

SERMONS
INTENDED FOR THE
PROPAGATION
OF THE
GOSPEL.

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P R E F A C E .

THE following Sermons are selected out of many, which the Author has found occasion, in a Missionary capacity, to address to several Congregations, divided by vast tracts of unoccupied forest, in the Province of New Brunswick. They are committed to the Press, to serve for memorials of certain views of religion, which he regards of primary importance, as well to those who may have heard them preached, as to others to whom they could not be orally delivered. The attentive reader will probably observe that, although incomplete of themselves, they form in some measure a congruous series, for which it might not be difficult to assign appropriate places in a regular system.

That system the Author does not undertake to denominate, because he is not aware that it has yet obtained its proper name in the world. The deeply-thinking Dr. Jeffery, once Archdeacon of Norwich, concludes his original Discourse, on "the different Schemes of Christianity" which have prevailed in different ages, with the hope, that "the next period" would witness "the restoration of the simplicity of Christianity;" that "that which was taken away, might be restored; that which was added, removed; and that which was changed, renewed: and so Christianity be made standard again, that is, truly and entirely divine and evangelical." The Author rejoices in the number of enlightened and benevolent divines, whose sermons and writings have contributed to verify the anticipation. And happy would he feel himself in indulging the humble hope, that any exertions on his own part might tend to prepare the minds of the smallest portion of his countrymen for the reign of pure truth and goodness, which will assuredly "in the fulness of times" prevail.

The Province, in which these Sermons have been preached, contains at present but a scanty and scattered population. This population consists however of active and enterprising settlers, whose number is fast increasing ; and the peculiar capabilities and advantages of the country justify the expectation, that New Brunswick will eventually occupy no unimportant station among the British Colonies in North America. With high satisfaction therefore the Author refers to the endeavours of His Majesty's Government, and the Provincial Legislature and Authorities, to extend to all ranks and collections of the inhabitants the benefits of a liberal education ; provision having been made for a sufficient number of Schools in every Parish, a superior Academy in each County, and an University on the English model at the Provincial Capital.

That these wise and beneficial measures may be followed by an adequate religious establishment, properly adapted to the condition and circumstances of the people, and securing due pastoral care for this part of the flock of Christ ; is the most patriotic prayer, which the Author's observations and reflection have taught him to offer for those among whom his lot is cast. Unfeignedly esteeming every upright Christian, and regarding with honor the voluntary efforts of individuals and societies to diffuse what they conceive to be divine truth, he must yet avow his decided conviction, that a well-constituted national religion is essential to national happiness. Without this—without THE STANDARD OF THE CROSS erected and maintained, the incomparable blessings of the British Constitution can be but imperfectly enjoyed or appreciated ; education, with a free press, will be productive of interminable discord and contention ; and, although the powerful arm of public justice may for a time repress external violence, the spiritual and moral state of the neglected district will too sadly illustrate the misery of that error, which, in leaving the unguided mind to invent or choose its own religion, disregards the admonitions of all history, and contradicts the principles of every divine institution.

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CONTENTS.

SERMON	PAGE
I. The Happiness of Religion	1
II. Christian Conversion	13
III. Expiation	29
IV. Justification	43
V. Holy Comfort	59
VI. Election	71
VII. Providence	83
VIII. The Kingdom of Christ	97
IX. The Assurance of Prophecy	111
X. The End of all Things	123
XI. The Still Small Voice	133
XII. The History of England	147

THE
HAPPINESS OF RELIGION.

PSALM XXXVI. 7, 8, 9.

How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

THERE is one thing which all men in the world are constantly desiring and endeavouring to obtain; I mean happiness, pure and undisturbed enjoyment, the peace and satisfaction of the soul. But human life is full of disappointment and misery, because most men mistake their way; they know not where the inestimable treasure may be found. For the pleasures of sense, increase of substance, “the pride of life”—the common objects of pursuit all over the earth, although they may in some measure gratify for a time, can never fill and permanently satisfy the soul of man. The experience of all nations acknowledges that something higher and greater is necessary—something rising above the earth, and extending beyond the present life. And therefore all—the enquiring and considerate in all nations—have sought the favor of a superior power, and the prospect of a future state. *Religion*, the knowledge of God and the assured hope of his eternal blessings, is the “*One thing needful;*” this, and this alone can make us truly and lastingly happy.

The Royal Psalmist had the brightest conceptions and the richest experience of the excellence of Religion. I will attempt to point out to you how it deserves the glorious eulogy which he bestows upon it in the passage before us.

1. Religion therefore, true Religion, that which we learn from our holy books, is incomparably excellent, because it reveals to us *the goodness of God*.

The goodness of God is in some sense known to all men, because it is a matter of universal experience. The world abounds with the bounty of its maker. He “preserveth man and beast;” affording in general to all his living creatures nourishment and support, and making their lives for the most part easy and pleasant. For although some are exposed to much want and suffering, and none are entirely exempt from them, still on the whole it surely must be acknowledged that the balance is greatly in favor of enjoyment.

To us also, who are accountable creatures, the kindness and mercy of God are manifestly displayed. Very many of the bounties of Providence are *indiscriminate*, and consequently communicated to multitudes who are far from deserving them. He “causes his sun to rise *on the evil* and the good, and sendeth rain on the just *and on the unjust*.” In innumerable instances also the criminal feel his forbearance:—he “giveth to all men liberally and *upbraideth not*,” although multitudes shew little gratitude for his goodness, little regard to his will.

But notwithstanding all these evidences of God’s goodness, much greater in amount than we are often disposed to esteem them, there cer-

tainly is a vast and strange amount of *evil* in the world; much of which does not appear like the punishment of immediate guilt, and therefore cannot be at once assigned to the just judgment of its ruler. Pain and death in every variety of form befall "man and beast;" and, as far as we can discern, the infliction is very rarely proportioned to the particular desert of the sufferer. And here the light of nature fails; our reason knows not how to reconcile such things with the goodness of God. Reflecting men in every age have staggered at the difficulty, and were never able fairly to solve it. Some have conceived that the world was in a great measure left to chance; others have imagined the eternal existence of an evil power, constantly counteracting the benevolent designs of the good; others have concluded that this part of the world must have been the work of powers inferior to the Almighty.

Our Religion reveals a *God of perfect goodness*; and, if it does not dispel all "the clouds and darkness" that surround him, gives us sufficient assurance that "righteousness and judgment are the foundation of his throne." It tells us that God in the beginning made all things good and happy; that when mankind had fallen into sin, he subjected them to labour, sorrow and death; nevertheless, that "*he left not himself without witness,*" doing good to all men, and keeping up a constant remembrance of his name in the world; that "in every nation the man that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him;" that "he will make all things work together for good to them that love him;" that he is "merciful and gracious, forgiving in-

iquity and transgression and sin;”—that he hath so loved the world as to give it a Saviour—in whom whosoever believes shall have eternal life; that “he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness;” and that “*the creature* (or creation) shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

These great truths give comfort and confidence to the soul. Amidst all the trials of our mortal state they encourage us to say, “How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore *the children of men*”—all the inhabitants of the world who have become acquainted with thy character—“put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.”

For, if we cannot yet account for the evil that has been suffered to enter and overspread the world, we are at least assured that it has but a partial and a temporary permission; that provision is made for its mitigation now, and its entire extinction hereafter; that at present, under God’s gracious providence, it actually tends to the welfare of the pious sufferer, and at the last will be altogether absorbed in the glorious deliverance which is the final purpose of the Almighty.

2. Such is the confidence inspired by the general truths which our Religion reveals. But it has peculiar and more intimate delights for its disciples. “They,” says the Psalmist, “shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.” He speaks, I conceive, of the blessedness which they partake who give themselves up to God, trusting in his goodness,

and placing themselves unreservedly under his protection. These are no longer merely "*the children of men;*" they become God's own children, and are admitted to the blessings of his household and family.

The Psalmist may be understood to allude, if he does not directly refer, to the Tabernacle or Temple which was God's house in Israel, and to the stream of Siloam, an unfailing spring of pure and sweet water, which flowed by Mount Zion. But his language is figurative, and is intended to describe those spiritual enjoyments which God provides for his servants and worshippers. We, who belong to the Christian Church, may fitly apply it to the benefits which we derive from the establishment of that Church in the world. For here—wherever the Church of Christ is established—we have God dwelling amongst us, like a bountiful and affectionate father of a family. This is the peculiar view which, as members of the Christian Church, we are taught and encouraged to take. "Our Heavenly Father" is the title by which we especially address the most High. We are assured that he regards us as a father does his children; that he watches over us with paternal love and care; protects us from evil, or turns it into good; is above all things desirous of our improvement and welfare; and omits nothing which would be properly conducive to our happiness.

Being authorized to call God by the endearing name of Father, we feel ourselves brought into a state of near relation and intercourse with him. We do not look upon him as a stranger and afar off; but we *feel his presence*, address

him as if he were at hand, and entertain no doubt that he is really so, and hears and attends to all that we say.

Nor does our Heavenly Father leave us destitute of especial proofs of his presence and regard. "They are abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house." This, says a pious commentator, is "the benefit of holy ordinances, sweet to a sanctified soul, and strengthening to the spiritual and divine life:— they desire nothing more in this world, than to live a life of communion with God, and to have the comfort of the promises."—We may pursue the allusion to the Temple. Sacrifices were there continually offered, of which the offerers themselves partook; and surely they must have received that food with especial satisfaction, which was itself the appointed token of reconciliation and friendship with God. We commemorate the sacrifice of Christ—we present ourselves a living sacrifice—we offer up the spiritual sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise; and we receive abundant returns: we *feed upon the Eucharist*—we enjoy the consciousness of peace with God through the allsufficient atonement—we find it strengthening and refreshing to the soul;—we experience the unspeakable delight of God's favor and acceptance; and our "*prayers return into our bosoms*" in the shape of blessings, encouragements and consolations. The joys of God's servants are pure, lively and reviving. They "drink of the river of divine pleasures." Surely the Psalmist speaks of the influences of the Holy Spirit, the subject of so many promises, and the peculiar blessing and glory of the Church. These keep

the soul alive; these give us an appetite and taste for holy enjoyments; these communicate a joy and a peace which (as it has been well remarked) "being purely spiritual, are of the same nature with the pleasures of the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, and bear some analogy even to the delights of the eternal mind."

3. For let us not suppose that the Gospel is a dead letter, or "the Church of the Living God" unblessed with manifestations of his love. "With him," as the Psalmist confirms his assurance, "is the well of life, and in his light shall we see light."

God, the fountain and source of *all* life, can communicate *spiritual* life—holy thought, heavenly desire, good intentions and determinations—"to whom he will;" and he *will* surely thus enliven all who devoutly repair to him for that "living water." None, who approach him with sincere and earnest supplication, will he "send empty away." The Holy Spirit is promised as the never failing "Comforter" of his faithful servants, and is doubtless ever ready to hold communion with their souls. It may be that his animating communications are not distinctly discernible; just as the warmth which we derive from the sun is not to be distinguished from that which we already possessed in our own bodies; but as certainly as the sun sustains natural life, does the Holy Spirit invigorate and maintain the life of the soul.

"And in his light shall we see light." Light is the scriptural image for *knowledge*,—especially that knowledge which produces wisdom and virtue, and is attended by joy. The Psalmist

seems therefore to mean that, when God reveals himself to men, they become wise and good and happy. Such is the express design of divine revelation; and when this *light* is accompanied by *life*—when the truths of God's word are carried home to the heart by the influence of his Holy Spirit, then the design is effectually accomplished. ✕ Contemplating the excellence of God's nature, we become, as the Apostle says, *transformed into his likeness*; we endeavour to imitate his holiness, justice and love; and in so doing we enjoy that happiness and satisfaction which is the proper attendant on goodness. The more we know of God, the more we resemble his glorious self; and thus proceed from "glory to glory," until at length we shall be found fit for his presence in a higher and more perfect state of being. There the remains of darkness and of suffering will have passed away; then shall we know many things which must continue strange and mysterious as long as we are in this world; and then shall we understand the reasons (for good and sufficient reasons there must be,) why these things were not revealed during our mortal pilgrimage.

We have thus considered the happiness which belongs to true Religion. We have seen it, first of all, revealing to us the goodness of God—inasmuch as he is bountiful, forbearing and forgiving, and has formed a plan for the world's salvation. We have seen it, in the second place, bringing us into a near relation to God; placing us under his protection, and assuring us of his parental love and care. Lastly, we have seen it imparting to us life and light, holiness and

wisdom, with joy and hope. These are the genuine and certain effects of true Religion, as far as it really exists and operates in the soul. They have been experienced and enjoyed by all those good and pious men whom the Holy Scriptures hold forth to our admiration, and by the Christians of every subsequent age who have followed their steps.

Since then Religion is so excellent a thing, how desirable is it that we realize its benefits! We all wish to be happy, but some probably know by bitter experience that they have not yet discovered the way. Let such persons examine themselves, and see if the cause of their unhappiness is not this—that they are hitherto destitute of true Religion. They live in the world without enquiring after God; or, if God does engage some of their thoughts, they keep their hearts estranged from him—they do not devote themselves to his service—do not study his will, or sincerely endeavour to regulate their conduct by it. The consequence is unavoidable—they find nothing else to satisfy the soul. Business vexes and disappoints them; pleasure becomes nauseous; time is a burden; remembrance affords them no delight, hope no relief:—nay *fear*, the apprehension of God's anger on a mispent life, and of the misery that is yet to come, torments them in their most serious and reflecting hours. Would they escape from their unhappiness, and enjoy their being? The only way is *to cultivate true Religion*. Let them acquaint themselves with God, seek reconciliation and peace with him, and learn to live as his faithful servants and dutiful children; and then

they will find a happiness worthy of the name; they will find themselves in possession of that which can give real comfort and solid satisfaction to the soul—of that which will console and tranquilize it amidst all the vexations and disappointments of life—of that which can strengthen and sustain it under the pains of death and the terrors of the world to come.

Some among us doubtless know the truth of what I am stating, and could testify to the value of Religion by their own experience. And if there are any who have seemed to seek for happiness in this way, and yet to seek it in vain, it behoves them to discover, if possible, the errors or defects which must exist in their search. They have either made some fatal mistake in their *creed*—believing of God that which is not true; such (for instance) as an absolute decree of eternal reprobation, or any other unjust or unworthy opinion; or withholding belief from that which *is* true; as that “God will have all men to be saved,” and has provided and accepted a “ransom for all;” or if their general faith be right, they have not personally entered into covenant with God,” but remain without communion with him; or if they suppose themselves within the bonds of the covenant, they “*walk* in darkness and *do* not the truth,” as the Apostle expresses it—their life does not fitly agree with their profession—they allow themselves in something which disturbs their souls and mars their peace. If they take any thing for their creed contrary to the obvious sense of God’s own word; if they suffer any consideration to keep them estranged from Christ and his Church;

if they indulge any sinful thought, affection or practice; they must not be surprised at finding themselves unhappy. They have not "put their trust under the shadow of God's wings," and therefore cannot reasonably expect the enjoyment of "his loving kindness." Let them "cast away all their transgressions," and sincerely and heartily give themselves up to God; and they will assuredly find that his promises have not failed, and that his mercies can abundantly satisfy the faithful and obedient soul.

Finally, let us remember that there is a growth in grace, and a corresponding advancement in happiness. The more we know of God's truth, the more intimate our communion with his love, the more complete our fulfilment of his will—the greater will be our enjoyment of the pleasures of Religion. Be it therefore our daily and constant endeavour to become wiser, and holier, and better: so shall we daily become happier men. And may our Heavenly Father, the Father of all mercies, according to the prayer which follows our text, "continue his loving kindness to them that know him, and his righteousness to the upright in heart;" that they may increasingly enjoy that "peace which the world cannot give," and may "go from strength to strength, until they appear before the God of Gods in Zion."

CHRISTIAN CONVERSION.

JAMES V. 20.

He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death.

“WHILE (says the Historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,) the great body was invaded by open violence, or undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the Cross on the ruins of the Capitol. Nor was the influence of Christianity confined to the period or to the limits of the Roman Empire. After a revolution of thirteen or fourteen centuries, that religion is still professed by the nations of Europe, the most distinguished portion of human kind in arts and learning as well as in arms. By the industry and zeal of the Europeans, it has been widely diffused to the most distant shores of Asia and Africa; and by the means of their colonies has been firmly established, from Canada to Chili, in a world unknown to the ancients.”

Among the causes which that celebrated Historian has thought fit to assign for the rapid and extensive propagation of Christianity in the world, “the doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth,”

justly occupies a distinguished place. "The most sublime efforts of philosophy, (as Mr. Gibbon felt himself compelled to acknowledge,) can extend no farther than feebly to point out the desire, the hope, or at most the probability of a future state. We are sufficiently acquainted with the eminent persons who flourished in the age of Cicero and of the first Cæsars ; with their actions, their characters, and their motives ; to be assured that their conduct in this life was never regulated by any serious conviction of the rewards and punishments of a future. Nothing except a divine revelation can ascertain the existence, and describe the condition, of the invisible country which is destined to receive the souls of men. When (therefore) the promise of eternal happiness was proposed to mankind, on condition of adopting the faith, and of observing the precepts, of the Gospel, it is no wonder that so advantageous an offer should have been accepted by great numbers of every religion, of every rank, and of every province of the Roman Empire."

It was indeed "*no wonder;*" and I know not if this reason alone, supposing only (what the Historian professes to admit) the revelation itself satisfactorily attested, were not adequate to the mighty effect. The only wonder is that a religion, capable of such a progress, should ever cease to proceed ; that any of those, whom it had once reached, should cease for a day to be powerfully affected by it ; that an individual, professing himself a believer in Christianity, should be contented to remain at rest, while there remains "a soul" which may be "saved from death."

It is not my intention however to account for

the apathy or inactivity sometimes to be observed; but merely to present you with a few plain considerations, calculated, I trust, by the help of God, to impress your minds with the affecting truth, that such a deliverance is actually to be effected by the "conversion of the sinner from the error of his way."

Need I then remind you, that, according to the plainest statements of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, every man who lives in this world is destined also to live in another and an eternal state? We have not here the fables of a Pluto and a Rhadamanthus; we have not the ingenious conjectures of a Pythagoras or a Plato; we have not the dubious anticipations of a Cato, a Cicero, or a Tacitus; but we have the solemn declaration of one who raised others, and himself triumphantly arose, from the dead; that "the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves will hear his voice and shall come forth:"—and we have the clearest testimonies of those who were witnesses of *his* resurrection, that "it is he who is ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead."

As little necessity can there be to remind you, that "the sinner," living and persevering in sin, has no hope of the happiness of the life to come. The same voice, which declared the final revivification of all men, proclaimed the purpose for which they will "come forth:"—the same witnesses, who attested the resurrection of their Lord, announced that when he shall "come to be glorified in his saints," the wicked shall "be punished with everlasting destruction."

Nor can there be much occasion to dwell on

the well known doctrine of the Gospel, that "the sinner" who is "converted from the error of his way" shall be "saved"—preserved from that tremendous doom, and admitted into Paradise. The whole volume of the New Testament is fraught with testimonies to this consoling truth; all sects and parties of Christians acknowledge and believe it; and the danger now would seem to be, not so much lest any, like some of the early Christians, should pronounce great and notorious apostates incapable of recovery; as lest men of a totally different character, forming too slight notions of the repentance which is requisite, and indulging too vague and general a persuasion of the placability of the divine nature, should "cry peace, where there is no peace, and strengthen the hands of the wicked by promising him life."

The questions therefore which appear to be of most importance to ourselves, are these:—*Who is "the sinner,"* needing to be "converted from the error of his way?"—and *what is that conversion* which "shall save" his "soul from death?"

Now, in search of the character that needs conversion, it is quite unnecessary to go among men who have never yet heard the Gospel, or to whom it may have been defectively or corruptly imparted. Both these classes of mankind are indeed proper objects of Christian compassion, and of Missionary exertion;—not as if "the Judge of all the earth" could "do" otherwise than "right;" not as if at the great day of account the maxim of Christ could be disregarded, "Of every man it shall be required according

to that which he hath" received :—but for this reason, that the happiness of a rational being requires certain moral qualities, and that they, who have not learnt to live according to God's holy will, cannot be prepared for the enjoyment of his presence. On this ground perfectly justifiable has been the zeal of a Schwartz or a Martyn in one Hemisphere, and of an Elliott or a Brainerd in another, who have made the conversion of the Heathen the prime object of their labours; nor are those pious Missionaries, or Societies, worthy of any thing but commendation and encouragement, whose labours are directed to the same object which the divine will proposes to itself—that "all men" may "be saved and may come to the knowledge of the truth." But sin and sinners, alas, are nearer home. They are found under the clearest light, the most abundant means of Christian knowledge. Let any man take up the ten commandments—let him take the two great precepts of supreme love to God and equal love to our neighbour, which contain the substance of these commandments; or let him take our Blessed Lord's spiritual exposition of his Father's Law, as it is contained in the Sermon on the Mount :—let any one, I say, take these for his rule, and he will find transgressors, almost without number, among the professors of the purest form of our religion. Instead of "loving God with all the heart, and mind, and soul," he will find many, who appear almost utterly regardless of the Divine being; carelessly profaning his name or his day, seldom if ever studying his word, and living as if they had well nigh "said in their

hearts—there is no God.” Instead of “loving their neighbour as themselves,” he will find them almost indifferent to the welfare of others, unless they can be made subservient to their own advancement, interest, or pleasure; perhaps positively indulging in envy, or malice, or revenge, or uncharitableness;—perhaps acting the tempter’s part, and alluring to evil, rather than seeking their good. Instead of “poverty of spirit,” “mourning” for the sins and miseries that overspread the world, “meekness” under injury and vexation, a “hunger and thirst after righteousness” rather than all secular advantages, that “purity of heart” which qualifies for the sight of God, and readiness to suffer “for righteousness’ sake” which ascertains the title to “the Kingdom of Heaven;”—instead of these Christian tempers and dispositions, he will find too, too great a preponderance of the very reverse of them all. In childhood he will find the inclination strongly set towards that which is evil; in youth, the passions headstrong and impetuous, threatening to overleap all bounds, and carry their unhappy victim to precipitate destruction; in maturer years, the love of this world grown indeed mature, while regard for another seems hardly yet to have taken root; and in old age, when hoary hairs should at least remind men that their day is far spent, and that they have but a little time remaining to prepare to meet their God, he will find them caring for every thing, talking of every thing, busy about every thing, rather than that their near-approaching and most awful account. It is impossible for me to enter at length into particulars; for, as

the great master of ancient reason has observed, *sin and error are infinite*; but if you look at the characters who surround you in life—perhaps I should rather say if you reflect upon yourselves—you will be at no loss to discover “the sinner” who needs to be “converted from the error of his way.” Every one requires such a conversion, who does not live as if he believed the word of God;—who does not lead that “sober and righteous and godly” life, which would show that he entertains a serious and constant expectation of a judgment to come;—who does not (in a word) spend this day as if he might to-morrow “appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”

What then, it is evidently worthy of our enquiry, is the nature of the *conversion* which all these persons need—that which “shall save a soul from death?” You might easily anticipate my reply;—it is, manifestly and necessarily, such a change in the character of the person, as shall make him truly good; fill his heart with the love of goodness; produce a life agreeable to God’s holy will; and really and satisfactorily prepare the soul for that kingdom in which the Redeemer reigns. In other words, it is exactly that change in the human character which the Gospel was designed and is calculated to effect. For the proper object of our religion, and the sure result of it as far as it is faithfully received and applied, is no other than that which the name of its adorable author expresses:—“He should be called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins.” The method adopted may, or may not, be that which our reason might

consider best adapted for the case; but it is that which approved itself to Infinite Wisdom, and the propriety of which experience has abundantly confirmed. Where the Gospel fails, we have no reason whatever to suppose that *any* means *could* succeed; but the Gospel *has* succeeded, and is still successful, when *all other* hope of reformation must have been abandoned. Let any one read in the writings of the Apostles, or even in Heathen authors themselves, the description of the depraved morals of men when Christ appeared among them; then let him consider the change which must have occurred, when an Apostle wrote these words,—“And such were some of you;—but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God;” and he will require no other argument of the reclaiming influence of our religion. The language of this religion to the sinner varies of course according to the extent and kind of his error;—substantially however it is much the same, and will always be found to embody a few great and general truths. It tells him—“You were in your original nature an image of your Father that is in Heaven, upright and pure; made to glorify him, and do his will on earth: you have fallen from this high and holy state, and as a transgressor stand exposed to the displeasure and the judgment of him who made you:—nor are the fears and apprehensions of your conscience vain—“because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world:”—“know therefore assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus who was crucified Lord and Christ;”

and unless you obey his commands, unless you approve yourself his faithful subject, your doom is fixed for ever:—but if you do truly repent— if you are heartily sorry for all that you have thought and said and done amiss, and desire henceforth to live in obedience to his will, he is “exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour;” he died for your sins—“Behold” in him “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;” he is “able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him, since he ever lives to intercede” in their behalf:—through that intercession you may surely obtain the pardon of your sins, and the gracious help of the Spirit of holiness to purify your heart and enable you to overcome temptation: only live to him who died for you—only “be faithful unto death, and he shall give you the crown of life.” Such is the language of the Gospel to every sinner; such the truths which by the blessing of the Almighty have effectually converted multitudes of every tongue and nation from the various errors of their ways, and made them a holy people:—nor could these great and encouraging truths in any case fail of a like effect, were they only firmly believed and earnestly regarded.

Would any desire a full representation of the great change which these truths are calculated to produce, a more complete picture perhaps cannot be found than in the *confessions* of Augustine, of which Milner the Historian of the Church has given an excellent epitome, while Owen in his *work on the Holy Spirit* has descanted on it in his usual manner as the most signal illustration of divine grace. Of the peculiar theology of the Add-

can Bishop, or that of his disciples in modern times, I would not be understood to speak; but these parts of their writings may doubtless be perused with general advantage. The sum of the venerable Father's experience may be briefly stated in his own concluding words—"How hast thou loved us, Father! Many and great are my diseases, thy medicine larger still! Terrified with my sins and the weight of my misery, I was desponding; but thou encouragedst me, saying, Christ died for all,—that they who live should not live to themselves, but to him who died for them. Lo, I cast all my care on thee, Lord, that I may live. Thou knowest my weakness and ignorance; teach and heal me. He hath redeemed me with his blood, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Let not the proud calumniate me, if with the poor I desire to eat and be satisfied, and praise the Lord."

The example of so extraordinary a man as the Bishop of Hippo is not indeed to be taken, nor should any particular instance be taken, as a standard and model for all. The faculties and tempers, as well as the circumstances of men, are infinitely diversified, and produce a corresponding variety of character. But as far as any are involved in sin, so far they require a conversion from the error of their way, and by the same means which Augustine found so effectual may every soul be saved. Divines of quite other schools, provided they discover a cordial regard for the principles of Christianity itself, will be found to express similar sentiments. For "Faith" Bishop Horsley emphatically observes, "is not

merely a speculative, but a practical acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ ; an effort and motion of the mind towards God, when the sinner, convinced of sin, accepts with thankfulness the proffered terms of pardon ; and in humble confidence, applying individually to self the benefit of the general atonement, in the elevated language of a venerable Father of the Church, drinks of the stream which flows from the Redeemer's wounded side. The effect is, that in a little (time,) he is filled with that perfect love of God which casteth out fear ;—he cleaves to God with the entire affection of the soul. And from this active, lively faith, overcoming the world, subduing carnal self, all good works do necessarily spring."

Whenever therefore a sinner appears before us, let this thought present itself to the mind : There is a soul that may be saved from death—that most certainly will be saved, if it can but be made to consider and feel the great truths of the Gospel—and that as certainly must, should it continue in sin without repentance, die and perish for ever ! Considerations these which ought unquestionably to awaken us all to the most lively concern and active exertions for the eternal welfare of our fellow men. The Apostle's remark in our text is designedly of universal extension ; and the Christian will feel it his duty, on all suitable and proper occasions, to warn his erring brother, and if possible persuade him to change his course. But there are specific classes of men on whom this duty is more especially incumbent, inasmuch as their station gives them peculiar authority and influence.

Parents, heads of families, masters and mistresses, are charged by nature and Providence with the welfare, and surely with the highest welfare, of their households and dependents. Let these seriously consider the weight of their words, the value of their advice, and the consequences of their demeanour and example. Let them watch over the objects of their care from day to day, admonish them of every dangerous symptom which they may observe, and endeavour to lead them in a course of Christian obedience. The benefits which would result from a faithful discharge of this duty are clear and certain. It would without doubt be attended by the blessing of God, and produce a great accession to the "inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven."

And if this be the duty of superiors in private life, the obligation as evidently extends to public authorities. A strange notion has been lately propagated in the world, that rulers and legislators have no concern with religion. Civil society, say those to whom I refer, being formed for present peace and protection, the magistrate quits his province when he regards the immortal interests of men. But is this the argument of Christian philosophers? With what scorn would it have been rejected by the sages of Athens or of Rome! Who has assured them that the civil state is constituted for such objects alone? Those who have investigated the real origin of things would tell them that that state began under the parental roof; that it branched out in the wider relations of blood and affinity; that friendships, acquaintances, divisions of labour, interchanges of services and offices, compacts,

laws, governments, civil constitutions, all followed in a natural order; that modifications and revolutions in states (on which alone, as I conceive, these philosophers have founded their opinions,) are merely accidental circumstances; and that the essential bond of society survives all such occurrences, and can be resolved into no other principle than that will of our Creator by which man was made a social being. And was it not, and is it not, *his* will, that men should regard each other as made for eternal existence? that, as parents, as relations, as friends, as neighbours—so also rulers and legislators, should aim at the ultimate good of the respective objects of their concern? Thus I make no doubt that not only Cicero, but the severer reason of Aristotle would have argued, had they received the revelation of a future state. Thus, until modern infidelity had poisoned the springs of public sentiment, Christian states and statesmen have always believed and acted. And thus, when the delusive imaginations of the day shall have passed, will “Kings and all that are in authority” remain convinced of their highest duty to “be the nursing fathers of the Church.” Occasional and temporary circumstances may indeed be unfavourable to a public provision for the propagation of Christian truth and the promotion of Christian virtue; but every sincere Christian, who may occupy a public station, will feel and lament the defect; he will apply his best consideration to discover by what means it may be soonest repaired; nor will his conscience enjoy peace with his God, unless satisfied that he employs his best endeavours, as

far as those endeavours can properly extend, to “convert the sinner” and “save the soul.”

But, whatever may be said or thought of others, one order of men at least there is, of whose duty in this respect none will doubt. **The Clergy—the Ministers of Christ’s Church**, whether countenanced and supported by the state, (as throughout every Christian nation they ought to be) or dependent on other means of subsistence, must feel themselves interested above all men in the duty and the hope which have been the subjects of our consideration. For they are bound—(I refer particularly to the declared sense of the Church of England, but in this point all churches are of the same opinion) to devote themselves especially to this one thing—the care and salvation of souls. For such is the plain doctrine of the inspired founders of the Church :—“They,” says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of all those who sustain the Pastoral office, “watch for your souls as those that must give account.” A consideration so impressive, that Chrysostom tells us when he read that text, “it produced a violent agitation in his soul, and filled him with a holy fear and trembling.” And in a commentary on the passage he exclaims—“Lord, how difficult, how hazardous an undertaking is this ! Of all the souls that are committed to thy conduct, men, women, and children, thou art to give an account !” Justly might the excellent and sober-minded Bishop Bull subjoin, after quoting this and other testimonies in his most impressive discourse on the difficulty and danger of the Priest’s office :—“We minister

to souls! Souls! Methinks in that one word there is a Sermon. Immortal souls! Precious souls! One whereof is more worth, than all the world besides,—the *price of the Blood of the Son of God.*”

But it is time that I conclude; and I do it with one short observation, addressed to each individual by and for himself. The Scripture says “If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death.” It may be that no man appears to be aware of *your* error and danger; it may be that none has the courage or the opportunity to attempt your deliverance:—but remember, every one who does not find himself in the plain path of Christian duty, remember that there is one who witnesses every thought of your heart; and that by the help of that Almighty one *you*, even you, may convert a sinner, and may “save a soul from death.”

EXPIATION.

HEBREWS, IX. 13, 14.

If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!

THE peculiar design of the Epistle to the Hebrews was to show the superiority of the Christian dispensation over that of the Old Testament; and one important point of the superiority asserted is this—that the expiation provided in the death of Christ is far more availing for the relief of the conscience, than all the sacrifices of the Law of Moses.

It may be useful to enquire how other sacrifices were conceived to possess a purifying efficacy, before we apply the idea to the sacrifice of Christ.

The devotion of the ancient world consisted in great part of sacrifices offered on altars. Some nations, such as the Syrians, the Phœnicians and their numerous colonies, and the Celts who were the original inhabitants of western Europe, offered human victims—prisoners, slaves, or even their own children; but the custom of sacrificing other animals was almost universal. Great obscurity indeed is spread over this practice, because it became involved in systems of blind superstition. When sacrifice was blended with the confused mass of ancient mythology,

it was to be expected that offerings of all sorts, on all occasions, and for all purposes, would be made by the bewildered votaries of idolatry. We may however, I think, still perceive that the idea of expiation, or atonement for sin, lay at the foundation of the practice. Certainly we meet with numerous traces of this sentiment in ancient Greek and Roman writers; they not only speak of sacrifices offered to pacify the powers of the invisible world, and cleanse from guilt and pollution; but they relate several illustrious instances of individuals devoting themselves to destruction for the deliverance or benefit of their country. But wherever human sacrifices were offered, they must surely have been believed to be accepted by divine justice in the place of other men. And with respect to the animal sacrifices of the Egyptians at least, whom Herodotus, the father of profane history, describes as the most attentive of all men to religious observances, he delivers the following remarkable account from his own observation and knowledge :

“Their established mode of Sacrifice is this : bringing the animal to the altar, they kindle a fire, and having poured wine upon the victim, and slain it, they cut off its head; then, having pronounced many imprecations upon this head, they either dispose of it to Greeks frequenting their market, or cast it into the river. The imprecations which they pronounce are to the effect, that if any evil be about to happen, either to the sacrificers themselves, or to all Egypt, *it may be turned upon this head.* Such is the universal custom (says Herodotus) of the Egyptians at all their sacrifices; and in consequence

of this custom, no Egyptian will taste the head of any other living creature."

Now here, (even had we not a very similar account in the Law of Moses) we find, I conceive, the general, if not the original, notion concerning the efficacy of animal sacrifices. They were offered in expiation. By some process in the justice of heaven the guilt of the worshipper, together with the judgments which it entailed, was supposed to be transferred to the slaughtered victim. The pure and innocent creature suffered: the criminal, acknowledging his guilt and supplicating forgiveness, expected to escape.

The origin of this practice, with the considerations which led men to adopt it, is not to be found in profane authors. If we find it any where, it must be in the sacred writings of Moses, who lived many centuries before the most ancient historians of other nations, whose works has been preserved to our times. But neither does Moses give us any decisive information on the subject. He leaves it altogether undetermined, whether sacrifice was originally appointed by the Lord, or originated in the thought and feeling of men. This, however, the venerable historian *does* determine—that from the earliest ages of the world, even from the time of Cain and Abel, "the firstlings of the flock and the fat thereof" were especially *acceptable* offerings. By the time of Noah the sacrifice of animals would seem to have been regularly established; for immediately after he came forth from the Ark, we are told, "Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean

beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar : and the Lord smelled a sweet savour" (or was pleased with the sacrifice) and proceeded, as if induced by its propitiating influence, to relieve the earth from the curse which had drowned it with the deluge; to "bless Noah and his Sons," taking them under his protection; and to "establish a covenant of life and peace, with them and every living creature, for perpetual generations." Thus, from Noah, the second father of the human race, the practice of animal sacrifice, with the persuasion of its peculiar efficacy in propitiating offended heaven, naturally descended to the several nations of the earth.

In the Law of Moses it pleased the Lord to give a complete sanction to this practice, and by express declarations to explain its meaning. The Paschal Lamb was the first of the sacrifices which the children of Israel were commanded to offer; and of this the design was made sufficiently clear. "The blood" was to be "sprinkled on the door" of every house, on that awful night, which was to be for ever memorable for the destruction of the first-born children of the Egyptians, and the deliverance of the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage: "for the Lord," said Moses, "will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel and the two side-posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you."

Numerous sacrifices were afterwards enjoined or approved by the divine Legislator of

Israel; some of them certainly for the immediate purpose of expressing the gratitude and piety of the worshippers; but others were directly appointed as expiations of sin and purification from defilement; and as such were necessary to the religious life of an Israelite, necessary to restore him from time to time to the favor of the Lord, and to his place in the congregation. These sacrifices formed an essential part of the Mosaic covenant; they were the means, the only authorised means under that covenant, of obtaining pardon of sin and peace of conscience. And indeed, wherever the blood of an animal was shed, even in those sacrifices which were called "freewill-offerings," or offerings of "peace" or thanksgiving, there appears to have been an intention to remind the worshipper that, although the Lord in his mercy accepted such offerings, they could be accepted only as from a pardoned sinner. What else would an Israelite be likely to infer, when he found this statement in his Law;— "The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul?"

But could the blood of animals procure such a blessing? To a certain extent it unquestionably could, God had appointed it to be shed for that express purpose, and annexed the blessing to it by his own sacred declaration and promise. As long as the national sacrifices should be duly offered (the rest of the Law being likewise observed by the nation at large) so long the children of Israel would continue God's people; and every individual of that people, if he

duly attended on the public services, and also offered such sacrifices as were prescribed for sins and defilements of ignorance and infirmity, might believe himself *so far* justified and sanctified—so that neither the guilt of *such* sins, nor the shame of *such* defilements, could exclude him from the covenant.

Farther however than this the mercies of the Law went not. For the man who sinned “with a high hand”—the wilful and obstinate transgressor, whether he were an idolater, a sabbath-breaker, a murderer or an adulterer,—the Law provided no expiation; of such persons it pronounced, that they should “die in their iniquity,” and “their blood” should “be upon them.”

And in truth, as the author of this Epistle observes, and as many passages in the Old Testament would lead us to reflect, it must have been in all cases “impossible for the blood of goats and of calves (considered with regard to its intrinsic value or efficacy) to take away sins.” It was “a figure for the time then present;” it “sanctified to the purifying of the flesh;” by virtue of God’s appointment it availed for that external purification which made men fit to continue in his service; but it “could not make him who did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience.” So says the author of this Epistle *to the Hebrews*; and every reflecting and considerate Hebrew must, we might suppose, have always felt, that there was a vast disproportion between the shedding of an animal’s blood, and the cleansing of the soul of man from sin in the sight of God. And, although such a person

would scrupulously conform himself to God's directions and trust his promises ; although he would "walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," and "look for redemption according to the mercies promised to the fathers and witnessed by the Law and the Prophets;" still he would feel that "the redemption of the soul" was too "precious" to be obtained "by burnt-offerings or sacrifices for ever." Thus undoubtedly did the author of the 51st Psalm feel, when he said, "*Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it : thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise!*"

Thus the Law, with all its sacrifices, was unavailing to the satisfaction of the conscience. It afforded only this relieving hope, that the God who had declared himself "merciful and gracious and forgiving" after the children of Israel had broken his covenant at Sinai, and on many subsequent occasions; and had appointed express sacrifices for the expiation of minor offences; would, *by some analogous method as yet unrevealed*, admit the sacrifice of a broken heart, or pardon and accept the true penitent, although his sins might be such as had no atonement provided by the Law.

Now *that method the Gospel has revealed.* "The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, **is**

calculated to cleanse "the conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

It is the doctrine of the Gospel that Christ is "THE LAMB OF GOD that taketh away the sins of the world;"—that "God hath set forth *him* to be a propitiation in his (own) blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins—that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth;" that Jesus, the Christ, the holy and beloved son of God, being pure from every stain of sin, and of infinite worth and dignity by the union of the divine nature with his human person, by the impulse of that eternal Spirit which formed and conducted the plan of redemption, *offered himself a sacrifice to eternal justice*; that he laid down his life as a satisfaction and vicarious atonement for the sins of men; and that through him all who believe in his name are justified—his blood being really accepted as a sufficient expiation for "iniquity, transgression, and sin."

The consequence, stated by the sacred writer, is this; that, as persons living under the Old Testament, after they had contracted guilt or defilement in the cases specified by the Law, might consider themselves sanctified or cleansed by the legal sacrifices and purifications, so that they needed not to fear the presence of the God of Israel; in like manner, but far more satisfactorily, is the conscience of believers in Christ purified from the sense of guilt and defilement by their faith in his atonement, so that they feel themselves enabled with assured and joyful hope to "serve the living God."

That the atonement of Christ is thus efficacious,

may be shown, as well from the reason of the thing, as from actual experience.

By the reason of the thing I mean, that the sacrifice of Christ is that expiation on which the soul of man may securely rely.

In the first place we are distinctly and fully assured, that it *is* a sufficient and satisfactory expiation. No doubt obscures the promises of the Gospel. To every one who truly repents of his sins, and seeks forgiveness with humble faith in Christ, complete and eternal deliverance is unequivocally promised through the Redeemer's blood. On this promise we might—we unquestionably should—rely, even if we knew nothing whatever of the way in which that blood avails for expiation. The word of God, duly attested as it is in the Gospel, must surely be a sufficient warrant for our faith.

But we *are* enabled to discern something of the propriety of the sacrifice. We *can* in some measure perceive *how* the death of Christ is capable of satisfying divine justice. For whether we regard the punishment of sin as requisite to maintain the honor of God's law, or to deter from future transgression, the death of Christ on our behalf must appear abundantly effectual for either purpose. No man—no being in the universe—can think of God's beloved Son bearing the guilt of our iniquity and dying for our forgiveness, without the deepest and most awful conviction of the justice of God, and the most dreadful apprehension of the consequences, should that atonement in any case be unavailing. And let it not be forgotten that salvation is promised, even through that atonement, to those

alone who so repent as to renounce and abandon sin: for the impenitent and wilfully disobedient, neither will the Redeemer's blood avail, nor can there "remain" any other "sacrifice for sins."

The feeling of the believer therefore is,—whether he looks at the absolute promises of God through Christ, or at the satisfactory atonement which Christ has made,—“I am pardoned; I am justified from all things; God has accepted the propitiatory sacrifice which himself provided, and which must have been of infinite value.” Hence his conscience is cleansed; he no longer looks upon himself as polluted and dead in sin, but as sanctified and alive to God in Christ; he rejoices in the salvation of his soul; and proceeds to live as one who is “alive from the dead.”

Such is the reasonable and probable effect of a belief in Christ's atonement. And does not experience confirm the argument? What sort of persons have they been who have believed? I do not say—who have been called Christians, but who have sincerely trusted in Christ crucified? Those whom the new Testament exhibits to our view—what did they become? Did they not all—the Apostles, and all whom they acknowledged as faithful disciples of their Master—purify themselves from all sin and serve God in holiness of life? Those who in every age have known the Gospel and felt its power—have they not all, as far as we have reason to believe that they understood and applied Christian truth—been distinguished by the same marks? And now—wherever men believe in Christ—truly

believe in his atoning blood, is not the same effect produced? “Who is he that overcometh the world?—but he who confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God?” Who endeavours to “purify himself even as God is pure?” but he who believes that Christ died to “redeem him from iniquity?” Who discover the deepest penitence for sins committed, and the greatest vigilance to avoid future transgressions? Are they not those who pay the devoutest regard to the Redeemer’s Cross? Who are most distinguished for all the graces and virtues of Christianity—for humility, heavenly-mindedness, patience, meekness, charity? Are they not such as could most justly say, We are “crucified with Christ?”

Let us then humbly and gratefully adore the mercy of Almighty God, who has given us our life under the light and grace of the Gospel. Great indeed is the privilege to “behold the Lamb of God;” to be enabled to look to that sacrifice which is a full expiation for sin; to know him in whose blood we have complete redemption. We might have been born among Heathens, destitute of any sacrifice in which confidence could be reasonably placed; or among Jews, where the sacrifices, although of divine appointment, were of such a nature as to give but very imperfect relief to the conscience; or among Christians (for such in name there are) ignorant of the true value of the Redeemer’s blood. Blessed then—blessed from all our hearts be that mercy which has cast our lot in a Christian and enlightened land—where the pure word of God at least is read and heard—and where (if we have but “ears to

hear,") the true and perfect salvation of Christ is known!

Let us settle it in our minds as a certain truth that the death of Christ was a real and effectual atonement. Many have been tempted to pass over or explain away the doctrine of the Gospel on this grand subject. The Cross, "to the Jews" of old "a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness," is to these persons any thing rather than "the power of God." Should any doubt arise in our minds, let us remember how very plainly the Apostles speak of the atoning efficacy of the Redeemer's blood; how decidedly Jesus himself spoke of the necessity of his death; how the types and prophecies of the Old Testament pointed to such a propitiation; and finally how "the desire of all nations," as discovered by their numberless sacrifices, required a sacrifice in which the soul could confide. An atoning Saviour is evidently the end of the Law, the fulfilment of the Prophets, the hope and the want of man. O! now that such a one has been revealed, let us not shut our eyes to his glory, but "look unto him and be saved!"

Lastly, let us call ourselves to a solemn enquiry, whether we are "redeemed to God" by the "blood" of Christ. That blood was shed "for the life of the world;" but unless it has been "sprinkled on our hearts by faith," and we "have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," it cannot yet have availed for ourselves. But how shall we know the fact? Surely every man's own conscience should be able to inform him of it. Have we, or have we not, as a plain matter of fact, placed

our trust in Christ crucified for the pardon of our sins? But if the answer should not at once be given, there is still a decisive criterion. Faith in Christ is an active principle; it must shew itself by the feelings which it excites, and the life which it produces. Does then our faith “sanctify to the purifying” of the soul? Has it “purged our conscience from dead works,” and constrained as well as enabled us to “serve the living God?” If any would pass for believers in whom such effects are not observable, O let them remember who it was that said “*If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me!*”

JUSTIFICATION.

ROMANS, V. 1.

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“PEACE with God” is the first and highest desire of an awakened and reflecting character. Until he enjoys this blessing he can find no rest; because as long as the conscience regards the Almighty for an enemy, it must be agitated by dreadful apprehensions. But if only satisfied that God is his friend, he experiences a delightful serenity and happiness; being assured that, whatever may befall him, the Most High can make “all things work together for (his) good.”

This inestimable blessing is communicated by the Gospel, and enjoyed by all those who truly receive it. It is the high privilege of the Ministers of Christ to inform their fellow servants how to obtain so great a benefit. And wherever men are prepared for the Gospel which they preach, it becomes (if rightly preached) “the ministry of Reconciliation,”—the means of establishing union and friendship between God in heaven and mortals here on earth.

On the present occasion I suppose myself to address persons who earnestly desire “peace with God.” I suppose that, in reflecting on his awful holiness and your own sinfulness of heart and life, you have felt a miserable fear of death and eternal judgment, and are anxiously enquiring “What must I do to be saved?” And I

will endeavour to show you, as plainly as I am enabled to understand it, the sure way of salvation and peace.

In the language of the Apostle therefore I proclaim to you this Gospel:—"Being justified by faith," you shall "have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Peace is the consequence of justification; justification is to be obtained through Christ; and faith is the means by which you may obtain it. If you rightly believe in Christ, you are justified through him; and if so justified you are at peace with God. Let me explain distinctly each of these things.

1. A man is justified when he is *accounted* or *pronounced* just or righteous. The expression is thus used in the Old Testament. In the 25th chapter of Deuteronomy, verse the 1st, we find this precept of the Law of Mosés: "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall *justify* the righteous and condemn the wicked." In the 17th chapter of Proverbs we have the admonition: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord." Here, and in many other places, the word relates to the judgment which man forms or declares concerning man; but elsewhere it is used of God's judgment of the soul. Thus Solomon prays at the dedication of the Temple, (1st Kings, VIII. 32.) "Hear thou in Heaven, and do; and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked to bring his way upon his head, and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness." Our blessed Lord speaks in a like

manner of the judgment of the last day ; (Matth. XII. 36, 37.) where, shewing that every thing which indicates the disposition of “ *the heart,*” were it even “ *idle words,*” will be taken into account, he declares—“ For by thy words thou shalt be *justified,* and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

Thus far justification exactly corresponds with the extent of actual and personal righteousness. It is the *law* of God as well as the *law* of man, that the just should alone be justified, pronounced and treated as just or good. And hence our Apostle, after taking a view of the state of mankind, and appealing to the conscience both of Jews and Gentiles, infers that on the ground of their own merits they could not be *justified*; that “ all the world had become guilty before God,” and therefore “ by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.”

Such is the state, and such the alarming prospect, of man in himself. But “ through our Lord Jesus Christ” another justification is provided for us. “ *Now*” says the Apostle, “ *the righteousness of God without the Law* is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.” For “ the Law (of Moses) had a shadow of good things” that were “ to come” after it. It appointed mediators between God and man ; it enjoined offerings and sacrifices for sin ; for sins of ignorance and infirmity it extended forgiveness ; and in some of its provisions, such as the paschal lamb and the scape-goat, it held forth a shadowy hope of general and complete atonement. The Prophets spoke a plainer language. To pass over innumerable predictions

of the blessings of the Gospel, Isaiah very distinctly describes in his 53d chapter the provision which God had resolved to make for the justification of a sinful world. Speaking of a most extraordinary character whom he calls "the Servant" and "the Arm of the Lord" he says, "Surely he hath borne *our* griefs and carried *our* sorrows—yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten *of God* and afflicted: But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed: All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He shall see of the travail of his soul (its consequences and effects) and shall be satisfied:—by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities."

The mediation of Christ is evidently here intended, and the application of it was thus made by St. Paul in his discourse to the Jews of Antioch, (Acts, XIII.): "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you *the forgiveness of sins*, and by him all that believe are *justified from all things*;—from which ye could *not* be justified by the Law of Moses." This indeed is his language, the language of all the Apostles, throughout their ministry. Wherever they went, they preached "peace by Jesus Christ;" according to his commission and injunction that "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

But in the Epistle to the Romans, our Apostle most fully and explicitly declares the doctrine of the Gospel. “*The righteousness of God,*” he tells us, is that which “is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” For when “the whole world was guilty before God;” when “all had sinned, and come short of his glory,” so as to have no hope on the ground of their own righteousness;—when in this respect there was “no difference” (no *essential* difference, whatever there might be in the *measure* or *degree* of guilt) between Jew and Gentile, or man and man;—then “God, sending his own son in the likeness” of our sinful nature, delivered him up to death as a sacrifice for our sins, “that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,” or justified, pardoned and accepted, “freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Justification, therefore, in the sense of the Gospel, is the *imputation* or reckoning of righteousness to sinful men. On God’s part this is an act of mercy or grace; Christ and his redemption are a free gift; and therefore it is called “the Righteousness of God.” On the part of Christ it is a purchase; by laying down his precious life, by making his own soul an offering for sin, he has obtained our pardon and acceptance; and therefore he is called “our Righteousness.” On *our* part it is nothing; nothing but a blessing received and enjoyed—for we are “*justified freely* by the grace of God”—not by any “work” of which man might “boast.”

But is there really such a thing as this? Can God, who sees and judges all things as they

are, account or pronounce a sinner righteous? Through the redemption that is in Christ, and with reference to his righteousness and atonement, he can; he has given us the fullest assurance of it; it is the great doctrine of the Gospel, the peculiar blessing of the new covenant. When Jesus was himself the preacher, he invited all—all in their actual state of sin—to “come” to him, and declared that they should “find rest for their souls;” that whosoever came he would “not cast out;” that “whosoever believed” should “not be condemned,” but should “have everlasting life.” The Apostles were sent to “preach the Gospel to every creature;” and they preached the blessed truth, that every one who believed their message and avowed his faith by receiving Baptism in the name of Christ should certainly be saved; that in that Baptism his sins were washed away; that as soon as he believed God accepted him; that in consideration of what Christ had done and suffered, he was actually justified, and become a child of grace and of God.

Nor was the freeness of this justification confined to the men of that first age of the Gospel: it belongs to all who shall ever have believed in Christ. Hence, when St. John in the Revelations, (chapter 7th,) “beheld (the) great multitude of all nations and kindreds and tongues standing before the throne clothed in white robes,” he is informed that “they” had “washed their robes and made them white *in the blood of the Lamb.*” For, as the same Apostle states in his General Epistle “*Jesus Christ the righteous* is the propitiation for our sins; and not for

ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

There is, it must be acknowledged, something very astonishing in this method of justification. The mind is amazed at the contemplation of it, and hardly knows how to admit the gracious truth. One thing however is found bearing a resemblance to it, and to that St. Paul compares it;—the fall of all mankind in Adam. But these two appointments correspond; they belong to the same system of divine government; and the recovery is happily as extensive as the loss. “As by the offence of one (Adam, our common father,) judgment came upon all men to condemnation (and death); even so, by the righteousness of one (Jesus Christ, our common Redeemer,) hath the free gift come upon all men unto justification of life.” Nay, the blessing far exceeds the curse; for “the blood of Christ cleanses from *all* sin”—not merely from that guilt of our first parent which polluted our nature and subjected us all to death; but from the accumulated transgressions which we have ourselves committed, and by which we have deserved a heavier weight of punishment; “for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.”

Thus we obtain a full view of justification. Let us proceed to consider the nature of that *faith* by means of which we are justified.

This might seem indeed to want little explanation. To believe in Christ is to believe the Gospel, or give credit to what he and his Apostles taught. But there is a vast difference between a general assent, and the deep conviction

of truth which results from careful attention and enquiry. Brought up in Christian countries, we learn the "Articles of our Belief" by rote, and often perhaps imagine ourselves believers because we have never considered the question "Are these things so?" To this idle, heartless and unmeaning sort of faith the justification of the soul and peace with God cannot be attached. Those who have proceeded no farther in religion have no notion of such a justification as produces peace; they look forward with a mixture of fear and hope to the judgment of the last day; and uncertain as to their actual state, entertain a vague idea that *then* the merits of Christ may be found of some avail. This is that "dead" faith against which St. James saw cause to protest even in his own time; a faith which is ineffective, and, as he plainly warns his readers, "cannot save" the soul.

To believe in Christ, in the only sense in which faith is worthy of regard, is to be fully persuaded on due consideration that the Gospel is divinely true, to embrace its doctrines, and to look to Christ as the only Saviour. It is to receive all the truths which the Gospel teaches, but especially that peculiar and distinguishing truth, that "Christ died for our sins;" that he is "the *Lamb* of God," the sacrifice and atonement for the sins of the world. It is to trust in Christ, being satisfied that he is able to save; and to present ourselves before God, pleading in humble confidence the merit of his precious blood. They who *thus* believe are justified; they *seek* for pardon and acceptance through the Lord Jesus Christ, and they find it.

Many persons are offended at the doctrine of "justification by faith," imagining it calculated to encourage a vain confidence, and to open the door to a careless life. But in truth no doctrine could be more worthy of divine wisdom, or better adapted to the condition of mankind. It cannot, when properly taught and received, be productive of any bad effect, on two accounts : first, because faith in Christ, such as I have described, must always be accompanied by true repentance; and secondly, because it implies obedience, the submission of the heart to God's will in Christ, and the sincere discharge of every duty.

Faith, I say, must always be accompanied by true repentance. For in believing Christ to be the Saviour of the world, we believe the whole world to have been involved in sin, and needing deliverance; and in looking to him for our own salvation, we see and acknowledge the sins which have made that salvation necessary *to us*,— which have exposed *us* to the condemnation of God. We consequently feel sorrow for sin, hatred of its malignity, and an earnest desire to be rescued from its evil power. With such feelings *the sinner* comes to Christ, but he comes to "sin no more."

True faith also implies obedience, or the practice of Christian virtue. If indeed Christ were merely a deliverer from punishment—if the Gospel simply offered pardon and eternal life to believers, there might be room for apprehension; although even in that case faith would *tend* to produce a good life; it would be likely to "work by love," or gratitude to so

gracious a benefactor; and by hope, the hope of a heavenly inheritance for which the pure and holy alone could expect to be fit. But this is a partial view. Christ appears in the Gospel as a complete Redeemer. He not only came to "give his life a ransom;" but he is the teacher of perfect virtue, and the enjoiner of the whole duty of man: he holds forth every motive to the practice of universal goodness, and most solemnly declares that they only who keep his commandments shall be finally admitted into his heavenly kingdom. Now every person who sincerely believes in Christ will and must attend to these instructions and declarations; and, while he embraces with humble confidence the salvation, the free and immediate salvation, which the Gospel offers him;—while he actually enters into a "state of salvation," and is at peace with God through the atoning death of the Redeemer; he feels himself bound by the strongest obligations—the authority of his Master, the will and command of his Lord, the promises and threatenings of his Judge—to lead "a godly and a Christian life."

The doctrine of justification by faith, even by faith only, is therefore safe; as it is unquestionably the doctrine of the Gospel itself. But this doctrine is also "worthy of all acceptation," because it contains a singular excellence;—it produces an effect much to be desired, which would hardly attend any other view of the divine government, any other kind of covenant or scheme of salvation. It is "justification by faith" alone which communicates "peace" to the soul.

The nature and value of this blessing remain now to be considered.

Peace, where there has been previous war, requires a reconciliation. "Christ," as the Apostle elsewhere says, "is our peace;" having become the mediator between God and man, reconciled divine justice to sinners by the atonement of his own blood, and thus opened the way for our restoration to favor and friendship with God. When we believe in that reconciliation, we enjoy "peace with God;" we regard the Most High as our friend; we love him, feel a happy confidence in him, and delight in the thought of pleasing him; we rejoice in his love, and in the hope of admission to his heavenly mansions, his eternal bliss and glory.

Such a "peace with God" is of the highest value. It is at the same time the sweetest happiness which the soul can enjoy, and the best encouragement to a faithful perseverance in duty. It gives us that repose without which we are incapable of any regular endeavours after holiness, and assures us that our labour shall not be in vain. It imparts moral strength and vigour to the soul; for "if God be for us, who shall be against us?" If he be our friend and ally, what other power can prevail to our disadvantage? What is there which, in reliance on his Almighty support, we may not fearlessly undertake and accomplish?

We are not left however to the mere natural effect of a belief in our justification. To those who *are* justified God himself communicates peace. The Spirit of truth and holiness is their "comforter," and in this capacity it is his especial

office to impart that "peace which surpasseth all understanding." To this high privilege the Apostle refers when he says, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost;" and "much more, being justified by the blood of Christ, we *shall be saved by his life.*" By the help of this Spirit the believer continues in a state of justification and peace. He is supported in his conflicts with sin, the world and the great adversary. He is enabled to "hold fast the profession of his faith," and to "hope to the end." He struggles to overcome the infirmities of his nature, daily seeks and obtains forgiveness for unavoidable failings, and endeavours to "purify himself even as Christ is pure." In short, "being made free from sin (as a ruling power,) and become a servant to God he has (as the Apostle expresses it) his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Such is the state, such are the inestimable blessings, to which we are called by the Gospel. But have *we* obeyed the call? Have we *actually* entered into this state? Are these blessings *in personal consciousness and enjoyment ours?*

They were known and enjoyed by those who first believed in Christ, as the pages of the New Testament and the voice of history abundantly testify. They were clearly understood by our venerable Reformers, and are fully attested by the Liturgy and Doctrines of our Church. Through the "mercy of the Lord" extending "from generation to generation," and "his righteousness unto children's children," they have come down as an inheritance to ourselves.

But an inheritance may not be asserted.

Ignorant of its value, or engrossed by other pursuits, the heir may suffer it to remain unclaimed and unoccupied. In our infancy we, being the children of those who professed the faith, were acknowledged as “children of the (New) Covenant,” and received by the Church as “members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.” But we may have disregarded our title, and left it to lie dormant. We may never have presented ourselves before God as believers in Christ, and so may never have obtained the blessings of justification and peace. Many, alas, who are born in Christian lands, thus pass their days; year after year elapses without their discovering any vital regard for the Saviour; and when the time of their departure comes, they have still to seek—if it may be allowed them then to obtain—“peace with God through the redemption of Christ.”

Their state is fearful. But “*now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation.” Although we ought from our childhood to have grown up in the faith of the Gospel and the enjoyment of its privileges, it is not yet too late to be saved. These blessings are offered, freely offered, to us all. We have only to believe with that true faith which leads us to forsake sin and devote ourselves to the service of Christ, and we shall surely be “justified” and “have peace with God.”

Some are probably anxious to learn *what precise steps* they should take, *what specific acts* perform, to enter into possession of their Christian privileges.

A determinate act was appointed by Christ, and in the primitive Church was performed.

amidst such circumstances as in most instances actually rendered it, *an evidence of justifying faith*. This was Baptism, a public and solemn washing with water "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost;" by which the convert declared to the world that he renounced all the defilements of his former state, and entered into the new and holy society of the Christian Church. The circumstances, which almost always proved the sincerity of the first converts, were the difficulties, sufferings and dangers to which they exposed themselves by their profession. No sooner had a person been baptized in those days, than he found himself an object of general hatred and persecution; and few were likely to encounter the trial, unless inwardly persuaded that "in Christ they should have peace."

In the present day the case is different. Neither Baptism, nor any other mode of acknowledging a belief in the Gospel, exposes men to very painful consequences. Such an acknowledgment is rather necessary, in Christian countries at least, to our worldly comfort. Although therefore it is undoubtedly right and obligatory to maintain and observe the ordinances of Christ, we cannot justly place confidence in these as evidences of the vitality of our faith and the safety of our spiritual condition.

What we have now to do, if we would enjoy pardon and peace, is rather private than public. It is akin to that worship which Christ enjoined: "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut the door." The soul must draw nigh to God, pleading the precious name and blood of the Redeemer, earnestly imploring forgiveness

and acceptance, and giving itself up to God in Christ. Such an "entrance within the veil" will be manifested by a new disposition and character, a holy and religious life; every sin will be forsaken, every duty zealously discharged. If not previously baptized, the believer will submit to that Christian rite, as the appointed entrance into the outward and visible Church; if already a professed and acknowledged member, he will diligently attend the assemblies of the Church, avail himself of the several offices of the ministry, and become a partaker of the Lord's supper, the sign and seal of communion with Christ.

Let this course be taken in sincerity and earnestness, and the Blessings of the Covenant will assuredly be our own. For Christ is the same as in the days of old; and the Gospel is the dispensation of the grace of God, to continue unchanged until Christ shall come again.

HOLY COMFORT.

ACTS IX. 31.

Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

THIS description belongs to the Christians of the land of Israel a few years after the resurrection of Christ and descent of the Holy Spirit. At the conclusion of the first persecution, when Saul the leading persecutor had been converted into a zealous propagator of the Gospel, and the Jews were otherwise occupied,—“then had the Churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria”—the three principal divisions of the land at that period, “and were edified”—confirmed and established in Christian truth; “and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied”—new converts being continually added to their members, and new congregations formed.

The same description ought to have belonged to all the Churches in the world since the days of persecution have passed. Enjoying “rest” from outward enemies, we ought to be “built up in our most holy faith,” and exhibit such an union of virtue and happiness as might attract continual accessions to our communion. In many instances it has been far otherwise; our religion has declined, rather than flourished, in the sunshine of worldly prosperity. The example however of the primitive Churches remains for our imitation. Let us set that example

continually before us, and endeavour to attain a just resemblance to it.

The sacred historian describes in a very few words the course of life which those Christians pursued, and the blessedness with which they were favoured. They "walked" or lived "in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." If we consider the two parts of this description, we shall perceive a close connexion between them; and inferences will follow, both of practical importance, and of the most consolatory nature.

"The fear of the Lord" is a scriptural phrase for true religion. It expresses that solemn reverence for the Almighty which pervades the pious mind. Such a feeling must be produced in every person who seriously thinks of God, and must remain as long as the Most High is actually present to his thoughts. For how can any one reflect on the nature of the Supreme Being without the deepest awe? He made us and all the world, and on him we entirely depend for life and breath and all things. Should he for a moment withdraw his supporting hand, we fall into the dust from which he raised us; should our provocations call forth his anger, the ground might cleave asunder under our feet, or the lightning's flash instantaneously burn us up. If life be preserved, how easily can he make it worse than death itself;—afflicting our bodies with excruciating pains, or our minds with yet more intolerable agonies! Nor is there hope of escape; for he is eternal, and can (if he think fit) expose us to everlasting punishment: he is "able to destroy both body and soul in hell."

And this Almighty and Eternal God is one whom we have reason to fear. For full of bounty and goodness as he certainly is, he is neither indifferent to our conduct, nor incapable of inflicting even the severest punishments on his creatures. A holy and just ruler of the world, he maintains his government by punishing the guilty as well as rewarding the good. We are all suffering more or less in the present state, because we are all involved in sin;—our nature being so corrupted that “there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not.” But we have more, much more, to apprehend in a future state; because here the sins which we commit as individuals do not seem in general (certainly not in very many instances) to be brought to account; and we are assured that “God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.”

But God has given us a law. The substance of it is written in the hearts of all men; and therefore every man on earth, being condemned by his own conscience, must tremble, if he ever seriously thinks, at the thought of God’s displeasure. In our Holy Scriptures this law is plainly written and fully unfolded: we are expressly told what is God’s will, and “what sort of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness.” And when we judge ourselves by God’s commandments, we discover alarming defects and transgressions; we find that in very many instances we have done amiss and dealt wickedly; and when the outward action may not have been grossly offensive, we feel

an oppressive weight within—"another law in our members, warring against the law of our mind (and conscience,) and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin." The inevitable effect is fear—fear of future and eternal wrath. We know that God cannot approve and justify such characters as we feel ourselves to be, and we consequently look forward with dreadful apprehension to our appearance before his judgment seat.

Relief indeed is found in the mercies of God. All men are supported by some hope of forgiveness, but the Gospel of Christ affords ground for sure and steady confidence. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Through the ever-blessed Redeemer it has pleased God to assure us of salvation, if we believe in him and keep his commandments. And those "commandments are not grievous;" although they contain the whole duty of man, although they are the same with the law of our nature and the eternal law of God, still they do not oppress the believing soul, because help—divine help—is provided. "The law of *the Spirit* of life makes him free from the law of sin and of death." Thus, if we are Christians indeed, we are delivered from tormenting fears; but there is a "fear of the Lord" which still remains. It is that to which the Apostle refers in the exhortation—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling—for it is *God which worketh in you.*" The very consideration of God's unbounded goodness fills the soul with the most awful reverence. The Christian reflects upon himself as "God's workmanship, created in

Christ unto good works." He trembles when he thinks in *whose* hands he is,—for what purpose God has taken him in hand,—and what is the work to be done. His fear is, not so much lest he should be condemned for his transgressions—for the Gospel assures him that he *has* passed from death to life, and is actually admitted to a state of favour and acceptance;—but, lest he should "receive the grace of God in vain,"—lest he should withstand and counteract the purpose of divine mercy,—lest he should (after all) "come short of the glory of God."

Such a fear is highly salutary. It tends to the best effects; it makes us watchful, active, humble and devout. It is a filial and a holy fear; exciting us to act as it becomes the children of God, and to follow that "holiness—without which no man can see the Lord." It "keeps us in the love of God," and maintains and invigorates our faith and hope. In conjunction with those motives it produces a Christian life—leading us to "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." It is the principle which immediately directs our attention to practical godliness, and therefore rightly stands, in the New Testament as well as the Old, for vital religion in general.

In this "fear of the Lord" the primitive Churches "walked;" and, as a fit and natural accompaniment, they enjoyed "the comfort of the Holy Ghost."

"The comfort of the Holy Ghost" comprises all the happiness which Christianity communicates to the human soul. The Gospel is very generally foretold by the Prophets as a consolatory

dispensation, and the most peculiar name by which the Jews from of old have distinguished the Messiah, is "the Comforter." The "just and devout" at the time of our Saviour's birth, were "waiting for the consolation of Israel." And great was the consolation which Jesus brought, by his wonderful works of mercy and benevolence, by the meekness and gentleness of his deportment, and by the blessed assurances, encouragements and promises of his doctrine. But to his disciples, afflicted at the prospect of losing their guardian and guide, he promises a yet greater blessing to result from his departure to Heaven;—"ANOTHER COMFORTER," who should "abide with them for ever," and more than compensate for his bodily absence—"even the Spirit of Truth."

"The comfort of the Holy Ghost" is best understood—at least may be best explained—by considering that which the disciples enjoyed while Christ was present with them. For it is of the same nature, with this single exception—that what Jesus did outwardly, that the Spirit does inwardly; or (more strictly speaking) what Jesus communicated to the soul through the bodily senses, that the Spirit leads the soul to obtain by all the means of grace and divine truth. For here we must distinguish between the miraculous gifts of the Spirit and his office of comforter. Those gifts were *partial*—the Apostles and some only of the first disciples were endowed with them; but "the comfort of the Holy Ghost" is *universal*—it is the privilege of all Churches and of every member. Those gifts were temporary—they scarcely continued after

the last of the Apostles; but this is *perpetual*—it was to “abide always even to the end of the world.” These gifts were imparted *for a particular purpose*—to complete the external revelation of the new Covenant, and establish the Christian Church; but this is the *great promise* of that Covenant, to be enjoyed by the Church, and *constitute its characteristic blessing*, and distinction from the unbelieving world.

What then was the comfort which the disciples enjoyed in the immediate presence of Christ? It was this, that they had God present with them—present in his power, his wisdom, his holiness, and his mercy; and so abundant was the mercy, that “they were not consumed,” but found themselves safe and happy in that awful presence. Christ was their Almighty *protector*, their wise *instructor*, their holy *monitor*, their merciful shepherd, guardian and guide—in one word their *Lord and Saviour*. *Such* then is the Holy Spirit to the souls that enjoy his “comfort.” He is God present in their minds:—the power, wisdom, holiness and grace of God abiding with them, to preserve them from evil, instruct them in righteousness, admonish them of danger, and conduct them to salvation. He does not now make any new revelation, because that were unnecessary. Sufficient was long since revealed by Christ and his Apostles; but he “*opens the heart to attend*” to the “word” once “spoken by the Lord and confirmed by those who heard him;” he “enlightens the eyes of the understanding, to know the hope” which is set before us, the rich and glorious inheritance of the saints, the great love wherewith God

has loved them, and the nature of the salvation which his grace has provided; he inspires faith, producing a firm belief in the precious truths of the Gospel, and a stedfast trust in God's promises through Christ; he melts the soul in penitence, warms it with love, animates it with hope, and prepares it for heaven. By leading it to reflect upon itself, to observe the change which has taken place in its disposition and character, and to compare itself with the commands and promises of the Gospel, he gives it the happy persuasion that it has really passed from death to life:—he “bears witness with our spirit, that *we are the children of God*” and the heirs of immortal bliss. Thus he comforts us under every trial and affliction, “keeps us from falling;” and safely conducts us to our final home—the “mansions of our Father's house.”

Some persons doubt whether the influence of the Holy Spirit is actually experienced in the present day; they are inclined to think his peculiar presence and comfort to have been confined to the first age of the Gospel. But if they would carefully peruse and consider the promises of Christ, and the language of the Apostles on the subject, they would surely find themselves compelled to adopt a different view.

Others are not satisfied without sensible manifestations of the Spirit's presence. They either persuade themselves that they receive these in secret voices, or strong impressions, or perhaps in dreams and visions; or they are distressed with anxious expectations of things of that description. The Holy Spirit *may* sometimes act upon the soul by such means; for he certainly

can employ any means which are not evil in themselves, or unsuitable to our nature. Generally however I believe his suggestions are not perceptible; that is, are not to be immediately distinguished from the operations of our own minds. But they are not the less real; and although gentle, gradual, and silently communicated, may still be certainly known by their nature, tendency and effect. The soul is “sanctified by the truth” of God, and in that sanctification enjoys “the comfort of the Holy Ghost”—the blessed assurance of an union with Christ, a deliverance from all evil, and a final admission to the glory of God.

And now we see the close and inseparable connexion between “the fear of God and the comfort of the Holy Ghost.” They are connected now as they were in the primitive Churches. No man can enjoy the comfort of the Holy Ghost unless he lives in the filial fear of God, and every man who so lives is entitled to look for that invaluable blessing. They are connected, by the promise and goodness of God, if not strictly as cause and effect, yet certainly in the way of service and reward. “If ye love me,” said Christ, “keep my commandments—and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter.” “Repent and be baptized,” was Peter’s exhortation, “in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”—in other words, sincerely and avowedly embrace the religion of Christ—“and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” “And we,” he declared on another occasion, “are his witnesses”—witnesses to the exaltation and saving power of Christ—

“and so also is the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to *them that obey him.*” Repentance and faith indeed, and every act and feeling of religion, proceed in some sense from a divine influence; but “the comfort of the Holy Ghost”—the peculiar blessing and privilege of the faithful—is given to those only who have already believed, and are “walking in the fear of God.”

Would *we* then enjoy this inestimable privilege? The way to its attainment is plainly set before us. It is to lead a truly religious life. It is to live as if we were always in God’s presence. It is to remember him in all things, and to devote ourselves to his service. It is to meditate upon his truth, to study his will, to call upon him in earnest prayer, to hold communion with Christ and his Church, to renounce and forsake every sinful and dangerous practice, and to regulate our thoughts and words and actions by the rule of God’s commandments. Let us DO THIS—and “the comfort of the Holy Ghost” will surely be imparted to us. We shall find ourselves supported, strengthened and cheered in our course. We shall enjoy a peace which the world cannot give. We shall “find rest for our souls.”

But some there are who *look* for this rest and do *not* find it. They appear to be “walking in the fear of God”—probably think that they really do so—and yet they know not “the comfort of the Holy Ghost;” they are depressed and afflicted, and “go mourning all the day,” as if their Lord had “left them comfortless.” If they do not deceive others or themselves, if they really are God’s faithful and devoted servants,

the destitution is not real. They have the Holy Spirit for their guardian and guide; although, for some reason, which man perhaps cannot discover, they are not at present enabled to rejoice in his comfort. They are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation—though now for a season they may be in heaviness.” Let them persevere and “hope to the end :”—the clouds may be dispelled, and the light of the Lord shine upon them; and should it not be so, it is impossible that they should finally “lose their reward.”

It behoves us however carefully to examine ourselves. Are we really “walking in the fear of the Lord?” Are we his true and faithful servants? Do we set him continually before us, and live as if he were present with our souls? Do we worship him in spirit and in truth? Do we pay serious attention to his holy word, endeavouring to become well acquainted with his will and the way of salvation? Do we frequent the assemblies of his people? Do we partake of the ordinances of his Church—especially of that blessed sacrament which is the appointed sign and seal of spiritual communion with Christ? Do we resist *every* temptation and inclination to evil, and bring *all* we do to the test of Christian duty? If we fail in *any* of these respects, we ought not to wonder at our want of comfort. We deprive ourselves of it—we grieve the Holy Spirit, and must expect to find grief and distress in ourselves. And this, I believe, is the principal, if not the only, reason why so little of spiritual comfort appears to be enjoyed in the present state of our Churches. Our religion is partial

and defective. We have occasionally a fear of God, but we are not constantly "walking in that fear." "He" then "that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit" long since "said unto the churches—To him that *overcometh* will I give to eat of the hidden manna :—As many as I love, *I rebuke and chasten*. Be zealous therefore and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me."

ELECTION.

I THESS. I. 4.

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

THE doctrine of Divine Election has been the subject of so much contention among Christians, that a considerate person feels himself bound to speak of it with the greatest caution. Since however Christ and his Apostles saw reason to teach this doctrine, and since all who read or hear the Holy Scriptures will of course form *some* opinion concerning it, it evidently becomes the duty of a Christian Minister to endeavour to lead his congregation to a *right* opinion: to guard them at least against errors which may appear of dangerous consequence; and establish them securely in the great principles of the "faith once delivered to the saints."

Actuated by such considerations, I now undertake to explain to you, as far as I am enabled to discern the truth, what the Gospel really teaches respecting our "election of God." And this I shall attempt to do, not by authoritatively pronouncing that this or that is to be believed; still less by general reasoning independent of express testimony; but by simply and candidly "searching the Scriptures," and appealing to your own judgment in the interpretation of them.

You are probably all aware that the doctrine of our "election in Christ" is generally deduced from certain passages in the Apostolical Epistles. Paul, Peter, James and John all

speak of believers in Christ as those whom God had elected or chosen out of the world.' And many persons seem to take such expressions, as if their sense was to be determined by the particular passages in which they occur. It strikes me however at once, on referring to those passages, that they contain a language with which the persons addressed were previously familiar. The Apostles do not *begin* to teach their Christian brethren that they were the "elect of God," but they address them as those who already knew themselves by that peculiar designation. In the 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians, which is probably the first of all which St. Paul wrote to Christian Churches, he does not undertake to instruct them in the nature of Election, but (as if the word readily and naturally occurred) remarks that he "knew their election of God." In the same manner St. Peter addresses his first Epistle to the "elect strangers" throughout various countries. And St. John writes to a pious individual as an "elect lady," and communicates the greeting of her "elect sister."

It might be suggested indeed that the Apostles had previously taught the doctrine of Election in their discourses to the persons whom they thus addressed. And this *might* certainly have been the fact (in some cases most probably was) although such instruction has not been recorded by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles.

It happens however that the idea is much more ancient. "The elect" are mentioned in the Gospels; and that in such a manner, as to shew that the term was in previous use. Our

Blessed Saviour familiarly employed it on several occasions. "Shall not God," he asks (Luke XVIII. 7,) "avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?" He foretels the coming of impostors, who should "seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." (Mark XIII. 22.) Speaking of the afflictions which were about to befall the Jews, he says, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake (St. Mark adds "whom he hath chosen,") he hath shortened the days." And describing the consequences of that tribulation, he says, "the Son of man shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds." Now, although I will not say that the meaning of the word might not be inferred from other discourses of our Saviour, it appears to me perfectly plain that he adopted it when already in use. If therefore we find the Jewish sense of the term "elect"—that I mean in which the Jews of our Saviour's time would have been likely to use it;—then I conceive we have its true meaning, as used by Christ in his discourse to Jewish disciples.

Now the Jews were very likely to have this term in use, because it is frequently used in the sacred writings of the Old Testament.

We find it there applied to the whole nation of Israel. Moses, (Deut. VII. 6.) David, (Psalms CV. & CVI.) and the Prophets in many places speak of the nation as "chosen" (or elect,) "chosen of the Lord," "chosen to be a special and a holy people to himself."

We find it applied also to particular persons

or families in Israel whom it pleased God to choose for especial purposes. Thus Moses and Aaron are spoken of as "chosen"—the one to be the prince of Israel, the other the priest. Thus the tribe of Levi are described as "chosen" for the service of the sanctuary. Thus "Saul," in the first instance, was "the man whom the Lord did choose" for Israel's king; and after Saul had been rejected for disobedience, "he refused" says the Psalmist (LXXVIII. 6, 7, &c.) "the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, (for the ruling portion of the nation;) but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved: he chose David also his servant—to feed Jacob his people and Israel his inheritance." Of this choice the Lord is represented as speaking in another Psalm (LXXXIX. 2, &c.) "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations." In the same sense the Prophet proclaims the fulfilment of this promise in Christ—the *chosen* of God: (Isaiah XLII. 1, &c.) "Behold my servant whom I uphold, *mine elect* in whom my soul delighteth! I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment unto the Gentiles."

There is yet a third sense in which we find the term employed in the Old Testament. It occurs in the prophetic description given by Isaiah in his two last Chapters, of the rejection of the greater part of the Jewish nation, and the adoption by God of another people, composed of a *chosen part* of the Jews, together with a multitude collected from among the Gentiles.

“ Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, ‘ Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it,’ so will I do for my servant’s sake, that I may not destroy them all : and *I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob*, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains ; and *mine elect shall inherit it*, and *my servants shall dwell there* ; and Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, *for my people that have sought me*. But ye (the rest of Israel) are they that forsake the Lord—therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter ; because when I called ye did not answer, &c.,—and ye shall leave your name for a curse unto *my chosen* ; for the Lord God shall slay thee, and shall call his servants by another name :—for behold I create new heavens and a new earth, &c.,—and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands :—they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord and their offspring with them :—It shall come that *I will gather all nations and tongues*, and they shall come and see my glory ; And I will set a sign among them ; and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations—to Tarshish, Pul and Lud, that draw the bow—to Tubal and Javan—to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory, and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles ; and they shall bring *all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord* out of all nations :—*and I will also take of them for Priests and for Levites*, saith the Lord.”

It is, I conceive, to this last usage of “ Elect ”

and its kindred terms, that Christ in the first place, and after him the Apostles, allude when they apply those terms to the members of the Christian Church. The Jews found their fathers, and from them their whole nation, represented as *the chosen of God*—his peculiar people on the earth;—they found individuals and families *selected* from among themselves to fill especial offices, and one individual foretold, to arise from the family of their chosen Kings, who should be in a preeminent degree that *chosen one in whom Jehovah would delight*;—and they found an *elect people* equally foretold. Those who should fear the word of the Lord, and obey the voice of this his chosen servant, selected out of Israel in the first place, and then associating to themselves a vast number of congenial characters out of all nations, to whom the peculiar privileges of Israel with all the blessings promised by the Prophets should eventually be transferred. When therefore they heard Jesus speak of *the elect* whom God would regard, who would not be deceived by the false Christs and Prophets, nor perish in the destruction of Jerusalem, would they not at once understand him to mean his faithful disciples among the Jewish people? When they heard him speak of *his elect to be gathered from the four winds*, would they not—at least *ought* they not—to have understood him to signify those who would hear God's word and receive the Gospel among the various nations of the world? And when the Apostles, after Jews and Gentiles were united in one Church, addressed them altogether as “the elect of God,” would they not be naturally understood to refer to the prophecies

which predicted such an union, and the formation of such a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people?"

It may however be observed, and the observation is just, that Christ and the Apostles extend the idea of election much farther than this. They certainly in some passages refer to the choice which God had made "from before the foundation of the world;" and they speak of those who are its objects as "chosen to salvation," and "predestinated to eternal life and glory." They lead us in fact to contemplate the grand scheme of Divine Providence, which originating in the eternal love and wisdom of God, will have its consummation in the eternal world. Such a plan there unquestionably must be, and the almighty power and perfect knowledge of God will eventually conduct it to completion.

But how is the reference made to this divine and eternal system? Does our Blessed Lord, or does any of his inspired Apostles, speak of it as an absolute election of certain individuals, involving what has sometimes been called irresistible grace, and excluding all fear of their "falling away?" They give sufficient assurance, undoubtedly, to those who belong to the *actual* elect of God. "My sheep," says Christ, "hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish." "Whom he called," says St. Paul, "them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Thus are Christians encouraged, when likely to be disheartened by the afflictions of the world, or to feel themselves lost amidst surrounding impiety :

from all such causes of fear and distress they are led to take refuge in God, who "knoweth them that are his;" they are assured that "all things" will be made to "work together for their good."

But who are thus encouraged and assured? Whom does the New Testament *recognise as God's elect*? Our Blessed Lord most plainly and satisfactorily extends this recognition to all who should "believe in his name" and "keep his word;" and the Apostles therefore addressed all Christians, all those who professed the faith of Christ and were found within his Church, by the same appellation. Nor do they employ the name as a mere title: they speak, with manifest sincerity and earnestness, of the real election of every member of the Church. Thus in one place St. Paul tells the Thessalonian converts that he "knew their election?" And how did he know it? Because, when he had himself preached the Gospel among them, they had "received it as the word of God." But do they therefore encourage all those whom they address to cast away fear? Do they intimate no apprehension lest they should lose their high and blessed privilege? On the contrary their Epistles are full of admonition, warning and careful direction. With respect to these very Thessalonians, our Apostle says he had been fearful "lest the Tempter might have tempted them, and his labour been in vain." And indeed the practical bearing of all their addresses to their fellow Christians corresponds with St. Peter's express exhortation, "Wherefore the rather, Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for *if ye do these things ye shall never fall.*"

And here I think we may discern the root of their error, who have blended either ancient fatalism or modern *necessity* with the Christian doctrine of Predestinate Election. Is it not to be found in the unconscious substitution of human weakness for divine omnipotence? We feel ourselves incapable of foreseeing events, unless they are absolutely fore-determined; and this imperfection of our limited nature we tacitly attribute to the infinite and almighty God. But the perfection which the Holy Scriptures claim for the Divine Being is supreme and incomparable, as well in knowledge as in power. While *HE could* create free or independent agents, *HE* could also foresee the course which those agents would pursue. He has predetermined to do whatever he does; but this predestination involves no violation of the free agency which he may have thought fit to communicate to any of his creatures. With them he has determined from all eternity to act on the invariable principles of goodness, justice and truth. And *this* determination of the Eternal Mind, embracing all created intelligences, with every circumstance and event which can befall them, constitutes that Divine Predestination on which Election is properly and necessarily founded. It ensures, unquestionably, the final and complete accomplishment of "the eternal purpose," which omniscient wisdom distinctly perceives and anticipates through all the contingencies of time; but it destroys not the liberty of any rational creature. It is an adamant rock on which "the faith of God's elect" should assuredly repose; but it affects not their actual election, their present state, or individual prospects. They, and

they alone, have just cause to consider themselves elect, who discover those moral qualities of piety and virtue, of which the Most High has declared his certain and unalterable approbation.

Are therefore all who call themselves Christians entitled to the glorious name of God's elect? *Precisely as far as they are entitled to the name of Christians.* But, as the Apostle remarks with sorrow, that all "were not Israel who were of Israel," so I fear we must acknowledge that all are not Christians who outwardly belong to the Church. The Apostles in fact have unequivocally intimated that the time would be, when the visible Church could not be generally identified with the election of God. Even in their own day a "mystery of iniquity" was working, and some persons they were themselves constrained to pronounce unworthy of "the holy name whereby they were called." But far more "perilous days" were "coming;"—days in which there should be an awful "falling away" from the truth and holiness of Christianity, and a "man of sin"—a "son of perdition"—exalted to the highest seat in "the temple of God;" days in which "men"—evidently men bearing Christian names—should be plunged in all kinds of immorality, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." From such St. Paul directed Timothy to "turn away;" absurd and preposterous it were to apply to such characters the title of God's elect. In the Revelations therefore, which delineate the progressive state of the Church until the consummation of all things, a distinction, a broad and awful distinction, is made between *them* and the "called, chosen and faithful" followers of "the

Lamb." These alone, we are solemnly forewarned, shall find their "names written in the book of life." And indeed the proverbial remark which our Saviour made respecting the Jewish people has since become but too justly applicable to nations professing Christianity—that "many are called, but few chosen."

The practical inferences from the subject are obvious and highly important.

We are all—all whose minds are awakened to a due sense of religion—anxious to ascertain our own state—to know whether we belong to the number of God's elect. There is no great difficulty in deciding the question, if we will but judge ourselves by the plain rules which the Gospel supplies. The Apostle knew the election of the Thessalonians, because they had "become followers of him and of the Lord." So—if we bear the same character, if we have sincerely embraced that Gospel which Christ and his Apostles preached, and if our faith, under the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, has actually produced the fruit of a holy life—we may certainly know our own election. *Thus* then let us examine ourselves—*thus* form our judgment of our actual state and future prospects.

Many are afflicted with distressing fears that they may not at last be found among the elect. But the Gospel is highly encouraging. If we have *now* the marks of God's election, we are *certainly* the objects of his love and care; we are taken under his protection; and his almighty power is engaged to assist our endeavours, "help our infirmities," and "keep us from falling." On this power we may safely rely, assured that if we humbly confide in it, and sincerely endeavour

to "walk with God," no other power shall prevail to our ruin, or pluck us out of our Heavenly Father's hand. There is not, if I have read the Scriptures aright, any absolute and irreversible decree; but God is unchangeable, and it is his purpose and intention to bring his children to glory.

But for those who have not the marks of divine election—for the unbelieving and disobedient—for those who reject or disregard the word of God—for the profane and irreligious, the immoral and licentious—for those who are destitute of the love of God or man—how dreadful is the inference which forces itself upon us! Reprobated by any eternal predestination indeed they have not been—for God "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" but actually reprobate, rejected, and unworthy of everlasting life they undoubtedly are in their present condition; and should they continue in their state of alienation from God, they will not, cannot be admitted into his glorious kingdom. Oh! let all who feel themselves to belong to this unhappy class of men, be roused by a due sense of their danger; let them "flee from the wrath to come;" let them take refuge in Christ, who still "comes" by his Gospel as truly and effectually as he once came in the flesh, "to seek and to save that which was lost." From the throne of his heavenly glory has he proclaimed to those who have a name to live and are dead:—"Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent:—he that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and *I will not blot his name out of the book of life*"

PROVIDENCE.

ROMANS VIII. 28.

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

ONE fact appears too evident as soon as this sentiment is heard; namely, that the number of those who believe it—or at least who believe it for themselves—believe that *they* “love God,” and therefore that “all things” are “working together” for *their* “good”—is very small. Go where you will—listen to the common conversation of almost any company—draw forth the observations of almost any one you meet; and how seldom do you find the person who seems to enjoy the happy persuasion! Some are given up to murmuring and discontent; nothing seems right to them: the course of the seasons, the circumstances which occur in their business or occupation, the behaviour of their families and neighbours—every thing is wrong; every thing frets and vexes them; they meet with continual crosses; their life is a torment to them. Others have more self-command and show a better temper; they have learned to disregard the petty annoyances which are of daily occurrence; and if it pleases God to grant them a tolerably fair and prosperous course in the world, they may perhaps be ready to make a decent acknowledgment of his goodness: but should he see fit to put forth his hand and afflict them, they repine under the dispensation, and appear to have no

idea that it can have proceeded from a kind and benevolent intention. And others again there are who have learned to speak the language of piety on such subjects, and on common occasions appear to feel as they ought; but yet are seen to sink under great adversities, as if it were impossible to reconcile these with the goodness of God. And yet what says the Apostle? "*We know,*" he says, "*that all things work together for good to them that love God.*" He speaks of himself in common with all his faithful and well instructed fellow Christians; and he states that they were perfectly assured—so that they could never doubt, of the tendency of every circumstance and every event to promote their welfare and happiness.

Now, in order to obtain, if possible, right views on this great subject, let us consider—

1st. The Persons who may entertain this confident persuasion; and

2dly. The Grounds for their confidence.

1st. As to the Persons who may be confidently persuaded that all things are working together for their good, they are those "*who love God.*"

There are many marks by which good men are described in the Holy Scriptures. Sometimes they are termed such as serve God, and hearken to his word, and keep his commandments; sometimes such as walk with, or before, God;—most commonly perhaps they are represented as fearing God, and comparatively in a few places only is mention made of their *love to God*. It is however especially fit to be remembered, that the precept in the Law, which speaks most fully of the love we owe to God, is chosen

out of all the rest by our Blessed Saviour, and declared to be “the first and great commandment;”—nay to be the commandment on which, together with its kindred and subordinate one of love to our neighbour, all the Law and the Prophets depend.

In truth the love of God is the highest attainment of the religious character, the best and noblest of the fruits of faith. They who love God, will fear and serve and obey him; but they will do more than all which can be done from the influence of other motives—they will heartily and cheerfully devote themselves to his service, and desire only to make *his* will and pleasure their own.

Would we understand the nature and the efficacy of this principle of love?—Let us consider it as it is felt and exercised towards men. Pure and genuine love, whether it exists in family connexions or in cordial friendships, causes us to exert ourselves for the service of one another, very far beyond any other motive. The best resemblance however which we can find of the love of God, consists in that affection with which a child—a good and dutiful child—regards a kind and tender parent. In such a child we see this incomparable principle of action almost superseding every other, and rendering it needless. The child loves its parent above all other persons, and esteems the parent’s judgment much more than its own :—consequently it has, as it were, but one law—the parent’s mind and will; and by this it habitually and delightedly regulates its proceedings. Such cases, indeed, through sad errors and failings in the conduct

of parents towards their children, are not the most common; and in this condition of our nature we must expect even the purest feelings of childhood to be mixed up with a portion of baser alloy: still however we *do* observe, and all of us doubtless have had occasion to observe, instances of the purity and power of filial love.

Look then from earth to heaven! See the same heart, which has loved as it ought a human parent, raised to the love of a *heavenly Father!* Consider the creature of God esteeming "*his* judgment in all things to be right," and desiring only that his "*will* should be done:"—and you have the best and most effectual of all the principles of religion in exercise before you.

Now there seems to be in this affection something so natural, so beautiful, so congenial to the soul, that we might be ready to look for it on every side, and wonder if we did not find it in almost every man we meet. But it is indeed by no means easily or hastily to be acquired. Many lessons must be learned before it, which are not to be mastered in a day, and which man alone can never teach. Before we *can* love God, we must have acquainted ourselves with him; we must have learned to consider him as *full of goodness*, and so the fit object of love; nor shall we be able to regard him with that affection, unless we are satisfied of his own kindness and goodwill for ourselves.

But the generality of men are lamentably wanting in all these requisites for the love of God. Notwithstanding the vast advantages which we enjoy who are living under the Gospel,

—notwithstanding the clear discovery there made of “the loving kindness of God our Saviour,”—notwithstanding he there appears full of perfect goodness towards all those who only desire and endeavour to please him;—still such is the want of faith, or (I should perhaps rather call it) the want of thought and care, which prevails on such subjects, that few, very few, seem truly to know “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Otherwise, how could they but love that God, of whom such statements as these are made;—“God hath so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;”—“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth:—for there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,—who gave himself a ransom for all;”—“There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth?”—We do not, I say, care to think or enquire sufficiently on these subjects; (for absolute unbelief is by no means, I conceive, the common cause,) or it is utterly impossible but that our hearts should be filled with love for our God. The fault is this;—we are either involved in some sinful course, and so dare not think of him, who, with all his goodness and mercy, must still remain a righteous judge, and as such an object of fear to the impenitent sinner; or our thoughts are taken up with the cares and gratifications of this life; and we find no sacred retirement in our minds, in which we may acquaint ourselves with God, and learn to regard him with due affections.

And now we not only perceive who the persons are, to whom "all things work together for good;" but we may also understand what course we ourselves should take, if we would enjoy that inestimable blessing.

We must—whatever be the effort required for that purpose—we must set ourselves in earnest to *enquire* after God. We must *consider* the revelation which he has been pleased to make of himself and his adorable perfections, until we have acquired a proper knowledge of the goodness and loveliness of his nature. And we must also "*be reconciled* to God;" renouncing whatever is sinful—whatever is at variance with his holy will, and would thus keep us in a state of enmity with him, and humbly resolving to obey him as dutiful children for the time to come. Then should we become capable of loving God; and not capable only, but we should find ourselves habitually inclined and disposed to regard him with filial affection. And then, strong in faith—full of confidence in his goodness, and assured beyond the possibility of doubt that he, the allwise and almighty one, intends our happiness—we should be unalterably persuaded that "all things are working together for our good."

For,—to consider, as we proposed,

2dly. The Grounds for this persuasion—

Does not the nature of God, as it is now revealed to us in the Gospel, lead us of necessity to such a conclusion? For although mysteries—great and painful mysteries—remain in the dispensations of Providence; although many strange and unaccountable things occur in the histories

of peoples and nations, and in the lives of individuals; still the Gospel of Christ does reveal and display the character of God after such a manner, that no true believer can entertain a doubt of his goodness.

We could not indeed, by the just use of our own reason, have formed any other idea of the Divine Being. We could not but have supposed that He, who made all things by his wisdom and power, must have made all things for good; and that, however he might punish incorrigible transgressors of his laws, and however he might correct his erring children, or suffer their obedience to be tried by affliction, he could not leave these to perish under adversities, but would surely at length bring them forth to happiness and honor.

Such just reasoning is amply confirmed by the revelation of God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ. He, in his own person, disposition and temper, and his manner of acting towards men, as well as in what he taught concerning his heavenly Father, exhibited a character of perfect goodness and unimpeachable benevolence. "*Fear not, little flock!*" is the language of the whole Gospel to those who receive and obey it; "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;—Peace I leave with you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid:—Ye *now* (indeed) have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you:—In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer—I have overcome the world:—for "this is LIFE ETERNAL—that they should know

thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent !”

“LIFE ETERNAL”—a future and everlasting state of happiness after this world has come to its end—that is the great secret, by the knowledge of which the Christian triumphs over the sufferings and adversities of the present state. Being assured that he shall live for ever with his glorified Redeemer, as a child and heir of God, he reckons that “the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.” Nay more, that these sufferings are not only to be endured with patience, and triumphed over by hope; but that even things which appear most adverse, really have a good and beneficial tendency. How else should God permit them to befall his children?—those whom he knows to be affectionately devoted to his service?—those of whom his beloved Son is but the first born brother?—those whom, from “before the foundations of the world,” he has foreseen and predestined as the inheritors of his heavenly kingdom? To leave *them* exposed to any real harm—to permit any calamity to happen which might endanger their salvation—would be manifestly nothing less than to counteract his own eternal purposes; and therefore the true Christian may well assure his soul that nothing of this kind CAN take place; that in all the things which men account adversities he is *more* than a conqueror; for that “all things”—all the circumstances in which he may be placed, and the events which may befall him in his progress to eternity—shall be made to “work together for” his *eternal* “good.”

Do you then, my Christian Brethren, *truly* believe? Are you persuaded in your hearts before God that Jesus has brought a true revelation from heaven? And do you actually regard yourselves as those who are to live for ever in that better world whither he has gone? Take, by all means, and enjoy the comfort which your principles ought to obtain. Look up to the throne of the Most High, and there behold a kind and tender Father, who designs by the whole course of his Providence to forward and secure your everlasting welfare. Look at every circumstance and every event (however painful any may be—however interruptive of your present ease and pleasure,) as an instrument in God's hand for working *some* good (whether you discern its operation and trace its effects or not) for your souls. And make, if it be possible, such reflections habitual. Be constantly accustomed to cherish, and repeat over to your minds, those happy truths which cast a heavenly light on the darkness of the world. Prepare yourselves beforehand, so that you may be ready to say, whenever a trial shall come,—“*It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good:*”—good for me in the end, if I am but enabled to bear it aright, it cannot but be.

Every human being has his sufferings; every one who is a child of God and an inheritor of heaven *must* have them, for the correction of his evil inclinations, and the subjection of his spirit to the discipline of his heavenly Father. But I feel that I may be addressing those who have had to encounter peculiar privations and adversities, Some, whom I remember in affluence,

have been reduced to poverty; and many, who were once enabled to support their families in competence and comfort, can now hardly procure a scanty supply of the necessaries of life.

I would not, my afflicted Brethren, undervalue such adversities. Trying they are—not merely to flesh and blood—but to the heart and spirit of man. It is no easy thing, in such a change of circumstances, to maintain a tranquil temper, and repose an unshaken confidence in the goodness of Providence. This however may be done by a lively exercise of Christian faith. For if you have learned to believe that “*all things work together for good,*” you ought of course to regard *even these things* in that light; to see your Father’s hand in every distressing circumstance; and to be persuaded that, in withholding the former portion of your “daily bread,” he will grant you a larger measure of the bread of life—the knowledge and experience of that grace which nourishes the soul for eternity.

Some, alas! there are with whom one might reason in another manner—reason of the “*righteous judgments* of the Lord” in the adversities which have befallen them. For did they not abuse their former prosperity? Did they not employ their better fortune in the gratification of their sensual appetites and passions, to the dishonour of the name of Christians, to the injury of their own souls, and of those around them? Surely it is but just in God—even if it were not also merciful—to take from them the intoxicating cup, and to bring them to sober reflection. And much it is to be desired that they would make a proper use of their “time of

visitation;" and lay up in their minds resolutions of frugality, prudence and good behaviour, which might, by God's blessing, have a lasting effect on their future lives. And well does it behove them to remember that, where adversity as well as prosperity, afflictions as well as blessings, have failed to bring a man to amendment of life; nothing farther is to be expected, but that God in his just indignation should leave them to be "filled with their own doings, and eat the fruit of their own devices."

Others however there are who did not run to riot in their prosperous days; and yet the cloud has overtaken them in common with their neighbours. For these the blessed truth before us is especially adapted; and earnestly would I hope and pray that they may be enabled to apply it to themselves, and "rejoice in the tribulation" which is now their lot "in the world." If they are Christians indeed—if by faith in Christ they are enabled to "love God," they may say, with greater confidence than even the Prophet of old, "Altho' the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Nay, if we could but draw aside the veil which hides the truth from our mortal senses—if we could but see things in the light in which they appear before him who beholds them in their consequences, and traces the end from the beginning: we should in very many instances learn to call them by

totally different names from those which they now bear :—we should learn that a life of temporal ease and enjoyment is often in its tendency most calamitous to our spiritual interests; while a dispensation of trouble and affliction is the very thing which we most need—the greatest benefit which could be bestowed on our souls. But, whatever the appointments of God may be, whether comfort or distress be our lot, this his children “know—that *all*” shall certainly “work together for their *good*.”

Finally, let me prevail on you all to take that view of things which the Apostle takes in this passage ;—to look above and beyond the transient pleasures and sorrows of this mortal life, and to keep your eye and your heart steadily fixed on the only object which is of real importance—the *life of eternal felicity* prepared in heaven for those who faithfully follow their Redeemer. If you can but be satisfied of that inheritance at the last, you may contemplate with a cheerful countenance the most distressing scenes through which you can have to pass in your journey towards it. The loss of fortune, of friends and relations, of any of the comforts of this world; the occurrence of painful disorders, of afflicting incidents, of any of those things which we would naturally avoid; all such events may be met with fortitude and endured with contentment; because the *trial* which they occasion is only *temporal*, while the *good* which they tend to produce is *eternal*. To God therefore, and to his disposal and governance, let us entirely resign ourselves; considering nothing as unalterably evil but *sin*; and determining, in

reliance on his gracious aid, to keep the path of our duty, and place a constant trust on our Almighty protector. And may indeed "all things work together for *our* good;" may we be "sanctified wholly;" and may our "whole spirit, soul and body, be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!"

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

JEREMIAH XXIII. 5—8.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch; and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness. Therefore behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth which brought up, and which led, the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

GLORIOUS prophecy, and calculated to excite the most joyous feelings!—And yet I know not how to refer to it without a pang of melancholy, and can hardly dwell upon it without tears.

I look back to the time of Jeremiah, perhaps four and twenty centuries since; I review the events of successive ages; I survey the scene now around me:—I see but little like the fulfilment of the prophecy, and even yet it might appear at almost a hopeless distance.

The Jews, it is true, were restored from Babylon and the more northerly countries which formed the Medo-Persian empire. Under Cyrus and his successors they enjoyed the liberty of returning from most of the places to which they had been carried captive; and the remnant who availed themselves of that indulgence dwelt for a time in the land which had been their own. Zorobabel, also, a son of David and the prince of Judah, governed the remnant from Babylon in righteousness; and under his government they

were relieved from many calamities and oppressions. But how far did he, and every other deliverer and ruler of the Jews, fall short of the king whom the Prophet describes! How insecure and full of troubles was their temporary settlement in their land! And how small a part of the nation returned—how insignificant was the deliverance, compared with the triumphant redemption from Egypt!—Alas! I find not the promised blessing here.

Jesus arose from David—“a righteous branch” indeed. But “Judah and Israel”—how were they “saved?” Where have they “dwelt safely?” Did they not refuse to acknowledge their king? And instead of “dwelling in their own land, have they not since been involved in a captivity, far worse, and of vastly longer duration, than all which had gone before?”

Some would persuade themselves that, where the literal sense of such prophecies has failed to be verified by events, their spiritual accomplishment may supply the deficiency. After a partial fulfilment of this prophecy in Zorobabel and the restoration from Babylon, Christ (they say) appeared among the Jews; and those who believed in him, together with all the spiritual “seed of the house of Israel,” have enjoyed the blessings foretold. But, were this a satisfactory mode of interpretation, many a cloud still obscures the light in which I would exult. Does the “king reign and prosper?” Alas, how imperfect are the glories of his kingdom! Does he “execute judgment and justice in the earth?” Ah! how much injustice is practised in his kingdom—committed even in his name!

What then shall we infer? Has this prophecy not been fulfilled? Are we yet, with the unconverted Jews, to expect these blessings and glories at some future period?—Let us examine it more attentively; refer to facts, for the purpose of ascertaining how far it has really been verified; and then consider what may still remain as the object of our hopes.

The Prophet therefore foretels the appearance of an extraordinary person, who should be a “branch of David,” a “king,” and denominated “the Lord our righteousness.”

The descendants of a family are by a common figure represented as the branches of a tree. And the Messiah being to descend from David, whose family had fallen very low in the time of Jeremiah, and might afterwards have seemed almost extinct, the Prophet foretels, as an instance of remarkable mercy and power, that God would still “raise,” or cause to grow, “unto David a righteous branch.” Isaiah had employed the same metaphor yet more emphatically, when he said, “There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” The word translated “stem” appears strictly to signify the stump left in the earth, after the body of the tree may have been cut off. It is the same word which is translated “stock” in that memorable passage of Job: “There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease; though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground.” The appearance of the predicted king is represented as

equally surprising with the germination, from such a perished stock, of a tree more verdant and fruitful than ever.

Now here it will be at once perceived that Jesus Christ corresponds with the terms of the prophecy. He was a descendant of David, and arose from David's stock exactly according to the figurative description. The glory of the family had declined from the death of Solomon. The revolt of the Ten Tribes from Rehoboam robbed the tree of the greater part of its majesty; the frequent provocations of his successors drew down many judgments and public calamities, which deprived it of more; the Babylonian captivity extinguished the royal style and dignity. Neither the name, nor the least portion of the power, remained at the time of our Saviour's birth. The sceptre was then in the hands of Herod, an Idumean or Philistine, of descent foreign to the whole nation; and this sceptre Herod swayed by the mere permission of the Roman Emperor. The family of David was out of sight and forgotten: so little was it noticed, that Herod knew not where to find it. The poverty of Mary and Joseph is very observable. And the sacred history is in this respect remarkably confirmed by a very ancient writer. In the reign of Domitian, we are told, the Jews discovered such symptoms of a restless spirit, that apprehensions were entertained of their attempting to assert their independence. The jealous Emperor commanded search to be made after the descendants of David who might remain in the land. In consequence two persons, grandsons of Jude, who is called the brother of our Lord,

were brought before him. They probably expected to be put to death; but when Domitian saw the mean and humble appearance of the men, observed their hands worn with labour, and found in answer to his enquiries that they supported themselves by the cultivation of a very small farm, containing scarcely more than twenty-four of our acres, they were dismissed with compassion and contempt. Thus had David's family been cut down to the very root: there remained in it neither mark nor hope of royalty. And under these circumstances Jesus arose from that stock, the "righteous branch" of the Prophet.

Of the righteousness of Jesus there can be no question; but it is here foretold that this "righteous branch" should "reign" and be a "king." In this character indeed the Messiah is most generally described by the Prophets; and in the same character was he universally expected by the Jews: hence their common and familiar expression, "Messiah the king."

Now, however destitute Jesus might be of external state and pomp, still it is the truth that he appeared among the Jews as a king. The Angel applied the prophecies to him in the annunciation, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." The approved confession of Nathaniel was, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel!" The multitude, who attended his entrance into Jerusalem, cried, "Blessed

be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Jesus himself said to his disciples, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." Before Pilate he acknowledged that he "was—was born—a king," although his "kingdom was not of this world." But most gloriously did he proclaim his royalty, when immediately before his ascension he declared, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Accordingly the Apostles speak of him as being "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour," the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords;" and assign him a dominion infinite and everlasting: "He must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet."

The last thing observable in the person foretold is the "name by which he should be called, The Lord our Righteousness." By this designation, if the passage stood alone, I might not have understood more to be signified than that in the days of this king, and by means of his government, the Lord would be the righteousness of his people Israel; that is, would deliver them from oppression and sin, and cause all around to acknowledge them as his just and favoured people. But when I take this prophecy in connexion with others which relate to the same person, the Messiah; for instance, that in the 110th Psalm, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool;" or that in the 9th chapter of Isaiah, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting

Father, the Prince of peace;" or that in the 8th chapter of Micah, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting: and he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth:"—I find abundant reason to take the words of the Prophet in a more literal sense, and understand the Messiah's name as really descriptive of his personal character. In him I expect to see JEHOVAH—the very power and goodness of God, exerted for the redemption of his people.

And here also I find the prophecy accomplished in Jesus Christ. Not only did the Lord manifest his power and goodness at the time when Jesus appeared, and in behalf of his spiritual government; but "the Father that dwelt in him—he did the works,—for in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead." And in the strictest sense he became "the righteousness" of all who "believed in his name;" "making an end of sin, bringing in everlasting righteousness," and assuring them of a final deliverance from all evil, and a safe and permanent abode in his heavenly kingdom.

Thus far then the prophecy has been verified. To this extent we may read it as a record of the past. And our hearts may rejoice, that we have seen him whom "Prophets and righteous men of old desired." But let us proceed to consider the beneficial effects which were to result from

the appearance of this sacred and glorious person. For the Prophet foretels that "the king should reign and prosper;" that he "should execute judgment and justice in the earth;" that "in his days Judah should be saved and Israel dwell safely;" and that these blessings should far surpass those which attended the deliverance from Egypt. Have these predictions been accomplished in the kingdom of Jesus Christ?

The unconverted Jews, we well know, cannot be persuaded that they have. And indeed it must be confessed that, if this king was to be like other kings—to sit on a throne of state, and rule by human force—nothing of the kind has yet been seen.

But why must we thus understand the Prophet? Does not all that he says on the subject lead us to look for things greater and higher and diviner? And shall not that king whose "name is the Lord our righteousness," rather reign in a Godlike and incomparable manner?

Thus then Jesus has "reigned and prospered." It must be remembered that, in order to accomplish various prophecies, he had different characters to sustain. He was not only to be a King, but also a Prophet and a Priest. As a Prophet, he was not merely to teach divine truth; but it was most clearly and explicitly predicted of him, that he should undergo the too general fate of the Prophets—be "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" and should bear testimony to the truth of his doctrine by sealing it with his sufferings and blood. As a Priest, his office was intercession for his people; which, it was also predicted,

he would offer in a peculiar manner;—"the Lord would lay on him the iniquity of us all," and "make his soul an offering for sin." And when this character should have been sustained, and this offering made, then was he to enter on his glorious reign; then "should he see his seed, prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hand." So was it foretold, and so it has come to pass. Christ was exalted to his kingdom after he rose from the dead. His resurrection proved him to be the "Son of God with power," and his ascension to "the throne of the Majesty on high" was his actual installation in his regal dignity. Since that time he has "reigned and prospered." By the effusion of his Spirit the Apostles were "endued with power from on high;" and thus propagated his Gospel, and extended his dominion over a great part of the world. The most powerful nations in all the quarters of the globe unite in saying, "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ! Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father!"

Jesus has also "executed judgment and justice in the earth." In his doctrine the principles of perfect virtue are established; and these principles have not only been adopted by individuals, but have been in a great measure transfused into the codes of national laws. Hence a very extensive improvement has already been effected in the moral state of mankind. And if the laws of the Gospel were but universally observed, they would produce such exact justice, such benevolence and charity, as would secure universal order and peace.

But has "Judah been saved?" Does "Israel dwell safely?" As already intimated, there is a sense in which the affirmative might be maintained. All who were "Israelites indeed" received Christ for their king, and uniting with the Gentiles who became the "children of Abraham by faith," formed "one fold under one shepherd." These have been saved, if not from earthly enemies, from the worst of all enemies—sin and Satan. They "dwell safely" now; for whatever may have befallen them, nothing can avail to their final harm. And they will at length be all established under the Messiah's sceptre in his heavenly kingdom, enjoying perfect and eternal tranquillity.

Thus also the concluding part of the prophecy might be considered as accomplished. In the kingdom of Christ the deliverance from Egypt is almost forgotten, to remember the far greater and more valuable redemption which his faithful people have received. They "say no more, The Lord liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth which out of all countries" has gathered his elect, and will not forsake them until they "dwell in their own land"—in the inheritance designed for them from before the foundation of the world.

Do I then say that these predictions have been accomplished? that their intention is exhausted? that they need not carry on our thoughts to any thing farther on the earth? I cannot—dare not say it. I say that the "Lord has raised up the branch to David;" that the "King reigns and (in some measure) prospers;"

that he "executes judgment and justice" as far as men submit to his government; that his subjects, whether of Jewish or Gentile origin, are "saved," and in the most important sense "dwell safely;" and that in his kingdom the deliverance from Egypt is comparatively forgotten. But I cannot say that he has "prospered," or "executes judgment and justice," to the extent which the terms of the prophecy lead me to expect; still less can I say that "Judah" are saved and "Israel dwell safely," contemplating as I must the actual state of the great body of the nation; or that "the seed of the house of Jacob" are "brought up and led out of all countries," and "dwelling in their own land."

These and such like expressions, I can hardly doubt, are to be literally understood, and will yet receive a strict accomplishment. Thus the Jews themselves appear to have invariably understood them; thus the disciples of Christ both before and after his resurrection; thus St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, as far at least as the "salvation of all Israel"—including that part which has hitherto been involved in "blindness," may be said to have incontrovertibly determined their sense.

The days of the Messiah, be it remembered, are not yet ended. "Of his kingdom" it was expressly declared that "there should be no end." It is of course progressive, and has its eras and periods, and its extensions and events adapted to them. Unknown and undiscoverable as is the final day, enough of time and space may yet remain for the exact fulfilment of all which is predicted, before the arrival of that consummation

when Christ "shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father," having "put down all (other) rule and authority and power."

From the investigation which we have pursued the prophecy is found to be very comprehensive. It presents a grand picture to our view. It exhibits the rise of the kingdom or Church of Christ many ages since, reminds us of our existing state under his sceptre, and leads forward our anticipations to the blessed and glorious issue of his government. Let us endeavour to make just and edifying reflections on each of these points.

We have found the prophecy partly verified to the letter. Let this fact satisfy us of its divine truth, and impress our minds with a deep and settled conviction that the whole shall be satisfactorily, if not literally, accomplished. But not this prophecy only: let the fact remind us that the Holy Scriptures do really contain "the word of God." None but the Omniscient could have foreseen the rise of this "branch" from the root of David—the birth of a man who should be regarded as "the Lord our righteousness." Let us then seriously attend to those sacred records; listen to them with awful reverence, as if we actually "heard the voice of the Lord God;" and enquire what he says to ourselves—to such persons as we feel ourselves to be.

The prophecy may especially remind us of our state under Christ. "Him has God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour," and it is the proper effect and end of his government to "execute judgment and justice." Let us therefore enquire

whether we are his faithful and dutiful subjects—whether we enjoy his salvation, and are doing his will. Has he saved us from the captivity of Satan—the power and dominion of sin? Does he reign over our souls by his holy Spirit and word? Is it our constant employment to obey his commands? Are we “dwelling safely,” as to our spiritual condition, under his protection; and can we reasonably expect an eternal habitation in his heavenly kingdom?

The government of Christ will assuredly be maintained, until its great objects shall have been effected. He will “reign and prosper” until he shall have established universal “judgment and justice;” most probably, until the remains of his ancient people the Jews shall have been restored to “their own land;” but, most certainly, until “all kings shall bow down before him, all nations do him service.” Oh! let us call upon our souls to anticipate the glorious events, to desire those blessed days. Let us make their advent our daily prayer, and exert whatever faculties may be granted us to prepare the way. Let us act, each in his place and province, as the ministers and servants of our king—“executing judgment and justice” towards every man. Let us follow our Redeemer—to “seek and save that which was lost,” to “preach deliverance to the captives,” and to “give ourselves”—whatever we have, whatever we are enabled to do—“for the life of the world”—the salvation of Jew and Gentile,

THE ASSURANCE OF PROPHECY.

LUKE XXI. 33.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

EIGHTEEN hundred years have nearly passed away since these words were spoken; that generation has long since returned to dust, and the dust of many other generations buries it from our sight; the glory of Israel and the armies of Rome are gone from the earth:—yet here are we, with the words of Christ sounding as freshly in our ears, and thrilling as powerfully in our hearts, as if they had now for the first time been uttered. In this sense at least the prophecy appears sure of accomplishment: a “monument more durable than brass” and “more firmly based than the pyramids of Egypt,” Christianity remains; and will remain, though heaven and earth should literally pass away, as long as the soul of man continues in existence.

The solemn declaration however signifies more than this. It refers, not merely to the words themselves, but to the divine truth of their import; it avers, not only that the prophetic discourse shall be kept in memory by the providence of God, but that it shall be confirmed, whatever else may fail or change, by the exact correspondence of the events foretold. Let us then consider these momentous forewarnings, and endeavour to apply them to the purposes for which they were given.

The Prophecy, to which this declaration relates, consists of two parts. One part of it belongs to the Jewish people, and the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem; with regard to which Jesus said, "Verily, verily, this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." Another part belongs to a different display of the justice and majesty of God; for "of *that* day and *that* hour," said Jesus, "knoweth no man; no, not the angels that are in heaven; but my Father only."

Some difficulty has been found in determining precisely what portions of this prophetic discourse should be assigned to the first of these periods, and what to the second. And many commentators have been of opinion that the respective portions were designedly intermixed, because the destruction of unbelieving and impenitent Jerusalem was to be a type or sign of the destruction of a wicked world at the last day. Without directly entering, however, on this question, we may easily satisfy ourselves, that a most important part of the prophecy was fulfilled within the period to which it was expressly limited; and that another part, of far greater importance, yet remains to be fulfilled at a period still unknown. My object will consequently be to point out the exact accomplishment of the former part of the prophecy, and so endeavour to impress you with the necessity of preparing for the awful certainty of the latter.

I. The portions of the prophecy which undoubtedly belong to the first period are those which speak of the ruin of the temple and city of Jerusalem, and the desolation of the land of the

Jews. “As some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said :

As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

And when, he afterwards added, ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh :—Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains, &c. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written (by the Prophets on that subject,) may be fulfilled.—For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

Now all these things came to pass exactly as they were foretold. Within forty years, and so before the generation of men to whom Jesus spoke had departed from the earth, the Roman armies encompassed and besieged Jerusalem. After a terrible destruction of the miserable Jews by sword and famine and pestilence, the city was taken by Titus the Roman General ; the temple was burnt and completely demolished ; and the people were either carried, or sold, into captivity among the various nations which composed the Roman Empire. And in that captivity—at least as a race despised and trampled on—they still continue, dispersed over the face of the earth.

Of these facts there is no doubt ; all the world

know and acknowledge them. But how do we know, some persons would probably ask, that the words were actually spoken by Jesus? May not the prophecy have been invented after the events had taken place? The answer is :—we find it recorded by three original historians, Matthew, Mark and Luke; each of whom gives a plain and artless account of the life of Jesus, and that (as I could easily show you) without concert between themselves, and without one borrowing from another. Moreover, all the traditions which we have concerning these historians (the earliest running up to the time of St. John,) lead us to believe that they severally wrote before the destruction of Jerusalem :—Matthew, probably, about eight years after our Saviour's ascension, Mark a few years later, and Luke within (at most) thirty or thirty five years. Besides, there is a particular occurrence mentioned by ancient writers, which shews that the Christians had received a warning to escape from Jerusalem. Josephus, the Jewish historian, who relates at length all the details of that dreadful war, states the fact, that at the time when the Roman armies were completing their investment of the devoted city, "many" of the inhabitants "fled." And Eusebius, with other Christian historians, informs us that at that time all the believers in Christ "fled to Pella" and other places of security beyond Jordan—so that not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem.

We have thus the best evidence that the prophecy was really delivered by Christ. But is it, some would still demand, a real and divine prediction? Might not a sagacious person clearly

enough foresee that the turbulent and obstinate Jews would never rest until they had provoked the Romans to destroy their temple and capital, and put an end to their national character? I reply—certainly not; because the Romans were not accustomed thus to treat the people whom they subdued. Their great statesman and philosopher, Cicero, who lived just before the age in which these things happened, remarks it as a creditable distinction of his countrymen, that it was their practice to preserve and incorporate conquered places, and notices with regret a single exception (among those who had not waged war with savage barbarity) in the instance of the city of Corinth. So different were they, from whom alone Jerusalem had now to fear, from the Babylonians whose vengeance it had formerly experienced. The probability was, confirmed by the experience of many nations and cities, that should the Jews, who had already been easily reduced to subjection and tribute, rebel against their conquerors, a few legions would quickly crush their frantic efforts; and an edict from the Emperor, making some changes in the government of the province, and securing it against further disturbance, would treat the people with such forbearance and kindness as might be likely to win their gratitude, and induce them to rest satisfied under Roman protection. This, I say, was the fair probability at that time. But, had it been less than it really was, and supposing it even likely that the peculiar temper and conduct of the Jews would provoke the Romans to unusual severity, (such as they had exercised on Carthage and Numantia,)

now, I pray, could mere human wisdom foresee, so as confidently and distinctly to foretel, that *during the time of that very "generation" Jerusalem would be "compassed with armies"*—that its destruction would be *complete and final*—and *that the whole people* would be led away into captivity among a variety of nations for a long and almost endless period? How could Jesus discern that this was the precise time when all the threatenings contained in the books of the ancient Prophets would receive their accomplishment? We do not learn that any other person of that generation, whether Jew or Gentile, ventured to utter such a prediction; nor indeed that such a one was ever uttered concerning any other city or people. So clear and satisfactory is the proof, that he who spoke these words, was inspired by the wisdom of God.

2. Bearing therefore this great truth in mind, remembering that these are really the words of one who could look forward into futurity, let us proceed to take a view of the other part of the Prophecy; the part which has not yet been fulfilled. For Jesus was especially careful to impress his disciples with the assurance, that events far more awful and momentous were to be expected after—long after—all those things had come to pass.

“And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and the time draweth near (—and so history informs us that many false Messiahs, or professed deliverers of Israel, have appeared—some from before the destruction of Jerusalem;) go ye not therefore after them: But

when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass; but *the End is not by and by.*

Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. But *before all these* they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you; delivering you up to the synagogues, and prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. (These are things which happened as much after the destruction of Jerusalem as before it. Then giving directions how his disciples should act under all the circumstances which would befall them, including the troubles and miseries which were near at hand, he thus foretels *the End* of all:)

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; mens' hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the sign of THE SON OF MAN coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

Some have understood even this part of the Prophecy as if it figuratively described the judgments which were coming on the Jews for their rejection of Christ and the Gospel; and others, with somewhat more of probability, have applied it to the triumph of Christianity in the days of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor. But it is, I conceive, perfectly plain from the Epistles,

and especially from the two Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, that the Apostles, and the whole Christian Church under their instruction, looked for a very different fulfilment;—for nothing less than the real and personal coming of Christ to the last judgment of the world. The coming of the Lord is held out by them, either as a motive to patience and perseverance *under all temporal afflictions*, or to awaken the careless and indifferent to *a sense of their terrible danger*; objects scarcely to be answered by an expectation of the destruction of Jerusalem, or of the triumph of Constantine. Moreover, the coming of Christ, and the day of the Lord, are viewed in *immediate connexion with the resurrection*—as events in which the dead would be as much concerned as those who should be found alive; a consideration which undeniably proves how the Apostles looked, and would have taught us all to look, for the fulfilment of the latter part of our Saviour's prophecy.

Be it then our faith, that *as surely as the Romans came to execute the vengeance of offended heaven on the Jews, so surely shall Christ come from heaven, to take vengeance on them that obey not his Gospel, and to be glorified in his saints and admired in all that believe.* “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away.” They were entirely verified in that generation; and they will be on this, and on all the generations of men. These eyes—whether before or after the sleep of the grave, it matters not—shall see him descending in the clouds of heaven; and we—even these bodies

and souls of ours—shall partake, either of the redemption, or the everlasting destruction, of that day. And oh! may we learn to live like those who really believe that these things shall be!

What effect the belief should produce—yes, and must inevitably produce, on those who entertain it, Christ himself has taught us in the plainest words: “And—

Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares; for as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

Is it possible to say any thing by which this solemn and affectionate admonition can be made more impressive? It is addressed, not to the daring unbeliever, but to us who pass for believers in Christ, but endanger our eternal hopes by yielding to the weakness and corruption of our nature. And alas, does it not strike us with the conviction, that too, too often—if not continually—we have been regardless? At the convivial board, at our private table, in our common business, and amidst the amusements of life, have we not forgotten ourselves? Have we not lost sight of Christ and the judgment day, and ate and drank, and talked and acted, and partaken of diversions and pleasures, in a manner most clearly proving that eternity was far from our thoughts? And yet there has never been a day,

or an hour, when this prediction *might* not have been fulfilled. The time is left in complete uncertainty, in order that, as all have an interest in the event, all should continually hold themselves in readiness.

Think then, let me say to each individual, what would have become of you, if our Lord had come at this, or that, or any one of numberless seasons which conscience recalls to your mind?—If he had come when you were indulging in the pleasures of mere sense, utterly forgetful of your spiritual nature and all its claims? If he had come when you were engrossed in worldly business—employed altogether about the things of this life, even if you did not allow yourself to violate truth or honesty, charity or peace, for the sake of them? If he had come when you were joining in idle and frivolous, if not directly improper conversation; or in foolish recreations, which “make a mock of sin,” and play about its verge, if they do not absolutely plunge in its pollutions? If he had come when you were indulging the thoughts of your own heart—unholy or unkind, if they were not positively impure or malignant?

Ah! does not every one of us feel, that if he had come at those times we could not have endured the day of his coming; we could not have stood when the Judge appeared? In shame and confusion must we not have fallen on our faces to the earth, to await the sentence which must have banished us from the presence of his holiness?

It is then a mercy that he has not yet appeared; it is a great mercy that the prophetic words

of the Son of man still vibrate in our ears. Oh! let them now at least settle in our hearts; and rouse us to vigilance, and a life consistent with the hope of salvation, for the time to come. It may be, that never more will the warning be addressed to us—

“Take ye heed; watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.”

THE END OF ALL THINGS.

1 PETER IV. 7.

The end of all things is at hand : be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

THE remark has occurred to many persons, on reading this passage, and others of similar import in the writings of the Apostles, that they appear to have conceived "the end of all things" much nearer than experience proves it to have been. Hence some have looked about for another sense which might be fairly given to their words. One class of critics seem almost to have persuaded themselves that such expressions referred, not to *that* consummation which we call "the end of the world," but to the destruction of Jerusalem and conclusion of the age of the Old Testament. Another class have been rather inclined to consider these expressions as little more than figurative representations of the approach of death—"the end of all things" in this world to each individual.

It can scarcely be necessary to enter into a discussion of either of these interpretations, because I believe all would admit the first and most obvious sense of the words to be the most satisfactory—provided it should not imply a false prediction on the part of the Apostles, the authorised and inspired interpreters of truth.

But from such a suspicion it seems perfectly easy to exonerate their name. For in none of

these places do they foretel any thing as of themselves, but merely refer to a well known prediction of Christ; adding perhaps some explanatory or illustrative circumstances. And in what terms had their Divine Master predicted the consummation of all things? Had he told them it was near at hand? Had he told them it was far distant? Neither the one, nor the other. But he had very carefully apprised them that the period was *not* to be disclosed. He delivered a very solemn prophecy concerning a series of events, which were to *begin* with the destruction of the Jewish State and Church, and to *end* at the end of all things in the present world. Of the first great event, the destruction of Jerusalem, he precisely declared that it was very near; so near that that generation should not pass away, till all belonging to it was fulfilled:—and so it happened even to the letter. “But of *that* (concluding) day and hour,” he said, “knoweth no man, no not the angels that are in heaven, neither the Son; but the Father.” In the mean time it was his and his heavenly Father’s will, that the Apostles and all their followers should regard it as *possibly*, or even *probably* near. “Watch,” therefore, he says, “and pray that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man;—And what I say unto you, I say unto *all*, Watch.” For the same reason the prophecies relating to the end of the world, contained in St. John’s Apocalypse, and other writings of the Apostles, are all carefully expressed in language which *might* be fulfilled, either at an earlier, or at a much later period. “That day,”

says St. Paul, "shall not come except" certain remarkable events shall have preceded it;—but those events (a great departure from the true faith of the Gospel, and a sad display of prevailing wickedness and impiety) were of such a nature, that they might either have taken place within a few years, or have been protracted during several centuries. For the duration of these events St. John indeed assigns certain terms of time;—but then he denominates them periods of *days*; and few, (I believe) if any, persons ever thought of taking a day as the prophetic symbol for a year, until so many years had elapsed, that they might likewise apprehend the periods assigned to have nearly reached their conclusion. And with such admirable caution are these prophecies framed, that *even now* the same salutary uncertainty remains. For, supposing it to be at length absolutely certain that a prophetic day signifies a year;—still, from the peculiar manner in which the prophetic periods are dated, from the room left for doubt whether several periods were to succeed each other, or to be more or less synchronical, and from other circumstances of an ambiguous complexion, no man can undertake to *determine* when the end will be. It may still be comparatively remote:—it may be also, (for every word of prophecy might thus be accomplished) before. "THIS generation shall have passed away."

"The end of all things," said St. Peter therefore—"the end of all things," may the minister of the same Lord now say—"is at hand;"—not that it *must* come to day, or to morrow, or within any precisely determinable time; but that it

may, may probably, soon arrive. "Be ye therefore sober," temperate with respect to all the enjoyments of life, "and watch" with minds awake and collected "unto prayer"—the employment best fitted for the anticipation of a holier state and the more immediate presence of God.

The certain prospect of death indeed at no very remote period ought, unquestionably, to affect us deeply, and exercise a powerful influence over the whole course of our life. Were "the days of our age" invariably three or four score or a hundred years, reason would still direct us to make good use of all our appointed time; to "consider the end," and do all things with a deliberate view to their final events. Nor could there be any just doubt concerning the *kind* of life which even in that case it would behove us to pursue. For, setting aside all other considerations, what but a virtuous and holy life could we conceive calculated to produce a desirable futurity? Did we not even look forwards *for ourselves*—did we not extend our view to our personal existence in a world to come—still the good man is the only one who leaves any thing good behind him here. "Justice and benevolence," as the Roman statesman and moralist well reminds his readers, *alone* obtain the esteem and love of those with whom we live; *alone* constitute the name and character which can be honored by posterity. By such qualities also, *alone*, carefully communicated to our children, and others under our influence, our worth survives our dissolution; and thus, according to the natural course of things, the consoling

promises of the Royal Poet receive their accomplishment,—“The generation of the upright shall be blessed; and his righteousness endureth for ever.” But reason and revelation coincide in leading us to anticipate another world; for which therefore the present life ought evidently to be regarded as a state of preparation. And for a happy futurity surely it is inconceivable that any kind of life, but that in which sanctity and virtue have become habitual, should prepare and capacitate the soul. Were we then *sure* of reaching the *furthest* bound of human life, wisdom would still admonish us—“The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch-unto prayer!”

But how little probability is there that we—that any particularised individual among us—should attain to such an age! “Few,” we well know, “are they who find it.” In youth, in maturer years, in all parts of the successive periods of life, men are seen to die. They disappear from the earth: their name and character, such as they may have become, irrevocably fixed in this world; and (as far as we can see) their state and destiny in the world of spirits as irreparably decided. Who then, that justly considers these things, does not feel himself deeply affected by them? Who does not often hear a warning voice—as if a messenger had come to him from the other world—that “the end of all things is at hand;” that there is no time to be lost; that he has none (not a day,) to waste on frivolous vanities, still less to abuse in low and polluting pleasures; that neither the enjoyments nor the cares of this life should be suffered to

engross his mind; but that he should make a sober and temperate use of the various objects of sense, and by the habitual practice of devotion keep himself prepared for his removal to the eternal state, whenever the time may come?

Such are the reflections naturally suggested by the ordinary uncertainties of our mortal life; reflections which the unexpected departure of our friends or neighbours is calculated, and doubtless intended, to excite; reflections which their disappearance for ever from the throng and business of life ought to invest with awful solemnity. Here (should we reflect)—as we miss them in the public way, from amongst the assemblies of men, above all as we look upon their vacant place within the house of prayer;—here they were the other day, and now they are gone; irrecoverably, unchangeably, everlastingly gone. Oh! how great does the importance now appear of the life they led on earth! If they were characterised by any moral obliquity, how painful, how distressing, the remembrance. No good or happy effect, we all see and feel, can have been produced by such causes; nay we know not how to dwell upon the thought, and can only turn for relief, with vague and indefinable hopes, to the infinite mercy of Almighty God, and “the blood” which was “shed for the sins of the world.” But, on the other hand, what comfort and encouragement do we derive from the contemplation of departed goodness! The upright and just, the kind and benevolent, the charitable and merciful, leave in our hearts a cheerful and lovely image. And if their social virtues have been sanctified by a spirit of pure and fervent piety;

if we have seen them "doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with their God;" we then behold them assuredly delivered from all evil, "arrayed in white robes and palms in their hands," admitted "before the throne of God," and "serving him day and night in his" heavenly "temple." The inference for ourselves is obvious and impressive. We are mortal, as they were; we hold our lives by as frail a tenure; another week, or another day, may number *us* among those who *have* been; and fix our character among men, and our fate in the eternal world, just as irrevocably as theirs have been fixed. Now then let us consider whether the prospect is such as to satisfy our minds. If now called away, would we leave a memory which survivors ought to cherish; and would our spirits anticipate an eternal peace and serenity?—And if such considerations are unsatisfactory—if they bring ungrateful convictions on our conscience, let them by all means produce their proper effect on our lives: let them arouse us to a thorough examination of our disposition and conduct, with a determination to reform whatever shall be wrong: let us "redeem the time," and by the mercies of Christ secure the everlasting redemption of our souls.

There are periods when it pleases God to visit mankind with peculiar judgments; and through one of these we are evidently passing. A dire disease has been seen to fall, like a blast from heaven, on various regions of the earth, sweeping as it were over its appointed space, and destroying with almost inconceivable rapidity the powers of life. Many a spot around us, some

for the second time, have been marked by its dreadful ravages; and, although the apparent physical causes of its introduction and extension may be less observable among us, it would still be wrong and presumptuous to imagine ourselves exempt from danger. The moral causes—if levity and thoughtlessness, if intemperance and profligacy, if impiety and profaneness, if a life notoriously regardless of its final account—if these are admitted as sufficient reasons for an extraordinary intervention of Providence, the moral causes, it cannot be denied, exist among us in formidable force. Well then may this disease be regarded as a special messenger from heaven—an “angel of destruction,” alas, to some, but charged with a message of peculiar mercy to the rest; calling us all to serious reflection, repentance and amendment of life. Oh! let the call penetrate our hearts; and, knowing not how near “the end of all things” may be, let us “be sober and watch unto prayer.”

The true force, however, of the admonition before us certainly lies in this;—that God hath appointed another world to supersede the present state of things, and has left us in utter uncertainty when he will effect the mighty change; that it may come any day, and the day in which it does come will be a “day of judgment”—a day of discrimination between the good and the bad—when “these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” For this day the dead are represented as waiting, either in trembling fear, or in joyful hope; for this the living are required to stand prepared by spending every day as if it might

be the last. May we "have grace" to act agreeably to these most momentous truths! May we, one and all, become sober and serious;—laying a due restraint on our appetites and passions; regulating our whole conduct by the rules of reason and religion; withdrawing, as far as the duties of our station will permit, from scenes of dissipation and profligacy; and firmly resisting the temptations which it may not be possible entirely to avoid. And may we "watch unto prayer"—devoutly uniting in the supplications of the Church, and maintaining a constant and holy communion with heaven in private. Thus should we be prepared for all events, because prepared for "the end of all;" and might hope to meet the severest trials with humble fortitude—shewing to others, and enjoying in ourselves, the incomparable excellence of Christian faith and hope; the moral dignity and happiness of that man, whose "*heart standeth fast, trusting in the Lord.*"

THE STILL SMALL VOICE.

I KINGS XIX. 11, 12.

Behold the Lord passed by; and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

THE Scriptures contain no explanation of this most remarkable and ever memorable manifestation of the Lord. It was intended to make its own impression on the mind of Elijah, and is left to work its own effect on those who read his history. Probably therefore we should not do right, if we were to affix to it any one precise signification; to confine it to the circumstances and events by which the Lord was made known in the Prophet's time; or to consider it as directly prophetic of any which have since occurred. It is rather significative of the way in which God generally reveals himself to men, and in which they should look for such discoveries. Doubtless however it had an especial reference to the state of the Prophet's mind, and has been recorded for our admonition and instruction. We are therefore at liberty to consider the general ideas which it may seem naturally to convey; and apply them to Elijah and the scenes through which he was passing, as also to the dispensations of divine government which more particularly concern ourselves.

The general ideas which the passage naturally conveys are, I conceive, such as these:—that God does not so fully reveal himself by the more violent displays of his power, as by the calmer and more silent intimations of his will. The devastating wind, the destructive earthquake, and the consuming fire, go “before the Lord,” and awaken a thoughtless world to his majesty and wrath; but his good and gracious counsels, the plan which he has formed, and the object which he pursues when all opposition is overthrown, the works of human pride levelled in the dust, and sin and “sinners consumed out of the earth;”—these are understood by that man only who listens to the “still small voice,” by which the Lord speaks to his waiting and obedient servants. In a certain sense indeed the Lord is in the wind, the earthquake and the fire; for all such things are the effects of his will, and consequently manifestations, in a measure, of his nature; but if we regarded these alone, we should form but a very imperfect, and in fact a very wrong, notion of God. Wisdom and goodness are his most essential attributes, his darling perfections, his delight and glory: when these are revealed to the soul, it learns to view mercy as prevailing against judgment; learns that the Almighty afflicts in order to correct, lays low to raise and establish, and (in a sense it may be said,) destroys to revive and save for ever.

1. Let us now apply these ideas to the case and circumstances of Elijah. This great Prophet was raised up to restore the knowledge and worship of God in Israel at a time of almost universal ignorance and apostacy. For this

purpose he was ordained, not only to publish the Lord's word, but to be the minister of his justice and his mercy. He was first commissioned to make this declaration to Ahab, the idolatrous king, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word;" and a long drought and most distressing famine confirmed the truth of his pretensions. At length, "in the third year," when the people might have been supposed to be thoroughly humbled, and prepared to make a proper account of the mercy, "the word of the Lord came to Elijah, (who had fled to the neighbouring country of Zidon for a scanty sustenance) saying, Go, shew thyself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." But that the impression might be the stronger, and the people at once (if possible) weaned from their chief and leading sin, the Lord determined at the same time to make a signal manifestation of his infinite superiority over all the false gods whom they ignorantly worshipped, and enable his Prophet to execute due judgment on the prophets or priests of the predominant idolatry. When the fire had fallen from heaven and consumed Elijah's sacrifice, so that the people fell on their faces and said, "The Lord—he is the God," and when all the incorrigible prophets of Baal had been put to death at his command;—then "the Lord sent a gracious rain and refreshed his inheritance."

Elijah might now reasonably expect a great change in his circumstances, as well as in the principles and character of his countrymen. He might suppose idolatry entirely destroyed, and

look for due respect and honor as the distinguished Prophet and minister of the Lord of Hosts. But how different was his experience! Jezebel, the heathen wife of Ahab, the chief author and supporter of the idolatrous worship in Israel, still retained her influence, and was still unreclaimed. Immediately after the astonishing miracle which God had wrought in confirmation of the Prophet's word, and the execution of justice according to the divine law on the prophets of Baal, the haughty and infatuated queen sent this message to Elijah, "So let the Gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow at this time." We might have thought that Elijah would securely defy the menace; that he would have placed his trust in that God, who had so recently and so victoriously maintained the cause of his servant, and made him apparently the converter of the whole people. But it was not so. Whether he sought in vain for some express promise of protection; whether the Lord was pleased to inform him that on this occasion he must not expect miraculous assistance; or whether he was merely left to his own *natural* weakness:—these things we know not;—but we are distinctly told that he had the same apprehension, and pursued the same course, which any ordinary man would have done. He "fled for his life;" he took refuge in "the wilderness;" and was there so oppressed with despondency and sorrow, as to utter this prayer, "It is enough now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." At that season of depression, he seems to have imagined

that all his labours and sufferings, all the divine truths which he had taught, and the grand miracles which had accompanied them, were in vain;—Jezebel remained in power, and would very soon, as the distempered mind of Elijah foreboded, pervert the people again, and renew the abominations which he had suppressed.

But the Prophet was not deserted. An angel supplied him with food; the same heavenly messenger led him in safety through a journey of forty days; and the power of God defended and supported him until he arrived at Horeb, or Sinai, “the mount of God”—where he had originally revealed himself to the children of Israel. There the word of the Lord came to him, and demanded, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” His answer fully disclosed the state of his mind. Overlooking the late most memorable transactions, as if they had never been, he says, “I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away.” Then the remarkable scene followed which the text describes. But what are the words uttered by the “still small voice” which bespoke the immediate presence of Jehovah? They were of a character widely different from the Prophet’s apprehensions. They fully upheld him in his high and awful office. “Go,” said the Lord, “return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus; and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu, the son of Nimshi, shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha,

the son of Shaphat, shalt thou anoint to be Prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

Now here I think we may, without much difficulty, perceive the impressions, which this peculiar manifestation of Jehovah was calculated to make on Elijah's mind.

It would therefore naturally tend to compose his feelings. Was there any thing in him corresponding with the wind, the earthquake, or the fire? Was there any thing violent, agitating, or indicative of undue warmth of temper? Was the Prophet exasperated and indignant at the treatment he received? Did he tremble with rage at the failure, as he then appeared to consider it, of his attempts to "turn the heart" of the people "back again" to the Lord? Was he ready to call for vengeance on his enemies, and consume them in his wrath? "*God was not*" in such passions. They were the workings of human nature, not of the holy Spirit in the heart. It was the Prophet's duty not to give himself up to such impetuous feelings, but to wait for the "still small voice" of reason, deliberation and patience.

But the scene might be yet more instructive to Elijah. He was a "man of God," and really anxious that the name of the Lord should be glorified, and his will obeyed. Doubtless he could say with the strictest sincerity, "*I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts,*"

although even *in him* human infirmity would mingle with what was holy and divine. He had therefore, we may suppose, ardently hoped and fondly trusted that the late displays of divine power and justice would have effected an universal and lasting reformation in Israel; and now that he so soon found the contrary, he might have thought it worthy of the Lord,—he might have been disposed to make it the object of his prayer—that the storm of God’s anger, the earthquake of his indignation, or the fire of his wrath, should terrify or destroy the incorrigible nation. Such thoughts were not altogether wrong; but they were hasty and indiscriminate. Too many of the people were indeed abandoned to iniquity, and, notwithstanding such partial and temporary repentances as Elijah had lately witnessed, would become in time ripe for destruction; but the “still small voice” of divine wisdom and goodness pronounced otherwise concerning a select number. That same voice therefore decreed the destruction of the former when the time should arrive, chose the fittest instruments; and appointed Elijah himself to designate them to their office. But, with respect to the “seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal,” these, said the voice, “I have reserved to myself;”—in the midst of terror and destruction they should be safe. The invasions of Hazeael might alarm them; the subversion of the kingdom by Jehu might fill them with consternation; the wars and famines, and other calamities which would happen according to the word of Elisha, might threaten to destroy them:—but whatever they might apprehend, whatever they might suffer,

they were the "reserved" of the Lord, and he would be their sure and eternal deliverer.

1. Thus this peculiar manifestation of the Deity had a direct and powerful tendency to tranquilize and settle the Prophet's mind. It taught him to wait with patience for the Lord's time, to judge as he judges, and to place a full confidence in the equity of his proceedings. We find him therefore immediately afterwards dismissing his fears, leaving the unprofitable solitude to which he had fled, and in the face of all his enemies steadily and undauntedly pursuing the path assigned him.

2. Let us now attempt an application of the same principles to the dispensations of divine government which more particularly concern ourselves. The methods, by which God makes himself known to us, are his ordinary providence and extraordinary revelation;—and with respect to each of these the scene before us is instructive.

For, with respect to the ordinary course of divine providence, as it is carried on by the operations of nature, very imperfect and erroneous indeed would be our ideas of God, if we regarded only the stormy "wind, the earthquake, and the fire." Such things, we know, are set at work by him; they are the instruments of his vengeance on a sinful world; sometimes they appear especially appointed to execute his judgments on particular nations or individuals; they spread alarm and dismay through the hearts of men, and awaken them to the power and justice of the Lord. But "*the Lord is not in them;*" they perform his "*strange work*"—the work which sin, alas! renders necessary, but which

would be otherwise altogether foreign to the nature or will of God. “His delight is in blessing, not in cursing;” in preserving the world which he has made, not in afflicting or destroying it; in making his creatures happy, not in terrifying or consuming them. The “*still small voice*,” which breathes in the healthy and refreshing breeze; the testimony borne by the beneficial order of nature; the comfortable assurance which the attentive observer perpetually receives from the creation around him;—the Lord saying in his heart, “While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease:”—this tells us much more of God—this gives us a far better notion of him who is “good to all, and his tender mercies over all his works.” Just so in human governments;—it is not the terrors of war or of justice;—it is not the alarms which may be spread through the world, or the punishments inflicted on public enemies or transgressors at home; which constitute good government: but the things in which every wise governor far more delights are those measures which promote virtue and peace; viz. industry, order, and the quiet employment of the several powers and talents of the people.

The same observations hold with respect to the extraordinary revelations which God has made of himself. Every dispensation of God indeed must have its judgments, as well as its mercies, until sin and sinners be no more; but there is this difference between the two great dispensations with which we are acquainted, the

Law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ,—that in the Law *judgment* is more apparent, and *mercy* in the Gospel; and consequently we learn more—much more—of *God* from the “still small voice” of Christ, than from the storm, the earthquake and the fire, which literally attended the promulgation of the Law on Mount Sinai, and in the spiritual sense prevail throughout the whole system of Moses. In fact the severities of the Law answered the same purpose with the wind, the earthquake, and the fire of Elijah; they went before the Lord; they prepared the way for Emmanuel; they drew the attention of mankind to the divine wisdom and goodness about to be manifested in the Gospel. For when he appeared, who was “God manifest in the flesh,” how remarkably different was his appearance from the circumstances which accompanied the promulgation of the Law. A man, unattended with pomp or ceremony, working miracles indeed, but those of a merciful and bountiful kind, in gentle and encouraging accents, is heard to say—“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” This is the voice of Christ; yet this “still small voice” pronounces great and awful things, as did that which was heard by the Prophet. It foretold a succession of calamitous inflictions upon the Jewish nation, and upon the world, until both should be destroyed for their unbelief and disobedience. But like that it speaks with confidence of a remnant who should

be left :—“ he that endureth to the end shall be saved : my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me ; and I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish : be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.”

We are now living under the dispensation of the Spirit. Since the ascension of Christ, the Holy Ghost has been the immediate governor of the Church. And in his operations also a distinction may be observed, not unlike that which presented itself to the mind of the Prophet. At his first descent, there came “ a rushing mighty wind,” “ cloven tongues as of fire” rested on the Apostles, and they were enabled to awaken the attention of the world by the exercise of miraculous powers. But these were to be of transient duration ; they were the works of the Lord, but “ the Lord was not” in them ; they preceded “ the still small voice” with which the Apostles, as inspired and directed by the Spirit, communicated divine truth to their attentive hearers. And is there not somewhat of the same kind to be observed in the internal operations of the same Spirit ? Are there not often excited within us *violent convictions*, “ rending (as it were) the mountains, and breaking in pieces the rocks before the Lord ?” Are there not agitations and convulsions, overthrowing our proud plans, changing the current of our purposes, and producing great alterations in the whole face of our characters ? Are there not fires of holy indignation, and zeal, and revenge against our sinful passions ? All these are works of the Spirit of God, and prepare us to receive

his gracious influence; but yet "the Lord is not" in them, as he is in "the still small voice" which whispers to our understandings and our consciences when we are brought to listen with undisturbed attention, and are disposed, without resistance or hesitation, to obey and follow his holy admonitions.

There are probably many interpositions of divine justice and mercy yet to be expected in the affairs of the Church and of the world; but certainly one great proceeding remains, which concludes the dispensations of the government of God, as far as they have yet been revealed:—the judgment day. Then Christ will be seen in all the glory of his power, and will certainly come to "take vengeance on those who know not God nor obey his Gospel." Then will be the wind—the earthquake—and the fire. All rocks and mountains will be rent and broken to dust; the earth will reel to and fro; the world itself and all things therein will be the prey of an universal conflagration. All nations will be assembled before the Son of man; and his own voice will pronounce judgment—even "everlasting punishment"—upon the incorrigibly wicked. Yet these are not the things in which he delights; they are necessary, and, with reference to their execution by divine power, "God" is called "a consuming fire;" but still, if I may so speak, "the Lord is not in them." Hence we find that the Apostles, after the example of their divine master, dwell not so much on these terrific scenes; but hasten forwards to the final glories of the world to come. "Nevertheless," they say, although God be just, and vengeance must fall on

the head of the wicked, "we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness"—where "God himself shall be with men; and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; for the former things (will have) passed away."

In conclusion, let me request you to observe who are the persons that may expect to hear "*the still small voice.*" They are not the vain and thoughtless children of the world, who fall in with the prevailing customs and fashions of their time, consult their present interests or pleasures, and serve mammon instead of God. They are not the people who, when arrested by any striking event, become serious, abandon their idols, and adopt good principles for a day; but on the morrow return to their former course. They are not even those, who outwardly indeed adhere to the Lord their God, speaking and acting in his name; but indulge ungodly tempers, anger, or envy, or revenge, or discontent. They are not those who still need to be alarmed or subdued by the displays of divine power and vengeance. But they are those servants of the Lord, who calmly watch and patiently wait for the manifestation of his will; who *attend* to him as he speaks by his providence, by his word and ministers, and by the whispers of his Spirit; and who are ready to go and to do, as he shall be pleased to direct them. These shall understand the way of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; these shall know and enjoy his goodness; to them he shall reveal himself more and more, until, having walked and held happy converse with God here below, they shall be admitted to

his unclouded presence above, "see him as he is, and know as they are known."

Let us then, my Brethren, if we would be partakers of such blessed privileges, cultivate continually such a disposition. Let us, in the first place, resolutely forsake the sins and follies of the world, and say in our hearts, "The Lord—he is the God; the Lord he is the God!" Let us, in the next place, restrain and suppress every turbulent and unruly passion, that we may pay a due attention to "the still small voice" of the Lord. Let us, like Elijah, have our solemn seasons for "wrapping the face in the mantle, and going out and standing in the entering of the cave"—excluding from our view all earthly objects, leaving our secular cares, and communing singly with our own hearts and with our God. And, after the Prophet's example, let us directly and fully perform the commandments of the Lord; placing a firm and entire trust in his faithfulness, love and power; and unchangeably assured that, in going the way and doing the will of God, he will "deliver us from every evil work, and preserve us to his heavenly kingdom."

THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

PSALM XLIV. 1.

*We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us
what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.*

IT is the great characteristic of a religious man, according to the oldest and most venerable of historians, that he "walks with God." Wherever such a man goes, he feels himself in the presence of the Being who created, sustains and governs the world: that awful Being he considers it his duty to bear continually in mind, and regard all things with reference to him. Nor merely in the system and course of nature does the religious character perceive and adore the Deity: he recognises also the intervention of the Most High in the affairs of men; of private individuals, and of collective bodies. In no respect are the sacred writers of Israel more remarkably distinguished, than for their constant acknowledgments of the Supreme Being as the God of their nation: the history of that nation, as narrated by them, is a history of Divine Providence. Jehovah is represented as their creator and father; their guide, protector and deliverer; their lawgiver and king; their prophet, priest and judge. Him they celebrate in all their national poetry; his perfections they glorify; in his presence they rejoice as the source of all their enjoyments; his absence they mourn as the cause of all their sufferings. And was this adorable Being the God of Israel alone?

In a peculiar sense he was; but their own inspired Prophets have taught us, even every nation under heaven, to regard him also as *our* God. "Have we not," we may enquire in the words of a member of that holy company, "one father, and hath not one God created us?" And in the words of another we may reply, nay in those of the Almighty himself to that peculiar people, "Thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called."

Of all the nations among which the globe has been divided in modern times, none surely has greater reason to look up to God with reverence and gratitude, than that which constitutes the head of the British empire. And in addressing a congregation of the established Church of England, I shall scarcely be thought to act an invidious and unbecoming part, if I take a view of the history of our country as illustrative of the wisdom and goodness of Providence; and remind my fellow countrymen, as the pious and patriotic Psalmist reminded the people of Israel, that "We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us, what thou, O God, didst in their days, in the times of old."

The origin of ancient nations, except those of which sacred history treats, is lost in obscurity; nor have we any authentic account of the people who inhabited Albion before the invasion of Julius Cæsar. Certain however it is, that in days of very remote antiquity a race of men capable of forming great designs, and of carrying those designs into effect, must have been planted in the island by Him, who "separated the sons of Adam, and divided to the nations their

inheritance." Of those men, and of their mighty undertakings, **STONEHENGE** remains the monument and emblem. In the midst of an immense plain, where to this day the ploughshare hath rarely broken the glebe, the traveller surveys with astonishment and admiration stones of almost incredible magnitude, some fallen on the ground, others still standing in their places, which could never have been moved without mighty force, directed by a mechanical knowledge hardly to be imagined of a barbarous age. These are the relics of vast circles and ovals, which in all probability once formed the metropolitan temple. By means of which no certain idea can now be formed, these huge blocks of stone were raised out of distant quarries, conveyed to their present site, hewn with the instruments of the mason, and some fixed upright as pillars on the ground, on whose heads others, like prodigious architraves, were accurately mortised. Examining these gigantic remains of the ancient inhabitants of our country, with a collection in my hand of all that historians and antiquaries have said concerning them, I cannot describe my feelings when I found the earliest of all these writers totally uninformed on the subject of their origin :—the very age of the world when Stonehenge was built, and the name of the people who built it, were unknown alike to Norman, Saxon and Roman records.

It appears however from the observations and experience of Cæsar and other Roman commanders, who, with all the advantages of superior discipline, and the long tried valour and conduct of legions which conquered the world,

hardly succeeded in effecting the subjugation of Britain, that our aboriginal ancestors were men of no ordinary cast. "At Cæsar's coming hither," says our Milton, great in British history, as well as in heroic poetry. "such, likeliest, were the Britons, as the writers of those times and their own actions represent them; in courage, and warlike readiness to take advantage by ambush or sudden onset, NOT INFERIOR TO THE ROMANS, NOR CASSIBELAN TO CÆSAR; in weapons, arms, and the skill of encamping, embattling and fortifying (alone) overmatched." "Their dealing," says Diodorus, the Greek writer of ancient Sicily, "was plain and simple without fraud." And so striking was the magnanimity of their prince Caractacus, when misfortune had betrayed him into the hands of the Romans, that the Emperor Claudius felt it impossible to keep so generous a spirit in chains.

But it is especially to be observed that even in those times the island was celebrated for its religion; a religion which, whatever might be its faults, was certainly of a sublime and ennobling character. Amidst their groves of enduring oak the Britons were taught by their Druids to aspire after *immortal* honors; and such was the reputation of these priests, that Britain, as we are assured by Cæsar, became the fountain and school of Druidical learning.

The causes from which our forefathers, in their state of comparative barbarism, attained to such honorable distinction, it is not easy to discover. Something might probably be due to a temperate climate; something to a soil worthy of cultivation, but at the same time requiring it; something to

an insular situation, which threw the inhabitants on their own resources, while it excited them to exploration and enterprise; and something to the bold and hardy spirits of the first settlers from the neighbouring coasts. After all however it is evident, that there must have arisen among those CHILDREN OF GOMER (for that is their true and original name, preserved to this day in *Cumberland* and *Cambria*, and by which their descendants in Wales have always distinguished themselves and their language) men of uncommon talents, by whom the minds of the rest were formed to achievements surpassing those of their continental brethren. And to what shall we attribute the rise of these men,—these spirits of ætherial temper, the Merlins, the Arthurs, and Ambroses of ancient fable and legend,—but to the favouring Providence, which even then destined our country to be pre-eminent among the nations of the earth?

But the mere fact of the gradual subjugation of Britain by the Romans may be allowed to prove that there were faults in the aboriginal inhabitants, which required the correcting aids of civilization. For this purpose therefore, we may presume, it pleased God to permit that subjugation; and Britain continued under the dominion of the Roman Emperors, until she had derived all the benefit which such a connexion was capable of conferring. During that period the Britons learned the arts of internal communication, fortification and civil architecture; to the present day the great roads may be traced by which the Romans traversed the country in all directions, the principal cities bear names

derived from legions once encamped within their walls, and the remains of proconsular villas indicate how well the conquerors instructed their subjects in the comforts and elegancies of domestic life. Numerous, without doubt, must have been the advantages attendant on the residence of governors such as AGRICOLA; who, we are informed by his son-in-law and biographer, Tacitus, after having reduced the southern part of the island to tranquil submission, employed the happy season of peace “in the most salutary designs;” teaching and promoting, like a common father, the institutions and customs of civil life. “The inhabitants, rude and scattered, and so prone to war, he privately persuaded and publicly assisted to build houses, temples, and places of public assembly; and by praising the active and reproving the sluggish, he substituted for necessity an honourable emulation. Moreover he caused the young nobility to be educated in liberal arts; and by preferring the native genius of Britain before the studied acquirements of Gaul, induced them to cultivate Roman eloquence, whereas they had previously held the language in abhorrence.”

One benefit however there was, far surpassing all other advantages, for the communication of which to Britain the arms, the arts and science of Rome were God’s providential preparation: I mean, the introduction of THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. For while Britain continued subject to Rome, Christianity prevailed even in the Roman camp. And, whatever authority might belong to the British Lles or Lucius, by his countrymen called *Lleufor Mawr*, or the *Great*

Light, whom ancient chronicles represent to have first given a national establishment to that divine religion, which his ancestor, Bran, the father of Caractacus had brought with him from Rome;—certain it is that Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, was in Britain invested with the imperial purple. Under him the British Church naturally enjoyed peculiar protection and favor, and Christianity appears to have been propagated throughout all the Roman Provinces in Britain. Hence we find three British Prelates, Ivor of York, Restitutus of London, and Adelphius of Caerleon, attending the Synod of Arles, which Constantine convened in the year of our Lord 314. The great Council of Nice, in the year 325, was also attended by Bishops from Britain; as again was the Council of Rimini in the year 359.

Nor were the Christians of Britain undistinguished amidst the newly converted world. They discovered on several occasions a commendable regard for the truth and purity of their faith, and much of the genuine spirit of the Gospel. In a letter to Athanasius and the Alexandrian Bishops they declared their approbation of the Nicene creed, and afterwards made vigilant exertions to preserve their Church from the novel doctrine of Pelagius. We may justly admire their superiority to worldly lucre, when they refused a maintenance which Constantius had offered their Bishops, desiring to support their independence of any foreign power. The ancient *Triads* pronounce “Dewi, Padarn and Teilo, the Blessed Guests of Britain, because they visited the houses of rich and poor, native and

foreign, accepting neither money, meat, nor drink, but teaching the Christian faith without fee or reward;—on the contrary, distributing money, food and clothing to the poor.” The same venerable memorials reckon Cadwalader the last of “*the Three Blessed Kings*, because he granted the privilege of his land, and all his property, to the faithful, who fled from the unbelieving Saxons, and from the unbrotherly ones, who sought to slay them.”

Civilization however does not maintain the standard of morals; and the religion of the Holy Jesus, although generally embraced by the Britons under the auspices of the Roman eagles, was not sufficiently established to preserve them from the vices which ruined Rome itself. Debilitated by luxury and sloth, and lacerated by civil discord, Britain, when abandoned by the Roman legions, felt itself incapable of defence against barbarous invaders. However bitterly therefore we may deplore the miseries and desolation spread over the land at the first introduction of the Saxons; we cannot but acknowledge that the lively, active, resolute and undaunted spirit of such a people was required to raise to high pre-eminence the future character of England. The testimony of Gildas, the authentic British historian, who lived at Bath in the middle of the sixth century, and describes the scenes which had immediately surrounded him, leaves no doubt of the too general corruption of the Britons. The memorable remark of the Great Gregory, that the youthful *Angli*, whom he saw at Rome, would be most fit to join the hallelujahs of the *Angelic* choir, affords a good idea of

the personal superiority of the Anglo-Saxons; and the form of Christianity, which in consequence of that observation they received from the ancient capital of Christendom, must be acknowledged to have possessed advantages over the pure, but comparatively unsystematic principles previously disseminated in the land. The mode of their conversion, as represented by the venerable Bede and other most ancient writers, is truly worthy of recital; showing, as it does, the candid and honest disposition of our English forefathers even in their heathen days, and illustrating the wisdom and goodness of God in establishing THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND on solid and durable foundations,

In the fourth year of his succession to the Papal seat (says the learned and pious Northumbrian Monk; that is, in the year of our Lord 596,) Gregory, admonished by divine instinct, sent Augustine, whom he had designed for Bishop of the English nation, accompanied by other zealous Monks, to preach to them the Gospel. The Abbot (for such was Augustine appointed over the rest,) and his associates arrived safely at the isle of Thanet, in number about forty, besides some of the French nation whom they brought with them as interpreters. Ethelbert, the Saxon king of Kent, to whom Augustine sent a new and wondrous message, stating that he had come from Rome to proffer heaven and eternal happiness by the knowledge of another God than the Saxons knew, directed them to remain where they had landed, and to be furnished with necessaries, while he should consult on what was fit to be done. After some days

coming himself into the island, Ethelbert selected a place of conference under the open sky. They on the other side, when invited to his presence, advancing for their standard a silver cross and a graphic representation of our Saviour, came slowly forward, singing solemn litanies; 'till sitting down at the king's desire, they preached to him, and all in that assembly, the tidings of salvation. Whom having heard attentively, the King thus replied: "Fair indeed and ample are the promises you bring, and such things as present the appearance of much good; yet, since they are new and uncertain, I cannot hastily give my assent, quitting the religion which, from my ancestors, with all the English, I have for so many years retained. Nevertheless, because you are strangers, and have undertaken so long a journey, to impart to us the knowledge of things, which I am persuaded you believe to be the truest and the best, you may be assured we will not repay you with any molestation, but rather provide you the most friendly entertainment in our power: nor do we forbid you, whomsoever you can by preaching, to gain to your belief." He accordingly assigned them a residence in Canterbury, his chief city; and made provision for their maintenance, with free permission to preach their doctrine wherever they thought proper. By which, and by the example of their holy life, a life spent in prayer, fasting, and continual labour in the conversion of souls, they gained many; on whose bounty and that of the king, receiving what was necessary only, they subsisted. There stood without the city an ancient Church, built in honor of St.

Martin while the Romans remained in the country; in which Bertha the queen (for she, we are informed, being the French king's daughter, had been a Christian before her marriage,) usually went out to pray. Here also the Roman missionaries began to preach, baptize and openly perform divine worship. But when the king himself, convinced by their good life and miracles (says the ancient historian) became a Christian and was baptized, which happened within a year of their arrival, then multitudes daily, conforming to the example of their prince, thought it an honor to be reckoned among those of his faith;—ten thousand, we are told, were baptized in the single year 599. To whom Ethelbert indeed principally showed his favor, but compelled none; for so, the Saxon divine assures us, had he been taught by them who were both the instructors and authors of his faith, that the Christian religion must be voluntarily embraced, not professed by compulsion. At length Augustine, being advanced to the dignity of Archbishop of the English, recovered from its ruins and profane uses a Christian church in Canterbury, built of old by the Romans, which he dedicated by the name of Christ's Church; and adjoining it he founded a seat for himself and his successors: a monastery also on the east side of the city, where Ethelbert at his instigation built St. Peter's, and enriched it with great endowments, to be a place of burial as well for the archbishops as the kings of Kent. The number of Christians began now to increase so fast, that Augustine, ordaining two of his assistants, Mellitus and Justus, as subordinate

bishops, sent them out to the work of their ministry. And Mellitus by preaching converted the east Saxons, over whom Sebert, the nephew of Ethelbert, by that powerful monarch's permission then reigned; whose conversion to congratulate, Ethelbert founded the great church of St. Paul in London to be their bishop's cathedral; the same Mellitus having the satisfaction but a few years after of consecrating St. Peter's church and abbey at Westminster, founded by the piety and zeal of his more immediate sovereign Sebert. Justus also had his cathedral founded at Rochester; and this, as well as St. Paul's, was endowed by Ethelbert with fair possessions.

Thus, according to the most authentic testimony, was *the Church of England* happily established on the mouldering ruins of its British predecessor. So honorable to all the parties concerned, so perfectly agreeable to reason and nature, was the origin of that religious establishment; which, patronized by successive dynasties, cordially embraced by Saxons, Danes and Normans, justly receiving temporal support in grateful return for the spiritual good which it was found to communicate, and improving in knowledge, purity and utility, with the progress of the national mind, survives the changes of more than twelve hundred years, and has now its bishops and cathedrals on the banks of the St. Lawrence and the Ganges.

But to the Saxons our country is indebted for other great and lasting benefits. The free institutions to which they had been accustomed in their native wilds, their *Synoths* and *Wittena-*

gemotes, or conferences of wise men, were the original source of our English *Parliaments*. The same Ethelbert, who first established Christianity among them, is recorded to have given laws and statutes, after the example of Roman Emperors, written with the advice of his sagest counsellors, and in the English tongue. These laws, improved by Ina, enlarged by Alfred, and collected into a systematic code by Edward the Confessor, form in their substance the *Common Law* of England, on which all our subsequent legislation is founded. Literature also found its best patrons among the Anglo-Saxon kings. To them England owes her first schools for liberal education; Sigebert, king of the East Angles, having laid the foundation of the University of Cambridge; while Oxford justly glories in her founder—the truly learned, wise, pious, brave and good—the incomparable and almost perfect Alfred.

The Danish invasions and the Norman conquest, were little more than the predominance of active and valiant divisions of the same people, over those who had become comparatively dissolute and enfeebled. The former had at least the good effect of producing a national union and reformation, with all the benefits which England derived from the government of Alfred. The latter, miserable as was the oppression under which our Saxon forefathers groaned for a time, added what was wanting of solidity, dignity and grace to the English Constitution. To the noble Barons, whom the Norman princes called and treated as their *Peers*, we are indebted for the GREAT CHARTER, by which the rights

and liberties of Englishmen were consecrated for all succeeding ages. To the wise policy of those princes themselves we must attribute the privileges of our shires, cities and boroughs, from which resulted in course of time *the House of the Commons* of England. To them, and the spirit of princely magnificence which they diffused, are due the castles, towers and palaces, the cathedrals and parochial churches; where strength and beauty, majesty and elegance, are still seen combined in admirable harmony. From them originated that extraordinary union of valour with humanity, which mitigated the horrors of war, while it raised the English hero to an unexampled height of glory.

Of the great and happy effects produced by these and such like means, it is not necessary to speak at length. Not only have "we heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us," but the whole world is well aware, what Englishmen have been in fields of battle and in courts of justice; in public council and under the domestic roof; in the various pursuits of industry, art and science; in the noble speculations of a sublime philosophy, and the nobler aspirations of a holy faith; and in all the virtues which bless and adorn a people.

In these latter days the effects are most extensively seen and felt. Defects and errors there are and will be in all which belongs to man. But, under the continued blessing of that benign Providence which we are bound most devoutly to acknowledge, our nation has advanced and improved on the deeds and the character of its days of old. THE REFOR-

MATION of the national religion by the happy agreement of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and its final settlement on a basis of faith and order, with an unrestrained liberty of conscience and of worship; the consolidation of the Constitution by *the Bill of Rights*, and other measures for the security of personal freedom and the equal protection of the laws; the peaceful union of the sister kingdoms of Scotland and Ireland, productive as it is (notwithstanding peculiar difficulties in the condition of the latter, which time and patience alone can disembarass,) of mutual strength and prosperity; the display of British spirit and energy at home and abroad, by land and by sea; the diligent cultivation of all the resources of the nation, and the undaunted defence of its independence against the most fearful and deadly hostilities; the wonderful extension of the British name and influence by colonies and commerce, portending I know not what kind of empire over the remotest regions of the globe; and the anxious desire and persevering endeavours of our countrymen to communicate to "all the families of the earth" their own blessings—equal liberties and rights, impartial laws, the comforts and enjoyments which are the fruits of knowledge and virtue in this life, and the animating and consoling hopes of a better through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ :—these are, all and every one, so many consequences of God's ancient providence over the distinguished nation to which it is our high privilege to belong—so many evidences and manifestations of "what HE hath done in the days of our fathers, in the times of old."

What then remains, but that the inheritors of such recollections should adore with grateful devotion the God of their fathers, and call upon their souls to fulfil the duties of the station in which his providence has been pleased to place them? Reflecting on those who have been before us—the Briton, the Roman, the Saxon, Dane and Norman, the wise and great and good of those successive races blended into one nation, —“what manner of persons ought we to be!” Our care it should unquestionably be, to derive all the benefit which the example of our predecessors is calculated to afford; to shun the vices which we may find occasion to deplore, and imitate the virtues for which posterity holds them in honor. And here we cannot hesitate; because our reason, when it looks at characters from a distance, adopts the same general standard of morals. Can we doubt that the men, who have in any age most contributed to the welfare of our country, were the most devout, the most faithful, the most just and benevolent; and that, as far as any have failed in such qualities, they have failed to contribute to their country's good?

But a review of the history of England conveys more peculiar instruction. Not without a divine providence “have we heard (it) with our ears, and our fathers have told us.” In other words, the distinguishing and proper character of a people is derived from hereditary associations. It is natural therefore, it is right, it is agreeable to the mind and will of God, that an Englishman should feel an especial interest in things for which his country has been remarkable. And, among many other things, which are

thus associated with our nature, I conceive it impossible not to feel, that a *King* "*the Vicar of Christ,*"—as our princes of every race were designated from the establishment of Christianity to the Norman conquest, for which "*Defender of the Faith*" and "*Supreme Head of the Church of England*" have not unaptly been substituted since the Reformation; *a national Church under Episcopal government*—which has existed in the island for upwards of fifteen centuries, even as long as Christianity itself; and *a Parliament*—comprising, to use the language of Ina in the first enactment of his reign, "*the advice and consent of all the Bishops and Chiefs, and the Wise men and People of the whole kingdom,*"—are our peculiar heritage. Other institutions may have been better adapted to other nations; we may even admit, as the judicious and candid Hooker did with respect to the reconstruction of the Church of Geneva, that social arrangements on a very different plan may have been the "*wisest devices, if we duly consider what the present state*" of another country might "*require.*" But *our* duty and our happiness it surely is, to adhere, with all the veneration and attachment which long prescription inspires and justifies, to the ancient Constitution of England; the great objects and obligations of which cannot perhaps be more justly expressed, than in the language of our Danish sovereign Canute:—"**FIRST, ABOVE ALL THINGS TO LOVE ONE GOD, AND MAINTAIN ONE CHRISTIAN FAITH UNANIMOUSLY; TO LOVE AND HONOR THE KING; AND TO STUDY ALWAYS, BY EVERY MEANS, HOW TO ADVANCE THE NATIO-**

NAL WELFARE, AND HOW TO EXALT THE TRUE
CHRISTIAN FAITH."

Great cause indeed, the greatest cause, we have for humble gratitude to the God of our Fathers, that "the true Christian faith" has been so firmly established in our country. .But proportionably great is our responsibility to that divine providence, which has given us so exalted a rule of life. And well does it deserve our serious consideration, what account we shall be prepared to give, not merely in the trials which nations and individuals undergo in this world, but at that bar of "the Judge of all the earth," where Britons, Saxons, Danes, who perhaps once perished for their sins, shall "rise up and condemn" the unfaithful and unprofitable of a far more enlightened and highly favoured generation.

