set up mere willingness to die, as the test of fitness for that important change ; for can none be found in whom this evidently is a stream, flowing down from an inward fountain of impatience under pain ; fretfulness at crosses, and murmuring discontent at the running of the line by which providence has measured their lot ? Nay, has not this willingness sometimes been inflamed into desires so eager, as to hurry on the hardy wretch, with his own hands, to strike the tremendous blow ; to throw back on the giver's hand the slighted boon of life ! and rush, uncalled, into the presence of his Judge ? Death is no friend to these. Far from the abode of peace, his hand will fix their guilty souls forever !

NOR may we lop off from the list of saints, every one who looks on death with dread.—Often this dread arises from weakness of faith and its attendant graces—often from the strength and sensible workings of some inward lust—often from negligence in self-examination, or certain other duties—and often from a natural timidity interwoven with the constitution—sometimes from melancholy, or other
bodily

bodily disease, but generally from the hidings of God's countenance. Yet whatever be the spring, this tear may be a medicine. And one thing we know, that Christ will deliver many from death's sting, who by its fear have been in bondage to the last (a).

BUT, these mistakes apart, there are not wanting considerations which may be presented to the minds of true christians, sufficient to make death appear truly desirable; how many burdens lie heavy on them, of which they can hope for no other deliverance? Every thing in this world is empty, unsatisfying and ensnaring. Nothing here gives the soul that rest which almost all things daily promise. Religion alone affords peace; but that is so imperfect during this life, even to the best, that its joys are tasted only by drops; and of these how many are the interruptions; and how many bitters intermingled with them? What conflicts with temptation; what struggles with innate corruptions; what sorrows and distresses; what pains and darknesss await the believer in his pilgrimage, which turn his path through the valley of Baca, and nightly water some couch with tears! From all these, death is the grand deliverer. And is it then marvellous that the weary traveller should sometimes cast a wishful eye towards the beloved home, where peaceful rest invites him to its arms? Die when or how he will, the true believer cannot but find his dying to be his gain (b). What though his body must be deposited in clay? That clay shall be to it a bed of rest; a bed perfumed and sweet as a bed of roses, ever since it was the place where the Lord lay:—
Its

(a) *Heb.* ii. 15. (b) *Phil.* i. 21.

Its darkness shall not fright ; its solitude shall but promote the soundness of the sleep :—A sleep as sweet and as refreshing as it is sound ; to which ten thousand ages will be but as an hour :—Nor shall the labors of sister worms disturb this soft repose. Jesus shall watch the favorite dust, a grain of it shall not be lost :—It shall wake more fresh than the morning flower, more durable than pillars of marble, and more glorious than yonder sun in his meridian pride (c).

WHAT then is in the change which death shall work, which can be undesirable to a holy soul ?—It comes but to transport it from a vale of tears to the mount of joy ; from an howling wilderness to an heavenly paradise ; from fears to endless security ; from toil to rest ; from Egypt to Canaan ; from Sodom to Sion ; from misery to glory ; from earth to the heavenly Jerusalem ; from the converse of sinning mortals to the spirits of just men made perfect, to an innumerable company of angels, to God the judge of all, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.—O the glorious exchange !—Methinks the very idea of passing, in a moment, beyond the reach of Satan's devices, this world's snares, and sin's inhering taint, to holiness and bliss equal to our highest capacity ; to a state, in which we shall serve God perfectly, praise and honor him effectually, and be satisfied forever with his likeness and his love—might be sufficient to induce the soul to stretch its wings in eager longings to depart !—Nor can the coldest philosophy censure the heavenly pathos with which it breathes out what it is no longer able to suppress—*Come ! Lord Jesus ! come quickly !*

NOR

NOR are these aspirations a mere fiction of fancy! A cloud of witnesses in real life, rise up and claim them as their own. An inspired apostle is spokesman for them all (*d*). Thus did Job long, when it was no less trial of his patience to wait until this change should come, than it was to bear his accumulated troubles. Thus did David's heart pant after the full enjoyment of his God :—Thus Peter looked on the day when he should put off his tabernacle :—This was the language of holy Paul, when breathing after dissolution :—And this the earnest cry of all who had received the first fruits of the spirit :—These the groans of the whole new creation, who have need of patience to incline them to wait for the manifestation of the sons of God. Nor is this the experience of prophets and apostles and good old Simeon only :—What else carried the host of martyrs through? What else prevailed with them not to accept offered deliverance, when to be stoned, to be sawn alunder, to be devoured by wild beasts, tortured by racks, or dissolved in flames, was the other side of the alternative? And blessed be God, there are not wanting in the church, to this day, a goodly number, who with Jacob, are waiting for God's salvation; and with Paul longing to be clothed with their house from heaven!

THESE desires however may not refuse the boundary of resignation :—Christ is not forgetful of his sheep—nor is the Lord slack concerning his promise. The safe arrival of every saint in glory is necessary to accomplish the fulness of Christ. Their transportation to his bosom, is therefore, the object of his desire. He longs for the happy day. Heaven

is

is as ready for them now as ever it will be—their title to it is as good the first moment of their union to Christ as it ever can. Nothing hinders their immediate entrance on the possession of their inheritance, but this—they are not ready—no defilement, no imperfection can be admitted there—both these impediments lie yet in their way—there are Canaanites yet in the land; they must by a course of spiritual warfare, be driven out by little and little (*a*)—the heir of glory must be educated to a fitness for his destined sphere, before he enter on it. He must grow up to manhood, to the measure of the stature of a man in Christ (*b*). He could not enjoy his heavenly patrimony one moment before that which is perfect be come (*c*); and one moment after that he shall not be kept out of it. His desires of dissolution then should be companions of sincere resignation to his Father's will—and, thus associated, they are the warrantable and the natural language of every sanctified soul.

OBJECTION. DEATH sometimes finds believers unready and in the dark, and surely cannot be desirable in these cases.

ANSWER. FROM the moment of his first uniting to Christ by faith, every believer may be said to be habitually prepared for death:—Having the spirit of God dwelling in him, and the righteousness of God upon him as his robe. But to actual readiness there is required the present exercise of grace, and sensible evidence of peace with God.—I believe death rarely snatches away a real christian in a course of backsliding, without first rousing him by the
I midnight

midnight cry, and making the wanderer look again towards his father's house : Yet, should it be otherwise, though the soul in actual readiness alone could die with comfort, the nature of the covenant of grace constrains us to conclude that both will die in safety (*d*). It is true, the servant whom his Lord finds sleeping when he calls, may expect to find a dark valley in death—yet even thus, how different his gloom from that of the ungodly ? To the one, the darkness increases as he goes, until it becomes outer darkness, without hope of day—but to the other, the dark valley is inverted ; death holds out the gloomy end of the lane on this side dissolution—all his darkness, terrors and conflicts are over when the saint comes to the article of death. And then the stroke is instantaneous—we can never say of death that now it is here. No. It is always seen either coming—or past—the last moment the soul was in the world of sense—the next moment it wakes in that of spirits—and not a moment is left between.

REFLECTION 1. TAUGHT by these considerations to pity them who are enslaved all their lives by the fears of dying, let us not forget to try our own temper concerning that important event : If we do indeed consider death sometimes as desirable, let us take care to examine the grounds on which these desires stand ; and never lose sight of the great difference between the true fortitude of the ripened saint in clear views of eternity, and the fool-hardiness of a Brutus or a Cato, or other maddened sinners, blindly rushing on their fate.

REFLECTION 2.

(*d*) 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Isa. lv. iii.

REFLECTION 2. How unreasonable the backwardness of some real christians to die ! What pleas can they offer to support it ? Will not God sustain my life while he has any use for it ? When that is over, what use have I for it more ? Could the prolonging of it to the most distant period of time do me any good ? Do I plead for longer life that I may do good to the church of God ? But if any such good is done, must it not be all of the Lord's own doing ? And shall not all that he designed be certainly done ? He can be at no loss for an instrument.—The changing of his tools does not in the least embarrass his work. He can lay by one and take up another without any damage. Could I ever do any good unless he was pleased to work by me ? And if I do none, shall not my longer stay in life produce much evil ? But if I really want to serve and glorify God to any purpose, it is best to die ;—for heaven is the only place where I can expect to answer that end.

Wish I to live for the sake of wife and children ? Alas ! it is to be feared that, in consulting their welfare, we are often in danger of being found attempting to have them all in our hands ; to wrest them out of the unerring hand of God. When we have done our best, why can not we leave the issue to him ; and rest easy, though we see it not with our own eyes ? Were this the temper of our minds, we may be sure God will convert the stones of the wall into bread, before he will suffer them to perish for want of it : Their settlement in the world depends not in the least on our presence ; the unalterable decree of Jehovah is gone forth long ago, by which all their circumstances are infallibly settled. Who can vacate his holy purpose ? Cannot he
execute

execute it without me ? Why then should I be anxious to interfere ? And as to their best interest, have we not often reason to fear that they are more injured by our defects than profited by our example ?—Children are not brought one hour sooner into a state of grace for their parents being alive. Our immoderate cares about their lot may hurt, but cannot help them : And after all, God will dispose of them just as he pleases, without so much as once consulting us on the matter. Let us then cheerfully commit them to the Lord, or we may doubt whether we have sincerely committed our souls to him ; none of these can excuse our anxieties for life—but what if I be not fit to die ? If ever I am fitted, God alone must do it. This he can with infinite ease—in sickness as well as health—in one day as well as one thousand years ; there is no need of my living long to give him time for this : And if I live ever so long I can do nothing to help him in it ; all things are his ; all now ready ; he not only can but will fit me for glory, if he design to receive me to it ; and if not, the longest life could neither give me a fitness for it nor a title to it. I am therefore stripped of every plea to justify my refusing at any time to resign to his sole decision the solemn question—whether I now shall close my eyes, or see another day.

REFLECTION 3. How blessed then the death of the resigned christian ! This may indeed be said to be departing in peace. See him under the pressure of heavy affliction, calm and serene within ; rent with pain, he stands unmoved, as some mighty rock amidst the surrounding surges of the ocean ; he endures the tempest and is still :—“ All my distresses “ (says the good man) are given me out by weight “ and measure ; not a drop to run over, not a grain “ 100

“ too much. Why then should I complain ?—
 “ Were it not right, God would not have done it :
 “ Nay, he would be just still if my afflictions were
 “ infinitely greater :—Every thing better than the
 “ lowest hell is better than I deserve at his hand.—
 “ I am persuaded he will support me under all he
 “ inflicts ; I am therefore quite easy about the mea-
 “ sure of my troubles : Let him give me strength
 “ to bear, and then lay on what he will.

“ Nor would I have my dear friends suppose thi^s
 “ calm arises altogether from sensible enjoyment o^f
 “ divine consolations :—On the reverse, I can assure
 “ them, these streams run but low with me now :
 “ However, comforts are not my Christ ; he is my
 “ rock, and that is ever the same :—Often indeed,
 “ have I been favored with sweet manifestations,
 “ when, to my short sight, less need of them appear-
 “ ed than at this juncture. But O let me not seek
 “ to correct infinite wisdom ! His ways are best,
 “ and I submit. He has promised never to forsake
 “ me—I know he is faithful. I live not now by
 “ sense, but by faith. The written word is now my
 “ strong hold—I never found it fail—it never will
 “ —inward feelings are indeed exceeding pleasant,
 “ but for a long time I have not dared to trust
 “ them—In my first acquaintance with religion, I
 “ was wont to live on frames, and by them to mea-
 “ sure the grounds of my hope—but divine grace
 “ has, in due time, taught me to live upon Christ
 “ in the word—this has safely steered me through
 “ the darkest seasons ; and I can trust it still.—
 “ Salvation itself, and the comforts of it are two
 “ distinct things—very little of the one may be
 “ perceived when the other is wholly mine. If my
 “ Redeemer’s care of my pleasure should move him
 to

“ to give me the sheddings abroad of his love, it
 “ would make my passage through this valley far
 “ less thorny : But if he sees himself like to be sup-
 “ planted, and I am beginning to live on my com-
 “ forts rather than on his person, righteousness and
 “ grace, I shall bless him for the tenderness of
 “ my safety that makes him withdraw those sweets
 “ from my taste, while he leaves me his own word
 “ and strength to rely on it. I will not be over solici-
 “ tous for comforts in death, the cup which my
 “ Redeemer shall please to put into my hand, shall
 “ I not drink it ? Lord Jesus into thy hands I com-
 “ mit my spirit.”

XI. **When** death comes to them who have seen
 God's salvation it shall fully satisfy all their wishes.

By what has been already offered, it appears that
 this messenger comes in answer to Christ's desire
 and theirs. He comes on a great errand, and surely
 is equipped with all that might contribute to his
 doing it well. For the sanctified soul, comfort in
 abundance is provided, purchased, treasured up in
 Christ, and promised in the word, to be given
 when the saint is prepared to receive it. The hour
 is now come, when the Holy Spirit has finished the
 work of that preparation ; nothing remains to
 hinder its being given fully, and death is sent to cut
 open the way to the full enjoyment of it. We may
 then be well assured that it can do the saint no
 harm ; but rather will remove every bar that ob-
 stinately blocks : Clouds and darkness flee before him,
 fear and sorrow vanish, sin and temptation now lose
 their hold, and all possibility of returning woe is
 eternally fore-closed. The Holy Spirit having
 changed and drawn them to receive Christ by faith,
 has

has taken up his residence in their hearts as a Spirit of adoption, and there has wrought their natures into conformity to the moral perfections of the divine ; has given them intimations of heavenly bliss, desires after it, and earnestness of the full possession ; and gradually prepared them to enter on it.—Christ himself has the key and power of death : He is united to the believer vitally, dwells in him by the Spirit, will never leave him nor forsake him, and has graciously promised to come at last and receive him to himself (e) : The full accomplishment of this promise, in its largest sense, is reserved to the final judgment, but it shall be made good at the hour of death too ; for at that hour the souls of just men made perfect go to him on high.

In this however no personal visits of Christ's human nature are to be looked for at the dying bed ; ten thousand saints in ten thousand different parts of the world may be summoned to eternal rest at the same moment of time : The human nature of the Redeemer possesseth no ubiquity ; it can be present but in one place at once—that place is the highest heavens. Thence the Lord descended when he came to save, thither he returned when that work was finished ; there shall he be retained until the restitution of all things at the final day : And then he shall come down the second time. Besides these two, no other descents of the humanity of our Immanuel can be expected on scripture warrant.

BUT the text is true, the promise sure, and every true disciple shall find it fully verified in fact.—
What Christ does by the use of means is not less
really

really his work than what he does immediately in person : Thus he truly dwelt in them by his Holy Spirit—and thus he truly guarded them by the ministry of his holy angels through all the changing scenes of life—and thus by the special operations of both, he kindly comes and deals with them in death.

GRACE and light now brought to perfection by the Spirit—Nothing intercepts the full sight of the world of spirits but the partition wall of the clay-tabernacle, in which the soul is enclosed:—From this prison Jesus, by the angel of death in the act of dissolution, sets the active spirit free :—And then, in a moment, she finds herself plunged into the full blaze of the spiritual world, with all its unconceived surrounding glories full in sight. Squadrons of angels of light, who had been used with pleasure to condescend to encamp around the saints, and kindly care for all their concerns through life, now gladly obey the orders of their Lord to give attendance at the closing scene—to guard the bed—and repel the shafts of clustering fiends (now eager to disturb the triumphs of the ascending heir of glory ; at sight of which they gnash their teeth with envy : Here therefore Christ dispatches select bands of glorious spirits to attend)—to take charge of conveying the released soul to his palace of bliss—yea, to bear it on their wings, in triumphal pomp through the airy regions, where satan roams—boasting himself in his usurped title of prince of the power of air.

BUT as Christ is priest forever, so he is prophet too :—As such he guides his saints by counsel while they live ; and as such, he conducts them to glory ;

glory ; as such he affords them his servants and his staff in their passage through the gloomy vale.— But lest our Prophet's lending his servant and his staff should not satisfy in this hour of trial, he comes himself—he gives the intellectual eye such a sense of the presence of his divinity, which filleth all space, as perfects its transformation into his image ; and as body is naturally penetrable by spirit, the interposition of material worlds can be no hindrance to the soul from taking in at one glance, all the space between the death bed and the Mediator's throne :—A sight of Immanuel's personal glory in his exalted state can as easily be given to the eye of the disembodied spirit as to the bodily eye of Stephen while yet alive. That sight now allowed, opens the heavenly court, and sheds down those attractive influences from the love and beauty of the ascended Saviour, as now fulfils his purpose of drawing his redeemed up to himself—this divine attraction mounts the soul on high, moves it on, directs the line of flight, and serves as its wall of fire, to defend it from all the darts of watching fiends on its way—even as the fiery pillar once parted between Israel and the Egyptians in the midst of the waters :—Moved by this energy divine, the Seraphic convoy darts along, joyfully waiting up the enraptured spirit, their endeared charge ; mutually entertaining and entertained, and hymning Jehovah's praises by the way :—Rapid as the solar ray, that shoots across the hemisphere in the twinkling of an eye, the retinue ascends past all the starry worlds to the empyreal heavens, the city of the Lord, and seat of the exalted Saviour's throne, the centre of the attracting force.

But on their arrival there, what tongue can speak ? What thought can fathom, with what formalities

malities of endearment and honor—amidst what heavenly salutations—and what holy congratulations of waiting myriads—they make their triumphal entry into the palace not made with hands?—How do all the golden lyres strike up more elevated strains on the joyful event, which adds a new jewel to Immanuel's crown; whilst the new citizen is honorably escorted through every celestial street, until it is presented to the enthroned Redeemer, and by him embraced and set before the Eternal Father, as the fruit of the travail of his holy soul: He wills it now the possession of its destined mansion; to this the Father lovingly consents—accepts his chosen favorite, and smiles to see it crowned by Jesus' hands:—And then, what pure embraces, what extasies of joy, what eternal weights of glory begin, what HALLELUJAHs resound through all the palaces on high! But I forbear—eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart been ever able to conceive what follows!

REFLECTION. WILL may it be said that *blest are the dead that die in the Lord!* Who would not welcome such a death? Could the empire of a Cæsar persuade us not to die? Let weary pilgrims look in here and rejoice; yea, let the distressed saint view this perspective, and blush that he should startle at the cross: Through what oceans of blood or furnaces of fire, should he not be content to pass to such an end?

XII. EVERY instance of such death is a fresh evidence of the truth and reality of the christian religion. It is an appeal to reason—from that judge it demands an answer. Must not that religion be more than human which turns the heart to a temper

so contrary to its nature ? Which makes it the seat of virtues so foreign to its taste as those we have reviewed ? What less than power divine could bear up minds naturally the most feeble among our race, under a series of crosses and afflictions, the sharpest in kind that flesh is heir to, and continued without remission through every stage of life ? What could make them reconciled to their sufferings, and bless the hand that lays them on ? What can shed down that heavenly peace in death ? Can give this blessed tranquillity within, even in full sight of all that is contained in dying and its effects ? What can fill the soul with joys at the nearest prospect of this, surpassing all its former joys as far as the waters of the ocean do the drop of the bucket ? Must not that gold be true which abides this touch-stone ?—The hour of death is honest—varnish fades here—and now the mask must drop—this world deceives no more—nothing but reality can stand the test at this crisis :—Can all the powers of philosophy furnish an instance of that triumph, which in the expiring saint has often raised patience to pleasure, pleasure to delight, and delight to rapture ; to extasy of *joy unspeakable and full of glory* ? The philosopher shudders to take his leap in the dark—the hero can brave death because ignorant of its nature, or buoyed up by the madnels of inhuman passion :—But the christian sees clearly all the import of the errand on which this universal conqueror approaches ; he beholds him drawing near ; unappalled he looks him in the face, and opens his breast to the levelled arrow ; exulting in the consciousness of a sure interest in immortal glories then waiting to be actually enjoyed.

BEHOLD

BEHOLD a timid mother* stretched on the deathly bed, with a weeping flock of little fatherless dependents standing round; her friends assembled waiting the moment when they should be called to close her eyes; her body sunk under the superior force of the last enemy, but her mind strong with immortality all its own; her senses wide awake, her speech articulate, and her reason sound as ever: Terrible indeed are the ravages death is making through all her mortal frame, but not one complaint is heard dropping from her lips; no murmur is whispered, no sigh of discontent, complacency in all that her Lord has done smiles on her countenance, and the raptures of her soul break forth in his high praises; anticipating the work and joys above, before she lands on Jordan's yonder side:—"Help me, O my
 " christian friends, to bless the Lord for my afflictions: Once I thought them as mysterious as I
 " felt them sharp, but now I see their end; I could
 " not have done without them; Jehovah's ways
 " are right. O blessed be his name for that transporting hour when I first felt the drawings of his
 " love, and called salvation mine! O the heights!
 " O the depths of love divine! Why has it marked
 " out for its object—me—the vilest—me—the most
 " unworthy of the human race, whilst thousands
 " stand without of far more worth, and far less
 " guilt than I? O it is unspeakable—how shall I
 " praise thee O immaculate Redeemer! I long to
 " appear before thee, that I may gaze on the sweet
 " effulgence of thy glory, face to face!—Farewell
 " sweet ordinances, and thou delightful table, where
 " I have often seen it through the lattice. I go
 " where

* This and the two preceding cases were omitted in the delivery for want of time.

“ where no glass is needed. O the lustre of my
 “ Immanuel’s beauty, which I already see ; these
 “ eyes shall rove with wonder and delight over
 “ those matchless charms for endless millions of
 “ extatic years. O conquering lover ! rend this vail
 “ of mortality ; why tarry thy chariot wheels ? My
 “ soul is sick of love—come Lord Jesus, come
 “ quickly ; I long to mingle with yonder radiant
 “ choir, and rival their highest notes with higher
 “ praise for higher debts than theirs. Ye tardy
 “ moments fly, and let me go, and cast my crown
 “ at the feet of the Lamb ! For he is worthy ! For
 “ he was slain and has redeemed me by his blood.
 “ His love draws strong ; it constrains me to wish
 “ the gordian knot was cut, that my longing soul
 “ might take wing and reach my resting place in
 “ the bosom of my Lord ! My heart is gone over
 “ Jordan, and why do I tarry behind it ?—O bless
 “ the Lord all ye saints around the throne for his
 “ salvation, his precious salvation ;—but now he is
 “ come ! Welcome ye heavenly messengers, I will
 “ bear you company with all my heart ; my earthly
 “ friends adieu ! My children, Lord, I now be-
 “ queath to thee. I ask no portion for them but
 “ thy favor ; for all is thine, and thou art mine,
 “ mine for evermore.”

AND thus she fell asleep ; let infidelity comment on her case.

BUT the length to which this copious theme has
 already drawn out our meditations on it, forbids my
 making any reflections here ; and calls me to a
 pause. It will not suffer me, however, to close the
 subject, until it recall to the minds of this assembly,
 the holy life, the peaceful and triumphant death that
 occasioned our treating on it at this time ;—the life
 and

and death of Mrs. Phebe Lane, the eldest daughter of the Reverend Jonathan Parsons, the late pious and faithful pastor of this church, of which she was a sister and an ornament.

SENSIBLE how far any tinctures of flattery are unbecoming this sacred desk, I am happy in having a subject to handle now that stands in no need of it. The beloved sister whom we this day deplore, I may venture, with the greatest freedom, to set before you as an example and demonstration of the truth—the power and happiness of that religion which I have been considering in this discourse. To pretend to virtues we ourselves possess not, is pride heightened and aggravated by hypocrisy—To celebrate others, whether dead or living, for qualities to which we know they had no just claim, is the wickedness of insincerity, basely truckling under the garb of Christ's free-born subjects, to be beasts of burden for the tyrant of darkness. But not to acknowledge peculiar gifts of heaven is the opposite extreme—it is ingratitude to be punished by the Judge.

THE vulgar clamor against Funeral Sermons I consider with regret—but hope to learn from it to proceed in my present attempt with diffidence and caution. Most sincerely do I wish this task had fallen to the lot of some abler hand—But her religious connexions with this church, and her natural relation to a respectable part of this assembly, removed all shadow of propriety that would otherwise have appeared in my resisting the importunity of the bereaved circle—It was my privilege to be favored with a long acquaintance with the deceased: It was my happiness too: for through the whole

whole term of its continuance she improved and augmented that esteem of her worth, which, at its beginning, had set her in my eyes above the generality of her age and sex.

I feel no temptation to treat her name with partiality ; and I am happy in the reflection that this audience, in general, from their own knowledge of her character, can attest the truths I have to tell, and add many supplements where my relation fails.

BORN of a pious, heavenly pair, whom I cannot mention on this occasion, without causing the wound felt in the loss of them by you and the church militant in general, to smart and bleed afresh, in your hearts and my own——The Reverend JONATHAN PARSONS ! the late dear and venerable Pastor of this Church—and Mrs. PHÆBE PARSONS——But I forbear——Ancestry was never the boast of our departed sister, however strong her ground for it : Yet it was no small advantage ; as it secured her the privilege of a religious education—a privilege which all should highly prize——She was endowed by the God of nature with mental capacities much above the level. A clearness of perception and readiness of wit ; a solidity of judgment, and a strength of understanding ; an ability to do the work of deliberation, and discern the force of argument, were soon discovered in her by her friends, in a measure far above her years——These were talents not left to rust and perish in neglect—she had an early thirst for knowledge, and was very assiduous in its pursuit : And thus her powers were quickly ripened, by a store of improvements in all which is useful for a female mind.

To this she early added those amiable qualities which naturally adorn the sex, and which endeared her to her acquaintance. She possessed that social frankness which is the dew on friendship's root ; but tempered with that modest reserve which affords a shelter to its branches against the beams of burning dog-star heat : The law of kindness dwelt on her lips ; affability and condescension to all around her, in every sphere, gave a new magnetism to her other qualities.

A PRINCIPLED antipathy to indolence and sauntering on the one hand, and to idle, though fashionable diversions, on the other, led her mildly along the line of sober virtue ; equally removed from the paths of temptation to what is wrong, and of ostentation of what is right. Sincerity disdaining a disguise, and truth without a mask, were characteristic of her. The envenomed voice of slander was banished from her ear with a generous indignation, which did honor to her sex : With a magnanimity as rare as the zeal that inspired it was disinterested, she stood ever ready to offer her shield for the defence of traduced innocence : Her friendships were founded on virtue, and they stood fast and unshaken, whatever changes of fortune intervened.

BUT her benevolence was universal :—The greatest happiness of the whole world was her mark ; and no occasion was neglected to shew how honestly she aimed at it : Her sympathy with distress was not a well shut up, nor fountain sealed ; its streams flowed incessant while any channel opened to convey them : Witness the tender assiduities with which she oft attended the helpless patient in a disease, whose infectious nature shut her out of society,
while

while she came near the bed : Witness the various labors of her industrious hand, which often made the mourning widow's heart to sing for joy. Her fortitude was proof to distress, and immovable her perseverance in the way she saw to be right : Her life unstained by any blemish, became at once the pattern of the youth, and the companion, friend and delight of old age.

BUT she was a sinner ; and from her early years the Spirit of God was following her with convictions of it ; convictions which sometimes rose to all the heights and produced all the effects mentioned in the seventh proposition of this subject. These however she found all insufficient, until about sixteen years ago, sovereign grace employed its omnipotence, completed the conquest of her heart, and ranked her amongst the trophies of redeeming love : Her conversion was rational, scriptural, and clear in all its steps ; and her relation of it was sweet and refreshing. Many of you, who were present when it was read before this church, at the time of her reception into its complete fellowship, can, I trust, remember the contents ; what were her views of sin and of her lost estate ; what her earnest cries for a sight of God's salvation—what sight she at last obtained of those objects so far beyond the ken of bodily eyes—what discoveries of God's nature, and law—of the plan of redemption and the character of him who wrought it—what truth and reality, what transcendent beauty and glory she saw in these things, and what the effects produced in her by the sight, she solemnly told you ; and some of you I hope will never forget.

FROM that time she began a new life—amiable in the eyes of mortals were her qualities before,
L but

but now her virtues were spiritual and refined—love to God was their principle, and faith in his beloved Son their root. While they all aimed at obtaining the most finished conformity to Jesus as their pattern, and promoting to the highest the glory of Jehovah as their end.

THE spiritual warfare was no sooner commenced than a spiritual watch she found must be kept up : Habitually attentive to her walk, she was frequent in solemn examinations of her heart. The walls of her chamber, and the stars of night can witness, how often she has spent the silent hour in fervent wrestlings with the hearer of prayer, for herself, her friends, the church and world ; and with what ardor the throne of grace has been besieged, on some of these occasions—for some precious souls now present before God ; for whom these prayers of faith are yet on file, and will, we trust, prevail to draw down chosen blessings on their heads, after the lips that uttered them are silent in the clay.

HER repeated renewals of covenant with the Lord—the heavenly comforts that filled her soul on such occasions—with the various evidences of her sweet communion with her God, as the God of peace—together with the exercises of her heart in darker seasons of desertion and sorrow—these, all these, her humility studiously concealed from human eyes ; but they stand now recorded in her diary, in which, from her conversion, she carefully noted the things that most concerned her, from time to time as they arose.

BUT it could not be a secret here, how constant she was in attending the word and ordinances of God in all seasons ; and how often she triumphed
in

them as they that divide the spoil :—Her intimate friends have not been uninformed how greatly she delighted in God's salvation ; how sweet she found that peace which it affords : But her acquaintance in general, well knew how unshaken was her adherence to its distinguished doctrines.

ONE thing more I cannot but remark ; in which she was as singular as she was excellent in others—I mean that noble courage, which made her stand forth, in all the bloom and vivacity of youth, an avowed advocate for religion ; in times, when contempt of it was the epidemic disease of her coevals, and deemed a necessary ingredient in politeness and good manners :—Undaunted by the sneer of profane wit, she greatly dared to be singular in this respect. Blushing, yea sighing in secret for the follies of the age, she was not ashamed to own herself a follower of the despised Redeemer ; and cheerfully chose to take part of the chain of his persecuted friends—of this, plenty of instances are not wanting fresh in the remembrance of many friends in this assembly—one specimen of it was subjected to the public eye every Lord's day, while she publicly led in the praises of her God, and became the parent and patroness of a female choir, which is still the ornament of this assembly, at a time when it was deemed so great a trial for a woman to let her voice be heard in the songs of Zion.

It pleased Providence sometime ago to order her removal to the metropolis of the Commonwealth ; but amidst all the trials of her new sphere, she dropped not her virtues—they began to shine out in her new situation, and had already attracted the esteem of a respectable acquaintance ; whose tears are now mingling with ours, in lamenting the stroke that snatched her from their sight.

A **STROKE**, however sudden and surprizing to us, which was not unlooked for by herself:—For some months before, she seems to have had some premonitions of her approaching departure; and for a time, she went mourning the absence of the comforter, as one that walked in darkness and had no light; though still she staid herself on the God of her salvation:—But this was the last opportunity for the adversary.—The Sun of Righteousness soon arose.—The clouds were dispersed before his cheering beams.—Her eyes got a sight, a ravishing sight of God's salvation; in which she could sing with Simeon in the text—her difficulties were removed—her doubts settled—she saw him whom her soul loved—she knew in whom she had believed—she triumphed in his precious name—possessing that peace, in its fullest sense, which we have been considering; with hopes big with immortality—yea, with joys unspeakable and full of glory, she waited for the coming of her heavenly bridegroom—and, with all sails spread, she embraced the happy gale that soon waited her away beyond our sight, and sweetly conveyed her to the celestial shore.

THOUGH the conflict in her body was great for a time, all was calmness and serenity within.—Her views clear as the meridian ray—and perfectly apprized of her situation, “she smiled at death's drawn dagger, and defied its point”—she felt no sting in dying, but sometimes would enquire if this was death: the peace of God, that passeth understanding softened her dying pillow—this sweetened the pangs of disrupting nature, and turned the grim visage of the grisly tyrant to an angel's face. It was but a little before her soul took wing, that she

she declared to a near friend “ that for three weeks past she had enjoyed such manifestations of the glory of God—such attestations of her interest in his love, as were almost too much for her shattered frame to bear up under. ” And scarce a minute before her departure, she testified that these unspeakable favors were still kindly continued: and, having taken a most affectionate and solemn leave of the weeping friends, and faithfully charged all of them not to weep for her but for themselves—but never to rest until they had found Christ—or having found, never to cease to follow him—whose service was sweet by the way, and who now at the end was bestowing on her joys which the world could neither give nor take from her, one moment of which she would not exchange for all that ten thousand worlds could contain—whose blessed face she longed to see unveiled—and on the sight and enjoyment of whose charms, she expected immediately to begin the entertainments of an eternal day ! And thus she did depart in peace ! and slept in the arms of everlasting love !

—“ SOFTLY her fainting head she lay
 Upon her Saviour’s breast ;
 Her Jesus kiss’d her soul away,
 And laid her flesh to rest.”

SENSIBLE I am she was not without her imperfections until then ; but none was so sensible of them as herself—for them she lamented more than for a first-born—for them she longed to be dissolved—and her Lord, by granting her desire, has made her perfect at the last.

WHAT now remains for us, is to observe and improve this glorious fact. And is there an infidel

del in this assembly ? Is there a blinded wretch within these walls, who has been wont to consider christianity as a fable, and to laugh at vital godliness as chimerical ? I cannot wish him to wait until he is summoned to the dread tribunal of our enthroned Redeemer :—No ! I beg leave to invite him to pay a candid visit to the death bed of our friend—to examine every circumstance—weigh every expression there—and say, must not that be a divine religion indeed, that can afford this “magnanimous triumph over the king of terrors ?”—What can the gay flutter of the exalted spheres of life afford that will stand this test ?—What can the riches or honors of this world produce, that will abide the trial of this furnace ?—Alas ! miserable comforters are they all ! The most flattering amongst them now makes itself wings and flies away :—O that men would know that they are men !—O that they would put off the brute, and awake to conscience and to reason :—Then would the sweets of their infidelity be found to be but the apples of Sodom ; then would religion rise to its native dignity ; and the highest dignity of man be owned to rise from the possession of it :—However we leave them with this memento, that this death-bed lecture will not fail to leave them converted or condemned.

BUT I cannot persuade myself to drop the subject without addressing a word from it to the bereaved mourners present ; and especially to you—Dear Sir, whose anguish and whose loss gives you just claim to the chief rank in the distressed train : my very heart bleeds with and for you :—It was indeed no common blessing heaven reserved for you, when he chose you for the partner of a person so dear to himself ; nor was you possessor of a common privilege

lege in so near and intimate a friendship with her in the last stage of her ripening for glory. But alas ! all enjoyments here are fugitive ; and the dearest often found most fleeting :——Pearls and jewels of the choicest kind, are swept down the stream as fast as dirt and dross. Precious was the talent committed into your hands ; and we wonder not at the throbbings of the bosom from which it has been wrung. He must be less or more than man who would not feel this stroke.

You will however not forget who has done it.—The hand that smote you never erred.—Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. At sight of this, you will lay your hand upon your mouth and be still : Sudden as the affliction came at last, you was not unwarned. Methinks the repeated visitations that snatched the dear pledges of your love from the womb to the grave were meant as fore-runners to pave the way for this ; to wean you from the dearest things in time, and to prepare you for the present blow : At least you cannot doubt but that you enjoyed your dear departed friend every moment that heaven designed her for you.

SHE was not taken from hence until her race was fully run, and the last sand in her glass was fallen. We doubt not she is taken away from evil to come. What though no evil was in sight to us ? God seeth not as man seeth. Who can tell what temptation might have beset her in ten, in seven, in one single year ? from which she might have regretted that she was not hidden in a grave ? That you loved her we all know-----And could you love her, and not wish her happy ? And could she be completely

compleatly happy, and not die ? She is gone to her gain. Be not then swallowed up of sorrow ; but rather bless God for what he has done for her : and then rise up and follow her wherein she followed Christ ; and if you do, I may venture to assure you, that the separation which death has made between you will be but short. You shall meet again—shall see face to face, and join hand in hand, in the triumphs on high, where God will wipe away all tears from your eyes.

LET me in the next place, take liberty to set this affecting picture before the brethren and sisters of the deceased :—You have, my honored friends, keenly felt the point of this fatal dart ; you drink deeply of the cup of sorrow, which providence has put into your bereaved brother's hand ; be pleased also to take share in the friendly counsel now addressed to him.

METHINKS I hear it echoed from yonder dark abode ! the tomb accosts you ! It is the well-known voice that calls to you—once more !—Once more, could these cold and lifeless lips address you, she would urge this theme with double earnestness :—She would enforce my argument with energy beyond my line—she would tell you “ it is all reality ;
 “ nothing but religion can bear up through death,
 “ and triumph over the grave : Haste, my dear
 “ friends ; come up hither, and with me, see the
 “ face, and sit down with me at the marriage supper of the Lamb. O let me not see any of you
 “ among his wretched foes at the great day ! Rise
 “ above that world that is made to be burnt up :—
 “ Set your hearts on high ; make religion your business ; then stretch your wings in haste : Here
 remaineth

“ remaineth a rest past description ; here are waiting for overcoming faints, crowns and robes and joys which eye has not seen, nor ear heard.”

WHEN I cast my eye upon the pew where once she sat, and rivalled Seraph's songs ; it bids me rehearse the farewell admonition of the deceased important member of the choir.

“ OFTEN, my dear companions in the sacred work, often have I delighted to mix my notes with yours below ; how has my heart rejoiced to meet and join your strains ! now I am withdrawn from you : But I am not weary of the work ; I never shall ; I have only joined another choir : My love to you is not abated by the change—I come now to invite my fellow songsters to meet and help me here.

O THE anthems, the transporting hallelujahs, that ring through all the heavenly arches ! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive them all. Praise him ye faints below with heart and voice. O never let me hear one of those sweet voices howling in despair for ever, with which I often used to join in strains of joy ! Never let me hear them cursing God hereafter, that so sweetly helped me to bless him heretofore.”

AND let not the church of Christ here think themselves untouched. Loud is the voice with which heaven calls to you—breaches of this sort you can but seldom meet—let it not pass unnoticed :—Let us remember the time of life is short—it behoves us to let go the eager grasp of creature-delights—to be weaned from this world and all it gives—and see to it that we live daily in the views

of God's salvation. Dedicate our whole selves to the Lord—Seek for growth in every grace, and be earnest for actual readiness to depart in peace whenever the Master calls.—

I look around me—to see, if any heaven-born female will rise up amongst us, to pick up the falling mantle of the dear deceased; and fill her place, now empty in the church below :—Where is the Lord God of salvation? All that she had was his gift—the residue of the Spirit is with him.—Let us look to him then that can raise us up another PHÆBE, who, by following her steps, shall rise and call her blessed.—

