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CHRISTIAN DEVOTION,

CONSISTING OF

DISSERTATIONS ON THE PSALMS.

BY ROBERT REID, A. M.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA.

VOL. I.

After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.

Acts of the Apostles, XV. 16.

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WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA, to wit:

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the second day of August, Anno Domini, 1833, ROBERT REID, of the said District, hath deposited in this Office the title of a Book, the title of which is in the words following, to wit:

"Helps to Christian Devotion, consisting of Dissertations on the Psalms. By Robert Reid, A. M. Minister of the Gospel in Erie, Pennsylvania. After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof; and I will set it up. Acts of the Apostles, XV. 16."

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E. J. ROBERTS,
Clerk of the Western District of Pennsylvania.

PREFACE.



DEVOTION is that exercise of the heart, by which the Christian, having consecrated or set himself apart, to the service and enjoyment of God, comes before him with a true heart; and says with the psalmist; "unto thee O Jehovah, do I lift up my soul." He says, bless Jehovah, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. The christian enters into covenant with God, and he lives to God in the habitual exercise of devotion. If man had not fallen from his primeval state of holiness, he would always have been happy; and his soul would always have been lifted up to God, in the anthems of praise. But man has become ~~ungrateful~~—has forsaken his God—has no steadfast desire to praise him; and has no delight in his communion. Man is naturally dead in sin. He is alive to do evil; but dead to every holy exercise of the heart, and to that holy practice, which is the natural fruit of love to God, and our neighbour. But all who have come to the Lord Jesus in the Gospel, received him as their Saviour, and entered into covenant with him, have a bond of union formed between their hearts and their Redeemer; by which they are drawn ~~after him~~ in the cords of love. As the Father sent him into the world, that he might perform the works of salvation; so he sends his people, that they may perform their Christian duties in the world: as he sanctified himself, or set himself apart, that he might perform the duties, and endure the pains and penalties, which it was necessary he should suffer for their sins; they are sanctified by the influence of his truth on their hearts; and are perpetually devoted to his service. As the son of God is devoted to the

service of his Father, and rejoices always in his favour; so the christian is devoted to the Father and the son. His fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ. He yields himself to God; and presents his body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is his reasonable service.

He is willing and obedient. His service is by no means reluctant. He has the spirit of life, and therefore he delights in obedience. He that comes to Christ has life communicated to him in his coming; and this same life is communicated, in every act of worship, and every duty he attempts to perform. We obey the command by attending to the duty; and we receive life, and power, and comfort from him; and are enabled to advance with cheerfulness and joy. We learn to delight in the law of God after the inward man; to make it our daily study, and to set our hearts upon it. Thus we learn to say with our blessed Lord; my meat and my drink, is to do the will of my heavenly Father, and to accomplish his work. ~~There are many degrees of~~ willingness; but we cannot be said to have any degree of it, until we can say with the apostle; Lord I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest; I will go with thee to prison and to death. But the christian learns to glory in tribulation. He rejoices, that the Redeemer has counted him worthy to suffer for his sake; and he counts all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.— Thus many of the martyrs have been tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. All these are different degrees of devotion; and the highest degree of it is beyond our conception; ~~but~~ it is a high degree of devotion, by which the christian rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

One of the ways which God chooses to try the devotedness of his people, is to bring them into sorrow. He requires that all his people should cast themselves entirely on his care; and trust in him, by taking him for their por-

tion. They must not take that course in life, by which they have the best prospect of obtaining the honours, or the wealth of the world; but that course, by which they shall have the best opportunity of promoting his glory, and the interests of his kingdom. Sometimes he calls them to suffer the loss of all things. In some cases their trials are so severe, that they would prefer death to life, if they had their own choice. So Job declares; my soul chooseth strangling and death, rather than my life. Moses also said to God, in a certain condition of perplexity; "if thou deal thus with me, kill me I pray thee out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness." In such cases of suffering, devotion is a difficult duty; and we are too apt to complain in a way that approaches to murmuring. This was the sin of the Israelites, when they were passing through the wilderness of Sinai; and it is generally the sin of Christians, while they are passing through the wilderness of this world. But God teaches us to devote ourselves to him; and by chastisements, he makes us learn his law. Often the christian cries out, in the tortures of his heart; "how long, Lord, shall thine anger last? Will the Lord cast off forever; will he be favourable no more?" But he still devotes himself to the service of God. He prays and faints not. He waits with patience for the time of deliverance; and at length God hears his cry, and brings him out of his distresses. Then he enjoys the comfort of deliverance. God puts a new song in his mouth, and he offers his devotions with a joyful heart.

There is great comfort in the exercise of devotion, when our troubles are past, and we have learned to delight ourselves in an abundance of peace. The prophet declares; "thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." By perfect peace, we should understand, a great degree of the pure and permanent peace of mind, which comes by the

Gospel. God has promised this peace of mind, to those whose minds are stayed on him. They shall learn not to be anxious about any thing in this world; but to cast their burden upon Jehovah, who has promised to sustain it; and that he will not suffer the righteous man to be moved.— We are all exhorted to be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make our requests known unto God; and we have the promise, that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. When the Christian has learned to rely on such promises, he has the hope in possession, which shall be to him an anchor of the soul. The tempest may rage, the waves may swell, and roll their mountain tops to the clouds; but he shall remain steadfast, and immovable, because he knows the Lord of Hosts is with him, and the God of Jacob is his refuge.

The book of Psalms is certainly designed, and given, by the God of Jacob, as a perfect system of devotion; and always to be used in the praise of the Church. It is the Christian system of devotion, because it contains in it all the devotional sentiments and feelings of the Christian; and the man whose mind is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, often beholds with astonishment, the wonderful adaptation of it to the worship of the new testament, while the language and the forms of expression, are adapted to the ancient modes of worship. It unites the two dispensations in the christian's mind. It is continually developing its hidden glories, both to his understanding and his heart. Every psalm is an exhaustless storehouse of gospel truth, which was either not understood, or but dimly and faintly seen, by the worshippers under the law of the old testament; but now, since the day has broke, and the shadows have fled, the images and emblems which are taken from the ancient modes of worship, convey the gospel truths to our minds, much more clearly and strongly, than any other modes of expression, which have been invented by man. When the

christian, for example, uses the expressions of the Psalmist; "I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams: I will offer bullocks with goats:" He expresses the powerful effects of the love of Christ in his heart. He has been redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, and he loves to express his devotions in language, which brings this truth to his mind; while he devotes his property and all that is under his control to the service of God. His heart leads him to make a costly sacrifice, after the example of his Lord. The christian who uses the psalms to express his devotions, will always have a strong inducement, to make his worship spiritual; because no other than a spiritual meaning can be attached to his language. The natural man will, no doubt, consider it as foolishness; because he cannot look into the spirit of it: but the deep things of God are always opened up more clearly, to the spiritual man, in the exercise of his devotions.

We are exhorted by the apostle to use the language of the psalmist in our devotions. "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing, and making melody in your hearts, to the Lord."* It is evident that no other system of psalmody, but that contained in the scriptures, was used in the churches until many years after the days of the apostles. The modern use of the word hymn, as a poem, or piece of poetry, adapted to some particular occasion, was then altogether unknown in the churches. The word psalms, has a wide and extensive meaning, and generally signifies praises, which are offered to God in his church. But, as when we speak of the scriptures, we mean the word of God, so, when we speak of the psalms, we ought to mean the psalms which are found in the word of God. In this sense, the word psalms comprehends both hymns and spiritual songs. There are dis-

* Ephs. v. 18, 19.

ferent titles prefixed to many of the psalms, such as **MISMOR**, and **SHIR**, &c. The former seems to correspond to the Greek word **Hymnos**; and signifies a kind of poetical composition, which has been polished and dressed, as the vine is pruned and dressed to render it fruitful. The word **SHIR** signifies a song or ode, and seems to have a more general signification than the word **MISMOR**. But it seems altogether evident, that the three Hebrew words, **TEHILLIM**, **MISMORIM** and **SHIRIM**, are the words which the apostle translates psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. They stand as the titles of different psalms, and do not leave the shadow of proof for the human inventions of the present time.

They were all, like the rest of the scriptures, given by inspiration of God. The sentiments and feelings, which are expressed in them, were breathed into the heart, and the understanding of the psalmist; and he was taught to express them, in the manner, which was best calculated, to convey the true meaning to the understanding, and the heart of the worshippers. They have this advantage over all human compositions, that they are entirely free from errors. No uninspired man could compose a system of psalms, which would be absolutely perfect; and against which no valid objection could be brought: but this system is a perfect rule for the exercises of devotion. It is the channel, in which our thoughts, and feelings, and affections, must be taught to run, when we offer our praises to God. They are called the psalms of David, because most of them were the productions of his muse. God gave him poetical talents, that, by his instrumentality, his Holy Spirit might breathe the correct sentiments, and feelings of devotion, into the hearts of his worshippers. This is one prominent sense in which David was the man after God's own heart, who should fulfil all his will. But there were others besides David, whom God inspired to complete the system of praise. **Asaph**, and **Heman**, and **Jeduthun**,

and, perhaps many others, whose names are not mentioned. The ninetyeth psalm is called, "a prayer of Moses the man of God." Whatever therefore may be said in favor of other systems of praise, this is the only system, which has any valid pretensions to divine inspiration. We know that God has authorized and commanded this system of praise to be offered to him in publick worship, that it has never been abrogated; and that it has his authority at the present time, as much as in the former dispensation.

It breathes the very spirit of christianity. It is impossible there should be any discrepancy between the spirit of David, and the spirit of Christ; for both spoke by the same spirit of God. It is true, that like the writings of Paul, there are some things in the psalms, which are hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction: but the man of spiritual understanding, and even the simple and unlettered christian, who is taught by the spirit, and who uses this system of devotion, will always learn to cherish the mild and gentle spirit of christianity, while he will never indulge the spirit of revenge. No man had less of this spirit than David himself. The history of his life proves that he was kind and merciful as a sovereign, and as a father, he was indulgent even to a fault. It is impossible, therefore, that his writings could breathe the spirit of cruelty; or have in them any thing vindictive or revengeful. But he sings of mercy and of judgement, as he was directed by the spirit of God. He sings with the wisdom which cometh down from above. The psalms present to us the very feelings of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is infinitely kind and merciful; but who is also the righteous Lord that loveth righteousness; and is appointed to be the judge of all. In that period, when he was made flesh, and dwelt among men, he exhibited mercy and judgement, in a way which was far superiour to the powers of man; no man could speak as he spoke: but, while blessings flowed from

his lips, in such a way as to cause the mourners in Zion to rejoice, his denunciations of judgement were most terrible to the workers of iniquity.

This is the way in which he speaks in the psalms ; for they are the word of Christ. The whole scriptures are his word. As God the father created all worlds, and all creatures by Jesus Christ ; so he has made him the prophet of his church, and all divine revelation is given by him. But the psalms are emphatically the word of Christ. This is the meaning of the apostle, when he says ; let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ; teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs ; singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.* Whatever meaning may be put on the words psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, it is plain that the apostle means by them, the word of Christ, which is to dwell in us richly. This word consists, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Is it not therefore evident, that this ~~must~~ mean the sacred songs of Zion, which are all to be found in the psalms of scripture ? In this word of Christ especially we are to teach and admonish one another, and to teach and admonish ourselves ; for it is full of the wisdom which cometh down from above. In this word we are to sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord.

This is the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb, which those characters were singing whom the apostle beheld, standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. " They had gained the victory over the beast, over his image, over his mark and over the number of his name." They were no longer under the dominion of the vain inventions of man. But they foresaw the terrible judgements of God coming on the earth, and finally all nations coming to worship before him. Therefore they sang this new song of judgement and of mercy. It is always a new song to them whose minds are enlightened in spiritual knowl-

* Col. III. 16.

edge, and have the wisdom which cometh down from above; because, time after time, it presents to them newer and more glorious views of the gospel of Christ, and of the judgments of God. They will always sing a new song, while they sing a portion of this word of Christ. It is an old song, which the church has sung from the beginning, but the singers have always received newer, and more luminous, and spiritual views of the truth. Thus the darkness is passing away, and the true light is always shining more and more clearly, into the christian's understanding. Thus while his mind is enlightened, his heart is warmed, by the pure and spiritual devotion of the gospel.

But we have all reason to feel the reproof of the Redeemer, when he said to his disciples; having eyes, see ye not; and having ears, hear ye not. Although we should always read the psalms as the word of Christ, and always sing them as the song of the lamb; yet the meaning of them, in this true sense, is not clear enough to ~~dispel the dark-~~ness of our minds; and the Redeemer himself is too often concealed from our view. We must all complain with the prophet; "verily thou art a God that hidest thyself. O God of Israel, the Saviour." The reproof of Moses to the Israelites is still addressed to us; "Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." It was the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave the law to Moses on mount Sinai; but he concealed himself in a great degree as God the Saviour, and his commandments were dimly seen. He said thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; but the Israelites had so little knowledge of the spirit of the commandments, that it was supposed to relate to the friendships, and the enmities which exist between nations, or different communities. They said in explanation, "thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy." Thus the meaning of the law was changed to its opposite. Therefore when the Redeemer was expounding the law, and delivering it from the false

glosses of the Jewish teachers, he remarked, ye have heard that it has been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy ; but I say unto you, love your enemies ; bless them that curse you, &c. I have said so to you before, and I say the same thing to you now. It is necessary for us to see and know the truth, that the commandments under the old testament, and under the new, have exactly the same meaning ; and that they were given by Jesus Christ, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Men may become more enlightened, and more accurate, in their perceptions of moral principle, or of the duties of the law ; but the subject is unchangeable like its author. It is impossible, that the morality of the psalms, should be in any sense different from the morality of the new testament. There can be no discrepancy, and no contradiction, for both are the word of Christ.

But the psalms are the song of the Lamb, who was slain from the foundation of the world. He speaks as the suffering Saviour, who poured out his soul with strong crying and tears, to him who was able to save him from death. His people experience through their whole lives a portion of the same sorrows. Every one of them declares with the apostle ; " I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." We hear his words and they express our feelings. His sorrows are substantially the same with our own.

The christian not only laments over his troubles but his devotions are all mingled with godly sorrow, in the confession of his sins. On this account he is brought down to the dust of humiliation. The reason why we suffer pain is because we are sinners ; and therefore we confess our sins before God, because we know that we are guilty, and we hope in his mercy. But Jesus Christ did no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth. His nature was perfectly holy,

when it was conceived in the womb, and therefore could not be defiled. Yet he confesses his sins, and laments over them. He says: "Lord thou knowest my foolishness; my sins are not hid from thee." As he took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses, we must believe that he had the same sorrow for him, as if he had been actually a sinner. As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same. It was impossible that he could take any sinful or unholy feeling, which belongs to fallen man; but he took the pain, and grief, and godly sorrow, by which a true penitent grieves and laments over his sins. Therefore says the apostle; In that he died, he died to sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. As at this moment he enjoys the highest degree of delight in his Father's presence; so when he was on the earth his Father's face was often hid from him in his troubles; and he was overwhelmed and in perplexity, as a penitent sinner, who laments and mourns over his provocations. ~~This is~~ This is the way in which we are to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord. We not only indulge no sinful disposition in our hearts, but when we examine ourselves, we do not find any sinful propensity; or if we do find the remains of some sinful disposition, which we have formerly indulged, it fills us with sorrow; we are conscious that our delight is in keeping the commandments of God; and we have this life, or delight in our duties, by our union with the Lord Jesus Christ. In this respect, therefore, the song of the Lamb, and the song of every christian, is the same in the words by which it is expressed. But the sufferings of Christ were infinitely greater, than the sufferings of any of his people. He was buffeted, but not for his own faults. He did well and suffered for it. The pain which was inflicted on him, was beyond all human comprehension. When we sing the parts of the song of the Lamb, in which his sufferings are described, we sympathise, and hold communion with him, as

having suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

Every man who can join in these exercises of devotion, must become acquainted with the meaning of typical representations, or the language of symbols. The Redeemer calls upon his people to give ear to his law, and incline their ears to the words of his mouth; for, says he, "I will open my mouth in a parable,—I will utter dark sayings of old." A large part of his preaching, was delivered in this manner, when he was on the earth; and the psalms are full of these dark sayings, which are always hid from the understanding of the natural man. He cannot see the spiritual meaning of the symbol. He cannot discern the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the sacrament of the supper; and, therefore, he cannot communicate worthily in that ordinance. The whole system of sacrifice was typical, or symbolical, and the whole truth concerning the sacrifice of Christ, is presented to us in the psalms, in the language of symbols. ~~There are many who are not pleased with this~~ method of communicating religious knowledge, and they will not take the trouble to understand it. This is the reason why these parables have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. But the spiritual man delights in them, because he is enabled to discern their spiritual meaning, and to serve God in the spirit, while he has no confidence in the flesh.

As the psalms were generally written by David, and express his own thoughts, and his own circumstances; and as the person, the kingdom, and the circumstances of David, are used as typical representations of the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom; so it becomes necessary for us always, to look through the sign, as we look through a perspective glass, to see the thing signified. The sorrows and distresses of the psalmist were real. He suffered the very pain which he describes. He suffered as a christian, with submission and resignation to God. He made earnest sup-

plication, with strong crying and tears, to him who was able to save him from death. But his sufferings, his prayers, and his deliverances, are to be viewed not only as realities; but also as similitudes, or representations of the sufferings, prayers, and deliverances of Jesus Christ. In the whole history of the humiliation, and of the final prosperity and glory of David, we see Jesus, who became man, that he might suffer death; and who afterwards rose from the dead, and was crowned with glory and honour. We see also the sufferings, and the exaltation, of all the children of God. They must all pass through tribulation, and wash their robes, by these means, in the blood of the lamb.— This is the way in which the Redeemer washes them from their sins in his own blood, and makes them kings and priests to God, even his Father, that they may reign with him forever.

But the history of the Israelites, and that part of it especially, which consists of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, of their passage through the red sea, their travels through the wilderness, and their entrance into the land of Canaan, is to be viewed, not only as a history of events which did actually take place; but also as a spiritual history of the church, and of God's dealings with his people, both as individuals and as churches, from that period until the present. We are still in the wilderness, and still look forward, by faith, to the rest which remains for the people of God.

This is a very important consideration, for the right understanding of the psalms. The church is still the Israel of God, and all christians are spiritual descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; therefore when we utter these dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us, we should not only have a continual increase of this spiritual knowledge in our own hearts, but be able to show forth these wonderful works of God, in this spiritual sense, to succeeding generations.

The author has come to the resolution, after careful examination of the subject, and not without some difficulties in his own mind, to retain the word Jehovah in his translation of the psalms. The Septuagint, or the seventy Greek translators, use the word Kurios, or Lord, as a translation of the word Jehovah; and in this they have been followed by almost all other translators. Even the writers of the new testament have not thought it necessary, in this respect, to make any alteration. It is probable that the Septuagint were prevented from retaining the word Jehovah in their translation, on account of a strong Jewish prejudice, by which they were accustomed to view it as a kind of profanation, to pronounce the word Jehovah, except it were on some extraordinary occasion. It was called the tetragrammaton, or four lettered word, because they were afraid to pronounce it. But, although it is very proper for us to preserve a sacred regard for all the names and attributes of the great God, and especially for this name which is ~~absolutely incommunicable, by which no creature can~~ ever be called, there is also danger of forgetting the nature and attributes of God, which are expressed by this word and by no other. If we seldom or never use the word, the meaning and force of it will not operate so strongly on our minds, as if we were accustomed to use it, and still to give it its full operation both on our understanding and on our heart. The psalmist might have used the word Adonai, or Lord, more frequently, and the word Jehovah less frequently, than he has done and his meaning would not have been less clearly expressed; but he seems to have a fondness for this word, somewhat similar to the attachment, which the Apostle Paul evidently manifests, for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The writers of the New Testament, were not engaged in translating the bible; and they seem to have generally used the Septuagint, which was the translation commonly used, in the times in which they lived. This is the reason why they use the word Kurios and not Jehovah.

Perhaps the word Lord comes nearer, than any other word in the English language, to express the meaning of Jehovah. Whenever it is used to distinguish the great God, from all other beings, it naturally signifies the sovereign Lord of the heavens and the earth. It is therefore the most appropriate, for expressing the real character, and the station of Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. God the Father has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. As he is the governour of all worlds, and all creatures, angels, and principalities, and powers being subject to him, the word Lord seems to be the most appropriate to designate his character. But still there is nothing in the word which would exhibit his eternal sovereignty. There are many Gods and lords in the universe, and some are exalted above others; but the name Lord will not prove that the highest of them is any more than a creature.

The word Jehovah expresses all perfections. Eternity is the radical, and the most prominent idea, contained in it. It is properly and literally rendered, He who is, and who was, and who is to come. All beings in the universe derive their existence from him. His existence is underived; or derived from none but himself. It is impossible for finite beings to comprehend the nature of the infinite being. The human mind is lost in the investigation. All that we can know of eternity is comprehended, merely in the existence of God. There was once a period, when no living being existed, but Jehovah. This is eternity, and this is all that we can know of it. But the name Jehovah has four distinct meanings. It signifies the Godhead, consisting of three distinct persons, or subsistences; and it signifies each of these persons. The Father has been called

“the fountain of the Deity.” But it is really dangerous to use any similitude for describing the Father. He is absolutely indescrivable. We never can obtain any knowledge of him, excepting through the son. He is called, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. The similitude is here taken from the sun in the heavens, and is in fact the only similitude, by which the nature of God can be brought down to the level of the human understanding. We know that light has always proceeded from the sun, ever since he came into existence, and it may be said, to be generated by the sun; also the effulgence of light, by which he is surrounded, may be called the brightness of his glory. This is the sense in which Jesus Christ is the only begotten of the Father; because he is generated by him, and proceeds from him. This generation and procession had no beginning. He is the same, yesterday, and to-day, and forever. The Holy Spirit has always, in a similar sense, proceeded from the Father and the Son. ~~This may be explained by the spirit that dwells and operates in the human frame, and by which all our works are framed, and brought to perfection.~~ “What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him. Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God.” The word Jehovah, or the eternal and self-existent being, is therefore used to express the Godhead, or the trinity in unity, and it is also used to distinguish each of the persons of the Godhead, from any being in creation.

The names of God, are intended to express the attributes of God, and the station which he holds, in the government of the universe. The word Jehovah expresses all excellence. Therefore, says the Psalmist, Thou, thy name is JEHOVAH, art thyself alone the Most High over all the earth.* The word ELOHIM, is plural and signifies Gods. The word JEHOVAH is singular and signifies one united be-

*Psalm LXXXIII. 19.

ing. The plurality of the persons is expressed in the word ELOHIM, and the unity of the persons in the word JEHOVAH. "God said, or the ELOHIM said, let us make man in our image according to our likeness." "Hear O Israel; *Jehovah* our *Elohim* is one Jehovah. And thou shalt love JEHOVAH, thy ELOHIM, with all thine heart," Our translators have rendered the word ELOHIM Gods, in Gen. iii. 5. The serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die. For ELOHIM doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as ELOHIM, knowing good and evil. The word ELOHIM is intended to represent the three distinct persons or subsistences in the Godhead, and the word Jehovah to signify their union in one being. It is highly important for us to attach the meaning of the word to the name. In Exodus vi. 2, 3, it is said; ELOHIM spake to Moses, and said to him, I am JEHOVAH, and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name AL SHADDAI; God, the Almighty, or God the all bountiful, but, by my name JEHOVAH, I was not made known to them. He revealed himself to them, as the Almighty, and all bountiful God; but he did not reveal himself to them as the God, who is eternal, and self-existent. But he has revealed himself, in this character, to the church, ever since the days of Moses; and therefore we ought always to use the word Jehovah, wherever it is found in the Hebrew; and be able, always, in our minds, to attach to it its proper meaning.

The persons in the Godhead are naturally and necessarily equal. This must be evident, because each of them is independent and self-existent. Each of them is Jehovah, as the Godhead is Jehovah. Each of them is he who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty. Hence the Redeemer declares in Rev. ii. 2, 3, all the churches shall know that I am he who searches the reins and hearts. He says also in Rev. i. 8, I am Alpha, and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the Lord; who is, and who was, and who is to

come, the Almighty. The Holy Spirit is represented as a person of the Godhead, when it is said, the Spirit of the God moved, or fluttered, or brooded, upon the face of the waters, like a bird fluttering over her young. The Redeemer says, concerning him, when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. It may therefore be said of him that, it is he who searches the reins and the hearts. So, says the psalmist, thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; thou renewest the face of the earth. But these three persons are so intimately united, that although they may be spoken of distinctly, they ought never to be separated, even in our thoughts. Their union is infinitely more perfect than the soul, and body, and spirit, of a man. God is more perfectly one, than any created being. We say a substance is simple, when it is not composed of parts, or ingredients; but no such substance has ever been found in the natural world. The air which we breathe is composed of three distinct and separable substances, and if chemistry were better understood, it would probably be discovered that these substances are composed of others. There are three distinct intelligent subsistences in the Godhead; but the fact could never have been discovered by the powers of man. It is matter of revelation. But Christ says; I am in the Father and the Father in me, and he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

The words Father and Son are used for the sake of explanation, and for showing the distinction of the persons; but we should still remember that the subject is Jehovah, and there can be no imperfection in it. The Father begets, and the Son is begotten; and the Father says to the Son, at this moment, this day I have begotten thee. The Son is always generated, and always proceeding from the Father; as he says, I proceeded forth, and came from God: These two persons in the Godhead are really and truly Father and Son, but in a much higher sense than can be spoken of any created beings.

When we use the sun, as a similitude to explain the nature of Jehovah, it is, if possible, still more necessary to keep before our minds, the absolute perfection, the self-existence, and eternity of each of the persons. It might be said that the sun propels, or sends out the light from itself; and therefore the Father sends the Son in a similar manner. This similitude may not be improper, when we speak of the Father sending the Son, to perform some work, in creation or providence. But as the light may be said to proceed from the sun, by its own power; and its nature is to extend itself in all directions; so the Son of God is, by nature, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. The Father did not make him what he is, nor send him forth to be the brightness of his glory, for this is his eternal nature. He is generated by the Father, and proceeds from the Father, as naturally as light is generated by the sun, is of the same nature with it, and proceeds from it continually.

The same similitude may be used, for explaining the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. He is not called the Holy Spirit, because he has any holiness more than the other persons of the Godhead. The Godhead is one pure and holy spirit. He is called holy from the economy of the Godhead, in the plan of redemption. But his natural procession from the Father and the Son, is, in some respects, similar to the procession of heat; for light and heat both proceed from the sun; but the heat enters into the earth, and renders it fruitful. The heat enters into the earth by its own power; but may be said to proceed from the light. But similitudes do not prove any truth; they are only properly used to explain it after it has been proved: and the best similitude, which can be brought to explain the operations of the spirit of God, in creation and providence, is that of a bird, brooding, and fluttering, over her young.

But it is important and highly necessary, to be acquaint-

ed with the relation, which the persons of the Godhead, bear to each other, and to us, in the grand and eternal plan of redemption. The natural relation of the persons to each other cannot be said to be altered; but each of them sustains a particular part in the great work. The persons of the Godhead are naturally equal. None of them can be said to have any perfection which the others do not equally possess; but in this plan there is evidently authority and subordination. There are blessings bestowed by the Father on the Son, and honour given by the Son to the Father.— The Son is obedient, and the Father commands. This proceeds from a voluntary compact or agreement. But there is evidently, in this plan, a wise and wonderful adaptation, to the nature, and personal relations of the Godhead. As it is natural for the Father to generate the Son, and natural for the Son, to be generated by the Father; so it is no less natural and proper, for them to enter into an agreement, in which the Father should command and the Son obey. When the Redeemer declares; “my Father is greater than I;” he refers not to any inferiority in his divine nature, to the nature of the Father; for this is altogether impossible; but he refers to his mediatorial character which he had voluntarily adopted. He had taken this character by an eternal decree; and in time he was declared to be the son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

The name Adonai, is frequently used in the prophets, and in the Psalms, to designate the Lord Jesus Christ, as the king, or sovereign, who directs, and governs, and executes judgement. In this title he appears to be the executive of the Godhead. The Father has said to him; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Jehovah said to my Adonai, sit thou at my right hand, &c. The prophet declares; “I saw the Adonai, sitting on the throne,” &c.† He was filled with terrour, and said; “woe is me,—for mine eyes have

*Psalm cx. 1. †Isaiah vi. 1.

seen the King, Jehovah Sabaoth." But the apostle John declares; he then saw the glory of the Redeemer, and spoke of him.* The prophet Daniel also speaks of him, when he says; "now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications; and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the sake of Adonai."† The prophet Malachi declares; "the Adon whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, &c.—But who may abide the day of his coming?"‡ Wherever the reader finds the word Lord in the following translations of the Psalms, he may rest assured that the original word is Adonai, or Adon. It is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, because he is the king, or the sovereign and judge, of all the earth.

The common use of names, is to distinguish objects one from another. But there is always some reason, why an object has a particular name appropriated to it; and the reason is generally found in the object. The name often expresses some quality, or attribute, which belongs to it.—*This is remarkable in the Hebrew names, which are recorded in the scriptures.* There is generally an obvious reason, why one name is used rather than another. God is distinguished from all other beings by the name Jehovah, because he exists of himself. He is the only being in the universe who possesses life. In him we live, and move, and have our being; but his life, and existence, is in himself.—Therefore it is said, Jehovah is his memorial.||

But the son of God has not only the name Jehovah, appropriated to him as his memorial, by which he is always to be remembered, when we think, or speak of him; he is emphatically the name Jehovah. He is the character, description, or image, of the invisible God. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. He makes the Father known to us. No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever, the Son will reveal

*John XII. 41. †Daniel IX. 17. ‡Mal. III. 1, 2. §Hosea XII. 5.

him. This is the reason why he is called, the name Jehovah, why the Father says my name is in him, and why he is called the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. He reveals Jehovah to his people, and therefore they are to come to the Father through him, or in his name. Coming to God in the name of Jesus Christ, has much more meaning than is generally supposed. It is not merely the mention of his name. This is generally the outward form; but men often make mention of the name without knowing the nature, and spirit of the duty. The old testament saints, always came to the Father in the name of Christ, although they did not know the name Jesus. Daniel came to the Father in his name, when he prayed, that he would shine upon his sanctuary which was desolate, for the sake of the Adonai. We come to the Father in his name, when we believe that he is the brightness of his glory, and that all the perfections, especially all the goodness of Jehovah, is manifested through him, to his people. We ask blessings for his sake, when we believe that we have no right to any favor, and that he is the only channel, by which blessings can flow to man. He is the name Jehovah, because it is through him Jehovah is revealed to us; and there is no other name given under heaven among men, by which God can be known, or any blessing received from his hand. We see God through Jesus Christ, as we see the sun, by the light which surrounds him, and proceeds from him; and this light is his very substance. The image of Jehovah, or the brightness of his glory, reveals him to us, and this image, or brightness, is of his own substance.

God has given us the psalms, as the expression of the devotional exercises of our hearts, in private and publick worship. Here every individual should learn his secret devotions. His thoughts should be taught to run in the same channel, when he approaches secretly into the sacred presence of Jehovah, when he comes into the same

presence with his family, and when he attends on the public duties of the sanctuary. A part of the exercises of devotion should always consist in singing, or chanting, or repeating, a portion of the psalms. As the exercises of devotion should always be performed, with the understanding, and the heart; and as all christians ought to unite in those exercises, when they approach before God in company; so it is necessary, there should be some foundation laid, and some sentiments, and feelings, which are known, and which are common to them all. That every congregation of worshippers, ought to have a common liturgy, is a sentiment to which the fathers of the church, from the earliest ages, have always cordially assented. The members of every congregation, when they are publicly assembled for worship, ought to repeat together, or sing or chant, some devotional sentiments, which they all believe, and in which they can all cordially unite. In this way, they are enabled to hold fellowship with one another, and with the God of truth. It is powerfully efficacious in uniting their hearts, by a kind of christian affection, which is tried, and chastened, and purified; and, as it is founded in truth, may be expected to be permanent. It is the love of truth which is elicited by means of the understanding. The spirit of God presents his truth to our minds, and we love it; and therefore we cordially unite in repeating it before him.

The liturgy of the church of England has been the means of preserving the soundness of faith, and the purity of devotion, in the understanding, the hearts, and lives, of many, who in that church, have continued for ages to be the salt of the earth. It is by such characters, and not by the lordly establishment, that the English church has been enabled to stand erect, amidst the wide spread desolations of Zion, like the church of Philadelphia, "a column in a scene of ruins." Their liturgy has kept the truth in their minds, the light of truth has still shone around

them, and their candlestick has not been removed out of its place.

But the psalms are the liturgy which God has given to the church. All that is necessary for us, is to learn their meaning, and imbibe their spirit. This is the new song of the hundred and forty and four thousand, which no man can learn, but those that are redeemed from the earth. When we learn the spirit of this song, we have the best evidence, that we belong to the number of the redeemed. The worshippers ought to unite in the expression of sentiment, rather than of sound. The musick of the churches at the present time is generally unfavorable. The ancient mode of chanting, is much better than the present mode of singing, for the melody of the heart is now too generally forgotten, and the whole attention is turned to the sound. But this new song should be learned in the hours of retirement and meditation, when the world is shut out, and the thoughts called home; when God alone is present with us. This is generally the time which God chooses for opening the understanding, and giving the truth its proper operation on the heart. In publick worship we express the truth which has been the subject of former meditation, we unite in the utterance of things, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. It is proper and necessary, that there should be some degree of harmony and melody, in the voices of the worshippers; but the melody of the heart is the all-important requisite. God pays but little attention to things that are merely outward and formal: he looks into the heart. His worshippers ought therefore to pay particular attention to the sentiments which they sing; so as to know the truth, to love it, and to make it their own. The psalms are not David's, nor Asaph's. They are not spiritually applicable to them, more than to us. They are now given to us to express our devotions, as they were given to them to express their devotions. We should therefore learn the truths which are expressed in

the psalms, and see that our hearts fully accord with them. Thus we shall unite with the Lord Jesus, and with his whole church, on the earth, and in heaven.

Christian devótion, like christianity itself, is progressive. It always becomes more pure and refined and spiritual, from the period in which the christian was born again, until that time when he shall be fitted for entering into his Father's house in the heavens. The church of God also must become more pure, and enlightened, and spiritual, as being composed of worshipping societies, who unite in the exercise of devótion. But the psalms are the system of devótion, which God has given, for the perfecting of the saints, and for the continual edification of the body of Christ. They must never be altered or amended. God has given no authority to any man, but the inspired writers of the scriptures, to make a system of psalmody for his church. Nor is there the least shadow of proof, that he has given any man authority to amend the psalms, and make them more suitable to christian devótion. If it was necessary for the prophets to bring convincing evidence that God had sent them, and even for the Lord Jesus to work miracles, to prove the truth of his mission, it is no less necessary for the man that alters and amends the psalms, to bring infallible proofs, that God has sent him for this purpose.

If we proceed on this principle, of amendment without revelation from God, then we have no system of devotional exercise, on which we can rely as the truth. The church is thrown into confusion. No line of distinction can be drawn, between true and false worship. One man has as good a right to make psalms as another; and if he should have the talent to write poetry, so as to please the taste of the age in which he lives, he has it in his power to make his exercises of devótion, a rule, or model, for the devótions of all who choose to adopt his system. No intelligent christian can fail to foresee the horrible effects, which this

false principle must produce in the religious world. Unhappily the effects of it, at this present time, are visible to all mankind; so that the christian profession is, by many, treated with contempt. On this principle, any man, who has any kind of religious feelings, has a right to membership in the church; because there is no divine standard for christian devotion. One man has just as good a right as another, to give his devotions, as the standard; and if he has the talent to make a system of psalms, or hymns, or spiritual songs, and get them introduced into the publick worship of God, his right is established. In this way the church is amalgamated with the world, and this leaven of unauthorized, and spurious devotion, will corrupt and destroy the whole mass.

But this ruin never can be permitted, in the providence, and under the government of the Adonai Jehovah, who has declared; "upon this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In all ages, the ~~beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit, has brought some of his contrivances into operation, to destroy christianity.~~ In these latter ages, he has transformed himself into an angel of light; and has introduced a false religion, which so nearly resembles the truth, that all must be deceived, who have not their senses exercised, by reason of use, to discern both good and evil. Although men generally profess to believe in the truth of christianity; and although there are many who may be called babes in Christ, there is, comparatively, but a small number, that are of full age. The evil spirit therefore has a great advantage. He has age and cunning on his side, and the objects of his deception are merely babes. The men of knowledge are few. They have little influence, and many believe it to be a hopeless work, to attempt to stop the progress of error and confusion. God has said, "I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them." This course of evil must continue until it has reached a certain point, and then it will be arrested.

The course of Providence is, first to bring iniquity to light, and then to stop its progress, by punishing the offenders. It is obvious that he has now begun to bring the iniquities of mankind to light. The earth is beginning to disclose her blood, and scenes of iniquity will soon be presented, at the sight of which we shall shudder, and be astonished at our blindness. We shall wonder why we did not see the evil, which in ten thousand deceitful forms, has stalked over the world, slaying its thousands every day.— Among these forms of iniquity, one, not the least, is the casting aside of that system of devotion which God has given to his church, and the use of systems which have been framed and contrived by the wisdom of man. Of this evil we may say; it is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

But God has already begun to punish the offenders by pouring out the vials of his wrath. The seven last plagues have already commenced their operation on mankind.— God now says, as he has formerly said, by his prophets; “behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.” It is truly a wonderful work of judgement, and the apostle declares;— “I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God.” They are the last plagues, which God will inflict on mankind, before the millenium; and as they have begun, they may be expected to continue, and to become more horribly disastrous and painful, from year to year, and from age to age, until the sanctuary shall be cleansed from all false worship, the uncircumcised and the unclean cast out of the church, and the wicked cut off from the earth. The author has said in a former publication, that when the seventh angel is represented, as pouring his vial into the air, we ought to understand the plague of pestilence. This pestilence has begun. It is indeed a consi-

derable number of years, since the terrible scourge called the Cholera, began to be inflicted on mankind; but it is a short time since it first made its appearance in the christian world. We may, however, look for the plague of pestilence, under various forms and different names, until the prophecy shall have been fulfilled, which declares, that through the whole land, two-thirds shall be cut off and die, and the remaining third shall have passed through the fire, and have been purified.

The mass of the world can understand nothing but that which is palpable. Almost all men are now convinced, that this last scourge of pestilence, is one of the most terrible plagues, which have ever been inflicted on mankind: but they do not see that the other plagues have all begun to operate, as well as the seventh. It may be said with respect to every one of them, the plague has begun, and there is no hope that it will be stayed. Men shall blaspheme the God of heaven, on account of their pains and of their sores, and shall not repent of their evil deeds.

But the vengeance of heaven will increase and become more terribly severe and calamitous. The world has enjoyed many years of unexampled prosperity, but the time of adversity is at hand, and this shall be so terrible, that christians generally will need to consider the exhortation of the apostle Peter; "beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." But all the people of God shall be delivered, and God will compass them about with songs of deliverance. This shall be the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. The churches shall all realize the force of the truth, presented to them, by the same apostle; the time is come, that judgement must begin at the house of God: but if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God: and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear. It shall be a most

terrible destruction, for it is represented by a stream of melted lava, rolling down the side of the burning volcano. God sits in the chariot of his judgements, passing with rapidity over the earth, and a torrent of liquid fire is rolling before him. Fire goes before him and burns up his enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world, the earth saw and trembled.

The psalms are appointed to be the chief channel, for conveying comfort to the christian's heart, in the time of these calamities. The chief comfort in the time of trouble, is the hope of deliverance, coming from the hand of God; and when this deliverance comes in answer to our prayers, and our steadfast reliance on his promises, it is an earnest of our eternal deliverance from all evil; and then we are enabled to rejoice in his salvation, and to set up our banners in his name. As God has determined to magnify his word above his name, and as this portion of his word, which is truly an epitome of the whole scriptures, is now much despised, and treated with contempt, by many christian churches, there is every reason to believe, that God will cause it to be honoured, in proportion to the unmerited disgrace, which has been heaped upon it. In this sense he will build up the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; he will raise up the ruins of it, and set it up, on the ancient foundation. There is no need for a new system of psalmody, or to form any imitation, or resemblance, of the system which God hath given for the expression of our devotions. All that is necessary is to learn to understand it, and to make a right application of it to ourselves. It contains the true *Sheminith*, or the oil of gladness, by which we shall be enabled to rejoice, and to glory in our tribulations. An essential part of the author's design, in the following dissertations, is to provide an antidote for the poison which in these days of religious quackery, has been administered to the churches, by men who have truly a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

They show that they are ignorant of God's righteousness, and that they are going about to establish their own righteousness, when they invent systems of devotion, for which God has given them no authority. They have shown the truth of the poet's observation, that a little learning is a dangerous thing. The psalms of scripture is the fountain of christian poetry. This is the true Pierian spring, of which we can never drink too deeply, nor too largely. The man who makes it his practice, to drink daily at this fountain, will not be intoxicated by drinking at the stream of modern religious poetry. They may be called new songs, but their novelty is a fading flower. This is a new song, whose novelty will continue for ever. When all human inventions shall fade, this will appear in everlasting bloom.

In whatever manner the present publication may be received, or whatever may be its effects on the minds of the religious community, the author is conscious that his motives are good, that his great object is to benefit the church of God, without respect to party or denomination; and that he has no love for one sect of christians more than another, excepting as he believes them to be following the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ, the captain of their salvation. His attention has been directed, for many years, to the subject of psalmody; he has given it a laborious and painful investigation, and is fully convinced that the psalms contain an accurate history of christian experience. Here every christian finds his own experience. He knows himself to be a christian by finding all his feelings, and all his circumstances, presented to his mind, in this system of christian devotion. This is a true criterion and test of every man's christianity. Whatever will not agree with this test is not the precious metal. It is merely a kind of alloy, or dross; and however it may resemble the precious metal, it will be utterly burnt up and destroyed, in that torrent of fire, which will soon begin to roll before the chariot of the Almighty.

Finally, the author commends his work to the care of him that keeps Israel. He found it necessary to study the prophecies, that he might obtain an accurate knowledge of the psalms. He looked to the blessing which is promised, in the commencement of the book of Revelation, to him that reads, and to them that hear the words of that prophecy, and keep the things that are contained in it. But he had little knowledge of the way in which God bestows his blessings on sinful men. He shows them his power, and that he is terrible in all his works. The author had supposed, that the former part of his life was chequered with many troubles, and that his share in the calamities of life was greater than that of most of his brethren in the ministry; but God knew that it was necessary for him, to endure greater troubles, than any he had formerly experienced. He had a fiery trial to endure; and it was so terribly severe, that he was astonished beyond description, and verily thought that some strange thing had happened to him. He had no fears of eternal death, but all the pains he had ever experienced, and all the forms of death he had seen or understood, were nothing when compared with the sufferings he endured in passing through this fiery trial. But the psalms were his support. They alleviated his pains, they brightened his hopes, and gave him some comfort against every assault of the enemy. He found that the spirit of God makes his own word the channel, through which he sends his consolations to the heart of the afflicted. As God said to the Israelitès, "ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt," so the author knows the heart of the afflicted; and he knows that the only dependence for comfort and hope, in the time of trial, is the promise, and the faithfulness of God. With this hope he sends his book into the world, with the prayer that it may lead many to a close, and familiar, and intimate acquaintance, with the book of psalms.

Erie, Pa. August, 1833.

PSALM I.

TRANSLATION.

1. **BLESSED** is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked ; and who stands not in the way of sinners, and sits not in the seat of scoffers :

2. But who has his delight truly in the law of Jehovah, and in his law will meditate day and night.

3. And he shall be as the tree, planted by the streams of water, which shall bring forth its fruit in its season, and its leaf shall not fade ; and all which it brings forth shall thrive.

4. Not so the wicked ; but truly they are as chaff which the wind drives away.

5. Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

6. For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous ; but the way of the wicked shall perish.

DISSERTATION.

THE apostle informs us that David, in the thirty-second psalm, describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works ; saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. So the psalmist who wrote this first psalm, which may be considered as a title, or frontispiece, set at the head of the psalms, describes the blessedness of the righteous, or the godly man. The first word shows us, that this blessedness, is great beyond imagination. No man

on this side heaven, can give a complete description of it, or can fully understand it. It might be rendered how great, or how wonderful is the blessedness of the man, &c. A state of blessedness is that in which God is our friend, and is not to be estimated according to our present feelings of joy or sorrow. A man may be blessed, and yet he may suffer great misery. The psalmist was in a state of blessedness, when he says, my heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. The word happiness is, in common language, generally used to express our present feelings; and in this sense, a man may be blessed, who feels very unhappy: but still there is comfort in the feelings of the blessed man. It is impossible, while he has his senses, he should ever fall into despair. Zion may say, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me; but at the same time, the spirit of God speaks both to her understanding, and her heart; can a woman forget her sucking child? &c. I will never leave thee, &c.

This blessedness is perfect in its nature, because it is real, true, and permanent blessedness. It can never be lost, for it is the very essence, and first principle of the everlasting life, which the Lord Jesus bestows upon every one that comes to him. But it is imperfect, because it never comes to the fulness of its perfection in this world. The christian is always growing, and advancing, towards the stature of the fulness of Christ. As the Lord Jesus Christ now sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied; so every christian shall be perfect in blessedness after he shall have passed through the sorrows of life, and when his light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall have worked out for him a far more abundant and an eternal weight of glory.

The psalmist then gives us a description of the course of life, which the man pursues, who is possessed of this blessedness. He walks not in the counsel of wicked men.

By a wicked, or an ungodly man, is meant, one who despises, and voluntarily forsakes, the commandments of God; who indulges some kind of iniquity in his heart, or lives under the influence of some malevolent disposition. A righteous man is one, who, like the apostle, does daily exercise himself to have a conscience void of offence, both towards God, and man; or like Job, he is perfect and upright, fearing God, and avoiding evil. He always endeavours to possess the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and cultivates an obedient, docile, and gentle disposition, under all the afflictive dispensations of the providence of God. But in the spirit and disposition of a wicked man, there is always something, the reverse of that charity, which is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil. He will not only indulge anger, and wrath, against his neighbour; but he will lay snares and frame devices for his injury. When his sins, or his bad deeds, are examined and scrutinized, they will appear to have been done without the fear of God. Therefore the man who has this blessedness, will not walk in his counsel.

Neither will he stand in the way of sinners. When men walk in wicked counsels, and not only indulge in evil thoughts, but form plans of iniquity; they will surely go on to the accomplishment of their wicked purposes. By sinners, therefore, the psalmist seems to mean particularly, those who are advancing in some course of iniquity. When men are engaged in any course of this kind, they will endeavour to take along with them, every one whom they can entice, or allure by any means in their power. The man, therefore, who voluntarily puts himself in their way, seems to have a desire, or at least shows that he has no great aversion, to their society, and their sinful works. Therefore, if we expect to possess this blessedness, it will be necessary for us, not only to shun the counsel of the wicked; but also the way of all men, who are walking in any evil course. When men are engaged in any kind of

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business, and have become accustomed or habituated to it, they acquire a kind of facility, by which they are enabled to advance, with more and more rapidity. The psalmist here shows us the advancement of men, in their sinful courses. They first indulge evil dispositions in their hearts, then they form their sinful plans, and perform their sinful works. Then their hearts become hardened, and they endeavour to turn into ridicule, every thing that is good and holy. Thus fools make a mock at sin : and when they go on in this course of iniquity, they are like the rock descending from the lofty precipice, they go downwards with accelerated velocity to the gulph of ruin.

There can scarcely be a more disgusting, and humiliating sight, than to see men sitting and conversing on religious subjects ; and not only expressing their unbelief, but their scorn, of holy and spiritual things. The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God and they are foolishness to him ; but when he has acquired so much confidence, and hardihood in his folly as openly to despise them, and turn them into ridicule : then is there no longer any hope for such a character. The righteous man will not sit in his seat, nor keep his company when it can be avoided.

It is highly necessary for us to watch, and if possible to prevent, the entrance of sin into our hearts. We should therefore keep in mind the exhortation ; My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Our hearts should always be kept in that state of feeling, that every sinful suggestion, will be repelled with abhorrence. The human heart is inclined to give way, to sinful temptation ; because it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Satan is always watching for an opportunity, to lead us into sin ; and will take the advantage of every inclination of the heart, which he knows to be favourable to his wicked designs : we should watch against his devices, and against the entrance of every sinful thought.

But it is necessary for us, not only to abstain from every

sinful indulgence, and to cultivate a hatred of sin ; but also to love, and to practice every christian duty. The blessed man is said to have his delight truly, in the law of Jehovah ; and this law is the subject of his thoughts, and meditations, both in the night and day. The great God, who created, and who governs the universe, has given us a rule, by which our hearts and lives are always to be regulated. When man was created, God wrote this rule in his heart ; and when men, who have no access to the revealed law, perform such duties as are contained in this law, they are said to give an evidence of the fact, that the law has already been written in their hearts. The law of God is like himself, unchangeable. It is by no means altered by being written, and set before us in the scriptures. God sets before us substantially and spiritually, the same law, which he gave to Adam in the garden of Eden ; and to Moses on mount Sinai. The gospel may also be said to be a law, which God has provided, to be a remedy for the evils, which sin has brought into the world. It is by the gospel, that we are to be delivered, from the bondage of sin. When the law was broken, there was nothing in it to save us from condemnation ; and nothing in it to enable us to obey : but the gospel brings with it, justification from sin, and the power of obedience. Thus sin is condemned in the flesh, and the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. The law and the gospel, when they are thus united, become a perfect law of liberty ; by which we may be delivered from all sinfulness, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Therefore, it is declared by the apostle James, that whosoever looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he not being a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

The natural man possesses not this blessedness, because he has not his delight truly, and spiritually, in the law of

God. He may attend to the duties of religion; but if he has any delight in them, it is merely in the outward form. Whatever is spiritual in religion gives him no pleasure.— But the true christian can always say with the apostle, I delight in the the law of God, after the inward man. I delight in doing my duty in the spirit of it. True christians are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh. It is labour to obtain a spiritual knowledge of the commandments of God. It requires the constant exercise of the understanding, and it sometimes gives us pain, especially when we come to the knowledge of our sins; but it is upon the whole a pleasing labour. It brings an abundant reward for all our toil. It is therefore the delight, and the constant employment of the christian. He labours in the things of this world, not because he delights in such labour, but because God has made it necessary. He must attend, in some degree to the works of this world; but he considers himself a stranger and pilgrim on the earth, while he seeks a heavenly country, and a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. In these exercises he places his delights, and whenever it is not necessary for him, to be engaged in other considerations, his thoughts run on these subjects night and day.

The law of God, considered in this broad and extensive sense, comprehends all the exercises of devotion; all communications which God has made to us in his word, concerning his nature, his attributes, and his works; all the worship which he has commanded to be offered to him, and all the regulations of his house; all the doctrines of faith, and all the duties of holiness. He has made his wonderful works to be remembered, to be the subjects of our meditation; and subjects of this kind are more excellent, and beneficial to us, than all earthly thoughts and desires. The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God, abideth forever.

But Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth. If we believe in Christ, the law will always lead us to him. If we look to moral duties, which by the law we are bound to perform, we see that it is in him alone that we have righteousness. By his personal obedience, and his sufferings, he has magnified the law, and made it honourable; and by his mighty power, working in our hearts, he will enable us to obey, and suffer with him; to have his spirit in our hearts, both in our works of obedience, and in our bearing of the troubles of life. When we meditate on the law, as revealed to the ancient people of God, the law of sacrifice, and the various ceremonies and judgements, which were contained in the Mosaick dispensation, we find that all these things direct the thoughts to Jesus Christ; and that the law is always a schoolmaster to lead us to him. In this sense it is no new commandment, we have had it from the beginning; but it is a new commandment, in him, and in us, for the darkness is passing away, and the true light is always becoming brighter and brighter. These are the wonderful works of God, which he has given us for our meditation, and they are "sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."

The man who engages in this kind of exercise, and who finds his delights in the law of God, after the inward man, has the promise, that he shall advance, and be fruitful, in all good works. As the tree that is planted, near some perennial stream, will be in no danger of being dried up and withered, by the scorching heat; its growth will not be impeded by the drought; its leaves shall not wither nor fade; and its fruit shall not fall before its time; but shall grow to maturity, and ripen, and be fit for use. So the man who lives in these habits, shall be fruitful in the grace of christianity, and shall flourish forever in the garden of God. He may indeed occasionally be subjected to pain and sorrow, and his labours may in many respects, appear to be unproductive. The common translation, "all that he doeth

shall prosper," although the truth is expressed by it, yet it is liable to be misunderstood; and it is not very easy to be seen. Every christian is obliged, on many occasions, to complain with the prophet; I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought: and yet it is true, that all he doeth shall prosper. But the psalmist seems to carry on the figure of the tree, to the end of the sentence; and in this view, the sense is plain, and cannot be mistaken. He shall always bring forth fruit unto God. I have chosen and ordained you, the Redeemer says to all his disciples, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. All his true disciples, and especially the mourners in Zion, shall be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. In this sense, all their works shall prosper, and all their fruit shall flourish, be matured, and come to perfection; and when their beloved comes unto his garden, he shall eat his pleasant fruits.

While the psalmist appears to delight in describing the blessedness of the righteous man, he only glances at the condition of the wicked; as if it were no very pleasing subject. He dwells on the contemplation of the goodness, and mercy of God, which shall always follow his people in their passage through life, and passes rapidly over the condition of the wicked. But he tells us plainly that all their fond hopes, and pleasing expectations of happiness, shall meet with disappointment, even in this world;—shall be covered with the gloom of thick darkness, when they shall stand at the bar of God; and they shall finally perish forever. Not so the wicked; but truly they are as the chaff, which the wind drives away.

He draws the comparison between the wicked and the chaff, which is carried away by the wind, from the summer threshing floors. A reference is made to the customs of those Eastern countries, when the scriptures were written. They threshed out the grain, not in barns, but in some ele-

vated place, which was exposed to the wind; and it was winnowed with a shovel, or some instrument, by which it could be continually thrown up, so that the wind might pass through it. Then the grain immediately fell on the floor, while the chaff or all that was light and worthless, was carried away. Some particles were scattered over the field; but the body or mass of the chaff, was deposited at some distance from the threshing floor; and because it was worthless, it was set on fire and burned. This figure is often used, to show us the future condition of the righteous, and the wicked. When John the Baptist preached concerning the coming of the Redeemer, he said; "his fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." This was intended in the first place, to represent the judgements, which were about that time, to be inflicted on the nation of the Jews; and finally the last judgement, which shall be the punishment of the wicked. The Jews, who believed not the gospel, were driven and scattered like chaff before the wind. Many of them were sold for slaves, and carried into captivity; many perished by famine, and various tortures, both of body and mind; and the whole nation was cut off from the land of their nativity. In this sense they were driven away like the chaff and burned. But this declaration of the Baptist, and of the psalmist, is to be extended, beyond any judgement which is to be inflicted in this world. The fire that burns this chaff is unquenchable. The chaff must be burning forever. It is the representation of a condition, in which there is continual pain, disappointment and despair. It is the state where their worm dieth not and where their fire is not quenched."

Men who set their affections on this world, often look forward to future emoluments, honours and enjoyments. They hope that their old age shall be honoured, and that their memory shall be embalmed, in the hearts of their

descendants. They all also have some hopes of happiness, beyond the grave. But all the pleasing prospects of the wicked, shall at length be covered, with the gloom of disappointment. It is said that the heart sickens, when hope is deferred. When some expected enjoyment is long before it arrives, every succeeding hour becomes more tedious than the foregoing. But, when the expectant is in a suffering condition already, and when, instead of finding relief, his pains are increased in a tenfold proportion; when the scenes of anticipated pleasure are turned into excruciating torment: then the heart not only sickens with the pain of disappointment, but is swallowed up in the anguish of despair. The psalmist shows us the latter end of the righteous and the wicked. The former is compared to a tree, well watered, in a good soil, flourishing and fruitful, and whose fruit comes at last to full perfection; and the latter is represented by the chaff which is driven away, and gathered into a heap by the winds, and at last set on fire to burn forever. In this representation we cannot help perceiving the disappointment of all pleasing hopes. All their comforts are gone. The world shall pass away, and all the enjoyments of it shall come to an end. But there are positive pains in the future world, and these pains have all degrees of torment. As the gulph of ruin is an abyss to which no bottom can be found, so the pains of hell have all degrees of woe; and the misery of the most miserable is far deeper than our comprehension.

The righteous judge has already determined, that the hopes of the wicked shall never be realized; but that on the contrary, their fears shall come upon them, with distress and anguish intolerable. Therefore, when the judgment shall be set, and the books opened, they that know themselves to be wicked, shall not rise and stand upright, like those who know themselves to be upright in heart. The hearts of the wicked shall then feel the condemnation of the law of God, for their own consciences shall bear tes-

timony against them; and they shall shrink back with terror from the countenance of their judge. "His eyes are like a flame of fire, and out of his mouth goeth a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance is like the sun shining in his strength." When therefore he shall thus present himself to every eye, it is very natural that the tribes of the earth should mourn for him. They have set their affections on the earth, they have disobeyed the commandments, and preferred the gratifications of the earth, to the blessings which he brings in the gospel. They would have been condemned if there had been no offers of salvation, but they have rejected the gospel, and therefore their condemnation is increased by the very goodness and mercy of God. No wonder they are represented as calling to the rocks, fall on us,—and to the hills, cover us. His eye shall pervade the deep and dark recesses of the hearts of wicked men, and they shall not be able to stand in the assemblage of righteous characters. Two assemblages shall immediately be formed, the one on the right, and the other on the left hand of the judge.

This psalm concludes with a remarkable declaration, which states the reason, why sinners shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous. The way of the righteous is known to Jehovah, therefore the way of the wicked shall perish. There is evidently a sense, in which God knows the way of the wicked, as well as the way of the righteous; for he is acquainted with the thoughts of all men. He searches the hearts and tries the reins. He therefore knows what passes within us, and whether our thoughts are righteous or wicked. But his knowledge of the righteous will then be the recognition of his former approbation and love. It might be rendered with propriety, Jehovah shall know the way of the righteous; he shall recognize and approve of it, as having been marked out to them by himself. But he knows it in this sense at this moment, and approves of it, because they all have taken that course.

which he has opened and marked out for them, in his gospel. This is the meaning of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he says, "I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep." He has put a mark on them before, and he now recognises them as his own. On the contrary, when wicked men shall come to him, and say, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, &c. he declares, I will then profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity. He will acknowledge his people, as those whom he has foreknown, and loved with an everlasting love; and whom he has drawn to him with his loving kindness; for they have all said to him, "draw us, and we will run after thee:" and those who have not followed him with their hearts, he will say, I have no knowledge of you as my people, or my sheep. Hence it is obvious, that those whose way he has not known, who have taken a course which he has never commanded or approved, cannot be recognized as his people; and therefore their way must perish, or be lost in the labyrinth of errors, which terminate in everlasting confusion and darkness. They have chosen their own way, and God says, "I will also choose their delusions, and I will bring their fears upon them." The things which they hoped for shall be swept away from their grasp, and the things which they feared shall overwhelm them in misery and despair.

Let us choose the way of the righteous, and let the law of Jehovah be our delight;—let it be our meat and our drink to do the will of our heavenly father, following the example of our blessed Redeemer; "and then we shall know, if we follow on to know the Lord," that God has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. We shall know his voice and follow him, and not follow strangers, because we know not their voice.

PSALM II.

TRANSLATION.

1. Why do the heathen rage, and the people meditate vain things ?

2. The kings of the earth seat themselves in council, and the rulers deliberate together,—against Jehovah,—and against his anointed !

3. “Let us brake asunder their bands, and cast away from us their cords.”

4. He that sits in the Heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.

5. Then shall he speak to them in anger; and in his wrath he shall terrify them.

6. But I have anointed my king upon Zion, the hill of my holiness.

7. I will declare the decree. Jehovah hath said to me; thou art my son; I, this day, have begotten thee.

8. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance; and the ends of the earth for thy possession.

9. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them to pieces as the vessel of the potter.

10. And now, ye kings, be wise; be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

11. Serve this Jehovah in fear; and rejoice in trembling.

12. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kind-

led but a little. Blessed are all who wait for him.

DISSERTATION.

The apostles, Peter and John, having healed a man who was lame from his birth ; and the miracle having come to the knowledge of the Jewish rulers ; while the apostles were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them. They were grieved that they taught the people, and preached, through Jesus, the resurrection from the dead. But, not daring to bring any accusation against them, for fear of the people, they called them and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach, in the name of Jesus. But when they had permitted them to depart they came to the place where their own company had assembled, and they informed them how they had been treated by the chief priests and elders. It is said, "when they heard that, they lifted their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is ; who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said : Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things ; the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together—against the Lord, and against his Christ." By a proper degree of attention to this interesting fact, we may have some knowledge of the meaning of this exclamation : Why do the heathen rage ? &c.

The word which is rendered heathen, represents that part of mankind, who are either ignorant of the gospel, or continue in opposition to it, after they have heard it preached. In a large and comprehensive sense, it means the inhabitants of those countries, which have never been enlightened by the gospel; and in a more particular and limited sense, it means those who show by their lives and conversation, that they have not received the principles of

Christianity into their hearts; and that they do not yield obedience to God, according to his gospel. So the Psalmist, in the lix. Psalm, prays for deliverance from his persecutors, and calls them heathen; although he evidently means Saul and his agents, who were endeavouring to destroy him. It is mentioned in the title, that this Psalm was composed at that time, when they watched the house to kill him. He declares "they lie in wait for my soul. They run and prepare themselves without my fault. Thou, therefore, O Lord God of Hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen; be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision." We are, therefore, to understand by the word heathen, or Gentiles, or nations, as it is here used by the Psalmist, all those who, in heathen or christian lands, are ignorant or regardless of the gospel: or who still continue in opposition to the principles, or the practice of true christianity. When we see the various efforts, which are made in the present time, to prevent the operation and advancement of the pure principles of the gospel, and the pure worship which God has appointed, from being practised by those to whom God has sent it: when false worship is introduced, and a false gospel preached; instead of the true gospel of Christ; and when we compare the facts before us, with the facts which are stated in the Acts of the Apostles; we may see clearly what we are to understand by this exclamation of the Psalmist. The heathen still rage, and the people still meditate vain things, whenever the leading truths of the gospel are presented to their minds, in such a way as to command their attention.

As in this particular example we are to understand by the heathen, or nations and people, with the kings and rulers of the earth, Herod and Pontius Pilate, the gentiles and the people of Israel; so in all other cases where opposition is made to the true gospel, we shall find that the opposition

is made by the very same sort of characters; although they have the name of christians. Herod was the king of the Jews, and professed to be a worshipper of the true God; the Jews made the same profession, and attended to his worship with the most scrupulous formality: even Pontius Pilate professed to have a great regard for truth and righteousness. All that diligently observe the course of life, which is pursued by men who are called christians, and men called infidels, will find that there is a striking similarity, between their conduct, and that of the Jews and Romans, in the days of the apostles. They rage, and they imagine vain things; for while they seat themselves in council, and deliberate against Jehovah, and against his Messiah, they are gathered together, to do whatsoever his hand and council determined before to be done. They are fulfilling the designs of God, while it is their great object to oppose them, and prevent them from being fulfilled.

The Psalmist here presents to us the language of the hearts of such characters. They say in their hearts, let us break asunder their bands, &c. All that receive the Lord Jesus Christ in truth, must receive him not only as their prophet and priest; but they must receive him as their king. They must put themselves under his government, that he may rule in them as well as over them. The bands and yokes of the Redeemer, are the bands and yokes of the Father. He draws his people to his Son; and he puts his yoke upon them. It is true that his commandments are not grievous. His yoke is easy, and his burden light. But it is grievous and heavy to the man whose affections are set on the present life. He commands us not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world, not to be solicitous concerning what we shall eat, what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed; but to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and to rely on his promise, that all temporal things, which are suitable and necessary, shall be given to us in the proper

time. But the worldly minded man cannot bear this constraint. The great object of his solicitude is the things of this world; and so great is his eagerness to obtain them, that to be commanded to set his affections on other objects, not only gives him pain; but excites a kind of rebellious disposition in his heart. Then he takes some means to free himself from these bands and yokes, which are attempted to be put upon him, contrary to his inclinations. Hence men that have the same feelings and dispositions on this subject, will unite in the same work, and use the same language of encouragement the one to the other.—Various and numerous are the means and efforts and contrivances, which men have adopted for this purpose; and they are chiefly directed against him, whom the Father has commanded angels and men to worship. Herod and Pontius Pilate, the Jews and the Gentiles, at the time when Christ rose from the dead; assumed his authority; and was about to send his gospel over the world, exerted themselves with all their power, aided and directed by the power of Satan, to break asunder the bands, and cast away the yokes of the Redeemer. But they succeeded no better than the builders of Babel in ancient times. They thought to exalt their own power above the power of the Almighty. They attempted to build a city and a tower, whose top might reach to heaven, that they might have a centre of union, where they should gather together against the Lord, and against his anointed. In that period they were less guilty than they are at this time, because the true character of the Lord Jesus Christ was not clearly revealed. But such is the enmity of the human heart, against Jehovah and against his Messiah, that carnal men always become the more hostile, as the truth is more clearly revealed. In the days of Herod and Pontius Pilate, the power of the Messiah appeared to be so small, that the feelings of enmity in the hearts of many, were mingled with contempt; and for years and ages after those days, the gospel was suffered

to grow, because men did not generally see, that the reigning religion would be endangered by its influence : but as soon as its truth began to appear, then the sword of persecution was unsheathed, and the venom of the dragon appeared, in all the efforts of the heathen to destroy the christian name. But so soon as christianity obtained power, and the name of christian became a title of respect and honour, then anti-christ arose, under the outward resemblance of christianity; the dragon gave his power unto the beast; satan put on the robes of an angel of light; the man of sin seated himself in the temple of God, and set his throne close by the throne of the Most High. This is the spiritual condition of the world at the present time. Hypocrisy prevails under the outward appearance of christianity, and the great mass of the christian world, have a name that they live while they are dead. Thus men still say in their hearts, concerning the Redeemer, we will not have this man to reign over us; and they say, one to another, let us break his bands asunder; and cast away from us his yokes.

This kind of feeling and disposition is in all mankind by nature; for the carnal mind is enmity against God; and this carnal mind is never utterly destroyed in us, so long as we remain in this world. But it is by submitting to Christ, believing in Christ, and trusting in Christ continually, that we receive power to conquer our own evil dispositions, and to gain the victory over the world, the flesh and the devil.— The power of evil is so strong, both in our hearts, and in the world around us, that nothing less than the constant operation of the power of Christ, can deliver us from the dominion of sin, even after we are made willing in the day of his power. “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that we cannot do the things which we would.” When we delight in the law of God after the inward man, we still find a law in our members, warring against the law of our minds. This evil principle will operate to prevent

us from submitting entirely to the law of Christ. It operates in the christian by means of darkness and deception, and he can find it only by the application of the light of truth. Hence he frequently exclaims with the Psalmist, "who can understand his errors?" All christians, therefore, have reason to examine themselves constantly and carefully, lest they should act like the rest of mankind, in breaking and casting away the bands and yokes of the Redeemer.

Still it must appear evident to every one, on mature deliberation, that all the efforts of man against his Maker, are like the efforts of a venomous reptile, to injure those who have power to destroy it, or inflict upon it, whatever pain they may think proper. We are here told, that there is some such feeling in the mind of the Almighty, when he beholds the evil dispositions, and the malignant efforts of sinful men, against the authority and government of his only begotten Son. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh; &c. When we speak of the laughter and derision, or of the anger and rage of the Almighty; we should keep in mind his high and holy nature and character. There can be nothing in his laughter that is degrading, and nothing in his anger, which would give us any reason to think, that his mind could be ruffled by the same passions which agitate the human bosom. When Herod and Pilate, with the Jewish and Gentile populace, exerted themselves to destroy the Redeemer; and made him suffer death on the cross; or when the rulers of mankind at the present time, and those whom they have under their authority, exert themselves in various ways, against the Redeemer and his cause; he beholds their works, and is able at any time by an exertion of his power, to confound their councils, and cover them with confusion. Therefore the laughter, which is here ascribed to Jehovah, is the perfect tranquility of his mind, when he considers that all the efforts of his enemies, are as harmless as the efforts of a worm against the foot that treads upon it.

But as men have in them the malignity and the poison of the serpent, and by this evil disposition, their actions are directed and regulated; so God looks with displeasure on their evil works: and as these evil works are directed against his authority and government; so he determines in his justice, to punish them for their iniquities, and to put them under his feet. As God is known by the judgements which he executes; so we may have some knowledge of his feelings of anger against transgressors, by the sufferings which follow many transgressions. The wrath of God is the steady determination, which he keeps in his heart, to punish every sin to the uttermost. It is no pleasure to him to bring misery upon any one, for he does not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men; but he has determined to execute judgement righteously; and the sin of rebellion against the government of his only Begotten Son, is the most presumptuously wicked of all the wicked actions of men. Those, therefore, who are guilty of this sin, shall be reprov'd in his anger, and terrified in his indignation.

The dreadful vengeance which he inflicted on the Jews, after they had condemned and crucified the Redeemer, may give us some knowledge of the terrible nature of his wrath. The object which the Jews had in view, in the perpetration of this wicked work, was to free themselves from his yoke. But instead of gaining their object, they were cast down into the chains of darkness and despair.— They suffered horrible punishments in this world, and too many of them in death, gave mournful evidence that their names were not written with the righteous. As it is one of the subjects propos'd to us by the Redeemer, for our rejoicing, that our names are written in heaven; so it is, and ought to be, the cause of most horrible pain and terror to men, when they have reason to fear, that they shall die in their sins, and be the objects of God's displeasure for ever.

It appears from the whole history of the plan and the works of redemption, as they are presented to us in the scriptures, that God the Father intended, chiefly and principally, to exercise, and to manifest his love to his only begotten son, who of his own free will, had undertaken to be the mediator between God and man. This was evident at his baptism, when the heavens were opened, and the spirit of God descended like a dove, and remained on him; and when the Father, by a voice from heaven proclaimed; This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. So John the Baptist declares; "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand." Thus it is declared also, by the apostle Paul, concerning the salvation of those whom he had chosen to everlasting life, "whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the first born among many brethren." Man was created in the image of God, but having lost that image by his fall and apostacy; so all those who shall be saved, are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the son of God. As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same. He took flesh and blood, and thus united the human with the divine nature. Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; and, therefore, God the Father has exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name. We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. This is therefore the great cause, why God honours and blesses a part of the human family. His great object is to render most blessed and glorious, him who was with him through eternity, as one who was brought up by him, and whose delights were with the sons of men.

The Father is here represented as making this procla-

mation to heaven and earth, to angels and men, that he had honoured his only begotten son, by committing into his hand the government of earth and heaven, until that period, when all things should be subdued unto him, and his enemies should be made his footstool. The commencement of this kingdom was publicly made on Mount Zion, where the temple was built, from this place the gospel began to be proclaimed, the knowledge of Christ to be extended, and his kingdom to be established. The Father, therefore, proclaims : I have anointed my king upon Zion, &c. As David and Solomon, and the kings of Israel, were anointed upon Mount Zion ; so Jesus Christ, the spiritual or true David, was anointed king over the universe, but especially over the Israel of God. As Zion was consecrated to God for a holy place, among the hills or eminences, which were in, and round about Jerusalem ; and was the particular place where his holy people assembled to worship him ; so the assemblages of christian worshippers are his house, his temple and his holy place. There is now no place upon the earth more holy than another. Therefore the Redeemer said to the woman of Samaria, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers, shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship him. Jesus Christ is anointed the sovereign or king, over all the assemblages of christian worshippers, and is the head of the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who filleth all in all.

The psalmist in the next place represents this King of Zion, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, as making his proclamation to the kings of the earth and to mankind. It might be proper for us in this place, to look back for a moment, over the arrangement of this sublime and wonderful piece of divine composition. In the first place, the nations and people of the earth, appear to be assembled to-

gether in rage and tumult. Then ten thousand vain imaginations enter into their minds, like those who framed the project of the building of Babel. The kings and rulers and judges sit together in deliberation; and the chief subject appears to be, how they shall be able to free themselves and the world from the government of him, whom God the Father has exalted in human nature, to be the Prince and the Saviour.

Again, the great God of heaven, the Father and Lord of the universe, is represented as looking down upon mankind, and viewing their evil imaginations, and works of wickedness with contempt and indignation. Then he confounds their language and throws them all into confusion; and while they look forward fearfully to the judgement, and fiery indignation, by which they are threatened, and by which their hearts are filled with terror, they call to the rocks to fall upon them, and to the hills to cover them, from the vengeance of the Most High: For he speaks to them in anger and terrifies them in his wrath.

But there is hope for the human family, by the reception of the gospel, and the acknowledgment of willing subjection, to the King of kings. Therefore, that confusion might cease, and all things be settled in proper order, the Father proclaims to the universe, that he had anointed his King, and placed him on Zion, his holy hill. Then this King comes forward, and reveals the substance of his Father's annunciation. He proclaims the eternal decree of God, or the covenant into which he had entered with his Father, before time began, and in which all nations were promised to him for his inheritance; and he concludes with an address, in his Father's name, to the kings and judges of the earth, and to all mankind, to submit to his authority, receive his instruction, and enjoy his protection, and the blessings of his kingdom.

The persons of the Godhead are eternal. There are three distinct subsistences in the one Jehovah, and each of

these subsistences is Jehovah. They are not called Father, Son and Holy Spirit, from the relation which they bear to mankind in the gospel ; but from the relation in which they stand to each other. If the universe had never been brought into existence, Jehovah, the Father, Son and Spirit, would have been as he is the same Jehovah. We may also observe, that the Godhead in each of the persons is invisible. No man hath seen God at any time. It is true that God can render himself visible to man, by putting on any appearance he pleases, and he appeared to Moses as a flame of fire in a bush. But the Son of God has taken human nature as his permanent residence or dwelling place. He dwells in human flesh. His human body and his human soul, are thus united with the Godhead. His human nature is not only the dwelling place for his divine nature ; but the Father dwells in him, and he manifests the Godhead to his people. We come to him that we may come to the Father ; because the Father is in him, and he in the Father ; and it is he who makes the Father known to us.

When the Father makes this declaration to him ; "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee ;" he simply declares a fact, which is always the same. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever. There can be no change in the divine nature ; neither in the Godhead, nor in any of the persons. Nor can the covenant of redemption change the natural relation, in which they stand to each other. But the Son voluntarily became the servant of the Father, to accomplish the work of man's salvation, and the Father promised to make him King of kings, and Lord of lords. There was no radical change made in his human nature, for even as a man, he was holy, when he was generated, or begotten and conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary ; and hence the angel said to her, "that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the son of God." There was only this change, that the word

was made flesh, and dwelt in human nature, as in a tabernacle. He dwelt in our nature even when he was in the womb of the virgin; and when he entered on his ministry, he manifested his glory, which plainly appeared to his disciples, to be the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

We may here know something of the force of the epithet, wonderful, which is so often applied to the son of God in the scripture. Thus, when Manoah inquired of the angel, who appeared to him and told him, that he should have a son, he asked: what is thy name, that when thy saying cometh to pass, we may do thee honour: he said, why dost thou ask after my name, seeing it is secret; or as it ought to have been rendered; seeing it is wonderful. Thus also said Isaiah; unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called wonderful. And thus says the apostle, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh!

Hence as the personage, who on account of his eminence, is called wonderful, is the mighty God,—God manifested in the flesh; so it is plain that he has the very nature of Jehovah. In this nature there can be no degrees. It is one and the same in each of the three persons. Jehovah is the self-existent God, he who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty. The great difference which exists between God and all other beings, is that of the creator and the creatures. The creator is eternal, and possesses all the divine attributes; while the creature was brought into existence by his power, and is limited in all his faculties. But the son of God is the creator of all worlds. By him all things were made. He is naturally the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and upholds all things by the word of his own power.

The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, which he had proposed in himself, before they were executed, in creation and providence. We understand the nature of a

decree or purpose, from what passes in our own minds, when we determine upon any thing, which we intend to bring to pass. Therefore as the decree, in the order of nature, must exist before the work; so those who make a decree, must exist before the decree. As Jesus Christ was naturally and essentially the son of God; so this relationship between him and the Father, existed in the order of nature, before the decree, and the Father mentions it as a fact then in existence. But the son of God here relates or declares the decree, as a covenant transaction; somewhat similar to the transaction called the covenant of works, in which God said virtually, although not in words to our first parent Adam, thou art my son by creation: "Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." A covenant is a constitution of God, which he has established and published; and to which no kind of objection can possibly be made, by the other contracting party. A decree is some kind of stipulation, which God has marked out or delineated, and made conspicuous, to those concerning whom it was made. In this decree or covenant transaction, the Father exhibits his love to his Son; and the Son, by receiving and proclaiming it, shows his love to the Father. The Father determined to place his only begotten son, in a situation, similar to that of Adam in the covenant of works, and the Son said to him; "Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." God the Father, then became the God of the Son, because the Son then stood in the room of man.

Jesus Christ is therefore very properly called Wonderful, as to his divine nature; and he is no less wonderful, as to his human nature, in union with the divine. It is very true that in the fullest and most exalted sense of the terms. his human nature never can be called the son of God, be-

cause the human is essentially below the divine nature, and can never rise so high in the scale of excellence as to be altogether equal to it: yet the Holy Ghost declared, that the holy thing which was to be born of the virgin, should be called the Son of God. Adam was called the son of God, because he was created in the image of God; but the human nature of Jesus Christ, is the Son of God in a much higher sense; because the eternal and only begotten Son of God, has chosen to make this human nature his eternal residence. Therefore as the body of Christ will be glorious beyond all our comprehension; so his soul will transcend in its faculties, of feeling and understanding, all the souls of the children of Adam. "He is fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured into his lips; and God has blessed him forever." In this sense he is the chief among ten thousand; yea; he is altogether lovely. The Apostle also declares, in the Epistle to the Romans, that Jesus Christ was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Since, therefore, Jesus Christ, as to the human nature, is declared to be the Son of God with power; and as this human nature is, by the excellence of its faculties, the beauty of its form, and by every other created excellence constantly partaking of the communicable attributes of God; so in this sense also, God the Father says to him, thou art my Son; this day I have begotten thee.

In this sense every christian may sing this sentiment in application to himself. "The children of God are born, not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God." They are born, of water, and of the Spirit; or by the outward means, and by the inward operation of the divine power in their hearts. They are born, not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. But regeneration is the commencement of the work of holiness. When

God begins this good work in the heart, then every virtue and every grace, is communicated in the proper time.— “His divine power bestows on his people, all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him, who has called them to glory and virtue.” By faith in the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, they become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.— Therefore in this sense God says to all his people, as well as to his only begotten Son, ye are my sons, this day I have begotten you. He has begotten them to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven, for those who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. This is the way in which we ought to apply such sentiments to the captain of our salvation, and to ourselves, as far as they are applicable.

This Psalm was written by David, and is therefore in a certain sense, applicable to David. God said to him, as he said to every one that is regenerated: “thou art my son, this day I have begotten thee.” But David was, in his person, in many of his works, and in his kingdom, a remarkable type, or figure, or symbol of the Son of God.— No figure taken from man, can fully represent the whole person of Christ, for as his divine nature cannot be represented to the eye of man, so it cannot by any symbol be fully represented to the human mind. But as David was raised from an humble condition in the world, and was anointed by the command of God, to be the king of a great and powerful nation; and the temple and the city of David stood on Mount Zion; so God said to David, in a certain sense, I have anointed thee my king, upon Zion, the hill of my holiness. Ask of me, &c. The kingdom of Israel was, after years of trial and dangers and painful exertions, finally given into his hand; and he reigned over the whole

nation. He acquired authority during his life, over many of the heathen nations around the kingdom of Israel, and the reign of Solomon, his son, extended from the river Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea. So the promise was in a certain sense fulfilled in Solomon; "he shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth."

But in the person and works of the Redeemer, in the propagation of his gospel, and in the establishment of his kingdom, we may see and realize the truth of all these typical representations. As it is declared by the Apostle John, the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; so we may say, the promise was fulfilled outwardly to David, but inwardly and spiritually it was fulfilled, and is still in the course of being fulfilled, to the Redeemer. It is necessary for us to keep the truth always in our minds, that all things belong to the Father.—He has authority over all, and he has authority over his only begotten Son. In this sense, as well as with respect to his human nature, the Redeemer declares the Father is greater than I. Jesus Christ is Jehovah, and has the same nature with his Father; but he is always under the Father's authority. He obeys his commands, and he receives blessings from his hand. He asks, and receives; he seeks and finds; he knocks and it is opened to him. But when we take into view the human nature of Christ, the kindness and condescension of the Father appears more clearly to our minds. When he recognizes the Redeemer as his son, both in the divine and human nature, and knowing that his delights were always with the sons of men, he anticipates his wishes, and promises to give him on his asking, all nations for his inheritance, the ends of the earth for his possession.

As the Father intends to support his authority over all, so he shows this determination in the very honours which he bestows upon his son. It is necessary, even for the Son

of God, to ask and to receive from his Father, whatever blessings or honours he wishes and hopes to enjoy. This asking is not merely a particular request but a continued prayer. God says to all his children, as Christ said to his disciples, ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened. It is only he that asks, who has any right to hope for any blessing from the hand of God. Prayer is an exercise of so much importance, in the eyes of the Father, that his only begotten Son is still in the habit of prayer. There is something always which he desires and asks from his Father. He stands at the right hand of God, and makes intercession for all that come to God through him. But one of the chief and most important requests, which the Redeemer makes to his Father, is that all the nations of the earth should be brought into subjection to him; that all kings should fall down before him; and all nations should serve him; that he should not only be virtually, but by universal acknowledgement, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

He has had his request always in some degree granted to him. A part of the human family has been given into his hand, from generation to generation. The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness: he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. This is in fact the condition in a spiritual point of view, in which the Redeemer finds all his people, who are given into his hand to be redeemed. In the ancient ages, they were only to be found in one nation; and the rest of the world were suffered to walk in their own ways, and to choose their own delusions. But he led his own people like a flock of sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron, and other leaders whom he provided for them. It was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour, who led them, and there was no strange God with him. It is necessary that the Redeemer should lead his people through trouble, and

that he should humble them and try them : but when they are sufficiently humbled, so as to be able to bear prosperity with a righteous and humble disposition, then he raises them to honour and comfort, and gives them reason to praise him. He has promised, that they shall delight themselves in the Lord, and he will cause them to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed them with the heritage of Jacob their father. He causes their light to rise from obscurity, and their darkness to be as the noon day. He guides them continually, and satisfies their soul in drought, and makes them like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. This is the way in which the captain of our salvation leads all who are given into his hand by the Father. He whose delights are with the sons of men, finds increasing delight in filling the hearts of his people with spiritual food and gladness, as soon as they are prepared and fitted to receive it. This is his portion and his inheritance among mankind, and he thus prepares a people among whom he shall dwell forever.

But the Father has promised, that the people whom the Redeemer forms for himself, and who shall shew forth his praise, shall not only be collected from other nations, besides the Jews ; but in the latter ages, all nations shall serve him, and his churches shall be purified, so that his worshippers shall generally be righteous characters. Professing christians, who live in any sinful practices, shall be cast out of the church, and finally destroyed from the earth. Therefore says the prophet : “ awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion ; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city : for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.” The true gospel shall have free course and be glorified, and all those who will not submit to the Redeemer, shall finally be cut off. For God says, “ the nation and kingdom which will not serve thee shall perish ; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.” Thy people also shall be all righteous ;

they shall inherit the land forever ; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified."

The Apostle declares, that the rulers of the church watch for the souls of those under their care, as they that must give account. If therefore they should have reason to believe, that the people under their care were generally righteous characters ; they would then be able in their prayers, to give their account in with joy. It would indeed be equal cause of thanksgiving to God, by faithful rulers and overseers of any church or congregation, if they had reason to believe, in the judgement of charity, that those of whom they had the oversight were generally righteous. But this appears plainly to be the meaning of the Father's gracious promise to his son, to give him the earth for his inheritance. Every congregation of worshippers, shall generally be composed of righteous characters ; and the inhabited world shall be divided into different congregations. It is said in the book of Deuteronomy ; " when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance ; when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." The meaning of this declaration, which now seems obscure, will be fully developed in that time, when the Most High shall divide to the nations their spiritual inheritance in the gospel, and when the sons of Adam shall be separated merely into different congregations of worshippers. Then it shall come to pass, according to the words of the prophet, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountain, and shall be exalted above the hills ; and all nations shall flow unto it.

The Father has commanded his only begotten Son to ask him continually for this invaluable blessing ; or to make it the subject of his prayers. He asks only for such things as he believes and knows to be agreeable to the will of his Father. But the Father has taught him to pray that the nations may all be given to him for his inheritance ; and the

Redeemer has taught us to make our request for the same blessing. It is all comprehended in the petitions, thy kingdom come; and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We know that it is the will of his Father, to give the kingdom into his hand. "The riches of the Gentiles shall be brought into it. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, even the rich among the people, shall entreat his favour. Yea, he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba, prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised."

This grant of the Father is accompanied with a command, which renders it proper and necessary for the Redeemer to bring the world into subjection, by a course of severe and terrible discipline. A rod of iron can never be supposed to be used by a father for the correction of his children, unless they have become exceedingly refractory, —and even rebellious. This is plainly an emblem of such severe and terrible measures, as a sovereign would use when his subjects had rebelled against him. But the nations of the earth have always showed this rebellious disposition. It has plainly appeared, in all ages and countries, where the government of Christ has been attempted to be established, that mankind would rather be under any other sovereign, than the Son of God. This is the reason why the heathen rage, and why the rulers of the earth sit in council. Their object is to break the yoke of the Redeemer. They do not desire to be under such a government. Indeed there is too much evidence of this lamentable truth, in every country and neighbourhood, where the gospel is preached, and the ordinances administered according to the commandments of Christ. The spirit of Antichrist began to work in the minds of men, even in the days of the apostles; and it has continued to increase in power, notwithstanding all the efforts and exertions, which have been made to extend the influence of the gospel. It

was the purpose of God, that mankind should be permitted to give full proof of the wickedness of that spirit, which dwells and operates in the human heart. But he declares, by the apostle Paul, that when that wicked spirit shall be fully developed, and exhibited for the condemnation of the world that lies in wickedness, then the Lord shall consume him, with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming. Then a terrible series of judgements shall be executed over the face of the earth. These judgements are called the seven last plagues, or the vials of the wrath of God. In these scenes the Redeemer shall rule the nations with a rod of iron, and shall dash them in pieces, as the vessel of the potter.

But although all the chastisements, which shall be inflicted on the children of God, shall have the effect to teach them his laws, and render them more humble and obedient; yet we may learn from many places in scripture, that in these latter days, the judgements of God on his own people, will be more severe than any which they have experienced in former times. In these latter ages the prophecy is to be remarkably fulfilled; "awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die, but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say it is my people; and they shall say, the Lord is my God." From these declarations of the truth of God, we may learn that there shall be in these latter days, a long series of dreadful judgements, by which the wicked shall be cut off and destroyed in large numbers, and the righteous shall pass through a fiery trial,

by which they shall not be destroyed, but their hearts shall be purified. Hence it is said, concerning "the great multitude, who stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands: These are they who came out of great tribulation; and have washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb."

But in the end of all these tribulations, when they shall have passed through these fiery trials, and have come forth like gold, they shall be raised to honour and power among mankind. So it is said concerning the witnesses, whom the Son of God had appointed to prophesy in sackcloth, and afterwards to suffer death, and that their dead bodies should be cast into the streets, for the gratification and triumph of their enemies; they afterwards rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven; and then great fear fell upon them who saw them. So also, it is promised by the Lord Jesus Christ, to the church of Thyatira, and to all churches that are placed in similar circumstances, and that walk in the course which he has commanded; contending earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, "to him that overcometh and keepeth my works to the end, I will give him power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of the potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father." Individual Christians, who are placed in these circumstances, may be obliged to endure great tribulation, to lose all the comforts of this world, and even their lives, for the sake of the truth: but those who are faithful unto the death, shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. When churches or christian communities continue faithful, and suffer every kind of pain and indignity, which the enemy can inflict; when they never give up the truth, nor submit with their hearts, to the power of iniquity, they always overcome in the end, and rise into power.—The honourable condition, to which the christian church

has arrived in the world, at this present time, shows conclusively the faithfulness of God to his promise. The power to which the protestant churches have arrived, who have contended earnestly and faithfully against the errors and corruptions of the Roman church; this and many examples of particular churches, who have suffered for a time in bearing testimony to the truth, but have afterwards gained the victory and risen to honour, might be adduced, to show that the Redeemer has been abundantly faithful to his promise in times past. But in these latter days, we may hope with confidence, to see the same promise fulfilled, in a striking and remarkable manner, to all the churches who have continued firm in the support of the truth.— They shall have power over the nations; their enemies shall melt away before them, and by the power of their King, who stills the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumults of the populace, they shall be enabled to dissolve and disperse all the combinations of the enemies of the truth, and of the pure worship of God.— Like the potter's vessel, they shall break them to shivers.

The foregoing part of this Psalm, is a short but powerful exhibition of truth, showing the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the manner in which that authority shall be exercised and supported. The Psalmist therefore concludes with a no less powerful application of the subject, to the leaders and governours of mankind, and through them to the whole world, to induce them to bow in willing subjection, to him who is placed over them by the Father Almighty. By kings and judges that class of mankind is evidently meant, who hold the reins of government, and direct the affairs of nations, cities, villages, and communities, from the largest to the smallest. Even the father of a family, who has children and domestics under his government, is in this sense one of the kings and judges of the earth. All these characters stand in a state of responsibility to the great King and Judge of all. The Father has

committed all judgement to the Son, and we must all, even in this world, stand at the judgement seat of Christ; to give an account of the things committed to our charge. Our judgement, or condemnation, will be the more terrible in proportion, to the importance of our official station. Every man, in every station of life, must pass under the inspection of this Sovereign Judge; and therefore it is highly important, that every one should exercise wisdom and receive instruction.

This King, whom we are required to serve, is no other than Jehovah, the Sovereign of the heavens and the earth, and the creator of all things. "By him," says the apostle, "were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." This is Jesus Christ, the King, whom the Father has set upon Zion, and who claims the government of the universe. The Father has anointed him for this high office, that he might wage war with the powers of darkness, and bruise the head of the serpent. When Eve brought forth her first born son, she exclaimed I have gotten a man from the Lord, or rather, as it ought to be rendered, I have gotten a man, **THE JEHOVAH**. It is the same personage who is here brought into our view. Serve this Jehovah in fear; for he is your Maker, and the great and dreadful God. The fear of him is the beginning of wisdom. We should fear him as we fear the Father, and our religious joy should be mingled with fear. We are commanded to rejoice always in the Lord, but in our rejoicing we should keep in mind his dreadful judgements; and tremble in view of the vengeance, which he will execute on the workers of iniquity.

But this subject is addressed chiefly to those kings and rulers, who sit in council and deliberate together against Jehovah, and against his Messiah. These are all the kings

of the earth, and the judges who bear rule over the tribes of the earth. These characters, if they continue to keep their minds fixed on the earth, and regard not the words of this King, shall mourn, when they see and understand his coming to bring terrible judgements upon the earth; when the fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. They are commanded to tremble in the midst of their profane and earthly joy, and instead of serving themselves and the idols of their own hearts, to serve this Jehovah who is the Son of God.

There is a token of subjection and of willing obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, which in its outward form and correspondent feelings, is in some degree different from the kind of subjection and willing service, which we render to the Father. The kings and judges of the earth are exhorted, to kiss the son, lest he be angry, &c. The meaning of this expression can scarcely be understood, without recurring to the manners and customs of times and countries different from our own. In the ancient ages, all the heathen countries, as well as the Jews believed in saviours, who were in some respects different from the great God.—Almost all the household gods, and the gods of particular countries, were of this description. They all believed that the God who made the heavens and the earth, was a higher and more powerful being, than any of the particular and local saviours. This is the subject, which is brought particularly before us, in the xlv. of Isaiah; a part of which we shall translate literally, from the original Hebrew. “Assemble yourselves, and draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations; they have no knowledge, who carry the wood of the graven image, and pray to a god who cannot save. Proclaim, and bring near; yea let them take counsel together; who hath showed this from ancient times? from this time who hath proclaimed it? am not I Jehovah? and there is yet no God without me; the just God and the Saviour; none except me. Look to me and be saved all

the ends of the earth, for I am God and none else. By myself I have sworn, the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." The meaning of this declaration is explained by the Apostle in Romans xiv. "We shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ. For it is written, as I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." If we do not bow to him at the present time, we shall be obliged to bow to him as our judge, at the day when all nations shall be assembled before him, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." They who do not look to him as the Saviour, and tremble before him, lest he should be angry, and they should perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little, shall be obliged to look to him and tremble before him, as their judge, when he shall pronounce the sentence of eternal condemnation on the wicked.

It was customary, among many of the idolators of ancient times, to kiss the images of their gods. So we are told by Cicero, that the mouth and chin of one of the gods were worn by the kisses of his worshippers. So also it is said by the prophet Hosea: they say of their idols; "Let the men that sacrifice, kiss the calves." Thus we may learn how the act of kissing began to be considered as an act of worship, which they rendered to their gods and saviours, and also as an act of reverence, to those whom they esteemed and honoured as their superiours, who had a rightful authority over them. When Pharaoh the king of Egypt, placed Joseph in authority over his kingdom, he said to him thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled. It is literally rendered, at thy mouth shall all my people kiss. The custom of kissing the idols, or of kissing the hand when they

bowed to the idols, as a token of subjection and reverence, had become so common, that it was used in their common language to signify willing subjection to those who were in power. But Joseph was a type of the son of God. He was called by Pharaoh, Zaphnath Paaneah, one to whom God revealed secret things. The Lord Jesus Christ was sent into the world, to reveal the secret of redeeming grace; and thus the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant. Thus also God the Father said to his son, thou shalt be over my house, and at thy mouth shall all my people kiss; or, they shall all be ruled by thy word.

The love of God which is manifested in the gospel, and the various attributes of God, which ought to excite love in the hearts of men, are exhibited so clearly, that those who do not receive the Redeemer and submit to him, give an evidence no less clear, that they are actuated by some kind of dislike or hatred to that Saviour, whom the Father has placed on the throne, and to whom he commands them to be subject. Hence as this Saviour is the acting governor, and judge of the earth; so this kind of wicked feeling always excites his resentment and indignation. God the Father offers him, and he offers himself to be their Lord, and Saviour; and they reject him and say we will not have this man to rule over us.

No wonder that the anger of the Redeemer is excited, since he has made such a sacrifice for man, and offers him such invaluable blessings. This kind of conduct proceeds not entirely from ignorance, but hatred; and such characters are really the enemies of Jehovah, and of his Messiah. Hence he looks upon them with anger and withdraws his presence. He says this people errs in their hearts, and they have not known my ways. They perish from the way, like the Israelites who fell and died in the wilderness, in which they wandered, and never found the way to the land of Canaan.

There is danger of everlasting ruin in the indulgence of such a disposition. If we do not give ourselves up to him, to be ruled and directed according to his will, his wrath will be kindled against us. We have reason to fear that he will hide his face from us, and then we will go on forwardly in the way of our own hearts. If there is danger of perishing when his wrath is kindled but a little, it must be a dreadful consideration, to see his wrath burning against us, like the devouring fire on Mount Sinai, when even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake. If such was the declaration of Moses when he saw the emblem of the wrath of the Son of God, no wonder the wicked are represented as calling to the rocks to fall upon them, and to the hills to cover them from his vengeance.

Men perish from the way by little and little, as his wrath is kindled. They first begin to neglect their duty occasionally and then give it up entirely. Sorrow is always the consequence of sin. There is a short lived comfort which is placed before them, by way of temptation, and they are led into sin; but sin will always be followed by pain. Sin entered, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. But this sin of refusing submission to the Son of God, if it continues so long as to harden the heart, and provoke his anger, so that he swears in his wrath they shall not enter into my rest, is certain and irremediable and eternal destruction, from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

The son of God is always presented to us as a Saviour, or deliverer. Pain and sorrow, and wo, are denounced against mankind in the curse of the law of God. But the Son offers to be our Saviour; and there is no other name given under heaven among men, by which they can be saved. Without him the curse must come upon all, and by rejecting his offers of salvation, the condemnation is increased beyond all hope. Those therefore who receive

him, and trust in him for salvation, are the only characters, who have a right to expect blessings from God. The act, or exercise of the mind, by which we receive his salvation is not sensibly perceived at any particular moment. He is always presented to our mind, as a refuge or protection, and therefore waiting for him, and flying to him for protection, are only different degrees of the same exercise of the believer's heart. His salvation consists in deliverance from all sin, and all sorrow. We wait upon him for his blessing, and we exercise patience, in waiting for his coming to deliver us from evil, and to bestow upon us every other blessing. All those whose hearts are continually acting under the influence of this principle, are in a state of blessedness, which is perfect in its nature, and will always be growing in its degrees, until it reaches the perfect blessedness of the heavens.

PSALM III.

A Psalm of David.—In his flight from the face of Absalom, his son.

The word SELAH occurs here for the first time, and it occurs three times in this psalm. We meet with it about seventy-one times in the book of psalms ; and it occurs three times in the third chapter of Habakkuk. It is probably intended to mark a pause in the worship of the temple, when the band of musicians, and all that were engaged in singing the praises of God, directed their attention more particularly to the sentiment ; and when they felt a strong desire to exalt the name of Jehovah. It seems to have nearly the same meaning as Alleluia, and to be composed of two words which are properly rendered, exalt ye Jehovah.

TRANSLATION.

1. O Jehovah how are my enemies increased ! Many are risen up against me.

2. Many are saying concerning my soul ; there is no help for him in God.

3. But thou, O Jehovah, art a shield for me ; my glory, and he who lifts up my head.

4. I cried to Jehovah with my voice ; and he answered me from the hill of his holiness.

5. I laid myself down, and slept quietly ; I awaked,—for Jehovah supported me.

6. I will not be afraid of ten thousands, who set themselves against me round about.

7. Rise, O Jehovah, save me, O my God ; for thou hast smitten all my enemies on the cheek ; thou hast broken the teeth of the wicked.

8. Salvation belongs to Jehovah ; thy blessing is upon thy people.

DISSERTATION.

It would be difficult for the human mind to imagine a condition more distressing, or a trial more severe in the

life of a child of God, than the condition of David, when he composed this psalm. It is perhaps not very proper to say that he sat down, and composed this psalm, in those trying circumstances, for the use of the church. This is by no means probable; for his mind, at that time, could not be in a suitable condition to commit his thoughts to writing. But these were the thoughts which passed through his mind, when he was about to flee out of the city of Jerusalem; and when Absalom was about to enter into it, with a large army, intending to destroy his father, and all who adhered to him. The conspiracy was strong, and the people who followed Absalom increased continually. "And there came a messenger to David, saying, "the hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom." And David said unto all his servants, that were at Jerusalem; "arise and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword." And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet; and wept as he went up, and had his head covered; and he went barefoot and all the people that was with him, covered every man his head; and they went up, weeping as they went up."* This psalm contains the substance of the prayers and petitions, which he offered up to God in those trying circumstances.

At that time David was somewhat advanced in years. The natural strength of his mind, as well as his bodily prowess had begun to fail. The throne of his kingdom appeared to have been so firmly established, that there was no danger to be apprehended from internal foes; and God had destroyed the Philistines, and all his foreign enemies, so that he had no reason to fear any of the Gentile nations, around his country. It was indeed least of all to be feared, that one, who had proceeded from his own bowels, and whom he tenderly loved, would have attempted to put him

*2 Sam. xv. 13. 14.—30.

to death, that he might reign in his stead. But God executed this judgement on him, for the sin he had committed many years before, in the case of Uriah the Hittite, and Bathsheba his wife. God had said, that the sword should not depart from his house, and that he would raise up evil against him out of his own family. David therefore had reason to fear that he had lost the affections of his people, that his own family had turned against him; and he had full and complete evidence, that his own son had become his enemy and sought his life.

In those trying scenes, his only resource was the "hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble." He had been in the habit of fellowship, and constant communion with his maker and redeemer; and he had full confidence that he would not forsake him, in the time of need. He knew that he was looking upon him, at all times, and saw his condition, at that moment. When he looked around him, and recognized the multitude of his enemies, and his circumstances of danger, and perplexity; he makes his complaint to God, and describes his condition. His enemies had increased beyond all his calculations, and many were continually rising up against him, and joining the conspirators. Many of his people, who had no great degree of friendship for him, although they might not have joined the standard of his enemies, began to think that God had forsaken him, and would help him no longer. But the case of the psalmist is, spiritually and substantially, the case of every christian. The business of this world, in all the various grades and conditions of life, is apt to bring mankind into collision with each other. The love of the world, the ambition, the selfish feelings, the desire to exalt themselves, and to favour those who they hope will favour them in return, leads them to oppose others, from whom they have not such expectations, or against whom they have imbibed some dislike, or hatred. Every christian man, and every honest man, who stands in any

important station, which renders him an object of envy, will often have reason to make the same complaint, to his Father in heaven. O Jehovah how are my foes increased! &c.

It is true, that our own particular enemies may sometimes be increased, and sometimes diminished. This psalm will not always, in this respect, express our own particular condition. Even David could not always say, that his enemies were always growing more numerous; and therefore this psalm will not always express the feelings, and the particular circumstances of every christian; but we are always connected with the whole body of christians, —with the church militant throughout the world. In this sense, our enemies are always increasing, although like the enemies of David, they are always defeated. It is our duty also to mourn, and to weep with our afflicted fellow christians, for their enemies and ours are the same. But we are to look to Jesus, who suffered every painful wound, which our hearts can receive; and who suffered through his whole life, as well as when he hung upon the cross. By our union with him, we suffer sympathetick sorrow, even in the time of our prosperity; because as he was, even so are we in this world: and thus every christian can say, I am crucified with Christ.

But christians do not only, in this sense, always suffer with Christ, and also suffer with their fellow christians, who are his body; but they find themselves frequently in a condition, similar to that of the psalmist. Nothing comes by chance. No effect can be produced without a cause. If we suffer, we may be assured that the pain is inflicted upon us by an enemy. Satan is in this respect the executioner of God's judgements, and by him he often inflicts chastisement on his people. He delivers them to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved, in the day of the Lord Jesus. When our afflictions, our pains, and calamities, increase, our enemies may be said to in-

crease. Our troubles sometimes follow one another, so rapidly, and become severer and more painful, that we find ourselves, spiritually, in the very same condition of the psalmist. We find also, that when our sorrows are publick, and known to our fellow men around us, the opinion will be adopted, and expressed by many, that there is no help for us in God. This was the sentiment which was believed, or at least feared to be true, in the case of Job. His friends came to comfort him in his distresses, but they were miserable comforters; because they thought that God would not inflict such pain on a good man: therefore they inferred, that Job must have been a wicked man, and a hypocrite; and therefore they concluded, that God was about to destroy him forever. They said concerning his soul, there is no help for him in God.

But God is our protector, and we ought to glory in his protection. He says to every christian, "I will be with thee to deliver thee, and I will honour thee." We may be said to glory in the person, on whom we depend for deliverance from evil, and for support and comfort and honour. God is our glory, when we rely on him for all blessings. We should trust in him alone, to bring us out of every condition of trouble, in which our hearts are overwhelmed, and in perplexity. Every christian, or at least every one, who who has any evidence of his christianity, has had experience of his favour, and his interposition in his behalf, in time past. He has had an answer to his prayers. God is always called on by his people, as the hearer of prayer; and they have evidence, in their own experience, that he has attended to their supplications. No one that has any experience of christianity, can be ignorant of this. God may not choose to answer our prayers, in the very way which we expect him to answer them; but if we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight, we shall know, or we shall have good reason to believe, that we do receive of him, and have received of him.

every petition which we have asked agreeably to his will: "This" says the apostle, "is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petition which we desired of him." We should see that our petitions are of the kind, which God has promised to give to his people, and we should ask them in such a manner, and with such affections, as God requires of us. We should not indulge in doubts, or perplexing thoughts, which weaken our faith, and create distrust. We ought to rely upon him with confidence, and the thing, which we ask, is fully secured to us. We have the thing which we ask, because faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.

The petition of the psalmist at that particular period, was, that he might be brought back to the temple, to his kingdom, and his former authority. As the ark and the mercy seat, were the symbol of the presence, and protection, and of all the covenanted mercies of God to his people; so the priests and Levites thought it necessary, to take the ark along with them, that David, in his exile, might have the opportunity of inquiring at the mouth of God, in the manner which was customary. But David said; "carry back the ark of God into the city, if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again and show me both it and his habitation." The worshippers of God in those ancient ages, attached great importance to the ark, because it contained the testimony, and was covered with the mercy seat. From this place, audible, or at least intelligible answers, were frequently given to prayer. It appears that when they prayed, they always turned their faces toward the temple, and their thoughts were directed to the holy oracle, and the mercy seat. In this way, the psalmist had before received answers to his prayers. He had asked, not only in his heart, but with his voice; speak-

ing aloud, and in publick : for he could always say with Paul, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. He prayed not only with sincerity, but with earnest supplication ; and he received some kind of assurance, that his prayer was heard, and accepted. Although this subject is liable to be misunderstood, and abused by fanaticism, like all other religious feelings ; yet it is a truth, which no christian can disbelieve, that God gives answers to the prayers of his people ; and gives them in a way, that they may be understood. We must have something more, than the mere feeling or persuasion, that God has heard us ; for men may feel persuaded of the truth of things, that are altogether false. But there are, in many cases, sure grounds for the persuasion, that our prayer has been heard ; and that our cry has come before him, into his ears. If indeed we live in the neglect of any known duty, or indulge ourselves in any kind of sin, we may be certain that God will not pay any kind of attention to our petitions. We then ask, and receive not, because we ask amiss that we may consume it on our lusts. In such petitions, God may indeed give us what we ask, but there is great reason to fear, that he will send leanness to our souls. But when we know that the petition is one, which God has given us the right to ask ; when we have taken the precaution, to examine and purify our hearts, from every sinful disposition, and thus draw near to God with true hearts, in full assurance of faith, we may then rest assured that, God will answer us from the hill of his holiness.

When we have attained to that blessed and most desirable condition, in the exercise of faith, that we can place full confidence for salvation, in the promise of God ; and not only for eternal salvation, but for deliverance from every particular danger, we can then commit ourselves, and all our concerns, to the protection of our Saviour ; and although a hostile army should be encamped against us, we should be able to rest in peace. To attain this condition, it is ne-

cessary to make constant application, to our hearts, and to live under the influence, of such directions, and promises, as, "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."—"When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me." The man who makes it his constant practice to trust in God, for all blessings;—for strength to enable him to perform all his duties, and for the wisdom which is needful, and profitable to direct him; who attends with all his heart, to every commandment of God; and relies upon his promises, to give what temporal blessings are suitable for his circumstances, and for his constant portion of the bread, which cometh down from heaven, has no reason to fear, in any circumstances of danger and perplexity. The angel of the Lord encamps, around them that fear him, and gives them deliverance. Why then should they fear? Their protector is all powerful, is faithful to his word; and has promised, that no evil shall befall them, neither shall any plague come nigh their dwelling; because they have made the Most High their refuge and their habitation. It was this confidence in God his Saviour, by which the psalmist was enabled, in the most fearful scenes of danger, when his enemies were numerous and powerful, and his friends were few, feeble, and much discouraged; to lie down, and to sleep quietly,—to take his usual rest, and to awake in the morning at the proper time, because he was supported by his God, whom he had made the object of his trust. Therefore he publicly declared, I will not be afraid of ten thousands, who set themselves against me round about.

The christian is frequently placed in situations, in which there is much danger and perplexity; but the situation of the psalmist was extremely distressing. Few christians have such severe and terrible trials to endure, and it is to be feared, that very few of the present generation of christians, if they were placed in the same situation, could lie

down and sleep in perfect confidence. ' But he knew, that he was perfectly safe, in the protection of God. When the city of Dothan, in which the prophet Elisha resided, was surrounded by an army of Syrians, with horses, and chariots, the servant of the prophet was in great perplexity. Elisha then prayed to God, that the eyes of the young man might be opened, that he might see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire, round about Elisha. We may see, in this miraculous exhibition to the eyes of the prophet's servant, what may also be seen by the eyes of our faith, if we are able to realize, and apply the truth of God's promises to ourselves. For, as he has said, "the Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand;" then all that is necessary for the christian, in every circumstance of danger, is to realize and understand and apply such declarations to himself. We have truly great reason to humble ourselves, and keep our minds in their proper place: for the heart is deceitful above all things; and therefore we have reason to be on our guard against spiritual pride: but when our circumstances are like those of the Psalmist, and we plainly see the weakness, or deceitfulness, of every earthly ground of hope, and God is our only refuge; we may then say, "I will not fear though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

But the faith of the christian, by which he relies upon God for protection, and deliverance from evil, never renders him negligent, or forgetful, of the exercise of prayer. If any of our fellow men had promised to give us some benefit, or to relieve us from some difficulty, we should not, in common cases, suppose it necessary to make constant, or repeated application to him, for the accomplishment of his promise: but God has made it our duty, to be instant and fervent, in our applications to him in every time of need. The parable of the unjust judge, and the poor wid-

ow, is intended to show us the necessity of constant, earnest, and importunate prayer; and that we ought not to fail, or to relax in our efforts or earnestness to obtain the blessing, because it is not given to us immediately on the first request. It is for this very reason, that God does not rise to save us immediately, when the danger begins to threaten. He frequently waits until his interposition becomes absolutely necessary. Hence it has been said, by experienced christians, that man's extremity is God's opportunity. He comes for deliverance, in the time when he is most needed, and this is the time when the prayers of his people are the most fervent and importunate.

In these cases, we find it necessary to recur to former deliverances, and to call to mind the judgements, which God has inflicted on our enemies; especially the grand interposition of Christ for our salvation, when he conquered principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross. The christian often finds, in his experience, the truth of the declaration of the apostle; "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." He finds also, that amidst the collision of temporal interests, and the various causes which induce men to act in opposition to each other, he must pass through scenes of affliction and persecution among his fellow men. In the trials of this kind, through which he has already past, he knows that he has gained the victory, through him that loved him,—that although he may be said to die daily, and to be killed all the day long, he is still more than a conqueror. He knows that God has smitten his enemies on the cheek, and has broken the teeth of the wicked; and therefore he calls upon him with confidence to rise and save him; as he had formerly experienced deliverance from his hand.

He makes his acknowledgments, and offers his thanks-

giving to Jehovah, by ascribing to him all his salvation.— All salvation is of God, from the beginning to the end. So powerful are the principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world; and sin has obtained so much power over the human heart, that all the united abilities of angels and men, would not be sufficient to deliver our soul from evil. “The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever; for no man can redeem his brother, nor pay a sufficient ransom.” But Jesus Christ is Jehovah, and all our salvation is of him. He has given himself a ransom for the sins of his people, and therefore God can be just, and the justifier of those who believe in him. He makes intercession for them, and God the father pardons their sins, and accepts them as righteous, through the righteousness of their saviour. He works, in them, righteous and holy principles, and dispositions; and by him they are enabled, to work out their own salvation, with fear and trembling: for they know, that it is God who works in them, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. All our salvation is of God, none of it is our own. We are only instruments, in his hand, for the performance of this blessed work.

The blessing of Jehovah always rests upon his people. This blessing may be said to descend, from heaven to earth, in the offers of salvation, through the gospel; for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. All mankind, therefore, have a right to accept of this salvation, when it is offered to them; but they will not accept of it, and therefore they are left to perish, and to die in their sins. But the people of God are scattered over the world wherever he sends his gospel.— Although the gospel is sent generally to mankind; and Wisdom declares, “to you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men:” yet his people whom he foreknew, and predestinated to everlasting life, are the only charac-

ters who receive the gospel. It comes to their hearts, and operates effectually for their salvation. Thus when the apostle Paul was in the city of Corinth, and before he had made any progress, in preaching among the Corinthians, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him by night in vision, and said to him, "fear not Paul, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city."—These were the people on whom the blessing rested. In them it was like seed sown upon good ground, which brought forth, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.

But when God begins the good work of his grace in the heart, he always brings it to perfection at last. Thus it is said of the Redeemer, that having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end. Hence the Psalmist says; "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me; thy mercy, O Lord endureth for ever: forsake not the work of thine own hands." The people of God may be in great difficulties, in doubts and fears, and despondencies;—Zion may say, "my God hath forsaken me; my Lord hath forgotten me;" but God says, "can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb: yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee." "The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance." We shall therefore conclude this dissertation, with the words of the apostle Peter; "brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ."

PSALM IV.

To the chief; — upon Neginoth; — a Psalm of David.

It was probably addressed to the officer, who presided over the musicians, in the temple worship. The word Neginoth signifies stringed instruments.

But the titles of the psalms have a spiritual, as well as external or outward, meaning, which it is highly important for christians to understand. It cannot for a moment be supposed, that the spirit of God would address the psalms; merely to the chief singer in a congregation; or appoint a certain kind of musical instrument to be used, in the singing of any particular psalm, in a christian church. The psalms may have been directed to the chief leader of the musick in the temple, and the kind of instrument may be mentioned, which was the most proper for the psalm. But the worshippers in the new testament must look beyond the outward form, and fix their minds on the inward, or spiritual meaning.— By the Chief, we are most probably to understand the son of God, who directs and regulates the heart of the worshippers in Zion, or the spiritual temple, in the heavens and on the earth. We may also learn the spiritual meaning of Neginoth, by the uses of the word in the Hebrew scriptures. It is used in the prayer of Hezekiah,—in Isaiah xxxviii. 20. “The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments, all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord.” Hezekiah had been sick, and his recovery was not expected, from the nature of his disease, but God graciously restored him to health: and therefore he was determined to sing his praises on the Neginoth. If we examine the psalms to which this title is prefixed, we shall find, that although, like the prayer of Hezekiah, they express mourning and lamentation; yet they all terminate in praise and thanksgiving.

TRANSLATION.

1. Answer me when I call, God of my righteousness. Thou hast enlarged me in distress. Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

2. O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame; will ye love vanity; will ye seek after falsehood?

3. But know, that Jehovah hath set apart

the godly man for himself. Jehovah will hear, when I call upon him.

4. Fear, and sin not; speak in your heart upon your bed, and be silent.

5. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and trust in Jehovah.

6. Many are saying; who will show us any good: lift upon us the light of thy countenance, O Jehovah.

7. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than they enjoyed, when their corn and their wine increased.

8. I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for thou alone, O Jehovah, makest me to dwell in safety.

DISSERTATION.

THERE are some of the psalms, which are adapted to particular, critical situations, and circumstances, in the christian's life. The former psalm expresses the sentiments and desires, which operated in David's heart, when he fled from the city of Jerusalem, on account of the rebellion and treason of his son Absalom. But in general, the psalms are intended to express the circumstances, the sentiments, and desires, which christians commonly present before God in their worship. This psalm is plainly calculated for christians, in all their common and stated approaches to God, in publick and private worship. God is the hearer of prayer, and he gives the answer when, and how he pleases. It would always be pleasing to these, who are engaged in this exercise, to know that as God has formerly attended to their prayers, he will now give them a favourable answer. But this depends, in a great degree, on the kind of sentiments and desires, which we present before God in our worship. The prayers of the self righteous man are not acceptable, and God will not attend to

them, nor answer them. "The language of the heart of all true christians is; "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." This truth is here recognized by the psalmist, when he prays, "answer me when I call, God of my righteousness."

No man can be justified in the sight of God, unless he can be considered in the eye of the law, as a perfectly righteous man. The perfect law of God is not satisfied with an imperfect righteousness. It is therefore an obvious truth, that if we would be justified, God must provide for us a righteousness, which will answer all the demands of the law. But this is obtained only through Jesus Christ. "It is the righteousness of God through faith, which comes upon all, and to all that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.— Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

It is this free gift of God, which alone can give us solid and permanent comfort. Previously to our reception of this, we are in straitened circumstances. We are shut up in prison. We can have no comfort in looking to the righteous God for salvation, because we have no righteousness to present to him. In this condition of distress, God gives us enlargement by setting before our minds, for our acceptance and our justification, the righteousness of his only begotten Son. This enlargement, like all christian comforts, is not given to us altogether at one particular time. The mind is sometimes illuminated, and we see more clearly the benefits, which God has conferred upon us; and again our prospects are darkened, and our hearts are in sorrow and distress. The christian, who has a spiritual knowledge of the scriptures, will always be able to understand this enlargement, not only by his own experience of comfort and joy in believing; but in the promises which

God gives to his church, in her increase in numbers, and in light, and holiness. "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Thou shalt see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, and the forces of the gentiles shall come unto thee." This is in fact one of the chief blessings of the gospel, which the Lord Jesus Christ was sent, by the father to bestow upon his people. "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people,—for a light of the Gentiles: to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." We are naturally in prison,—we sit in darkness, because we have no light in ourselves; but when he causes the light and comforting influences of his spirit to shine into our hearts, then we may say, "thou hast enlarged us in distress. Be gracious to us and hear our prayer."

When we acknowledge with thankfulness, the blessings we have formerly experienced, and the value and importance of those which we hope to receive, and ask them from the grace of God entirely, confessing that we have nothing in ourselves to deserve any blessing, we may hope that our worship shall be accepted, and that our prayers shall be answered.

These spiritual benefits appeared to the Psalmist, so great and so valuable, that temporal things seemed to sink into utter insignificance, and the conduct of those whose minds were engrossed with those vain things, to be absurd and foolish, and to deserve censure and reprobation. O ye sons of men, &c. This expostulation seems, not so much to proceed from David as from David's Lord, It is evidently Jesus Christ who makes this address; and it is sub-

stantially the same with the expostulation of the wisdom of God, which is presented to us in the book of Proverbs.—
 “How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity; and the scorers delight in scorning; and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you.” This wisdom is no other than the son of God, who declares that he was always the delight of his father, rejoicing always before him: that he also rejoiced in the habitable parts of his earth, and his delights were with the sons of men. It is therefore Jesus Christ who uses this language of the Psalmist, and says, O ye sons of men; how long will ye turn my glory into shame, &c! Temporal and spiritual things are continually presented to our minds. The one by God the saviour, and the other by the God of this world, the evil spirit who works in the children of disobedience. The one is the glory of the saviour, and beyond all conception glorious: “for eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit.” But these spiritual blessings are “hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should shine unto them.” Jesus Christ is the image and the glory of the father, he is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; and the gospel is the glory of Christ. He delights and rejoices in the habitable parts of the earth, and it is his glory to redeem from ruin and misery, all who come to him, and receive his salvation,

But it is always a truth, which ought to be the cause of mourning; “that this light shines in the midst of the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.” The sons of men turn the glory of Christ into shame; they love vanity, and seek after falsehood: This is the prominent char-

acteristick of the sons of Adam; and the number of such characters, in every part of the earth, is much greater than the number of those, who seek after truth; and set their hearts on things that are substantial and valuable. Thus Christ calls, and they refuse; he stretches out his hands, and they pay no attention to it, but despise his offers of salvation; and what he considers to be true glory, is, in their eyes, an object of contempt.

Nothing can be more absurd than to suppose, that this course of life can terminate in any thing, but disappointment and misery. They treat the gospel of the glory of Christ, as if it were a subject of which men ought to be ashamed. They act on the same principle of those by whom Christ was crucified; and he expresses their sentiments and feelings concerning him, when he says; "I am a worm and no man, reproach of men and despised of the people. All that see me laugh me to scorn." But they that love vanity, and seek falsehood, shall have vanity and falsehood for their portion. They may be gratified for a time, and rejoice in the works of their own hands. God may give them what they desire, but he will send leanness to their souls. They shall never be satisfied with the fatness of his house, nor drink of the streams of blessedness which he provides for his people. He will say to them, "ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction as a whirlwind;—when distress and anguish cometh upon you."

But if God had done nothing more for the human family, than to make the outward offers of salvation, and give them warnings, and reproofs, and threatenings, of everlasting destruction for rejecting and despising his word, all this would never change the heart of one individual. They would all continue to love vanity, and to seek after falsehood, through the whole of their lives; and still insult their maker and

redeemer, by turning his glory into shame. Therefore the world ought to know, and to consider this truth, that Jehovah hath set apart the godly man for himself. This is the same substantial declaration of the apostle Paul, when he says; "it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his son in me." So it may be said of every true christian, God, in his own good pleasure, hath separated or set him apart for himself, so soon as he was born: And not only this, but there is a preordination, or predestination of every godly man, to some particular holy office in the house of God, before he was born, or formed in the womb. Thus God said to the prophet Jeremiah; "before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb, I sanctified thee; I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." God therefore declares to every one of his people, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee: and the redeemer declares; "no man can come to me except the father, who hath sent me, draw him." He declares concerning all his people, as he declared concerning the prophet Jeremiah; before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and sanctified thee and ordained thee: whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. The fact, that God has ordained one man before he was born to be a prophet, and separated another from his mother's womb, to be an apostle, proves clearly this fact which is here stated by the psalmist, and which all men ought to know, that God hath set apart every godly man for himself.

The proper use, which every professing christian should make of this doctrine, is to give diligence to make his calling and election sure. So God said to the prophet Jeremiah; "say not I am a child; for thou shalt go to all to whom I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee,

thou shalt speak :” “ and he said to Paul, be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace.” So he commands all his people to perform their duty faithfully, in the particular station of life, in which he has placed them. They have then an evidence that he has called them, by grace, and that he upholds them, and strengthens them, by the right hand of his righteousness. This is the best evidence of our election, and it becomes clearer and stronger as we advance in the right performance of our duty ; for no man can perform his duty righteously, without continually and assiduously, asking God to direct him, and to give him strength for the performance of it. God therefore has already heard his prayers, and has given him the proper answers. Therefore he will not refuse his petitions in the time to come. Every christian may say with the psalmist ; “ Jehovah will hear me when I call upon him.” We are always to keep this principle in our hearts, and to come to God in the full assurance of faith : for if we keep our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, and hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering, we shall finally arrive at the full assurance of hope ; and our calling and election shall be so much confirmed, that we shall always be able to say with the psalmist, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of God forever.

The great teacher of Israel, by the voice of the psalmist, gives directions to his church, and to all mankind, how they should advance in the practice of their duty to God, and in the hope of obtaining the comforts of his salvation. The word which is rendered fear, or tremble, or stand in awe, has a particular reference to our condition, when some temptation, either to neglect our duty, or to commit some actual sin, is presented to our minds. Indeed when we speak of the performance of our duty, we should keep the truth in mind, that Christ is the end of the law for righteous-

ness to every one that believeth; and that when we attempt, or endeavour, to do any duty, the very intent and meaning of the law, in prescribing our duty, is to lead us, in the first place to Christ, to give us righteousness and strength for the performance of it. We should frequently consider the condition of the church, when God gave his law on Mount Sinai, when the mountain burned with fire, and was surrounded with blackness, and darkness, and tempest; when there was the terrible sound of a trumpet, and such words were uttered, as struck terror into every heart; so that Moses himself exclaimed, "I exceedingly fear and quake." The great object and intention of such terrible displays of majesty, is to prevent us from sinning. When men are engaged in turning the glory of Christ into shame, loving vanity, and seeking after falsehood, there is no ground of hope, that they will ever change their course of iniquity, until God makes them hear the thunders of Sinai. They must be made to tremble at the view of his terrible judgments, which he has in store for the workers of iniquity. Therefore, says the prophet Isaiah, "O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence; as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil." This is the kind of awe, and fear, and trembling, which ought to be produced in our hearts, when we contemplate the holy law of God, and every particular duty which God commands us to perform. Thus the heart of the christian is always melted, and softened into obedience, by such views of the presence of the great and dreadful God.

Such fear will always prevent us from sinning. If men had no hope of escape from punishment, and if they believed that the punishment would be terrible, and such as the Israelites were taught to fear by the thunders of Sinai; they would not dare voluntarily to disobey any command of God. There are truly many kinds of fear. There is the fear which prevents every kind of action, by which they

call on the rocks to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them. There is also the fear which has in it no hope of escape from the pains of a future world, and by which men say; let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die; and those who live under the influence of this kind of fear will gratify all the lusts of the flesh, when there is no apparent suffering to be endured at the present time. The apostle exhorts us to fear lest the promise being left us, of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it; and he asks how shall we escape, if we neglect this great salvation. It is to the exercise of this kind of fear that we are called by the psalmist. We realize the presence of the great and dreadful God; we know that he is a consuming fire, and that he will by no means clear the guilty. The lofty imaginations of our hearts are cast down; we humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and bow before him in the dust of humiliation.

The heart, that is engaged in this salutary exercise of fear, will not dare, even to meditate on subjects, which are pleasing to the carnal mind. A man may abstain from many outward sins, and yet indulge sin in his heart; and by this practice of iniquity in his thoughts, may become more and more corrupted: but the fear of him, who searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men, who will punish the sins of the heart as well as the sins of the hands, and who is angry with sinners every day, will teach us, not to let any sin-reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof. This fear will lead us to examine ourselves carefully and diligently, lest some sin should have obtained a residence in our hearts; for it is not easy for us to understand our own errors: and in this examination we talk with our heart on our bed, in secret and silent meditation. Those who pursue this course for a time, and who realize the presence of the holy God, will finally come to the determination to attend to all the duties which God has required. They will say with Joshua, "as

for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;" and with the psalmist; "I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved."

God requires of us, the practice of religion, both publick and private; and it has been the practice of all the people of God, in all ages, to unite in his worship in the sanctuary. The system of worship by sacrifice, was appointed in ancient times, to represent the atonement of Christ, to the minds of the worshippers. The blood of lambs, and of bullocks, and goats was offered to God continually on the altar. In these latter ages, God has appointed that the outward forms of the worship should be changed, and that the blood of bulls and goats should not actually be offered to him; but he has given us no authority to change the language of our worship. On the contrary we are commanded to offer up to God continually, through Jesus Christ, the sacrifice of praise, giving thanks to his name.—It is therefore the positive institution of God, that we should still use the language of sacrifice, when we offer up our worship. This is the way which God has chosen to connect together the worship of his people under the Old, and the New Testament. There is therefore no authority given us to change the system of psalmody; we are in this manner to unite our hearts, with the worshippers of God, in all ages of the world. But this is truly a more spiritual dispensation than the former; and we have the spirit, or substantial meaning of the sacrifices, always before us in our worship. We look to the blood of Jesus, who through the eternal spirit, offered himself a sacrifice, without spot to God; and thus by worshipping God in the spirit, and having no confidence in the flesh, our consciences shall be purged from dead works, to serve the living God. But the language of sacrifice is evidently the most proper, to express the spirit of our worship, in the new testament dispensation. It is the blood of Christ which makes the true atonement, and cleanses the heart; and when we

have these things constantly presented to our minds, in the language, in which the spiritual meaning may be most clearly understood, we may hope, that by this kind of representation, a deeper and more lasting impression will be made on our hearts, than could be expected from any invention of man. Thus when Christ says, in the institution of the supper, "this is my body which is broken for you, and this is my blood of the new testament," he presents to our minds, the whole system of gospel truth, and the way in which the gospel is to be received. So when we are commanded to offer the sacrifices of righteousness, we have presented to our minds, the whole system of righteous worship, with which God will be pleased, and which has for its foundation, the sacrifice of his only begotten son. As Jesus Christ offered a sacrifice of righteousness, well pleasing to God, when he gave himself a ransom for our sins; so we are enabled to offer a sacrifice of righteousness, when with the spirit of Christ, and with reliance on him for all blessings, we attend to the worship of God according to his commandments.

A righteous offering is an offering given in humble obedience to God's commandments. When Saul was sent to destroy the Amalakites, the sacrifice that God required of him, was to put them all to death; to spare neither man nor woman, infant nor suckling, ox nor sheep, camel or ass: and his sin consisted in sparing the sheep and oxen, that he might offer them in sacrifice on the altar at Jerusalem. It was thus that Saul rejected the word of the Lord, and for this he rejected him from being king over Israel.— Since therefore rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry; so the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart the Lord will not despise.

When we offer up our worship with this kind of spirit, in obedience to God's authority, and in the way which he has appointed, then we may be said to offer the sacrifices of

righteousness. We are always, in our worship, to act on the principle, which the apostle lays down for our direction, in the exercise of charity: "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that which a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not." We have no righteousness of our own, but Christ has provided righteousness for us, which is to be received by faith, according to his own ordinances, and in that same faith, and these same ordinances, to be offered through him to God.

From this we may see the necessity, and the importance of attention to the command; "put your trust in the Lord." We are to trust for all things in the Lord Jesus Christ, "who of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and redemption." He that believes the important, but humiliating truth; that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; that he has really nothing in himself, on which he can rely for the right performance of any duty: and at the same time believes that the Lord Jesus Christ possesses all that is needful for his wants, and is ready to bestow it upon him, when he asks it in a proper manner, will of course trust in him for all things. When therefore it is our wish, to obey the command; "offer the sacrifices of righteousness," we endeavour to obey by attending to the appointed ordinances of worship, and then trust in him for all things which are needful, to enable us to obey, and to worship him in spirit and in truth.

The spirit of this command will extend to all the duties, which we owe to God and man. It is, perform your duty, and trust in God for every kind of ability, which is necessary for this performance. The obedience of the gospel is performed, by the strength which Christ imparts to his people. He gives life in the first place, and then his people are enabled to live to God. Hence it has been well observed, that the law says, do and live; but the gospel says, live and do. Christ gives his people spiritual life, and by this they are enabled to live to God,

This life is communicated by lifting up the light of his countenance upon us. Men are always in search of something from which they hope to derive benefit; and they are always desirous of receiving information on this subject, from any source where there is any hope of receiving it: but too many neglect the proper object. They mistake evil for good; and they put darkness for light, and light for darkness. God has commanded us to seek first, that kingdom whose blessings consist in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. He has shown us the means by which these blessings can be obtained, and has himself offered to be our instructor. All that he requires of us is to pray to him,—to ask with earnestness for his directing hand, and to follow his instructions.

This psalm, like all the psalms of scripture, is to be considered as proceeding from the Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostle refers us to all the psalms, when he says; "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; with grace in your hearts, singing to the Lord." He is our Lord, as he was David's Lord. His father is the Lord of heaven and earth, and he has made him the Lord of heaven and earth. He is therefore our prophet, or instructor, and he is also taught, or has the knowledge communicated to him, by his father. He is also man as well as God. Therefore he often speaks in the psalms as a human being, as one of the children or servants of God, because he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham: at other times he speaks as one of the prophets, or instructors sent from God, to teach mankind the way of life; and at other times he speaks as the great and dreadful God, the judge of all the earth. In this place he speaks as a simple, dependant, child of God. One who relies upon his father in heaven, for every kind of good which he seeks. Therefore he says lift upon us the light of thy countenance, O Jehovah.

This is an emblem taken from the banners, which the tribes of Israel displayed, in their marches through the wilderness, from the red sea, to the land of Canaan. Every tribe had its standard, but they all marched under the standard of the Almighty. He went before them in the pillar of the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night. Thus he lifted upon them, emblematically, the light of his countenance, and gave them light to march through the desert. But he gives a banner spiritually to those who fear him, that it may be displayed because of the truth. He illuminates his truth, and thus he places it clearly before their minds. He sends forth his light and his truth, and they are guides to them, to bring them to his holy hill. Therefore the prophet speaking, of the latter days, declares, "in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to him shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious."

When, therefore, the christian beholds the folly of mankind around him, when they are asking who will shew them any good; refusing to be directed by the true guide, and following the ignis fatuus which the god of this world, or their own vain imaginations, may have raised from the earth, to go before them, and to lead from error to error, until they shall be lost forever; he always asks, with earnestness and solicitude, that God would lift on him the light of his countenance, that he may be directed in the path of truth and peace.

The christian is always encouraged to look to God, for life, and direction, and comfort, in his journey through this world; because he knows, and sees plainly, that, although, in the course which he has chosen, there are many sorrows to be endured; and that he must still pass through trials and tribulations, in his way to the kingdom of heaven; yet he enjoys, upon the whole, much more comfort than the men of the world. They seek their enjoyment from the things of time. Their highest pleasure is to see their

riches increasing, that they may have the means of gratifying their lusts. But this kind of pleasure and enjoyment naturally fades, and decays. It becomes less and less by every succeeding moment of reflection, and finally terminates in pain. But the kind of enjoyment which God gives, and which every christian has experienced, is pure, and spiritual, and permanent. There is nothing in it sinful or corruptible; and therefore it is not mingled with pain; and the pleasure grows with every step of his advancement in the knowledge of Christ. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." So we are commanded to be careful, or to be anxious about nothing, but in every condition, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make our request known unto God, and we have the promise, that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. There is some similarity, or resemblance, between the joy of the christian and that of the worldly minded man. The one has his times, or periods, of enjoyment, when his temporal affairs prosper, and his wealth increases; and the other has his times of enjoyment, when God puts gladness into his heart. He sometimes receives clearer discoveries of the truth of God, and his heart is filled with joy. Thus on a certain occasion the Redeemer is said to have rejoiced in spirit, saying, "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father," &c. This is one of the numerous ways, in which God puts gladness into the hearts of his children; and they can all look back to some particular periods of heavenly joy, as well as to times of excruciating sorrow. They have their times of exaltation, and their times of depression; and it is not unlikely, that when the psalmist expressed this sentiment, he might have re-

membered some period of rejoicing in the spirit: but as the joy which arises from worldly prosperity, in the heart of the man whose affections are set on the earth, is a very different kind of joy from that which God puts into the hearts of his people; so the subject, which is here chiefly presented to our minds, is the joy which remains in the christian's heart, which the world cannot give, and which it cannot take away. It is pure, permanent, unfading bliss, which, although it is small, like a grain of mustard seed, yet it will enable the christian to rejoice in the whole of his life, and in some periods, to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

It is therefore the duty, and the interest, of every christian, to bring his heart to this full dependence, and implicit confidence, in the care and protection, of his father in heaven. It is a duty, which, like all other exertions of body and of mind, is to be frequently performed, in order to acquire a facility, in performing it. The formation of christian habits, is not different from the formation of other habits; only that the work is more difficult: It is not hard to acquire sinful habits, for such works are natural to the human mind. But habits of holiness are difficult to be obtained, and, perhaps the most difficult of all, is to learn to trust in God. Unbelief in God is, in general, the sin that most easily besets us, and it is a most difficult duty, for us to lay this sin aside. Perhaps the best method of learning the duty of trusting in God, is to follow the example of the psalmist;—to commit ourselves and all our concerns, into the hand of God, by earnest and fervent prayer; then to consider ourselves in perfect safety, and lie down and sleep in peace. The man who lives continually in this christian habit, and who lives in the practice of christianity through the day, will at length enjoy the comfort of trusting in God, when he knows himself to be surrounded by enemies, and all the dangers, and difficulties, of human life.

This is the true philosophy of life. By this we may

learn how to live, and how to die. It is truly the wisdom which cometh down from above, whose ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. The man who is accustomed to continue in the path of duty, and never to depart from it, for any of the pleasures, or the gains of this world; but who always commits his way unto the Lord, and trusts in him, will always find him to be a present help in time of trouble; and will always be enabled to dwell in safety. God will enable him to live in quietness and security; not indeed like the security of the people of Laish, whose careless and thoughtless habits, and their indifference concerning danger, while they pursued their own pleasures, were a kind of prelude to their destruction: but his security is of the same nature with those who dwell in the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. God has said to him in his word,

No plague shall near thy dwelling come,

No ill shall thee befall;

For thee to keep, in all thy ways,

His angels charge he shall.

PSALM V.

To the chief—upon the Nehiloth—a Psalm of David.

The word Nehiloth is supposed to mean some kind of wind instruments; but this is merely a supposition; and was probably thought of, because Neginoth is used for stringed instruments. None of the ancient versions attach this meaning to it. They all consider it in some way as relating to the inheritance which God gives to his people. The whole title has been rendered, and perhaps with greater propriety than any other version of it: To him who giveth victory, the God of the inheritance. It is therefore addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

TRANSLATION.

1. Give ear to my words, O Jehovah, consider my meditation.

2. Attend to the voice of my cry, my king, and my God; for to thee will I pray.

3. O Jehovah, in the morning thou shalt hear my voice; In the morning I will prepare for thee, and I will look upwards.

4. For thou art not a God who delighteth in wickedness; evil shall not sojourn with thee.

5. The vain and foolish shall not stand before thine eyes; thou hatest all the workers of iniquity.

6. Thou wilt destroy them that speak falsehood. The man of blood and of deceit, Jehovah will abhor.

7. But I will come into thine house in the multitude of thy loving kindness; I will worship towards the temple of thy holiness, in thy fear.

8. O Jehovah, lead me in thy righteous-

ness, because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before me.

9. For there is not any established truth in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness: their throat is an open sepulchre: they will flatter with their tongues.

10. O God punish them; let them fall by means of their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against thee.

11. But let all, who trust in thee, rejoice forever; let them sing aloud, because thou hast spread thy covering over them; and let them who love thy name exult in thee.

12. For thou, O Jehovah, wilt bless the righteous; as with a shield thou wilt compass him with thy favour.

DISSERTATION.

God sits in the heavens, and the universe is before him. No object can escape his attention entirely; but he looks on some things more attentively than on others, because he considers them as more important. One of the most important objects, in the eyes of the Almighty, is an upright and honest man, engaged in fervent prayer. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance doth behold the upright." One of the first, and most important considerations, to which we ought to attend, when we come into the presence of God, is to have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water; and the second object of importance is to be earnest and fervent in our supplications. The word, which is here rendered meditation, signifies that kind of aspiration in prayer, which can almost be heard, and which proceeds from fervent ejaculation. It is not an unmeaning groan

without any idea, or thought attached to it. The psalmist had a precise object before his mind, in all his addresses to God; and he asks that God would pay particular attention to his thoughts; and would discern the object which was before his mind, and nearest to his heart. He asks that God would incline his ear, as those that are determined to hear, to pay attention, and to weigh every word that is addressed to them, and not to let the loudness of the cry, or the earnestness and fervency pass without regard.

God has given us our voice, and the capability of expressing our thoughts, and the feelings and desires of our hearts. There is about the same analogy, or proportion, between the words, or manner of expression, and the thoughts or feelings of our hearts, which exists between our persons and our dress. The one is of very little importance in the eyes of God, who looks upon the heart. But when the heart is engaged in earnest and fervent prayer, there is generally something to correspond with it, in the words and actions. It is true, that all the thoughts and words, and actions of men, must be expected to partake of sinfulness or imperfection. There are many prayers which have the appearance of fervency, but have in them very little, either of the exercise of the understanding or the heart, while there is enough of loudness and vociferation. But the real value of any prayer, is its truth and fervency, and no one can doubt, that these virtues were eminently in the mind of the psalmist, when he uttered these expressions.

This prayer appears to be addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, whenever the word King is used in the psalms, the Messiah, the anointed, or the King, whom the Father has set on his holy hill of Zion, is almost evidently intended to be placed before the mind. "The King in thy great strength O Lord, shall very joyful be." "He great deliverance gives his King." "Let the King hear us when

we call," &c. It would be endless to multiply quotations on this subject, and indeed there is little necessity for it. All who are particularly acquainted with the psalms of David, and who use them in their worship continually, will not only see that Christ is the King, who is presented to us every where in the psalms; but that it is by means of the psalms, that the kingdom of Christ is established in the world, and especially in the believer's heart. In all his hopes, and in all his prayers and his praises, he looks to Jesus Christ, and says, "Thou art my King, O God; command deliverances for Jacob. Through thee we shall push down our enemies."

Jesus Christ is the constant object to which the christian looks in his prayers. He looks indeed to God the father, but he looks to him through his only begotten son, whom he has appointed the heir of all things. We are to look to Christ, because he is in the Father, and the Father in him. Philip, the apostle, once said to Christ, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." But Jesus said unto him, "Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, show us the Father. Believest thou not, that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" We may ask the Redeemer, like Philip, to show us the Father. But we should still bear in mind the truth; that "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." He declares to us, or shows us the Father, by placing himself before our minds; for he is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.—Therefore as the Father possesses undisputed authority over the heavens and the earth; so he has given this same authority into the hands of his son; and thus he has appointed him the heir of all things. Christ is offered to us to be our King; and by receiving him in this relation, we obey the command of the Father. The Father does

not lose his authority over us, by our full and total obedience to the son; because the son is one with the Father. He is in the Father and the Father in him. He hath said to us, all authority is given unto me, in the heavens and in the earth; and therefore when we obey him, we obey the Father. When we pray to him, we should always remember that our prayers are offered up through him to the Father. He never does his own will; but always receives and obeys the directions which his Father gives him. Therefore when the christian prays to Christ, he comes through Christ to the Father, for the answer to his prayer. He knows and trusts, that the subject of his prayer will be laid before the Father, and that the answer will be given through the son. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit, are God; and are therefore each of them the object of our prayers; and it is proper for us to address each of them as our God: but still in all our prayers we should keep the truth in our minds, that it is the Holy Spirit who puts the desire into our hearts; and, that it is Jesus Christ who offers it to the Father, and accompanies the prayer by his own intercession.

When we hear the psalmist offering his petition to Jesus Christ, his King, and his God, we may see the emphasis of this declaration; "to thee will I pray." If we do not keep this distinction in our minds, we shall not be able to understand the force of many expressions, used by the psalmist. Thus it is said in the 100th Psalm, "Know ye that the Lord, he is God; it is he that made us, and not we ourselves." If any one were to read this declaration who was not acquainted with the truth, that Jesus Christ is the person here particularly spoken of as our creator; and who did not know that the creation is the new creation; he would be able to see but very little force in the expression. So the man who does not see the force of the expressions, "my King, and my God," as designed particularly to lead our minds to Jesus Christ, will probably pass over the commencement of this Psalm, without seeing its spiritual meaning, and then

all the remaining parts of it will be covered with obscurity.

But Jehovah, Jesus, our King, and our God, is here particularly presented to us, as the object of our prayers.— Following the example of the psalmist, we shall present ourselves before him in the morning, when we have passed through the slumbers of the night. He has watched over us, and preserved us. There are many dangers around us night and day. The powers of darkness are seeking to destroy us. There are beings innumerable, and powerful, beyond all our knowledge, who are ready at all times to bring us into misery. But as they are mighty to destroy, so the Lord Jesus Christ is mighty to save. He has laid down his life for us, and suffered pains and torments, dreadful, and excruciating, beyond our comprehension. He that has thus suffered for us, has not forgotten his love to us, in the night that is past; and therefore it becomes us to remember, and to call into action our love to him, who has loved us with an everlasting love, and who, with the cords of love, has drawn us to himself.

But when we approach before God, we ought not to rush into his presence, like the horse into the battle. It is necessary for us, even before we enter on the exercises of devotion, to remember the command, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. If we hope to escape his terrible judgments, we ought not to provoke him to anger, by coming into his presence, with hearts not sprinkled from an evil conscience. As we are commanded to examine ourselves previously to our approach to the table of the Lord, that we do not eat and drink unworthily; so we are to beware of coming into the presence of God, with hearts unconscious of our condition, or while we have some dispositions in them which are known to be evil.

When we have prepared ourselves, we should then look to the throne of our King and our God. It is not the action of the eyes of our bodily frame; but of the eyes of our mind. We are not to imagine to ourselves, any similitude

of the Almighty; but we know that Jesus sits on the right hand of his Father, the right hand of the majesty on high; and we should look to him as the author and finisher of our faith, as well as the giver of all good.

When we approach into the presence of our God, we trust that he will look upon us with some kind of approbation, or good pleasure; but we know that he can have no delight in any kind of wickedness. The gods of the heathen are like themselves, unjust, revengeful and cruel. Jehovah is indeed the God of vengeance, but he is the God of mercy and judgement. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and therefore he cannot delight in wickedness. The prophet declares; "thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity." It is the object of his abhorrence, and therefore he can have no delight in looking upon it; he will not only not suffer any evil to dwell with him; but it shall have no residence; he will not suffer it even to sojourn, or to continue in his presence any longer than to pass upon it the judgement of disapprobation, and then he will cast it out.

This view, which is here taken of evil and wickedness, was no doubt occasioned by the view which the psalmist had taken of the Almighty, sitting on his throne of judgement; and he beheld men coming into his presence to worship him, and to remain with him, while they cherished some malevolent disposition, or permitted it to remain in their hearts. They are guilty of this sinful indulgence, because they do not consider nor understand the truth, that God is absolutely holy; that he is not only free from sin, but he hates it with a perfect hatred. He will truly not suffer the man to remain in his presence, who knowingly permits any sinful disposition to remain in his heart.

The course of iniquity, which men generally pursue, leads them, in the first place, into vanity and folly, and then into falsehood, and deceit, and violence. So the apostle declares; "when they knew God they glorified him not as

God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image," &c. God has never left himself without a witness, but men do not give him the glory which is due, and which he requires.— They do not cherish gratitude, nor offer thanksgiving for his favours; and of course they become vain; and vanity generates folly. This is always the downward course of men, in all ages, and in all countries throughout the world. They first become ignorant of true religion, both in practice and in principle; and then they become self righteous. These are the characters which are here presented to our minds, by the vain and foolish. The Pharisee, who went into the temple to pray, and thanked God that he was not such as other men, is a prominent example of ignorance and vanity, under the outward practice of religion. This man was vain of his religious duties. But notwithstanding all his professions, and the favourable judgement he had formed of himself, God gave his judgement in favour of the Publican, whom he despised. He humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, and trusted in his mercy, while he cast away all his iniquities: but the other did not know his iniquities; because he had never become acquainted with the truth, that man in his natural condition, is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. He had never seen his own poverty and wretchedness, and therefore his heart was not humbled. God is determined to support his own character, as the righteous judge, and king, of the earth; and he will not suffer such characters to stand before his eyes, and to feel and act as if his judgement was given in their favour. He will give some evidence of his disapprobation of their course of life, even in this world; but at the final judgement, they shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous.

Love and hatred are two principles entirely opposite to

each other, and the feeling, corresponding to each of these terms, may consist of various degrees. The lowest degree of love or hatred will lead us to give a preference to one object, and reject another. Thus God is said to have loved Jacob, and to have hated Esau, before they were born, and consequently, before they had done either good or evil. But this kind of love or hatred consists merely of preference or rejection. In this sense we are commanded to hate father and mother, wife and children, &c.; and to love the Redeemer and his gospel. Thus also he declares, "he that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me." But the hatred, which God bears against the workers of iniquity, is not only rejection from his presence and favour, but dislike and abhorrence, in proportion to their iniquity. Men are apt to hate those who have done them an injury: and good men will regard a murderer with abhorrence, although he may not have injured them particularly. But all iniquity excites the abhorrence of God, and is also injurious to his government. Subjects may sometimes hate the government under which they are placed, and not hate the governour. But the workers of iniquity do, in fact, hate both the almighty, and his government; and therefore they are the objects of his hatred. He hates them in proportion to the evil dispositions which they indulge in their hearts, and the sinful works which they perpetrate.

There is no kind of iniquity which God regards with greater disapprobation, than speaking falsehood. It was by this that our first parents were seduced, and sin and death entered among mankind. They yielded to false speaking, and they, and all their descendents, fell under the curse of God. If therefore the sin of yielding to the seducer was so severely punished, how dreadful must be the guilt of the man, who by speaking falsehood, leads his fellow man into error and iniquity. The destruction which is the punishment of this guilt can have no other meaning,

than everlasting woe: For in the sense of annihilation, neither soul nor body shall be destroyed. But it evidently means everlasting destruction, which shall come from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. It is the destruction of comfort, and the positive infliction of pain, which shall render useless and abortive every plan, and every effort, to obtain happiness; and the heart, fatigued and wearied out, by repeated disappointment, shall at length sink into despair. This is the place of torment, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.

As there are many degrees of the blessedness and glory of the saints in bliss; so there are no doubt many degrees of degradation and misery, in the place of everlasting destruction. There are many degrees in guilt, and there is punishment proportioned to every degree. Righteousness in judgement, consists in apportioning to every character, its proper condition. The man who speaks falsehood, and lives in the habit of this kind of iniquity, not only leads others into sin; but his own iniquities always become greater and greater. By speaking falsehood, the world is filled with deceit and violence. The man of blood will not scruple to inflict unjust or unnecessary pain on others, when his own interest can be promoted by it; and, in the accomplishment of his wicked purposes, he will practice deception. But on the man, who has advanced to this degree of iniquity, God looks not only with disapprobation and wrath, but with utter abhorrence. He is an abomination in the sight of God. It is therefore evident, that such a man must suffer anguish intolerable, in the place of everlasting destruction.

When the Christian comes into the presence of God, it is always in dependence on his mercy. He knows that he has no right to any favour, on the foundation of justice: but as God has said; "I am the Lord God, merciful and gracious," and has invited all those to come to him who are wearied and heavy laden, that they may obtain rest for

their souls; so the christian always comes to him, on this foundation. It is because the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion, that the christian takes encouragement to come before him. The offers of salvation are made to all. Here there is no discrimination made between the righteous and the wicked; for Christ says; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. We are all in this sense sinners; for there is none righteous; no, not one. Therefore the christian always comes to him, in the multitude of his mercies, or his loving kindnesses.

He determines also to worship him in his fear and according to his own ordinances. It was always the custom of the worshippers of God, in the ancient dispensation, when they prayed to God even in secret, to turn their faces towards the temple. This was the custom of Daniel, when he prayed in his own house, in the city of Babyloa. But the temple of God in those days, was the emblem of his temple in the heavens; and therefore when they attended diligently and faithfully to his ordinances, they hoped that God would admit them, spiritually, into his holy place above; and that by thus coming into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way, they might have strong consolation, who had fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them. The true way of worship has been the same in all ages, and the only superiority of the worship of the New Testament, to that of the Old, is that Jesus Christ is more clearly set before us, in the former than in the latter. The vail of the temple is now rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and we may all come into his holy place in his fear.

But it is still a most important subject of consideration, that the gate is straight, and the way is narrow, that leadeth to life; and that we have many dangerous enemies, who would take delight in leading us to destruction. The way of God's righteousness is the way of life. We should all, like the apostle, endeavour to be found in Christ, not

having our own righteousness, which is of the law; but the righteousness which is of God, through faith. The christian attends faithfully and diligently to all his duties, but when his heart is examined, he is always found relying on Christ for every blessing. He trusts not in his own works for any part of his salvation. Walking in the way, we always need to ask and we are always in the habit of asking that God would lead us, and make the way plain before us. Such is our ignorance of our own weakness and worthlessness, and such is the natural pride of our hearts, that we are inclined to turn from the path, to which God has directed us, to choose our own course, and to trust in ourselves. This course, to which we are naturally inclined is evil, and would be dangerous, if there were no enemies, that would take delight in our ruin. Such is the evil and corrupted nature of man, that if left to himself, he would always choose the broad road that leadeth to destruction. But there are many powerful, intelligent, and wicked beings, both among our own species, and in the spiritual world, who are always exerting all their powers, to lead us in the way of sin and death.

The enemies of which the psalmist here speaks particularly, are those who endeavour to lead us into error, and falsehood, and deceit; and if they cannot succeed to seduce us by flattery, they will then become openly hostile, and use all means in their power, to destroy us. The word enemy is one of great latitude, and every man is here considered as our enemy, who would lead us from the path of God's righteousness: for the psalmist says lead me in thy righteousness because of mine enemies. Every man, therefore, is in this sense, our enemy, who would lead us into error, and the two classes of mankind, which in other places are denominated the righteous and wicked, are here presented to our minds. Nothing can be more absurd, and it would truly be a most unjust reproach and slander on the character of David, to suppose that he cherished a

malignant disposition against some men, who were not bad characters, but who were opposed to him; and that, on this account he speaks evil of them both before God and man. If this supposition be true, then the psalms of David ought never to have been sung in the worship of God, in any dispensation: and the sentiments contained in them, ought never to have been received, or cherished, in any human heart. But the very thought is a horrible insult to the righteous and holy God, who appointed these sentiments to be sung by his worshippers, and of course appointed them to be sung as their own sentiments, and therefore to have been previously adopted.

But the psalmist here exhibits the real character of every wicked man. He speaks of all mankind whose hearts are not renewed by the spirit of God. The spirit of these declarations, and indeed the very words, are quoted and used by the apostle, in the III chapter of the epistle to the Romans, as descriptive of the character of every natural man. "Their throat, says the apostle, is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips," &c. When the apostle concludes this description, he declares; "now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." These are therefore, the declarations of the law of God, and of the spirit of God, respecting all the natural descendents of Adam. There is no established truth in their mouth, &c. Instead of being irritated, and inflamed to wrath by such declarations, as if they were the effusions of the malice of David against his enemies; and as such, very improper sentiments, to be put into the mouth of a christian worshipper: we ought to know that these are the declarations of the spirit of God, respecting ourselves, as long as we are in our natural condition; and in this view, they will have a tendency to humble us under the mighty hand of

God ; that our old man may be crucified, that the body of sin may be destroyed, and that henceforth we may not be the servants of sin. When these are our sentiments, concerning the world that lies in wickedness ; when we sing these sentiments in the publick worship of God ; and when we have hopes, that we are delivered from this condition, we should endeavour to have the same sentiments and feelings, which are here expressed by the psalmist. It is true, that there is no established truth in the mouth of any natural man. It is true, that " his mouth is full of cursing and bitterness," &c. But we should still remember that this is also our own natural condition ; and we should see that we have some evidence of a change of heart and of character.

By a proper examination of our own hearts, and of the world around us, we may have sufficient evidence, that we have a righteous disposition in our hearts, and that the mass of mankind are wicked. The holy scriptures clearly express the state of the heart, and the feelings, and sentiments, of the children of God. That man, for example, who can enter with all his heart into the feelings, and sentiments, of the psalmist ; and whose heart beats in unison with every expression of his devotion, has the best evidence, that God has created within him a new heart, and that his spirit is renewed by the operation of the spirit of God. For it is evident that the same spirit operates in his heart, by which the heart of the psalmist was actuated. But the spirit of the world is in evident opposition to this spirit.—The apostle appeals to the understanding, which all christians may have by proper examination, when he says ; " We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness."

But all the children of God, who, like David, are obliged to pass through the business and bustle of the world, and to enter into collision with mankind, will find by bitter experience, that this description, of the psalmist, is not too highly coloured ; but that mankind, in general, are just

such characters, as are here represented. There is no established truth in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness, &c. It is true, that when we have suffered, from time to time, by the ingratitude, and baseness, and dishonesty, of those with whom we have intercourse, our minds may be too much irritated, and we may utter words unadvisedly: But these words are intended, by the Holy Spirit of truth, to describe the character of the world that lieth in wickedness. No doubt David describes the character, of those who opposed his advancement to the throne of Israel; but the Spirit of God, by the pen of David, describes the real character of all natural unregenerated men; and every christian who is obliged, from his course in life, to come into the same kind of collision with mankind, will find, that this representation is confirmed in his own experience. Thus the Redeemer saith concerning the leaders of the Jewish nation; "Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." This is a plain and very intelligible commentary on the psalmist; "Their throat is an open sepulchre; they will flatter with their tongues." Perhaps the scribes and pharisees who lived in the days of the incarnation of the Messiah, were further gone in iniquity, than some other generations of men; but the psalmist speaks of the principle that rules in their hearts, and forms their character. Those persons, of whom the psalmist speaks particularly, had gone so far in the practice of this kind of wickedness, that there was no longer any probability of their coming to repentance.

Although it is true that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, whenever the proper application of it is made; yet there is a kind of advancement in the practice of iniquity, in which men are beyond the reach of pardon; because they are too wicked to make application, with that humility, and penitent feelings, which are necessary.—

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There is a sin unto death. The sin against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. When therefore we offer our prayers and supplications for all men; it is not our duty to pray for those, who are advancing in this course of iniquity, by which they are grieving and provoking the spirit of God. This is such a sin, as was committed by the scribes and pharisees, when they endeavoured to make the populace believe, that Christ cast out devils by Beelzebub. There is always a great deal of that kind of iniquity committed among mankind, especially when parties are contending for power, either in church or state. It was men of this description, who would use wilful and malicious falsehoods, to accomplish their purposes, who were combined against David; and who were combined against the Redeemer: and in fact, there are few christians and few honest men, who are placed in any publick capacity, and have publick duties to perform, who will not be obliged to contend with such men, through the whole of their lives. It is entirely useless to pray for the repentance of such characters. In all cases of this kind, God says to every christian, as he said to the prophet Jeremiah; "pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee." In all such cases the proper kind of prayer is, O God, punish them: let them fall by their own counsels, &c.

This sin of bitter and malignant rebelling against God, is indeed committed by some; but it cannot be committed by many. When the apostle confesses, that he had been a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; he says, "I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief." He was ignorant of the real character of him whom he blasphemed and persecuted. He says also to the Jews who were guilty of the same crime; "I wot brethren that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Men, may, therefore, commit many great and aggravated transgressions, without committing the sin, unto death. It is

indeed necessary for us, not only to be possessed of a considerable portion of christian knowledge, and to have our feelings corrected and chastened by exercise, so that we may use this language of the psalmist in a proper and suitable manner. There are certain individuals in all communities, who have committed this sin; and there are others who have not yet committed it; but are advancing in the same course: and, therefore, when we use the language of the psalmist, we should pity, and pray for, those who have not committed the unpardonable sin, while we ask that they may not prosper in the course of iniquity.

But while the prayers of the christian are directed against the wicked, not because they are his enemies, but the enemies of God; he will always attend to the command of the Redeemer; "love your enemies; bless them that curse you," &c. The psalmist acted on this principle when God brought Saul his enemy into his power; but he would not inflict upon him any injury: and when others wished to destroy him, he saved his life. These facts show clearly the kind of spirit by which David was actuated, when he prayed that God would destroy his enemies, and make them fall by their own counsels. He showed in his conduct towards Saul, that he was actuated by the spirit of God; "who is long suffering to usward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." This is the disposition which we should always cherish towards every enemy. It may be necessary for us, on some occasions, to exert our powers to repel the invading foe; and to offer our prayers for the destruction of our enemies; but we should always exercise long suffering towards them all, and not indulge any personal animosity against any individual.

But while we have a desire to do good and not evil, to all mankind, we are especially to love and favour the household of faith. It is our duty to remember, in our prayers, all the children of God. They are those who trust in him,

and love his name. They trust in him as their refuge, and he extends over them the covering of his protection. Our condition in this world is full of danger, and we have powerful enemies on every hand, who use every exertion in their power, to ruin us. But the Saviour has offered himself for our deliverance, and has said, "look unto me and be ye saved, for I am God." There are truly many false saviours, who offer themselves for this purpose, and if we trust in them they will lead us to destruction. But the true Saviour considers himself honoured, by our trusting in him. There is a kind of fellow feeling, among all who know their condition in this world, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. As they all fly to the shadow of his wings for their protection; so they all rejoice not only in their own safety, but in the safety of each other. Their trusting in him, and his continued protection, will offer them continual comfort, and they will naturally rejoice in, and desire, the comfort of each other.

It is truly the highest source of comfort, to know that we have God for our Saviour, and this knowledge is to be obtained by trusting in him continually. We ask him for righteous dispositions, he gives them to us, and we find them in our hearts. We know that we have the spirit of Christ, for it is our meat and our drink, to do the will of our heavenly Father, and to accomplish his work. Thus we know that Christ is in us; and this knowledge is a perennial stream of comfort. We know, that as the Father covered the Son with his favour, and with this he was crowned, even when he endured the sufferings of the crown of thorns; so we are crowned with his favour in all our sufferings in this world. Every christian may say with the apostle; "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Thus he enjoys comfort with his risen and glorified Lord, and rejoices in his protection forever.

PSALM VI.

*To the chief — on the Neginoth — upon
the Sheminith—a Psalm of David.*

The word Neginoth signifies stringed instruments, and the Sheminith probably signifies an instrument with eight strings. In this point of view the title seems merely to give directions to the chief musician, and to the singers in the temple concerning the external part of the worship. But some think, and indeed the opinion seems by far the most probable, that by the word chief, we ought to understand Christ the Conqueror, who gained the victory by his sufferings: by Neginoth—the harps of God, which they are said to have, whom the apostle beheld standing on the sea of glass: who had risen above their sorrows, and were offering the sacrifice of praise, giving thanks to the name of God their Saviour; and by Sheminith a copious effusion of the oil of gladness, with which the conqueror was anointed and by which he and all his people are able to bear their sorrows, and at length to triumph over them and over all their enemies.

In this view the title might be translated—To the chief conqueror—On stringed instruments, or the harps of God,—concerning the oil of gladness.

TRANSLATION.

1. O Jehovah, do not rebuke me in thine anger; and do not chasten me in thine indignation.

2. Be gracious to me, O Jehovah, for I am weak: Heal me, O Jehovah, for my bones are troubled.

3. And my soul is troubled exceedingly: but thou, O Jehovah, how long!

4. Return, O Jehovah; deliver my soul. Save me for the sake of thy mercy.

5. For there is no remembrance of thee in death: In the grave who shall praise thee!

6. I am wearied out in my groaning; I have made my bed to swim all the night with my tears; I have melted away my couch.

7. Mine eye, wasted away with vexation, is sunk, by reason of all my enemies.

8. Turn away from me all ye workers of iniquity; for Jehovah hath heard the voice of my weepings.

9. Jehovah hath heard my supplication; Jehovah will receive my prayer.

10. Let all my enemies be put to shame, and let them be greatly troubled: Let them be turned back: Let them be suddenly put to shame.

DISSERTATION.

REBUKES and chastisements are a part of that discipline which God has provided for his children:—"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." The very essence, or substance of chastisement is pain or sorrow of heart. This pain or sorrow consists of many degrees, from the transient pang which passes through the heart and is gone, to the excruciating anguish which continues to torture the heart, and of which the pain becomes almost intolerable; in which the christian cries out with the Redeemer, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! All the pains which the christian is obliged to bear from time to time, through his life, are here presented to our minds. He has always some degree of hope in his sufferings, and always some degree of fear. As his sufferings become painful and excruciating his fears will generally increase. God may be displeased and angry with his children, but it is still the same kind of anger, which a parent feels against the child whom he loves, and whom he finds it necessary to punish for an offence.—He says to his people, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." But God is said to have spoken this against all the children of Israel, against the whole family

whom he brought up from the land of Egypt; and as there were many of that family cut off and destroyed forever; so the christian in his sufferings is very apt to fear that the anger by which he now feels the pain, may increase and give him greater pain, and burn against him forever. This appears to have been the condition of the psalmist's mind when he prayed to God, "Do not rebuke me in thine anger; do not chasten me in thine indignation."

Although God cannot be said to have feelings or passions like men; yet the way which he has chosen to reveal to us what desires and affections he possesses, is by referring us to our own desires and affections. God is therefore said to be angry and full of indignation: his fury is said to burn like fire. We are not, however, to suppose, or to indulge the thought for a moment, that the mind of the Almighty is subject to those paroxysms of rage, by which some fathers correct their children, not only with severity, but with cruelty: or by which torture or death is sometimes inflicted by one man upon another. There is always a difference between the pains of chastisement which God inflicts on his own children, and the judgements which he brings upon the wicked. Towards the former he acts with the kind and tender feelings of a father, and towards the latter he acts as a judge who punishes the guilty. But the pains which he inflicts upon his own children are sometimes so severe and terrible as to cause them to fear that God has become their enemy, or is about to cast them off forever, and give them into the hand of the grand enemy to destroy them. So long as the christian can find the evidence in himself that he is a child of God, by having the feelings of a child; when he can cry to Jehovah, "Thou art my father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation;" he then knows that God has not begun to treat him as an enemy: but still he fears that God may increase the weight of his affliction, so that he may be driven to despair, or cast down into that kind of dejection, that he shall cease to cry

to God, as a child to a father. The wicked are said to gnash their teeth in despair, or to know their tongues on account of their pains and their sores, and to blaspheme the God of heaven, but not to repent of their deeds. The christian sometimes fears that his sorrows may drive him to these extremities, and therefore, he prays, "O Lord chasten me not in thy hot displeasure."

This is a kind of sentiment which every christian can feel. There are many degrees of the same feeling in different individuals; and therefore while they are conscious of what passes in their own hearts, at the present time, and recollect something of the feelings which they have had in time past; they can join with the psalmist David and with the Lord Jesus Christ in the same supplication, both for themselves and for the church, or for the body of Christ which still remains on the earth.

These are the evils which the psalmist feared, but he proceeds to express those which he felt. His sorrows had been so long protracted, that they had brought him to a weak and languishing condition. By the force of disease, or by some painful operation on the mind, in which there are apprehensions of the displeasure of God, any man may be brought into a condition similar to the case of Eliphaz; who declares, "In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, fear came upon me and trembling which made all my bones to shake." Job also declares, "When I say my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint: then thou scarest me with dreams, thou terrifiest me with visions; so that my soul chooseth strangling and death rather than my life." The word which is here rendered "my life," is in the Hebrew "my bones." It signifies the weak and languishing condition, to which Job had been reduced, by a long series of afflictive dispensations. His very bones trembled under the apprehension of some new and more terrible degree of pain. He would rather have been put to death by strangling than endure the pain which was in his bones.

But in the troubles which the psalmist endured he makes earnest and continued application to the great physician. There is still balm in Gilead; there is still a physician there; but application must be made to that physician with earnest, repeated and continued supplication in our own persons for our own deliverance. When the prophet Jeremiah was reduced to despondency, concerning the Israelites, it was because they were so far gone in iniquity, that there was no hope of pardon for the nation. There was balm in Gilead, there was a physician there, but the physician had determined not to heal the wound of the daughter of his people. There are periods when national calamities cannot be prevented by our prayers. But every true penitent has a right to hope that God will attend to the supplications which he makes for himself, in the time of trouble, when he approaches to God with a true heart, and in the full assurance of faith.

But we must appeal to the mercy of God alone, and mercy is moved only by misery. There is misery in actual suffering, and there is misery in the prospect of suffering. We are, therefore, to cast ourselves upon the mercy of God and entreat him to deliver us from the evils which we feel and which we fear. It is truly a severe trial, when our troubles increase with the intensity and earnestness of our supplications for deliverance. This appears to have been the fact with respect to the psalmist. He asked for deliverance and his troubles were increased. He declares, my bones are troubled, and then he adds, my soul is exceedingly troubled; and still the Saviour, in whom he trusted for deliverance, appeared not to pay any attention to him, nor to be moved by the intensity of his sufferings. Then he makes the mournful exclamation, "but thou O Jehovah, how long!"

It is important for us to enter into the spirit of the psalmist, for we are commanded to pray and not to faint. When we ask for deliverance from evil, and the evil not only con-

tinues, but becomes worse, there is a strong temptation to lay aside our supplications, and to cease from asking any longer. But the psalmist continues to supplicate, with a greater degree of fervency in proportion to the delay. His faith becomes stronger by the trial. God appears to have turned away from him, and forsaken him, and he reiterates his supplication for mercy. "Return, O Jehovah, deliver my soul; O save me for the sake of thy mercy."

He brings forward such motives as would naturally operate on the mind of a merciful being, who is able to deliver. As God is merciful, so he desires that this attribute should be known to his creatures. He has determined to make it known to the universe, that he delighteth in mercy. He has more delight in mercy than in judgment, therefore, he does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men. It is, therefore, his desire to cause his mercy and truth to be remembered. But if one, who has cast himself on the mercy of God, according to his promise and the offers of his salvation, should, nevertheless, be cast down to that place of darkness and despair, where hope never comes; it is certain that God would not be glorified in that transaction as the God of mercy.

It is obvious, that by death and the grave, the psalmist means the condition of the wicked after death, but he never means, by these terms, a state of annihilation. In almost every place, where he uses the term *death* he means by it a state of suffering. With respect to the body it means a state of dissolution as it lies mouldering in the grave; as God said to Adam, "thou shalt return to the dust, from whence thou wast taken;" but with respect to the soul, it always means a cessation of comfort, and the infliction of pain. Hence the place of torment is called "the second death." Hence the Lord Jesus Christ said to his father, "thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Hence also the Redeemer said, concerning the rich man, "in hell he list-

ed up his eyes being in torments." By death and the grave the psalmist here means the invisible condition of the dead, and especially the condition of those who are cast down to destruction. God says, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, "behold all ye that kindle a fire and compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks that ye have kindled, this shall ye have from my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." When such characters are laid in the grave, even their bodies may be said to lie down in sorrow; because there is no ground of hope for a joyful resurrection. They become food for worms, and gradually dissolve into dust, while their souls are cast into the state of torment, where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched.

It may, perhaps, be objected to this interpretation, that such a man as David could have had no fears of the pains of hell, and that true christians are generally delivered from such fears. But such an objection would destroy itself; for the psalmist must either have had the fear of being annihilated, or the fear of suffering in a future world. But there is not even the shadow of evidence, either in the works or the word of God, that any human being shall ever be reduced to nothing. Such fear could not have entered the mind of the psalmist; he therefore must have had some fear of the sufferings of a future world. There is, indeed, an advancement in the christian life, in which the christian is not affected by the terrors of the wrath of God, or the fears of future woe. His hope is the anchor of his soul, by which, he is kept sure and steadfast amidst all the fluctuations and storms of the ocean of life. Since Christ has come into the world; and suffered for his people, the fears of hell are neither so general, nor so painful, as they have been formerly among the children of God. This is the meaning of the apostle when he says; "for as much as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death, he might

destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage." From this fear Christ by his death delivers his people. But this deliverance is like every other part of our salvation. It is obtained in the exercise of faith, so long as we remain in this world; and this faith is sometimes obstructed in its exercise, by unbelief, the sin that so easily besets us; and many times it is mingled with doubts and fears and "vexing thoughts," so that we have frequently reason to say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul," &c. We may therefore understand the meaning of the psalmist, from the very spirit and genius of christianity. He had no fears of annihilation; but he had some fears that God had forsaken him and that he might not return to him, in mercy ever in this world.

The word remembrance, as it is here used, and, indeed, as it is generally used in the scriptures, does not signify the thought or the recurrence of some object to our mind, which we had known or thought of before. The English word remembrance is sometimes used in a passive sense: but in the Hebrew it has always an active signification. It means properly, the exertion of the mind, by which, we recall and consider with some degree of pleasure, the things which we had formerly known. It is indeed sometimes used to express mournful reflections and recollections, which give us pain; but in the scriptural use of the term, we always make such reflections for the sake of some expected benefit. It is certain that God is not, in this sense, remembered in the infernal world. There the wretched inhabitants will always endeavour to forget him, or to blot him out from their remembrance, because they have no hope in his mercy. In death and hell there is no active remembrance of God—no desire to consider and meditate on his mercy, because this mercy has been despised and rejected; and on this account, it was withdrawn. This passive remembrance must always give pain, and is the very es-

sence and spirit of the worm that never dies. From this scriptural sense of the word remembrance, we may plainly see the meaning of the psalmist, when he says, "there is no remembrance of thee in death; in the grave who shall praise thee?"

We are not to understand that the patience of the psalmist was almost exhausted when he says, "I am wearied out," &c. The words might be rendered, "I am dying," &c. These expressions are evidently hyperbolic. It is impossible that the psalmist could actually cause his bed to swim with his tears. But it is by no means that kind of exaggeration by which poets sometimes magnify their scenes of description far beyond nature, and their readers are apt to think that too little attention has been paid to truth in the description. The pains, by which the mind of the psalmist was tortured, were severe beyond description. He stands before us in his sufferings, to typify, and represent the sufferings of Christ. For this purpose he was severely and terribly afflicted, that by the description of his sufferings at the time he endured them, he might not only show us the sufferings, which are sometimes endured by the children of God; but that we might see something of the tortures, which were inflicted on his only begotten son, when he stood in the room of sinners, and especially when he bare our sins in his own body on the tree. When we look through the sufferings of David, and behold the sufferings of our Lord, we shall then see, that there is nothing too highly coloured in this description.

We may here understand something of the deep degree of affliction, to which christians are sometimes reduced. The psalmist expresses the pains which he felt. The tears which he shed, the groans which he uttered, the wasting away of his flesh and the dimness of his eyes, are merely the particular effects produced by his pains. Other effects may be produced on other christians, by the same pains. Some may shed no tears, and yet their hearts may feel

more pain than those who, in this way, may find vent and expression for their sorrows. The appetite of some may be diminished, while others may be enabled to eat their food as usual. The bodily health of some may decline, and some may be enabled to endure their sufferings without decrease, either of health or spirits. We should always look at the spirit of the description, and if we are christians indeed, we shall be able to know something in our own experience of the same nature or kind, although not in the same degree.

Few christians are called to endure so intense sufferings as the psalmist. Some endure more than others, and the severity of their sufferings is generally, in some degree, counterbalanced by a corresponding degree of christian joy. None can tell how much God may yet call him to suffer, in this world. But this ought not to be any cause of fear. God says to every one of his people, as he said to the angel of the church of *Smyrna*, "Fear none of the things which thou shalt suffer." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." But the christian will always have some evidence, in the spirit with which he suffers, that he is suffering with Christ. He always bears his sufferings with the disposition of a child, that is chastened by his father. He endeavours to bear his sorrows as Christ endured his sorrows. He feels the rod and he complains, but he always submits, and prays, and hopes for deliverance, through Christ.

But there is a great aggravation of the christian's sorrows, in the conduct of those who look upon him, with an evil and malicious disposition. These are the characters, whom the psalmist here calls his enemies. Every man has in this sense his friends and his enemies among his neighbours. There are some who desire to promote our interest, and give us all the comfort in their power; and there are others, who look upon us with an evil eye, and are glad when we fall into trouble. The christian, who occupies a

publick station like the psalmist, or is a teacher of religion like the Lord Jesus Christ, will always find his enemies more hostile, and a larger number of them, than one who occupies a private station. But those, who are inimical to us on account of our christian principles, will generally retain their evil disposition, will become inveterate in their hostility, and will be glad when we fall into either sin or sorrow. They will exert themselves to give us pain. It is evident that the enemies of the psalmist were, in general, professors of religion; and it is a fact, that the enemies of the true christian are almost always professors of christianity. All these enemies will endeavour to increase our vexation, when we are in trouble; and therefore the psalmist declares that by reason of all his enemies, his eye was sunk, being wasted away with vexation.

The psalmist having continued for a time, in the utterance of these lamentations, mourning and weeping before God, he became, at length, the object of pity and compassion; and he received some satisfactory evidence that God attended to his supplications. The doctrine, that God does sometimes give intimations of this kind, to his people, is plainly taught in many parts of his word. God was pleased to inflict continued pain, of some kind, on the apostle Paul. He says "there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of satan to buffet me;—and, for this cause, I besought the Lord, thrice that it might depart from me." But God said to him, "my grace shall be sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The apostle had full and sufficient evidence, at that time, that this was the word of God, in answer to his prayer. He had also the authority given him, to publish this truth to the world, as a part of the word of God. He has not given us the authority to publish our prayers, nor the answers we receive to them: nor are those answers always impressed on our minds, in such a way, that we can know, that God has paid particular attention to our petitions.—

But yet there are some answers to prayer, which we may know, when we have sufficient evidence that our prayer is agreeable to the will of God, and that we have approached him with true hearts and in the full assurance of faith.

But there are many cases in which God does attend to our prayers and even receive them graciously, and give us reason to believe that he has thus received them; and they will at length be answered in a way, far different from our expectations. The prayer is answered, God has truly complied with our request, but the answer is so very different from all our thoughts, and anticipations, that we have some difficulty in understanding or believing, that he has paid any attention to our prayers. In this sense, while we are travelling in an enemy's country, we often hear language which we do not understand. When Moses put the Egyptian to death, and saved the life of the Israelite his brother, he supposed that his brethren would understand, that God was about to deliver them from the land of Egypt, by his hand, but they understood it not. These difficulties do not occur because the language in which God speaks to us is not plain, but because of the dulness of apprehension.

We may learn, from the form of expression which is here used, by the psalmist, that he had appeared before God, from time to time, with weeping and supplication.— He declares, God has heard the voice of my weepings.— He had often repeated his solicitations, and many times, he had wept before God. Finally the answer was given. In such a manner as satisfied his mind that God had heard him. We are not to expect less difficulty on this subject, than the man after God's own heart. He prayed, and supplicated, and fasted, and wept on one occasion, and an answer was given, to his prayer, by the death of the child, for whose life he prayed. This was the first child he had by the wife of Uriah. If this child had lived he would probably have been considered as the heir to the throne

of David. Thus the way would have been open for a scene of distrust, and contention, concerning the succession; and it might have been said, that Christ was not the son of David, but the son of Uriah the Hittite. Hence we see, that in the answer to our prayers, God looks upon the heart, and gives the answer in wisdom and truth. My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

But in this psalm, David expresses his confidence that God had heard his voice, would attend to his applications, and give him a favourable answer; and therefore, every child of God may hope to be heard in the same manner. In this sense, God is not to be viewed as a respecter of persons. It is not David, but the man that fears God and works righteousness, who shall be accepted. If we are diligent in our duty, fervent in our spirit, and if God is the master whom we serve, we may hope that he will treat us in the same manner, as he treated the psalmist. If we be dead with Christ, we believe, that we shall also live with him. If our old man is crucified with Christ, and the body of sin in us, is wasted, and destroyed, we may hope that God will act towards us, in such a manner as to increase our comfort, and give us new degrees of spiritual life. He will give us reason to hope, that our prayers shall be answered, if not in our own way, yet in the way which shall be the best, and for our greatest benefit.

It is evident that the Psalmist considered those persons his enemies, who endeavoured to throw obstructions in his way to the prize of everlasting life, or the crown of glory in the heavens; and these same characters, whatever we may think of them, are the worst enemies of the christian. It is the workers of iniquity around us, who have access to us when they please, and are, perhaps, considered as our firm friends and adherents, who are our worst enemies, and whose company we ought to dread and to shun. It is indeed necessary for us frequently to keep company, or to

associate with such characters, in the intercourse of the world; there are some of them, professors of religion, and are admitted to all the outward privileges of the church; but when we have sufficient evidence, that any one of our acquaintance is a worker of iniquity, or lives in any sinful habits, we are to avoid all unnecessary intercourse with that man. The natural effect of much intercourse or intimacy is to lead us away from communion with God. There are indeed many characters who have fallen into some errors, and who do not so closely and so constantly engage in the performance of religious duties, as we could desire, but they are not workers of iniquity. We may hope to reclaim them from some of their errors, and to lead them to the knowledge of the truth. Therefore in this respect every christian should endeavour to attain the wisdom which comes down from above, which is profitable to direct him in all the duties which he owes to God and his fellow men.

But the first thought which entered the mind of the Psalmist, after God had relieved him from his distress, and graciously attended to his weeping cries, was to seclude himself from the society of those who lived in some practices of iniquity. It is a publick declaration to the world, that such characters should no longer have any countenance from him, and it is also a private intimation to every one who lived in any sinful practice, not to expect any intimacy with him in future. God had heard his prayers, had given him a gracious answer, and thus had become his friend; and therefore in all his communication with mankind, he would say, with the Apostle, "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." The Psalmist, the Apostle, and all true christians are perfectly willing to have fellowship with all mankind, in christian principles and christian feelings, but they can have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness—they all say, by their

lives and their actions, and even by their countenances, turn away from us all ye workers of iniquity. God has given us reason to hope, that we shall in future enjoy his fellowship, and therefore we can have no fellowship with you.

It is not only the christian's comfort, but his joy and exultation; it fills his heart with delight, to have evidence that Jehovah has attended to his prayer. The ignorant and self-righteous who, like the Pharisee, are so much elated with the self approving conceit, that they are not as other men, may believe that God has answered their petitions, and holds fellowship with them, because they are better characters than the world around them. Such men do not understand nor apply to themselves the declaration of the prophet, "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags," &c. They know not the force of the truth; "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint." That they "are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:" and they can see but little condescension on the part of the high and holy God, to have fellowship with them. But although the true christian fully believes the doctrine, that God can hold fellowship with man, and that Enoch walked with God, yet it is difficult for him to believe that God could condescend to hold fellowship with himself. Thus Job declares, and he expresses the feelings of every true christian: "If I had called and he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice." But there are certain indications of the presence and favour of God, of which, after diligent and careful examination, the christian finds that there is no proper reason for rejection, or for doubt.— Thus some of the apostles hesitated, and doubted when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to them after he had risen from the dead, but they were all finally convinced of his presence, and his love to them; and their hearts were filled with joy and peace in believing. There is some such feeling generally in the christian's mind when he can no longer doubt that Jehovah hath heard his supplication.

But if we have received one such answer as this, where there is no doubt left on our minds, and we are fully convinced that God has attended to us, we have a right to hope that God will attend to us in future. Having begun the good work he will no doubt perfect that which concerneth us. "Having loved his own who were in the world he loved them unto the end." The psalmist speaks with confidence, and all christians may also say with confidence, "Jehovah hath heard our supplication; Jehovah will receive our prayer."

It is always to be suspected, and it will almost always be found to be true, in the experience of the christian, that those characters, with whom he cannot hold fellowship, because they are workers of iniquity, and whom he has reprov'd for their iniquities, either by his walk and conversation, or by his words, will become his inveterate enemies; and will endeavour to injure and destroy him. By these enemies, the psalmist declares that his eye was sunk, and wasted away with vexation. They opposed him, in all his designs, and works of righteousness; therefore, he prays that they might be put to shame. When David was told that Ahithophel, his chief and wisest counsellor was among the conspirators with Absalom, he prayed that God would turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. Ahithophel, however, gave wise counsel to Absalom, but it was not followed. It was treated as foolishness in comparison with the counsel of Hushai, the Archite, David's friend.—But when he found how his counsel had been treated, he went home to his house and hanged himself. He died the death of a traitor, and he died by his own hand. Thus Ahithophel was put to shame. It is also evident, that destruction came upon him suddenly and contrary to all his hopes and expectations. He was cast down to perpetual disgrace at the very time when he hoped to be the chief governour of Israel, under Absalom, whom they had chosen to be their king.

It is very important for us to pay particular attention to the subjects of our prayers, and the spirit or disposition of the heart, with which they are offered to the holy God.— We should have good reason to believe that they are agreeable to his will. Every petition which we ask, and every feeling or desire which we present before God, and which we have a right to hope that he will receive with any kind of attention or regard, must correspond and agree with the law of God. Therefore every petition or desire, which we offer up concerning our fellow men, must agree with the principles of the law by which we are commanded to love our neighbours as ourselves; or to do to all men as we would wish them to do to us. It is utterly impossible that David or any of the writers of the psalms could have written any sentiment, in a spirit different from the spirit of obedience to this precept. David declares, “the spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was on my tongue.” It was therefore the same spirit who gave the commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, and who put this desire into the mind of the psalmist; Let all my enemies be put to shame, and be greatly troubled; let them be turned back and suddenly put to shame. It was also the same Holy Spirit of God that actuated the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ when he commanded his disciples; “I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your father who is in heaven,” &c. It was he also who actuated the heart of the apostle Paul when he said, “Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil, the Lord reward him according to his works.” And, “if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha,” that is, *accursed when the Lord cometh*. No man will believe, that the spirit of God ever contradicted any of his own declarations, and no intelligent christian will believe, that Jesus Christ ever uttered a sentiment, in contradiction to any of

the sentiments which are found in the psalms. He indeed illustrates, or opens up, the meaning of the psalms, and makes them more clear, both by his own instructions and the writings of the apostles; but, the psalmist was always actuated, both in his conduct to his fellow men and in his writings, by a similar spirit or disposition to that which actuated the heart of the Redeemer. When Saul was given into his hand, and he might have revenged himself for the evils which he had made him suffer; then, instead of putting him to death, or suffering him to be injured, he interposed his authority, to save him from destruction. Therefore it is altogether fair and reasonable to suppose, that if the enemies, of whom he here speaks, had been given into his hand, in the same manner as Saul, he would have also saved their lives. God allows no man to be actuated by the spirit of revenge, much less will he allow any one to take the sword into his own hand and execute vengeance on his enemies.

But the spirit of private revenge, and the love of justice, come sometimes so near to each other, and appear to be so very similar, that the ignorant and indiscriminating, whose senses have not been exercised, to discern between good and evil, will often mistake the one for the other. No doubt there are some who sing the psalms of David with a spirit of revenge, and there are others, who refuse to sing them in the worship of God, from the mistaken notion, that David was actuated by such a spirit when he wrote the psalms. Thus it is a fact, that Satan is clothed like an angel of light, and those, whose minds have not been exercised in this spiritual discernment, will always be led into error on this subject, unless they ask with fervency and sincerity, to be directed by him who has said "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go."

The apostle tells us in the book of Revelation, that he saw under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and

they cried with a loud voice; how long, O Lord, the holy and the true, dost thou not judge, and revenge our blood, on them that dwell on the earth. This appears so much like the spirit of revenge, that if such a sentiment should be found in the psalms, it would be supposed, by many, to belong to "the revengeful spirit of the Old Testament," and therefore not fit to be sung in the worship of the christian church. But the truth is, there is just as little of the spirit of private revenge in the religion of the Old Testament, as in that of the New. Revenge is a selfish feeling, by which, a man desires to inflict pain on his personal enemies, without paying a proper regard to justice; but the love of justice is a desire, that the wicked should be punished; and that our own personal enemies should also receive their just retribution. But we are taught, by the law of God, as it is connected with the gospel, to render good for evil: and when the Redeemer commands us to do to others, as we would that others should do to us, he declares "this is the law and the prophets." It is also said by Solomon, "If thine enemy hunger, give him bread to eat; if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." Forgiveness of personal injuries is taught in the Old Testament, as much as in the New. But there is no forgiveness, in any other way than through the blood of Christ; and if the worst enemies of the true christian were cleansed by this blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, it would fill his heart with joy. Uriah will by no means object to the forgiveness vouchsafed to David, when he finds that David is cleansed from blood guiltiness, by the application of that blood which cleanseth from all sin. The souls whom the apostle beheld under the altar, where they had been sacrificed, would have desired no better vengeance, than to know that the sacrifice of Christ had delivered their enemies from the guilt of their blood. The psalmist would

have been highly delighted, if his prayer had been answered, by putting his enemies to the shame and sorrows of repentance.

If therefore there is any reasonable ground of hope, that God will give repentance to any of our enemies, we ought to pray for their repentance and forgiveness; and this is evidently the meaning of the Redeemer, when he commands us to pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us. But as it would be folly for us to pray for a man, whom we saw or heard committing the sin unto death; so we are not bound to pray for any particular sinner, unless there is some reasonable ground of hope that God will give him repentance unto life. When, therefore, we see any one advancing in the course of iniquity, and especially when he is endeavouring to injure and ruin us, the most natural and suitable petition for us to make to God, is that he may be turned back, and put to shame.

In this view which the psalmist gives us of his enemies, they appear to be pressing forward, in order to ruin and destroy him. Such was the conduct of the Egyptians, when they pursued after the children of Israel into the Red Sea. They were determined to destroy them, and they pursued after them for this purpose. But God looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire, and of the cloud, and troubled the host; and took off their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily. Thus they were put to shame and greatly troubled. Hence they at length determined to give up the pursuit and to return. But the waters returned, and covered the chariots and the horsemen, and all the armies of the Egyptians. Thus they were suddenly covered with confusion and darkness and death. It is not only right for the christian, but God requires it of him as a duty, to say, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord." If, therefore, we have sufficient evidence, that our enemies are actuated by a spirit similar to that of the Egyptians, and exert their enmity against us in a sim-

lar manner ; it is evident that they are not only our enemies, but the enemies of God. Hence it is our duty to pray, that some judgement may overtake them in their course of iniquity : and when we see that the judgement has been executed, it is our duty, like Moses and the Israelites, to sing unto the Lord, because he hath triumphed gloriously ; the horse and his rider he hath thrown into the sea. It is in such works as this, that Jehovah appears to be glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.

PSALM VII.

*Shiggaion. ——— Of David, which he sang
to Jehovah, concerning the words of Cush
the Benjamite.*

The word *Shiggaion* signifies errors or wanderings. It is used to represent the luxuriance of plants, or vines, in a soil that is well watered. It represents also the wanderings of the sheep from the fold, and the wanderings of the church, when they turned aside from the commandments of God. It is here used to signify some unintentional errors, which the psalmist had committed; of which advantage had been taken for slander and defamation. Cush the Benjamite had probably been the chief of his calumniators. His words, which were circulated, and believed, by the enemies of David, seem to have made a deep, and painful impression on his mind; and he poured out his heart before God, in the words of this psalm.

TRANSLATION.

1. Jehovah, my God, in thee I put my trust: save me from all my persecutors and deliver me:

2. Lest he tear my soul like a lion; tearing me in pieces, and none delivering.

3. Jehovah my God, if I have done this: if there be iniquity in my hands;

4. If I have done evil instead of good, to him with whom I have lived in peace: I have even set free him that was my enemy without cause:

5. Then let the adversary pursue, and overtake my soul: let him tread down my life to the earth; and let him cause my honour to remain in the dust.

6. Rise, O Jehovah, in thine anger: rise up against the rage of my enemies; and

awake for me, the judgement which thou hast commanded.

7. So the congregation of the people will encompass thee, and on account of them, do thou return to thy place on high.

8. Jehovah shall judge the people: judge me, O Jehovah, according to my righteousness, and according to my integrity which are with me.

9. O let the iniquity of the wicked come to an end: but do thou establish the righteous; for the righteous God trieth the hearts and the reins.

10. My defence is with God, who saves the upright of heart.

11. God judgeth the righteous; and God looks on the wicked with wrath and contempt, all the day.

12. If he do not turn, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and prepared it.

13. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he hath prepared his arrows for the persecutors.

14. Behold, he will travail with iniquity; he has even become pregnant with mischief, and he hath brought forth a lie.

15. He has digged a pit, and deepened it; and he is fallen into the destruction which he prepared.

16. His mischief shall be returned upon his own head; and upon the crown of his head, his violence shall descend.

17. I will give thanks to Jehovah according to his righteousness; and I will sing psalms to the name of Jehovah, the Most High.

DISSERTATION.

Among all the troubles which the true christian endures, there is scarcely any more painful and excruciating, than the persecution of a powerful, persevering, and relentless foe. A persecuting disposition is not only sinful, and condemned every where, in the word of God; but it is that trait in the character of man, by which he most resembles the grand adversary of man and God. A persecuting spirit is the continued and cherished desire of inflicting pain; and the instrument by which it works is generally the tongue. It is necessary for us to speak the truth, on all proper occasions; and the faithful exhibition of any truth, by which the faith or practice of men is censured, or condemned, will always give pain. The ministers of the gospel are therefore commanded to cry aloud, and not spare; to lift up their voice like a trumpet, and show God's people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. But if any minister should find pleasure, in the infliction of pain on any of his audience; and pursue the subject merely for his own gratification, and not for the benefit of the sinner, he would then be guilty of persecution. The principle, or spirit of persecution, is that evil disposition which delights in giving pain, and continues to inflict it for its own gratification.

True christians, in all ages, have had many of these persecuting foes; and those who are the most active, and the most diligently engaged, in bringing their fellow men under the power of gospel truth, will generally find the greatest number of this kind of foes. The dominion of David was similar to the dominion of Christ; for Christ was not only the son of David according to the flesh, but his heart was actuated by the spirit of Christ. It was his great object to cause truth and righteousness to flourish, and to deliver the needy and the poor and him that had no helper;—to give encouragement to true religion, and to prevent or hinder the progress of irreligion, error, and iniquity. Therefore

his foes were many, and there were many of them active, and inveterate in their hatred and opposition. But every one who comes before the face of the world, and supports and vindicates the truth of God, in whatever situation God may have placed him, will have need to call upon God, to save and deliver him from his persecutors.

As we are to trust in God for the power or ability which is necessary to enable us to perform our duty; so we are to trust in him for deliverance from our enemies. The grand adversary of man is exceedingly powerful. We are exhorted by the apostle to be sober and vigilant, because our adversary the devil, like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. He delights in destruction, and especially in the destruction of our comforts, and the increase of our misery. As God has his messengers, his angels, the ministers of his gospel, and others, whom he commissions or commands to do good to his people in various ways; so satan sends his emissaries and agents, to seduce mankind into sin, and by all means to bring them into sorrow. It is evident that this roaring lion, who acts in secret, and is still possessed of an archangel's power, is able to destroy and bring to ruin any of the children of Adam; who are all disabled by sin, and have no power in themselves to withstand him. There is therefore no hope of preservation for any individual, but by flying to the strong hold, where Christ has every necessary preparation for our complete defence. If we really hate sin, and enter into no kind of collusion, or party, or tampering with our lusts, if we still continue faithful in the service of our Lord and master, and put our trust in him for deliverance, he will not suffer any of our enemies to get the advantage over us.

In this case we have every motive to bring forward, which can operate on the mind of a powerful, and honourable protector. We are weak and powerless, entirely incapable of self defence. God has called us to put our trust

under the shadow of his wings. We know that he has power to save us, and that our enemy has the power, and the will, to inflict upon us the most horrible misery. If God should suffer him to proceed to the accomplishment of his desires, he would tear our souls in pieces, as the lion would the timid fawn. We should be obliged to say with our Lord, "my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" and with Job, "terrors are turned upon me; they pursue my soul as the wind; and my welfare passeth away as cloud." But as God has promised to deliver us, and we put our trust in him, and cast ourselves upon his care, it is only necessary to state our case to him in the manner of the psalmist, and with the same arguments, and the same fervency, to persevere from day to day, and there can be no reasonable doubt, that God will hear us, and deliver us in the end. He delivered the psalmist, and Job, and his only begotten son, when he stood in the room of sinners; and every one that has trusted in him will confess, that he is faithful to his promises, and that he has magnified his word even above his name.

If we have committed any particular sin, it is our duty to make our confession in the way which God has commanded. If we have done any evil to our fellow man, we are to make every restitution in our power, and then to confess our sins to him, who is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If, however, we have not committed any particular transgression, against God or man; but have been slandered and calumniated, we are then to state the truth before man or God, as God gives us the opportunity. If we know, and are conscious, after diligent and faithful examination, that we do not live in the practice of any kind of iniquity, nor roll any sin as a sweet morsel under our tongue, but on the contrary, that we hate every kind of evil, then it is our duty, and our privilege, to appeal to the judge of all the earth, that our cause may be examined, and our judgement may proceed from his lips.

The practice of profane imprecations is so common among mankind, and so many are in the habit, or, on some occasions are guilty of wishing a curse to their own souls on certain conditions, that this kind of profanation does not create half the abhorrence, which it ought to create, even in the minds of christians. But as there is nothing so terrible as the judgements of God; and as there is no greater sin, than that of calling upon God to witness a falsehood, or the indulgence of some kind of wicked disposition in the heart; so it is plain, that the judgement of condemnation, in the high court of heaven, is continually given against multitudes of mankind. Swearing is an act of worship, and when we swear by the name of God in truth and righteousness, and rely upon him to give his judgement according to truth, we then put honour on him as the sovereign, and the judge whom we acknowledge and obey. But when swearing is multiplied among mankind, and a proper regard is not paid to the solemnity of an oath, to the value and importance of truth, and to the God of truth; it becomes profanation and blasphemy; and it must in the end bring down the terrible vengeance of the Almighty. If men have committed some kind of iniquity, and they say they have not committed it, then call on God to witness their false declaration, as if it were truth, and then imprecate some vengeance on themselves if they have not spoken the truth, we can scarcely conceive of a more aggravated crime, and the judgement must be terrible beyond all human conception.

There can be nothing more appalling than this imprecation. Satan the grand adversary is the executioner of the vengeance of God, upon the condemned sinner. He has no regard for justice, and he delights in giving pain. In this respect he will go to the very limits of his permission. We may know something of the pain, which satan can inflict, by the pains which were inflicted on the psalmist, and on the Lord Jesus Christ, when he complains; "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart

is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." "The enemy hath pursued my soul; he hath smitten down my life to the ground: he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead." So Job complains, "He teareth me in his wrath who hateth me; he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me." The pains of the spirit are the pains of hell.—Christians are sometimes brought into these depths of tribulation in this world, as the psalmist says; "the pains of hell took hold on me; I found trouble and sorrow." But God watches over his own people continually, and the enemy shall not be permitted to afflict them, beyond certain limitations. It is in the condition after death, that the enemy shall have full power of pursuing their souls like a lion, and shall tear them and rend them in pieces, when there shall be none to deliver.

As God has provided the psalms as a system of devotion, containing all the spiritual exercises of the heart, which are to be offered to God in worship: so we may learn that this exercise of the heart is a part of christian devotion.—The grand adversary is always accusing us before God, when ever he gets a suitable opportunity. We have enemies around us, belonging to our own species, who wait for our halting; and are glad when they can get an opportunity of slandering and reviling us. There are accusations brought against us frequently when we do not know it. The christian therefore must always be prepared to use this language of the psalmist before God, as well as before his fellow men. We must be able to say with truth, "there is no iniquity in my hands." Although no christian will say, there is no sin in him, for he knows that sin dwells in him, that there is no good thing in his flesh; and that there is no man that sinneth not; yet he knows, from self-examination according to the law of God, that he does not yield up any of the members of his body, nor any of the faculties of mind, to the practice of iniquity: In his mouth there can be found

no guile; at least he cannot find it by the strictest scrutiny. He says to God, who can understand his errors cleanse thou me from secret faults; and keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins. In this sense, he has clean hands, and a pure heart. Therefore he can always come to God and say, "there is no iniquity in my hands."

But it is necessary for us to come to particulars; and the psalmist here no doubt refers to the particular crime, which was alleged against him. It must have been that of doing an injury to a friend, or of rendering evil for good. He had formed no habit of this kind; he had never yielded to this kind of temptation; it was the object of his abhorrence. The true christian might be tempted, like David, to commit this sin, as it was committed in the case of Uriah. But the tempter had, in some way, succeeded to conceal the sin from his mind; and therefore his conscience did not accuse him, until the sin was committed, and God sent the prophet to show him his iniquity. It is therefore of little consequence, whether this psalm was written before, or after the sin of David in the case of Uriah, for the psalmist refers to the principle that reigned in his heart, or to his habits of thinking and acting. The false accuser would no doubt bring forward the act of David, in the case of Uriah, to show that he had injured his friend, or had repaid evil instead of good, to the man with whom he lived in peace: but David denies that he cherished such a principle in his heart, or lived under the influence of such an evil disposition. In proof of this he brings forward his treatment of Saul his enemy, who was his mortal foe without any cause. This man rendered evil for good: because he endeavoured to destroy a faithful subject, who had ventured his life, for his sovereign, and for his country. When God had brought this enemy into his power, instead of destroying him, he set him free. This therefore was sufficient proof, that he was not in the habit of doing evil to his friends. If therefore any christian is ac-

cused of any particular sin, as being habitual to him; and some sin which he has actually done is alleged as proof that he is a sinner; he will always be able in the same sense of the psalmist, to declare that he has not rendered evil for good, and that he has rendered good for evil.

On this subject every christian may come to absolute certainty. He knows after proper examination, that he is not, in this respect, a sinner, and therefore, as he relies on the justice of God, he has no fear that he shall be given into the hands of the enemy to destroy him. The christian may have committed sins of this kind, both before and after the time of his christian profession; but he can say with the apostle, "I have obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." He knows that he does not cherish any iniquity in his heart; and that as soon as any of his sins becomes known to him, he casts it away. He always obeys the command of God, "cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit." Therefore although he does not depend on his righteousness, for justification in the sight of God; yet he knows that the righteous God will not give him into the hands of the enemy, to be tormented, for the commission of sins of which he is falsely accused. In this respect he acts on the principle of the apostle, when he said to Festus, "If I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof they accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar." In the case of the apostle, it was proper for him to appeal to the judgement of the Roman governour; but in all cases of accusation, we have the right of appealing to the judge of all the earth; and we know that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit; we know that whatever crimes may be alleged against us, we are not spiritually guilty; and therefore we shall not be condemn-

ed, because the throne of iniquity cannot have fellowship with God.

But the pains and penalties which we imprecate upon ourselves, after the example of the psalmist, and in the same consciousness of innocence, are truly awful and tremendous. The word, which is here rendered enemy, signifies the chief of those evil spirits, who obtain a degree of familiarity, or intimacy with mankind. In ancient times, and even in the days of David, there were some that were known to have this intimacy with some of the spirits of darkness. They entered into a league with the adversary of man, and with his help they were able sometimes to inflict pains on their enemies. But although there are few, comparatively, at the present time, who have this kind of intimacy with Satan; yet wherever he has the permission, he is ready to inflict pain on mankind, and especially on the servants of God. He is like Nimrod, the mighty hunter, who endeavours to make man his prey; and his wounds are inflicted upon the spirit. The life, or the comfort of those whom he is permitted to torment, is trodden on the earth, and their honour, their character or reputation, is covered in the dust, and must remain in this state of degradation, so long as he has the power to keep it down. If he were thus permitted to tear our souls like a lion; rending them in pieces, and none delivering; life itself would be a burden to us, and, like Job, we should curse the day in which we were born.

By the judgement of God in this world, we are always to understand the dispensations of his providence, in his government of the world. These judgements are compared to the great deep. They are dark and mysterious, and so deep, that they cannot be fathomed by the human mind. The wicked prosper and the righteous are unsuccessful in their pursuits. The hypocrite obtains the name of devout and godly, and lives and dies with the character of a devout and exemplary christian, while the names of the true dis-

principles of Christ are cast out as evil. But there are certain times and periods, in which God comes forth to vindicate his own injured honour, and his people who have been oppressed ; by executing judgements on the wicked, in the dispensations of his providence. We know from the history of David, that God did rise in his anger, and did disappoint the malicious hopes of his enemies : and the judgement which he had ordained and commanded, that David should be the king of Israel, in the room of Saul, was awaked and renewed, and operated, so that David finally came to the throne. Such also was the judgement in favour of the Lord Jesus Christ, while the high priests, and all the rulers of the Jews were combined, and used all their power to prevent the Jewish nation, and the Gentile world, from becoming christians. But christianity at length prevailed, and has still prevailed from generation to generation. It is the judgement which God has commanded, that Jesus Christ should reign, and that all nations should acknowledge him, as King of kings, and Lord of lords. This judgement also shall be awaked, and shall operate throughout the world. This judgement is commanded with respect to christian churches, and to individual christians. Christ said to the angel of the church of Philadelphia : "Behold I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie ; behold, I will make them to come and worship at thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." The Jews had opposed the christian church at Philadelphia, and said that christianity was the work of Satan. They no doubt pretended to a great degree of goodness, but Christ calls them the synagogue of Satan. No doubt they were obliged at last to bow to the authority of the Redeemer. It is in such dispensations of his providence, that Jehovah rises against the rage of the christian's enemies, and awakes for him the judgement which he has commanded.

It is necessary for the influence and power of any sov-

ereign, or commander, that he should on some occasions exert and manifest his power, both for the purpose of encouraging his friends and discouraging his enemies. So when God rises in his anger, and brings terrible judgement on the wicked; as in the latter part of the reign of Saul, and especially after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, then the hearts of his people are strengthened, his worship is attended by larger numbers, and they are enabled to rejoice, and triumph in his praise. For this purpose God frequently exalts himself by his judgements. He says to the world be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth.

Jehovah is always presented to us as our judge, as well as our creator and governour. His judgement signifies his decision, and the execution of his decision, with respect to the conduct of mankind. He sits on the throne of judgement in the heavens, he sees every work of man, and passes his judgement upon it. This is both the reliance, and the comfort of the christian. It is a great satisfaction to him, to think, and to have ground for believing, that God will form his judgement, and will declare, and execute his righteous sentence on all mankind. It is also his hope and prayer that God would be his judge. There are two things which he finds in himself, which render it desirable, that the righteous God should be his judge, and these are his righteousness and his integrity. The former is the righteousness of his Redeemer which he has received, and on which he relies for his salvation; and the latter is the effect of that righteousness in his heart, by which he is determined, in the strength of his Redeemer, to live a righteous life.— It is therefore the comfort of the christian to know that the Lord will judge his people, for he can say with truth, “surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.”

It is very important for us to keep the truth in our minds, that our judge is the son of God. “The father judgeth

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no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the son." It is not necessary for us to inquire whether the psalmist had this truth in his mind, when he wrote these sentiments; we know that this truth is here presented to our souls by the spirit of God, who takes the things of Christ, and shews them to his people. He has said, that the hour is coming, in the which, all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth. And the apostle declares; "we must all stand at the judgement seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." If then Jesus Christ is to be our final judge, he is also our judge at this moment. He is the governor among the nations, and takes particular cognizance of all human affairs. It is our duty to see and recognize the Lord Jesus Christ, in the declaration of the psalmist, "Jehovah shall judge the people;" and looking to him as our judge, to make the same prayer, Judge me, O Jehovah, &c. We should plead his promise which he has made to all his disciples, as well as to the apostles; "when he the spirit of truth is come he will guide you into all truth." "He shall testify of me;" "He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." In this sense, "the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our king; the Lord is our lawgiver; he will save us."

We may pray to Christ as the acting governour of the world, while we pray to the Father, who has created and who governs all things by Christ. As this world is full of iniquity in all the departments of life, and as God is a righteous governour; so it is our duty and our privilege, to pray that iniquity may not prosper. But this petition, when it is offered in faith, and by the mind that has wisdom, has always some particular object in view. The christian not only looks to that period, when iniquity as ashamed shall stop her mouth; but to those designs and projects of iniquity, which come within his own particular knowledge and observation. There are counsels and plans

in iniquity ; in every stage of advancement, and when we have any knowledge of any evil work, which is thus advancing to consummation ; we are not only, not to join in it, but rather to say with David ; “ O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” But while we pray, that all such counsels may be defeated, may be brought to an end, and produce no favourable result ; it is our privilege to pray, that the counsels of good and holy men may be established, we should pray that God would favour, and prosper, and bring to perfection, every work of righteousness.

But while there are many devices, and counsels of iniquity, which bear on the countenance, the very features of the evil one, and concerning which no christian can be mistaken ; it is also a truth that Satan puts on the robes of an angel of light ; and it requires more than common powers of discrimination, to enable us to detect the deception. We should always beware of that spurious charity, which calls evil, good, and good, evil, which puts light for darkness, and darkness for light : and we should endeavour to have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil, that we may not be mistaken in our desires and exertions for the advancement of truth, the propagation of the gospel, and every work of charity. The wicked frequently put on the appearance of the righteous, and while their designs prosper, the righteous are disheartened and discouraged ; but as God is the judge, he is able to detect every kind of evil in every kind of subterfuge. When the prophet declares, “ the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; who can know it.” It is also declared, “ I the Lord search the heart ; I try the reins ; even to give every man according to his ways.” The Lord Jesus Christ declares concerning the church of Thyatira, and especially concerning some part of it, that was much corrupted : “ I will kill her children with death ; and all the churches shall know, that I am he who searcheth the reins and

hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." Therefore as it is necessary for us to form our judgement, and to speak and act concerning the works of men around us ; so when we pray for the downfall of all iniquity, and error, and deception ; and for the establishment of truth and righteousness ; and when it becomes proper for us to particularize the objects of our prayers, we should always ask wisdom from the searcher of hearts, that we may be able to discern both good and evil.

When we thus particularize the objects of our prayers, and of our exertions, we should see and understand that our hearts are upright. In the courses which are pursued by mankind they generally fall into error, either because the object to be gained is not such as God requires them to pursue, or the means which they use to obtain it are sinful. In these cases the heart cannot be upright, and man cannot pursue a straight and even course to the object of their desires. Satan takes the advantage of their sinful dispositions, and leads them into error ; and even the upright may be brought into trouble and difficulty ; but in all such cases, where they know that they are actuated by upright and honest desires, they may say with the psalmist, " my defence is with God."

There is a sense in which God is said to judge, both the righteous and the wicked, while he condemns the one and justifies the other ; but in this declaration, the psalmist means to tell us, that the great judge of all the earth, always searches into the cause and gives his sentence in favour of the righteous man. In the same sense he declares, a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. When the poor widow continued to complain to the judge, who feared not God nor regarded man, he attended to the complaint because of her importunity, but when the righteous man brings his complaint before the great judge of heaven and earth, and continues to ask for his judgement with fervency and perse-

rance, the very name or character of God, is sufficient to insure him a favourable hearing, and a decision in his favour. But God is no respecter of persons. If a poor widow had committed some iniquity, and should bring an unrighteous cause before God, hoping that he might favour her because she was poor, such conduct would excite his indignation. In general, when there are two litigants, in opposition before an earthly court, the one must be called righteous and the other wicked, and the judge is bound to look on the righteous man with complacency, and on the wicked with disapprobation. So God looks in all such cases with contempt and wrath on the unjust.

But the wrath of God is not an inefficient, inoperative principle. He always executes the judgements of his wrath, on the sinner who continues to be impenitent. God always acts like himself. Those whom he loves, and on whom he bestows his favours, are made blessed and glorious, beyond all the thoughts and conceptions of the mind of man. "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." But as the goodness of God to his own people must fill their hearts with admiration; so the severity of his judgements will cause the universe to say to God; "how terrible art thou in thy works." This is here represented by the whetting or sharpening of his sword, bending his bow, fitting his arrows on the string, and preparing for himself the instruments of death. They are such instruments as will inflict the most excruciating torments, on the workers of iniquity, in proportion to their guilt. His arrows are prepared for the persecutors, the poisoned arrows which shall drink up the spirits. They have pursued the children of God, with unrelenting vengeance, and therefore the vengeance of God shall pursue them for ever. A portion of this death, or this vengeance, every impenitent sinner must endure; but the most miserable of

all shall be the impenitent persecutors of the children of God:

The psalmist proceeds to describe the operation of iniquity, in such characters, and the kind of punishment which shall be inflicted upon them. He calls the world to behold the operation of iniquity in the hearts of the wicked, until it is brought forth into action. When he says, behold, he will travail with iniquity, he intends to show us, that evil is first engendered in the human heart, and then brought forth into action; lust conceives and brings forth sin. The heart of the wicked man becomes pregnant with some kind of mischief, and the first appearance of it is falsehood. As the hunter, when he is in pursuit of his prey, first digs a pit in the course, in which he supposes his prey will pass, and that he may make his success the more certain, he deepens it afterwards; so the wicked man, or the persecutor, lays wait for his neighbor that he may destroy him. There are three prominent ways in which evil may be inflicted. We may suffer in our persons, our property, or our reputation; and often for some purpose of this kind the pit is digged and made deep.

But if we pay attention to the word of God, and to the dispensations of his providence, we shall see the truth of the declaration; "they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." They fall into the destruction, which they had prepared for others. But their judgement is like the judgement of the serpent. God said to him, "thou shalt bruise his heel, but he shall bruise thy head." Men may give pain to a righteous man; they may hurt his heel: but when God renders them a recompense, the vengeance will fall upon their heads. Their own violence shall strike them at last, on the crown of their heads. The pain which they shall endure is beyond all conception; because it is represented by the worm that never dies, and the fire that shall never be quenched.

When the christian beholds the dispensations of the

providence of God, in his judgements on the wicked ; and sees how the righteousness of his judgements is high beyond his former thoughts and conceptions ; he is incited to render praises to God, and to sing psalms to the glory of his name. Saul's persecution of David, and all his endeavours to destroy him, were the means by which David was raised to honour and power ; and by which he lost the throne of Israel and sunk to degradation. The Jews thought to destroy the Redeemer, so that even his memory should perish ; but all their efforts to destroy him, were the means of his higher exaltation, and of sinking themselves still deeper into degradation and infamy. Such views of the providence of God towards ourselves and others : the history of his government in the world from the earliest times, and especially the history of his government in the church, are calculated to raise our thoughts, to admire and adore the righteousness of the Most High. We shall come to the determination, for ever to render to him thanksgiving and praise.

PSALM VIII.

*To the chief — upon the Gittith. — a
Psalm of David.*

If we believe that the scriptures are altogether the word of God, we must also believe that every part of the scriptures is given for our benefit; and therefore has some spiritual meaning, which may give exercise to the understanding and the heart. The word which is here rendered; "The chief," must always mean the Lord Jesus Christ. It is always addressed to him, spiritually, and substantially, as the head of the church, and the head of the worshippers of God, wherever they may be assembled. He is the chief among ten thousand. The word Gittith is designed to express the subject, concerning which the psalm is written, and which we should keep before our minds in our meditations upon it. It signifies literally, the treading of the wine press. It relates to him who declares by the prophet Isaiah "I have trodden the wine press alone," &c. The psalm is intended to celebrate the love, and condescension of God, by which he has taken our nature, will finally tread down all our enemies, and give us the spiritual blessings of his kingdom.

TRANSLATION.

1. O Jehovah, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth; who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

2. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, thou hast ordained strength, on account of thine enemies; that thou mightest put to silence, the enemy, and the avenger.

3. When I look to thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and stars, which thou hast established:

4. What is mortal man, that thou dost remember him; and the son of man that thou dost visit him?

5. Thou hast made him lower for a little, than the angels; and with glory and honour thou has crowned him.

6. Thou hast made him ruler over the works of thy hands; all things thou hast put under his feet.

7. Sheep and oxen, all of them, and even the beasts of the field :

8. The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, that pass through the paths of the waters.

9. Jehovah our Lord how excellent is thy name in all the earth.

DISSERTATION.

WHEN the spirit of God operated in the mind of the psalmist, to produce this interesting exercise of christian devotion, he was probably engaged in the contemplation of the starry heavens. It was his practice, sometimes, to retreat to the top of his house for the purpose of meditation. The tops of the houses in Palestine are generally flat, and are therefore well fitted for this kind of mental exercise.— But while his eyes wandered over these splendid and beautiful objects, his mind was naturally turned to the great creation, and to the relation in which Jehovah stood to Israel. While he says to mankind, look unto me and be saved; he says to every one that is of an obedient spirit, be not dismayed nor confounded, I am thy God. “I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.”— While therefore the psalmist contemplated the works of creation around him, he was led to meditate on the relation in which he stood to the creator, and the excellence of his name, which should finally be known throughout the world.

The word which is here rendered Lord, signifies a judge, ruler, director, and vindicator. It is he to whom we commit our cause, and who will execute judgement for us. It was he whom Isaiah beheld in prophetic vision, when he exclaims; Who is this that cometh from Edom; with dyed

garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, marching on in the greatness of his strength. This Jehovah is our Lord, who speaks in righteousness, and is mighty to save us. It is the same Lord whom the prophet beheld, "sitting on his throne, high, and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. When the Seraphim cried one to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory!

God is made known to us through Jesus Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten son of God, who is in the bosom of the father, he hath declared him." Therefore, as Isaiah is said by the apostle John, to have seen the glory of Christ, and to have spoken of him; so the psalmist may, in this psalm, be said to be speaking of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, which he saw in the works of creation and of redemption. His temple is not only the earth and the heavens, but he sits in majesty and glory far above creation. He is the high and lofty one, that inhabits eternity, and dwells in the third heavens, from which he manifests his glory through creation.

But this glorious and exalted personage has an enemy, who was originally created by his hand, and therefore cannot be omnipotent; yet he possesses power far beyond our comprehension. This is the being to whom it is said, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." It was he that seduced our first parents into sin, that he might reign in this world. When man was seduced from his allegiance to his rightful sovereign, the kingdom of Satan commenced on the earth, and all mankind would have become his subjects, and should have been ruined forever, if the son of God had not taken our nature, and suffered and died for us, that by his death he might destroy him that had the power of death; and redeem his people from bondage.

Satan is called emphatically the enemy, and the avenger.

because he is the grand adversary of God, and especially of the son of God. God is one being, yet he subsists in three distinct persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When the universe was created, and all creatures, that were endowed with intelligence, presented themselves before their maker, God the father acknowledged his only begotten son and commanded all the angels of God to worship him.— This adoration satan refused, and became his enemy. Then there was war in heaven, and satan the adversary was cast down to hell. He is probably called the avenger, because he endeavoured to revenge his disgrace, by the seduction of our first parents; and by his constant opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ, and his gospel, in all ages of the world.

But the Lord Jesus Christ had determined to defeat the adversary, by instruments that are poor, and weak, and apparently contemptible. He succeeded in seducing our first parents, when their understanding was strong, and there was no evil inclination or bias in their hearts; and therefore in our present condition, if we had no friend to assist us; satan would find no difficulty in seducing all the descendents of Adam into sin. As Goliath despised David, when he came to him with a sling and a stone, so satan despises all the powers that are in man: and if there was not an omnipotent and uncreated power, who works unseen, and gives us understanding, and wisdom, to defeat the arts and devices of the adversary, the wisest of men would yield, like Solomon, to some of the wiles of the tempter. But he is frequently defeated, by those whose apparent weakness he despises. He cannot see, nor understand, how the power of God works in the heart of one, who has, naturally, but little understanding, but who is able to see and turn aside all his fiery darts. As the Lord Jesus Christ conquered principalities and powers, so his people became more than conquerors, through him that loved them. Hence the Redeemer is said, on a certain occasion, to rejoice in spirit and to say, "I thank the O Father, Lord of heaven and

earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and powerful, and hast revealed them unto babes."

On that occasion, when the Lord Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem for the accomplishment of the prophecy; "Tell the daughter of Zion, behold thy king cometh, meek, and having salvation; setting upon an ass, and on a colt the foal of an ass;" the enemy and the avenger was conquered and put to silence. When the chief priests saw the wonderful works, which the Redeemer performed, and the very children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David, they were displeased; but he said to them have ye never read; "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, thou hast perfected praise." The spiritual meaning of the two phrases, thou hast ordained strength, and thou hast perfected praise, is, thou hast put the enemy to silence by weak and inefficient agents. The power of God is revealed, and the enemy is covered with confusion.

But the great principles which is contained in this declaration, is conspicuously and gloriously revealed, in the power, which is bestowed on man, in the person of Jesus Christ. Man is to be the governour of creation. This will appear, from a comparison of these words of the psalmist, with the reasoning of the apostle, in the second chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. When the psalmist looked to the heavens, to the moon and stars, which are the works of the fingers of God; and then looked to the earth, to poor, frail, and miserable man, as destined by the Almighty, to be governour of all the works of creation, he was filled with wonder and astonishment. The word which is here rendered man, is never used to signify man in the state in which he was created. It always signifies man as fallen, and subject to pain and death. The subject of the psalmist's admiration is, that this poor, miserable creature man, should be raised to such dignity and honour, as to have all things put under his feet. The apostle declares in explanation; "For, in that he put all in subjection under him,

he left nothing that is not put under him." But the apostle brings forward the same subject, in the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians; and tells us that Christ must reign, until he shall have put down all rule and all authority, and power; that the last enemy who shall be destroyed, or put under his feet, is death; that man in the person of Jesus Christ shall have dominion over death. We may therefore infer, that all his people shall have some degree of the same power, conferred upon them; and shall give praises forever to him, that loved them, and washed them from their sins, in his own blood; and made them kings and priests, and unto God. Death shall also be destroyed, or put under their feet forever.

It might have been expected, that when man fell into sin, and became the subject of death; that God would have given him up to the power of death, and paid no more attention to him. But instead of giving him into the enemy's hand, he appointed for him a saviour, and that this saviour, should assume his nature. "He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." The Lord Jesus Christ, when he was on the earth frequently called himself the son of man; and therefore, by remembering, and visiting man, we are to understand, the assumption of human nature, by the second person of the Godhead.

There is some obscurity thrown on this subject, in the translation of it into English. One who does not understand the original languages, might suppose, that the psalmist and the apostle are both speaking of the creation of man; and that man was created a little lower than the angels; but the subject of which they speak, is the lessening or lowering of human nature, in the person of Christ, so that he might be subjected to pain, and sorrow, and death. Angels are never subjected to suffering, because they have never sinned; but Christ was placed for a time in a suffering condition. The apostle explains what is meant by this lower-

ing, or lessening of man, when he says; we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death. He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners; and yet he was made capable of suffering for sin. Adam, when he was created, might be said to have less dignity, and less power, than the angels; he did not stand so high in the scale of created excellence; but he was equal to the angels, in the enjoyment of happiness.— He may be said to have had “fulness of joy,” and he had not any pain to endure. This subject therefore does not at all relate to man’s original condition, but to human nature as it now exists; and especially human nature united to the son of God. We may look to the psalmist himself, for an example, or specimen, of the human nature of which he speaks. Speaking of himself, and of all the children of God, he says to Jehovah; “What is man, that thou rememberest him, or the son of man that thou visitest him.”

Jehovah remembered, and visited man, when the holy nature of the man Christ Jesus, was created, by the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the virgin Mary; and he took up his residence in human flesh, when the body of Jesus Christ became the temple of the living God. He took our nature, and our infirmities, although he was sinless.— Then angels and glorified spirits might have made this exclamation, what is man, &c. Abraham, when he rejoiced to see the days of the Messiah; and David, who when he wrote this sentiment, was looking to Jesus; and all true christians while they sing this sentiment in the praise of God, are actuated by a degree of the same holy admiration.

But, while we see Jesus, who was, for a short time, put below the angels, that he might suffer, or taste death, for every one of the sons of God, whom he brings to glory; and thus became their captain or leader, in the way of salvation; we may also see him, and in him, see human nature, crowned with glory and honour. All creation is now put under him. Every being, except the Godhead has

either become subject, or must be subjected to him at last. The father now says to him, sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. And he himself declares; "I have sworn by myself, that unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear." His enemies shall be compelled to bow to him, and to receive from his mouth, the sentence, which shall fix their final doom. Then he shall cast death and hell into the lake of fire, which is the second death.

When the psalmist speaks of man, in the person of Jesus Christ, being made the ruler over the sheep and oxen, the she beasts and birds, and the fish of the sea, he refers to man in his original condition; and it is therefore to be received as an emblem or figurative representation, of the authority of Jesus Christ over the heavens and the earth. As man when he was created, had this dominion given to him; as God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the cattle, &c. So God the father has given to the man Christ Jesus, dominion over all the works of his hands. He left nothing that is not put under him. As he created all things in his divine nature, and as this divine nature is united to man, as he is God and man in our person; so Jesus Christ reigns over creation. God the father has set him at his own right hand in the heavens; "far above all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in the world to come."

But as God the father has put all things under his feet; so he has given him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. As the head and the body are united; and as there is a communication from the head, through the whole system of man; so there is a communication of this glory and honour, to which the manhood of Christ is exalted, to every member of his body the church, both upon the earth

and in the heavens. When therefore, the psalmist declares; thou hast made him ruler over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet, he directs our minds to the honour which is conferred on the church through Jesus Christ. It is ours in reversion, as it is in store for us; but as it is the gift of God, and received by faith, so it is virtually ours. In this sense the apostle says, "all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

But we may look forward to a more full and glorious developement of this truth, before the end of the world.— For if we are the true children of God, we are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. If the church now suffers with Christ, the time is coming, even before the end of the world, that the church shall be glorified with Christ. It may be said with respect to the glory, which God shall put on his church in the latter days; that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. All creation, as far as we have any influence in it, especially the creatures in this world, have suffered by the fall of man; and so the apostle says, we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain, together, until now. But as the earnest expectation of the creature, waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God, so all christians may look forwards, with confidence, to the first resurrection, when the saints shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years; Then the knowledge of Christ shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; and the government of Christ, shall not only ameliorate the condition of man, but of all the inferior creation as far as man has any influence.

Hence it is clear, that the conclusion of this psalm, is no unmeaning repetition. It is the overflowing of the psalmist's heart, when he beheld the glory of the works of redemption, as they far exceeded the works of creation; the glory and blessedness of those who are created anew in Christ Jesus, which far exceed the glory and blessedness of

our first parents in paradise; and above all, the honour and glory of the captain of our salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings, that he might bring many sons to glory. If we have right views of the works of redemption; when we behold or meditate upon the works of creation, we shall say, with admiring praise, "O Jehovah our Lord; how excellent is thy name in all the earth?"

PSALM IX.

To the Chief ——— upon Muth Labben—
a Psalm of David.

The meaning of the words Muth Labben has never yet been satisfactorily explained. Some have translated these words; "concerning the death of a son." If this should be admitted, it would lead our minds to consider the death of Absalom; or perhaps, the death of the oldest son of David by Bathsheba, as the subject which engrossed the mind of the psalmist, when this psalm was composed. But it seems difficult to discover any particular connexion, between either of these two events, and the subject matter of the psalm. Some have supposed that the words AL and MUTH ought to be joined together as one word, and then the words, ALAMUTH LABBEN, might be rendered; "the hidden things of the son." This appears to have been the view, which was taken of it, by the Septuagint. If this view be correct, which is certainly the most probable of the two senses, then it will appear, that this psalm presents before our minds, the hidden things of Christ, the son of God, as the judge of all the earth; who always decides, and acts, as a judge, in favour of his people; and executes vengeance on his enemies. His judgements are always righteous, but his righteousness is like lofty mountains, and his judgements like the great abyss.

TRANSLATION.

1. I will give thanks to Jehovah with all my heart; I will declare all thy wonderful works.
2. I will rejoice, and I will exult in thee; I will sing psalms to thy name, O Most High.
3. When my enemies were turned back, they stumbled; and they perished from thy presence.
4. For thou hast maintained my judgement, and my cause; thou didst sit on the throne, giving righteous judgement.
5. Thou hast rebuked the heathen; thou hast caused the wicked to perish; thou hast blotted out their names, forever and ever.
6. O enemy, destructions have come to a final termination; and thou hast demolished

cities; their remembrance is perished with them.

7. But Jehovah shall remain forever; he hath established his throne for judgement.

8. And Jehovah shall judge the world in righteousness; he shall administer justice to the people, with perfect rectitude.

9. And Jehovah shall be a refuge for the oppressed; a refuge for the times, when they are in distress.

10. And they shall place confidence in thee, who know thy name, for thou hast not forsaken them that seek thee, O Jehovah.

11. Sing psalms to Jehovah, who dwells in Zion; show forth among the people his doings.

12. When he makes inquiry concerning blood, he remembers them; he forgets not the cry of the humble.

13. Be gracious to me, O Jehovah, see my grief, which I suffer from those who hate me, O thou, who dost raise me up from the gates of death:

14. That I may show forth all thy praises, in the gates of the daughter of Zion; that I may exult in thy salvation.

15. The heathen are sunk in the pit which they have made; in the net which they have hid, is their own foot taken.

16. Jehovah is known, by the judgement he has executed; the wicked is ensnared in the work of his own hands. This is a call to meditation.

17. The wicked shall be turned into hell; even all the heathen who forget God.

18. For the meek shall not be eternally forgotten; the hope of the humble shall not perish forever.

19. Rise, O Jehovah, let not man prevail; let the heathen be judged before thy face.

20. Bring fear upon them, O Jehovah, that the heathen may know they are but feeble men.

DISSERTATION.

It is impossible for any one to use these expressions, with the feelings and affections which correspond to them, without looking to Jesus Christ, and to the works which he has performed for our salvation. The christian always looks to his condition in this world, and to the enemies who surround him; he sees himself as he is, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; while his enemies are numerous and powerful, consisting not only of the sons of men; but of principalities, and powers, of the spiritual world; who stand in high places, and are possessed of many advantages, which they are always ready to use for his destruction. God is under no obligation to save us; we have no claim to any favour from him, against whom we have rebelled; but he has provided his only begotten son, who says to us; look unto me and be ye saved; and thus the whole way is opened, for our deliverance from the evils of this world, and of the world to come.

The worship of the christian, may therefore be said to consist in thanksgiving, or the offering of the sacrifice of praise. This must be offered with all the heart. It is thanksgiving for deliverance from eternal death, and for the gift of eternal life, through the son of God; and therefore any thing less than the whole heart could not be accepted by God, and could not be offered by the true christian. It is very necessary for us to bring to our remembrance, and to meditate on the wonderful works, which God has done for us; and how he has magnified his mercy.

in delivering us from many of the evils of this world; and from the wrath to come, while we have deserved none of these blessings, but are by nature children of wrath even as others. It is also our desire to make known to mankind around us, the wonders of God's love both in the doctrines, which he has taught us by his word and spirit; and in the righteous dispositions, which he has wrought in the hearts of his people, delivering them from the power of darkness, and translating them into the kingdom of his dear son. In this way we desire to "let our light so shine before men, that they seeing our good works, may glorify our father who is in heaven."

There is a kind of rejoicing and exultation, which the Redeemer has provided for those, who are united to him in the faith of the gospel. Hence says the apostle; "rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." It is he that gives us this rejoicing. It is in his heart, while he sits at the right of his father; he communicates it to his people, like all other blessings; and we are to endeavour to obtain it, by worshipping God in the spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh. But the way to obtain the highest, and the purest kind of rejoicing in Christ Jesus, is to sing psalms to his name, as the Most High God. The psalms are intended and calculated for this purpose. They are hymns of praise, to be sung to Jesus Christ as God; and this is the way in which they have been understood by the christian church, in all ages. It is highly necessary for us to learn this method of rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and to sing psalms to his name; for this is no doubt the new song, which is said to be sung by those who stand with the Lamb, on mount Zion. It is said to be a song, which no man could learn but themselves, because they were redeemed from the earth; and there was no guile found in their mouth, and therefore they were enabled to sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb. It is a new song because it is a spiritual song; and they are

taught of God to sing it in spirit and truth. It is like the law of God, the old commandment, which has been in the church from the beginning; but it is a new commandment, because the "darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

But an important part, of this rejoicing in Christ Jesus, is the joy of deliverance from our enemies; and to know that they are placed in a condition, in which they can no longer give us any trouble. Every christian, like every other man, has his friends and his enemies among his neighbours. It is folly for a christian to think of living in this world, without having enemies, because the friendship of the world is enmity with God. If we expect to live in friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ, we must support his truth and his cause, in the station of life in which he has placed us; and therefore as he had his enemies, so long as he continued in the world, we also may expect to have our enemies, as long as we continue in the world. All those that are in the habit of rendering evil for good, will be our enemies because we follow what is good: But the powers of darkness are our enemies, and above all, there is the grand adversary of God and man, whose power is only less than omnipotence; and who as far as he is permitted will endeavour to injure and destroy us.

The psalms are intended to express the devotional exercises of the christian. They were made for this purpose, and by the wisdom of God, they are calculated for the use and benefit of every christian. There is therefore a sense, in which every christian may use this language, in application to himself, in his own particular circumstances.— There are some christians, who like the psalmist, are placed in circumstances more prominent, and conspicuous than others; and in their case, the application is more plain and easy; but the application of the great principles of christian experience, to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head, will in some degree be suitable to every member of

his body the church. When the Redeemer rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, his enemies were turned back, and they stumbled, and fell, and perished from his presence, until Jerusalem was destroyed, and the nation of the Jews was scattered over the face of the earth. In this period of the world, God the Father did manifestly, and conspicuously, maintain his righteous cause, sitting on the throne, and giving judgement in his favour. When we look into the history of christianity, and consider the treatment it has received from the world, from that period until the present time; we shall find, that the enemies of the Redeemer and his cause, have been repeatedly making attempts, to injure and destroy it, and have repeatedly stumbled and perished from the presence of God. For the Father said to him, sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

The psalmist himself was a conspicuous example, of the truth of this declaration, and no doubt made it particularly, with respect to himself. His enemies may be said to have been turned back, when Saul was slain on mount Gilboa, and his army was dispersed. From that period, they stumbled and fell, and finally perished; and David was finally acknowledged as the king of Israel, according to the promise of God, who had spoken of him as a type of the Messiah, and had said; "I have set my king upon Zion the hill of my holiness. Ask of me and I will give the heathen for thine inheritance," &c.

Mordecai the Jew, who was enabled to gain the victory, and to triumph over Haman his enemy, and the enemy of the Jewish nation, may be brought forward as a conspicuous example, for the illustration of this great principle. Haman was turned back at that time, when having erected the gallows, he came to the king to ask the life of Mordecai, and when, instead of being able to destroy him, he was obliged to do him honour. From that period he stumbled and fell, he and all his family, and all the enemies of Mordecai, and of the Jewish nation.

But every christian, who acts honestly and faithfully, in the station of life to which God has called him, will be able to make the same declaration, spiritually, concerning himself. He must have his enemies and his trials. The former may be powerful like Haman, and may use every method in their power to destroy him; and as Daniel was cast into the den of lions, and into the burning fiery furnace; so he may complain and say; "My soul is among lions and I lay in the midst of flames, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." But let him only continue to walk in the path of duty, and trust in God for deliverance; and his enemies will finally be turned back, and stumble and perish. He will have reason to exclaim in triumph; "thou hast maintained my judgement and my cause; thou didst sit on the throne giving righteous judgement."

But when God has maintained the judgement and the cause of his people, and when their faith has been sufficiently tried, then he proceeds to bring judgement on their enemies. By the heathen we are here to understand the nations of the earth, or mankind considered as countries, or communities. Among these communities, or nations, there are always a few christians, who in this respect are the salt of the earth. But they live in the practice of christian duty, and for this they are despised and hated. It is to vindicate their cause, that God comes forward in his judgements; and he rebukes the heathen, or the nations, by wars, and famines, and pestilences, and such other scourges, as are proper to display his righteousness, as the judge of all the earth. In these judgements, there are often many good men called from the earth, to enjoy the glorious inheritance, which is reserved for them in the heavens; many righteous men suffer great tribulations; and therefore, the hand of God, operating in favour of his people, is not generally seen. But at the end of such judgements, the truth is finally observed and understood, that

God has rebuked the heathen, has caused the wicked to perish, and has blotted out their names forever.

In order to see and understand this truth, we need only look to the nation of the Jews, at that period, when the judgements of God were brought on them, after the crucifixion of the Redeemer. At that time the Jews were almost all heathen, in the scriptural sense of the word. It was then true, that the outward court of the temple, and the holy city, were given into the hands of the Gentiles, that they might tread it under foot for a certain period. But after the resurrection of the Redeemer, and especially after the calling of Cornelius, when the gospel began to be preached to the other nations besides the Jews, then God began to rebuke the heathen, by bringing judgements on the Jewish nation; and he destroyed and blotted out the names of the wicked, by the Roman arms. We are to understand by the wicked, the inveterate enemies of Christ and his cause. This was one of the most remarkable displays of judgement, which answer to this declaration of the psalmist:—But he intends to present to us the course of the providence of God, with regard to those characters, who are heathen and wicked; and he calls our minds to behold the final termination of all his judgements, when all wickedness, and even the memory of the wicked, shall be utterly destroyed from the face of the earth.

This is an address to the grand enemy. War, and havoc, and ruin, are his delight; and the element in which he lives. Ever since he gained the advantage over our first parents by the introduction of sin, he has stalked over the earth, destroying all the comforts of man. Cities and kingdoms have prospered for a time, and have become great and flourishing; but the principle of decay still worked in the midst of them, and soon brought them to destruction. Thus the Chaldean, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman governments, have alternately sunk into ruins; and the very ruins of many large and populous cities, have been

totally obliterated, from the face of the earth. This work of ruining is here called destructions, as it respects the surface of the earth. Satan shall be bound a thousand years, and shall not be permitted to disturb the prosperity of man. After that period he shall be let loose for a short time, and shall again deceive the nations; but the fire shall devour the enemies of God; and all their works shall be destroyed; and then the throne of God shall be established, for the last judgement. Christians are always taught to consider the last judgement, as at hand, because there is a series of judgements, still advancing towards the final termination; and therefore as they say to God when they pray for blessings on his church, "the time to favour her, the set time is come;" so they always say to the enemy, when any remarkable judgement is executed, now, behold the final termination. It is as certain as the present judgement, and it is at hand. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; and it enables us to speak of things that are not, as though they were, because they are as certain as the faithfulness of God.

It is truly a pleasing subject of meditation to the Christian, when he has been engaged, in surveying the changes, which have taken place in the world around him; the various overturnings, and the ruins of empires, and kingdoms; that the self-existent God shall continue forever the same; that Jesus Christ his saviour and his king is the same, yesterday, and to-day, and forever. One of the great objects, which God had in view, in creating the world, and subjecting it to changes, was to show his own stability. He permitted sin to enter into the world, that he might display his justice and power, in the punishment of sinners. Because he has determined to show his wrath, and make his power known, he endures with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. While the consideration, that God will execute righteous judgement, on every individual in creation, is painful to the wicked, it is a source

of comfort, to every righteous man. It gives him pleasure to know, that his sovereign is righteous, and that he has established his throne for judgement; in this world, as well as for the final judgement, at the last day. It is very important for us to believe this truth, and to keep the judgement seat of God before our minds: for if we are oppressed or injured, we can go, like the poor widow, to the righteous judge for redress; and to that very judge, who has spoken a parable to us, that he might teach us to be fervent and importunate, when we ask him to redress our grievances.— No one that comes to him in truth, and obedience, shall have reason to complain that his cause was not heard, or that the decision was unrighteous. The only cause of uneasiness, or pain, to the suffering christian, is, that God is long, before he gives his decision. He bears long with his people, because he is long suffering, and waits to be gracious even to the wicked, on his repentance. No fault shall ever be found with our judge, for a precipitate judgement; and if he has chosen to wait for a time, before judgement is executed for us, we know that our cause is in righteous and holy hands; and therefore we ought to wait with patience, for his time to do us justice.

But is a great consolation, and ought to fill our hearts with joy, to know that God himself will be our refuge.— The word, which is here rendered refuge, signifies a high tower, which is not only impregnable, from its lofty situation; but we are enabled to look from this tower upon our enemies, with the same feelings of David, when he saw the Philistine coming to meet him in the battle. The one was strong and powerful, and practised in the arts, and the exercise of war; and he was armed and equipt for the combat: the other had the power of God to protect him, and give him the victory. He had nothing in himself, on which he could rely, to save him from a powerful enemy; and he belonged to that class of mankind, whom the grand adversary delights to oppress. The time and circumstances of

that meeting, rendered it just such, as is here expressed by the psalmist. The fortunes of the war depended on the result of the single combat; and David had no outward dependence, but a sling, and a few stones, which he had picked up as he passed over the brook. But God directed his aim, and strengthened his arm. The stone sunk into the forehead of the Philistine, and he fell to the earth. This is the sense in which God is the refuge of his people; and in the deepest distress, and most straitened circumstances, he will always open the way for their deliverance.

It is of great importance for us to know the name of God, that we may place confidence in him. We may hear of the character which he has obtained among his people, and this may be some encouragement, for us to trust in him in the times of distress; but we can only know his name, by knowing his only begotten son. When we acquaint ourselves with him, we shall be in peace. If we know whom we have believed, we shall be persuaded, that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him; and our knowledge of his power, and of his faithfulness will always grow by experience. In this way we shall be able to say with the psalmist; "thou hast not forsaken those who seek thee, O Jehovah."

The experience of his protection, and deliverance, is one of the most powerful excitements to encourage us to sing his praises, with our hearts, and our understanding. As God dwells in Zion, or in the publick assemblages of his people, there he has placed the best facilities for his worshippers to become acquainted with him. They have experience of his faithfulness; they are his witnesses; and, by attending on his ordinances, they encourage one another to show forth his doings among the people. All true christians take delight in the publick worship of God, and especially in singing psalms to his name: for the psalms are a spiritual history of his doings, in the hearts of his people, as well as of his publick doings in the church and in the world.

There are certain times and circumstances, in which God comes out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity; and when the blood of the sufferings of his people, from the hands of the wicked, like the blood of Abel cries for vengeance, and is heard. There are times when the Redeemer declares; "the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." These are the times when he makes inquiry concerning blood. Then wars, and famines, and pestilences become frequent. Many are brought into terrible suffering, and many are cut off from the earth. Such, for example, was the remarkable period of vengeance, which followed the shedding of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; and such is the period which shall follow the shedding of the blood of the witnesses of truth, in these latter days. In such scenes of suffering, the world may not be able to perceive any distinction, between the sufferings of the people of God, and the sufferings of the rest of mankind; but God remembers his own, and hears the cry of the humble, when they call upon him for deliverance. It is well known that no christian suffered death, or captivity, when God executed vengeance on the Jews, for the blood of his son.—Then he remembered them, and sent them to a place of safety; and thus he always orders the circumstances of his people, so that his promises are accomplished to them, in times of trouble and danger. They find the truth of the promise; "I will never leave them, nor forsake them."

The history of God's faithfulness, in attending to the prayers of his people, who have cried to him for relief, in their trouble, always affords encouragement to others, who are in similar circumstances of trouble. Although the true christian has more substantial and spiritual enjoyment, than any other man; yet he has also continued sufferings to endure, as long as he continues in this sinful world. So the apostle Paul, notwithstanding all the rejoicing which he had in the Lord Jesus Christ, declares; "I die daily;"

“I have continual heaviness and sorrow in my heart.”— One of these perennial streams of sorrow is the hatred of mankind around him. So the Lord Jesus Christ was hated, and all his true followers must expect the same treatment. If they have persecuted me, said the Redeemer to his disciples, they will also persecute you. This hatred and persecution is not understood, nor felt, by the rest of the world. They think it impossible that a man should be hated and persecuted, when he is publicly respected, and honoured by all who are acquainted with him: and no doubt there were many, in the days of the psalmist, who thought that he had no reason to cry out, concerning hatred and persecution; when he was king of Israel; and had so many faithful and powerful friends, who were ready to adventure their lives and fortunes, in his behalf. But as every one has it in his power to give pain to his neighbours, or all that live near to him; so the christian must always expect to suffer from those around him, who are not under the influence of christian principles. They do bear towards him, in all circumstances a kind of dislike, which they cannot, and, in many cases, do not wish to conceal. It is this kind of grief, of which the psalmist here particularly complains, and every christian has the same cause of complaint to make, before his judge, every day in his life. He asks that God would be gracious to him, and look with commiseration on the grief, which he continually endures.

To ensure an answer to this prayer, the christian has always many arguments, which operate with power on the mind of his judge. It is his nature to be gracious. He has proclaimed himself to be the Lord God, merciful and gracious; and he says; “look unto me and be ye saved.”— The christian has looked to him, and knows, in his own heart, that he has taken, and now takes him, for his saviour. He trusts in him, as the only one, who is able to save him from the power of the enemy. He alone is able to destroy him that has the power of death. It was customary in an-

cient times, as their cities were generally fenced with walls and gates, to have the arms, and the whole strength of the city, so organized, that they could at any time be collected at the gates. Therefore as death is here spoken of under the emblem of a city, so the gates of death, mean the whole power of death. Hence, as the Saviour has power, to overturn all the works of him, that has the power of death; so this is his province, and the station which he holds. He stands conspicuously ready, to deliver all that make application to him, from the whole power of death.

The christian has the intention, and the hope, of being able to stand publicly in the christian assembly, to which he particularly belongs, and there manifest the praises of his Saviour; but if this should not be granted to him in this world, he trusts in his Redeemer, that he will enable him, to proclaim his praises in the church in heaven. By Zion, we are always to understand the collected multitude, or the general assemblage of the worshippers of God, and by the daughter of Zion, that particular assemblage among whom we are accustomed to worship. When our fellow worshippers can see, and understand, that God has been gracious to us, by some particular manifestation of his kindness, and this gives them joy; then our joy is raised to exultation. Thus, Mary the mother of our Lord, when she knew that God had been gracious to her, and had received the congratulations of Elizabeth, her cousin, the mother of John the baptist, is said to have exclaimed; "my soul doth magnify the Lord: And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour: for behold, from henceforth, all nations shall call me blessed." We may here see the power of the psalmist's argument.— He expresses his desire, to manifest the praises of God, in his salvation.

One of the most evident manifestations, which God gives of himself to mankind, in the works of his providence, is his turning the weapons of his enemies against themselves. Their hearts are pierced by their own swords.

which they have drawn, for the destruction of his people, and his cause. They dig a pit, and they fall into it themselves; they spread their net, and they are taken in their own snare. Haman erected a gallows for Mordecai, and he was hanged upon it himself. He meditated the destruction of the Jews, and his ten sons and all his hopes were destroyed by their hands. Saul designed to make David fall, by the hands of the Philistines; but in the dispensations of providence, he and his sons fell by their hands, and the way was opened for David to get possession of the kingdom. The Jews said concerning the Redeemer, if we let himself thus alone, all men will believe on him and the Romans shall come, and take away our place and nation. They therefore put the Redeemer to death, hoping to destroy him and his cause together. But his death was the cause of his future life and glory. He was lifted up from the earth as a malefactor, and by this he was manifested to mankind, as their Saviour. The Jews thought that if he were permitted to live, and to preach his doctrines, insurrections against the government would be encouraged, and fomented, the nation would be thrown into a tumult, and the Romans would come and deprive them of their national-existence. But, because they refused to submit to the powerful kingdom of the Redeemer, God left them to fall into insurrectionary tumults, and new feuds and animosities rose among them continually; finally the Romans did come and take away their place and nation, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, and scattered them over the face of the earth.

Thus the wicked is ensnared by the work of his own hands, and this is a subject presented to us for frequent meditation; for we may see it every day, in our observations on mankind. * It is recorded in the pages of history, and it is recorded in the memory of every one, who has made any observations on the world around him. "There is a sore evil, says Solomon, which I have seen under the

sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." Men heap up wealth, and instead of being a benefit, it becomes a curse to them, and their posterity. But while we observe the folly of mankind, in bringing evil on themselves, and say with the psalmist, "sure each man walks in a vain show," we should not forget, that this is the course of God's providence with all mankind. Not only the wicked man, but the christian, when he forgets his duty, and commits iniquity, only provides a rod for his own chastisement. If we are christians, we may be certain, that our sins will not only lead us into sorrow; but our sorrows will be the more severe, and will come upon us the more rapidly, because we are the children of God. Let us meditate on these things, that we may not be tempted to sin.

But it is highly necessary for us to look to the end, and final termination of all wickedness. We have two objects set before us, the blessings of heaven and the miseries of hell; and both of them must be the subjects of our meditation, if we have any right to hope, that we shall be kept in the path of duty. As the wages of sin is death, and as every particular sin brings us into sorrow; so it is a plain and natural inference, that when men live in the practice of iniquity, and die without repentance, they pass into a state of misery. Their condition never changes after they depart from this world; for, after death is the judgement: and then God will say to the wicked; "depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The hell which is here presented to us, is evidently the place of torment, where the worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. The psalmist speaks of it as the last end, the final termination, of the course of every wicked man. He must make his bed in hell; he must lie down in sorrow. It is true that the psalmist says, the snares of death prevented him, and the pains of hell took hold upon him; but when he called upon God, he delivered him out of it;

but this punishment which is presented to our minds, is the end of the heathen who forget God.

As remembrance is an active exercise of the mind, in which we call objects before us, and think of them; so forgetfulness is a want of regard, for the object which we forget. Men do despise their maker when they forget him. Forgetfulness of God, and neglect of our duty to him, are sins of the same kind. If a sovereign gives laws to his subjects, and they pay no attention to them, the sovereign is forgotten; but he will make himself to be remembered, by the infliction of the penalty on those who are thus disobedient. But the penalty of disobedience to God is the curse of his law: and unless this is removed by the blood of Christ, it must finally eventuate in the second death.

Those who forget God shall not be remembered by him, in the time of their trouble. He says to them, "because I called and ye refused; I stretched out my hand and no man regarded; therefore I will laugh at your calamity," &c. It is forgetfulness of God which prevents men from hearing his word, in the preaching of his gospel, in the reading of the scriptures, and the various dispensations of his providence; for in all these ways God speaks loudly to mankind. They do not hear his voice, because they do not endeavour to find out the meaning of the spirit, speaking to their hearts. But this is the course of sinful human nature.—When we endeavour to be mindful of our duty, and apply ourselves with all our hearts to hear the voice of God, we are nevertheless slow of hearing; and therefore God gives us instruction, and makes us learn his law, by a course of chastisement; which humbles our hearts, and makes us "know that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." But it is the course of God's dispensations, both of mercy and judgement, to show mercy to the poor, the meek and the oppressed, while he executes judgements on the wicked. When he makes inquiry after blood,

he forgets not the cry of the humble. Still he finds them, like the poor widow, crying and supplicating, with fervency and importunity, amidst many temptations to fear, that God has forgotten them. But their hope does not fail them; and when God comes in the judgements of his wrath on the wicked, he remembers his people in mercy, and their prayers and tears, all having been recorded, are brought before his eyes at the time, when he is ready to relieve them. The humble man shall find at last, that not one of his fervent supplications has been forgotten.

When we look at true christianity, as it is described and exemplified in the word of God, and compare it with the show of religion, which appears among the generality of professing christians, who have the form of godliness, but deny the power of it; and when we consider the truth, that men who are gentiles or heathen in their hearts, do not alter their nature and character by professing to be christians, we shall still find some reason to fear the prevalence of irreligion and iniquity. But God has said, that he will always build his church upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and therefore every edifice which is built by feeble man, in opposition to the true church of God, shall finally crumble into ruins. No weapon that is formed against Zion, shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against her in judgement, God shall condemn.

His promises are faithful, and shall all be performed at last, but as he is long suffering, and bears long with iniquity, before he comes forth to punish it; and as he comes for judgement in answer to the prayers of his people: so they ought to use such arguments and entreaties, as are proper to be presented to the righteous judge of all the earth. The word which is here rendered man, signifies the miserable condition, into which man has fallen by his sin. He has become weak, and impotent, in doing good, but he has power to do much evil. He follows the direction of the God of this world, the spirit that works in the children of

disobedience, and therefore, if the judge of all the earth did not occasionally interpose by his judgements, man would prevail, and the earth would become as it was before the flood, a scene of moral ruin. Therefore when God comes forth in judgements on his enemies, he comes forth in mercy to his people ; and in answer to their prayers. In this respect, partial evil is universal good. It is good for the children of God, that they are afflicted, for when they are delivered from the affliction, they find that they have received salutary instruction. It is also a benefit to the church, that her members are afflicted ; for the children of God learn wisdom, not only from their own sufferings, but from the sufferings of their brethren. The judgements of God are also a benefit to the world ; because that by them man is taught his own weakness, and the mighty power of God ; therefore the church of God is always called to behold his judgements, and to rejoice.

By the judgements of God, the righteous are comforted, and the wicked are terrified. It is important for every man to know the truth of his own condition : but men seldom discover their own weakness, and their wretched condition, until they are made acquainted with the terrible vengeance, which God executes on his enemies. It may be good for them to be put in fear, for they may learn the truth of their condition, that they are poor and weak and miserable, and that there is a terrible enemy at hand who seeks their eternal ruin, while he uses all his arts to keep them in continued rebellion against God. The prayer, therefore, that God would put the heathen in fear, is evidently the dictate of the spirit of God ; who has no pleasure in the death of the sinner ; but who has the desire that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

We may all learn a salutary lesson, from beholding the judgements of God on the wicked. It is our duty to seek deliverance from the fear of death, and the Redeemer has put this deliverance within our reach, by the constant ex-

ercise of faith and hope, in the practice of christian duty. But when the children of God are represented as standing on the sea of glass, mingled with fire, having gained the victory over the beast, and having the harps of God to celebrate his praises in the song of triumph: they say, "who shall not fear thee and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy?" When we see the terrible vengeance of God about to be executed on the heathen who forget God, we ought to learn that we are all miserable sinners, and to rely for our salvation only on the mercy of God our saviour.

PSALM X.

The same subjects are presented to our minds in this psalm as in the foregoing. But it consists chiefly in fervent supplications to God the saviour, that he may execute judgements, on the proud oppressor. If the title ALAMUTH LABBEN, which is prefixed to the preceding psalm be correctly rendered, "THE HIDDEN THINGS OF THE LORD;" and if the Lord Jesus Christ is Jehovah the judge, to whom application is made in favour of the poor, it is evident that the same title might be prefixed to this psalm with the same propriety.

TRANSLATION.

1. Why, O Jehovah, dost thou stand afar off; why dost thou conceal thyself in times when there is distress?

2. In the pride of the wicked, he persecutes the poor; let them be taken in the devices, which they have framed.

3. For the wicked boasteth concerning the desire of his soul; and he blesseth the covetous, whom Jehovah abhors.

4. The wicked, according to the loftiness of his face, will not make inquiry; all his devices are framed without God.

5. His ways are grievous in every time; thy judgements are far above, out of his presence; all his enemies, he puffeth at them.

6. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved forever and ever; I am one who shall not be in adversity.

7. With cursing, and deceit, and fraud, his mouth is full; mischief, and vanity are under his tongue.

8. He sitteth in the place of ambush in the villages; in the secret places he slays the innocent, his eyes are secretly directed against the poor.

9. He sitteth in ambush in a secret place, like a lion in the covert; he lies in wait to seize upon the poor; he will seize upon the poor when he has drawn him into his net.

10. He crouches and bows down, that by his strong talons, he may cause the poor to fall.

11. He has said in his heart, God has forgotten; he hides his face, he will never see it.

12. Rise O Jehovah; O God, lift up thy hand; do not forget the poor.

13. Why does the wicked despise God? He has said in his heart, thou wilt not make inquiry.

14. Thou hast seen it, for thou lookest upon mischief and provocation, to repay it with thy hand; the poor leaves himself with thee; thou art the helper of the destitute.

15. Break the arm of the wicked; and inquire after his wickedness, until thou shalt not find it.

16. Jehovah is the king, forever and ever; the heathen are perished from his land.

17. Thou, O Jehovah, wilt hear the desires of the poor; thou wilt prepare their hearts; thou wilt incline their ear:

18. That thou mayest judge the destitute, and the oppressed; that the man of earth may no longer terrify.

DISSERTATION.

THE ways of God's providence are often mysterious, and are sometimes covered with thick darkness; so that the christian is filled with amazement, as well as sorrow; when he finds troubles multiplying around him, and he sees no

way of escape. The circumstances of the Redeemer, in the garden of Gethsemane, just before his crucifixion, when he began to be amazed and to be very heavy; when his sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground; and when his prayer to God was, father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, will enable us to understand, the kind of troubles, by which the heart of the psalmist was oppressed, when he offered this expostulation. He felt his sorrows most acutely, and he knew that God was able to give him instant relief; he knew that he had promised to relieve him; and that he was faithful to his promise: but still he seemed like one, standing at a distance, looking on his troubles; and instead of coming to his relief, he retreated backwards, and concealed himself from his view. This is not unfrequently one of the severe trials, which God has provided, to try the faith of the christian, in his passage through this world.

There are always two classes of characters in every place, and they are formed by two different kinds of principles, which operate in their hearts. One of these is poverty of spirit, which is produced in us, by the knowledge of our natural condition. We know, that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; and that we are entirely unable to help ourselves, and therefore we cast ourselves entirely on the protection of God our Saviour, and call upon him to deliver us from every evil, by which we are afflicted. The other principle is the same, which operated in the hearts of the church of the Laodicians, when they said we are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. Natural man will not believe in their own natural depravity. They cannot understand nor realize the truth, "that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;" nor the truth which is declared by the Redeemer, "without me ye can do nothing." They are not poor in spirit, because their hearts are not humbled. They are lifted with pride, and they fall into the condemnation of

the devil. Satan was proud, and he fell into the sin of rebellion against his maker ; they are proud and they become wicked.

Hence we may see the origin of the spirit of persecution. The spirit of pride cannot bear a rival, nor a superiour, unless some particular advantage is expected ; and then it can put on the appearance of humility for a time. But the proud man is never contented with his proper share of respect. The true christian endeavours to give every one his due ; but he will not flatter with his tongue, nor give respect to any one, when he knows he does not deserve it. In his eyes a vile person is despised ; and he honours those who fear the Lord. The spirit of persecution is that disposition, by which men continue to look upon others with a desire to injure them, when they have an opportunity.— When they get this opportunity, time after time, they always improve it to the injury of those whom they hate. The true christian is always the object of persecution. He has chosen the course which God has prescribed ; not to render evil for evil, but rather to repay evil with good. He might frequently find the means of repaying evil with evil ; for as Saul was brought, in the providence of God, into such circumstances, that David, whose life he intended to destroy, had the power of destroying his life ; so God occasionally gives to his people, the power of injuring or destroying their persecutors. But they do not cherish the desire to inflict pain, on any creature. As God does not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men, so they have no desire to inflict pain, for their own gratification, on their oppressors. David said, concerning Saul, when one of his officers desired leave to smite him to the earth, with the spear : The Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish. Also on another occasion of the same kind, he said to Saul, “ the Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee : but mine hand shall not be upon thee.” This

is the kind of desire which actuates the christian's heart. He is willing that God should be his judge, and he prays for justice and judgement from him ; but he has no desire to avenge himself, by destroying, or injuring his enemy. The true christian therefore never persecutes ; for he finds no pleasure in the infliction of pain upon others ; and his heart is humbled by the sense, and understanding of his own miserable condition by nature. But his humility renders him the object of contempt, and persecution. The proud man gratifies his pride, in depressing the circumstances of the humble.

It is therefore a righteous desire that such characters should be taken in their own devices. This is the course which God generally pursues, in his government of the world. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. They dig a pit for their neighbour, and they fall into it themselves. Saul endeavoured to destroy David with the sword, and he fell upon his own sword at last. Ahithophel gave wise counsel to Absalom, for the destruction of David ; but his counsel was the cause of his own destruction. He saw clearly, that the man whose cause he had espoused, was given up to ruin, and he preferred immediate death to the contempt and disgrace which he knew must fall upon him in the end. In the contemplation of such judgements, the christian will not only say, "so let all thine enemies perish, O Lord ;" but he prays that God would execute such righteous judgement, more frequently, that they might be seen and observed, and that the wicked might fear. This may be considered as a prophecy. It might be rendered ; "they shall be taken in the devices which they have imagined ;" and some have rendered it in this way, because they think the language of prayer, for the destruction of the wicked, is too harsh ; and therefore they prefer the language of prophecy. But it is necessary for us, to learn to rejoice in the judgements of God, and to desire the execution of righteous vengeance, on all impenitent sinners.

Therefore it is not only a prophecy ; but the expression of the christian's desire, that the wicked should be destroyed for the glory of God, for the benefit of the universe, and for his own benefit. When we say, "thy kingdom come," our petition involves the same consequences ; we pray, that the wicked might be cast down and destroyed, that the Lord Jesus Christ might reign and triumph over all his enemies ; that the kingdom of Satan might be destroyed, and the kingdom of Christ advanced and glorified : but, would there be any benefit in rendering this petition, "thy kingdom shall come?"—But, although we should desire the judgements of God on the wicked, and even behold, by faith, the execution of these judgements, we should always rejoice with trembling, and kiss the son ; lest he be angry, and lest we also should perish from the way.

The psalmist proceeds to describe the kind of thoughts, which are indulged and cherished in the heart of every wicked man ; the language which is natural to him ; and the works of iniquity, in which he delights. His desires are directed to the things of this world ; and he is always asking what shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed ? These are the chief subjects, by which his mind is engrossed, and with which it is pleased. Hence he learns to speak of these earthly things, in such a manner, as shows plainly, that he considers them as chiefly important, and spiritual things as of little value. Thus he despises the one, and boasts of the other, because on these he has set his affections. He is pleased with the man, whose thoughts run in the same channel ; and who in this respect is worse than himself. The covetous disposition, or the strong and inordinate desire, after the things of this world, when it is indulged and gratified, soon overleaps the bounds of honesty and honour. It leads its possessor to delight in the gain of oppression. He takes usury and increase, and extorts from the hand of poverty, much more than is just. The man, who has only commenced the

course of wickedness, shows what is in his heart, by vindicating and justifying, and even giving his approbation and blessing, to him who has made great advances in the same sinful course. He cannot help knowing that such a man, is abominable in the sight of God, yet so great is his love of gain, that he secretly approves of him, and wishes him success. Thus it is, that men, "who know the judgement of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

It is plainly the duty of every man to ask counsel of God, in all his plans and works. The Israelites of old, were generally unprosperous, in any work which they undertook, without having, in the first place, inquired of the Almighty. If we commence any undertaking, without, in the first place, seeking the divine approbation and direction, we have no reason to hope for success. God may indeed, in some cases, give his blessing without being particularly consulted, when the path of duty is plain; but every christian is in the habit of seeking, from God, the wisdom which is profitable to direct him. But the wicked man not only forgets his duty in this respect, but his forgetfulness proceeds from the pride of his heart. He thinks he has sufficient knowledge and wisdom in himself, or that he may obtain it from created objects around him; and he cannot think of humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, to ask his approbation and his directing hand: and therefore he forms all his plans, as if God were not the governour of the universe. In his whole practice, he says with Pharaoh, "who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Men may read over these descriptions of human wickedness, without knowing that they apply to themselves; but the man who can undertake any business of importance, without diligently inquiring of God, and asking all things, which are necessary for the right performance of the duty, has reason to fear, that he may become just such a character before the end of his life.

Another characteristick of the wicked man, is, that his words and his actions, in certain times and circumstances, do give pain to every intelligent and discerning christian. His want of true religion may always be discovered. The most accomplished hypocrite has never yet been able to deceive those, to whom God gives the power of trying the spirits, whether they are of God. They always find something in his conduct which gives them pain: for they see plainly that he has not a proper regard for the judgements of God. They seem to be removed from his view, and therefore are not the objects of his continued attention. The conscience of the righteous man is tender, and being enlightened in the knowledge of God's law, he knows that his judgements extend to his thoughts, as well as to his words and actions; but the wicked man does not know the spirituality of the law, and therefore the judgements of God are beyond his view. He does not see nor understand them, and they make no lasting impression on his heart.

Another criterion of the wicked is the contempt, in which he holds his enemies, and every one who dares to arrest his progress, or prevent the accomplishment of his purposes. He is determined to accomplish his designs, and if sinful means are necessary, he will always resort to them, rather than his purposes should be frustrated. The purposes of the righteous man are frequently broken off, because they cannot be accomplished without some departure from duty; but the wicked man perseveres, and uses every means in his power, for the accomplishment of his designs. He is therefore frequently successful, and the pride of his heart is always increased by his success. He takes the praise to himself, for the wisdom of his plans, and of the means of their accomplishment. He exclaims, like the Chaldean monarch; "is not this great Babylon, that I have built, for the house of the kingdom; by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" With this

kind of feeling his enemies are despised, for he believes that he is able to discover, and to prostrate all their plans; and to punish them for all their attempts to prevent his advancement. Thus also the great city Babylon, the kingdom of Antichrist, is represented as saying; "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." This is always the feeling of the wicked man, who prospers in his way, and brings wicked devices to pass.

But the evil dispositions of his heart increase with his prosperity. It is of importance for us, to remember, that this is the description, which God has given of man in his natural condition. It is applied in this manner by the apostle. Speaking of man, as he is, under the law, he says, "his mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. The poison of asps is under his lips." Thus every mouth must be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God. For although our hearts may be renewed, and we may have become a new creation, by the power of God through Jesus Christ; yet we have still something of the sinful nature in us, and as far as this operates, we are just such as is here represented. But every one, who has not come to Jesus Christ in the gospel, has this character, without any counteracting principle. He does not know it. Perhaps if he did know it, he would repent and believe the gospel. It is the province of the Holy Spirit to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and judgement; and those who are convinced of sinfulness, and receive the humility of the gospel, will abhor themselves and repent in dust and ashes: but the man who is not thus convicted, and changed in his heart, has his character here fully drawn by the pencil of inspiration. "With cursing, and deceit, and fraud, his mouth is full," &c.

But as men advance in years and in power, and in wealth and influence among mankind, their evil nature will be manifested, in works of violence and of blood. It is a fact that these characters, who slay the innocent, and fatten on

their spoils, are still to be found, as if they were lying in ambush, in the secret places of the villages. There are enough of them, wherever men live in the vicinity of each other; but they are generally to be found in villages; because they find in them, a greater number of poor, over whom they can exercise their power, with less danger of being discovered. In such places every man that is reduced to distress, will find some one of these characters, ready to take the advantage of his necessities. This is the way in which they slay the innocent, and their eyes are secretly directed against the poor.

In proportion as men divest themselves of the feelings of mercy, they are given to cruelty. They are here presented to our view, under the emblem of a lion in a secret place, when he watches for his prey. Their object is to seize upon the poor and destitute, who have none to espouse their cause, or to execute vengeance on them, by whom they are injured. They spread their net and when they are drawn into it they seize upon them and devour them. As when the lion prepares himself to spring upon his prey, he crouches with his belly almost touching the ground, and strikes his prey to the earth with his powerful claws; so these characters watch intently, and draw the poor into their power, and then they treat them with cruelty.

But it will appear to every one, that reads and meditates, with attention, on this portion of the word of God, that the chief subject which is here presented to us, is not the sufferings of those who are naturally poor, from their oppressors; but the powerful attempts of the spiritual enemy, who walketh about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He works by the instrumentality of man, and uses the power of the minds of some, for the seduction of others; and those whom he cannot seduce, he will, if permitted, bring into trouble, and fill their hearts with pain. In this respect there are always deceivers, who sit in ambush in the villages, to lead the ignorant into errors, and to turn away mankind from the truth of the gospel.

By the innocent, the psalmist does not mean persons who have no sin in them, or who have never committed any sin; there are no such characters as those, upon the face of the earth; he means those who are not conscious of any evil intentions; who are well disposed and well meaning, and have the general character of innocent persons. It is towards such characters, that the eyes of the roaring lion are secretly directed. He desires to slay them, as he slew our first parents, by leading them into errors and deceptions, that they may depart from the truth, and become sinful and unholy. He endeavours to lead them into temptation, that they may gratify the lusts of the flesh, and finally become wicked. His great object is to make mankind, finally, and irrecoverably, miserable; but if this object cannot be accomplished; he will inflict pain upon them in this world, as far as he has power. He has his net prepared for all classes of mankind; for he walks about seeking whom he may devour: but he loves to drink the blood of the most innocent and humble.

This roaring lion is especially the grand adversary of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. As the Redeemer came to take away the sin of the world and to make men righteous; so he comes to make them sinners, and to keep them in this condition, that he may devour them. One part of his ambition, is to make them his instruments, in biting and devouring, and destroying one another. They become his agents in destroying one another, both by peace and by war. As the Redeemer sends his ministers, to proclaim peace and truth: so Satan sends his ministers to proclaim a false peace; that men may indulge a carnal security, and may finally be drawn into the net to be devoured. Those men, who lie in wait in the villages, and sit in the covert like a lion, are the representatives, and the agents of the grand adversary. He dwells in the darkness of their hearts, and conceals himself from the eyes of men. Thus he crouches and bows down, that by his strong ones, he may cause the poor to fall.

This roaring lion is called the God of this world, who blindfolds the minds of them that believe not; and he is also called the spirit that works in the children of disobedience; but he is embodied in such characters, as are here described by the psalmist; and he blindfolds their minds, that he may engage them in his work. It is really an astonishing truth, that men who profess to believe the being and attributes of Jehovah, do sometimes act upon the supposition that God forgets, and that there are events which take place in this world, to which he pays no kind of attention; and never sees them. If they always believed the truth, that the holy God is always present, and sees all their thoughts and their actions; that he will call them to account, and punish them for every sin; they would not dare to perpetrate such cruelties. No man would dare to commit any sin, or indulge any evil in his heart, if he could only realize the thought, that the holy God is always looking upon him, and is taking particular cognizance of all his actions. But men forget this truth, and then, with every sinful indulgence, they indulge the hope, that God will pass over their sin, will forget it, and not call it up in judgement.

God is represented as sitting on the throne of judgement continually, and all men are before him. They do not stand before him for judgement, as they shall stand at the last day, but the poor and the distressed have always the privilege of coming before him, for the redress of grievances, and the vindication of their righteous cause. He sits, and silently observes the conduct of the wicked. He acts in this manner, because he is merciful, slow to anger, long suffering, and ready to be gracious; not willing that any should perish, but rather they would come to the knowledge of the truth, and receive repentance unto life. But the truth of the proverb is too frequently manifested; "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men, are fully set in

them to do evil." The poor are always suffering, and always crying for redress. Like the poor widow, they are always fervently entreating the righteous judge, to vindicate their cause, and do them justice. This is also the fervent entreaty of the whole church of God. They desire and entreat, that he would rise from his seat, would lift his hand, and call the wicked before him, that the poor might have justice. This is the first and chief argument, in their prayers; and it is in fact, the chief plea of their advocate, who pleads their cause at the judgement bar of God. "He will always maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor;" and therefore he calls upon his father not to forget them.

But there is another powerful argument, in the effect which is always produced, on the heart of the wicked man, by the long-suffering of God. He despises him, because he thinks he will not make inquiry after his sins. Such is the sinfulness of human nature, and the love of sin in the human heart, that when any sinner can bring himself to the belief, or the hope, that God will not call him to account, and punish him for his sins, he will not be afraid to disobey his commandments. Even a child will soon learn to despise its parents, and pay no attention to their words, if they are not accustomed to give it proper chastisement. Hence also the punishments of hell are necessary, to strike terror into the hearts of sinners, that they may not forever despise the Almighty. If the hope of getting success in sin, and of escaping from punishment in this world, does really make them bolder, and more determined in their provocation, and in their advancement in the course of iniquity; how much greater would be their provocation, and their triumph in iniquity, if they had full confidence, that God would not punish them in a future world. By this powerful plea, the psalmist hoped to induce the sovereign judge of the earth, to vindicate his own cause in doing justice to the poor.

But the christian still keeps the truth in his mind, "that the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding both evil and good." He knows that his eyes are fixed on the wicked man, in his whole progress through every scene of iniquity, in which he is engaged. God beholds him, with the determination, to punish him for his iniquity, if he do not turn from his wicked works by repentance. He looks upon him, that he may render a just retribution, with his own hand. Every christian knows, that he is weak, and unable to contend with the wicked. Every man with whom he contends, will in some way gain the victory over him, unless he commits himself into the hand of the Saviour, for deliverance. We are unable to contend with the least of our enemies. We may say with Peter, Lord I will go with thee to prison and to death, but unless he imparts strength to our hearts, we shall not be able to endure. The christian has frequent contests with the enemy; sometimes with Satan, and the powers of darkness, who attempt to lead him into sin; at other times with some of his fellow men, who engage willingly in the same work of temptation; while he himself is without power. He is in this respect an orphan and destitute. But he casts himself on the care of him, who is the orphan's friend; and although his faith will be tried, yet he shall always be delivered at last, and be made more than a conqueror.

But those men, who become willing instruments, in the hands of Satan, for the temptation of christians; whether it may be to promote their interest in the world, or merely to gratify their malice, have the prayers of the whole christian church, continually against them. The Holy Spirit here teaches his people to pray, that God would destroy the power of the wicked; that he would inflict that kind of pain upon him, which is felt by the breaking of the arm; and that he would continue these visitations of sorrow, until every evil disposition should be purged out of his heart. This is the way in which the christian desires, that the

wicked should perish. It would always give him more pleasure, to find that wickedness had perished out of his heart, than that he had perished in his wickedness. His desire is, that iniquity should be destroyed from the heart of the sinner; but it is his comfort that God is the sovereign. He has power to save and to destroy. He can break the arm of the wicked, and afterwards conquer his lusts, and bring him into willing subjection. But we know from the word of God, that he will purify the earth by his judgements, and the wicked shall be cut off. He has said that the time will come, when professing christians shall be all righteous. He will wash away the filth of the daughter of Zion, and purge the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgement, and by the spirit of burning.

Jehovah, the everlasting king, is Jesus Christ, to whom all authority is given in the heavens and the earth, and who has upon his vesture, and upon his thigh, a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords." He is the same yesterday, and to day, and forever: but the Father has now given him authority, to save his people out of the hands of the enemy; to bind the grand adversary, and cast him into the bottomless pit; and to make all his enemies his footstool. Therefore the psalmist looking forward to future times, and beholding the glorious achievements of the King of kings, exclaims with the voice of triumph—The heathen are perished from his land.

By the phrase, "his land," we are no doubt to understand, all that is symbolically meant, by the land of Canaan. But we are to look especially, and particularly, to the blessed times of the Millenium, when the saints shall reign upon the earth, and when none shall profess christianity, but real christians. In those times the condition of the church will be very different from its present condition; for the court which is without the temple, and the holy city, are now given unto the heathen. Men who are Gentiles in

their heart, although they are christians in profession, have generally engrossed the name, the honours, and privileges of christianity; and in this sense the Canaanite still possesses the land. But the time is not far distant, when such characters shall be entirely expelled, and all, who have the faith of the gospel in their hearts, may now sing with the voice of triumph; "Jehovah is king for ever and ever; the heathen are perished from his land."

This is always the desire of the poor, and the chief subject on which their hearts are set. As the millennial glory of the church, will be an illustrious, and striking representation of its eternal glory, after the judgement day, and as the judge is now preparing his throne, for the execution of judgements, on those who oppose the advancement of his kingdom; so the great subject, to which christians now look, in their publick capacity, is the period, when the men of the earth shall lose their power, and the kingdom shall be given to the saints of the Most High. There are indeed, many particular objects of desire, which occasionally present themselves to the christians mind, and it is necessary, that his heart should be prepared for understanding, and for receiving, the blessings which he asks from God. He will incline his ear, and graciously attend to the petitions of his people. He will give his judgement in favour of the poor and needy, who are oppressed, and have none to help them.

The man of the earth, is the reverse of the heavenly minded man. In our meditations on these subjects, we are apt to fix our minds on the extremes, and thus forget the application to ourselves. But there are, in fact, only these two classes of characters among mankind. We must all be ranked, either with the earthly, or the heavenly minded.— We are now in a spiritual and substantial sense, either dwellers on the earth, or dwellers in heaven. But the men of the earth comprehend, all sects and denominations of mankind, except real christians. If the truth on this subject

were plainly discoverable, and the enemies and the friends of the Redeemer, in any part of the earth, were arranged on different sides, it would resemble the two armies of the Israelites and the Syrians, on a certain occasion, when the former were said to be like two little flocks of kids, and the latter filled the country. If christians saw their real condition, there are but few, who would be able to place much reliance on the words of the Redeemer; "fear not little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." There are many who would stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, or weakness of faith.— But all christians, who form right views of their own condition, and their own weakness, feel that their enemies are not to be despised. They see that there is a fearful odds against them, and therefore they pray the more fervently, to the judge who is able to save them.

But all christians desire to be delivered from this kind of fear; for it is truly the fear which hath torment. God delivers his people from this fear, by paying attention to their desires and prayers, and especially, by executing occasional judgements, on the enemies of his church. They all say with the prophet; "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him; until he plead my cause, and execute judgement for me." When God comes forth by his judgements, in favour of his people, the men of the earth cease, in a good degree, to be an object of terrour; for then judgement returns unto righteousness, and the upright in heart follow it.

When christians see the judgements of heaven in their favour, and they know that God will perfect that which concerneth them; they are enabled, not only to rejoice in the hope of final deliverance; but of victory and triumph. Their Redeemer is not only their advocate with the father, but he is also the judge of all the earth. He died that they might live, and that by his death he might destroy the power of the great adversary; who always seeks to de-

stroy, and who holds multitudes in fear. But these fears shall finally cease to agitate the hearts of the children of God. These adversaries shall fall;—the men of the earth shall be buried in the earth; and the grand adversary shall be cast into Tophet, which was ordained of old to be the place of his confinement.

PSALM XI.

To the chief ——— Of David.

The particular subject which is presented before our minds, in this interesting hymn of praise, appears to be of such a kind, as that which is described in the seventh chapter of John. It represents the language of faint-hearted or unbelieving friends to the christian, when he has some important and dangerous duty to perform; and they endeavour to dissuade him from the performance of it, by magnifying the danger, and persuading him that he may ruin himself, but that he can do nothing to arrest the progress of iniquity. But the christian declares his confidence in Jehovah, and his firm persuasion, that in the end, he will always execute righteous judgements on the wicked, and show himself to be the friend of his people.

TRANSLATION.

1. In Jehovah I have put my trust; how then do ye say to my soul, flee to your mountain like a bird.

2. For behold, the wicked bend the bow; they fit the arrows upon the string;—to shoot with them secretly at the upright in heart.

3. If the foundations have been overturned; the righteous,—what can he do?

4. Jehovah is in his holy temple! Jehovah,—in the heavens is his throne! His eyes behold, his eyelids try the sons of Adam.

5. Jehovah will try the righteous: but the wicked, and the lover of violence, his soul hates.

6. He will rain upon the wicked, snares, fire and brimstone, and the destroying tempest;—it is the portion of their cup.

7. For Jehovah is righteous;—he loveth righteousness; his countenance shines upon the upright.

DISSERTATION.

ON that particular occasion when the brethren, or the near relations of the Redeemer, advised him to depart and go into Judea, that his disciples there might also see his miracles, it is said, that those brethren did not believe in him. They had not then been fully convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. It was a time when the minds of the Jews were much agitated. He was daily performing miraculous works, at which they were all astonished; but they could not bear the thought, and were even enraged at the suggestion, that he might be the Saviour, whom God had promised to Israel. His brethren knew the hostility of the Jews, and that there were many of them determined to destroy him if they should have the power; and he appeared to stand alone, without any friend, to interpose for his deliverance. Therefore when his brethren who did not believe in him, advised him to go to Jerusalem to the feast, they did not believe that he would dare, at that time, to adventure himself publickly among the Jews; and they did in fact, say to him, although not in words, flee to your mountain as a bird.

The same thing was no doubt said to David, by many of his friends who were doubting, or hesitating, whether they should follow him in every important or dangerous work, which he attempted for the good of the nation, or of the church. He was the man whom God had appointed, to reign over his people, in the room of Saul, who possessed the power, and was the acting sovereign, while David was a stripling youth, who kept his fathers sheep in the wilderness. It was God that put the thought into his heart, to be the sovereign of the nation, to correct the errors into which it had fallen during the reign of Saul, to purify religion, and to establish the worship of God, according to God's own ordinances; so that it should never be overturned; but should stand substantially the same until the end of time. Therefore, as the kingdom of David was in

direct opposition to the kingdom of Satan, it was to be expected, that he would take this same method to destroy it, or to prevent its advancement and prosperity.

The same thing is still said to every one, who forms any plan, or exerts himself in any manner, for the correction of the morals, or the religion of mankind around him; especially when he points out their errors, and endeavours to enlighten their understandings in the knowledge of the truth, and of the pure worship of God. It is evident that there are many errors to be corrected, and many vices to be exhibited to the publick view, that they may be abolished; but the man who attempts the good work, always at the first, meets with discouragements, and is laughed to scorn. This observation will appear to be true, with regard to the use of the psalms of David in the publick worship of God. They were evidently intended for this purpose, and given by the spirit of God; they contain every sentiment and expression, which are necessary or proper for the exercise of devotion: and moreover, God has said; I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: but nevertheless it would now be said by many christians, to the man who would attempt this work; flee as a bird to your mountain.

The psalmist speaks of the exhibition which was made to his mind, concerning the troubles which he might expect to suffer, if he attempted the good work which he was meditating. Not only the wicked of this world, but the powers of darkness that are in secret, and therefore cannot be seen, have their bows bent, and their arrows fitted to the string, and always take a determined and deadly aim, at the man who enters on any important work of righteousness. This exhibition is the truth, although it may be used for good or bad purposes, and the friends of the psalmist pointed out his danger, that he might be discouraged, and might not attempt the work. It is a fact, that there are many who

stand like archers, with their bows bent, to shoot at any upright man, especially when he is attempting some work for the benefit of true religion, and the casting down of the powers of darkness. He must expect to be opposed, and obliged to suffer, in all the works of righteousness in which he is engaged.

But there are also discouragements, arising from the probability that the work will not be successful. There are many circumstances, both in the history of individuals, and of nations, or classes of individuals, in which it may be said that the foundations are overturned. Thus it was said to the angel of the church of Sardis; "I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Although no true christian will ever be left to perish utterly; for God has said to every one of his people, without any condition, or any appendage, which might excite any doubt in the mind; "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." As he has said to every one who hears the gospel, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved; so it is plain that no true believer shall ever be lost. Still it is no less true, that men may be once enlightened, may have tasted of the heavenly gift, may have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, may have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; and yet they may fall away and perish forever. Many professing christians in the church of Sardis, had died a spiritual death, and some were at the point of death, when this command was given to the apostle. This is one way in which the foundations may be overturned, and the angel was commanded to strengthen the things which remained, and which were ready to die.

The sin unto death,—the sin for which no pardon is provided, is not unfrequently committed by professing christians. Men do frequently suffer some false and corrupting principles to rankle in their minds, or they indulge in some carnal lusts, which war against the soul, until the things in

in them, which appear to be good and holy, are all departed; and God declares concerning them, they are joined to idols, let them alone. In all such circumstances the foundations are overturned.

But, as long as any thing remains, which appears to be spiritually good in the human heart, there is reason for hope. Men may commit great and aggravated sins, and yet they may not commit the unpardonable sin. The apostle confesses that he was once a blasphemer, and persecutor, and injurious; but he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. No doubt there were some of the Jews, who were engaged in the wicked work of crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ, who committed the unpardonable sin, because they did not do it ignorantly; but with malice in their hearts against him, whom their conscience testified to be the son of God: yet there were many others to whom the apostle declared; I wot brethren, that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers; repent therefore, and be converted, &c. Therefore we may infer, that even in that wicked generation, the foundations of truth and righteousness were not entirely overturned.

They had, however, nearly arrived at that condition, in which there was no longer any hope of their repentance; for the mass of the nation sinned wilfully, after they had come to the knowledge of the truth; and there remained nothing but the fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation. Such also was their natural condition in the time of the prophet Micah, when he said, "the best of them is as a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity." When we are obliged to witness this horrible condition, either in some one of our acquaintance, or in the community where we reside, then we shall be tempted to think, that all exertions to produce a reformation will be unavailing; because the foundations are overturned, and it may perhaps be whispered to us, flee as a bird to your mountain.

But the self-existent and gloriously exalted being, who governs the universe, sits in the midst of his church upon the earth, and sits also in his temple in the heavens. We can have some knowledge of the omnipresence of the Almighty, by considering the way in which created beings can change their residence, and be present in two or more places nearly at the same time. But Jehovah has no need to change his place, when he wishes to be present in any particular situation; for his presence fills the heavens and the earth: and while he sits in the midst of his church upon the earth, he sits upon the throne of judgement in the heavens, and looks into the hearts of all the children of Adam. "The word of God," says the apostle, "is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and the marrow; and it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." No servant of God, therefore, need be discouraged, or faint-hearted, because others are faint-hearted, and throw discouragements in his way. Although the powers of darkness, and wicked men, are taking every advantage to effect his ruin, while, in many cases, he has little or no hope that he can succeed in the business which he has undertaken, for the building which he had hoped to complete, appears to have been overturned from the foundations: yet he need not fear, because the plans of God shall not be frustrated. "The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

He intends to try the fidelity of the righteous. He therefore brings him into circumstances by which all his christian principles will be put to the test. For this purpose God has given statutes and ordinances to his church, to make it manifest whether they will obey his commandments or not. He has also laid particular duties upon particular christians, and these duties may be discovered from the

talents he has given them, and the circumstances in which he has placed them. Every one who has made any considerable advances in the christian life, will be able in some degree, to understand the spirit of the address of Moses to the Israelites, when he says; "thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years, in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or not."

But the trials of the righteous proceed from the love of God. They may be severe and painful, yet they are always tempered with mercy. As he fed his people with manna, and gave them water from the rock; so he always provides for them spiritual food and drink. The Holy Spirit, who is the comforter of the people of God, leads them into all truth, and takes of the things of Christ, and presents them to their minds, for their comfort and edification. Thus every new trial results in a new degree of the wisdom which comes down from above.—Some of them pass through fiery trials; but they ought not to think it strange, as if some strange thing happened to them, for even Christ learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and they ought to rejoice that they are made partakers of his sufferings: for if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him, and, by means of such sufferings, our hearts shall be cleansed in the fountain, which is opened for sin and uncleanness.

But while the sufferings of the people of God, even their most intense sufferings proceed from his love, it is the very reverse with the wicked. Both the comforts which he gives them, and the pains which he makes them suffer, proceed from his wrath and indignation. He may be angry with those whom he loves, and he may chastise them as a father corrects his children; but the wicked man is the object of his hatred and abhorrence. It is therefore very important for us to be able to say with Job; "thou knowest

that I am not wicked." If we harbour and indulge any sin in our hearts: if we love it and live under the influence of it; and especially, if we pursue this course, after we have come to the knowledge of the truth, then our own hearts will condemn us, and God who is greater than our hearts, knows that we are wicked. This wickedness generally manifests itself in works of violence. This word is always used to signify unrighteous, injurious, or illegal force.— There is a sense, in which the righteous and the wicked are always enemies, although in another sense they may be friends. The wicked may perhaps not be aware, that he hates his neighbour in his heart. Thus the carnal mind is enmity against God, but those who live and act under its influence, are not generally conscious that they have any such hostility in their hearts. But a wicked man will always endeavour to accomplish his designs, although they may interfere with his duty to his neighbour or to his God; and this kind of endeavour has always in it, some degree of violence. When men are accustomed to this course of life, it begins to be agreeable, and they find in it a wicked kind of pleasure. They love evil rather than good. When they sin willingly, and when, in any such sin, they come into collision with their neighbour, and gain the advantage over him, they soon learn to delight in this kind of feeling. Thus it is said concerning Hamah, when she was in trouble and in bitterness of soul, that her adversary provoked her sore, to make her fret; because the Lord had shut up her womb. This is an example of loving violence, which is by no means uncommon. There are not a few, who take pleasure in giving pain to others, when there is no necessity for it. They persecute him whom God has afflicted, and talk to the grief of those whom he has wounded.

These are characters whom God hates, whom he looks upon with loathing and abhorrence, and whom he is determined to punish in an exemplary manner. The punishments of snares, fire and brimstone, and furious storms,

have sometimes literally been brought to operate against the wicked: such even were the plagues of Egypt,—such was the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrhah; and there appears to have been some such judgements literally executed on the land of Idumea, when the streams of it are said to be turned into pitch, the dust into brimstone, and the land to become burning pitch. The temporal judgements of God on the wicked, are frequently presented to our minds as emblems of spiritual judgements, and as emblems of the last judgements in the future world. So the cities of Sodom and Gomorrhah are said to be set forth for our example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. By fixing our attention on the temporal judgement, and looking into the symbolical meaning, we shall be enabled to understand it spiritually. The land of Sodom and Gomorrhah, at the present time, is an emblem of the spiritual desolation of those characters, by whom it was formerly inhabited. All their worldly comforts, and even their lives, were destroyed by fire from heaven; and those comforts never have been restored. Their spirits are in a state of desolation; and suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.

We are therefore to understand these judgements in a similar sense. It is natural for man, and all creatures, to seek comfort, and, when they are in sorrow, to seek the alleviation of their pain: but God has determined to disappoint the expectations of the wicked; and when they expect to find comfort, or an alleviation of their misery, their hopes shall be disappointed, and their pains increased, by the means to which they resort for relief. As God rained fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrhah; as the streams of the land of Idumea were turned into pitch, and the dust into brimstone; so there shall be a similar kind of suffering inflicted upon the wicked forever. Men may enjoy a kind of happiness for a short period, in the gratification of their lusts, but their pleasures always decrease, and their pains become greater. We shall find this to be the fact in this

world by considering the judgements of God, on every wicked man, who is permitted to remain in this life until the time of old age. The pleasure fades and declines, and at length vanishes; while his sorrows increase until life becomes extinct. But the man who lives and dies, without the spiritual life of the gospel, is dead forever. He has not eaten of the flesh, nor drank of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore he has no life in him. No folly can be greater, than to suppose that such a man shall enjoy happiness in a future world, while the word of God every where declares the contrary. He dies in his sins,—he dies without spiritual life, and he must pass into the second death. These same judgements will be inflicted on his spirit forever. It is the portion of his cup.

The reason which the psalmist gives for this dispensation of providence is, that Jehovah is just, he loves justice, he looks with pleasure and approbation on the just. It is necessary that he should be just, from the station which he holds, as the judge of all the earth. He must be just, because he sits in the throne of universal and eternal judgement. But the wicked man who dies in his sins must be a wicked man forever; for there is no repentance nor righteousness to be attained beyond the grave, by any one who has not attained to it in this world.—There, the same judge who decides against him at this moment, will decide against him forever. But there is as much righteousness in deciding against a wicked man, as there is in giving judgement in favour of a just man. It is as plainly impossible, that the righteous judge should make a wicked man happy, as that he should make a righteous man miserable. The reason why believers in Christ are saved from punishment, is because they are saved from sin. They are first made holy, and then they are made happy; and their progress in holiness, and in substantial spiritual enjoyment, is nearly the same, and will be the same forever. Holiness consists in the hatred of sin, and the love of righteousness; and there-

fore saints in heaven must be increasing in holiness, and happiness forever; while, for the same reason, the wicked will increase forever in sinfulness and misery. Justice requires, that if a man increases in sin, his misery must increase; and therefore as the sinfulness of the wicked will always increase, so the righteous judge must always make them miserable in proportion to their guilt.

But as he looks with anger and hatred on the wicked, and will render them miserable in proportion to their guilt, so he looks on the upright with approbation and love: and their comforts will grow as their good dispositions become stronger. Although he loved his people at first, when they had no good quality, and were dead in trespasses and sins; yet after he has made them holy, he loves them for their holiness; and as they advance in all good qualities, and have, in this respect, a nearer resemblance to himself, he looks upon them with more approbation and more love.— He looks upon the righteous with complacency, because he delights in righteousness.

PSALM XII.

*To the chief — upon Sheminith. — A
Psalm of David.*

This is the second of the Psalms with the title Sheminith. Like the former, it treats of subjects which are distressing and painful to the christian's heart, and therefore he has need of a portion of the OIL OF GLADNESS, with which God will anoint all his people, as he anointed his only begotten son. When the woman, who on a certain occasion, designed to honour him by pouring a box of very precious ointment on his head, he observed that she had done it for his burial: so christians need a portion of the oil of gladness, to help them to bear their sufferings. When, therefore, they have been tried and proved, and have borne their sufferings with a proper spirit, their sorrows shall be turned into joy. As the titles of the Psalms are the word of God, it is certain that every one of them has a spiritual meaning, and the OIL OF GLADNESS is most probably the spiritual meaning of Sheminith,

TRANSLATION.

1. Help, O Jehovah, for the godly man ceaseth; for they that are established in the truth do fail among the children of men!

2. They speak vanity, a man to his neighbour; they speak with lips of flattery, and a double heart.

3. Jehovah will cut off all lips of flattery; —the tongue which speaketh great things.

4. They say, "with our tongues we will prevail; our lips are ours; who is lord over us?"

5. From the oppression of the poor,—from the sighing of the weak, now will I arise, Jehovah shall say, I will set him in safety, from him who breathes out cruelty against him.

6. The words of Jehovah are pure words; —silver refined in a crucible of earth,—purified seven times.

7. Thou, O Jehovah, wilt preserve them, thou will watch over them, on account of this generation, forever.

8. The wicked walk on every side, as the vile are exalted among the sons of men.

DISSERTATION.

THE attention of the christian, in the exercises of devotion, is directed not only to himself, but to mankind around him. He watches over the progress of christianity in his own heart, and mourns over the evils which he finds in himself; and he also pays particular attention to the community in which he resides, and the christian society of which he is a member. Although it is true, that christianity is always making progress in the world, as it is always making some progress in the heart of every christian, yet it is no less a truth, with respect to particular churches, or communities, that there are some of them declining and going back to the things that are behind; and it is a small number, comparatively, who can be said to be pressing forward, with ardour and perseverance, to the attainment of the glorious prize. It is probable that the seven churches of Asia will present to our minds, a view of the condition of the christian churches, throughout the world, which is never very far from the actual condition. There are some who have left their first love,—some who are neither cold nor hot;—and some who have a name that they live, while they are dead.

But there are some remarkable periods of declension in the whole church, to which our minds are frequently directed in these exercises of christian devotion. The first of these, is the period immediately before the church was carried captive into Babylon; the second is the time which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; and the third is the period just before the millenium, or the time in which we live. The Lord Jesus Christ has shown

us plainly, that when he comes to propagate his gospel over the world, there will be so little christianity, and especially so little of the faith of the gospel, that it will appear to be doubtful, whether true faith can be found among men. It is truly a subject too plain and obvious, at the present time, to admit of a doubt in the mind of any one, who is spiritually enlightened in the truth of God, that christianity is now so rapidly declining,—that the godly man is ceasing,—and those that are established and sealed in the christian faith, are fast passing away.

This subject is therefore calculated to call our minds to the condition of the church generally in the world, and in the particular community where our lot is cast. In both these views of the subject, the truth will be plain. True godliness is the worship of God, according to the ordinances which he himself has given, and not according to the inventions or commandments of men: it is therefore obviously true, that the godly man ceaseth. It is no less obvious, that the old and established christians, who have continued to exhibit a testimony for the truth; and who may be said to be the servants of the living God, who have his seal on their foreheads, are now fast passing from the earth, and few are left to supply their place. It may be objected that this is no new thing in the world. It has always been the same in this respect. The godly has been passing away, and men of truth and fidelity have been failing, and christians have lamented over it, and prayed over it, but still it has continued. But God requires devotional feelings in the hearts of his people, corresponding to the facts which they observe. It is a fact, for example, that there is sin in every human heart. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Those therefore who do not know their sins cannot confess them nor lament over them; and those who do not believe nor understand the truth, that the godly man ceaseth and the faithful fail, will not have such feelings of devotion as correspond to this truth.

The knowledge of this fact will show us, that there is a continual necessity, for the help of God in favour of his church, and for reliance on the declaration of the Redeemer; "on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." If there appeared to be no danger, we should not think of calling on God for help, nor of reliance upon the faithfulness of his promise. But when we consider the enormous power of the enemy, the decline of true godliness, and that the faithful are failing from among men; we find it the more necessary, that we should be like the poor widow, importunate in prayer, that God would come forth in vindication of his own cause, and the cause of his church, and not suffer his faithfulness to fail.

One of the most certain evidences of the decline of true religion, is the want of a proper regard for truth. It has been very justly remarked, that wherever christianity has spread rapidly over the world, it has been corrupted. In the days of Constantine, christianity acquired power over the minds of men, and was spread over the Roman empire; but there was so much corruption propagated along with it, that even then it was obvious, that truth was losing its influence, and that the godly man ceased. Vanity and falsehood are nearly related. When some vain thing is presented to us for solid and substantial truth, there is an intention to deceive us. But the vain thing is made to appear solid and substantial, and those who are accustomed to follow after vain things, are given up to strong delusions that they should believe a lie. The man who loves the truth, and follows after it, is never given up to this kind of deception. The Redeemer has said to all who follow his directions, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." But the psalmist intends to show us that there is a reciprocation of vanity. A man speaks vanity to his neighbour, and his neighbour speaks vanity to him in return.— All this is intended to please and flatter, that they may lead

one another into error. By the phrase, a double heart, we are to understand the thought and the expression, which are contrary, the one to the other. A man has no love for his neighbour, he only wishes to make him the instrument of promoting his designs, and he endeavours to persuade him that he is sincerely his friend. It is very necessary that we carefully examine ourselves, and never permit any vain thing to dwell in our hearts, that we may not speak with lips of flattery, and a double heart.

There is nothing more terrible than this excision. It is seldom or never perceived in its operation, at the beginning of the judgement. There may be a partial cutting off, as there was sometimes in the church of old. Those, who committed certain sins, were cut off from the congregation of the Lord. But this cutting off is a judgement inflicted on the spirit,—an operation by which God withdraws his presence and his favour; and if those who are thus cut off continue in the same sin, there is no hope that they shall ever be restored. This judgement is denounced against all, who cherish any evil disposition in their hearts, while their words are fair, and their outward conduct indicates love and affection. These are the characters described by the apostle Jude, when he says, “their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage.”

This evil principle always becomes the more powerful, the longer it is indulged. When they get success in sin, and their influence grows among mankind, they give themselves credit for all the works which they have been made the means of accomplishing. Thus Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said, Is not this great Babylon which I have built, &c. And thus there was given unto the beast a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. This is perhaps, the highest, or worst result of this vanity on the heart

and the conduct of those, who get success in sin; but the principle is the same, and forms the same kind of character, wherever it operates. Men do not glorify God in proportion to their knowledge, or their opportunities of acquiring the knowledge of God; and then they become vain in their imaginations. Their folly, and their vanity and pride always increase with the darkness of their minds. They indulge the thought, that their faculties are their own, and when they are accustomed to accomplish their purposes by means of their talents, they forget their maker: and although they take his name in vain, and profess to give him glory, yet they do virtually say with Pharaoh, "who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?"

When such men gain the ascendancy in any community, —when the godly man ceaseth, and the faithful fail, then christians will be despised and hated; and will at length become the objects of persecution. God is long suffering, and slow to wrath, therefore he bears long with the iniquity of wicked men. As it is the purpose of God to try his people with affliction; so these characters become the agents by whom the pain is inflicted. But although God is long suffering, yet he cannot bear to see his people suffer beyond that degree, which he knows will be for their benefit. They always cry to him in their sorrows, they continue to cry day and night. But when God sees that his people are purified; by being melted in the furnace of affliction, and their enemies have gratified their pride to a certain limitation, beyond which they are not permitted to advance; then his mercy operates in favour of his people, and his wrath against their enemies. The psalmist here expresses the same things which are contained in the third chapter of Malachi. Jehovah sends his messenger, the angel of the covenant, and he sits as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he purges them as gold and as silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. But when his people have been sufficiently cleansed, and their dross is

removed, he then executes his terrible vengeance, on those who have made his people suffer. The psalmist here refers to God's usual dealings with mankind. In all their afflictions they exercise this faith. They believe that the time is not far distant, when God will arise and say, I will now set them in safety. This time is always when the iniquity of the wicked has come to the full. This is expressed in the common translation by puffing at the man whom he despises and hates. But the full meaning of the word, which is rendered puffing, cannot be well expressed by a single term in the English language. It means, not only the breathing of contempt, but of wrath and cruelty.—When God beholds them acting in this manner, he says to them as he said to Senacherib; “because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears; therefore I will put my hook to thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.” At that time God performed the work in a miraculous manner, but he often does it silently and secretly. He will perform his word of promise, in giving deliverance to his people; and although his judgements may be slow, yet they will always come at last, with terrible vengeance on his enemies.

As the apostle declares that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all; so it may be said that his words are pure, and in them is no falsehood or deception. But as there are degrees in the resplendency of light, so there are degrees of moral purity. As it is said, there is none so holy as the Lord; so it may also be said, there is no word so pure as the word of God. This purity is known by the moral effect, which the word of God produces on the heart that receives it. Every command, or doctrine, of man may produce some effect on the mind to which it is addressed: but the duties which God has commanded, and the doctrines, which he has taught us in his word, have a tendency to make us perfectly holy. Every true christian will confess, with the apostle, when he looks into the law of God; I know that

the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. As the law is perfectly pure, it is the test of purity; and it shows the impurity of the human heart. "I had not known sin," says the apostle, "but by the law:" for, "by the law is the knowledge of sin." Thus every doctrine, and every command in the scriptures, are like the precious metal which has seven times passed through the furnace, or through an earthen crucible, which is still commonly used for refining the precious metals. The meaning of his words may be mistaken, because the human understanding is darkened by sin; but they will always be found to contain the most substantial spiritual sense; and when they become the object of our reliance, they purify our hearts, and give us comfort and peace. He will always be found to be righteous and holy and true, when his words are properly examined.

But God will preserve the poor and needy. He has held out this hope every where through his word, and in the dispensations of his providence. They must meet with troubles, and dangers, and sufferings; but they shall be delivered, in answer to their prayers. But their worst enemies are those characters, who speak vanity, with lips of flattery and a double heart. This race always exists in the world, and possess the most influence among mankind. They are always endeavouring, whenever they have an opportunity, to lead the poor into sin, or to cover them with shame and sorrow. But we have his word, that on account of the danger to be apprehended from this class of mankind, he will always watch over his people. He will never give them up into the power of the enemy.

But we have need of the continual exercise of faith, that we may derive comfort from the pure words of God; for the vilest of men are frequently exalted to stations of honour and influence in the community. This is an evil under which the world must groan, until that time when the Redeemer shall reign over the nations. Vile men are ex-

alted and the wicked walk about in triumph. The promise of God to his people is salvation or deliverance. We are still in the church militant and our enemies are numerous and powerful, even among our fellow men. They always boast of their numbers, of their power, and of every advantage they possess. But the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished. We should see that we have our lot cast among the godly, and that we endeavour to become more and more established in the faith and hope of the gospel; and then the pure words of God will teach us his truth, and fill our hearts with confidence.

PSALM XIII.

To the Chief ——— A Psalm of David.

TRANSLATION.

1. How long, O Jehovah! Wilt thou forget me forever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

2. How long shall I take counsel in my soul, being grieved in my heart daily? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

3. Give attention, answer me, O Jehovah my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;

4. Lest the enemy should say, I have prevailed against him; my adversaries will exult, if I should be moved.

5. But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall exult in thy salvation; I will sing to Jehovah because he hath given me a recompense.

DISSERTATION.

THE christian is exposed to sorrow and sadness of heart, all the days of his life. He has indeed his times of rejoicing in the spirit, and these times are like the times of eating his daily food, they are times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. But he must still say with the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." He has still as much of the life of Christ in him, as will enable him to bear his troubles without sinful complaining, or murmuring; yet still he is undergoing a kind of pain, which may be said to be of the same nature, although it is not of the same degree, with crucifixion. He has continued sorrow in his heart arising from various causes, and a great part of his pain arises from the dislike, and hatred, and op-

position, of those who live under the dominion of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law. Thus the psalmist declares in the 69th psalm, "Reproach hath broken my heart." He feels his sorrows more acutely than those, who are accustomed to indulge in the lusts of the flesh. Their hearts do in some degree become callous, not only to the pains of others; but they do not feel their own pains very acutely. The man who has lived in christian habits acquires a degree of sensibility which although it renders him more capable of christian enjoyment; yet it also makes him a greater sufferer, from the evils which he finds in himself, and which are continually around him in the world.

The feelings, which are here expressed by the psalmist, are felt, in some degree, by every christian. He may not feel them always, and at every moment, but he knows them by the description; they are such as he has been accustomed to feel, and to express before God, in his exercises of devotion. In this point of view, the psalms are exceedingly important. Other parts of scripture do occasionally express the devotional feelings of the christian, but this part of the word of God is given for this purpose entirely. It is the object of the psalms to express christian devotion. It is also by the use of the psalms that we are to learn christian devotion. They are not only the devotional exercises of David, but of him who is the son of David and David's Lord. It was in these words Christ offered up his devotions to his God and Father. It was thus that in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers, and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.

God cannot be said to forget, or to remember, as human beings forget or remember; but our remembering and forgetting are symbols, or similitudes, by which we may understand something of the remembering and forgetting, which pass through the mind of the Almighty. There is

a sense in which he can both remember and forget; but these operations in his mind are consistent with all his perfections. He hides his face from his people, and they are troubled; he remembers them and gives them comfort.— God is present every where through creation. His presence fills the heavens and the earth. He is represented by some sensible writers, as a circle, whose centre is every where, and whose circumference extends beyond creation. The psalmist declares, thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hands upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain to it.

If any of us were laid on the bed of languishing, and afflicted by some excruciating pain, and if some friend had promised to watch over us and relieve us; we should then expect him to pay attention to our calls, and give us the things which were necessary and suitable for our condition. But if this friend should appear to forget us in our trouble, and not attend to our cries, we might perhaps be irritated, and accuse him of a failure in his friendship, or in his faithfulness. But there can be no such failure in Jehovah.— He has said to his people, I will be a father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters; and therefore he will feel for them as a father feels for his children. But he has appointed trials and tribulations for them, that by these means, he might work in their hearts gracious dispositions, and holy affections, which will prepare them for the enjoyment of himself in the heavens. Therefore he lays these afflictions upon them, and he relieves and delivers them at the proper times. But he has given them the privilege and made it their duty, to call upon him and to plead his promises for deliverance, and thus to keep their faith in continual exercise.

It has been well observed that man's extremity is God's opportunity. It is not the course of God's providence, to answer our prayers, by granting our requests immediately, and in the very way in which we expect the answer to be

given: Days; and months, and years, may pass away, and we may be calling upon him day and night, and saying with the psalmist, wilt thou forget me forever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? And yet God may graciously withhold his answer, and suffer us to cry to him, while he seems to pay no attention to us, that he may try our faith and make it stronger, and better fitted for new trials, which may yet be before us. The christian's life is composed of such scenes of trial, and God has promised that he will not suffer his people to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear, and will open up a way for their deliverance, and show them the way, that they may continue to bear their troubles with patience and equanimity.

Every one who is in trouble will endeavour to find a way of escape. All the faculties of his mind will be engaged, and his attention will be fixed, sometimes on one way, and sometimes on another, while something may appear to his mind as an impassable barrier, and he has no hope of relief in that course. Thus he takes counsel in his soul, while his heart is sad, and his prospects are covered with the gloom of disappointment. But his troubles are increased by the knowledge, that none of those things come by chance, nor even from the immediate hand of God. The grand adversary has obtained power over him for a time, and to a certain limitation. The torments which Satan can inflict, are excruciating beyond conception. How terribly excruciating must have been the feelings of our blessed Lord, when he was in an agony in the garden, and when his sweat was like great drops of blood, falling down to the ground. At that period he might have said, and no doubt did say with the psalmist; "how long shall my enemy be exalted over me?" Job also made the same complaint, when he says, "He teareth me in his wrath who hateth me; he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me." These are the wounds inflicted by our spiritual enemy, and he frequently takes the advantage of some tem-

poral calamity, that he may wound our spirits. These are the severest of all our troubles. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

In all such sufferings the particular attention of his God and Father is the object to which the christian looks. If his attention is only directed to us, we trust that his mercy will induce him to relieve us, and that he will be moved to hear, and to answer our cries for deliverance. We therefore bring forward such motives, and arguments, as we think may have a tendency to call his attention, and to bring relief. We should never forget our covenant relation. He has said to every one of his people, I am Jehovah thy God; and therefore they all trust in him, and make mention of this relation in their prayers. A long course of walking in darkness, while the light of God's countenance is concealed from us; and he seems to be forgetful of his promise, will have a tendency to darken our minds, and to alienate us from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts. No kind of bodily pain or natural blindness, would be an object of such fearful apprehension to the christian, as the thought that perhaps he never had fully laid hold of the covenant of redemption, and that God may have forsaken him, and is determined to answer him no more. Such was the fact with Saul, the king of Israel. He had never fully given his heart to God, and therefore he was forsaken at last. Such is the natural blindness of the human heart, and the ignorance that is in us, that we have all reason to fear, lest the promise being left us, of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. On this subject the christian desires to have his mind enlightened, that he might know what is the hope of God's effectual calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. There is great reason to fear, that many of the Israelites slept the sleep of death in the wilderness; to whom God swore in his wrath, that they should not enter into his

rest. Therefore the apostle Jude says to the christian churches, "I will put you in remembrance though ye once knew this, how that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not." This is truly a painful consideration; but the true christian will not wish to have it involved in darkness, but will always pray and supplicate, to have his mind illuminated, and the fear of death discarded, by the true knowledge of the christian's hope, and by making his calling and election sure.

Another argument which the christian trusts, will have powerful influence on the mind of his God and Saviour, is the prevalence and triumph of the grand enemy, and the rejoicing of those who are enemies to the people of God. No doubt the adversary had some hope of prevailing against the Lord Jesus Christ himself, by tempting him to sin, either by the hope of honour and power, or by murmuring and rebelling against his father, in his excruciating tortures. But, as in this respect, the Redeemer conquered principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross; so he has held out the hope to all his people, that they should follow his footsteps, who did no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth. But the enemy has encouragement to continue his arts of deception, and his opposition to christianity, by his apparent success in turning many aside from the faith of the gospel, and the true practice of christianity. The enemy is in this respect like all other creatures, he has not the knowledge of the human heart, and he cannot know infallibly, whether a man is a real christian or not: he has therefore hope of success in his temptations, as all christians have reason to fear the prevalence of his arts of seduction.— When he is able to lead any christian into sin, he boasts of it, and says, "I have prevailed against him." This is also a source of joy to all the enemies of true christianity. It gives them pleasure to know, that one who has chosen a different course from themselves, and who has borne testi-

mony against their errors and their vices, should fall into some sin, or some trouble, by which they might be able to persuade their friends and acquaintances either that God had become his enemy, or that he was the enemy of God. God has promised that the righteous shall never be moved: if therefore any man who bears this character, should fall into such sin, or such sorrows, as might give them encouragement to say, he is moved, they would then have cause for rejoicing; and true christians would have reason to mourn.

Such arguments must have great power with God, because he works for his name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom christians are always obliged to dwell, and in whose sight God makes himself known to them. If christians should be moved, and should fail, because of the unfaithfulness, real or apparent, of the God whom they serve, then the heathen would rejoice, and blaspheme the worthy name by which christians are called. All, therefore, who come to God, with true hearts, may offer this argument in the full assurance of faith; that God will not leave them in darkness, nor suffer them to sleep the sleep of death.

This is one of the psalms, which commencing in the doleful strains of desertion and darkness, concludes with confidential trust, and grateful praise. None but the true christian can understand the workings of christianity in the heart. He knows how things can be reconciled, which are apparently inconsistent; how a man may be sorrowful, and yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich, having nothing, and yet possessing all things; how the worshipper can commence his song in doleful and melancholy strains, and conclude with comfort and joy. The psalmist expresses the habit he had formed, of trusting in the mercy or loving kindness of his God. There is a great difference between trusting in God for the payment of a debt, which we suppose to be due to us, and trusting in his mercy for the performance of a promise, which he has made to those, whose only recommendation is the misery

and wretchedness of their condition. This is the christian's trust; he knows that he has no just claim to any favour from Jehovah, and that his sole dependance is his mercy; but he knows also, that an appeal of this kind is never made in vain, by any one who trusts in the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. This salvation is deliverance from the power of the enemy, the Redeemer is able to deliver, and those whom he delivers must always rejoice in his salvation. Their rejoicing is mingled with exultation; because they are delivered from the hands of the enemy, and made more than conquerors through him that loved them. Their exultation shall be eternal, because the enemy shall be trampled under their feet forever.

In this sure and certain hope, christians are encouraged to offer the sacrifice of praise, giving thanks to the name of God; because he hath glorified his mercy, and his faithfulness, in their salvation. Even the lively hope which they obtain, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and by which they have full confidence that they also shall be delivered from all evil, is an abundant recompense for all the sorrows they have endured. But this recompense is continually increasing, for God makes all things to work together for their good. Every scene of sorrow through which they pass, is terminated with comfort and praise: and they know by experience the force and application of the truth, delivered by the apostle, that although no chastisement for the present is joyous, but grievous; yet afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them who are exercised thereby. It is therefore by reliance on the faithful promises of God to his people, that the hands which hang down are to be raised, and the feeble knees to be confirmed. And thus it is true that,

The man who bearing precious seed,

In going forth doth mourn;

He doubtless, bringing back the sheaves

Rejoicing, shall return.

PSALM XIV.

To the Chief ——— of David.

This psalm is nearly the same as the fifty-third. The one is probably an improvement upon the other, as authors sometimes amend and improve their works. The spirit of God made use of the faculties of the psalmist, for communicating his truth, and therefore as his faculties improved his communications were also improved. The fifty-third psalm is a copy of the fourteenth improved and amended. Both of them contain the same substantial truths; but the latter seems to express them more plainly. Thus the New Testament is plainer, and more easily comprehended than the Old Testament, while both of them contain the same substantial truths. The spirit of God who communicates truth, and who takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to his people, has thought proper to show us the same truth in both these psalms, and in the one somewhat more clearly than in the other. It is the doctrine of human depravity, which is by no means pleasing or agreeable to human nature; but for that very reason it ought to be the oftener brought before our minds, that we may be humbled. The Septuagint translators, or some, who have copied their works, have inserted a number of verses which are not found in the Hebrew text; but which are found in the third chapter of the epistle to the Romans. They are the following—"Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have spoken guile; the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." These verses are inserted immediately after the third. It is probable that the writers by whom they were inserted, intended to show that this psalm points out the natural depravity of all the children of Adam; and this is the fact: but the apostle brings his proofs from different parts of the Old Testament, especially from the fifth, the thirty-sixth, and the one hundred and fortieth psalms; and also the fifty-ninth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah.

TRANSLATION.

1. The fool hath said in his heart, "no God." They are become corrupted; they have made their doings abominable; none doeth good.

2. Jehovah, from the heavens, looked with attention upon the children of Adam, to see whether any acted wisely;—to seek God.

3. They are all turned aside together;—they are contaminated; none doeth good;—not even one.

4. Are all the workers of iniquity without knowledge,—eating my people as they eat bread;—they call not upon Jehovah.

5. Thus they were agitated with great fear: because God is in the generation of the righteous.

6. The counsel of the poor you put to shame: because Jehovah is his refuge.

7. O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion:—when Jehovah shall bring back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall exult, and Israel shall be glad.

DISSERTATION.

~~The~~ word, which is here rendered fool, signifies one whose moral and intellectual faculties are wasting and going to decay. Such a man for example as Nabal, of whom it was said, as his name is so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. It signifies one who is not possessed of the wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy; but he may have enough of the wisdom of this world which is earthly, natural and devilish. The Lord Jesus himself bears testimony, that the children of this world are in their generation, wiser than the children of light. Nabal had the natural ability to accumulate wealth. He was possessed of large property in flocks and herds and servants; but he was destitute of moral principle, and lived in the gratification of fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. The word is designed to represent, not only those who have indulged themselves in such vices as Nabal, or the rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every

day, but every man who indulges in any lust of the flesh. If, says the apostle, we live after the flesh we shall die; the end of these things is death. The man therefore who lives in this kind of indulgence is a fool.

It would be impossible for him to live in this manner, if he believed in the God, whose nature and attributes are revealed in the scriptures of truth : a God who is merciful and gracious, but who will by no means clear the guilty.— If he believed in him, his heart would always be tormented by fear, while he lived in the indulgence of his lusts. But the desires which men indulge, have always some influence on their understanding; and if men are in the habit of indulging this desire or of saying in their hearts, “no God,” they will, of course pay but little attention to the proofs which are adduced for the existence of such a being; and although they may not become speculative athiests, yet they will live as if there were no God. Every neglect of duty, as well as every sin, proceeds from this principle at the beginning.

This is the principle of spiritual corruption. The heart casts off the fear of God, and then evil dispositions enter into it. They are infused by that spirit, who is essentially corrupted and unclean, and who corrupted the hearts of our first parents. The first corrupt principle which was infused into their hearts was the desire to eat the forbidden fruit; and ever since that sin was committed, the heart of man is like a corrupted fountain. Out of the heart, says Christ, proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile the man, and are congenial with the heart which says, no God.

But men whose hearts are corrupted, and to whom evil thoughts are natural, will not always abstain from evil works. They may be able to conceal their thoughts; but their words and actions cannot altogether be concealed. These are called by the apostle the unfruitful works of darkness;

and he says it is a shame even to speak of the things, which are done of them in secret. But such works are looked upon by the pure and holy God, with similar feelings to ours, when we look upon a corrupted and putred carcass.— They are loathsome and disgusting to his holy nature.— Every man who is accustomed to purify his heart, by the faith of the gospel, will be able to put a difference between the holy and the profane, and will also look upon all abominable works with loathing and disgust; and he will know the truth of the declaration, “they have made their works abominable.” Such men never do any thing that is spiritually good; because their motives are corrupted. Man forms his judgement from external things. He cannot look into the heart, and therefore he calls evil good, and good evil, but God sees and judges the motives from which our actions proceed; and if the prevailing motive is sinful, the action is corrupt and abominable in his sight.— Therefore the man in whom a right spirit is not created, can never do any thing that is truly and spiritually good.

When the psalmist tells us, that Jehovah looked from the heavens, he states the constant practice of the Almighty. The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good. He forms his judgement concerning every man, from the most accurate observation. The subjects of this investigation are the sons of Adam. There is a difference between the sons of Adam, and the sons of God.— All men belong the former class when they are born, but every one who is regenerated is born of God. If any man be in Christ he is a new creation. He is born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. When therefore God looks upon the earth, he pays particular attention to those who are his children. They are distinguished from the sons of Adam, or from the men of the earth. God looked upon the other class, to see if there were any of them who ought not to be charged with the folly, and the sin of saying

In their hearts, no God! There are degrees of depravity, some are more corrupted than others, and it may be said of some, that they are not far from the kingdom of God.— Some of them, like the Pharisee, may thank God that they are not as other men; and while they recount their good actions, they know not, and therefore cannot confess their sins, in such a way as to have true humility. But there is not one wise man, who seeks God with a true heart and a right spirit, among all the natural descendants of Adam.— This is the judgement which God gives concerning mankind, after the most accurate scrutiny. “Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

They are all turned aside, and walk together in the ways of sin. However they may disagree in their opinions and practices, there will none of them be found walking in the path of righteousness. They may come near to the kingdom of God; but none of them will enter into it, because their hearts are corrupt. They cannot be admitted into the gates of the city, and have a right to the tree of life until God gives his judgement in their favour, and enrols them among the righteous. “Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and makers, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.” These are the characters who are not born again. They cherish these sins in their hearts; they do not hate them nor turn from them with abhorrence; therefore they are all corrupt, and none of them doeth good; not even one. Men are classed with the company they keep, and they are the companions of those who have the same feelings and dispositions with themselves; and therefore it may be said that all who love the world, or give it the preference in their affections, to the spiritual and holy blessings which are at God's right hand, are properly classed among those who are gone aside and are corrupted.

But that part of the fruit of this folly, which is most pre-

woking to the Almighty, is their treatment of his people.— Of all mankind true christians are the most harmless. It is not their desire to injure any human being, and they endeavour to do good to all as far as God gives them opportunity. Still it is a fact, that true christians are always despised, and hated, and persecuted by the workers of iniquity. The view of true christianity, as it is embodied in the lives of the children of God, always creates contempt in the proud and carnal heart. As the carnal mind is enmity against God, so it is enmity against his people; and those who live under its dominion will always find some pretext, for taking the advantage of one whom they hate, and whom they think they have no reason to fear. But Christ, the saviour of the christian, has all power in the heavens and in the earth. He has all natural ability in himself, because he created all things, and supports all things by the word of his power; but he has received from his father, all authority over the heavens and the earth; and therefore he must reign until all his enemies shall be made his footstool, and all things put under his feet. This knowledge is accessible to all, and all may know, who carefully examine the word of God, that Jesus Christ, the christians friend, and the captain of his salvation, is at this time, and shall be still more conspicuously in time to come, the governour among the nations.— It is therefore matter of astonishment, that men who profess to have knowledge, and appear to act wisely in other things, should not only be destitute of that knowledge which makes wise unto salvation, but should injure and destroy the humble christian, whenever they get the power.

This is the testimony of Jesus Christ concerning such characters. They eat up his people as they eat bread. It seems to give them an appetite, when they can get the opportunity of treating them injuriously, and when they find that such treatment will promote their temporal benefit.— The worldly minded man is always seeking gain, and he would rather obtain it at the expense of his neighbours, than

not obtain it at all: but it gives him pleasure when he can obtain it at the expense of the humble followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. We see such feelings continually exhibited in the works of mankind around us, and the subject is here brought forward, as if it were understood by all christians. The Lord Jesus Christ has put them on their guard, when he says, "in the world ye shall have tribulation."—They must submit to be eaten like bread, by men who call not upon the name of Jehovah. They are not in the habit of calling upon him with their hearts, when they eat their temporal food, and of course, they would not think of asking his blessing, when they are in this spiritual sense eating his people. But they do not know that they are sinning against God. They are guilty of this conduct because they have no knowledge. Thus it is spoken concerning the sufferings of the people of God in former times: "all that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, we offend not."

They have always some excuse, which at least palliates their guilt to their own minds: but still they are agitated by fear, when they consider and realize the truth, that God is present in a particular and friendly manner, with all his people. They are spoken of in this place, as having all descended from one righteous man. "If we be Christ's we are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." God, therefore, is in the midst of this generation forever, and when this fact strikes the minds of their enemies they are agitated with fearful forebodings of future vengeance.

But still, such is the infatuation of the world, and in fact the feeling is too common among professing christians, that any one who is known to make God the object of his trust in every thing, is looked upon with a kind of contempt, as if he were weak minded. It is certainly our duty to know and confess our weakness: for if we know it, and trust in the Saviour; then we are strong for the performance of our duty, or for the bearing of any suffering, to which we may

be called. We may say with the apostle ; when I am weak then am I strong. Notwithstanding these agitating fears which occasionally torment the hearts of the workers of iniquity, they still laugh at the man who knows that he is poor and needy, and makes Jehovah his refuge.

Such has been the condition of the Israel of God in all the ages that are past, and such is the condition of true christians in the present time. But as God sends help to his people out of his sanctuary above, so he has held out the encouragement, that the help which is necessary to enable them to perform their duties, and to bear their sorrows in this world, shall come to them out of Zion, and in their regular and stated attendance on the worship of the sanctuary. He has said, in all places where I record my name, I will meet with you and bless you. We may therefore hope, that he will send light to us from his sanctuary, and strength out of Zion.

But the church at the present time, may be said to be in Babylon, and in bondage ; because she is still under the dominion of Antichrist. She is in fact a captive, and is obliged to worship God according to the inventions or the commandments of men, unless she should make her escape into the wilderness, where she may hope to be preserved for a certain period from the power of the enemy. But the time is not far distant, when God will bring back the captivity of his people : and then there shall be a time of universal rejoicing, in the whole assemblage of christian worshippers. This psalm will then be sung, as presenting a retrospect of troubles, which shall then have been past and gone : and the deliverance from them will be an earnest of the final deliverance from all troubles, at the judgement day.

PSALM XV.

A Psalm of David.

TRANSLATION.

1. O Jehovah, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

2. He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart.

3. Who does not slander with his tongue; who does not do an injury to his neighbour; and who does not take up an evil report against his neighbour.

4. In whose eyes a vile person is despised; but he honours them who fear Jehovah: he swears to his hurt and does not change.

5. He does not lend out his money upon usury; and he does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall not be moved forever.

DISSERTATION.

THIS is a description of the moral character of the true christian. The psalmist makes application to Jehovah to let him know the kind of character who should be admitted into his tabernacle in the heavens, to dwell forever in his sanctuary. This is the blessed condition into which we are called by the gospel. God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people. And he has said, he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. But he commands his people not to touch the unclean thing, and not to hold communion with any who practice iniquity, or who worship God falsely. The question is not, how we shall become

christians; but the real character of the man who has already become a christian, and who shall never fall from his standing as a member of the church of God, but shall dwell in his house forever.

When we first make application to be received as members of the church, we are admitted on our profession and promise to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and to walk as he walked. We profess to believe the doctrines of his word, and we promise to perform the duties of his law, in reliance on the strength, which is not in ourselves, but communicated from him to his people. We make this profession continually, not only before our fellow christians, but before him who has said, "wherever two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—Every true christian says to him, "judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord." But there are many christians, so-called, who are a disgrace to their profession. We have still reason to say, with the apostle, "many walk of whom I have told you before, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things." None but those who worship God in spirit and in truth, shall abide in his tabernacle, and dwell in his holy hill.

But as God requires truth in the heart when we make our professions of christianity, so he requires truth and honesty in our lives and conversation with our fellow men. It is this trait in the character of the christian, by which the truth of his profession is established in the minds of his fellow men around him; and it is by the promotion of such habits, that he himself is established in his integrity, and does not become weary in well-doing. This was the course which our Lord Jesus Christ prescribed to the young man, who asked him what good thing he should do, that he might have everlasting life. He said he, thou wilt enter into life,

keep the commandments; and he directed him particularly to the duties which we owe to our neighbour. These are the directions which he gives us in this psalm. The duties of the two tables must never be separated, and the first is always the most important. We are, in the first place, to give ourselves up entirely to the service of God; and in the second place, we are to cherish the very same kind of love for our neighbour, which we have for ourselves. This will prove the truth of our profession of love to God, "for he that hateth his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

We must, in the first place, be united to the Redeemer, by the faith which worketh by love. It is said by the apostle, that Jesus, looking upon the young man, loved him, and said unto him, "go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me." If he loves us he will bring us finally to himself, and we shall love him, so as to be altogether willing to give up all things for his sake; and to take up our cross and follow him. We shall manifest our love to him, by performing all the duties of love to our neighbour: for "he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked."

When therefore the inquiry is made of our Lord Jesus Christ, by any of his disciples, who is the man that shall ascend into his holy hill, and dwell with him forever; it is obvious that both the inquiry and the answer are limited to his disciples. It is only the visible disciples of Christ that are in any way concerned in it. The rest of the world have neither lot nor part in the matter. They refuse to receive him as their Saviour, and to obey his commandments; and therefore the course of life they have chosen is a plain indication of the fact, that they are still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. We are therefore in the first place to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and to exercise the spirit of obedience to all his commandments; and thus

we shall be established in the faith and dwell in his house forever.

To walk uprightly is to hold fast our integrity. The true christian comes to the Lord Jesus Christ, and receives him in spirit and truth; and the same principle by which he made the profession of christianity, will always govern and characterize his conduct, through the whole of his life. He will say with Joshua, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord; and he will always trust in the "grace of God which bringeth salvation, teaching him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world; looking for the blessed hope," &c. When we keep this hope always before us, and never yield to any temptation of Satan, nor indulge any sin in our heart; but attend to our duties faithfully both towards God and man; then we may be said to walk uprightly and to work righteousness.

The Lord Jesus Christ always teaches his disciples to cherish in their hearts a sacred regard for truth; and always whenever they make any declaration, to express the thing that is in their hearts. It is not always necessary for us to declare every thing we think; for there is a time to be silent as well as a time to speak: but when we do make any declaration, it ought to be that, and that only, which is in our hearts. Those who profess to do good while they imagine evil in their hearts, are the characters whose inward part is very wickedness; and whose throat is an open sepulchre, while they flatter with their tongues. But it is said of those who stand with the Lamb of God on Mount Zion, having his father's name written in their foreheads, "in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God."

While it is necessary for us to speak the truth on all proper occasions, we ought to beware of doing or saying any thing which will operate to the injury of our neighbour. There are even some truths which in some particular circumstan-

see, ought not to be spoken; because they can accomplish no good purpose, and might be productive of evil. But slander generally consists in falsehood which will injure a neighbour's character, and is uttered with an evil or malicious intention. Some are fond of circulating injurious reports, and find a kind of wicked gratification in giving pain to their neighbour, and destroying his moral character, and influence among mankind. Such a man can never be admitted to hold fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ; nor can he hold fellowship with true christians. They sometimes find it necessary to speak such truths, as will give pain to others, and even to themselves; because God has commanded them to be faithful to the cause of truth and righteousness: but as they find no pleasure in the infliction of pain on their neighbours, so they will not voluntarily, and without necessity, spread abroad an evil report against any of them.

There are many characters who are base and contemptible, and therefore ought to be despised; but on account of their wealth, or power, or some quality, which makes them influential among mankind, they are esteemed and honoured by many. There is still a large number of characters in every community, "who have men's persons in admiration because of advantage," while he that has the fear of God always before his eyes, and therefore departs from evil, will always be the object of their dislike. But this is the man whom God delights to honour, and therefore the man who holds fellowship with God, will also delight to honour him. The christian has declared, and solemnly sworn, that he will keep all the commandments and judgments of the Almighty. He has entered into this obligation before God and man. But he knows that he must meet with pain and sorrow in the performance of his duties. Christ has said to all his disciples, in this world ye shall have tribulation. Therefore it may be said, that every one who enters into the obligation to follow the Lord Jesus Christ,

swears to his own hurt. This is a rock in the christian's course, over which many have stumbled and fallen. If we hope to finish our course with joy, it will be necessary for us to cast aside many of the enjoyments of the world; and, like Moses, to suffer affliction with the people of God. They are sometimes obliged to pass through fiery trials. But they have the promise of protection and strength from him, who has said, when thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Their resolutions are formed in the presence of God, and in dependence on his promise for strength; and therefore their purposes are never changed. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ who is the captain of their salvation, was made perfect through suffering. He showed that the prospect of infinite tortures, both in soul and body, could not induce him to put aside the cup which he had covenanted with his Father to drink.

But the christian keeps in his memory the important truth, which is stated by the apostle, that the love of money is the root of all evil; and therefore he will not use any dishonest or oppressive means, for the increase of his treasure. The word which is here rendered usury, is designed to signify the gain, which is obtained by oppression, or by grinding the faces of the poor. When a man takes the advantage of his neighbour's distress, and pretends to do him a favour by lending him money, while he exacts oppressive interest. The Israelites were forbidden to exact interest of their poor brethren for the loan of money. But there is no sin in lending money for a fair and lawful interest, where the parties are engaged in trade, and where there is no distress on the one hand, nor dishonest gain on the other. Still there is great danger of falling into errors, when men are engaged in this kind of traffick; and they who use this means of getting rich, do often "fall into temptation and a snare, and into divers foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." The true christ-

ian is always ready to befriend his poor neighbour, and to favour him in this respect to the utmost of his power. Instead of oppressing him, he will show him kindness. He cannot be bribed to favour the cause of oppression. He will not take any reward against the innocent.

It is evident that there are many who bear the christian name who can be bribed, not only to favour the wicked, but to stand openly on his side, when he is contending with a righteous man. They will plead the cause of error and iniquity, and condemn the innocent. This is the sin which men commit when there is any evil bias on their minds, and when they do not hate all sin with a perfect hatred. There is a constant collision in the world, between righteousness and unrighteousness; and the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, will always espouse the cause of iniquity. The word of God brings this accusation against every wicked man, "when thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him; and thou hast been partaker with adulterers." Men do really join in the sin, when their hearts are disposed to favour the guilty. There are many ways in which men can be bribed. The God of this world has his bribes always prepared for the men of the world; and there is always some way in which he finds them disposed to receive the reward of unrighteousness. But the true christian will not be seduced to espouse the cause of evil, by any bribe which the tempter can propose to his mind. It gives him pain to see iniquity prevailing, and therefore when any bribe is held out to him, which would tempt him to favour the wicked against the righteous, he will cast it aside with abhorrence. "He will always despise the gain of oppressions, and shake his hand from holding of bribes."

The spirit of God concludes this description, by declaring that the person who is here described, shall always be firmly established. He shall be an established man in the christian faith; he shall have the christian's hope as an

anchor of the soul; and he shall have a certain dwelling place near the throne of God, both in this world, and through eternity. As all worldly principles, and all motives of action, which are derived from the earth, must finally be moved and overturned; and the man who has no other support must be fluctuating and unstable, and will be driven about by the different winds of doctrine, which often blow and rage over the world; so the man who draws his motives of action from the word of God, shall always be steadfast and immovable, and abounding in the work of the Lord. The powers of earth and hell combined, will not be able to drive him from his purpose, or to unsettle his hopes. The promise of God is the ground of his stability, and his faith being the instrument by which he relies on the promise, will always become stronger by every new trial. Every christian should make an application to himself of the principles, which are here stated, and where he finds them to be his principles of action; and that he has formed his habits upon them; he may then rely on the promise of God, for his present and eternal stability. He may say with the whole church of God, as his hopes are built on the same foundation, the Lord of Hosts is with me, the God of Jacob is my refuge; therefore I will not fear, though the earth should be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

PSALM XVI.

MICHTAM ——— of David.

The word *Michtam* signifies a title, or inscription, written on a pillar, or column, or obelisk, in letters of gold. The subject of the psalm is the Lord Jesus Christ, at that most important and eventful period, when his body was laid in the tomb, and his soul had descended into Hades, or the invisible mansions of the dead.— It contains the feeling and sentiments of the Redeemer, when he was about to ascend to Paradise, or the third heavens. It shows us the spiritual meaning of the superscription, which was written by Pilate, and put over his head, while he hung upon the cross; THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. The meaning which it ought to present to the minds of christians is; THIS IS THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION.

TRANSLATION,

1. Preserve me O God, for I have hoped in thee.

2. O my soul, thou has said to Jehovah; thou art my Lord, my goodness extends not to thee.

3. To the saints who are upon the earth, and they are the excellent ones,—all my delight is in them.

4. Their sorrows shall be multiplied, who hasten after another; I will not offer their drink offerings of blood; and I will not take their names in my lips.

5. Jehovah is the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup; thou wilt maintain my lot.

6. The lines have fallen to me in delightful places; yea a goodly heritage is for me.

7. I bless Jehovah who hath given me counsel; yea, by night my reins have instructed me.

8. I have set Jehovah before me continually; because he is on my right hand, I shall not be moved.

9. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory shall exult; yea, my flesh shall rest in hope.

10. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;—thou wilt not give up thy Holy One, to see corruption.

11. Thou wilt cause me to know the path of life; abundance of joys are in thy presence; eternal pleasures are in thy right hand.

DISSERTATION.

THIS psalm is suitable to the circumstances of every christian. Every one of the sons of God may make the application of every sentiment in it to himself. But it ought to be applied particularly and especially to the Lord Jesus Christ at the time when he was about to ascend in triumph to the Paradise of God. He was then among the spirits in prison; but he was in Abraham's bosom; and he clearly saw the blessedness and glory to which he was just about to ascend. Therefore as it pleased him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, to make the captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings; so all the sons whom he brings to glory must first descend into Hades, or the invisible state of the dead,—to the place which is called Abraham's bosom, and from this they shall ascend into heaven, to Paradise, or to the right hand of the Father, and be forever with their blessed Lord.

As the Lord Jesus used this psalm in his worship, through the time of his sojourning upon earth, when he was performing the works, and enduring the sufferings, by which he was made perfect as the captain of our salvation; so all his people are to use it and rejoice in it, in all their sorrows upon the earth. The Redeemer has told them that in this world they shall have tribulation, and those who are desti-

ned to rise the highest in the blessedness and honours of heaven, must generally sink the deepest in the sufferings of this world. But as their afflictions are transitory, so they are all mingled with comfort and hope. Their light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for them a far more exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

But the preservation of Jehovah is necessary, in all the circumstances and situations, into which we may be cast, both in life and in death. The grand adversary who is so powerful, that he has dared to make war against heaven, is always dangerous, when he has access to any human being. He is the enemy especially of Jesus Christ and his people. If there were none to deliver out of his hand, he would tear their souls like a lion, rending them in pieces. But the Father was the Saviour, or preserver of his only begotten son, when he tabernacled in human nature upon the earth. In this condition he needed the preservation of God, as much as his people. It is said by the apostle Paul, that he was crucified through weakness. An angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, and to prepare him for the sufferings he was to endure, in the garden, and on the cross. Therefore when his sufferings upon the earth were finished, and he had descended into Hades, he knew that he needed protection also there.

But he knew that he had still trusted in God, as a son trusts in his father. His father had said to him, as he says to all his children; I will never leave thee, I will not forsake thee. He had trusted in God amidst all his sufferings; even when in the deepest anguish, he was obliged to cry out; my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! He had never given up his hope, and therefore his hope did not forsake him in the regions of the dead. He also declares, that he had always felt and acknowledged his dependence on God, not only as his father, but as his Lord. For the truth of this declaration he appeals to his own consciousness. He knew at that moment, what was passing in his

own heart, and he remembered his own feelings, and habits of thinking, in times past. He had always felt himself as completely under the authority of his father, as any subject feels himself under the authority of his sovereign. He claimed no pre-eminence above the other creatures whom his hands had made. Although he is by nature the Father's equal, and possessed of all the perfections of Jehovah; yet he laid aside his glory, and humbled himself, when he became the mediator between God and man. He then became the Father's servant, and entered on a work much more arduous than the work of creation: He put himself entirely under the authority of the Father, to do and to suffer all that was necessary, for the salvation of those whom the Father gave into his hand: His duties were set before him, and he performed them with the greatest fidelity. But when he says, my goodness extendeth not to thee, he means that he had done no more than his duty. The phrase might be rendered, "my goodness is not above thee." All that I have done and suffered is no more than thou hast a right to require. God did require it of him, and therefore it was his duty to give it; and he relied for all blessings and benefits in time to come, on the goodness of his Father. Every true christian will make the same declaration in life and in death.

But the case is different with respect to mankind. Jesus Christ is under no natural obligation to be their Saviour. We have forfeited every just claim to any favour from God. He might justly have left the whole human family to perish in their sins, and be cast down to everlasting woe. But he had covenanted with his father to save as many of them as should be given into his hand, and drawn to him by the power of God operating on their hearts. They are made saints, because they are consecrated by his eternal purpose, to make them holy to himself. He has predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. He works in them the

good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; and they are still in every age and nation where they dwell, the excellent ones of the earth. They are comely by his comeliness, which he puts upon them.— They have excellent qualities by being united to him, and partaking of his excellence. The apostle Peter declares, “that the divine power of our Redeemer has given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption, that is in the world, through lust.”

But, because the Redeemer is God, and calls the things that are not as though they were, he is said to delight in them, before they were made saints, and even before they were created. Before the creation of the world was completed, he is said to have rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men.— When he came upon the earth in human nature, he selected a few for his friends and companions, who, although they were despised in their day and generation, yet they were evidently the excellent ones of the earth. Such are the characters with whom he delights to dwell; and although they have no good qualities when they believe in him; for he justifies the ungodly: yet, when they walk in the light as he is in the light, they have fellowship with him and with each other; and they are cleansed by his blood from all their sins. Every one of them can also say, with respect to his fellow christians, “all my delights are in them.” “We know,” says the apostle, “that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren.”

But there are many other beings, besides the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom men trust for salvation. Men, in all ages, have generally seen and confessed the truth, that all men are sinners and need a saviour; but they did not know, nor make application to him, who alone can save. The natural man, when left to himself, will always reject the true saviour, and form a saviour for himself. If they do

not literally make a graven or molten image, they will form some imaginary saviour in their own hearts.

There are many ways in which they hasten after another. Some trust for their salvation in a saviour who is not God, but a being whom God created, and who is somewhat higher than the angels: others believe that the saviour is a mere man like themselves; some depend for their righteousness on the works of the law. It would truly be an endless task to enumerate the various ways in which men hasten after another. But the Redeemer declares, that, instead of escaping from misery, they shall multiply their sorrows. He says to them, "behold, all ye that kindle a fire, and compass yourselves with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have from mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

They shall have no part in his salvation. He will make no intercession for them. Jesus Christ ever liveth to make intercession, for all that come to God through him; but he will make no intercession for those who hasten after another. They may pour out their libations of blood; they may cut themselves with knives and lances; they may run into every kind of extravagance in their worship: Christ will not even take their names in his lips. Their worship shall never be brought by him before his father. But every one who knows the language of inspiration, will see plainly, that by hastening after another, is not only meant, seeking another saviour, but any kind of religious worship which God has not appointed. To all those who do not pay particular attention to the way which he has opened, he will say, "ye have chosen your own ways, and I will choose your delusions; and at last I will bring your fears upon you." Their sorrows therefore shall increase forever.

There is some particular object, on which the affections of every man are placed. There are various objects within our reach, and every one of them may have a share in our affections; but there is one object which we love above all,

and which we may be said to have chosen for our portion. The Lord Jesus Christ had chosen his father as his portion, and every christian makes the same choice. But he chooses God in Christ. He may therefore be said to choose Christ for his portion, for he is the way, the truth, and the life, and no man can come to the Father but by him. The Father has sent him to be our guide, and he sends him continually for this purpose, that he may lead us to himself. He chooses our way, and he chooses truth and life for us; and his choice is our choice. The Lord is my portion, said my soul, is the language of every christian.

He has chosen for his people, that very condition in the world in which they are placed, and all the blessings which they enjoy. As they have chosen him for their portion, so he makes the proper distribution of temporal and spiritual things among them all. As he chose the land of Canaan for the Israelites, and then divided the land by lot among the different tribes; so the lot of every family, and every individual was given to them by him; and he kept them in possession of it, as long as he thought proper. It is the comfort of the christian, that his Father, who loves him with all affection far exceeding the love of any earthly parent, has provided his portion for him, and gives it to him with his own hand. His life may be filled with troubles and difficulties, and he may say with the psalmist, I am distrest and ready to die from my youth, yet he can always have some trust, and sometimes a high degree of confidence, that God his Father will finally give him comfort and enjoyment, in proportion to his humiliation. The Lord Jesus Christ forsook the glories, and the enjoyments of his Father's throne, took the nature of man, and spent a life of suffering among mankind, endured the contradiction of sinners, suffered himself to be made a mark for the arrows of malevolence, and at last the fiends of the pit were let loose to wreak their vengeance on his soul: the Father himself was pleased to bruise him, to put him to grief, and to make his soul an

offering for sin; and, by the eternal spirit, he offered himself a sacrifice to God. In the endurance of these sufferings, he was obedient, and continued to be obedient, until he died the accursed death of the cross. Then God the Father was pleased to exalt him, and to give him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. In the view of these blessings and glories, which he may be said to have enjoyed in his soul, even when he was in the regions of the dead, he could exclaim; the lines are fallen to me in delightful places; I have a goodly heritage! On this subject, God gives similar views to his people, in their passage through the sorrows of life, and even when they pass into the regions of the dead. Some of them may be ready to say with Jacob, when he refused to be comforted for the death of his son Joseph, whom he supposed had been torn in pieces by a wild beast; I will go down to the grave; or rather to the regions of the dead, to my son, mourning. If any of them have died in grief, and with their minds covered with darkness, they will find all their doubts dispelled, even in the regions of the dead; and be enabled to say with their Redeemer; the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; truly I have a goodly heritage.

The course which the christian has chosen, was pointed out to him by his heavenly Father. He gave him counsel to choose it, and to walk in it; and his counsel was so powerful, by the operation of the Holy Spirit of God in his heart, that he was effectually drawn to the Redeemer, and choose him as his shepherd, and the captain of his salvation. They all rely upon God, to guide them by his counsel while they live, and afterwards to receive them into his kingdom in the heavens. He has promised to instruct them, and to lead them in the way, as they are advancing

through life ; and his eye being set upon them from above, he will guide them with so much care, that they shall not fall into any sin, or any trouble, which shall not promote their everlasting benefit. So the apostle says to the Roman church, God be thanked that you were the servants of sin ; but ye have obeyed from the heart, that form of doctrine, into which, as into a mould, ye were delivered. The sins and the sorrows of the christian, are a part of the means, by which the heart of the christian is melted down, and cast in the mould of gospel obedience.

But as God operates by means, in forming his people for himself, and works with them or without them according to his will ; so he sometimes causes their own feelings and affections, in the night as well as in the day, to be the means of restraining, and preventing every sinful disposition, and of enabling them to add knowledge to their virtue. The reins or the kidneys are used to denote these passions or affections, which are most secret, and impenetrable to the eye. Hence, when God is said to search the heart, and try the reins, it is plainly intimated, that this is a work by which he is distinguished from all creatures, for none of them is capable of this kind of scrutiny. The wicked man is said to devise evil upon his bed. He does it willingly, because he loves to indulge evil thoughts. They are the natural food of his sinful lusts. But the man who hates all evil, learns by careful observation, to discover and to restrain his desires, which might lead him into sin. It is evident, that there is less restraint in the night than in the day, upon the sinful propensities of the heart. The apostle says ; " let us watch and be sober : for they that sleep, sleep in the night ; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night." The christian learns from careful examination of his own heart, how to put a proper restraint on all the desires and affections, and to know the importance of the promise ; " sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." The Lord

Jesus Christ was tempted in every way, in which it was supposed that an advantage might be gained over him; but by all his temptations, he could not be led into sin; because he never indulged, but hated and repelled from his heart, any evil thought, which the tempter might place before his mind. In this way he gained the victory. He chose suffering rather than sinning. But because he himself was tempted, he learned to succour those who are tempted.

To have been counseled and instructed in this manner, and thus prevented from the indulgence of any sinful lust, is the cause of rejoicing and thanksgiving, to the christian, and for this he offers continually blessing and praise to Jehovah. It is the chief source of comfort on the bed of death; and it will afford the most delightful comfort to the christian's soul, when he enters into Abraham's bosom in the mansions of the dead. He has received his portion of sorrow in this world, and all his sorrows were mingled with comfort; but his abundant comfort is reserved for the future life, and he rejoices in the hope set before him.

God is engaged in giving instruction to his people night and day, and in causing all things within them and around them, to work together for their good. It is of great importance to us to know and realize the truth, that God is present with us, and is in fact, still standing at the right hand of the christian. As he sits in the heavens, and looks over the earth; so he can be present in any particular place at his pleasure; and he chooses to be present with all those who ask his presence, and rely upon his promise to be with his people. This is the way in which we are to set him before us. We are not to expect any visible demonstration; but we are enabled by faith to realize his presence, and to be assured that he will not suffer any of our enemies, temporal or spiritual, to move us from the foundation, on which our hopes are fixed. When God says, I will be with thee; I will go before thee; I will give thee strength; we are to look, in the first place, at the disposition which he mani-

ests, towards all, to whom the word is addressed. All who believe in Christ may rely upon it, and when they do rely upon it in true faith, then it becomes a promise to them particularly. When God says I will be with thee, he gives the right to hope that his presence shall be with us according to our faith; and therefore we may say, he is at our right hand, and we shall not be moved.

It is a great comfort when our reins instruct us, or when the secret affections, and emotions of our desires, are directed towards him. The man who sets his affections on the earth, will always have his attention engrossed by some earthly object; but these objects are forced on the attention of the godly man. It is necessary for him to attend to them in certain times and circumstances; but God has his willing attention. It is natural for him always to look to God, as being present with him. This is not only a preventive to the indulgence of any sinful disposition; but it is comfortable to know, that God our saviour is particularly attentive to us. We know therefore that he will not suffer the enemy to do us any essential injury; and that the blessings of his salvation shall be communicated to us, with a proper and suitable portion of the temporal comforts of the earth.

This subject may sometimes raise the heart of the christian, to the highest degree of gladness and exultation, which can be enjoyed on this side of heaven. As human misery admits of degrees, beyond all our conception; so the human heart may be raised to extacies of joy, which we cannot comprehend. Every christian experiences a degree of this feeling, when he uses this language of the psalmist in the worship of God, and some experience higher degrees of it than others; but the christian on the bed of death, when all his doubts and fears are fled; when his eyes behold the king in his beauty, and he sees the land that is very far off, will experience a degree of it, which till that time he never knew. This is what the apostle calls "joy unspeakable and full of glory." When, therefore, the soul of the chris-

tion enters the regions of the dead, and when he is carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, he shall then have an earnest of the land of promise, and in some degree realize the blessings of eternity. He shall then be enabled to say, "my heart is glad, and my glory shall exult, and my flesh shall rest, in the hope of a glorious resurrection."

But as the Lord Jesus Christ was sunk to the lowest degrees of misery, when the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; so he is now raised to the highest degree of blessedness and glory. All this was set before him when he uttered these words of the psalmist. The apostle tells us, that David then saw him and spake of him particularly, and that this language cannot be applied in the same sense to David, or to any of the children of God. "Men and brethren," says the apostle; "let me freely speak to you of the patriarch David; that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us until this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption."—The word which is here rendered hell, is hades, or the invisible world. It was evidently supposed, by the writers of the scriptures, to be in the bowels of the earth; and it is said by some of the Jewish writers, particularly by Josephus, to contain two apartments, separated entirely the one from the other, in which the souls of the righteous enjoyed comfort, and the souls of the wicked were in torments. When any one departed this life, his soul descended into hades, and was happy or miserable, according to the character which he had formed in this world. But paradise is said to be in the third heavens, and it was there that the Redeemer promised to meet with one of the malefactors with whom he was crucified. "To-day," said he to the penitent thief, "shalt thou be with me in paradise." We may therefore under-

stand the sense in which the soul of Christ was not left in hell. He went to that place for the same reason, for which he submitted to be baptised, that he might fulfill all righteousness. In that place he uttered these sentiments, and no doubt united with the saints in hades, in singing this psalm. We are not particularly informed, that the Redeemer ascended to paradise, accompanied by ten thousand of his saints; but this appears to be highly probable; and, that ever since that period, when they depart from this world, they do not remain in hades, but all ascend to those mansions in the skies, where they dwell with their blessed Lord.

As the Redeemer deserves, so he will always have the pre-eminence. His body was not corrupted in the grave, and his soul remained, but a short period, in hades. David, however, could sing this sentiment, and so can all christians sing it in the worship of God, in application to themselves as a part of the body of Christ. It is necessary that our bodies should see corruption, and moulder in the dust, until the resurrection; and it is probably necessary for our complete humiliation, that our souls should descend and remain for a time in that place, in the bowels of the earth, which is called Abraham's bosom; but we shall soon reascend and be with Christ forever. We shall not see corruption, in the same sense in which the wicked shall see it. As there is a new creation of the souls of Christ's people, by their union with him; and their bodies are united with his body even when they are mouldering in their grave; so they may all sing both with the understanding and the heart, thou wilt not leave our souls in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy ones to see corruption.

The path of life, for all the fallen human family, must lead them through the mansions of death; and it is to be feared that many who have gone to the grave and to hades, must at last be carried down to the lake that burns with everlasting fire. But although the children of God may be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, they shall then

see the path of life, which shall lead them to paradise; and their desire to be with Christ shall be abundantly fulfilled. As he enjoys the blessing and the glory of a perfect union with the Godhead, and the highest degree of happiness and honour to which human nature can be exalted, angels, and principalities and powers being subject to him; so he stands in the relation to his people, as a shepherd to his flock, a captain to his soldiers, or the first born to his younger brethren. They shall partake both of his exaltation and of his enjoyment. He says to all of them as he said to his disciples when he was in the flesh; "ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my father hath appointed unto me." Therefore they render thanksgiving and praise to him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God and his father.

They have not only honours but fulness of joy—their joys are eternal. Every faculty of the human soul, and the whole new man, as he shall be purified from corruption, shall be engaged in the service of God forever; and this service shall yield the highest delight. It is said by some of the ancient Jewish writers, that the man who had never been present at any of the solemn festivals, never had known the true nature of religious joy: and if these pure and holy pleasures can be so exquisite in this world, what shall be the enjoyments of the saints in heaven, when they shall see God in the person of their Saviour, and be in his immediate presence forever. It is evident that these delights, which are spiritual and heavenly, must exceed the sensual delights of the sons of men, as far as heaven is above the earth; but before we can understand them, it is necessary we should both taste and see that God is good, and then when taste and sight shall be improved, to the utmost perfection, we shall have the full fruition of all the blessings that are at God's right hand, and this shall not be diminished, but shall increase forever.

PSALM XVII.

A Prayer. ——— Of David.

We are here presented with a prominent, and very important specimen, of the devotions of David; and also of him who is infinitely greater than David; who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death. We are exhorted, by the apostle, not to be anxious, and not to suffer our minds to be perplexed, about the things which we suppose to be necessary for our comfort in this world; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to let our requests be made known unto God. The Redeemer has taught us by a most interesting parable, that we should always continue, and persevere in the exercise of prayer, and never faint, or relax our energies. The chosen people of God are said to cry to him day and night without ceasing; and the object of their earnest prayers, and strong crying and tears, is the redress of their grievances, the vindication of their righteous cause, the power of beholding the gracious countenance of their righteous judge, and of being conformed to his image.

TRANSLATION.

1. Hear, O Jehovah, that which is right, hearken to my cry, give attention to my prayer; it is not in lips of deceit.

2. Let my judgement proceed from before thee; let thine eyes behold the things that are upright.

3. Thou hast proved my heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast refined me like gold or silver: thou shalt not find any evil devices; my mouth shall not transgress.

4. As for the works of man;—by the word of thy lips, I have been kept from the paths of the destroyer.

5. O do thou uphold my goings in thy circuits; let not my steps be turned aside.

6. I have called upon thee, for thou wilt answer me, O God, incline thine ear to me; hear my speech.

7. Let thy mercy towards me be wonderful; O thou who, by thy right hand, savest the confiding ones, from those who rise up against them.

8. Preserve me as the pupil of the eye,—in the shadow of thy wings do thou conceal me.

9. — From the face of the wicked who would crush me to pieces;—my determined enemies do set themselves against me round about.

10. They are enclosed in their own fat; with their mouth they speak in pride.

11. Now they have encompassed our steps; they have set their eyes to lay us prostrate on the earth.

12. They are become like the lion that is greedy for the prey; and like the young lion that sits in secret places.

13. Rise, O Jehovah, disappoint him, cast him down; deliver my soul from the wicked man, who is thy sword.

14. From mortals, who are thy hand, O Jehovah;—from mortals of the transitory world; their portion is in this life, and with thy hidden treasures thou dost fill their belly: they are full of sons; and they leave the residue of their possessions to their younger children.

15. I shall behold thy face in righteousness;—I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.

DISSERTATION.

It is important for us in all our prayers, to keep the truth in our minds, that we do present ourselves before the

judge of all the earth, for his decision concerning our character and standing, and concerning the particular cause which we bring before him. If we have any right to hope that the righteous judge will decide in our favour, we must be righteous characters, and we must have a righteous cause. There is an adversary, who is also permitted to appear before God, who will bring every accusation against us in his power; and he has many advantages arising from our sinful condition, and the sin which doth so easily beset us. It is true that our only ground of hope is the mercy of God; and we are always to make our appeal to this attribute of God, for any blessing which we ask; and we have no right to hope for any blessing, without earnest and assiduous prayer: but our prayer will not be answered unless we have a righteous cause. We must fully accept of the Saviour and his salvation, as he offers it to us, confessing our sins, and casting ourselves upon the mercy of our judge; and then if there is no hypocrisy in us, if we do truly hate all sin, and ask to be delivered from it through Jesus Christ, and if the particular request which we make is proper for the righteous and holy God to grant, we may hope that our prayers shall not pass without particular attention.

It is sometimes important for us to know what particular event, or circumstance in the life of David, gave occasion for the expressions, which are used in a particular psalm; for we can imagine ourselves in similar circumstances, and when we trace the current of his thoughts, we then know the course which our thoughts ought to take, because the mind of the psalmist was led by the spirit of God. But the psalms are intended and calculated, to express the devotional exercises of the christian's heart, in all his approaches to the throne of judgement and of mercy. Particular circumstances in the life of David, will sometimes find an exact counterpart in the life of a christian, but the general principles are applicable to them all. Here is evidently an accusation brought against a christian, and he

appeals to the righteous judge, who is able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. David, for example, was chosen by the sovereign of the universe to be the king of Israel, and Saul desired that the kingdom should continue under his authority, and be established in his hand; he therefore found it expedient to destroy David. One of the ways by which he endeavoured to accomplish this object, was by bringing false accusations, and circulating slanderous reports: The psalmist here approaches to the righteous judge, and asks that he would hear his defence, and give his sentence according to truth and righteousness.

But the grand accuser will bring charges against every christian, at every opportunity, and if he can find no particular accusation, he will insinuate the charge of hypocrisy. If the christian enjoys prosperity in his worldly affairs, then it will be insinuated, that this is, most probably, the chief reason why he attends to the duties of christianity: If the christian is in a suffering condition, then it will be said that he attends to his duties, not from any regard to the commandments of God, but because he is afraid of some severer and heavier affliction. These were the accusations of the adversary in the case of Job; but he has his accusations prepared for every christian, in every particular circumstance. Thus it becomes highly necessary for us to live in habits of self-examination. For if we indulge any sin in our hearts, or allow ourselves to live in any sinful practice, then it would be a righteous accusation to say that we are hypocrites. But if we confess our sins, with humiliation and godly sorrow, and seek to be delivered from them by the blood of Christ, then the accusation is false, and the charge of hypocrisy will not be admitted.

But the christian desires that God may be his judge, and that his eyes may be intently fixed on his cause, that the righteous principles of action might be discovered, and that he might see who was in the right. It is true, that when an accusation is brought against us, we must be either

guilty or innocent of the charge. But the charge may consist of many specifications, and some of them may appear to be proved, in the eyes of one who did not look accurately into the subject, or who was not capable of discriminating accurately between good and evil. David, for example, was accused of a treasonable conspiracy, to put himself at the head of the government of Israel; and there were no doubt many, by whom he was believed to be guilty, and some believed him innocent: but he prays that God might scrutinize the charge and his defence, and keep his eyes fixed on the things which proved his conduct to be upright. So the man, who has retained his integrity in all the transactions of his life, and never advanced, wilfully and knowingly, in any course of iniquity, may have accusations brought against him, and crimes laid to his charge; but every judge will see the fallacy of the charges, if he keeps his eyes fixed on the principles, by which his heart and his conduct have been regulated through his life.

Although fallen man is no longer in a state of probation, for he has proved himself to be corrupt; so that when God looks on the sons of men, he sees plainly that all are sinful; yet every christian may be said to be in a state of probation, from the time he enters on the christian profession. God proves his people by certain visitations of his providence, by which their ruling passion is brought to light; he tries them by night, even in their dreams, that he may discover the kind of passions they have indulged, and the habits they have formed; and then he brings them into the furnace of affliction, that they may be melted down like gold or silver, and that the dross may appear and be removed. He is, therefore, said to sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and to purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. The trials of some are more painful than of others; but they must all pass through a similar process, and the effect will be the removal of every evil device, and

sinful propensity. The characteristic of the wicked man is, that his tongue frameth deceit, and the characteristic of the righteous is, the purpose that his mouth shall not transgress. Although every man is liable to fall into sin or be overtaken in a fault, yet no good character will frame an evil device.

This is the way in which men rush to ruin. They are at first overcome of evil. They give up their honest intentions, and their hearts begin to frame evil devices. Then they execute their plans of iniquity, and continue to transgress, until they are caught in their own devices, and finally destroyed. But the christian is preserved from this course of destruction, by laying up the word of God in his heart. This is the light to his feet, and the lamp to his path. He sees the course of evil and he avoids it. The way of duty is made plain to his mind, and the authority of God operates on his heart; so that he hears a voice, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it; and thus he is kept from the paths of the destroyer.

The man who is thus preserved time after time, and still finds that he is supported in his duty, will learn a greater degree of confidence in God; but still he will learn also the necessity, of fervently seeking the support of his almighty friend to uphold him in the practice of his duty. God has given us the forms of religion, and all the ordinances to which we are to attend, and when we attend to these ordinances, we walk in his circuits; but we need his hand to lead us, and support us, in all our duties. In this respect we should always be children, and never attempt to walk by ourselves. When we know our dependence on him, and ask continually for his direction and preservation, we have the strongest reason to hope, that he will not leave us to fall into error.

As God is the hearer of prayer, so all have encouragement to pray; and this encouragement is increased by our necessities, by the diligent attention which we are in the

habit of giving to his commandments, and above all, by his own promises which he has given to all his people. He has said, call upon me in the day of trouble; I will answer thee, and thou shalt glorify me. The worshippers of Baal cried aloud, from morning till evening; but there was no voice, no answer, nor any that regarded; but the prophet prayed, and God answered by fire. Our God is Jehovah, the same to-day, yesterday, and forever. We have, therefore, the strongest encouragement to pray and not faint, and to wait for him in fervent and diligent supplication.

The prophet Isaiah declares concerning the Redeemer, that his name shall be called, Wonderful; and he declares, O Lord I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name, for thou hast done wonderful things: So the angel said to Joshua the high priest; hear now Joshua, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men to be wondered at. The Redeemer also declares, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah; Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel, from the Lord of Hosts. There are truly many things, in the life of every child of God, which are the subject of wonder, at least to himself; and if they are not, the subjects of wonder to his neighbours, it is because they do not know them, or perhaps do not think them worthy of their attention.— All true christians do see, and understand the truth of their condition in this world, that unless God should interpose his powerful hand for their deliverance, they should all soon be destroyed, and their very names should perish from the earth. They are still in every part of the earth where they dwell, like a little flock of sheep, and their enemies are numerous and powerful. The apostle also declares, “we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” But the Saviour exerts his power for our deliverance, and it is generally seen only in the effects,

which are produced by his hand, which is invisible. There is therefore a wonderful array of power on the one hand, and nothing but weakness on the other. But the weak becomes strong, and the powerful are overcome, and covered with defeat and confusion. Thus God frequently shows his wonderful loving-kindness, in saving those who place their confidence in him, and they, when their enemies rise up against them, do always wait for his salvation.

As this prayer of the psalmist was dictated by the Holy Spirit, we may learn from it the tender care for which we should pray, and which God does actually feel for all his people. It is said concerning Israel; "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste and howling wilderness: he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." But the same thing is true, in a spiritual sense, with respect to every individual among his people. As the eye is the most tender, and one of the most important of the members of the human frame; so it may truly be said, that it is fearfully and wonderfully constructed, and guarded from danger. It is truly astonishing, that we are able to preserve this tender organ, from the numerous agents in nature by which it might be injured or destroyed. The care which we exert for the preservation of the eye, and the care which the eagle feels and exerts for the preservation of its young, while it flutters over them and covers them with its wings, is here used, to show us the care, which is felt and exercised by Jehovah, for every one of his people, and for which they should always pray. He has taught us to ask him to keep us as the pupil of his eye, and to cover us beneath his wings; and he has said, "ask and ye shall receive."

If christians knew their condition in this world,—that they are surrounded by enemies both temporal and spiritual, they would see the necessity and importance of knowing the love of God, and of making constant application to him for protection and deliverance. Man knows not the

iniquity which is in his heart, and it would be generally thought to be a false statement, for any one to assert that his neighbours would crush him and cast him down to destruction, if they had the power; and that men who are determined and inveterate, in their hostility against him, are walking round, and using the most accurate observation in their power, to discover the means of effecting his ruin.—The circumstances in which the psalmist was placed, and chiefly the enlightening influence of the spirit of inspiration, taught him the truth of his condition: but every christian may make the very same declaration. It is true there are degrees of this hostile feeling, some have smaller degrees of it than others, and some are not even conscious of its existence in their hearts; but it only wants favourable circumstances to bring it into operation, and then one man would act like Saul, another like Doeg the Edomite, and another like Ahithophel or Judas Iscariot. As the carnal mind is enmity against God; so it is enmity against his people, and will always show itself in circumstances favourable to its influence; and the christian who is placed in a situation in which he may become a mark for the arrows of malevolence, will often find himself painfully wounded. It will truly be his chief comfort to know, that God keeps him as the apple of his eye, and under the protection of his wings.

The prosperity of worldly minded men always increases the pride of their hearts. Thus it was said concerning the Israelites; "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation." Thus it was said by the church of the Laodiceans, "we are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" and their pride prevented them from attending to the truth, that, "they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." All such characters, whatever may be their profession, are

enemies in heart to the true christian. But it is necessary that men should live in the vicinity of each other, to give them an opportunity of showing their friendship or their enmity by their works. In all such circumstances it will appear, that true christians love one another, while those, that have the profession without the reality will appear to be just such characters as are here described, and will show their hostility to the real christians in a similar manner.— They watch their conduct with an evil eye. It gives them pleasure to discover something which they can turn to their disadvantage. They will watch every opportunity to prevent or impede the prosperity of true christians. The treatment which the Lord Jesus Christ received from the Pharisees, is a prominent example of the treatment, which every true christian may expect to receive from men of the same principles, while he advances in the performance of his publick duties.

Although the christian watches carefully against the envious disposition, which is natural to man, he proves the truth, which is declared by the apostle, that the spirit which is in us lusteth to envy, and therefore endeavours to be always on his guard, against the operations of this evil spirit; yet he cannot avoid seeing the outward prosperity of many wicked men. This strange and unaccountable fact presses itself continually on his observation. Therefore said Job to his friends; “mark me and be astonished, and lay your hand upon your mouth. Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power.” Asaph also declares that his feet were almost gone; that his steps had well nigh slipped, for, says he, “I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” God gives them prosperity in the world; but he does not give them grace to enable them to use their prosperity, so that their souls might prosper in heavenly things. He gives them what they most ardently desire, but

he sends leanness to their souls. But their pride increases in proportion to their increase in worldly prosperity.— So when they are enclosed in their own fat, their mouth speaks loftily.

The man who is righteous and humble, and walks in the path of duty towards God and man, if he has any apparent prosperity in this world, will always be looked upon by such characters, with the eye of envy. A good man will not suffer his heart to indulge this disposition against any one; but bad men do not feel themselves under any such restraint. They not only indulge the spirit that lusteth to envy; but they endeavour to find the means of injuring those whom they hate. As they walk round in their accustomed course of business, they mark the steps of those whose profession and life seem to put them to shame; and they fix their eyes upon them, like the lion when he watches for his prey.—All animals of this kind endeavour to approach their victims in silence and secret; they spring upon them suddenly, and bring them into their power before they are perceived. The true christian, if he knows his condition, will know that there is a number of such characters, who are watching him in secret; and above them all is the grand adversary, who, like a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour. We ought not, therefore, to be ignorant of his devices; for those who are caught before they are aware, will find no mercy from him, nor from those who obey his suggestions, and voluntarily engage in his work.

But the christian has a friend to whom he always makes application, and who always exerts his power to save him in the time of need. This friend is Jehovah, the self-existent and eternal God. He is the Lord or governour of the universe, and all other beings are in his hand. Their hearts, and the current of their thoughts are in his power, and he can change them like the rivulets of water, into any channel he pleases. He has a chain fastened around the neck of the roaring lion, and every beast of prey is as much

under his control : none of them can go one step beyond the length of their chain. Jehovah has suffered evil to enter into this world, and he has permitted or suffered the grand adversary to become the god of this world ; to bring many of the human family into voluntary subjection to him, and make them the means of tormenting those whom he hates, because they always resist him : but he will not permit this evil agent to destroy any of his people, and will always hear their cry and save them in the time of need. No doubt one part of the design of God, in suffering evil to enter into the world, was that he might have the glory of saving his people from the power of the enemy, and of turning the wicked works of this enemy, into the means of preparing them for his heavenly kingdom. He turns the swords of wicked men, one against the other, and they become their own executioners. They destroy one another, and they destroy themselves at last. So he declares that the Assyrian king and his army were the rod of his anger, and his indignation was the staff in their hand. In this sense, the grand adversary, and every wicked man may be said to be the sword, and the hand of Jehovah.— They are the instruments of vengeance for his enemies, and of chastisement for his own people. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth : but his enemies he will cast down and make them his footstool.

When God shall have subserved his purposes by means of those wicked agents, he will cast them down. He declares, “ when the Lord has performed his whole work on mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.” There is a necessity for some of those wicked agents to be employed for a time, in the infliction of salutary chastisement on his people ; and thus while the one becomes humbled the other becomes proud. God observes the effect produced on the minds of both ; and

when his people are sufficiently humbled, he turns his hand against their oppressors. In the mean time, they are constantly engaged in prayer, that their enemies, both spiritual and temporal, may be disappointed; and cast down, and their souls delivered from the oppressing power.

The men that are engaged in this wicked work, are called mortals of this transitory world, they have their portion in this present life; they choose to have their happiness here. It is true they hope for eternal happiness; but they are not willing to suffer affliction with the people of God. They choose to enjoy pleasures, even although they should be the pleasures of sin. God grants them their desires. Their God is their belly, their glory is their shame, and their minds are set on earthly things; but Jehovah sees proper to give them the things on which their hearts are set. They have abundance of the things of this world. They are permitted to delight themselves with the treasures of the earth. They have many children. Their sons come to manhood, and they enter into power and wealth. When they are called from the world, they leave behind them sufficient for the support and comfort of their younger children. This is often the portion of the wicked, and even of the cruel and relentless persecutors of the children of God.

This is the address of the psalmist, and of the church, in all ages, to Jehovah the judge of all the earth. It is a statement of the facts, which have been obvious in all ages, and which are mournfully obvious at the present time. But the comfort of the christian arises from his belief, that the world is under the power of a righteous governour, and from his hope in the promise of God, that all things shall work together for his good. The portion and the conversation of wicked men are in the earth: but the world shall pass away, and all who have set their affections on it shall be cast down into hopeless disappointment, and eternal despair. They shall not even have a drop of water to cool their tongues, when their lips shall be parched with the

fires of the wrath of God, and when the arrows of the Almighty shall drink up their spirits. This shall be the portion of the wicked, when this transitory world shall have passed away. They shall behold the face of God, but it shall be when they shall stand at his bar, and receive the sentence of condemnation for their wickedness, which shall never be purged away.

But the child of God has this comfort in all his tribulation, that his sufferings do work a righteous disposition in his heart. He receives the chastisement, and kisses his father's rod. In every new trial, his faith is proved to be more precious than gold. He is righteous, because the righteousness of his Redeemer is put upon him, and the righteous disposition which was in his Lord, is infused into his heart. He who is fairer than the sons of men, has given him a portion of his comeliness, and thus he is conformed to the image of the son of God. In this sense the christian may say at all times, "I shall behold thy face in righteousness;" and when he awakes from the slumbers of the night, he is perfectly satisfied with his condition; for he has always renewed and increasing evidence of the fact, that he is one of the children of God. If we can say with the apostle, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ;" if this principle operates continually in our hearts, we shall know that he is righteous, that we are righteous in him, and that we are born of God. We may therefore look with comfort and satisfaction on the love of God; as the apostle says, "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." We have some evidence that we are like him, and we are satisfied when we awake with the evidence of his likeness.

This is the inward resemblance which the christian bears to his blessed and glorified Redeemer. The resemblance is perfect, as it respects the inward principle which rules in his heart; for he can say with the apostle, and with

the psalmist, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." But still he must confess, that although he always endeavours to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; yet he still finds another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, which is still in his members. This renders him unhappy, whenever the subject is brought to his mind. But he knows that Jesus Christ is his saviour; for he has received him in this character, at his own offer, and on his own terms. In this way he has continued and increasing evidence of the fact, that he is a child of God. Therefore he looks forward with joy, to that eventful day, when he shall arise from the silence and darkness of the grave, and stand at the bar of God to be judged. He must be justified, because his heart has become perfectly righteous, and no sin can be laid to his charge, for his judge has borne his sins in his own body on the tree. As he beheld the Redeemer when he was in the world;—he looked to him by faith, and his heart was conformed to his image. This was his chief comfort and satisfaction, while he lived; so when he shall awake from the dead, at the judgement day, he shall behold his blessed and glorious Lord; and not only his heart, but his outward appearance shall be like him. Then his joy shall be full, when he shall find himself perfectly conformed to the image of his Lord and Saviour; who shall change his vile body and fashion it like his own glorified body, by that power with which he is able to subdue all things to himself.

PSALM XVIII.

*To the chief — Of the servant of Jehovah,
— Of David. He spoke to Jehovah the
words of this song, in the day when Jehovah
delivered him from the hand of all his ene-
mies, and from the hand of Saul. And he
said, &c.*

This psalm is the same in substance, and almost the same in words, with the xxii chapter of the second book of Samuel. It is the production of the heart of David, but the spirit of God put it into his heart; and he wrote this song, not concerning himself only, but chiefly concerning the spiritual king of Zion, whom he represented. It is addressed to the chief, and is spoken concerning him who is the chief among ten thousand, who has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Our attention is called especially to that period, when he conquered principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross. It must have been written by David, near the time of his life, which is pointed out to us, by the connexion of events, in the twenty-second chapter of second Samuel. Saul had been long since dead, and his family had not only lost all power, but had become almost extinct. Various enemies had occasionally risen up against David, and were put down. The Philistines, the Amonites, the Edomites, &c. and last of all his well beloved son Absalom. But they were all finally crushed and subdued, and his throne was at length established so firmly, that no rival power was at all to be feared. Therefore he said;

TRANSLATION.

1. I will love thee, O Jehovah, my strength,
2. Jehovah, my foundation, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation,—my high tower.
3. I will call upon Jehovah who is worthy to be praised, and I shall be saved from my enemies.
4. The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of ungodly men affrighted me.

5. The cords of hell surrounded me; the snares of death prevented me.

6. In my distress I called upon Jehovah, and I cried to my God: he from his temple attended to my voice, and my cry before him entered into his ears.

7. And the earth shook and trembled, and the foundations of the mountains were shaken and were agitated; for he was angry.

8. The smoke in his nostrils ascended, and the fire from his mouth devoured; coals were kindled from it.

9. And he bowed the heavens and came down, and thick darkness was beneath his feet.

10. And he rode upon a cherub and did fly, and he went forward rapidly upon the wings of the wind.

11. He made darkness his concealment round about him; his tent was the darkness of the waters, the thickness of the clouds.

12. From the brightness which was before him, his thick clouds passed over;—hail-stones and coals of fire.

13. And Jehovah thundered in the heavens, and the Most High sent forth his voice;—hail-stones and coals of fire.

14. And he sent forth his arrows and dispersed them, and he multiplied his lightnings, and threw them into confusion.

15. And the bottom of the waters were seen, and the foundations of the globe were revealed,—from the rebuke of Jehovah,—from the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

16. He sent from above,—he took me, he drew me out from many waters.

17. He delivered me from my powerful enemies, and from them who hated me; because they were stronger than I.

18. They prevented me in the day of my calamity, but Jehovah was a support to me.

19. And he brought me to enlargement, he delivered me because he delighted in me.

20. Jehovah will reward me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he will recompense me.

21. For I have kept the way of Jehovah, and have not become wicked in departing from my God.

22. For all his judgements were before me, and his statutes I put not from me.

23. And I was upright with him, and I kept myself from my iniquity.

24. And Jehovah has rewarded me according to my righteousness, and according to the cleanness of my hands before his eyes.

25. With the kind thou wilt show thyself kind; with the man of integrity thou wilt show thyself to be perfect.

26. With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the perverse thou wilt appear to be tortuous.

27. For thou wilt save the people who are humbled; and thou wilt bring low the lofty eyes.

28. For thou wilt enlighten my lamp; Jehovah my God will illuminate my darkness.

29. For by thee I will run through a troop, and by my God I will leap over a wall.

30. It is God whose way is perfect; it is the word of Jehovah which is refined; he is a shield for all who put their trust in him.

31. For who is God except Jehovah, and who is the rock besides our God.

32. It is God that girdeth me with strength, and he makes my way perfect.

33. He makes my feet swift as the feet of hinds; and upon my high places he makes me stand.

34. He teaches my hands for the war; and a bow of brass is broken to pieces by my arms.

35. And thou wilt give me the shield of thy salvation; and thy right hand shall sustain me; and thy humbling shall make me great.

36. And thou wilt enlarge my steps under me, and the soles of my feet shall not slip.

37. I shall pursue my enemies and overtake them; and I will not return until there is an end of them.

38. I shall wound them and they shall not be able to stand; they shall fall under my feet.

39. And thou wilt gird me with strength for the battle; thou wilt cause them that rise up against me to bow down under me.

40. And thou hast given me the neck of my enemies, that those who hate me I might utterly destroy.

41. They may cry, but there shall be none to save;—even to Jehovah, but he will not answer them.

42. And I shall beat them small as the dust before the wind; and as the mire of the streets I shall bring them to nothing.

43. Thou wilt deliver me from the contentions of the people; thou wilt place me at the head of the heathen; people whom I have not known shall serve me.

44. At the hearing of the ear they shall obey me; the children of the stranger shall make feigned submission unto me.

45. The children of the stranger shall fade away, and they shall be affrighted out of their close places.

46. Jehovah lives, and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

47. It is God who giveth vengeance to me, and he will bring down the peope under me.

48. He delivereth me from my enemies; yea thou wilt exalt me from those that rise up against me;—from the man of violence thou wilt set me free.

49. Wherefore I will give thanks to thee among the heathen, O Jehovah; and I will sing psalms to thy name.

50. He magnifieth the deliverances of his king; and he showeth kindness to his Messiah;—to David, and to his seed forever.

DISSERTATION.

It is truly an astonishing characteristick of the psalms, that they are applicable to David, to the Messiah, and to all his people. The man whose mind is spiritually enlightened, and who has any kind of experience in the christian life, will see continually in the psalms, a faithful and true description of himself, of all true christians, and a description of Jesus Christ, who is the head of his body the church, and who has in all things the pre-eminence. It is necessary for us in all our meditations, and dissertations or

discourses on the psalms, to look to him who is the chief, and is chiefly presented to us, then to the psalmist—to ourselves,—and to the whole church, both militant and triumphant.

Jehovah is our strength, and the more we know of this truth, we shall love him the more. Through him alone we shall be able to conquer our enemies. These enemies are not flesh and blood, but principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world,—spiritual wickedness sitting in high places. We have no power in ourselves to resist them, and they have every advantage over us. But God says to every one of us, as he said to Paul; my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. His excellency is our Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. He gives strength, and sufficient powers of every kind, to enable his people to stand in the time of evil, and to conquer and triumph in the end. It is our duty therefore to exercise love to Jehovah, and to exert the powers of our minds to give him glory.

In this place, the psalmist seems to exhaust the powers of language, in the description of the excellencies of Jehovah, as a powerful and faithful friend. The fortresses in the land of Palestine were generally built on some rocky eminence, and were calculated both for defensive and offensive warfare. Some of them were considered as impregnable, and they afforded the means of annoyance, or of ruin to the enemy. When Jehovah stands to us in this relation, and we can place our whole dependence on him for support, for the execution of judgements on our enemies, for deliverance from their power, and from every kind of evil; we have then a foundation laid, for that kind of comfort, which the god of this world can neither overturn nor shake. The word which is rendered God, always signifies the being whom we worship, to whom we make our requests for all blessings, and to whom we render up thanksgiving and praise; and the man must be in a condition of comfort who

can say with a true heart and in full assurance of faith, Jehovah is my God, my rock, in whom I will trust. When the inhabitants of a besieged city are convinced, that the fortress which defends them is impregnable by the enemy, they feel themselves in safety: but when we are convinced, that our fortress and our God is the self-existent being, by whom all things were created, and by whom they are upheld in existence, then our souls have an anchor of hope, which will keep us firm in the midst of trouble. The shield was always used to defend against the missive weapons of the enemy, such as darts and arrows. The horn of salvation is an emblem taken from the Unicorn or Rhinoceros, by which he provides his food, defends himself from his enemies; and by raising his horn, he shows that he has no fears of all the powers that can be brought to operate against him. Every strong fortress was provided with a lofty tower or turret, which was always the last place of refuge from the besieging foe; here the standard was raised, and the whole strength of the city was concentrated in the time of danger; here also the missile force was brought to bear upon the enemy with the greatest effect: as Jehovah is the first, so also he is last refuge of his people, from all the power of the enemy; and all their confidence is in him.— They always determine to call upon Jehovah for every blessing which they need, because he has always been the object of his people's praise; and thus through successive ages and generations they have proclaimed that he is worthy to have all glory and honour, and power ascribed to him. He has commanded us to offer thanksgiving, and to pay our vows to him; and then when we are in trouble to call upon him for deliverance: and therefore they need not have any doubt or hesitation, with respect to their deliverance by his hand. They have his promise, "I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

The sufferings of christians are in the next place presented to our minds. The christian, who has had the ex-

perience of the chastisements of his heavenly Father, will be able to recognise his own sorrows in the description.— They are represented by the pangs of a woman in travail, and by that pain which is felt, when a cord is drawn very tightly round the limbs. They are called the cords of death and of hell, because they give the most exquisite and excruciating pain. The pain is often inflicted by means of intelligent beings. Ungodly men or men of Belial were the agents by whom much suffering was inflicted on the psalmist, and every christian must suffer from this class of mankind in his whole passage through this world. He will find also, that his path is filled with snares and traps, to prevent him from obtaining the object of his wishes. Although his best hopes do actually succeed, and he has the promise of God that his just desires shall be accomplished, yet his life is nevertheless a scene of disappointments and troubles, which are intended as trials for his faith.

The most painful and excruciating tortures, both of body and mind, were inflicted on the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore when we desire to have the meaning of the psalmist fully set before us, we should accompany the Redeemer to the garden of Gethsemane and to the cross; we should be like the soldiers by whom he was crucified, of whom it is said, that "sitting down they watched him there." We should indeed be actuated by a spirit different from theirs, for we should look upon him whom we have pierced, and mourn for it, as one in bitterness for a first born. But God brings all his people to participate in the sufferings of his only begotten son, not by the feelings of sympathy, which are merely natural, and which all must feel, who have the subject presented to their eyes or their ears, in a way that is calculated to excite their feelings; but by actual experience of the same kind, although not the same degree of suffering.

The Redeemer suffered the most excruciating pangs of death. He exhausted the cup of suffering, because he stood in the room of all his people. But in the course of

his providence, he brings them into similar troubles, that their faith and love may be tried, and that it may be fully understood both by angels and men, that they have the faith of the gospel in their hearts. The cords of death and hell will give pain, just in proportion to the degree of violence with which they are drawn; and if the enemy were permitted; he would tear our souls like a lion, and rend them in pieces when there should be none to deliver. But God suffers him to inflict upon his people, just so much pain as is necessary, to convince them that there is no salvation in the creature, and to persuade them to come to him alone for salvation, to call upon his name, and to give him no rest until he attends to their supplication.

The effect of distress, and of every kind of sorrow, on the heart of the christian, is to lead him to God, to pray to him for deliverance. There are truly proper and suitable means to be used, and when we trust in God, these means are not to be neglected; but the christian puts his trust only in God, and he continues to pray, and intreat and supplicate without ceasing, or relaxing his fervency. He prays and faints not. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, is said to have offered "up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death." God will answer the prayers of them that fear him, and continue to pray without ceasing. Days and months and perhaps years may pass away, and the christian has not convincing evidence that prayer is heard; but he still continues his devotional exercises, without relaxation, and with increased fervency. He is heard at length in that he fears, or he is heard because of the correctness and continuance of his devotional exercises. When God gives a favourable answer to our prayers, there is generally some way in which he causes the answer to be heard and understood by us. But there are times and circumstances in which the answer is given in a voice of thunder, and while the heart of the suppliant is revived

and comforted and filled with joy, his enemies are covered with confusion and terrour. The prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ, which he offered up with strong crying and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, appears to have been answered in this manner, when his sufferings were finished, his body was hanging on the cross, and his soul had descended into the invisible regions of the dead. Then the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake; and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened. Then these words of the psalmist were literally fulfilled, the earth shook and trembled, the foundations of the mountains were shaken and greatly agitated, because God was wroth. The prayer of Joshua, and the army of Israel under his command, appears to have been literally answered, at the time when the five kings of the Amorites were incensed against the Gibeonites, and attempted to destroy them, because they had made peace with Israel. At that time they were discomfited with a great slaughter; and as they fled before Israel, God cast down great stones from heaven upon them and they died:—"they were more who died with hail-stones, than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword." God answered the prayers of his people in a most conspicuous manner, when he delivered them out of the land of Egypt, by opening for them a passage through the Red Sea. They may truly be said to call upon Jehovah in their distress, when the sea was before them, and the powerful army of the Egyptians was behind. There appeared at that time to be no means of deliverance. But when God put forth his power in favour of his people, the sea was divided, the bottom of the waters seen, and the foundations of the globe were revealed, from the rebuke of Jehovah, from the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

This is an exhibition of facts which the spirit of God makes to us in these words of the psalmist. They have many times been literally fulfilled; but they are fulfilled

spiritually in every deliverance, which God gives to his people, both as individuals and as publick bodies. We do not see nor understand it, because we do not see nor understand our real condition. It is important for us to look into the meaning of that declaration of the apostle, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The powers which are leagued together for our destruction are only less than divine. We can be delivered by none, but by him who is the great God and our saviour Jesus Christ. Therefore in all our distresses we are to cry to Jehovah, and wait for the blessed hope, and for the appearing of his glory in our deliverance. As he depended on his Father for deliverance, in his dangers and sufferings, so we are to hope that his Father will give us salvation through his blessed agency, which shall always be exerted in our favour in the time of need.

There is some light cast upon this subject by the prophet Isaiah, when he prays to God; "O that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence." He says also, "when thou didst terrible things that we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence." It is a truth that God generally gives an answer to the prayers of his people, in a way which they do not expect. Some terrible phenomena sometimes appear in the heavens and the earth, before some national judgements are to be executed by his hand; and the things which appear to be powerful obstructions in the way in which his word declares that certain things shall come to pass, are all removed; and thus the valleys are exalted, and the mountains and hills are laid low, the crooked things are made straight, and the rough places smooth. The church also declares, by terrible things in righteousness, wilt thou answer our prayers. God does actually bow the heavens

and descend ; he rides upon the cherubim, he goes forwards with inconceivable rapidity on the wings of the wind ; but he conceals himself in darkness, and he is hidden from our sight.

If, in a natural or temporal point of view, we fix our eyes on the phenomena of the heavens, when the dense and congregated clouds seem to be impenetrable to the rays of light, while the lightnings continue to flash, and the thunders to roll along the heavens, while all nature seems to confess the grand and awful presence of the Almighty ; we must see that sacred poetry excels in sublimity, all that has ever been written by man not divinely inspired : but when we take into consideration the truth, that God really descends in this manner, to deliver his people from their enemies, and that one of their spiritual enemies is more powerful than legions, and even millions of the most powerful among mankind, we shall then feel something of the power of spiritual sublimity. It requires divine power to create, and God was able to create the heavens and the earth in six days, but it requires more than creating power to be in continual exercise, to save one human being from the fangs of that adversary, who like a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

The psalmist represents his condition as being most dangerous. He was like a person placed at the confluence of a number of deep and rapid streams of water. When many of such streams meet together they form a deep and dangerous gulph, and thus the psalmist was struggling to keep his head above the water, while his strength was almost gone. He was in the midst of enemies who hated him, and who were exceedingly powerful, while he was weak. They came round him in the time of his distress, and shut up every way of escape. Whenever he made any attempt to escape they prevented him. The true christian is not seldom placed in such a condition as this, while he is a partaker of the sufferings of Christ in his flesh. He is

shut up in darkness while the waves break over his head, and he sees no way to be delivered. But God sends from above, and delivers him from his powerful foes. He delivers every one of his children, as he delivered his only begotten son. Whenever they shall have suffered the portion of pain, which is allotted to them, and their hearts shall have been sufficiently purified in the exercise of faith, he will relieve them from their sorrows, because he loves them. He permits their sufferings to advance to that particular point, which will promote their advantage and his glory, and then he will bring them to enlargement, and deliver them, because he delights in them.

Jehovah rewards all his children according to their righteousness. His only begotten son stands above them all, because he voluntarily suffered in the room and stead of all the other children; and in all these excruciating pains, he never suffered an unrighteous thought to enter into his heart. His Father has therefore given him a name which is above every name. But the reception of Christ's righteousness through faith actually makes us righteous. By receiving the Redeemer, we are not only acknowledged to be righteous and justified, but our hearts actually become righteous. Hence, says the apostle, I delight in the law of God after the inward man. The christian never engages with his heart in any course of action, which he does not believe to be righteous, and therefore his hands are clean, and his heart in this sense is always pure. God will therefore give him a reward according to his righteousness.

The christian's habits are here presented to our view.— He keeps the ways of Jehovah, and does not wickedly depart from any commandment of God. He endeavours to find out his duty, and when this is known to him, he never lives in the neglect of it. The christian will not commit a presumptuous sin. He sets the judgements of God before his eyes continually, and will never cast away any of his statutes. He is therefore always perfect or upright,

with God. If he should be led into any sin, he will repent with all his heart, and will be more watchful in future, against the prevailing and besetting sin, into which he is prone to fall. He is more watchful against this kind of sin than any other, because he finds it to be the most dangerous; and therefore he endeavours, "to lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset him, and to run with patience the race set before him." The man who has lived in this course of righteousness will have the witness in himself, the spirit of God will bear testimony with his spirit that he is a child of God. Such characters can always say with the apostle, "our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world." With this comfort God always rewards his people according to their righteousness, and according to the cleanness of their hands before his eyes.

God is the righteous governour of this world, as well as the judge, who will give to every man according as his work shall be. If any man has formed righteous habits both towards God and man, he will find that God is righteous, in giving him the comforts which a righteous man should hope to enjoy in this world. If any man is kind and merciful, and cherishes in his heart, and exercises in his life, a kind and merciful disposition; he will find that God will treat him with kindness and mercy in the course of his providence. "With the kind thou wilt show thyself kind." The man who acts honestly and uprightly in his dealings with his neighbour, and in the performance of his duties to God, will always find by a careful examination of the subject, that God has acted uprightly with him; and that it has not only been a righteous thing for God to afflict him, but the affliction has been for his benefit. With the perfect man, he will show himself to have acted with the perfection of a righteous judge, in all the things of this

world. The man who does not indulge, nor suffer any kind of impurity to remain in his heart, but comes continually to the fountain that is opened for sin and for uncleanness, that he may be purified, will be enabled to behold his God, and will find that his purity is of the same kind, although not of the same degree, with the purity of his maker. But if any one should suffer a perverse and rebellious, or murmuring disposition, to have its residence in his heart, and, like the Israelites in the wilderness, should be discontented and impatient under the various disappointments, and causes of uneasiness, which all must suffer in the course of life; and should think or speak in such a manner as to cast censure on the providence of God, he will find that God's providence towards him will operate in such a manner, as to increase this evil disposition. God declares to all mankind as he declared to the Israelites, if ye will walk contrary unto me, then will I walk contrary unto you; and I will chastise you seven fold for your sins. There can be no benefit in contending with the Almighty. If a son were to contend with his father, or a subject with his sovereign, the contention must always end in the disgrace of the former. But as the judge of all the earth must always do right; so none can stand up against him and be innocent. If men will continue in this way to rebel against God, they must at length be brought to that state of mental alienation, in which they will blaspheme the God of heaven, on account of their pains and their sores, and not repent of their deeds. The holy, and kind, and righteous governour of the universe, will appear to them to possess none of those virtues; but rather to act with injustice and cruelty in his government. It is therefore of great importance for every one to humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and not to let obstinacy or perverseness have any influence in his heart.

God has determined to humble his people, and to make them know and confess, that they are wretched, and misera-

ble, and poor, and blind, and naked; and therefore in the course of his providence, he brings them into such circumstances, as have a tendency to humble and mortify the pride of their hearts. Often he brings them so very low, that, like the apostle, they despair even of life. But when they are sufficiently humbled, he will give them deliverance; and their hearts shall rejoice in his salvation. As he has determined to bring his people down to christian humiliation, he will also bring down the proud and lofty, so, that they shall be constrained to bow to him. They may hate his government, but they must be subject to him; for he has sworn that to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear. So in this sense the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled.

But the humiliation of the children of God is intended for their benefit, and especially to enable them to bear the prosperity which God has in store for them, with a proper and suitable disposition. We must be humbled before we can bear exaltation, and our lamp must first be put out in darkness, before God makes it shine with a great degree of splendour. No nation on the face of the earth has suffered such a long scene of humiliating judgements as the Jews; but there is every probability, that they will be favoured with a high degree of joy and exaltation, in the latter days. So every christian who has been long in a state of affliction, and is brought very low, has a right to hope that he shall experience a high degree of joy and exaltation.

He must indeed expect that the powers of darkness will exert themselves to impede his progress, and if possible to destroy him. They may stand in his path, like troops of men in hostile array, they may put obstructions before him, as impregnable as the high walls of a strong city; but they shall not be able to obstruct his progress, any more than the inhabitants of Nazereth, obstructed the progress of the Lord Jesus Christ, when they led him to the brow of the hill, on which their city was built, that they might cast

him down headlong. "But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way." The christian has the strongest ground of confidence, that God will go with him in his duties, and especially in those which are the most painful and arduous.

There is a kind of perfection in all creatures that have not fallen from their primitive condition, and there is a kind of perfection in every man whose heart is renewed unto holiness. Thus Job is said to have been a perfect and an upright man; and Noah is said to have been an upright man and perfect in his generations. But when we speak of absolute perfection, there is none perfect but Jehovah. It is God whose way is perfect. He has given us commandments, he has made offers and promises to us, and when all these are studied and investigated, they appear to be like gold or silver which has been melted in the furnace, and in which nothing can be found but the pure and precious metal. He has promised to give his people protection from their enemies, and therefore they may use him as their shield, and put their trust in him as their defence from all the fiery darts of the enemy. There is no God besides him, and no rock on which dependance can be placed. For he girds his people with strength. When any one has a girdle about his loins, he can make the most powerful exertions. But God makes strength itself, a girdle for his people; and their path is directly forward, for they cannot be impeded by any kind of obstruction.

He that trusts in God shall always be enabled to advance in the path of godliness. He that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as the eagle; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. They have their enemies to encounter; but God shall give the power to make war, and to obtain the victory. It seems that in the days of the psalmist, the art of working in brass was brought to such

perfection, that they made their bows of this substance, and it required a strong man to bend them; but the psalmist declares in this spiritual sense that he had bended and broken the strongest bows. It is no vanity to speak in this manner; for it has the same meaning of the apostle when he says; "I can of my ownself do nothing, but by Christ who strengthens me I can do all things. When I am weak then am I strong."

When God has given to his people this spiritual strength, and enabled them to accomplish works which are far beyond human prowess, he gives them the sure and certain hope that they shall be finally saved. This shield of God's salvation will always be sufficient for us in every conflict with the enemy. For if he once teaches our hands to war, and our arms are enabled to break a bow of brass in pieces, then we may hope that the enemy will never again be able to cast us down in despondency; for we have the same power to uphold us, by which we have been upheld in the times past. If God gives us the shield of his salvation, we shall always be enabled to use it for the disappointment and discomfiture of the enemy; and we shall always be sustained in the conflict, by the right hand of God. Those very conflicts by which we see our own weakness, and by which we are most dejected, and cast into the darkest part of the valley of humiliation, will afterwards be of the greatest advantage to us; and will make us great, by teaching us how to vanquish the enemy on some future occasion. Our steps shall be enlarged, and we shall advance more rapidly in the christian journey. We shall no longer backslide nor turn from the course, but every succeeding day shall find us nearer our father's kingdom in the heavens.

The enemies of David, who exerted all their powers to destroy him, and to prevent him from obtaining the kingdom of Israel, are here used as emblematical of the spiritual enemies of the christian, and by these we are to understand, not merely the spirits of darkness, but all who oppose

the progress of the christian in the spiritual life of Christ in the heart. A large portion of our lives is generally spent like the life of David, in conflicts with the enemy, when the case often appears to be doubtful, whether we shall finally succeed. There are obstructions in our course, and reverses of fortune; and sometimes the enemy gains a temporary advantage, by means of some sin which easily besets us. But after a long series of trials and conflicts, and having learned our own weakness, we become such characters as those mentioned by the apostle, when he says; "I write unto you young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God dwelleth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." Although every christian warrior, like David, may use this language in a temporal sense against his adversaries, and by faith in the promise of God he shall obtain the victory; yet it is evident that all these declarations, are intended to express the christians hope of a spiritual victory, and the manner in which he is determined to proceed in the contest. In this war, there is no mercy to be extended to the enemy. Here even the exercise of mercy gives the enemy an advantage, which he will always use for our injury. When God sent Saul to conquer and destroy the Amalekites, Saul was vanquished by his own pride, and love of popular influence; and if our hearts still remain under the influence of any sinful disposition, we have reason to fear that our enemies will gain some advantage over us. We must be determined to pursue them and overtake them, and not return until we make a full end of them.

If we can make such a resolution, we need not be afraid, for we have the strength of God promised for our assistance. He will gird us with strength in the battle. He will enable us to put our feet upon our enemies, that we may cut off and destroy those who hate us. It is necessary for us to look at every thing in this subject spiritually and substantially. Our enemies are those who would lead us either into sin or misery, or both, and our victory over our

enemies is the destruction of their power. The christian has no delight in giving pain to his enemies. We know that David never inflicted pain upon his enemies; to gratify a revengeful disposition. But he had not those false and childish feelings of mercy which would prevent him from performing his duty; because it produced pain to his enemies. They would truly use every effort in their power to save themselves from ruin. They would cry to some saviour for deliverance; they would cry even to God to save them, but he will pay no attention to their prayers.

We shall be better able to see the force of these words of the psalmist, by looking back to that period, when Jerusalem was enveloped in flames by the Romans, when thousands were suffering the most excruciating tortures of body and spirit, and when there appeared nothing which could save the nation from ruin. It was the Lord Jesus Christ who inflicted the misery, that he might destroy the power of his enemies. They cried, but there was none to save; they cried to Jehovah but he gave them no answer; and the Lord Jesus Christ did really and spiritually crush them to small particles, like the dust before the wind; so that they had afterwards no power to prevent the advancement of his kingdom. The advancement of the kingdom of Christ is the object nearest to the christian's heart. This kingdom has a multitude of enemies among mankind; enemies who are such professedly, and enemies who profess to be friends. There are also enemies to this kingdom in every heart, that does not abstain from those fleshly lusts which war against the soul. The true christian unites with the Lord Jesus Christ in trampling upon his enemies, and casting them out like the mire of the streets; and he has no sympathy for the sin that dwells in his own heart; but endeavours to destroy it by the power of his Lord.

When any kingdom of government has begun to be established, and when the violent and most hostile foes are cut off, the next important work to be performed, is to put

to rest all strivings and contentions among the subjects, or citizens who belong to it. When the government of Saul was put down, and succeeded by the government of David, it would naturally require some time for the latter to be fully established. Even when the little brief authority of Absalom was overturned, some strivings and contentions arose among the people who followed David, from which there might have arisen serious difficulties. In the establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah over the world, there is something of the same strivings and contentions. After the Jewish opposition was put down, and the gospel sent over the world, it was necessary that the authority of the Redeemer should be established, amidst strivings and contentions, in every government, and in every heart, which was finally brought into subjection. Then Antichrist arose, and ever since that period there have been scenes of contention among the professed followers of the Redeemer, and the christian world is divided into sects and parties. Every christian must engage in this warfare in the community where he dwells; and there is also a warfare in his own heart. But God has given us his promise that those who adhere to the truth, shall be delivered from the strivings of the people, and that the truth in every place shall finally prevail.

God has promised to give the heathen to his only begotten son for his inheritance. We may see the course which he will pursue, in the history of the advancement of David. When the kingdom of Israel was consolidated and established in his hand, he soon obtained authority over the heathen nations around the kingdom of Israel; and at length far distant nations became his subjects. Solomon the son of David, is said to have reigned over all the kingdoms, from the river Euphrates to the Mediterranean sea. Not many years after the Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead, and put down his enemies the Jews, he sent forth his gospel over the world; and was publicly acknowledged in

almost all the nations of Europe. His gospel was preached, and when men heard it they received it. This is the accomplishment of prophecy. The Lord Jesus declares by David, that the gentiles shall obey by hearing the word preached. We see that this prophecy has been accomplished already to a certain extent, and it is also predicted that the whole world shall, in this way be brought into subjection to the son of God.

As there are two kinds of religion, the outward and the inward; so there are always two kinds of characters who profess subjection to the Redeemer, the children of the kingdom and strangers. If christianity were a popular religion, and if religious men were not obliged to take up their cross, and follow Christ through scenes of sorrow and reproach, there would be many of that class of christians who are called the children of the stranger. Still there are many characters, to whom the Redeemer says, as he said to the Jews; "verily I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracle; but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." But this fact shows the mighty power of gospel truth, as well as the truth of prophecy.— Although all mankind are gone out of the way, and are all become sinful; yet it does not follow that this feigned submission is mere hypocrisy, without any conviction of the truth of the gospel. There are many who are convinced of the truth of the gospel, who are not fully converted from the error of their ways; and these are chiefly the strangers of whom the psalmist speaks. Many are visibly brought into the church of Christ, who are not members of his spiritual and invisible kingdom; and all these are the children of the stranger. But this class of professing christians, as they are not confirmed in the faith; so there is among them a perpetual fluctuation. They are not fully established in the faith of the gospel, and there are some of the truths of the gospel which they do not believe: but they cannot be said to be the enemies of the gospel in

every sense of the term. There are many of the Jews, who on a certain occasion are said to have believed on Christ, but to whom he said; "ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you." These were strangers to the Redeemer, notwithstanding the profession of their faith in him, and the friendly disposition which they felt at the moment.

These children of the stranger have always some false principle, on which their hopes are founded. They always have some refuge of lies to which they retreat in the time of trial. In the time of the prophet Isaiah, they are said to have mocked at the judgements with which they were threatened, and to have said; "we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us." But they were frequently affrighted out of their close places. It is said by the prophet, "the sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" All their hopes shall finally fade; and when the last terrible vengeance shall approach, they shall say to the rocks, fall upon us, and to the hills, cover us.

It is always the chief comfort of the christian, that Jehovah the self-existent God, who always lives and who is always the same, is the rock on which his hopes are founded.—Amidst all the fluctuations of the world, and the various overturnings of the hopes of men, the christian knows that he has made Jehovah his refuge, and he feels perfectly satisfied with the foundation on which he has fixed his hopes: This leads him to ascribe to God all blessing and praise, and to desire that he should be exalted in the hearts, and by the voices of all. God is the God of vengeance. He has not given the injured man the privilege of avenging himself; but he has given his people the right to hope, that they shall have ample satisfaction for all the injuries they have re-

ceived. It is also true with respect to every conscientious christian man, whose heart is true and sincere, and whose life is an honour to his profession, that God brings down the people under him. He may be suspected and hated, and charged with hypocrisy in the beginning of his christian walk; but finally he outlives and conquers all calumny and falsehood. When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies be at peace with him. He is always in this sense delivered from his enemies, exalted above those that rise up against him, and set free from the man of violence. He even conquers by his sufferings, when he bears them with a true christian spirit. He may be said with the Lord Jesus Christ, to conquer principalities and powers, and to make a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross.

But as these scenes of humiliation, in the life of every christian, do finally give place to joy unspeakable and fulness of glory; so the scenes of the humiliation of the church militant, shall finally give place, to the triumph of christianity throughout the world. Hence the apostle declares, in the xv chapter of the epistle to the Romans; "now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the gentiles might glorify God for his mercy, as it is written; For this cause will I confess unto thee among the gentiles, and sing unto thy name." The christian makes the declaration in hope, not only that he himself shall yet praise God for giving him the victory over all his enemies, both temporal and spiritual; but that the whole christian church shall triumph in the latter days, and the whole gentile world shall join in the song of praise, to the chief conqueror, or the captain of our salvation, who always leads the praises of the church to God.

The Father receives the honour of the whole plan, and the whole work of our salvation. Christ relies upon his Father, for the deliverance of himself and his church, from

the whole power of the enemy; as David trusted in Jehovah to deliver him from all his enemies. The psalmist is here set before us as a remarkable type, or representation of the king, whom the Father declares he had set on his holy hill of Zion. As the victories; which David gained over his enemies, were always evidently the work of God; so all the deliverances which are given to the church, and to particular christians from the power of the enemy, are magnified as being given by the Father. Although he has not always spoken with an audible voice, nor formed any visible appearance to the eyes of men, in favour of his son, and of his gospel; yet he has always spoken, and does even now speak as plainly, by the voice of the truth in his word, as he spoke at the river Jordan, and on the mount of transfiguration, "this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." As the apostle declares; "if we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise;" so it may also be said, if we are Christ's, then we are also of the seed of David, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and God the father will bestow upon us the blessings he has promised to his only begotten son, and which he has laid up under his care, to be distributed among his people forever.

PSALM XIX.

To the Chief ——— A Psalm of David.

TRANSLATION.

1. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse makes manifest the works of his hand.

2. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night exhibits knowledge.

3. No speech;—no words;—their voice is not heard.

3. Their line is gone out into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.— In them he hath set a tabernacle for the sun.

4. And he, as a bridegroom, cometh out from his chamber; he rejoices as a strong man to run a race.

6. His going forth is from the extremity of the heavens, and his circuits over the ends of them; and nothing is concealed from his heat.

7. The law of Jehovah is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple.

8. The statutes of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9. The fear of Jehovah is clean, continuing forever; the judgements of Jehovah are altogether true and righteous.

10. They are more to be desired than gold, even much fine gold; and they are sweeter than honey, and the distillations of honey combs.

11. Also by them is thy servant warned; in keeping them is great reward.

12. Errours, who can understand? keep me innocent from secret errours.

13. Also from presumptuous errours keep back thy servant; let them not rule in me; then I shall be upright and innocent from the great transgression.

14. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable before thee, O Jehovah, my rock and my redeemer.

DISSERTATION.

ACCORDING to the language of philosophers, the psalmist may be said in this psalm, to lead us from nature to nature's God. He commences with the works of creation, and then calls our attention to the law of God, to the ordinances of his gospel, to the principles of christianity, and the means of purifying the heart. The God whom we are here called to admire is the Lord Jesus Christ, the word of God, who is said to have existed in the beginning with God, by whom all things were created, and without whom not any thing was made, that was made. The heavens are the work of his hands. The word firmament, which is used by our translators to signify the whole visible expansion, by which the earth is surrounded, as far as the eye can reach, is taken from the false philosophy of Aristotle, by which the sky was believed to be a solid substance like glass; but we are to consider the heavens, and the firmament, as including that vast imensity of space which creation exhibits to our eyes. All these things exhibit the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he commanded, and they were created by his word. He spoke and it was done. He said let there be light, and there was light.

Although God is one, and should always be considered as one undivided being, who is not composed of parts, and

whose presence fills the heavens and the earth, yet in this God there are three distinct subsistences, who are called the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and the Son is the agent whom the Father sends to accomplish his works. So the apostle declares it was by him he created the world; and that he upholds all things by the word of his power. The subject here presented to us is not natural, but revealed religion; not what the heavens have declared, or what they would declare, to those who have no knowledge of God revealed to them, in any other way; but, what the heavens and the whole expanse of creation, declare to us at this time, with all the helps to our understanding, which are afforded in the revelation of God. When therefore we understand, that Jesus Christ is the creator and governour of the heavens and the earth, that by him all things were created, visible, and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; and that the creator is himself uncreated, it follows plainly that Jesus Christ is the self-existent God. The heavens not only declare; "the hand that made us is divine;" but they declare the glory of the person of the God-head by whom they were created. The Father has the honour of planning and commanding, but Jesus Christ has the honour of carrying all things into effect.

But he has also the honour of governing all things. He declared to his disciples after he rose from the dead, that all power in the heavens and in the earth, was committed to him. He is the governour both in the moral and the natural world. The seasons as they roll on in perpetual change, the autumn changing to winter; the winter to spring, and the spring to summer; the day as it changes to night, and the night to day; the succession from one night to another, are always giving lessons of instruction to man. They all declare, the time is short, and now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation.

This is the way, in which the subject is applied by the apostle Paul in the x chapter of the epistle to the Romans.

He exhibits the day and night as being engaged, in preaching the gospel to mankind. This was the fact, even in the time in which he lived, for the gospel was then carried to the different parts of the world. It was true in some degree, even in the days of the psalmist; for all nations appear to have had some knowledge, and some expectation of a saviour; and therefore every day and every night brought this subject to their minds, with some degree of interest. It was in those days, chiefly a subject of prophecy, but the prophecy was carried over the world like the succession of day and night. There was no speech, no words,—their voice was not heard; but their line went out into all the earth, and the words to the end of the world.

It is in fact the gospel, or the new creation, which the spirit of God here chiefly presents to our minds. If any man be in Christ he is a new creation, old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. This doctrine will also be found to be true, with respect to the world which we inhabit. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, and all things seem to wait and look forwards with anxiety, towards the new creation, and the manifestation of the sons of God. In this respect day utters speech to day, and night to night teacheth knowledge; and the voice of creation is still becoming louder and more intelligible, and the sound will finally be heard and understood, at the remotest extremities of the habitable world.

The most splendid and remarkable of the visible objects in creation is the sun in the heavens. In the splendour and glory of the creation, he stands conspicuous. He appears in the morning like a bridegroom, coming out of his chamber, decorated in the splendid clothing, and the ornaments which are intended to grace the nuptial ceremony, or he appears like some of the heroes of antiquity, who were about to start in the race for the garland or crown, which was to entitle them to the highest honours in the

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nation. The course of the sun is glorious. He appears in the morning in the one extremity of the heavens, and seems to pass with inconceivable rapidity, to the other side of our globe; and while his presence illuminates every object, his heat penetrates where his light cannot enter; and thus every being in the system is warmed and cheered by his influence.

But the sun in the system of the gospel is he, who is said to be the brightness of the glory of God, and the express image of his person. The Father appears only through his only begotten son, as the light and heat, and animation are derived from the natural sun, to the earth. Therefore Jesus Christ is called the sun of righteousness. He illuminates the moral system, which was darkened by the fall of man. In him is life, and the life is the light of men; and thus he communicates life, as he dispenses the light of the gospel. By him God shines into the hearts of men, as he commanded the light to shine out of the darkness; and he gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in his person. Jesus Christ must therefore be revealed to us in the first place, before we can have any saving illumination from his law or from his gospel; but when we are once led to him as the sun of righteousness, then all the works of creation and providence, will become our instructors to teach us the knowledge of the gospel.

The law of God is a perfect rule, which he has given us for the regulation of our hearts, as well as of our actions.— All our desires and affections are to be brought to the law, that their real characters may be known and determined, as holy or unholy. By the law is the knowledge of sin. By comparing our hearts and our actions with the law of God, we are to learn their nature, whether they are righteous or wicked; and the degree of good or evil which is in them. The man who has lived in the practice of iniquity, who knows not God and obeys not the gospel, must be led to the law, that he may know his sinfulness. We must know that

we are sinners, or else we shall not seek the salvation of the gospel. This is the sense in which the law converts the soul.

But conversion is like sanctification. It is a continued work, commencing with the first operation of christian principle in the heart. We learn our sins day by day, we learn also the sinfulness of our nature; and we abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes. Conversion is a painful and humbling process, in which the christian looks upon his sins with aversion, and upon himself with abhorrence and abasement. He says with the apostle, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good; but it shows me that I am a sinner. "I know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." If we desire to be converted, we should keep the law continually before us, and say with the psalmist; "wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin: for I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me."

By the testimony of Jehovah, we are to understand a certain doctrine, or ordinance, or institution, by which some important and interesting truth is always presented to our minds. Thus the rainbow is an ordinance by which God teaches us, or gives us his testimony, every time when it appears, that he will never destroy the world by means of a deluge of water; and that seed-time and harvest shall never cease. He testifies that all men are sinners. He declares they are all gone backward, and there is none righteous, no not one. He testifies in the ordinance of baptism, and in the sacrament of the supper, that Christ has made an atonement for the sins of his people, that his blood will cleanse them from all sin, and that all, who in true faith eat and drink of the sacred symbols of the broken body and shed blood of Christ, in the sacrament of the supper, shall receive a portion of the bread and the water of life. Christians ought to

receive the testimony of God, with humble and simple dependence on his word; for this is true wisdom, and thus they shall learn to act wisely in all their conduct; but especially in all their religious duties.

The statutes of Jehovah are the public ordinances of religion, which are to be attended to, regularly and stately, by his people. The passover for example was a statute of Jehovah, which continued through the old dispensation, and the Lord's supper is the same statute, under the new dispensation. Such also is the preaching of the gospel, and the keeping of the Sabbath. They are all righteous in their nature, and all calculated to bring comfort and rejoicing to the christian's heart, as well as to help him forward in the practice of christianity.

As the law of God is a transcript of the divine perfections, and shows us the purity and splendour of his righteousness; so every particular commandment has the same purity and brilliancy; and by setting it before us, the eyes will be enlightened, as to that particular subject, concerning which the command is given. This effect is produced in us by keeping the command. For although the eyes of our first parents were opened immediately after they had broken the command; they saw that they were naked and knew that they had sinned,—they knew evil by unhappy experience, yet they would have known how to distinguish between good and evil; with much greater accuracy, if they had honoured the commandment, and kept it continually before their eyes. Those who have their conscience exercised to discern between good and evil, always keep before them the commandments of God, with the spirit of obedience in their hearts.

The fear of Jehovah is frequently used to signify the whole of religion; because it is the spirit or substantial principle, which characterises every christian duty. If any one performs his christian duties, with the fear of God in his heart, they will not be defiled by any impurity nor un-

clean disposition. He will discard every thought and suggestion, which would be offensive to God; and he will pray that God would search his heart, and take away every evil thing. This is not the fear which bath torment, which perfect love will cast out; but the fear which is excited by a view of the holiness and majesty of Jehovah. It must therefore continue and increase in the christian's heart forever.

The judgements of Jehovah are the decisions which he gives in his righteous law, concerning all the thoughts and actions of all mankind. These decisions are always followed by some effects on the mind, or some dispensations in providence, by which his approbation or disapprobation may be perceived and known. Men do still, "show the work of the law of God written in their heart, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the mean while, accusing or else excusing one another." We may always learn the judgements of God concerning all our actions, by making an application of the great principles of his law.—When these are properly applied, we shall always find that all his decisions are both true and righteous. They may sometimes appear at the first, to be dark and doubtful, but after proper examination, we shall always be obliged, from the force of truth, to say with the prophet; "righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee."

It has always been the course which the people of God have pursued, when any doubt or difficulty arose in their minds, to go to God for a solution: Thus it is said of Rebecca, when the twins struggled together within her, and she felt desirous to know the cause, that she went to inquire of the Lord. In ancient times, before the canon of scripture was completed, God often revealed his will to the prophets and the priests, and the people came to inquire the will, or the judgements of God, from their mouth: but if we desire to know his judgements at the present time, we have need only to go to his word, and to pray for his

spirit, which he has promised, to teach us all things, and to lead us into the truth. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to every man liberally." But it is absolutely necessary for us to prepare our hearts for receiving an answer. "We must ask in faith, nothing wavering." We must value the word of God above every other consideration, and it must be sweet to our taste beyond all earthly comforts. The psalmist here expresses his judgement, concerning the value and sweetness of all God's communications. Every christian expresses the same judgement, and he grieves and mourns, because his desires are not strong enough, after spiritual things; nor his taste sufficiently refined to relish their sweetness. To the man who has made advances in the love of these heavenly enjoyments, they are pure and sweet, beyond the purest honey which distills from the comb.

By all these communications the servant of God is enlightened, and put on his guard, against the various seductive influences by which he is surrounded. The tempter always exerts his power to conceal the evils from our view, that he may lead us into them for our ruin: but he who knows the judgements which God gives, concerning all his thoughts and actions, will not be ignorant of the devices of Satan; and therefore will not be easily led away from the path of duty. It is therefore a great benefit to be so well acquainted with the word of God, that we can tell what kind of judgement he will form, concerning any of our actions, or any course of conduct we may pursue.

It is impossible for any one to have a thorough understanding of the numerous and multiplied evils, which have been brought into the world by the introduction of sin.— "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?" In every step of our journey through the world, we are liable to make some deviations from the path of duty. The command of God always extends to the heart. When God, for example, commands

us to keep holy the Sabbath day, he says, thou shalt not think thine own thoughts. An error is, therefore, any departure of the thoughts from any of the commandments of God. When, therefore, we consider our proneness to wander from the path of duty, and the almost innumerable ways in which we are liable to deviate, we may all exclaim with the psalmist; "Errors, who can understand." They are numerous beyond imagination, and many of them so small, that they are imperceptible to the eye of the natural man. But they all lead to destruction; and the man who pursues any course of error has always reason to fear, lest he may come short of the promised rest.

The errors into which we are most liable to fall are those which escape our notice. God has given us his law as the rule for our thoughts, as well as for our actions, and he has given us also the right to hope, that by making application to him, we shall also receive the wisdom which is proper to direct us in every circumstance; but such is our ignorance of duty, and our natural inclination to wander from the direct path of God's commandments; that, when ever there is a path of error, which is not particularly pointed out to us, we are apt to leave the path of duty, and fall into sin. It is evident that the psalmist means by secret errors, those deviations into which we fall, without a particular knowledge of the sin. It is not a sin which we know and desire to keep it secret from the world; but a sin which we do not know, and may perhaps believe to be a duty. Thus Paul persecuted the church; but he did it ignorantly, and thought he was doing the will of God. But every error is sinful. The sin does not consist so much in our knowledge or our ignorance, as in the deviation from the command of God; but it is lessened or increased by our ignorance or our knowledge. Some sins which are committed ignorantly may indeed be very small. It is our duty, for example, to go to the table of the Lord and commemorate his death; but there may be some circumstances, in which we have not the opportunity of preparing our hearts, for the

performance of the duty. Then it may be a question whether we shall go to the table or not on that particular occasion. There are various ways in which the most conscientious may fall into secret or undiscovered errors.— We have all reason to pray, that God would not suffer us to bring guilt upon our consciences, by means of these errors of ignorance.

But the errors which are the most dangerous, and for which no pardon is provided, are those which men commit after they have come to the knowledge of the truth. When they know their duty and yet do the contrary. God declares in his law; “the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord; he hath despised the word of the Lord, and broken his commandment; that soul shall be utterly cut off: his iniquity shall be upon him.” There are many degrees of this kind of sin, and there are many steps towards it, from the sin of involuntary ignorance. When men will not take the trouble to seek instruction, their ignorance is in some respects presumptuous, and they hide their talent in the earth. They who advance in this kind of iniquity, will at last commit the sin for which there is no repentance, and no pardon. It is committed with a certain degree of light in the understanding, and of malice and contempt in the heart, against the spirit of truth. This is the great transgression.

When any vice, or sinful propensity, has obtained so much power in the heart by indulgence, that the commandments of God, and the reproofs of conscience are disregarded; and men rush forwards to the gratification of their lusts; then there is no hope of salvation, unless God arrest them in their course by some uncommon, or miraculous dispensation of his providence. We have therefore, always reason to keep a watch over our hearts, and to pray to God to prevent us from indulging any lust, which might lead us to a presumptuous sin. This is the only way in which the heart can be kept upright, and by which we can retain our integrity.

When we are in company with those whom we respect and love, we shall always be careful to use that kind of language and behaviour, with which they will be pleased. But God is always present with his people, and always looks upon their hearts. He has given us the right to hope that he will put such thoughts into our hearts, and enable us to use that kind of language and behaviour, with which he will be pleased. When we address him as our rock or strength, we say, that we are resolved to rely upon him for protection from every enemy, and as a solid and permanent foundation for every hope. He is our Redeemer, because Jesus Christ has paid the price of our redemption by his precious blood, and because he has undertaken to deliver us from all evil. It is therefore our blessed privilege and pleasing duty, to ask Jehovah our God, to keep us free not only from secret and presumptuous errors; but that he would give us thoughts and meditations, and enable us to use such words and outward behaviour as are pleasing and acceptable to himself.

PSALM XX.

To the Chief ——— A Psalm of David.

TRANSLATION.

1. Jehovah shall answer thee in the day of distress; the name of the God of Jacob shall exalt thee.

2. He shall send thy help from the sanctuary; and from Zion he shall support thee.

3. He shall keep a record of all thy gifts, and he shall accept thy burnt offering.

4. He shall give to thee according to thy heart; and all thy counsel he shall fulfil.

5. We will exult in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up the standard; Jehovah shall fulfil all thy requests.

6. Now I know that Jehovah doth save his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heavens; by mighty powers his right hand shall save.

7. Some make mention of the chariot, and some,—of horses; but we in the name of Jehovah our God, will make our record.

8. They are bowed down, and they fall, but we stand up, and bear our testimony.

9. Jehovah doth save; the King shall answer us in the day when we call.

DISSERTATION.

THE Septuagint translators have generally used the imperative form of the Greek verb in their translation of this psalm, and they have been followed in this respect by our

translators. Hence the foregoing part of the psalm appears to consist of a series of petitions; in which the church appears to come forward with boldness to the throne of grace, and every one gives assurance to his fellow worshipper, that his prayer shall be heard. The psalmist David, or the Lord Jesus Christ, may indeed be supposed to endite these petitions, and having offered them in his own person, hands them over to every other worshipper to unite in the same petitions. But the language of the original is in the form of a promise; and, like the xcii and the cxxi, is given to us for the particular exercise of our faith. Jesus Christ, the word of God, addresses the word of promise to every christian; and it is the duty and the privilege of every christian, to lay hold upon the word of promise in the full assurance of faith; and also that all christians should encourage one another with these words, by applying them, to themselves and to their fellow worshippers.

God has given us the promise that he will answer us in the time of distress. He has commanded his people to call upon him in the time of trouble; and has said, I will answer thee, and thou shalt glorify me. It is therefore very comfortable, and highly beneficial to the christian, and to an assemblage of christian worshippers, to use the language of promise in their exercises of devotion, when they know that this is the very way in which God has addressed them. When they are cast down, in sorrow and humiliation, then they are to call upon the name of God for relief. Thus when Peter performed the miracle of healing, on the man who had been lame from his birth, and who sat and asked alms at the gate of the temple, he declared that the name of Christ, or faith in the name of Christ, had given that perfect soundness in the presence of all. This man may be said to have had faith to be healed. But although we are not oppressed by any trouble that is uncommon, yet if we know, and are suitably affected with our natural

condition as sinners, then God may be said to send trouble, and we go by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ to be healed. When the apostle says, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death, he must at that moment have experienced deliverance, when he said, I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord. The painful thought of his sinful and miserable condition was removed for a time, by the pleasing thought that he had access to God through the blessed Redeemer. But in the name of the God of Jacob, we have not only the promise of deliverance, but of exaltation. The word signifies a high tower, in which we are not only defended, but exalted above the enemy.

God has promised to send this help out of his sanctuary, and support us out of Zion. In ancient times it was the duty of the worshippers, when they could make it convenient, to go to the temple to pray; but in these times God has opened the temple in heaven for all his people. We are commanded to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus. His sanctuary is in the heavens, and Zion is a spiritual mountain, on which his heavenly sanctuary is built. The help or support is not imaginary, but spiritual and real, and we receive strength and support from the hand of God, as we receive our temporal food.

Although we are altogether dependent on the bounty of God; yet he gives us the power of making presents to him. In the sacrifices and free will offerings which he received from the hands of his people in the times of the Old Testament, we should receive the same principle, by which ministers devote their labours and their talents to the preaching of the gospel, and by which private christians bestow a part of their property, for the support and propagation of the gospel, or for the relief of the poor.— God has promised to keep a record of all that we have done and suffered for his sake.

He will not be behind us in his gifts. He has promised

to give us all our desires that are good for us. So said the Redeemer to his disciples; "if ye abide in me, and my word abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." The same promise is made in substance in many other parts of the word of God. If our desires are proper for him to give, and for us to receive, we are to ask and they shall be given to us. Our wise and righteous plans shall all be accomplished, for he has said; "commit thy way into the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgement as the noonday." We should always see that our intentions, and all the desires of our hearts, are according to the will of God, and then, when we ask them with fervency and in true faith, we have every reason to hope, that our requests shall be granted.

This is the cause of the christian's exultation. It is in fact that which is generally believed to constitute happiness. If all our desires are fulfilled we must be happy.— Perfect and permanent happiness cannot be fully enjoyed until the judgement day; but there is no need for the christian to be unhappy, nor to have any doubt or fear on this subject. He should labour to have the scriptural evidence of his christianity. He should give all diligence to make his calling and election sure. If we have satisfactory evidence that we are the people of God, and that he has chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth, it is our duty and our privilege, to be glad and to exult in the salvation of God, while we keep the banners of truth displayed continually in our lives and conversation.

The christian lives by faith, and hence he always enjoys a portion of comfort in believing. In this respect God never leaves him utterly destitute. He never falls into despair. But he has God's promise that the time will come when every one of his requests shall be granted. He shall

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ask and it shall be given to him immediately. There are periods in the life of the christian, when his faith, or his dependence on the promise of God becomes so vigorous, and so clear, that he can say, I know that God will save me. He will answer me from his holy heavens. His right hand shall be extended with mighty power for my deliverance from all evil. This is the full assurance of hope. It was the hope of Job when he said, I know that my Redeemer liveth. It was the hope of the apostle when he said, I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

The word which is here rendered anointed is Messiah. It signifies the Lord Jesus Christ and all his people. He makes them all kings and priests unto his God and Father. As Jesus Christ was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, so every one of his people has a portion of that same unction of the Holy One; and as God saved his only begotten son; so he saves every one of them. It is necessary for us to keep the truth in mind that the powers which are against us are mighty. They are principalities and powers; they are the rulers of the darkness of the world; they are spiritual wickedness in high places: they have over them, as their leader, that powerful spirit, who is called the god of this world. *Therefore it requires a powerful arm, and a series of the most powerful exertions, to deliver us. But as God put forth his mighty power to save his Messiah, and communicated to him such mighty powers, that he was able to conquer principalities and powers, and to triumph over them in his cross; so by that same right hand, he will save all his anointed ones. Therefore they may all rejoice and exult, and set up the standard of victory; for Jehovah will at length accomplish all their wishes: he will save them with an everlasting salvation.

There is still some object in which we trust, and the name of this object will be imprinted on our memory, and

frequently mentioned in our conversation. The chariot and the horse were powerful means of defence, and of gaining the victory in the wars of the ancients.* The king who was well provided with chariots and horsemen, often obtained the victory; and thus they became the objects of trust among mankind. Men generally place more trust in created objects, than in the creator. As their affections are set on the earth; so earthly objects are the ground of their reliance for comfort, and for protection from evil.— But the christian in keeping his record of all the transactions, and all the important circumstances of his life, begins in the name of Jehovah. In him he puts his trust, and his name always comes into his memory, when other objects do not intrude themselves on his attention. His heart seems naturally to incline to Jehovah, and his hopes are placed on his word.

It is plain that the man, who sets his hopes on the things of the world, can never have any source of permanent comfort. In the day of distress the world can afford him no relief. He bows down and falls, and sinks into despair. He says, with Micah of old, my gods are taken away, and I have nothing left. But the man who trusts in the name of Jehovah, shall always be delivered out of trouble; he believes it and relies upon it; and therefore he stands erect in the midst of his troubles. He has set up his standard, and he keeps it raised; for God enables him always to bear his testimony to the truth.

This declaration, that Jehovah saves, is intended to show that the Saviour is Jehovah. The same class of mankind, who now uphold the truth of the gospel of Christ, has continued in the world, and has been the same in all ages.— They have stood amidst sufferings and the fires of persecution. When their hearts began to faint and fail, they have always found strength communicated. Their Saviour is the sovereign of the universe. Their help is laid, and they lay their help on the mighty one, who always

stands in the presence of the Father, and who ever lives to make intercession, for all who come to God through him. We call upon God through Jesus Christ, and the answer to our prayers comes to us through him. He will always hear us when we call, and bring us an answer from his Father and our Father, from his God and our God.

PSALM XXI.

To the Chief — A Psalm of David.

TRANSLATION.

1. O Jehovah, in thy strength the king shall rejoice; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he exult.

2. The desire of his heart thou hast given him; and the espoused of his lips thou hast not withholden.

3. For thou didst prevent him with blessings of goodness; thou hast put on his head a crown of the purest gold.

4. Life he asked from thee; thou hast given him length of days forever and ever. *

5. His glory is magnified in thy salvation; thou hast put on him honour and majesty equal to his desire.

6. For thou hast made him to be blessings forever; thou hast given him the most exhilarating joy by thy countenance.

7. For the king doth trust in Jehovah; and by the loving kindness of the Most High he shall not be moved.

8. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out them that hate thee.

9. Thou wilt make them as a furnace of fire, at the time when thy face is turned towards them; Jehovah will swallow them in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

10. Their fruit thou wilt cause to perish

from the earth; and their seed from the sons of men.

11. For they intended evil against thee; they imagined a wicked device, which they are not able to accomplish.

12. But thou wilt set them as a mark for thine arrows; thou wilt make them ready upon the strings against their face.

13. Be thou exalted, O Jehovah, in thine own strength; we will sing and praise thy power in psalms.

DISSERTATION.

It is evident that Jesus Christ is here presented to our minds as the king or governour of the universe. He hath on his vestment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. He is therefore emphatically the King. The Father has made him Lord over the works of his hands, and has given him all authority in the heavens and in the earth. He rejoices in the strength, or divine power of Jehovah his Father, for he is his eternal son, and therefore his Father's might has always been his, and shall be his forever. But as he possesses human nature, he rejoices in the strength of God, like any of his creatures; and his Father gives him strength to accomplish the great and glorious work of our salvation. It is all the Father's salvation, because it was he that formed the eternal plan, and communicated it to his only son, who always rejoiced in the habitable parts of his earth, and his delights were with the sons of men. As he has connected himself with his church, so that he and his people are one, God the Father has given him to be the leader and commander of his people. He and they are united, as the vine is united to its branches, so their salvation is his salvation. He stands to them in the relation of a father to his children, and

he brings them before his Father and their Father, and says, behold, here am I and the children whom thou hast given me.

The church is therefore the desire of the Redeemer's heart, and the espoused or betrothed of his lips. The union which is formed between him and his people is very frequently represented, by the union of the bridegroom and the bride. They were given to him in covenant from eternity, because they were always the desire of his heart.—“Thine they were,” said he to his Father, “and thou gavest them me.” He espouses them to himself when they receive his gospel. They then become holiness to the Lord. God the Father actually gives them into his hand, to make them holy, and prepare them for dwelling with him forever. Every one, therefore, that is actually given into the hand of the Redeemer, according to the church covenant, is an addition to his joy, because his Father has not withholden the espoused of his lips.

His Father has so much love for him, that so far from keeping back any blessing which he had promised him, or which he might desire, that he gives them blessings before he asks them. As soon as the thought enters into his heart, he is prevented from asking, by the presentation of the thing which he desired. By the crown of the purest gold, which is put on his head, we are to understand the government of the universe; for his church is here represented as his bride, and therefore his crown has not so much relation to his authority over her, as to his power over creation.

The life which he asked from his Father, is the life of blessedness and glory, which he enjoys as a king; but especially the eternal life which he bestows upon his people. He has life or enjoyment, by bestowing favours on them. He said to his disciples when he was in the world; “the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God; and they that hear shall live. For

as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the son to have life in himself." The Redeemer has received life from his Father, which no creature could receive; for although a created being may be happy, he cannot take a portion of his happiness, and give it to another. But the Father has given infinite blessedness to his only begotten son, and he takes a portion of this blessedness, and bestows it upon every one of his people. Thus the Redeemer enjoys blessedness, by making his people blessed. He lives by communicating life. He asks this privilege from his Father, that he might give eternal life to as many as he had given him, and the Father gave him the privilege of communicating this life to them through eternity.

The glory of the Redeemer is magnified, or made continually greater, in the salvation of his Father. He has taken honour and majesty, and given him a portion of them equal to his desires. He has made him the eternal communicator of the richest blessings of heaven. The light of his countenance shall forever shine upon him, and give him eternal and increasing joy.

The Lord Jesus Christ is like every one of his people, he places his confidence in God his father, and by his loving kindness he is never moved from his hope; but is strong in the faith giving glory to God. God has promised that the righteous man shall never be moved; and the man Christ Jesus relies upon the same promise. The difference between him and his people is only the difference, between the head and the members of the body. They all stand, by their union with the Father, and he honours and blesses them, because they trust in him.

But as the Father has made his son the executive of the godhead, and has given him power to execute judgement also, because he is the son of man; so all that are opposed to him shall be discovered and punished. He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and as a potter's vessel he shall break them to pieces. His enemies and his haters often ap-

pear among his friends, and frequently make the highest professions of friendship. Their words are smoother than oil, while war is in their hearts. But Jesus Christ declares, "I am he that trieth the reins and the heart;" and he knows his enemies better than they know themselves. Therefore his hand shall find them out in the execution of his judgements.

His judgements are often terrible in this world, but they shall be infinitely terrible at last. There is no pain so dreadful as that which is inflicted on the spirit of man.— Judas was one of his enemies, although he professed to be his friend. But his hand found him out at last, and so great was the fire by which his heart was tortured, and his comfort destroyed, that in the hopes of escaping the pain, he destroyed his life. This is a kind of earnest of the terrible pain of hearts, which in some way will fall upon his enemies: Their hearts shall become like a furnace, at the time when he turns his face towards them in anger. It was thus that he looked towards the Egyptians, when they were advancing, with a bold and determined resolution, to destroy his people. But by his look their strength was withered, and their hearts were troubled, so that their pursuit became a flight in the opposite direction. Then who can conceive their horror and despair, when they found themselves overwhelmed in the mighty waters.

But the pains which are suffered in this world are of short duration. It is but little to be destroyed as Judas, or as the Egyptians were destroyed. But the meaning of the word of God is, that these pains shall never cease. A furnace of fire, or an oven that is perpetually burning, is here used, as a representation of the eternal condition of the enemies of Christ. There is no mention made of any change for the better, and death makes no change on the soul.— Neither Judas nor the Egyptians altered their condition for the better by dying, for they died without repentance into life.

It is a comfort to us when we depart from the world, to have reason for the hope, that our families, and those who have imbibed their principles from us, shall continue in the world and prosper, and rise to honour. But it is a painful consideration, for any one, on the bed of death, to have before him a dark and cheerless eternity, and no hope that his posterity shall receive any blessing from God. The enemies of the king of Zion have every thing to fear for themselves, in a future world, and nothing to hope for their posterity in this world. The causeless enemies of any christian are the enemies of Christ. The man who commits an offence against a christian, commits an offence against Christ. Those who do not perform an act of kindness to a christian, when he is in need, will be charged by the Redeemer as having no charity for himself. But his enemies often imagine evil devices, and form plans, which, if they were successful, would prevent the advancement of his kingdom, and destroy his authority from the earth.— They are not able to accomplish their designs; for he has pledged his word, that his enemies shall be covered with disappointment, and shall at last utterly perish. He will set them as a mark for his arrows. Every one of them shall say with Job, while they have no hope of deliverance; “The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison of which drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.”

The psalmist concludes his address to this Mighty King, by ascribing to him the name Jehovah, or the eternal God; he who is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty. He desires that he might be exalted by his own strength. The Apostle declares that; “he is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power.” Therefore in the casting down of his enemies, his power shall be exalted, which will be always the subject of his people’s praise. Although his power as a human being must always be derived from

his Father, whenever it is needed ; yet his power as a divine person is in himself. The Father hath from eternity given to the son to have power in himself, as well as life in himself. Therefore he shall be the object of perpetual praises for his omnipotence, as well as every other divine attribute. Hence when christians sing this psalm, they ought to look directly to Jesus Christ. It is scarcely necessary for them to look to David as the type, for the antitype is so clearly presented to their minds, that all representations vanish.— We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and our minds dwell upon him ; while every other object sinks into insignificance, and is lost. May we behold him as the Lord our strength, as well as the Lord our righteousness ; and we shall praise his power, as exalted in our salvation.

PSALM XXII.

*To the Chief ——— upon AIJELETH
SHAHAR.—A Psalm of David.*

The word AIJELETH signifies power or strength, which is necessary to enable any one to perform some arduous work; and the word SHAHAR means the morning's dawn, which has in it a very small degree of light. The subject to which the attention is particularly called, is Jesus Christ upon the cross; and especially at that period in his sufferings, when he addressed his Father in the words of the first, and the most mournful lamentation, contained in this psalm; My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?—He was forsaken, but he was not left in the gloom and midnight of despair. The cheering and strengthening light of the morning dawned upon his soul. He had the hope that God would at length deliver him. This light still imparted as much strength, as enabled him to continue his supplications with some power and fervency, until he was enabled to say in the language of triumph; "It is finished. Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."

TRANSLATION.

1. My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me; why art thou far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring!

2. My God, I cry daily, and thou wilt not answer; also in the night and there is no silence to me.

3. But thou art holy, who dwellest amidst the praises of Israel.

4. In thee our fathers trusted; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5. To thee they cried, and they were delivered; in thee they trusted, and they were not put to shame.

6. But I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men, and the despised of the people.

7. All that look upon me, deride me; they open their lips with scorn; they wag their heads.

8. He trusted in Jehovah that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, since he delighted in him.

9. But thou art he who brought me forth out of the womb; thou didst cause me to hope when I was on the breasts of my mother.

10. Upon thee I was cast from the womb; from the belly of my mother, thou art my God.

11. Be not far from me, for grief is near; but there is none to help.

12. Many bulls have encompassed me; strong bulls of Bashan have enclosed me.

13. They have opened their mouth upon me, as a lion, tearing and roaring.

14. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are disjointed; my heart is like wax, melted in the midst of my bowels.

15. My strength is dried like a potsherd; and my tongue adheres to my jaws; and thou hast brought me to the dust of death.

16. For days have encompassed me; the congregation of the wicked have enclosed me; they have pierced my hands and feet.

17. I may tell all my bones; they look,—they stare upon me.

18. They have parted my garments among them; and upon my vesture they have cast the lot.

19. But thou, O Jehovah, be not distant; O my strength, hasten for my help.

20. Deliver my soul from the sword; my united one, from the power of the dog.

21. Save me from the mouth of the lion; for thou hast answered me from the horns of unicorns.

22. I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will sing praises to thee.

23. Ye that fear Jehovah praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob glorify him; and reverence him all ye the seed of Israel.

24. For he did not despise, nor abhor the humiliation of the afflicted; and he did not hide his face from him; but heard him when he cried.

25. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before them that fear him.

26. The meek shall eat and shall be satisfied; they shall praise Jehovah who seek him; your heart shall live forever.

27. All the ends of the earth shall remember, and shall turn to Jehovah; and all the families of the Gentiles shall worship before thee.

28. For the kingdom belongs to Jehovah, and he is the governour among the nations.

29. All the fat ones of the earth shall eat and worship before him; all that descend to the dust shall be made to humble themselves; and none can keep alive his soul.

30. A seed shall serve him; and it shall be reckoned to the Lord for a generation.

31. They shall come, and they shall declare his righteousness to a people who are yet to be born; and that he hath done it.

DISSERTATION.

THE promise of God, that he will never leave nor forsake his people, is made in the most tender and endearing form.

and is frequently repeated, in his word. He says to every one of them in the times of trouble and despondency, "can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb: yea, they may forget, but will I not forget thee." He promises to be present with his people in their troubles, and always to deliver them in the end. There are many degrees of comfort, and there are many degrees of pain. There are many cases in which he withdraws the comfort of his presence from his people, and their hearts are filled with painful fears, and forebodings of future evil. When God lifts upon them the light of his countenance he gives them comfort and peace; but when he hides his face they are troubled. In these mournful circumstances, they complain that God has forsaken them, and they make their complaint to himself. No doubt the Lord Jesus Christ suffered the most painful degree of this kind of sorrow, at the time when he uttered these words on the cross; but all the children of God are occasionally placed in circumstances, in which they suffer a degree of the same kind of sorrow, and pour out the same kind of complaint into the bosom of their heavenly father.

They never can be ignorant nor unmindful of the truth, that God is present with them, and knows the thoughts of their hearts. But when God is said to have withdrawn his presence, and to stand afar off, it is meant that his comfort is withdrawn, and that his people are left in sorrow. None of them are ever left to suffer the deepest and most aggravated sorrow; but they must all suffer a degree of misery in which they shall say, the pains of hell have taken hold on me. The Redeemer suffered the most excruciating of this kind of misery; because he stood in the room of his people, and bore their sins in his own body on the tree. But the experienced christian can always understand the meaning of these complaints, by comparing them spiritually, with the sufferings he has endured. Even bodily pain may be so

excessive, as to force the sufferer to cry, and even roar in his agony, but the pain of the wounded spirit is beyond description, and can only be represented so as to convey some very indefinite knowledge of it, by referring to the torments of the body.

It is often a great mystery to the christian, and a subject concerning which his ignorance gives him pain, why such sufferings should be inflicted upon him, and why they are so long protracted. So Job declares; "I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say unto God do not condemn me; show me wherefore thou contendest with me?"—Even the sufferings of the Redeemer in the garden were so severe and terrible, that it is said he began to be amazed, and to be spent and overwhelmed with sorrow. In fact the mind of the christian is not unfrequently depressed, and cast down, so as to be amazed at the extent, and the long continuance of his miseries.

But he does not faint and be discouraged, so as to leave off prayer. The severity and intensity of his miseries always impel him to more diligence and fervency, in this exercise of devotion. It is his wisdom to pray and not to faint. He knows that to forsake God would be to rush into misery. It would be sinking into the bottomless pit, without any effort to rise. When the disciples of Christ were forsaking him one after another, he said to those who remained; "will ye also go away? Lord, said Peter, to whom shall we go, but unto thee; thou hast the words of eternal life." The man who knows this truth will never cease to pray while he is in trouble. In the day time, in the midst of his labours, and in the hurry and bustle of the world, he always finds time for the ejaculations of secret devotion; and in the night, when sleep forsakes him in his misery, his heart pours out supplications to God. His sorrows are increased by the thought, that God does not appear to pay attention to his mournful complaints.

But the christian never harbours the thought for a mo-

ment, that God can do any thing inconsistent with his high and holy character. Holiness is not only freedom from sin; but hatred and abhorrence of every kind of iniquity.— As God has revealed himself as the hearer of prayer; so it would be inconsistent with his holiness, to suffer the faithful and fervent prayers of his people to pass unnoticed and unanswered; especially when they cry to him, in distress, as the God of mercy. The christian knows that when God does not immediately answer his prayers, he has good reason for his delay. The sufferings of his people may be of such a nature, and so severe, that they cannot praise him in their deepest and most terrible pains; yet they will afterwards praise him even for their severest sufferings. So God is said to inhabit the praises of Israel, he is surrounded with praises as the sun is surrounded with light; or as he is said to dwell in the light to which no man can approach. No man can be praised for all the works which he performs; but God is great and his greatness exceeds all search and investigation. His people have an intimate acquaintance with him and his works; their eyes behold his righteousness, and they always praise him when they see his glory.

In the midst of our sufferings, when we look for deliverance, but it comes not; when our pains increase, and God appears to pay no attention to us; there is some comfort in looking back to the examples of God's faithfulness, which appear in the history of his dealings with our father's, who have walked in the same paths of sorrow, and have been delivered. Thus Job declares though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. He trusted and he was finally delivered. The fathers always cried to God for deliverance in their troubles. They made him not only the secret, but the publick object of their trust; and therefore if he had paid no attention to their prayers, nor had given their deliverance publickly, they must at length have been ashamed of their hopes. But as God has said; them that honour

me I will honour; he has publickly fulfilled his promise in all the ages past. The psalmist lived to old age, and passed out of the world, full of riches and honour. God has given to his only begotten son a name which is above every name. The apostles of Christ may be said in a certain sense to dwell in the midst of the praises of the church.— Hence we may see the truth exemplified, in the history of all the fathers of the church, that instead of being put to shame they were delivered and honoured.

But in the history of the Redeemer, and in the history of every christian, we shall always find that comfort follows sorrow, and honour follows shame. Every one of them must be humbled before he is exalted. Hence it is said of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him. Every christian who attends to his duties faithfully, and bears his testimony to the truths of the word of God, especially if he is called like the Redeemer to be a teacher of religion, will not unfrequently be obliged to utter this complaint; I am a worm and no man, reproach of men, &c. He will feel this reproach and contempt in circumstances of suffering, when God appears to have forsaken him, and his enemies have full opportunity of adding to his sorrows. Thus it is clearly testified by those who were eye witnesses of the sufferings of the Redeemer on the cross, that they who passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself; and even the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes, and the elders, said, he trusted in God; let him deliver him, if he will have him; for he said, I am the son of God. This is not only a spiritual, but a literal accomplishment of the psalm, in the particular example of the Redeemer: but it is spiritually accomplished in all his people, in their passage through the tribulations of this world.

But while the christian pleads with God for deliverance,

he brings forward such arguments, as he thinks will operate with power on the mind of his heavenly father. The apostle declares, that God separated him from his mother's womb, to be a preacher of his gospel; and every christian who has given all diligence to make his calling and election sure, may also say that God separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace. But the Lord Jesus Christ was the son of God from eternity, and took human nature according to his Father's command; and therefore it may be said of him in a particular and especial sense, that God brought him forth out of the womb, and caused him to hope from the breasts of his mother. But there is a sense in which the truth may be repeated by every christian with respect to himself. Every kind and degree of true hope is the production of God in the heart, and the eyes of all things look to him as the giver of all good. But he sometimes causes the babe at the breast, who can scarcely articulate the prayer, which his mother has taught him, to have hope in the kindness and protection of his Father in heaven. His pious and tender parent has already devoted him to God from his conception in the womb, and thus he has been sanctified from his entrance into the world. It is always a great comfort to the christian, that he has been consecrated to God by his parents; but if his lot has not been so happy, and if he has the evidence that he has received the Lord Jesus Christ in truth; then the apostle has taught him to believe, that he was chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that he should be holy and conformed to his image, and therefore he may say that God was his God from the womb of his mother.

Our consecration to God depends not on ourselves, nor on our parents; as it is God that has separated us from the womb, and called us by his grace. It is he that has taken the charge of us, and made us what we are. He has said to every one of his people; "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn

thee." We must find the evidence of the fact in ourselves, and then if we are drawn to him, we know that the whole is his work. In this sense every one, who has a proper evidence of his christianity, may say, I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly.

It is very necessary for us, in the time of affliction, to be able to make strong and powerful appeals to the loving kindness and faithfulness of God. We know that God will be faithful, and when we see that his faithfulness is pledged for our deliverance; there is in the very thought, a degree of comfort and hope, which will keep our hearts steadfast in the midst of our troubles. When we can say to our best and only friend, he not far off, for grief is near, and there is none to help; we may have strong hope that he will deliver us in the proper time.

Our enemies are exceedingly powerful. We have in this part of scripture an exhibition of their rage, when it was glutted with success, and when they were intoxicated with full gratification. It is the same in substance with what the apostle beheld, when he saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; at which sight he was astonished beyond measure. The land of Bashan appears to have been well adapted to the feeding of cattle, and the bulls of Bashan were exceedingly powerful and fierce; and if any other animal against which they had a natural antipathy, had been put in their power, and their rage excited against it, they would have exhibited a striking emblem of the rage and madness of the persecutors of the christian church in all ages, especially in those times, when their works of wickedness appeared to have been crowned with success. One of those periods, in which the powers of hell appear to have been intoxicated with victory; and with the blood of the chief of the saints, even with the blood of the captain of our salvation, is here almost literally described by the spirit of prophecy, many hundreds of years before it came to pass.

We see the multitude of the Jews with the chief priests and the elders, assembled on mount calvary. We see the Saviour hanging on the cross, fastened by nails, which were driven through his hands and his feet; his bones disjoined and dislocated; and while he was racked with bodily pain, the powers of hell were let loose to inflict tortures on his spirit; while men appeared like Bacchanals, intoxicated with his blood.

But many exhibitions of the same kind have been made, from that day, to the present. The blood of the saints have been publickly and privately shed, and pains of various kinds, both bodily and spiritual, have been inflicted upon them, since the death of righteous Abel, to the pain which modern charity inflicts, by depriving the faithful witnesses of their proper power, and influence among mankind. In this spiritual sense there have been many in these latter days, who could say; "my heart is like wax, melted in the midst of my bowels; my strength is dried like a potsherd; my tongue adheres to my jaws; and thou has brought me to the dust of death." When ignorance and error are triumphant, and when many are forsaking the truths in which they had been instructed, the man who is possessed of that charity which rejoices in the truth, is made to mourn, not only because he has laboured in vain, and spent his strength for nought; but because the truth has fallen in the streets and equity cannot enter, and the land must finally mourn under the desolating judgements of God.

But the christian not only continues to pray and to supplicate for deliverance; but he becomes more earnest and fervent in his supplications, in proportion as his troubles are increased and multiplied. He makes Jehovah his strength, and trusts only in him. He supplicates that he would not stand at a distance like an uninterested spectator, that he would hasten for his help, and deliver his soul from the sword, from the dog and from the mouth of the lion. The word which is rendered my darling, or my united one,

appears, chiefly, to relate to the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then in the second place, to every soul that is united to him in the faith of the gospel; for all christians are one in Christ Jesus, and every christian is a member of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. This prayer ought therefore to be understood, as offered by the Redeemer personally, for his own deliverance; and also as a standing prayer, or intercession for the deliverance of every one of his people; for he calls each of them his darling, and his united one. We ought therefore to unite with him, in making supplications for our own souls, and for all his people; as they are united with us in the various ties of nature and of grace.

But it is of importance for us in our exercises of devotion, to have some understanding of the mystery of the human nature, being united with the son of God, in the person of Jesus Christ. It is a doctrine of revealed truth, that the Messiah is eternally the son of God, that he is frequently called Jehovah, the name which is translated by himself; he who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty.—It is therefore evident that the divine nature of Jesus Christ could not suffer by the hands of any of his creatures. Whatever suffering he endures, in his own original nature, must be such as a king would endure, when he saw his subjects rebelling against him, and was able to crush them in a moment; but being desirous of saving some of them, he exercised forbearance for a time, that some of them might repent and seek mercy. Thus God is said to be long suffering and compassionate,—not willing that any should perish. But it is impossible for man to comprehend the compassionate feelings of the son of God, towards that human nature, which he had taken into union with himself. His human nature is as really himself, as any member of our body is ourselves. If pain is inflicted on any of our members, it is our persons that suffer. In this sense Christ suffered in his person; although his divine

nature was totally impervious to all the fiery darts of the wicked one. He had power to crush his enemies in a moment; but as he had determined to suffer for the sins of his people, he therefore thought proper to give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and not to hide his face from shame and spitting. He would not even exert his divine power to save his person from suffering; but trusted entirely to his Father. As the Father had prepared him a body, or human nature; so he trusted in him to deliver that body from the power of the enemy. He had already experienced deliverance in times past, and trusted in him for future deliverance; that as he had answered him from the horns of unicorns, he would also save him from the mouth of the lion.

When the children of God ask any favour from him, they always have the desire to make whatever return or remuneration may be in their power. But all the return which man can make, and all that the son of God can make to his Father, is to celebrate his praises. Jehovah the Father is possessor of all things. They do not go out of his possession, or his power by bestowing them on any creature, or even on his only begotten son. Hence giving does not impoverish nor withholding enrich him. But as we are pleased when any good quality which we may possess, or any good work which we have performed, is spoken of with approbation; and when any one whom we have released from distress, speaks of our kindness with gratitude: so God is pleased when his perfections and his works are declared by his people. The great object or chief end of man is to put honour upon God, and to make this work his highest enjoyment. This is the great object of all the children of God. They meet together for this purpose.— They speak and hear the truths of his gospel. They unite in prayer and in praise, and their sincere desire is to glorify his name.

It is possible the psalmist may have intended to fulfil this

promise, in the remaining part of this psalm, and therefore he calls upon his brethren to glorify God for his mercy to himself, and for the blessings of the gospel, which are finally to be given to the whole human family. The remaining part is highly practical, and expresses the grateful feelings of one who had been raised from deep and horrible sufferings, to a high state of comfort and joy. He desires that the whole christian church should unite in giving honour and glory to Jehovah, and that their devotion should have in it a suitable degree of awe, and fear, and veneration. None can understand, or know, or possess the correct feelings of devotion, but the spiritual seed of Israel. These feelings may be learned by all the true and sincere worshippers of God, but the way to learn them is to have the same kind of feelings in our hearts, which are here expressed by the psalmist. This is the way in which we must learn the new song of the hundred and forty and four thousand, who were redeemed from the earth.

Nothing is so powerful as affliction for humbling the heart. The man who is sufficiently humbled "sitteth alone and keepeth silence. He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope." It is true that we have no just claim on Jehovah for deliverance from evil, and our only hope is in his mercy; but all mankind are in their nature objects of disgust to a holy being. The sufferings of a sinner must appear to all such characters, like the writhings of a serpent in the agonies of death. The Redeemer was viewed as a sinner, in the eyes of the law, when he suffered for sinners; and every sufferer, in the human family, is a sinner; and therefore if God does not despise us in our afflictions, nor hide his face from us, but hear us when we cry, we have reason to praise him with grateful hearts.

As the true christian desires to let his light so shine before men, that they, seeing his good works, may glorify his Father who is in heaven; so he acts on this principle in

offering up his praises. It is not sufficient for us to meditate secretly on the mercy of our heavenly Father, and cherish corresponding grateful affections; we shall desire to let his tender mercies towards us, appear also to others; so that he and not ourselves may receive the glory. We act on this principle, when we attend the publick ordinances of the gospel, and especially the sacraments of baptism and the supper. Our great desire is to celebrate the praises of God, and to pay our vows before his people. The christian never lays and indeed cannot lay, any new obligation on himself; for the law of God binds us to love him with all our hearts. There are indeed particular or singular vows, such as the vow of Jephthah, or the vow of Hannah to devote her child to the service of God in the temple. But all our duties both to God and man are obligations, which he has laid upon us, and we swear to fulfil them in all our professions of christianity. We call God to witness, that with his strength to enable us, we will faithfully and diligently fulfil all our obligations. We pay our vows before them that fear him, when we attend with true hearts to the publick worship of God, and to all the duties of godliness.

This psalm is gradually and most beautifully brought to a conclusion, by setting before us, the exceeding great and precious promises, by which we may all be made partakers of the divine consolations, which filled the heart of the Redeemer when his sufferings were brought to a close, and when his disembodied spirit winged its way to hades, and to the Paradise of God. The humbled or the afflicted shall eat and be satisfied. They shall have the accomplishment of the promise; "blessed are ye that mourn for ye shall be comforted." God has provided for them the spiritual blessings of his gospel. They are invited to a feast of fat things. These are "fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined," of which they shall eat and drink forever. There is a true and substantial sense in which they shall never die. They shall never cease to praise Jehovah, either in this or in the future world; and therefore

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they shall always be receiving blessings, for which they shall praise him. They shall always live by the faith of the son of God, and in the future world their faith shall be lost in everlasting enjoyment.

A large part of the joy, which was set before the Redeemer when he suffered, on the cross, proceeded from the hope, that he should see of the travail of his soul and should be satisfied; and the joy of the same hope is set before all who take up the cross and follow the captain of their salvation. They have all laboured in some degree, and with full sincerity of heart, to advance the interests of the gospel; and all of them shall at last see an abundant harvest, as the fruit of their labours. Those who have entered into their rest in the mansions of blessedness, shall have their blessedness increased, by beholding the future success of the gospel; and the saints upon the earth shall behold and enjoy the same future success, in the exercise of faith. The world has forgotten and turned away from Jehovah; but the future generation shall return, shall learn his true nature and attributes, and worship him in spirit and truth. The word Jehovah always signifies the eternal and self-existent God. It never can have any other meaning. The Godhead united, consisting of Father, Son, and Spirit, is Jehovah; and each of the persons is Jehovah. Each of them is the eternal and self-existent God, and possesses naturally every attribute of divinity, so that they are united in one; and their union or oneness is infinitely more simple and perfect than that of any human being. But Jehovah the Father is the natural governour of the universe, for he created all things by his only begotten son; and, in the eternal counsel of peace, he has given the government of the universe, especially the government of this world, into his hands, until all his enemies shall be made his footstool. The Father does not cease to be governour, because the Son governs; for the Godhead is one. Jehovah, consisting of Father, Son and Spirit, is the possessor of the heavens and the earth. The kingdom belongs to him,

and he is the governour among the nations: but Jesus Christ is the acting sovereign. He rules the world which he created.

This is the fact whether men will acknowledge it or not. He does not cease to be our governour, because we do not acknowledge him. He rules over us, and in us, and every thought of our hearts is under his control; but he rules in such a manner, that the human will is free, and man is accountable for his actions. He makes his people willing in the day of his power, although they are utterly unconscious of the operations of his spirit in their hearts. All whom he draws do run after him, and they willingly perform the duties he requires; while those who are disobedient to his commandments, do also follow their own inclinations, and must therefore stand at his bar to give an account of all their actions.

All this is the gift of the Father. He required of the son to be obedient and to suffer, and he prepared him a body for this purpose: but when he rose from the dead, he gave the universe into his hand. Therefore he said to his disciples, when he appeared to them after his resurrection from the dead; "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He also declared on another occasion; "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." It is the Son who declares in the words of the prophet Isaiah; "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return; that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." This bowing and swearing to him is explained by the apostle, to mean submission to him, as our judge or governour. We must all stand, and there is a sense in which we do now stand before the judgement seat of Christ. He now beholds us not only as our saviour, but as our judge. Therefore as the former part of this psalm applied to Christ in his humiliation, when he suffered on the cross; so the latter part

exhibits his exaltation. As the kingdom and the government belongs by nature to the Father; so by the gift of the Father it belongs to the Son. Therefore as the Father has given the government into his hands, so we ought to sing this latter part of the psalm, with particular reference to the Lord Jesus Christ; as our king, and the righteous sovereign of the universe. When he declares, "my kingdom is not of this world," he intends to show us the great and important truths, that his kingdom shall never be established, or the government carried forward, by deceit and violence, or fraud and force, like the kingdoms of the earth. His servants shall never fight for the establishment, or the support of his kingdom. They shall never with his approbation, go further than bearing testimony to the truth, and suffering for that testimony if it should be necessary.

But although the weapons of his warfare are not carnal, but spiritual, he shall finally conquer, and bring into subjection, every ruling power on the face of the earth. "All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." It will not be necessary for the government to change its outward form, and put some sect of christians at its head. He only requires them to acknowledge his spiritual authority, in all the departments of the government, and in all parts of the nation. The kings, the judges, and all who are in authority, are required to know the spirit of his commandments, and to make a right application of them, to the cause they have in hand. He will actually and publicly, become, King of kings, and Lord of lords, when all governours shall be subjected to his authority. He requires first the subjection of the heart; and when we become willing that he should rule in us, we shall soon learn to be obedient to him in all outward duties. If all men were to say from their hearts, the kingdom belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he is our Lord to whom we submit ourselves; then every government would soon become righteous, both in its spirit and in its outward form.

But he will bring the world into subjection by a series of

judgements. All men shall find it necessary to humble themselves before him. Those who are clothed in purple and fine linnen, and fare sumptuously every day, together with all that go down to the grave, will find that there is no comfort and no hope, without having him for their protector. They shall find that the things of this world will not be sufficient, to afford them life, or comfort, and that they have no power to save themselves from temporal or eternal misery. They shall be brought low by grief and trouble, and shall sink down in the midst of sorrows. But there shall some of them be delivered, by flying for refuge to the hope set before them. They shall then eat spiritual food, and worship the Saviour.

Amidst all the changes and revolutions in the world, the spiritual seed of Abraham shall continue and increase. All that belong to Christ are of this seed, for they are his according to the promise. They live in the practice of obedience to his commandments, and he knows them as his children. He declares; "I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my first born." It is evident that the personage, who is here called the Lord, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Although it was said in the time of his humiliation, and of his sufferings on the cross; "who shall declare his generation; for he was cut off out of the land of the living?" yet in the latter days there shall be a great multitude whom no man can number; and who shall all belong to his generation. One generation shall succeed another, and the righteousness of the Redeemer shall be made known by parents to children; and that he has performed the whole work of their redemption.

"Rise, crowned with light, imperial Salem rise!

Exalt thy tow'ring head, and lift thine eyes!

See a long race thy spacious courts adorn;

See future sons, and daughters yet unborn,

In crowding ranks, on every side arise,

Demanding life, impatient for the skies!

See barbarous nations at thy gates attend,

Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend."—*Pope's Messiah.*

PSALM XXIII.

A Psalm of David.

TRANSLATION.

1. Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.
2. He makes me lie down in desirable pasture; by the still waters he will lead me.
3. My soul he will restore; he will conduct me in the paths of righteousness, on account of his own name.
4. Also when I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they shall comfort me.
5. Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou dost anoint my head with oil; my cup is full to overflowing.
6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of Jehovah forever.

DISSERTATION.

THE man who can understand, and realize, and appropriate the blessings, presented in this psalm, has a large and permanent stream of comfort, to which he has access every moment in his life. There are no images in the power of language to present before the mind, which can convey the feeling of security and comfort, more clearly and strongly to the hearts of true christians, than those of the shepherd and his flock. It is the image which the scriptures frequently use, to represent the relation in which the Lord Jesus Christ stands to his people. Thus it is declared by the prophet;* "Behold, the Lord God," or as it is in the

*Isaiah xl. 10—11.

original, "the Adonai Jehovah, shall come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom; he shall gently lead those that are with young." Therefore in giving instruction to his disciples, he declares; "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." If therefore we have really and truly taken him for our shepherd, there can be no security equal to ours, for preservation and comfort. Our shepherd is the Adonai Jehovah, or Jehovah the Judge, the eternal and all sufficient God, at whose bar the world must stand to be judged. He has already given his life for us as a sacrifice. He has voluntarily undertaken to be our shepherd, and offered himself to us for this purpose. We have accepted his offer; we hear his voice, and we follow him. The christian who has this hope can always say; "I shall not want."

He shall never be left destitute of any thing which would be to him a real blessing. One prominent part of the office of a shepherd is to provide for the real wants of his flock. He watches over them carefully, so that none of them may perish for hunger. It would be an everlasting reproach to the shepherd, if any of the sheep should die with hunger by his neglect. But our shepherd has all the attributes of the Great God, and all the tender and benevolent feelings of a sinless man; and therefore the truth is as plain, as that God lives; we shall never be left destitute of any thing that is good for us. "All things shall work together for good to them that love God."

Every good and careful shepherd will lead his flock to places where the pasture is good; and where there is a gentle stream, beside which they may enjoy undisturbed repose, during the heat of the day. The good shepherd provides these spiritual blessings for all the flock under his care. They may not enjoy, nor have any opportunity to enjoy, the luxuries of this world; yet a suitable portion of

earthly things shall be provided for them. "Bread shall be given them, their water shall be sure." But they shall all have a never failing portion of the bread and the water of life. All earthly things fade. We may be satisfied with the food and drink of this world, but our hunger will soon return. The Redeemer declares, that the spiritual blessings which he bestows, shall never fade, but always increase. They are a fountain of living water springing up to everlasting life.

He, who, in spirit and truth, receives the Redeemer, will never forsake either his pasture or his fold; he will always hear the voice of his own shepherd, and never follow a stranger, yet, like literal sheep, the best intentioned christians are liable to stray. They never voluntarily forsake the commandments of Christ, yet they sometimes forget some particular command, or mistake the path of error for the path of duty. They always find a law in their members, by which a continued warfare is carried on against their best mental resolutions, and they find that there is danger, lest some lust of the flesh should obtain the dominion in their hearts. They find it necessary to recur to the promise of God, that sin shall not have dominion over them. It is by the exercise of hatred against sin, and reliance on the promise of God for deliverance from it, that the soul of the christian is restored to the correct path of duty.

Such is the care of the good shepherd, that the sheep are not suffered to go far astray, without some premonition, by which they are reprov'd, and invited to retrace their steps; and if they do not obey they must expect to be chastised. This tender care, and watchful regard, which the good shepherd exhibits towards his people, will be the cause of their love and admiration forever. It is not on account of their righteousness, or of any thing good in them; because they are always prone to wander, and their goodness is like the morning cloud which passes away; it is because he has loved them, and because he has determined to promote his own glory in their eternal salvation. There-

fore he leads them in the paths of righteousness, by an active influence on their minds. He instructs them and teaches them the way in which they should walk, and gives them a portion of the wisdom, by which their course is suitably directed.

The Redeemer declares, that through trials and tribulations his people must enter his kingdom. They shall finally be delivered from death; but their deliverance is always effected in such a manner, as to let them know and feel the evil, from which they are delivered. By death we are to understand, not merely the pains of dying; but all the pains which we endure in this world, and all the pains of the future world. It is represented by a lofty mountain, casting a dark shade over a deep valley, through which the christian must walk. Here there are many objects of terror. There are snares and traps and pits, and there, our adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. If he were permitted, he would tear the soul of the christian in pieces, and there would be none to deliver; for our adversary appears to be equal in power to any other created being. No creature can deliver us out of his hand. None but the Lord Jesus Christ can deliver us. He has power. He has come into the world to be our Saviour. He has called us to receive him as our saviour, and put our trust in him. He will watch over us with tender care, in the darkest and most dangerous parts of our journey; and therefore we need not fear any kind of evil.

Why should we fear, since our Saviour is always with us? Jehovah is before our face, and at our right hand, that we should not be moved. He is our shepherd. It was customary for shepherds, in the country where the scriptures were written, to use a rod or crook as an ensign of authority, and to keep the sheep in proper order; and a staff, which they could use for their protection from the wolves, and other ravenous animals. When we look to the rod of our shepherd, we see his authority over ourselves; and when we look to his staff, we can rely on his protection;

and rest assured, that no enemy shall be permitted to do us any essential injury. Thus, looking to Jesus is the exercise of the christian's heart, which gives him comfort in every situation.

But we may look to him, not only for protection, and deliverance from enemies; but for the blessings of food and raiment, and for such a portion of the good things of this life, as is proper and suitable for us, in the situation in which we are placed: but with all these temporal things, he has prepared the bread and the water of life, which are mingled with all our worldly comforts. When the true christian eats his food, and drinks his water, and wears his garments which protect him from the cold; God gives him faith and love, and gratitude, and all the holy and gracious affections, with which he holds fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ; and with which, he lives to God and has a foretaste of the blessings of heaven. He is enabled to add to his faith, virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity.

Although the Lord Jesus Christ, the good shepherd, when he dwelt on the earth in human nature, possessed no property, and had not where to lay his head; yet his Heavenly Father became his shepherd, and provided for his wants. There were no doubt many occasions, in which his Father literally prepared a table before him in the presence of his enemies, and anointed his head with oil, and made his cup run over. On one of those occasions, he dined publicly, at the house of one of the Pharisees, where a table was prepared for him in the presence of his enemies; and a female who was a penitent sinner, brought a box of ointment, and stood at his feet, and washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and anointed them with the ointment. All that period the Redeemer must have fully realized, the spirit of the truth which is here presented by the psalmist. Then he had temporal and spiritual comforts in abundance.

There are some times or periods, in the christian's life, in which he has feelings of joy, in which God puts gladness into his heart. His temporal wants are all supplied. He has every thing in this world, for which he has any particular or pressing necessity. His table is abundantly supplied with the good things of this life. His enemies behold him with painful emotions, and envy his prosperity. They see that God is with him, and they gnash their teeth in despair. He has every reason to believe that God is his friend. He knows that he has loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; and that God has not given his enemies the power to triumph over him; but has given him comfort and filled his heart with food and gladness: and his rejoicing is the testimony of his conscience, which is void of offence both towards God and man. In these, and similar considerations, the christian is some times enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

The hope of the christian admits of various degrees.— Sometimes he has doubts and fears and difficulties; and darkness covers his prospects: at other times the darkness is dispelled, and he looks with joy to the end of his course. We are exhorted to be diligent in duty and fervent in spirit, serving the Lord with all our hearts, and living in the performance of good works, and labours of love; as this is the way to the attainment of the full assurance of hope. This is the highest degree of christian comfort, and is always put within the reach of every christian. The hopes of this world will fade continually; but the hopes of future blessedness and glory will always shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

But this full assurance of hope will always make us diligent in attending to all christian duties, and especially those duties by which we enjoy communion with God in his house. The church of God is his house, and the ordinances of his gospel are the means by which the blessings of his house are communicated to his family. In this way he gives his people a portion of spiritual blessings day by

day. These blessings are the streams of his goodness and mercy, and they shall follow the christian all the days of his life. He has chosen these blessings for his portion, and he has the promise of him who is truth itself, that they shall be his forever.

END OF VOL. I.

ERRATA.

Page	35,	line	2,	for <i>proposed</i> read <i>purposed</i> .
"	47,	"	8,	for <i>brake</i> read <i>break</i> .
"	124,	"	17,	for <i>offer</i> read <i>afford</i> .
"	159,	"	13,	for <i>the</i> read <i>their</i> .
"	165,	"	21,	for <i>creation</i> read <i>creator</i> .
"	168,	"	2,	for <i>powerful</i> read <i>prudent</i> .
"	168,	"	6,	for <i>setting</i> read <i>sitting</i> .
"	171,	"	23,	for <i>emited</i> read <i>united</i> .
"	180,	"	9,	for <i>lay</i> read <i>lie</i> .
"	194,	"	6,	for <i>Lord</i> read <i>Son</i> .
"	216,	"	27,	for <i>natural</i> read <i>national</i> .
"	224,	"	2,	for <i>will</i> read <i>wilt</i> .
"	229,	"	16,	for <i>to read in</i> .
"	290,	"	14,	for <i>our</i> read <i>over</i> .