

THE
THEOLOGICAL WORKS

OF THE
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AUTHOR OF A COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE.

CONTAINING
THE FORCE OF TRUTH,—TREATISE ON REPENTANCE,—GROWTH IN GRACE,
SERMON ON ELECTION AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE,—SERMONS ON SE-
LECT SUBJECTS,—ESSAYS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECTS IN RELI-
GION, AND THE NATURE AND WARRANT OF FAITH IN CHRIST.

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DISCOURSE
UPON
REPENTANCE.

And they went forth, and preached that men should repent.—Mark vi. 12.

PREFACE.

THE importance of the subject treated of, and the rank which it holds in the word of God, among the doctrines and duties of Christianity; the backwardness of mankind to attend to it, in proportion to that importance; and an apprehension that it is not insisted on, either from the pulpit or the press, so frequently and strenuously in our times, as it was in the days of the apostles; form, collectively, the reasons which induced me to this publication. Much ignorance, and various hurtful and perplexing mistakes and difficulties, about repentance, may be observed, both amongst professors of serious godliness and others; I therefore thought, that it might not be unseasonable or unprofitable, to publish a discourse upon the subject.

My first intention was only to send to the press the substance of a sermon which I had repeatedly preached; but the same reasons influenced me, upon mature consideration, to complete the design, as far as I was capable; though the size and price are both by that means increased.

Some passages may be judged to bear hard upon certain popular sentiments, and current species of religion. I have indeed very plainly spoken my mind respecting several things, which I am convinced are detrimental to the cause of pure religion; and I hope I have not transgressed the rules of meekness and candour. Even wise and good men, in their zeal for one part of divine truth, may drop unguarded expressions, which bear an interpretation injurious to another part of equal importance; and thus, undesignedly, by their reputation give sanction to error. This our artful and watchful enemy will be sure to observe, and make his advantage of, in opposing true religion; by which some may be deceived, others hardened, and religion itself exposed to contempt and reproach.

It behoves then other friends of religion, who are witnesses of such perversions, to oppose and obviate them; nor must the reputation of some, or the censure of others, among their fellow-servants, be regarded, when the glory of God, the interests of religion, and the salvation of souls are at stake. Were some pious men, now in glory, to return on earth, and witness the abuse that has been made of certain indiscreet expressions which they employed, they would be the first to approve every endeavour to counteract their fatal tendency. With all plainness and freedom I would plead the cause of truth and holiness; but would give no needless offence to any man. May that God, whom I would “serve with my spirit, in the gospel of his Son,” powerfully succeed this feeble attempt to promote his glory in the salvation of souls.

Olney, 2nd February, 1785.

A
DISCOURSE
ON
REPENTANCE.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Christian Religion, as St. Paul preached it both to Jews and Gentiles, consists of “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,” and may therefore be properly called the religion of a sinner; for none but sinners need repentance, or faith in a Mediator, or that forgiveness of sins, which through him is preached to all that believe.

This consideration ought carefully to be attended to; Jesus Christ “came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance:” and if men lose sight of this peculiarity of the gospel, they will mistake in a fundamental concern; and be offended with those ministers, who alone address them in a Scriptural method. Our business, as preachers of the gospel, is not with men, merely as rational agents, but with men as sinners. We must not address them, as if they were newly entered on a state of trial; were as yet free from all blame; and were at last to stand or fall according to their future good or bad behaviour, and only needed to be instructed in their duty, and excited to perform it. This is not the state of the case. Even the most moral, respectable, and amiable of mankind are *sinners*,—condemned sinners. In this light the word of God considers us; and informs us, (not “What good thing we may do to inherit eternal life,” but) “What we must do to be saved” from impending ruin; whither a sinner “may flee from the wrath to come.” And thus must the faithful minister address his hearers, calling upon them as sinners, to repent and believe the gospel.

“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men.” Rom. v. 12. In consequence of the awful sentence, “Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return,” millions through successive

generations have yielded to the stroke: all the former inhabitants of the earth are swept into the grave by one general execution: many are at this moment experiencing the agonies of death; numbers are bewailing their departed and departing friends and relatives.—We too feel the consequences of sin, in our own personal pains and sickness, which are the forerunners and earnest of our dissolution: we too must have the sentence executed upon us in all its rigour. The wisest cannot elude it, the strongest cannot resist its stroke, nor can the richest purchase exemption from it.

The constant and extensive ravages of death are, in themselves, extremely affecting to the considerate spectator: but become more so when we reflect, that as certainly as when a malefactor is dragged from prison, and executed on a scaffold, he dies for breaking the laws of the land; so certainly, when a sinner dies, he dies for breaking the law of God.

Had sin and death been hitherto equally unknown to mankind; and now in our days had sin first made its entrance: immediately upon man's rebellion had we heard the sentence audibly and solemnly denounced, "Dust ye are, and to dust ye shall return;" had fevers, dropsies, palsies, apoplexies, consumptions, and other mortal diseases, on the one hand; with earthquakes, famines, and wars on the other, suddenly begun to spread desolation through families, villages, cities, and kingdoms among the guilty alone: should we behold at once multitudes dead, and multitudes in the agonies of death, the rest mourning over their beloved friends, and trembling for themselves; (like Egypt when there was not a house, in which there was not one dead;) the connection betwixt transgressing the divine law, and being punished with death, might be more affecting, but would not be more certain, than it now is; though it is seldom seriously laid to heart.

Or, were men in general free from sin; but from time to time one and another transgressed; who immediately upon transgressing was punished by death, according to the examples of vindictive justice recorded in the Scriptures: the connection would be more attended to, but not more certain than at present; when, "because sentence against an evil work is not executed *speedily*, the hearts of the sons of men are wholly set in them to do evil." Eccles. viii. 11.

But as all have sinned, and all die, and things have gone on so for many generations, death is considered as a thing of course: we live in the midst of its devastations without horror, or uneasy reflections; and inquire little why it is so? or what the consequence will be? Like soldiers who

grow inured to scenes of blood, and insensible to dangers through being familiar with them.

But this, solemn and alarming as it is, forms only a small part of the sentence of condemnation, which we lie under. Our Lord warns us, “not to fear them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but to fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.” In comparison with this effect of divine wrath, the worst which men can do to us, is not, in the judgment of the Son of God, worthy of our fear. Yet the bare recital of those tortures, which the cruelty of man hath invented and inflicted, in killing the body, is sufficient to chill our very blood: how dreadful therefore must they have been to those who endured them! And what must that misery be, compared with which the other is not worth a fear? Yet to this awful destruction every sinner is condemned, for breaking the law, and rebelling against the authority of his Creator.

Imagine to yourselves a company of condemned criminals in a dungeon. A warrant arrives:—one is taken from them, they see him no more; know not what becomes of him; and do not readily believe any reports which reach them, of the tortures which he endured, and the pains he suffered; another is thus taken from them, and another. The remainder still suppose that their companions are only released from the miseries of a dungeon; and expect their own turn merely as a similar deliverance. All this time, however, certain messengers from the king earnestly persuade them to submit, ask forgiveness, and accept of mercy. A few are prevailed upon, and dismissed; but the rest, seeing no difference betwixt those who are taken from them by a warrant, and those who are set at liberty with a pardon, persist in their obstinacy, and treat all persuasion with neglect and contempt.

This is the exact representation of the condition men are in. Death removes our friends and neighbours, one by one: we see not how they fare in another world; nor are we disposed to believe that “they lift up their eyes in hell, being in torments,” (though this is indeed the awful condition of all who die impenitent.) Our turn will shortly come; but we are seldom duly apprehensive about the consequences. “All things happen alike to all; as dieth the sinner, so dieth the righteous:” each is released from the evils of life; faith alone can follow the one to heaven, and the other to hell: but all men have not faith; therefore most treat with neglect and contempt the preachers of the gospel, who inform them of their danger, and in God’s name call upon them to repent, believe, and be saved.

But, beloved, though much grieved and discouraged by this neglect, we must not desist, nor would we despair of success. Let me beseech you then to keep in your mind these solemn and important truths, whilst with all seriousness, earnestness, and tender compassion, I address you as condemned sinners, in danger of eternal misery. We must take God's part against you, and vindicate his justice in that awful sentence which he hath denounced; but we can sympathize with you, and weep over you, and "long after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ." We also were involved in the same guilt, and under the same condemnation; we were equally secure and obstinate in sin, and equally negligent of salvation. But being now, through God's mercy, made sensible of our guilt and danger; and having upon repentance found forgiveness, and enjoying the hopes and first-fruits of eternal happiness, we are desirous our fellow-sinners should share our deliverance, and experience our felicity.

To be instrumental to the salvation of your souls, my fellow-sinners, is all to which the true minister of Christ aspires. However your minds may be blinded by "the god of this world," we see your danger, and mourn over your delusion. Your fondness for perishing vanities, and disregard to your eternal interests, excite our compassion; and would excite our indignation and astonishment, had not we too been equally sottish. Of the worth of your souls, the danger to which they are exposed, the preciousness of salvation, and the happiness of being truly religious, we are deeply convinced. "We have believed, and therefore speak;" and though in ourselves unworthy and insufficient, yet being entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, "we are now ambassadors for Christ, and as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God."

The most high God hath prepared a royal feast; all things are ready, rich abundance of provisions, and plenty of room! We are sent to invite the guests, and are directed to "compel them to come in." We would therefore invite, exhort, expostulate, warn, persuade, and command, with all tenderness and authority, and not take a denial. Blame not, I beseech you, our earnestness; be not disgusted or offended with our importunity; do not "pray us to have you excused;" do not overwhelm us with discouragement, and send us to give, with tears, an account of our ill success. Our love to your immortal souls, our longing after your everlasting happiness, constrain us to be thus troublesome and importunate. Nay, though you frown, insult, threaten, and persecute, we must persist, so long as there is a shadow of a hope. "We must not be overcome of evil, but over-

come evil with good." And at last "if ye will not hear, we must weep in secret places for your pride;" after His example, who wept over ungrateful Jerusalem.

To the true believer, careless sinners appear like intoxicated persons in a house which is on fire; who must be consumed in the flames, unless they can be induced to come forth, though themselves are utterly insensible of the danger. You may think yourselves secure, and make yourselves merry with our fears: but your awful infatuation, and imminent danger, are so manifest to us, that we must persist in our endeavours to convince you, so long as you are on this side of everlasting burnings. Thus Noah was treated by the inhabitants of the old world, and Lot even by his sons-in-law, with neglect and contempt when they warned them of their danger; but too late they found their warnings true; and so will you find ours, when death and judgment come, should you now slight them. "Because I called and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh," saith the Lord himself. Prov. i. 24-26. But I would rise superior to such discouraging apprehensions, and expect better success in this feeble attempt to call sinners to repentance: humbly hoping that God will hear my prayers, and employ this discourse as his instrument in that blessed work.

When John the Baptist began his ministry, he preached, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The blessed Jesus also began to preach, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "And the apostles went forth and preached that men should repent." After the resurrection of Christ, they were commissioned to "preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Accordingly, Peter preached to the Jews, "Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Paul in like manner addressed the Gentiles; "God commandeth all men every where to repent;" and informed them, "that men should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

From these, and many other testimonies of the word of God, judge ye, beloved, of the importance and certainty of our subject. No matter of trivial concern which may safely be disregarded, or of doubtful disputation which may plausibly be gainsayed or questioned, now demands our attention. But a subject of equal evidence with the word of "God, who cannot lie," and of importance proportioned to the interests of eternal ages.

Hear me then, I beseech you, with candour and attention; lay aside prejudice and levity, whilst with all seriousness and plainness I discourse concerning, 1. The necessity of repentance. 2. The nature of repentance.

3. The encouragement given to repentance. 4. The proper season for repentance; and, 5. The means to be used in repenting.—For the love of thy soul, I beseech thee, sinner; and as thou wilt answer it at the day of judgement, I charge it upon thy conscience, to lay this matter home to thy heart, as in the sight of God; at the same time beseeching him to make thee partaker “of that repentance, which is unto salvation, not to be repented of.”

PART FIRST.

Concerning the Necessity of Repentance.

BEFORE we enter more full upon the subject, I would premise, that I choose the word *Necessity*, as the most comprehensive which occurs to my mind: and I would be understood to intend by “the necessity of repentance;” 1. The urgency of the case: sinners must either repent or perish: 2. The reasonableness of repentance: having done wrong, we ought to repent, and act most unreasonably if we do not: 3. The obligation sinners are under to repent, both from this reasonableness of the injunction, and the authority of that God who enjoins it: and, 4. The additional guilt contracted by impenitency. As the same arguments frequently prove the necessity of repentance, in more than one of these senses, I thought it would better prevent needless repetition and obscurity in point of method, to treat of the whole at once, than to divide them into different heads. Having thus stated the meaning of the term employed, to prevent ambiguity, and that all may know what we say and whereof we affirm, let us proceed to the proof.

And here, reader, I have no need to inquire into thy character, whether thou art moral or immoral, a sober man or a drunkard, a good or bad relation or member of society, a formal worshipper or profane. Granting all that any man can desire, supposing the character of the reader to be decent, amiable, and respectable among men, I will endeavour to show him, and to show all, their need of repentance.

I. “Because all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”—Few in comparison are acquainted with the extent, strictness, and spirituality of the law of God, as taking cognizance of every thought, word, action, intention, or disposition of the whole heart and life: requiring absolute perfection in all things, continued in even to the last moment of life. Few keep an exact account of their own thoughts, words, and actions, with reference to this law, as the standard of duty and sin: consequently few are sensible, in any tolerable degree, how numerous, or rather how innumerable, their transgressions are. But most, or all, know, that in some instances they have offended God, by doing those actions which he hath forbidden, and leaving undone those which he hath commanded. Surely, reader, thy conscience will excuse me from further evincing this particular. Only listen to this faithful monitor: even now it arraigns, accuses, and condemns thee: and wert thou guilty only of one transgression, (instead of

those millions which are noted in God's book of remembrance,) and shouldest thou die without repenting of that one sin: as sure as conscience now condemns thee, so sure will God condemn thee in that solemn day, "when he shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

One felony or murder fully proved insures condemnation, equally with ten thousand. "Therefore, by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God;" because all have sinned: "And by the law is the knowledge of sin." It takes cognizance of, and condemns, every sin and every sinner; and consequently can justify none, who have once transgressed. But remember, that the number and heinousness of our transgressions, though they add nothing to the *certainty*, yet will add proportionably to the *greatness*, of the merited condemnation: and should add to the depth of our repentance. Could that man be found who had once, and but once, and in the smallest instance, failed of obedience, he would need repentance, it would be his duty, nor could he be saved in impenitence. How needful then repentance for him, whose sins exceed in number the hairs of his head, and equal the moments of his life! For him whose crimes are full of aggravation, and loudly call for vengeance!

II. The law which we have broken is "holy, just, and good."—There are laws in this land, which condemn the murderer and housebreaker to death. These are reasonable laws, of which none can disapprove, but those who are, or would be guilty of those crimes. We experience them to be the security of our persons, property, and repose. He who breaks these laws, is not only condemned by *them*, but in the judgment of every wise and honest man; and ought in reason to condemn himself like a penitent thief, allowing the justice of the punishment which he suffers. Luke xxiii. 41.

But Nebuchadnezzar made a law, commanding all his officers and servants to worship a golden image, on penalty of being cast into a furnace of fire; Darius made a law, forbidding any of his subjects to worship God for thirty days, on pain of being cast into the den of lions; and many such laws have the tyranny, caprice, and pride of imperious princes and rulers produced. They are however, evidently absurd and impious, and every man will abhor them, in proportion to his wisdom and goodness. The three pious Jews who broke Nebuchadnezzar's edict, and Daniel who transgressed that of Darius, were indeed condemned by the laws; but they have been admired for their courage, and constancy in *disobedience*, by all good men ever since. Nay, the very consciences of their enemies testi-

fied for them, that they had done nothing amiss. Nor would it have been right for them to have condemned themselves; but rather they might glory in serving God, and keeping a good conscience, in the face of danger and death.

Were the law of God in any degree like those oppressive edicts, we should have cause to be extremely grieved at the hardship put upon us, and alarmed at the sentence denounced against us; but we could not, with any propriety, condemn ourselves, or repent of our transgressions.

We ought not indeed to reply against God: but the absurdity of this presumption arises, not so much from the consideration of his irresistible power and uncontrollable sovereignty, as from that of his absolute perfection of justice and holiness. This we are bound humbly to allow and suppose, even when we cannot perceive it; and to silence all our rising objections by saying, “shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Yet God condescended himself to argue the matter with those who thought his ways unequal; he even proposes his conduct in his government of the world to our consideration, that we may see and adore his justice; and to our imitation, that we may be holy as he is holy: and the day of judgment will clear up all our difficulties, when the righteousness of God will be fully demonstrated, to the universal satisfaction of his holy creatures, and the confusion and silence of all his enemies. It is indeed blasphemy, to suppose the law of God unreasonable, and his government oppressive: but it is a blasphemy congenial to our depraved nature, of which in our hearts we are all guilty, and of which we are with difficulty cured; for “the carnal mind is enmity against God,—is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

As therefore no sinner can be truly penitent, till he is convinced that the law of God is holy, just, and good; we should first establish this point, in endeavouring to bring sinners to repentance. This is the apostolical method: St. Paul, arguing in the epistle to the Romans against justification by the law, aware of the false conclusions which men of corrupt minds would be ready to draw from his reasonings, again and again purposely leaves his main subject, to assert and prove the goodness of the law notwithstanding. With one accord, also, do all the writers of the sacred volume speak honourably of the *moral* law, expressing their approbation of it, and delight in it: nor is there one exception to this rule. This may show us the great importance of this part of the subject; and how dangerous some inconsiderate expressions are, into which several good men have

been betrayed in their zeal for that *fundamental doctrine*,—*justification by faith alone*.

We may be sure that the law is holy, just, and good; because given by a holy, just, and good God, whose work is perfect: and because, after Adam's fall, when it became *morally* impracticable for any of his posterity to be justified by it: he is still pleased to continue them under it, judge them according to it, and condemn them to utter destruction for breaking it.¹ “Is there unrighteousness with God?” He would not do these things, if they were not perfectly just. If they appear unjust to us, it is owing to our ignorance, self-love, low thoughts of God, and favourable thoughts of sin. Nay, so far was God from repealing this law, or abating its strictness, after man's transgression, that he republished it from Mount Sinai with awful majesty: he requires every one who would escape condemnation at the day of judgment, to condemn himself now for his transgressions of it, and to seek forgiveness from his sovereign mercy; nor would he even thus pardon one sinner, except as his own Son honoured the law, in our stead, by his perfect obedience and death upon the cross. Moreover he gives it into the hand of all believers as a rule of life, a standard of sin and holiness: yea, writes it in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Thus doth the most high God proclaim to the whole world his determination “to magnify the law, and make it honourable.” And had we no other evidence of its excellency, this, being abundantly sufficient, ought fully to satisfy us; yea, to humble us in the dust for acting so unreasonably as to break it.

¹ All who die in unbelief perish for breaking this law: all who are saved, were thus condemned for breaking it; else why did Christ bear their sins for them? Some indeed talk of another and milder law: but where it is found, when promulgated, what it requires, who does keep it, or who is condemned for breaking it, hath never been, nor never can be, determined. Others express themselves very ambiguously about our obligations to keep the law, prior to the consideration of redemption. But “where there is no law there can be no transgression:” where there is no transgression, there can be no condemnation: and where no condemnation, no occasion for redemption. Thus we repeal the law and subvert the gospel. Surely we ought with precision to determine this matter; and to show that man, as God's creature, is bound to obey his law; that sin is the transgression of the law; that the wages of sin is death; that Christ died (not for Adam's sin only, or mainly, but) for our transgressions of the law: that they who perish, are condemned (not only or principally because Adam sinned, but) for their own sins; that upon believing in Christ, we are delivered from the condemnation of sinners, but are never released from the obedience we owe as creatures: and that the obligation to obey is enforced on us by most powerful additional motives taken from redemption.

May we not, however, ourselves discern the reasonableness of it, notwithstanding our partiality in our own cause, and our love of sin? God is evidently the perfection of glory and beauty,² the Pattern and Fountain of loveliness; from whom all that is lovely in all creatures is an emanation, of whom it is a faint resemblance, which hath comparatively “no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth.” In himself he is therefore worthy of all admiration, love, and worship. From him we derive our existence, and all that rendereth our existence comfortable: our obligations therefore to him, as our Creator and Benefactor, are immense; he deserves then our entire and unreserved gratitude. Infinite love and gratitude, though he is worthy of them, his law requires not, because we are not capable of them, nor doth it enjoin the love and service of an angel; because he hath not endowed us with angelic capacities. The law runs thus: “Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD, with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength:” its requirements are proportioned, not to his worthiness but to our capacities. Of this love the man of the slenderest abilities is equally capable with the sublimest genius; the infant as the aged. In proportion to the superiority or inferiority of capacity, more or less is required: if it be honestly *our all*, the law demands no more.

But the law makes no allowance for our disinclination and indisposition to love and serve God with *our all*; because this is that very malignity of heart which renders us abominable in his sight. Every degree of this temper is a degree of enmity unto God: the very disposition arises from pride, love of the world, and love of sin; and in proportion as it prevails, is contempt of God in comparison with the world, sin, and self. It is therefore in itself infinitely unreasonable, totally inexcusable, and the very temper of the devil; who is completely detestable, because completely of this abominable disposition.³ When we therefore show that the law is ho-

² Psalm 1. 2. Out of Zion, the *Perfection of Beauty*, GOD hath shined.

³ This disposition is properly original sin, the effect of Adam’s transgression. Therefore he, as the root, and we in him, as the branches, lost God’s favour and image, and became liable to and fit for destruction. That this disposition is propagated by natural generation cannot reasonably be denied: that it is properly the punishment of Adam’s sin, seems capable of Scriptural proof. If we cannot clearly perceive the justice of this, we must silence our objections thus: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” True penitents read their own character, and see their own picture, in Adam’s conduct, and are humbled for original sin, as the fountain of all their actual transgressions. But as it is always either disputed, neglected, or abused, until the heart be otherwise humbled, I did not think it proper particularly to insist upon it in this discourse. Whilst some appear to lay an undue stress on Adam’s transgression, and speak as if it were the only sin for

ly, just, and good, because exactly level to our capacities, we mean our *natural powers*, not our *moral dispositions*: the want of the former proportionably excuses, the want of the latter proportionably aggravates, every failure of any given degree of service. Man, not having the powers of an angel, is excusable in not performing the services of an angel: but being of an unholy disposition, he is therefore the more inexcusable in any particular act of unholiness; seeing it appears that it was no inadvertency, but the rooted disposition of his heart.

To love and serve God with our all, is the substance of the requirements of the law in the first table. And what can be more reasonable? Can there be any difficulty in loving one who is perfectly lovely, being thankful for such a Friend, or serving such a master, except what arises from the inexcusable badness of our hearts; for this we are condemned, for this we ought to condemn ourselves, “abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.”

To love all men with equal estimation and benevolence is the substance of the second table: and we need only suppose this law given to our neighbours alone, as the rule of their conduct towards us, in order to perceive its excellency. What lovely, what happy creatures should we be, and what a delightful world would this prove, were all perfectly obedient!

which we were condemned, or Christ died: others totally deny and revile the doctrine of the fall; contending that man now is just such a creature, or nearly, with respect to his moral character and dispositions, as God originally created him. But the apostle Paul more than intimates that the image of God consists in righteousness and true holiness. Now we know that God created man in his own IMAGE: he also made him upright, and pronounced him very good. The question therefore is, what man now is. If experience and observation prove him to be naturally and universally prone to evil, and averse from good; and if the Scripture pronounce him *evil*, and abominable, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart to be only evil continually; he must be fallen from what he was originally. Ingratitude, enmity to God, pride, ambition, envy, malice, lust, falsehood, and covetousness, can form no part of the image of a holy God; or of that uprightness in which man was first made. But he must be very hardy, who should deny them to form a part of man’s present character. Nor can we suppose the God of truth would first pronounce man very good, and afterwards, without any intervening change, so often declare him altogether abominable. How much more does it become our narrow capacities, and proneness to mistake, to rest satisfied with the Scriptural account; “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,” “by one disobedience many were made sinners;” and to adore the depths which we cannot fathom than in the pride of philosophy and metaphysics, with such scanty information, to decide upon what we cannot comprehend, and, with daring temerity, to utter such words, as more than seem to be injurious to the divine character!

None is, or can be miserable, but the transgressor, or they whom transgressors injure. How excellent then this law, which provides for the happiness of the world so completely, that by transgression alone could men become in any degree miserable! Ought we not then to repent of our disobedience, our continual disobedience, and especially of our entire depravity of disposition, which renders us *morally* incapable of obedience.

Let every precept be impartially examined, and these things will appear with still more convincing evidence. For instance; “Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.” Is it not highly reasonable that we should devote this portion of our time to Him, to whom the whole belongs? Would not our best interests in connection with the glory of God, be promoted by obeying this commandment? “These things he commands us for our good.” How unreasonable then our disobedience! What need have we to repent of forgetting and neglecting to hallow the Sabbath!

Again, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.” As we all judge it reasonable that others should behave to us: let conscience determine, whether we have not done wrong in and ought not to repent of, transgressing this rule, in our conduct to others. We might easily examine other precepts, and show them to be equally reasonable. Yea, every one of them is so; and therefore every deviation from perfect obedience is entirely unreasonable. There is nothing in the whole law of God grievous in itself, or difficult, except to our proud and carnal hearts.—David and Paul, men after God’s own heart, greatly loved and delighted in God’s law; Christ, being perfectly holy, entirely delighted in it and perfectly obeyed it: angels and saints in glory enjoy full liberty in obeying it, and find it perfect felicity: yea, God himself, though absolute Sovereign, is pleased to observe in his own conduct, the same rules which he prescribes for ours (as far as consists with his majesty and authority;) his law is the transcript of his own holiness; and when he requires our obedience, he only says, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” In proportion as we bear his image, we take pleasure in his precepts, and find obedience easy and natural: in proportion as we resemble Satan, we hate the law, and find obedience irksome, arduous, impossible. How excellent then this law! how vile are we who have broken it! What need have we to repent of our unreasonable conduct.

III. All have need to repent, because all have by sin absolutely destroyed themselves.—A trifling penalty incurred by transgression might reasonably have been disregarded. When human laws only inflict small fines, short imprisonment, or burning in the hand, offenders may treat

such penalties with indifference: but when excruciating tortures and ignominious death, are the threatened punishment; when the sentence is impartially and rigorously inflicted: when the crime is fully proved, and the prisoner closely confined; the most stubborn spirit bends, the stoutest heart is intimidated, and indifference is madness.—Art thou then, sinner, careless and unconcerned, in a case infinitely more tremendous? Canst thou find a heart for *gay* amusements, or coolly apply to worldly pursuits, whilst “the wrath of God abideth upon thee,” the law thunders out a dreadful curse against thee, death closely pursues thee, everlasting misery awaits thee? That God whom thou hast offended, is at once the Witness, the Judge, and the Avenger of thy crimes: thou canst not hide thy transgressions from his all-seeing eye: thou canst not flee from his omnipresence, resist his almighty power, bribe his inflexible justice, or endure his awful vengeance. The sentence, if thou die impenitent, is already published in the Judge’s own words: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Are not these words of the loving Saviour most dreadful? “Can thy hands be strong, or can thy heart endure,” when they shall sound in thy affrighted ear? Is this “the wrath to come,” surely, inevitably to come, upon an ungodly world? Are these his words, who saith, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away?” Art thou one of the very persons concerned? Art thou a transgressor of the law? Doth the word of God run thus: “Cursed is every one, who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them?” And dost thou still remain unconcerned? Indeed, were there no way of escape, it would not be worthwhile to torment thyself before the time. “But there is forgiveness with God,” there is a space allowed for repentance, a way of salvation, a proclamation of mercy: and dost thou still trifle, and not apply thyself immediately to seek deliverance from “the wrath to come?”

Surely these considerations, if laid to heart in a manner suitable to their certainty and importance, would damp the vain mirth of an ungodly world, and turn their songs and laughter into bitter lamentations. Let me, my fellow sinners, recommend the apostle’s advice to you: “Be afflicted, and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy into heaviness,” James iv. 9. Thus shall your godly sorrow for sin, “work repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.”

IV. The necessity of repentance appears from the justice of this sentence, severe as it may seem.—Sinners are ready to say, “I only gratify my natural inclinations, and enjoy a little irregular pleasure for a few

years; and can it consist with the justice and goodness of God to punish me with everlasting misery? Is there any proportion between the crime and the punishment? But consider, poor deluded man, the infinite majesty, purity, and goodness of that God, against whom thy sins are committed: consider that “his is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever:” consider thy relations to him, as his creature, his property, his subject; and the reasonableness of his claim to thy love and obedience, resulting both from his own excellency and authority, and the benefits which he hath conferred on thee: consider the reasonableness of his law, the pleasantness of his service, the happiness of his subjects, and the noble rewards of obedience: then estimate, if thou art able, what injustice, ingratitude, rebellion, contempt, enmity, and obstinacy, there is in sin, and what punishment is adequate to its deservings.

If a man injure his equal, it is evil; if he injure his superior it is worse. If a child curse, smite, or murder his parent, his conduct is baser than it would have been had he thus treated a stranger or an equal. The wiser, better and more indulgent the parent, the more atrocious is the crime of the unnatural, ungrateful child. Should a son murder an excellent parent, in the midst of a recent profusion of kindness, without any provocation or motive, except in order to the more unrestrained gratification of some vile passion; what punishment should we deem too severe for the parricide? Add, further, the relation of sovereign to that of parent; a rightful, wise, just, clement sovereign, the common father of his people. For a persecuted David to stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed, though a cruel treacherous Saul, would have been highly criminal: how much more to murder a prince of consummate excellency, without the least provocation! for his favourite, on whom his bounty had been lavished, to be the assassin! But for his son, his indulged son, to break through all obligations, human and divine, and murder his father and prince at once, that he might more unrestrainedly indulge his lusts, would stamp the action with stupendous baseness! When Absalom designed to act this monstrous part against the man of God’s own heart, even the ill-judged lenity of the too indulgent parent was not permitted to rescue the traitor from deserved punishment.—According to the plainest dictates of human reason, the malignity of the action must rise in proportion to the authority and excellency of the party offended, and the offender’s relation and obligations to him. In human affairs, this method of computing the comparative criminality of offences, and proportioning punishments, is generally adopted amongst civilized nations. If we are allowed to compute in the same

method *the evil of sin*, (and why should we not?) what heart can conceive, or tongue express, or numbers reach, the evil of every offence committed against the majesty of God? By arguments and meditations of this kind, we may arrive at some feeble conception of the odiousness of transgressing the divine law: but he alone, who sees all things exactly as they are, is the competent Judge: and my design is not to demonstrate a matter before doubtful, but to illustrate the reasonableness of that which is certainly true. Whether we see and allow it, or not, sin is infinitely evil, and deserving of eternal punishment. Thus He hath determined, “whose judgment we know to be according unto truth.” All his loyal subjects on earth join in praising him, “as righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.” All the inhabitants of heaven thus praise him, even while “the smoke of the torments of the wicked ascendeth up for ever and ever.” None but rebels think the sentence too severe. If we would not have our lot with *them* in another world, let us not rank ourselves among them in this: but let us say, with holy Job, “I have uttered things which I understood not: things too wonderful for me, which I know not.” “I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no farther.” Yea, truly, “every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world shall appear guilty before God;” nay, they “shall be speechless” when ordered to be cast into outward darkness, “where is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.”—What cause then have all to repent, who have justly merited so dreadful a punishment!

V. All have cause of, and need for, repentance: because God will most certainly inflict this punishment upon all the impenitent with unabating severity. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Let no man deceive you with vain words: the impenitent sinner shall certainly spend eternity “in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.” An awakening truth which Satan and his instruments have in all ages been opposing; but in none more zealously, ingeniously, and, alas! successfully, than in this: for that great deceiver knows that nothing so effectually increases the number of the damned, as the disbelief of eternal damnation. “Ye shall not surely die,” was the first temptation of this murderer of souls: and still his kingdom is supported by the same insinuation. But if there be any meaning in words, if the idea of eternal misery can be conveyed in human language, and if the Bible be the word of God, then the wicked “shall go into EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT.” Though God is rich in mercy, though there is plenteous redemption in the blood of Christ; yet, neither the mercy of God, nor the blood of Christ, avail for any but the penitent:

to others, all the threatenings of the law alone belong: nor have they any part or lot in the gospel; except the deeper condemnation of “neglecting such great salvation,” and abusing the mercy of God, and the redemption of Christ, into an encouragement to continue in sin. Such sinners “are a people who have no understanding, therefore he that made them will have no mercy on them.” “Oh, consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” Psalm l. 22.

VI. The necessity of repentance is further evinced by considering the reasonableness of this awful determination. There is a controversy betwixt God and sinners, and blame must rest somewhere. Either God is indeed chargeable with blame, for enacting so strict a law, and annexing so dreadful a penalty on transgressors; or the sinner is as much to blame as this penalty implies, for breaking the law. To harbour one moment the supposition, that any part of the blame belongs to God, is blasphemous; doubtless the whole fault belongs to the sinner. Yet every impenitent sinner, in excusing himself, condemns God. “Wilt thou,” saith he to Job, “disannul judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?” Job. xl. 8. Why did the sinner break the law, if he did not think it too strict? Doth he *pretend* it was by surprise or sudden temptation, through inadvertency, and not deliberate rebellion?⁴ Then why doth he not repent? His impenitence for the past, and his present continuance in transgression, strongly imply a most injurious censure of the law, as inconsistent with his happiness: and his vindication of himself and his conduct, implies a censure on the justice of God in condemning sinners, equally injurious.

Now, should God pardon a sinner who thus excuses himself, and tacitly condemns him, he would seem to allow the excuse, and plead guilty to the charge; so that the honour of God and the salvation of an impenitent sinner, are irreconcilable contradictions: but God, conscious of his own most perfect justice, and jealous of his own glory, would sooner leave all the world to perish for ever, than thus consent to his own dishonour. Every hope, which any man entertains of pardon in impenitency, involves the absurd supposition, when carefully investigated, that God will dishonour

⁴ This is often the case of the true believer, who delights in the law of God, and hates evil, yet is surprised into the commission of that which he abhors, and breaks the law that he loves; but recovering from the surprise, he directly and deeply repents. But this excuse is merely a pretence in others, by which they cover a rooted enmity to the law, an habitual love of sin; and their impenitence discovers their hypocrisy.

himself, to humour and favour a proud obstinate rebel. Every such hope is pregnant with the presumption spoken of by Moses. “Lest there be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it cometh to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk after the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst. The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man; and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.” Deut. xxix. 18-20. Let us, beloved, attend carefully to such plain warnings of the word of God, that we may be armed against the temptations of Satan, and the rising presumption of our own hearts.

VII. The necessity of repentance is further manifested by reflecting, that no impenitent sinner can cordially approve of the salvation, revealed in the word of God. Indeed, did the gospel require men confidently to believe that *their* sins are already pardoned, and that all the blessings of salvation are already theirs, though they are destitute of every gracious disposition, as some have incautiously advanced; no scheme could better suit the pride and carnality of an impenitent heart. This however, is not the true gospel of Christ, but another gospel, which must be opposed, even though “preached by an angel from heaven.” All are bound to believe that God will forgive the vilest of sinners, who repent and believe in Christ: otherwise they make God a liar: for he hath attested it. When by scriptural evidence, (even by holy dispositions produced, and holy actions performed,) I am sure that my faith is living, and my repentance genuine, I may be humbly sure, that my sins are forgiven, and that I am a child of God, and an heir of glory; but not before. That I shall be welcome, if I come aright, I may be sure before I come: that I have come aright, and am accepted, I can only be assured by the effects I am conscious of, and the fruits of righteousness produced.

The way in which forgiveness and salvation are actually conferred upon sinners, may be thus illustrated. A state-criminal, under sentence of death, is thus addressed by his prince: “You deserve to suffer the rigour of your sentence: no excuse can be made for your rebellion, nor one alleviating circumstance found in your case: yet, by my own clemency, I am disposed to show mercy, so that I may but do it honourably; and so, as effectually to express my disapprobation of your crime for an example to others. I will, therefore, seat myself upon my royal throne, surrounded by my nobles, and multitudes of my subjects, as witnesses of your submission

and my clemency. Do you then approach and prostrate yourself in my presence, publicly and humbly confess your guilt, acknowledge you justly merit to be immediately led to execution, then throw yourself upon my royal mercy, and crave your life at my hands. In this humbling method, and in no other, will I forgive your crimes, and become your friend.”—I speak not here of that redemption price which Immanuel paid, that “God might be just and the justifier of him who believeth;” but merely of the glory of God’s justice in our condemnation, and of his mercy in our salvation; which he requires to be unreservedly and cordially acknowledged by every one who comes to him for pardon.

But an impenitent sinner always rejects, and generally is affronted with, this preliminary of peace and reconciliation. He stands upon his vindication, and holds fast his pleas and excuses. If he allow that he hath his faults, he insists that he hath his virtues, and expects that they should be accepted by way of compensation. He hopes also to do something more by way of atoning for his faults; and thinks it would be hard, and indeed palpably unjust, to send him, with all his imagined good qualities, sincere obedience, and good intentions, to keep company with thieves, murderers, and prostitutes in the bottomless pit. Such indeed is the self-love and self-partiality of mankind, that you will find few, if any, even of the vilest characters, who have not something of this kind to plead in arrest of judgment: every man’s own faults seem to himself more venial, than those of other men, and his supposed good qualities and actions more estimable; and thus the sinner “flatters himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.” But, especially, this is the grand objection of the rich, the moral, and the pharisaical. These would bid high and do much, yea, almost any thing but this, which is so intolerably mortifying to their self-preference. On this ground principally numbers reject the gospel, part from Christ, and come short of salvation: as “there is no difference; for all have sinned,” all are condemned, none can make satisfaction: all then that are saved must condemn themselves, and submit to be saved by grace alone, through faith in the Son of God. But whilst such persons proudly hesitate and object, the publicans and harlots, being brought to true repentance, approve of this humbling method, and enter into the kingdom of heaven before them.

VIII. Without repentance there can be no preparation of heart for that “holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.” All true Christians are zealous of good works, being taught by “the grace of God which bringeth salvation, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live so-

berly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” The Christian indeed is very far from perfection in good works, and therefore he cannot be justified by them; neither does he at all depend on them: but, by his sincere obedience, his unreserved observation of Christ’s commands, he proves that he is a true believer, and no hypocrite; he glorifies God, adorns the gospel, and promotes the real good of mankind.

But by deep repentance alone is the heart prepared for such a holy conduct. Without this, there can be no “ceasing to do evil, or learning to do well;” no “hating the evil, and loving the good;” no “abhorring the evil, or cleaving to that which is good.” Without repentance we cannot really love God, desire his glory, reverence his majesty, or delight in his law and service. Mere moral and relative good behaviour in the world, without any due regard to God; or mere external performances in religion, may subsist without repentance: but that holiness which respects the authority of God, as Law-giver and Judge, which springs from love of him and his commandments, and is intentionally directed to his glory, can only be produced from a heart renewed unto repentance.

Especially that deep sense of personal unworthiness, which is peculiar to the true penitent, prepares the heart to exercise genuine gratitude, contentment, patience, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, and love of enemies. These dispositions and duties form a very conspicuous part of the Christian character, as delineated in the sacred Scriptures: but no impenitent man can really exercise these graces, or perform these duties, whatever appearances he may occasionally assume. Yet if this be not our character and conduct, our hope is merely presumption, our profession, hypocrisy: “for if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.” So that without repentance no man can serve God here, or be saved in the world to come.

Lastly, Without repentance there can be no meetness for heaven. Without a correspondent disposition, without an appetite prepared for the object, there can be no gratification. A holy heart relishes and delights in holiness, and is thus prepared for the enjoyment of a holy heaven. But he who despises and disrelishes holiness in this world, could find no happiness in that place, where all the joys are holy, and where consequently all the employments would be irksome to him. No impenitent sinner has this “meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light;” because he cannot relish and delight in holiness: for as soon as he becomes of this disposition, he must in proportion abhor unholiness, and abhor himself for his sinfulness; that is to say, he must repent of his sins.

The whole company of the redeemed are likewise represented as joining in cordial and unreserved praises unto God and the Lamb; giving all the glory of their salvation to the rich mercy of the Father, and the precious blood of the Saviour. These praises imply an acknowledgment of the justice of the sentence executed upon the ungodly: nay, they imply that *they* themselves might justly, and should certainly, have perished with their fellow-rebels, had not Jesus interposed with his atoning blood. But could any impenitent sinner join this worship with sincere delight? Many openly arraign the conduct of the Judge in condemning sinners to eternal misery: and every impenitent heart is disposed to quarrel with this part of the divine conduct. Nor would the case be different, were it possible for a person of this description to enter into heaven: he would secretly condemn his Maker for severity, in eternally punishing others for the very crimes which he himself had committed, and never repented of; he must dissent from those praises in his heart, which arise from a principle of which he allows not; namely, that distinguishing grace and atoning blood have made all the difference between him and those in hell: he could not in sincerity allow that God would have been glorious, though he had left him to perish. But there is neither hypocrisy, nor discordant voice, nor unholiness, in those happy mansions; therefore no impenitent sinner shall ever enter into them.

Because our self-love renders us so unwilling to believe this important truth; because Satan with such artifice endeavours to draw off our attention from it; because we are so reluctant of ourselves duly to consider it; and because the entangling pursuits and interests, the pleasures, maxims, and examples of the world, have such a tendency to lull us into a fatal security in this respect; I have the more importunately laboured these multiplied demonstrations of the necessity of repentance. Surely, sinner, I have gained my point, fixed thy attention, and fully convinced thee, that thou hast cause to repent, oughtest to repent, and must either repent or perish. Surely thy heart is by this time in some measure suitably affected with the important subject; and thou art even now, with pressing anxiety, inquiring, "What then is repentance?" Beseeking the Lord to assist and bless the attempt, I shall endeavour with all possible seriousness and plainness, to satisfy this inquiry.

PART SECOND.

The Nature of Repentance.

I SHALL not spend my time in critically inquiring into the etymology, or the meaning of the words which are translated repentance in our version of the Bible. Suffice it to observe that μ μ μ , one word frequently used, signifies to *be afterwards careful or uneasy*: and μ , that more commonly used, signifies a *change of mind*, of judgment and disposition; which ideas severally and conjunctly express the nature of repentance, as it may more fully be learned from the general tenor of the Scriptures. I would then define true repentance to be “A genuine sorrow for sin, attended with a real inclination to undo, if it were possible, all that we have sinfully done; and consequently an endeavour, as far as we have it in our power, to counteract the consequences of our former evil conduct; with a determination of mind, through divine grace, to walk for the future in newness of life, evidenced to be sincere by “fruits meet for repentance;” that is, by all holy dispositions, words, and actions. Enlarging on this definition, I shall have an opportunity of expressing my sentiments on the nature of real repentance, and distinguishing it from various counterfeits.

I. Repentance comprehends “a *genuine* sorrow for sin.” This implies that there is a *spurious* sorrow on account of sin, which a man may have to excess without real repentance. This kind of sorrow arises from self-love, alarmed with the fear of punishment, without regard to the just desert of it. A man is indeed grieved; yet not that he hath sinned, but that God exceedingly hates sin, is determined to punish it, and is able to execute this determination in spite of all opposition. He is extremely sorry that the law is so very strict, and greatly terrified when he reflects on the danger to which he stands exposed: but he is not grieved at heart for the odious ungrateful part he hath acted. In human affairs, many, under condemnation of death, appear thus penitent, whose insincerity is detected by a pardon, and they rush upon the commission of new crimes. Many penitents of this description we meet with on sick-beds, or in circumstances of imminent danger: they are under excessive terrors, shed abundance of tears, and make many fair promises; but when the alarm is over, their repentance is repented of, and their concern lost in company and worldly pursuits. They likewise abound among the hearers of the gospel. Like Felix, when the word of God is brought home to their consciences, they

tremble, and perhaps weep: but they are soon quieted; and return to the pursuit of their worldly interests and pleasures with unabated alacrity: many of these embrace false and loose schemes of religion, are buoyed up with presumptuous hopes, and *practically* say, “let us sin on, that grace may abound.” Having got over their alarm, their repentance is finished; they live without remorse for the past, or tenderness of conscience for the present, nor have they any trouble in general about their sins; except perchance, some outrage to common decency shame them before their fellow-sinners.

These transient alarms and convictions are most effectually made use of by Satan, to keep men from true repentance. A general persuasion prevails, that we ought to repent, though few understand the real nature of repentance. However, this general persuasion frequently excites, from time to time, considerable uneasiness of conscience to him who considers himself impenitent. But when men falsely imagine that they have repented, or do repent, this uneasiness ceases, and they continue impenitent with a quiet mind.

Let me here entreat the reader to pause, and put a few questions on the subject to himself. “Has it not been thus with me? Is it not so to this hour? Do I not keep my conscience from reproaching me, or silence its friendly admonitions, by some general apprehension, that I am at times a penitent?”—I beseech thee leave not this consideration, till thou hast carefully examined it, as in the sight of God, and with the day of judgment before thine eyes. Most certain it is that multitudes live all their lives in a continued course of sinning and repenting *in this way*; and at length die impenitent.

But a man may be *really* sorry for particular sins, without being a true penitent. Conscience sometimes so reproaches men for certain enormous violations of all laws, human and divine, as to render them a terror to themselves: yea, they are exceedingly sorry that they ever committed those particular crimes, and would gladly undo them were it possible: and yet this hath nothing in it of the nature of true repentance. Thus Judas repented of betraying Christ, confessing his guilt, making restitution, and even seeking to prevent the consequences of his base treachery; indeed he was so stung with remorse, that he could not live under the anguish, but became his own executioner. Yet he was not a true penitent; for the Lord assures us, “It had been good for that man had he never been born.”

And we do not find that he ever expressed the least remorse for his hypocrisy, his covetousness, or his other wickedness of heart and life, which

he had continued in all his days. The case is often the same with murderers, who are unspeakably troubled for one act of violence to a fellow-creature; but not in the least concerned for all the contempt, ingratitude, and enmity, of which they have been guilty towards God. And the same is often observable in respect of many other notorious offenders. This sorrow is not excited by a conviction (resulting from knowledge and reflection,) of deep criminality, in having sinned heinously by disobeying a good God, and breaking a good law; but it arises from the horror of having done violence to natural light and their own consciences, to that degree, that none of their former *excuses and pretences* can pacify them: God having preserved thus much of himself and of his law in our reason and conscience, as a check upon natural depravity, and to bridle the headstrong corruptions of those, who neither fear him nor regard men; yet cannot act out all their evil purposes, without becoming their own tormentors.

But the sorrow of a true penitent is *for sin*, as committed against God, being rebellion against his rightful authority, and transgression of his holy law. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Psalm li. 4. He mourns after a godly sort, with a godly sorrow, or a sorrow which directly regards God. 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10. His sorrow springs from the consideration of the majesty, purity, and excellency of that glorious Being whom he hath offended, the reasonableness of the law which he hath transgressed, the obligations to obedience which he hath violated, the injustice and ingratitude of which he hath been guilty, and the complicated odiousness of his conduct. As every sin partakes of the same nature, and implies the same disregard to God, he mourns for all, and everyone; whether man were injured by it or not; whether it were secret or open; a sin of omission, or of commission; and whether it were or were not, contrary to the notions, maxims, customs, and allowance of the world. Yea, every sinful temper, imagination, and inclination; every idle, unprofitable word; every evil action of his whole life, as upon examination it recurs to his remembrance, excites afresh his godly sorrow. In proportion as he recollects the numberless instances of God's unwearied patience and kindness to him, in former years, he becomes more sensible of his own ingratitude, forgetfulness, and disobedience: and the further he is enlightened to see the glory of God, the more hateful all sin appears, and the more he mourns over his own offences.

As therefore the glory of the divine character shines forth more illustriously from the person and suffering of Jesus, than from all the other

works of God: the true penitent's sorrow will be more or less intense, in proportion to the degree of his spiritual apprehensions, and realizing views, of that great event. When with fixed attention he can meditate on the divine Surety for sinners, agonizing in the garden and expiring on the cross; when he can realize to his mind, in the exercise of faith, who he was that suffered; and what he endured from the cruelty and insult of men, the power and malice of Satan, and the avenging justice of the Father; and wherefore he suffered, even that he might bear our sins, and expiate our guilt: then, in an especial manner, his mind is deeply impressed with admiring views of the awful holiness and justice, and the unfathomable love and compassion of God: then sin appears to his mind peculiarly odious, as committed against a God of such a lovely and loving character: then he becomes abominable in his own eyes, and mourns for his sins with peculiar humiliation. They now become a sore burden, too heavy for him to bear; he goes mourning for them all the day long, yet mourns that he can mourn no more, is ashamed that he is no more affected, and abhors himself for the remaining hardness of his heart.

He now no longer vindicates his conduct, or extenuates his crimes: his mouth is stopped, his guilt is manifest, and he condemns himself. His judgement of his own character is now totally changed; he used to admire and approve, now he abhors and loathes himself: he was disposed to exalt himself, now he becomes more and more disposed to self-abasement. Then turning his thoughts inward, he traces back the streams of sin which have polluted his life, to that fountain of iniquity in his heart, from whence they sprang. "Behold," says he, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Psalm li. 5.—Abased in himself, and impressed with an awful sense of the holy majesty of God, he would despond, yea, at length absolutely despair, were he not supported by discoveries of the rich mercy of God, and the precious salvation of the gospel. Yet, thus encouraged, he indeed ventures to speak unto the Lord, but it is in the publican's self-abased frame of spirit, and humble words, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

This deep humiliation of soul renders a man backward to conclude his repentance genuine, his faith sincere, and his sins forgiven. These blessings appear in his eyes so large, his own character so vile, and his humiliation so small, in comparison with what he is conscious it ought to be, that he can hardly raise his hopes so high: and he is so aware of the wickedness of his heart, and discovers so much of Satan's artifice, that he fears being imposed on by a false peace, where eternity is at stake. But

when this hope springs up in his heart, and he discovers, by comparing it with the Scripture, with fervent prayer, that “it is the hope that maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him;” this is so far from drying up his tears, and terminating his repentance, that it vastly enlarges and purifies his godly sorrow; which is now attended with a sweetness far exceeding earthly joy. The fuller assurance he possesses, that Jesus “was wounded for *his* transgressions, and was bruised for his iniquities,” the more he abhors his sins and loathes himself. Here he sees with personal application, what wrath sin merited; what punishment he was worthy of; when a God of such immense compassion would not pardon one sin, without such a satisfaction: yea, would rather not spare his own Son, but be pleased to bruise Him in whom his soul delighted, than either leave sin unpunished, or sinful men to perish!

His own concern in this transaction directs his attention peculiarly to it. “The Father loved *him* and gave his beloved Son to die for *him*: Christ loved *him*, and gave himself for him, and interceded for him;” and thus *he* was spared and borne with all the years of his rebellion, whilst many others were cut off in their sins. At length “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved him, even when dead in sins, quickened him” by his Spirit; thus born of God, he was pardoned, justified, and adopted into God’s family, and numbered amongst the heirs of eternal glory; to which he is sealed by the graces and consolations of the Holy Spirit; as these are the earnest of the promised inheritance. Such discoveries and prospects elevate the soul to a degree of adoring love and gratitude, before unknown; and this increases the penitent’s self-abasement and godly sorrow. His heart is even broken, and as it were melted, when he considers the number and odiousness of the crimes committed against this glorious and gracious God, who was all the while full of love to him. His character is stamped, “a mourner that shall be comforted;” yet his is a sweet sorrow: whilst with tears of contrition and gratitude, he praises a pardoning God and a bleeding Saviour, he realizes the paradox, “Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;” except that in some dark seasons his heart is insensible, both to the motions of godly sorrow, and of holy joy. These alternate variations in the frames of his spirit, the true Christian experiences through the remainder of his life. His more melting seasons of godly sorrow are blended with, and prepare the way for, his sweetest consolations; which again increase and purify his mourning for sin; as he then most clearly perceives, what a gracious and glorious God he hath offend-

ed, and how vile he hath been. Thus ingenuous sorrow and holy joy, reciprocally assist one another; they intermingle with, and are proportioned to each other, in his daily experience; till at length death closes the varied scene. Then “God wipes away all tears from his eyes;” “the days of his mourning are ended;” he shall eternally be comforted, and plenteously reap the harvest which here he sowed in tears. I do not mean to determine anything concerning the degree in which true penitents obtain these spiritual discoveries, or experience these flowing affections, and melting frames. It is enough if we can describe the distinguishing nature of true repentance. True grace is of the same nature and tendency, whether we have much or little of it.

If, then, the genuine sorrow for sin required in Scripture has been described, it is no objection to say, that many true Christians have very little of these views and affections; because that is only to say, in other words, that they have but little true repentance; or (which amounts to the same thing) have but little true grace. And the less they have of these things, the less evident is their conversion; the more need have “they to examine themselves whether they be in the faith;” and to “give diligence to make their calling and election sure.” Certainly we must not adulterate the word of God, that we may accommodate it to the experience of lukewarm professors, in a day when “iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold.” This would be the way to reduce things from bad to worse, till true religion vanished from among us. We must still keep to the standard of God’s word, the experience of Scriptural saints, and the specimen of primitive Christians; endeavouring to stir up men’s minds to imitate these illustrious examples. And, on careful examination, I trust, the above description of godly sorrow will be found Scriptural: all real Christians have experienced something of it, and habitually do experience it: and the more distinct their views, the more enlarged their affections, and the deeper their contrition: the more evidently they are true penitents, and entitled to all the consolations belonging to that character.

Nor is the order in which these things are experienced, at all material, provided the godly sorrow be of the proper nature and tendency: yet I would just observe, that at all times it is begun before *assured* hope of salvation; otherwise pardon and the *assurance of it* would be vouchsafed to impenitent sinners; but it is much enlarged by this assurance, wherever it is scripturally possessed; as the believer now “looks upon him whom he hath pierced, and mourns.” It begins previously to the sense of pardoning love, and is perfected by it; because the believer’s love to the Lord is thus

increased, and this increases sorrow for having offended him. Let this be well digested, and then let us proceed to observe that,

II. Repentance is “attended with a real inclination to undo, if it were possible, all that we have sinfully done; and consequently with an endeavour, as far as we have it in our power, to counteract the consequences of our former evil conduct.” This frame of spirit will manifest itself,

1. By ingenuous confession of our sins to the glory of that God, whom by sin we have dishonoured. Thus Joshua exhorts Achan; “My son, give glory to the Lord, and make confession unto him.” The commission of sin impeaches the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God; and seems to say, that he hath forbidden us something conducive to our real happiness. Obstinacy in sin defies his power, dares his vengeance, and despises his truth and holiness; to vindicate ourselves, and cover our sins, arraigns the righteousness of his threatenings and judgments, or affronts his omniscience. Thus the sinner robs God of his glory. What he hath done cannot be undone: nor is it in his power to make satisfaction for the injustice, of which he hath been guilty, except he bear the eternal punishment. Convinced of this, the true penitent flees for refuge to the atoning blood of Jesus. But, though he cannot make satisfaction for his sins, or do anything towards meriting pardon or reward: (for this he knows must be wholly of free mercy,) yet what he can do, he will. He will, both in secret and openly, on all proper occasions, make full and unreserved confession of his crimes, and condemn himself; and thus glorify God’s justice and mercy; glorify his law, as “the ministration of condemnation,” and his gospel as “the ministration of righteousness:” for “both are glorious, though the latter exceeded in glory.” 2 Cor. iii. 7-11. All who have even a superficial acquaintance with the Bible, know that this is everywhere spoken of, as an essential part of true repentance, and often put for the whole of it: I shall not therefore further dwell on it, but shall confine myself to two observations. *First*, That secret sins require only secret confession unto that God who knoweth and seeth in secret: but public scandals require public acknowledgments: that we may openly honour God by our confession, as we have dishonoured him openly by our conduct. Thus when David had, by adultery and murder, given cause to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; by writing and publishing the fifty-first psalm, he publicly took shame to himself, even before his own servants, subjects, and children: and thus gave glory unto God, and stopped the blasphemy of the ungodly. *Secondly*, That the true penitent, though *general* in his public confession, should be, and will be, very particular in his secret confession; reviewing,

enumerating and bemoaning all his sins, of every sort, with all their various aggravations.

2. This disposition of mind will influence the penitent to make ample restitution to those whom he hath defrauded or injured. Under the ceremonial law, the trespass-offering was to be accompanied by restitution to the injured party. Lev. vi. 1-7. The plain meaning of which institution Christ hath given us in his Sermon on the Mount: “If thou bring thy gift unto the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; *first* be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” Thus it was that Zaccheus evidenced the sincerity of his repentance: and thus every sincere convert, with self-indignation, will haste to be rid of that accursed thing, dishonest gain:¹ with scrupulousness and diligence he will search for every remainder of it; he will restore it with interest to the injured, if he can: if not, he will give it to their relatives, and to the poor; and should he be unable to do this (which he will put himself to much inconvenience and self-denial rather than not effect,) it will be long the occasion of additional trouble of mind to him.—Let me ask thee, beloved reader, thinking thyself a penitent, whither thou hast impartially examined thyself on this score? whither thou hast imitated Zaccheus in this matter? Or art thou sure thou hast no cause, having never injured any man by fraud, violence, or extortion? I warn thee beforehand, that God will bring to light these hidden things of darkness, and fully investigate this matter, at the day of judgment. And no *unrighteous* persons, (2 Cor. vi. 9.) who, having injured their neighbours, love the gains of iniquity so well, as to refuse restitution, shall inherit the kingdom of God. This evidence of sincerity is so distinguishing, that I cannot but conclude, judging by the Bible, that all appearances of repentance, all pretences to experience, without this are hypocritical and delusory. What shall we say then to many persons, who, having formerly under colour of law, been, *perhaps* unwillingly, injurious to their creditors, still keep them out of their just rights; perhaps see them struggling with those difficulties, into which their extravagance hath plunged them; whilst they themselves now live at ease, perhaps in affluence; and are well able, (if they could prevail with themselves to retrench superfluous expenses,) to make restitution, in whole, or in part; but will not, because not compelled by the law of the land. These persons evidently confound human laws with doing the will of God; and prefer

¹ Who shaketh his hands from holding of bribes. Isaiah xxxiii. 15.

wealth, indulgence, and the pride of life, to the golden rule of “doing unto others as they would they should do unto them.” Whatever profession of religion any one, who acts thus, may make, his religion is vain, and a discourse upon repentance would be exceedingly defective, which did not bear testimony against this common and flagrant conduct.

Another evil, I am told, very frequent among persons professing evangelical religion, as well as others, is dealing in smuggled or contraband goods. This trade is in itself,—An evident violation of God’s express command, Rom. xiii. 6, 7.—A robbery upon the community, which must be taxed to make up the deficiency: And aiding and abetting all the enormities that smugglers commit. But necessity is pretended. I suppose it is necessary in order to be rich. “But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into divers foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition: For the love of money is the root of all evil.” 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

But our evil conduct may injure others, not only in their property, but in their reputation, in their connections, in their peace of mind, and in many other ways: and the true penitent, though he cannot undo what is past, yet will endeavour to counteract the mischief, at the expense of stooping to the most humiliating submission, of making the frankest acknowledgements, or by any method in his power, however contrary to the pride and self-love of the human heart.

3. This disposition of mind will induce a man to retract those false principles, which he has advanced, that may have a tendency to propagate or countenance infidelity or profaneness: and to counteract the consequence of his evil conduct, where it hath prejudiced men’s minds against religion, or led them into sin, and emboldened them in it: or any ways tended to the dishonour of God, and the ruin of souls. Gladly would he undo this part of his conduct: it ever grieves him upon reflection: he is pained that the seed is sown, and springs up and grows, notwithstanding all his endeavours to the contrary. But as far as his retraction, his arguments, his persuasions, his example and influence can reach, he will endeavour to prevent the further progress of the mischief. In these and various other particulars, true repentance influences a man sincerely to desire and endeavour to counteract the tendency of his former evil conduct; but appearances of humiliation for sin may be and often are without this distinguishing effect. Thus Ahab humbled himself and was clothed in sackcloth, but neither restored Naboth’s vineyard, nor ceased to commit iniquity.

III. True repentance is attended with a determination of mind, through divine grace, to walk for the future in newness of life, evidenced to be sincere by fruits meet for repentance: that is, by all holy dispositions, words, and actions.

This is at last the grand distinction betwixt true repentance, and all false appearances. Though men be abundant in shelling tears, and make the most humiliating confessions, or most ample restitution; though they openly retract their false principles, and are zealous in promoting true religion; though they relate the most plausible story of experiences, and profess to be favoured with the most glorious manifestations; though they have strong confidence, high affections, orthodox sentiments, exact judgment, and extensive knowledge: yet, except they “do works meet for repentance,” all the rest is nothing, they are still in their sins. For the tree is known by the fruit; and “every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” Yea, though Cain’s terror, Judas’s confession and restitution, Pharaoh’s fair promises, Ahab’s humiliation, Herod’s reverencing the prophet, hearing him gladly, and doing many things; the stony-ground hearer’s joy; together with the tongue of men and angels, the gifts of miracles and prophecies, and the knowledge of all mysteries, were combined in one man, “they would not prove him a true penitent, so long as the love of one lust remained unmodified in his heart, or the practice of it was *allowed* in his life.

Unless the drunkard become habitually sober, and the churl learn to be liberal; unless the contentious man learn meekness, and the proud humility; unless every man break off, and set himself to oppose and mortify his constitutional and customary iniquity; there is no real repentance. The man’s mind is not changed respecting sin: he does not sincerely grieve that ever he committed it, nor really desire it undone, nor heartily abhor it, nor is willing to be finally divorced from it; not from his darling indulgence, his Delilah, his Herodias; however he be affected, alarmed, and restrained.

I allow, that the true penitent will find work enough all his life with his own peculiar evil propensities; and after all his watchfulness, prayer, and determination of mind against every sin, he will too often manifest, to his great sorrow, that his evil nature is not destroyed, that sin yet dwells within him: but he will also give abundant evidence that no sin hath dominion over him; that his own iniquity is peculiarly abhorred, dreaded and opposed; and that, in short, “he is a new creature, old things are past away, behold all things are become new.” This will not be so evident to others,

in the case of a man, who was before moral and decent in his character; but it will be equally manifest to his own conscience; whilst he observes that he now acts from other principles, to other ends, and by another rule, than heretofore: and now he has not only regard to those things with which men are acquainted, but with equal care and attention abstains from secret sins, from evil tempers, intentions and imaginations, which are manifest only unto God.

It appears then, that this necessary repentance is a very arduous business. Thus our Lord represents it: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” Do you object the profit and pleasantness of your sins, and the pain of parting with them? He answers, “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out: if thy right hand or foot offend thee, cut it off. For it is profitable for thee” thus maimed and mutilated, “to enter into life, rather than having two eyes, two hands, two feet, to be cast into hell, where *their* worm never dieth, and the fire is not quenched.” When the difficulty is objected, the necessity is urged; the awful alternative—repentance, or eternal damnation! But should any urge the impossibility, he proposes the effectual assistance of Him, to whom all things are possible. An easy slothful religion may serve a man to live with; but only a diligent, self-denying religion will comfortably prepare a man to meet death. “Except a man deny himself, take up his cross daily, and forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple,” saith the loving Saviour of the world, the Judge of the living and of the dead; and because we are so backward to believe it, and so much depends upon believing it, he confirms it with a double asseveration;—“Verily, verily, I say unto you.”

But though the work is great, and requires labour and self-denial, there is no cause for despondency: the encouragements are proportionable: the success certain to everyone who is in good earnest about it: and the work itself unspeakably more pleasant than all the forbidden delights of sin.

PART THIRD.

Encouragements to Repentance.

I HAVE already intimated, that he who, convinced of the necessity of repentance, in good earnest uses those means which God hath appointed in order to it, may depend upon the effectual assistance of the Holy Spirit in this important undertaking, which will render it both practicable and pleasant and the same topic will afterwards be resumed, when those means are treated of. I shall not therefore farther speak upon that subject in this place, but lead your attention to those encouragements which arise from the assurance that repentance is inseparably connected with salvation.

I. In the *first* place, “God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” Were there any of the human race who did not need repentance, or any to whom repentance would be unavailing, we may be sure God would not have given such a commandment. He sends no message of this kind to fallen angels, or to the souls of wicked men who have died in their sins; because he hath determined to show them no mercy. Having done wrong in sinning, doubtless they continue to do wrong in not repenting; and their impenitent rebellion and enmity to God will eternally illustrate his justice in their condemnation; as all will see, that he doth not without cause treat them as enemies. A man who hath murdered his lawful prince, though the law must have its course, ought to repent, and shows a still more desperate spirit of rebellion if he die vindicating his conduct. Yet the avenger of blood, designing no mercy, requires no submission. A command to submit and repent, if sent to a company of condemned criminals, would directly excite a beam of hope in every relenting breast.—God sends his ministers and his word, commanding thee O sinner, to repent; were no more said, thou mightest safely draw this conclusion:—“Certainly he hath thoughts of peace, and intends to show mercy to all who obey the summons.”

II. God is always in Scripture represented as peculiarly ready to receive and entertain repenting sinners: “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephra-

in my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.” Jer. xxxi. 18-20. Here is the true penitent, mourning for sin, covered with shame, and crying for mercy: and the encouraging answer of that God, “who waited to be gracious.” The same is most emphatically inculcated by the experience of David in the thirty-second Psalm. In this, mark carefully how soon the sweet sense of forgiving love followed his ingenious confession of guilt.

But omitting many other Scriptures, for the sake of brevity, let me detain you a little in meditating on the prodigal son; a parable spoken on purpose to encourage the publicans and sinners, who listened to the words of Jesus. Let us attentively consider the character of the prodigal, his disdainful and ungrateful behaviour to a wise and indulgent father, his debauched and dissolute life, and the misery to which he was reduced. Here, as in a glass, we may see ourselves; our pride and ingratitude, our contempt of God and wilful departure from him, our folly, and our misery whilst we live in sin. Then let us view him at length *come to himself*, conscious of his guilt, sinking under his misery, covered with shame, adopting the resolution of returning to his offended father, with penitent confessions, and humble supplications. Discouraged as well as humbled, by the recollection of his own vileness, his only hope arises from meditating on the kindness of him whom he had so basely offended; and he can just enough raise his mind above despondency to expect, that, perhaps, after many repulses, and reiterated submissions and entreaties, answered by deserved upbraidings, his father might be at length prevailed on to admit him, in some mean capacity, to share that plenty which his servants enjoyed. Here we have the frame of spirit, the hopes, and the fears of the true penitent, most affectingly delineated. But, behold the tender father is looking out with eager expectation, for the return of his lost prodigal! he sees him afar off, and, through parental tenderness and compassion, is regardless of his age and gravity, and runs to meet him. Finding that he abhorred and condemned himself, without one reproach or the least delay, he welcomes him as a son: he clothes, he feasts, and rejoices over him, and commands all his servants to rejoice with him: “Because,” says he, “this my son was dead, and is alive! was lost, and is found!”

Thus shall every true penitent be welcomed by a gracious God. Not only shall he meet with a kinder reception than his fears foreboded; but his most sanguine expectations shall be far exceeded; his sins, however numerous, shall not be mentioned against him; his wants shall be all sup-

plied: pardon, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost shall be conferred on him; the robe of righteousness and salvation shall clothe him; angels in heaven shall rejoice more over him, than over ninety and nine Pharisees, who in their own judgement need no repentance; yea, God himself shall acknowledge him as his own child, and rejoice over him to do him good! Arise then, poor dejected sinner, and imitate this prodigal.

III. We have seen, that repentance and forgiveness are connected, in a great many texts of Scripture which have been cited, and many others might be produced. But I would more especially call your attention to those encouraging promises, which are expressly confined to such as are exercising repentance. It would be a needless prolixity to enumerate the whole, or the most of these promises! a few examples may suffice: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite heart, and that trembleth at my word." Is. lvii. 15. lxvi. 2. "He looketh upon men, and if any say I have sinned, I have perverted that which is *right*, and it profiteth me not; he shall deliver his soul from going down into the pit, and his life shall see the light." Job xxxiii. 27, 28. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy." Prov. xxviii. 13. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John i. 9. Let but the broken-hearted sinner well consider these few citations, and plead them in prayer, through the intercession of Jesus, and he will find them full of consolation. Then let him search the Scriptures, and he will observe, that no one character is so particularly encouraged as that of the penitent, under the titles of mourners, poor in spirit, contrite, humble, and such others, as are included in the explanation which has been given of true repentance. These things abundantly prove, that none but true penitents share the blessings, or are entitled to the consolations which flow from the salvation of the gospel; and that no degree of aggravated guilt can exclude any repenting sinner from the participation of the one, and the enjoyment of the other.

But let not any from hence conclude, that these privileges are properly the *rewards* of repentance, or that it *atones* for our crimes. This would supersede the necessity of the expiatory sufferings of Jesus, and militate with St Paul's express declaration, "that we are justified by *faith*, through

the righteousness of Christ,” and consequently would infer, “that Christ died in vain.” Did we repent of ourselves, without the preventing and assisting grace of God; and were our repentance perfect in its nature and fruits, it could not avail for our justification in any degree. It is indeed observable, that even they who speak of atoning for our transgressions of the divine law by repentance, change their language when they have occasion to treat of the laws of human governments: you seldom hear them speak of a traitor or murderer making atonement for his crimes by *repentance*, but by *his death*. This sacrifice to justice the law demands: this alone expiates the offence: and if a criminal, however penitent or disposed to future obedience, escape punishment; the law is dispensed with, justice is relaxed, and no atonement made. But God’s justice is perfect, and can admit of no relaxation: his law must be magnified and made honourable, and cannot be dispensed with. Not the repentance, but the eternal punishment of the offender, is the atonement indispensably insisted upon, or one equally honourable to the precept and sanction of the divine law. This the true penitent perceives or allows; he subscribes the sentence of his own condemnation, and humbly trusts in that vicarious atonement, which the Son of God once made, and which is of infinite value and efficacy; and through which “God is JUST, and the justifier of the believer.” That repentance which is depended on for justification, is a proud unbelieving repentance, and not the humble repentance here treated of.

But in fact, repentance, where it is genuine, is the gift of God. Thus St Paul speaks on this subject to his beloved Timothy. “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. In like manner the apostle Peter, before the Jewish rulers, declared, concerning Jesus, whom they had crucified: “Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” And when the same apostle gave his brethren and the church at Jerusalem an account of the conversion of Cornelius and his household, they “glorified God, saying, Then hath God to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” Acts v. 31. xi. 28.

This accords to the prediction or promise which JEHOVAH gave by the prophet Zechariah,—“I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.” Zech. xii. 10. This was fulfilled in

part, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the crucifiers of Christ, on the day of Pentecost, and when, being pricked to the heart, and inquiring of the apostles “what they must do;” three thousand obeyed the call to “Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.” In entire harmony with these decisive testimonies of holy writ, are those petitions in our excellent liturgy, which, alas! are often so familiar to the ear, as scarcely to excite the attention of the understanding, and not at all to affect the heart, of many professed worshippers in the established church: “Let us beseech him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit.” “That it may please thee to give us true repentance.” “Create and make in us new and contrite hearts;” with expressions implying the same important truth, which continually occur in many parts of our truly scriptural liturgy.

In fact, though we have so much cause for repentance, and *are in duty* bound to repent; yet our proud carnal hearts are naturally destitute of the least disposition or inclination to this duty. The shame therefore of our obstinate impenitency belongs to us; but the whole glory of our repentance, when the grace of God disposes and enables us to repent, is due to him, “who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.” So far then are we from *meriting* anything by repenting, that we are laid under fresh obligations to him “who hath granted us repentance unto life.” “Do not err, my beloved brethren, every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” Yet, on the other hand, let us not regard those who represent our natural want of inclination as an excuse for impenitency; not considering that the dominion of pride, and the love of sin, in the heart, which renders us incapable of our duty, forms itself the very essence of that impenitent heart, which God abhors and will condemn, and which cannot be its own excuse. Nor is the most penitent person in the world perfect in his repentance. No man hates sin in a degree equal to its hatefulness: no man condemns, abases, and abhors himself, as much as he ought to do; or as much as he would, did he more perfectly behold the glory of God, the excellency of the law, the evil of sin, and the multitude of his own transgressions; or had he more fixed views of the nature and glory of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. He that is habitually most penitent, finds his repentance capable of increase when his views are enlarged, and his heart is peculiarly affected with these discoveries: but even in these seasons, his enlarged godly sorrow is little in comparison to what it ought to be, and would be, did he, instead of “seeing through a glass darkly, see face to face.” How far then doth the gen-

eral frame of his spirit, when his mind is comparatively dark and unaffected, come short of the perfection of repentance! Over this every sincere Christian mourns, and for this seeks forgiveness.

For similar reasons the *fruits* of repentance do nothing towards atoning for our sins, meriting a reward, or justifying us before God. Take a familiar illustration: You owe your tradesman a sum of money; and you now continue to deal with him for ready money only: yet the old debt is not by this diminished. But should you daily purchase to the value of a crown: and only pay daily one shilling, your debt would rapidly increase.—Perfect obedience is no more than what is due to our Creator: so that after we have by sin for years run in arrear with him, did we obey, for all the remainder of a long life, as perfectly as an arch-angel, our love and obedience would be no more than his due for the present, and could do nothing towards discharging the old account: even with the apostle Paul's obedience the debt would rapidly increase. Sure I am, whilst I now write, that I this moment am more deeply deserving of condemnation than ever; because, though I hope sincerely penitent, I daily add recent transgressions to my former sins, and shall certainly perish, if Jesus do not plead for me, "Deliver him from going down into the pit—behold the ransom."

This salvation, through the ransom and intercession of the Son of God, every true penitent cordially approves, and thankfully embraces, and shall certainly participate. My brethren, an impenitent believer and a penitent unbeliever are ideal characters, which have no existence unless in some men's imaginations: except where the repentance is counterfeit, and the faith dead. Genuine repentance and faith are twin graces produced together, thriving together, and forwarding each other's growth. It is true, some exercises of faith precede, and produce repentance in the regenerate soul: but repentance precedes, and makes way for that exercise of faith, which interests the soul in the merits of Christ for salvation. The belief of the existence and perfections of God, his law and government of our relations, obligations, and accountableness to him; of the future state, the day of judgment, heaven and hell, always precedes repentance, and is influential in leading man to it: a belief of several truths respecting Jesus Christ and his salvation, generally, though perhaps not always, precedes. But he must be already in some degree penitent, who can cordially approve and embrace that salvation; for whilst a man remains impenitent, his proud heart will have insuperable objections to it; insuperable I say, in any other way, than by that change of judgment and disposition, which is denominated repentance.

The salvation revealed in the gospel, exalts God upon the throne, and requires the sinner to submit to his authority and righteousness, and give him the whole glory of his salvation. This appears most equitable to the true penitent, and to him alone. "Let God be glorified, says he, by all in heaven and earth, whatever becomes of me; but should he mercifully save so vile and worthless a rebel, I shall be an eternal monument of the richness of his mercy, and the power of his grace." The gospel is intended to put honour upon the law: "It is holy, just, and good," says the penitent soul: "I consent unto it that it is good," and I have "deserved its awful curse for my vile transgressions: I rejoice to see this holy law magnified, in the obedience unto death of God incarnate: I long to have it written in my heart by the finger of the Spirit: and my prayer is, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy righteous precepts!" The gospel shows sin to be exceedingly sinful, and discovers its infinite odiousness and just demerit; the true penitent, and he alone, irreconcilably hates all sin, even that which was his most darling indulgence. The gospel abases the sinner, silences his excuses, rejects his pleas, strips him of his distinctions; and, without regard to his learning, wisdom, wealth, honour, morality, or amiable character among men, treats him as a sinner condemned to die, deserving and fitted for destruction. To this the true penitent, and he alone, cordially submits. "I loathe and abhor myself." "To me belongs shame and confusion of face," is the genuine expression of his humbled heart:

The gospel honours Christ as the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the All in all: thus he appears to the true penitent, and to none else. In his person, undertaking, righteousness, atonement, resurrection, mediatorial exaltation, offices (as King, Priest, and Prophet,) intercession, instructions, example, and Spirit of grace, he appears to the humbled sinner altogether suitable, sufficient, and precious. On every other side despair lowers: the glory of God, and the honour of the law, demand his destruction: but here hope brightens; here he sees God glorious, and sinners saved; here he sees everything exactly suited to his wants and his desires; here he may have his sins pardoned, his corruptions subdued, his ignorance removed, grace communicated, strength renewed, and everything bestowed freely, without money and without price, which can raise him from the brink of hell, and the borders of despair, to the lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfailing. Christ appears to him "the Pearl of great price," "the Chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." "He counts all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of him." To him he flees, though with trembling heart, lest he should meet

with a repulse; with trembling hand he lays hold on this only hope; to him he cleaves in the midst of discouragements and delays, and answers every rising despondency with “Lord, to whom shall I go, thou hast the words of eternal life.” Nothing but impenitent pride and love of sin, render men blind to the glory, deaf to the voice, or negligent to the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ: nor can anything but a penitent sense of the evil of sin, and the misery of a sinner, reconcile the proud heart of man to this salvation.

Though repentance therefore does not in any degree merit pardon; yet it is that disposition of mind which both prepares the soul to receive it, and renders the possessor a meet object on whom a holy God may honourably bestow it: and no further obstacle remaining, divine justice being satisfied in the sufferings of the Redeemer, the point yielded by the sinner’s repentance, that he did deserve to perish, and is saved by free grace; and his heart being now rendered willing to be saved in the appointed way; he shall, without all doubt or delay, have salvation, and the consolation which springs from it.

Were more encouragement needful, I might lead your attention to the many examples with which the word of God furnishes us, of sinners, who had committed the most atrocious crimes, and borne the most infamous characters, for complicated long-continued guilt, who on repentance were pardoned and saved. It will be enough to recite a few of their names: such were Manasseh; the woman who was a sinner,—a scandalous and notorious sinner: the thief on the cross; Saul the persecutor; and the very men who crucified the Prince of Life! These instances are doubtless recorded purposely for the encouragement of those, who are ready to conclude that their sins are too many and too great to be forgiven; and they form a very important proof and exemplification of our doctrine; that no degree of guilt can exclude the true penitent from forgiveness, through the blood of Christ. For although our Lord speaks of some who sin against the Holy Ghost, and shall never be forgiven; and the apostle John mentions a sin unto death, which they who have committed should not be prayed for: yet St Paul extricates us out of this difficulty, by informing us, that it is impossible to renew them to repentance;” which forms indeed an awful warning to those who harden their hearts against conviction and live in impenitency, but affords no exception to our doctrine, and needs give no discouragement to the penitent soul.

And now, sinners, you see the necessity of repentance, the real nature of it, and the abundant encouragement you have to repent. I would hope

that from regard to your eternal welfare, you will set about it in good earnest; not only in preference to your vain amusements and dissipations, but even to your most important business and interests which are of no consequence in comparison with this “one thing needful.” Arise then, and be doing, and the Lord will both assist and prosper your endeavours.

PART FOURTH.

The proper Season for Repentance.

SUCH persons as are but superficially acquainted with the credulity of man, and the artifice of Satan; as have taken but little notice of the workings of their own hearts, and made but little observation of what passes around them, may be apt to conclude this part of our subject needless: yet, I trust, it will be found to be of great importance, and essentially necessary to discourse concerning the proper season of repentance.

The words of the Psalmist, quoted by the Apostle, comprise what I shall urge on this head: “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.” The present time alone is ours: yesterday is irrecoverably gone; tomorrow we may be in eternity! Were then all of you in the prime of youth, I would endeavour to enforce on all the necessity of *early* repentance.

To such then I first address myself. Consider, *young sinner*, that custom is second nature: thy innate depravity forges the chains which hold thee in bondage, but custom rivets them upon thee. This is not mere speculation,—it is the language of inspiration. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may he, who is ACCUSTOMED to do evil, learn to do well.”

Repentance may be considered either as the work of divine grace in us, or as our own work by the assistance of divine grace. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Doubtless it is always alike easy to almighty God, to change the heart and renew the sinner; yet the sinner, when thus influenced to will, and to do, may find vastly more difficulty in some cases and circumstances than he would in others. When worldly interests, cares, and projects, together with customary indulgences, have added strength to your lusts, you will find repentance vastly more arduous than at present. You will then find it vastly more difficult to “cease to do evil, and to learn to do well,” to separate from the ungodly, and to habituate our appetites and passions to control. If you now delay, and *should* hereafter repent, you will bitterly know what it is to “pluck out a right eye, and to cut off a right hand.” When to the opposition to lusts grown ungovernable by gratification, and remorse for sins which exceed calcula-

tion, bitter reflection¹ on the irreparable mischief which you have been doing all your life: you add what it will cost you to renounce the friendship, to withstand the persuasions and enticements, to resist the arguments, to face the scorn and bear the reproach of those comrades in iniquity, with whom you are hitherto happily unconnected: whilst perhaps your own children, trained up in wickedness, or the wife or husband of your bosom, whom you have ignorantly espoused, may be among the number of those, who are an offence unto you. Are you therefore in youth, in early youth, yea, in childhood! You are not too young to be sinners, both by nature and practice; evil dispositions and evil actions render repentance both needful and reasonable; and without it you must perish in your sins. Even now, therefore, I call upon you in the name of God, to repent and turn to God, and to do works meet for repentance. Listen not to your corruptions, to your companions, to the cruel murderer of souls, who would persuade you that it is soon enough yet. Millions are now in outer-darkness, who on earth intended some time to repent, but imagined they had time enough before them. Perhaps there are scarcely any who did not once think as you are now thinking, and flatter themselves as you do. Will you also trifle with the Almighty, till his patience be wearied out, and he cut you off, as he hath those who thus provoked him before you; and send you to be their companions whose example you would imitate?²

Do you imagine you shall find less difficulty, or have more resolution to break through difficulties, hereafter? Alas! your difficulties will daily both be multiplied and gather force; and you will find less and less inclination, or resolution to encounter them. Fear, shame, and conscience will make gradually more feeble resistance; restraints of education will wear off, and you will grow bolder in iniquity. Finding respite from punishment, you will grow more secure and hardened in sin, till perhaps God will give you over to incurable obstinacy.

Do you imagine that sinful pleasures can afford you more satisfaction, than is to be found in serious godliness: Poor deluded souls! I compassionate your case, whilst I abhor the blasphemous supposition. Once I thought the same; I bless God for undeceiving me, and beg of him to grant you the same mercy. "There is no peace, saith my God, for the

¹ Consider in this place, what has been urged, of the necessity of restitution, Part Second. He who repents early, escapes that difficulty.

² Jer, xiii.—Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! *will* thou not be made clean? When shall it *once* be?

wicked.” “Vanity and vexation” are stamped upon all created enjoyments; they consist of eager expectations; continual anxiety, disappointments, and mortifications; a few turbulent short-lived gratifications, insipid amusements, and fatiguing pursuits of pleasure. The mind of the poor deluded man who thus seeks happiness where it is not, is uneasy in waiting for the season of enjoyment; surfeited and dissatisfied even with the moment he longed for; pained at the retrospect; alarmed when he looks forward to death and judgment; and he can find no respite from anxiety, but by banishing reflection, and foregoing the noblest privilege of the rational nature. Your smiles, ye Votaries of pleasure! are hypocritical; your mirth affectation; your heart is heaviness in the midst of your loudest peals of laughter; remorse of conscience and foreboding fears often disturb even your most jovial hours, and extort the unwilling sigh; but they render solitude and reflection bitterness: whilst the least remembrance of death, or symptom of its approach, excite a horror I have felt but cannot describe.

This is earthly, ungodly pleasure, even when health, affluence, and all conceivable advantages concur to add relish to it: but when sickness seizes the poor wretch who knows no other joy; when poverty and adversity depress, and death approaches, his case is so miserable, and his anguish so intolerable, that no words can sufficiently express it.

But true religion is the source of the sweetest serenity, the most refined delight, the most exquisite enjoyment. From conscious integrity, peace with God, submission to his will, and reliance on his providential and gracious care, spring calm content with the present, and serene expectation of the future: and these form a “peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” Victory over the fear of death, and a well-grounded and lively hope of eternal happiness, support the soul in adversity, and increase the enjoyment of prosperity. Contemplation on the glories of the divine character, and the wonders God hath wrought, issuing in admiring love, adoring gratitude, and fervent praises, inspires the soul, at some seasons, “with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” A life of communion with God, an uniform walk in his pleasant ways, an increasing assurance and experience of his love, fill the Christian’s peaceful soul with an abiding satisfaction; which nothing greatly interrupts, but the stirrings of corruption, the force of temptation, and the imperfection of his obedience. By these, at times, guilt burdens his mind, and sorrow oppresses his heart: yet even godly sorrow itself rather increases than lessens his enjoyment: and if he for a season be unhappy, it is not because he is religious, but because he is no more so. Nor is there any rational satisfaction which he doth not

enjoy, with more real relish, because with more moderation, than others do: for real religion abridges us of no enjoyment, but that which is irrational, debasing, or inordinate. In short, a flash of lightning, which for a moment interrupts, and then increases the midnight gloom, bears more comparison to the cheerful genial light of the sun, than the most exquisite gratifications of sin, to those joys which the real diligent Christian experiences from day to day. "Come, taste, and see how gracious the Lord is, and how blessed they are who trust in him."

But doth Satan persuade you, that you shall have time enough hereafter? Alas! can you be the dupes of so bare-faced an artifice? You know that you have no lease of your lives, nor are sure of beholding tomorrow's light. Many as young, as healthy, as vigorous as you, are followed to the tomb. Dare you risk eternal happiness or misery on such a peradventure! Reflect, also, that your lives are in the hands of that God, whom your sins have greatly provoked, and your presumptuous impenitency still more. May he not, even at this moment, be saying, "thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee?" Hast thou not, deluded sinner, done enough already to provoke him to it? And shouldst thou slight the present warning, and rush into forbidden pleasure; seriously consider whether thou mayest not reasonably fear, lest in the midst of some daring provocation, he should "cut thee off with a stroke," and "then a great ransom cannot deliver thee."

Dare you flatter yourselves with the presumption of repenting, if not before, yet on a death-bed! Alas! how many are cut off by sudden death! how many bereft of reason by the violence of disease! how many are seized with madness, incurable madness! how many, I say, perish without one cry for mercy, and eternally curse their folly, in being the dupes of such a delusion! "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." You evidently see the design of Satan in his temptation: he aims only to lull you into security, till he can plunge you into despair; and then he will insult over you. But even should you have a space given you before death, can you reasonably hope that God will then give you his grace, which you have so long refused? Are you sure you shall improve those hours? Can you at last in your own strength, when you are languishing under a violent disorder, overcome all those difficulties which you have considered as next to insurmountable, even with the assistance of divine grace, all the days of your health? Will you need any additional anguish, when your bones are full of strong pain, and nature is even sinking under the load? Can you then be sure that your repentance is real and genuine,

when you have no opportunity of bringing it to a trial by the fruits which it produces? One instance indeed is recorded of a dying penitent, to show that repentance, even in those circumstances, is neither impossible nor unavailing; and but one, to teach us that such cases are very rare. To-day, then, make sure of this important concern. "Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids: deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the snare of the fowler."

"Remember therefore your Creator in the days of your youth." Remember your obligations and relations to him, and your offences against him: remember, repent, and seek forgiveness without delay, through that Saviour who hath promised, that "they who seek him early shall find him."

But indeed this best season is already elapsed with many; and it is too late to exhort them to early repentance. Perhaps some are dolefully lamenting, "My youth hath been spent in vanity and ungodliness; yea, the prime of life is irrecoverably past, and I am growing hoary in the ways of wickedness: what must I do? Is there nothing for me, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation? Indeed, my fellow-sinner, thy case is very deplorable: the day is almost spent: the night, wherein no man can work, is swiftly approaching: thy work is not begun; yea, all thou hast been doing, during the whole course of thy life, must be as it were undone. Thou must travel back again, with weeping and supplication, all the way which thou hast trodden for so many years. Death, judgment, and eternity, press upon thy unprepared soul: the grave is yawning for thy enfeebled body: and should death seize upon thee ere repentance hath taken place, it had been good for thee hadst thou never been born. Still, however, thy case is not desperate: though provoked by thy impenitency, the Lord yet renews his compassionate invitations. If then thy heart begin to relent; if remorse embitter thy soul: if thou art at length willing to acknowledge thy offence, and seek his face; come, and cast thyself at his feet, and venture upon his mercy and truth, who sayeth, "Him that cometh unto me I will *in no wise* cast out." If *indeed thou art renewed* to repentance, though "at the ninth or eleventh hour, thou shalt be equalled with those who have borne the heat and burden of the day." Herein lies the danger and the difficulty: but with God all things are possible; he "can change the Ethiopian's skin and the leopard's spots; and by his power, even thou who hast been long accustomed to do evil, mayest learn to do well." Admire then his long-suffering, who hath borne with thy impenitent disregard of his precepts and promises, his authority and invitations,

for forty, fifty, sixty or seventy years, and has neither cut thee off by death, nor deprived thee of thy much abused reason, nor left thee to utter insensibility! This is distinguishing patience!

Methinks, aged sinner, I see thy relentings, hear thy groans, and witness thy tears, confusion, and despondency; whilst the crimes of a long life pass in review before thee, the sword of divine justice is brandished against thee, conscience reproaches, and Satan insinuates that it is now too late. Yea, thou art even inclined once more to listen to his insinuations; and to conclude that there is no hope, and that after such a life, thy late repentance and worthless services will never meet with acceptance. But reject this dishonourable thought, resist the lying tempter; when he persuaded thee, heretofore, that it was too early in life to repent, he led thee to the brink of an awful precipice: if he prevail in persuading thee it is now too late, he pushes thee headlong into everlasting ruin. In both he acts in character, “a liar and a murderer from the beginning.”

“God’s ways are above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts,” and “his mercies are higher than the heavens,” else the case of the aged sinner would be desperate. But though he will not accept the late repentance, and the feeble obedience of one hour, because they merit such a favour; yet for his own name’s sake, and through the atonement and intercession of Jesus, he will pardon, justify, and save all those who truly repent and believe the gospel. This discovery of the unspeakable riches of divine love, whilst it gives encouragement to the drooping heart, ought to increase the sinner’s remorse for having so neglected and provoked a God of such excellency and mercy, and to quicken his diligence in availing himself of the divine patience, by fleeing for refuge to the hope still set before him. “Today, if ye will hear his voice,” before tomorrow, embrace his proffered mercy, and harden not your hearts. And whatever stage of human life you are now arrived at, I can only inculcate the same exhortation: “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation;” and suggest the same petition: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Psalm xc. 12. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it” speedily, and “with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.” Eccles. ix. 10. I have shown you, that this, of all others, is the most necessary and important work you can find to do: make then no delay, lest “he swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest.”

PART FIFTH.

The Means of Repentance.

IN entering on this part of our subject, a formidable objection may be started, and even grounded on what hath already been discoursed, against treating upon the means of repentance at all. It hath been observed, that repentance is the gift of God to us, the purchase of Christ for us, and the work of the Holy Spirit in us: “How then,” it will be objected, “can we do anything towards it? If it please God to bestow it upon us, we shall repent, without difficulty or labour: if not, our labour will be altogether to no purpose.” It is indeed a certain truth, that repentance is the gift of God, as it has been proved from plain Scriptural testimonies: but it is equally true, and capable of the same proof, that we must diligently labour for it. Nor is there any inconsistency betwixt these distinct views of the subject: they only appear inconsistent to our dark and narrow apprehensions. Upon a similar occasion, the Truth, the Word, and the Wisdom of God saith, “LABOUR not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall GIVE you.” John vi. 27. Christ will give it most freely, but you must labour for it most diligently. Thus the harvest is the gift of God, who giveth seed to the sower; who giveth rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and causeth the earth to yield her increase; yet must the husbandman labour. In both temporal and spiritual concerns, God gives not to the slothful, but to the diligent; and his bounty does not supersede, but encourage our activity.

He works in us, that we may work out our own salvation; he hath appointed means, and commanded us to use them. Obedience is our duty. We ought to use the means, and trust in the Lord to render them effectual; but not to depend on them, or rest in them. They who seriously desire to repent and turn to God, will manifest their sincerity by thus using every proper means with diligence and perseverance: nor shall their labour be in vain; “for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” But negligence will detect hypocrites, and justify God in their condemnation. Something then must be done in order to our being made partakers of repentance: not under the notion of merit, as if we made the purchase: for it is the gift of God: not under the notion of efficacious operation; for it is the work of divine grace: but in order to evidence our integrity in purposing repentance; and

that we may be found waiting upon God in the way of his appointment. And though the means will not affect the end without efficacious grace; yet they are quite as much calculated to produce the effect, as medicines are to remove sickness, or agriculture to procure the crop,—both of which are rendered effectual only by the divine blessing.

1. Then, “Consider your ways” as David did: “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet into thy testimonies.” Psalm cxix. 59. Are you now desirous truly to repent? Retire frequently into your chamber, shun the hurry and dissipation of a crowd, and court solitude, that you may recollect yourselves, and seriously commune with your own heart. There minutely review your whole past life: with exactness survey your thoughts, words, and actions, ever since the dawn of reason, or from the beginning of recollection. Ask yourselves seriously such questions as these: What have you been scheming, intending, pursuing, all your days? What hath been the standard of your judgment, and rule of your conduct: the opinion of men, or the word of God: the fashions of the world, or the example of Christ? What have your affections been fixed on? Have you given God, or the world, your heart: I mean your warmest desires, and most devoted attachment? Have you intentionally been pleasing God, or yourselves? Have you been seeking his glory in everything; or your own ease, interest, gratification, and honour? In what have your time and money been most cheerfully expended? In works of piety and charity; or in gratifying your sensuality, pride, and ambition. Have you been laying up, or aiming to lay up, treasures in heaven, or on earth? Have you improved health, prosperity, abilities, and influence, in promoting the glory of God, the interests of piety, and the good of men? Or have you done no good, but mischief, with them? Hath God been the delightful subject of your meditations and conversation: or have you willingly and habitually forgotten him, and regarded religious thoughts and converse as insipid and irksome? Hath the sweet work of prayer and praise, the worship of God, and hearing and reading his word, been your pleasure, or your task? Have you been out of your element when thus employed, and found more charms, and experienced more satisfaction in licentious company or dissipated mirth? Have you habitually revered the sacred name of God, hallowed his Sabbaths, and frequented his sanctuary with reverence and devotion? Or have

you taken his name in vain,¹ despised his ordinances, polluted his Sabbaths, or mocked him with an hypocritical worship?

What have your imaginations been? pure and heavenly, or lewd, ambitious, envious, covetous, revengeful, and abominable? What has your discourse been? edifying, serious, and candid; or profane, polluted, trifling, slanderous, and dissembling? What have your tempers been? meek, peaceable, and kind; or turbulent, contentious and overbearing? Have you behaved, as the word of God directs, in relative life, as parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, and servants? Has equity, disinterestedness, and kindness; or selfishness, covetousness and fraud, directed your worldly business? Have you in sobriety, chastity, and temperance, governed your appetites and passions?

But I have already exceeded due bounds in this specimen of queries, which you ought with all impartiality to propose to yourselves; allowing conscience, after mature recollection, to return a faithful answer. In short, set the law of God and the example of Christ before your eyes; make diligent search into your secret practices, intentions, and inclinations; steadily view your likeness, and estimate your character in this manner, until you know what manner of persons you are. Shrink not back from that view of self-deformity which will thus be presented to you; but look, and look again, till you “abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.”

¹ By taking the name of God in vain, I do not mean, nor does the Bible mean, merely blasphemy, perjury, and profane swearing; but every jest or expression which implies want of reverence to the name of God, his word and sacred things. Almost in all companies, the conversation, even though trifling and polluting, is incessantly interlarded with the words *God*, *Lord*, *Christ*, and such like: which are formed into hackneyed phrases, and used as mere expletives to adorn a period, or as notes of admiration, approbation, or indignation. Nothing can more fully discover the degree in which sinful man despises the glorious God, than this general and almost universal practice. Without pleasure, profit, or apparent temptation, in violation of an express command, and in defiance of an awful threatening; that tremendous name which impresses angels with holy awe, and at which devils tremble, is made man's mere by-word. But when the affronted *Jehovah* shall at last address the sinner, “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord?” and he finds that God will “not hold him guiltless;” his profane trifling will be at an end; and he will be constrained to tremble at the name which he would not reverence.—The inefficacy of much apparent religion, and the worthlessness of much evangelical profession, are demonstrated by their failing to repress this awful profaneness. All true Christians, who worship God in spirit and in truth, are, by that profound veneration which they bear to the Lord, cured effectually of this practice; and they ought to unite in bearing testimony against it, boldly, in all companies.

The man whose circumstances are embarrassed, may possibly retrieve all, if he have resolution in time to look well into his affairs, and be made sensible how bad they are: but to shrink from this investigation, and to banish reflection on a disagreeable subject, completes many a man's ruin. Thus multitudes are afraid, or averse, fully to examine their own character, conduct, and state; they flee from reflection, because uneasy and mortifying; and huddle up all in an unexamined obscurity, till they rush blindfold into remediless ruin. But by carefully examining how matters stand betwixt God and our souls, the danger is discovered, the remedy is at hand, and our destruction happily prevented. Shift not then this business; slur it not over, but go through with it, though disagreeable and mortifying; and you will find yourselves amply recompensed, not only by its subserviency to repentance, but to future solid and abiding peace of conscience.

II. Examine your heart and life daily. Nor only say, "What have I done?" but "What am I now doing?" "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" And the Lord pronounces him a fool who trusteth in his own heart. Men retain their good opinion and confidence concerning themselves, because they remain strangers to their own hearts, for want of daily examination: for the only way to discover a concealed villain, is carefully to watch him. Watch then your own hearts: examine well your own lives; keep before your eyes the requirements of the divine law, as far as known: search the Scriptures daily for further information: review your daily conduct, judging of it by that infallible standard: descend to particulars: to omissions and commissions, words and actions, intentions and imaginations, deficiencies and defilements in duty, and backwardness to it. This will prove of vast importance to self-knowledge, and consequently to self-abasement. Though difficult at first, it will soon become natural and pleasant to the true Christian; it will continually keep the heart humble and watchful, and the conscience tender; and dependence on the mercy of God, through the blood of Christ, for pardon, in continual exercise. This conduct, like well-arranged accounts, will prevent a thousand anxieties and terrors, in times of danger and sickness, and at the hour of death. Grudge not, then, this labour, if you are ambitious to be called disciples of Jesus, and do not "judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life."

III. Meditate frequently upon such subjects, as tend to excite and increase in the heart, the sense of the heinousness of sin; labouring with your reluctant minds to bring and keep them close to this exercise. Impen-

iteny is greatly the effect of extenuating notions of the malignity of sin; repentance must then flow from a sense of its hatefulness. It is needless to enumerate the various subjects which, duly meditated upon, may have this effect; and it would lead us into repetitions. Such are the majesty and excellency, authority and law, threatenings and judgments of God: his righteous severity against sinning angels, against Adam and his whole posterity, against the inhabitants of the old world, against Sodom and Gomorrah, against the nations of Canaan, against the people of Israel, in a variety of instances, especially in the final destruction of Jerusalem, and the continued dispersion of the Jewish nation.—All these, and others too numerous for me to mention, are but forerunners and emblems of that everlasting destruction, with which in a future state all they shall be punished, “who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Now, we know that the judgment of God is according unto truth:” these awful instances of his tremendous justice show us his judgment of the evil of sin, and what it really deserves: even *his judgment*, who is LOVE, and “delighteth not in the death of a sinner;” but punishes solely to express his holy hatred of that abominable thing which we lodge in our bosom, and in behalf of which we plead. These things were written on purpose to lead us to judge concerning sin, as God judgeth; and this will surely lead us to unfeigned repentance.

IV. Meditate frequently and intensely on the death of Christ. Consider who he was, and what he suffered, and wherefore he suffered. Purposely retire to contemplate this surprising scene; and yield not to weariness or indisposition, till you arrive at some heart-affecting views of a crucified Saviour. Superficial speculations may amuse the fancy, and furnish our conversation; but without deeply examining and well digesting this subject, and being thus established in judgment concerning it, we can never, in habitual experience, reconcile godly sorrow, with abiding peace and joy in the Lord, or humble repentance, with a lively hope of everlasting life. Here that Christian, who turns his eyes from other objects that he may steadfastly look unto Jesus,² will perceive, that the awful vengeance of God against sin, before considered, proceeds not from want of love to the persons of sinners, but from abhorrence of moral evil—the effect of a perfect view of its infinite malignity: that this judgment and conduct are essential to the most perfect character, and requisite to his glory as moral

² Heb. xii. 2.

Governor of the universe. When, therefore, in boundless love, he determined the salvation of sinners, he would “not spare his own Son;” but would sooner deliver him, “in whom his soul delighted,” to the most intense agonies and ignominious death, than leave sin unpunished, or permit his intelligent creatures to remain ignorant of his infinite hatred of it. For the instruction of the whole universe to eternal ages, in these and other important truths, respecting the divine character, law, and government, did the Son of God “suffer once for sins, the just for the unjust.”

Here likewise the sinner may learn to estimate the worth of his immortal soul; the vanity of this world; the dangerous situation in which he is placed; the difficulty there is in a sinner’s salvation, which cost him, who created and upholds all things by his powerful word, such humiliation and sufferings; the unspeakable love of God, and his willingness to save sinners; seeing “he hath not withheld his only Son from us.” These are lessons eminently conducive to repentance; and which can in no other way be learned to such advantage, as by “looking unto Jesus,” and meditating on his sufferings. He, then, who sincerely would repent, must daily retire in contemplation to Gethsemane and Golgotha.

V. *Lastly*, The whole must be rendered effectual by fervent and importunate prayer, without which all other means would be in vain. Whether we read, or meditate, or examine our lives and hearts, or whatever we do, prayer must accompany all; for it is God who takes away the heart of stone, and gives the heart of flesh, and renews us unto repentance; and him we must earnestly supplicate to bestow on us this good and perfect gift. But alas! it is extremely difficult to prevail upon men to get alone, and on their bended knees, day by day, to beseech the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, to work this change in them, and bestow this gift on them. To read, to hear sermons, and other things of a public nature, men may be more easily induced. A mere form or task of devotion, may also be reconciled with a self-sufficient and worldly spirit and conduct: but real prayer stands in direct opposition to them all. It is the very language of indigence and dependence, and earnest longings after God and holiness. In order to pray aright, a man must know, in some measure, how vast and various his wants are; he must understand his true interest and happiness; he must supremely value the favour and image of God. No man can truly pray for spiritual blessings, who doth not carefully review his life, explore his heart, and in a measure know his own character; who is not in some degree acquainted with the majesty, holiness, and heart-searching knowledge of God, his own absolute dependence upon him, his relations

and obligations to him, and his offences committed against him; and who is not, in a general way at least, instructed in the way of access for sinners to an offended God, through the atoning blood of his Son, and humbly willing to approach in this appointed way. Such a man draws near with reverential fear and deep self-abasement, confessing his unworthiness, and imploring forgiveness; encouraged only by believing apprehensions of the rich mercy of God to sinners through the mediation of Jesus. Conscious also of ignorance, weakness and depravity, in humble sincerity and earnest longings, he pleads the promises of the word of God, and implores the teaching, strengthening, sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Faith, repentance, and universal holiness, he longs for, feels his want of, expects, and seeks daily from God in prayer. In all this, his words express, but not fully, the very meaning of his heart. Daily he thus opens and pours out his soul unto God, turning the precepts and promises which he reads or hears from the word of God, into fervent petitions. All his sorrows, anxieties, and perplexities he spreads before the Lord, seeking, in every exigency, support, direction, and consolation from him: subjoining continual thanksgivings for mercies received, and intercessions for all around him; and submissively referring himself, in every case, to the will and wisdom of his heavenly Father. “Thus is he careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, makes his requests known unto God;” “and casts his care upon him, who careth for him.” Such prayer as this cannot be taught by man, but must be the effect of “the pouring out of the Spirit of grace and supplication;” who, communicating divine light to the understanding, and holy dispositions to the heart, excites fervent and spiritual desires in the soul, and teacheth us to pray with “groanings that cannot be uttered.” It is therefore called in the word of God, “praying, in and by the Spirit;” as opposed to a “form of godliness,” or good words spoken with the mouth, without suitable affections and desires in the heart.³ He whose words express more than *he* intends, or heartily desires, prays *formally* and hypocritically: he who means all his words express, and more than he can find words to express,

³ Saul, previous to conversion, was a strict Pharisee, who made *long prayers*; yet when the Lord spoke of his conversion to Ananias” he said, with emphasis, “Behold he prayeth.” Before, he might read or repeat long forms, or pray fluently in extemporaneous language but now he feels his indigence, dependence, and unworthiness, and really prays with suitable desires and dispositions.

evidently prays spiritually, and, though he may not be sensible of it, is assisted in prayer by the Holy Spirit.⁴

But if nothing, however specious or ostentatious, be prayer, which has not in it something of this nature, (as I trust, upon mature examination of the Scriptures, will be found the case:) then evidently the proud, ungodly, and carnal-minded, cannot pray aright. Nor can it be deemed strange, if, when a sinner is *first* seriously impressed with concern for his soul, he hath great reluctance to this spiritual exercise, and knows not how to go about it. For even real Christians, who are arrived at some measure of stability, and have made considerable proficiency in a life of communion with God, meet with considerable difficulty in this grand concern; have need habitually to be humbled for neglects and imperfections; and want continually fresh supplies of divine assistance to excite, teach, and enable them thus to “pray always and not faint.”

Satan also will oppose to the uttermost all his artifices to prevent a sinner’s approaching to the throne of grace; well knowing, that in the critical season, when any person is under serious impressions, if he can be prevailed on to neglect prayer, they will soon wear off, and leave the conscience more insensible than before. The business, pleasures, diversions, and society of the world; and that scorn with which ungodly men treat a life of prayer, combine their influence in aid of natural corruption and Satan’s temptation, to keep the poor convinced sinner from the throne of grace. And as if these hindrances were not sufficient, even some, professing serious godliness, (whose intention may be better than their judgment,) extremely increase the difficulty, by strenuously contending, that unconverted persons ought not to pray, or be exhorted to it.⁵

⁴ I am far from thinking that no prayer is accepted, which comes not up to this description; but this is the *nature* of a sinner’s praying for spiritual blessings: to this, in a degree proportioned to the measure of his grace, a believer attains: and every accepted prayer has something in it of the same nature.

⁵ If a man ought not to pray before conversion, he ought to *know*, that is “*be sure*” of his conversion before he prays: for if he be not sure of his conversion he cannot be sure whether he may, and ought to pray, or not. Thus *assurance* springs up in a sinner’s heart all at once; and now having received he may ask; having found he may begin to seek: the door being opened he may begin to knock.—Surely, at first glance, everyone must see this to be absurd and unscriptural, yea, anti-scriptural. Truly all ought to pray, but none will in sincerity, until the Holy Spirit in some degree inclines the heart. Then a man feels an inclination to do that, which before was his duty, though he did it not: frequently he knows not from whence this change proceeds: but is encouraged, by such Scriptures as that before alluded to, (Matth. vii. 7, 8. or Isaiah lv. 6, 7.) “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way.” Thus he begins to ask and seek: and in consequence to receive and find: in this way giving diligence he makes his calling and election sure; and this statement reconciles all the differ-

Such indeed are the pride and ungodliness of man, that, left to himself, and under Satan's influence, he never *will* pray in sincerity. Confounding the depraved disinclination with a real want of ability, many thence argue the want of obligation. But this argument, if it prove anything, proves too much; and would consequently repeal the law and abrogate the gospel, and furnish the devil himself with an apology, by making inward depravity a justification of outward rebellion; the desperate wickedness of the life. For certain it is, that man is as much disinclined to keep the whole law, or to repent and believe the gospel, as he is to pray; and will never do either the one or the other, if left to himself, destitute of the influence of divine grace. But doth this indeed justify all our transgressions of the law, and contempt of the gospel?

Again, prayer is an important part of that worship and obedience which the law requires: and it is also the grand means of receiving from Jesus new covenant-blessings. He, then, who prays not, at once breaks the law, and contemns the gospel: "and he that keeps the whole law, and *thus*⁶ offends in one point, is guilty of all."⁷ If then a sinner ought not to pray, he is justifiable in breaking the whole law, and equally justifiable in neglecting the salvation of the gospel! In fact, however, our depraved inclinations are in no respect the measure of our duty, but the direct opposite. "The carnal mind is enmity to God; is not subject to *the law of God*, nor indeed *can* be." The law to which the carnal mind *cannot* be subject, is the measure of our duty. This men *cannot* obey, because of the depravity of their nature, which enhances, instead of extenuating, their guilt. Men ought to love God and one another; having sinned, they ought to repent: they ought to believe and pray, to deny themselves and mortify their lusts: but they do not. What is the reason? They cannot. But in what sense is this true? In fact, because they dislike the service of God, hate his law, reject his authority, despise his gospel, and prefer the gratification of their lusts; and because these hateful dispositions are so predominant in them, that without the interposition of Omnipotence they are insuperable. Can these hateful dispositions then, be seriously urged as an excuse. Will any dare to urge them at the day of judgment? No; "every mouth will then be

ent views which the Scripture gives us of this matter. The Lord seeking us when lost, and being found of us when we sought him not, inclines us, (though we are not aware whence this inclination comes) to seek him in prayer; and thus we receive all spiritual and eternal blessings in the way of asking and receiving.

⁶ Num. xv. 30, 31. "The soul that doeth ought presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord—he hath despised the word of the Lord."

⁷ James ii.. 10, 11.

stopped, and all the world shall be found guilty before God." I should not in this place have touched upon this controversial subject, had I not observed how greedily this poison is drunk down, and how fatally it operates, in stupefying the conscience, flattering the pride, and apologizing for the sloth of mankind.

Instead of thus abetting, we should endeavour to counteract these artifices of Satan, and to combat the reluctancy of a sinner's heart, by showing the absolute necessity of prayer unto salvation; enforcing the invitations to the throne of grace; expatiating on the promises made to all who call upon the Lord; explaining the nature of prayer; directing him in the new and living Way to the throne of grace; answering objections, obviating discouragements, representing prayer as *our* privilege, and unspeakable consolation; and exhorting sinners to draw near, and share our happiness; for we may be assured, that they who are thus excited to pray, will in due time render unto God the praise of "making them to differ."

But I return from this digression. My fellow-sinners, you must pray or perish.—Your backwardness to pray should humble you, and stir you up to overcome it; especially by crying unto the Lord to incline your heart, by his grace, to love and delight in prayer. Your ignorance should urge you to begin as the disciples did:—"Lord, teach us to pray." You must not yield to corruption, temptation, or discouragement, but persevere in prayer with all sincerity and earnestness. If you pray aright, you will be very far from trusting in, or boasting of your prayers; for you will perceive much imperfection and defilement in them. But though humbled on that account, you need not despond; your prayers, though broken, faltering, and feeble, (if you mean what you express, and desire what you ask,) shall meet with acceptance through the intercession of Jesus, and be not only answered, but in due season far exceeded. Especially in this way you must seek repentance, as the gift of God through Jesus Christ; using the other means with diligence, earnestness, and perseverance; and then you will assuredly be made partaker of "that repentance which is unto salvation, not to be repented of."

CONCLUSION.

HAVING thus gone through the subject, according to the method first laid down, nothing remains but to close with a few practical observations.

I. I would observe, from what has been discoursed, that every species of religion, in which repentance forms no prominent part from first to last, is justly to be suspected, yea, certainly to be condemned as unscriptural and destructive. There is a great deal of this religion in the world, which often comes recommended by extraordinary zeal for some peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and is distinguished by unwarranted confidence and high affections. Men hearing the gospel, are superficially alarmed on account of their sins, and eagerly look out for comfort. Through inexperience they lie open to Satan's artifice, and are easily imposed on with false comfort, deduced from false principles, exactly suited to their carnal unhumbled hearts. Thus they presume that their sins are pardoned, and their state good; and with this presumption self-love is delighted, and high affections produced: these, expressed in earnest fluent language, create them injudicious admirers: this flatters and affects them the more, and confirms them in their confidence; so that they think, after such experiences, they must never more, on any account, doubt of their own salvation. Yet all this is only a land-flood, and soon subsides. They gradually experience a decay of affection, and grow lifeless, indolent, and worldly; with their affection their confidence declines, but they struggle hard to exclude doubtings: they call themselves backsliders; allow themselves to have forsaken their first love; and groan out Job's complaint, though not at all in Job's meaning: "Oh that it were with me as in months past!" And would a wish suffice, something might be done: but they have no heart for greater exertion. To close all, they abuse the doctrine of final perseverance; take it for granted that they are saints; expect to be restored as it were by miracle, whilst they turn a deaf ear to the voice of Christ, commanding them to "be zealous, and repent;" till at length, perhaps, a suitable occasion and temptation presenting, they throw aside their profession of godliness.

This is exactly the religion of the stony-ground hearers, who had faith, confidence, and joy, such as they were, but no repentance or humility,¹ and therefore no root in themselves: for it is only by renewing our hearts

¹ It is very observable how often the words, "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" are repeated by our Saviour; and how many similar expressions are used by his apostles. This infallibly teaches us, that all appearances of religion are fallacious, so long as the heart remains unhumbled.

unto repentance, that the ground is prepared for the reception of the seed, and the production of true faith and holiness, as hath already been demonstrated.

“Let no man deceive you by vain words.” Except you are partakers of repentance, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, all your religion is vain, your hopes presumptuous, and your destruction inevitable; whatever other attainments, gifts, or experiences, you may have to boast of, or to buoy up your confidence. Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and as effectually ruin souls by false religion, as by open ungodliness; and far more unsuspectedly.

II. I observe from what hath been discoursed, that great care is requisite in distinguishing betwixt true repentance, and that which is superficial and merely natural.² This is of vast importance, as numbers of those who die impenitent, have at times judged themselves, and been thought by others to be penitent. Let it then be remembered that true repentance, though generally accompanied with terror, tears, confessions, and outward reformation, good words, fair promises, and earnest resolutions, doth not consist in, or uniformly attend upon all or any of them. But true repentance is a change of judgment, inclination, and affection, in respect to sin, immediately: accompanied, preceded, or followed by a change of judgment, inclination, and affection, respecting God and his law, Christ and his gospel, ourselves and our conduct, this world and the next. From this change springs sorrow for sin, self-abasement and condemnation; sole dependence on God’s mercy; supreme valuation of Jesus and his salvation; love to God and holiness; tenderness of conscience; zeal for good works; all holy tempers; holy conversation, and holy conduct; accompanied with continual humiliation for remaining imperfections and defilements. Where these effects have been evidently produced, though with little or no terror, no effusions of tears, or seasons of peculiar melting, but gradually and silently, the repentance is yet sincere and genuine, by this rule,—it leads to Christ and holiness. But all other appearances, whether

² Some will, perhaps, be disposed to inquire, why I have not adopted the common distinction between *legal* and *evangelical* repentance. As these expressions do not occur in Scripture, every one is at liberty to use them or not; and the distinction did not appear to me sufficiently exact or comprehensive, for my purpose. True repentance has more respect to the law, as transgressed by sin, and justly condemning the sinner, than any false repentance can have. Whilst, on the other hand, men are more frequently seduced into a dependence on a superficial repentance, by unwarrantable presumptions of mercy, and false apprehensions of evangelical truth, than by slavish regard to the law. *Natural* and *spiritual* repentance seems to me a preferable distinction. By *natural repentance*, I would understand every sort of repentance of which a mere natural man is capable; by *spiritual repentance*, that which springs from true grace in the heart.

of terror issuing in self-dependence and neglect of Christ; or of supposed evangelical humiliation inducing professed dependence on Christ and free grace, whilst sin is not abhorred and avoided, nor holiness loved and practised, are superficial and hypocritical. Herod might have passed for a true penitent, if John would have allowed him his Herodias: yet John shall lose his head rather than Herod (notwithstanding promising appearances,) will part with his beloved lust; and human nature is just the same in other men as it was in Herod. Let no repentance therefore satisfy any man which doth not endear Christ and universal holiness; and divorce the heart from every sin, especially that which heretofore was the customary and beloved sin.

III. I would, from what hath been discoursed, take occasion to consider in few words, the nature and necessity of regeneration. No other religion but that which hath been described, requires that entire change which this term, and a variety of similar expressions in the sacred Scriptures, imply. A Pharisee's reformation, morality, and outward worship, require no entire inward renovation; and having no experience of it, nor seeing any occasion for it, with Nicodemus, he exclaims, "How can these things be?" The evangelical or antinomian self-deceiver also may have his opinions, affections, and confidence, without becoming a new creature; and will, therefore, whilst he uses the terms, mistake their import, and signify by them some of those enthusiastical impulses and revelations, which he experiences and boasts of.

But self-admiring, self-justifying man, will never exercise that self-loathing and self-condemning repentance which hath been described, except he be born again. Insensible to the attractions of heavenly objects through inordinate love of worldly things, he never will renounce and abhor all sin, mortify every lust, die to all carnal objects, and delight in God and universal holiness, except he be changed into a new creature, by the efficacious influences of the Holy Spirit; except "old things pass away, and all things become new."

This is the new birth so frequently spoken of in the sacred Scriptures. A new principle of divine life implanted in the heart, purifying the various powers of the soul. Hence proceed an enlightened understanding, a sound judgment in divine things, holy affections, a pure imagination, a sanctified memory, and a well-informed, tender, but not superstitious, conscience. Hence proceed new fears, new hopes, new joys, new sorrows, new aversions and desires, new dispositions, and a new life. Yet as these are in this life only imperfect in their degree, this imperfection of grace and remainder of corruption, extort from the true Christian bitter com-

plaints: "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They put vigour into his prayers: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me:" they still find him employment for repentance and watchfulness, and endear free forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

Sinners should therefore be addressed in terms like these: All your aversion to this thorough repentance, and all your delays about it, only demonstrate your need of being born again. Should God implant in your heart such a new principle of holiness, as would make you relish and take pleasure in divine things, you would find it natural and easy to abhor sin, to mourn over it, and forsake it; to repent and do works meet for repentance. Have you then a real desire after this invaluable gift? If you have not, but prefer the quiet satisfaction of your carnal inclinations; you are justly left without that which you so despise. If you have, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

IV. I now take my leave of impenitent sinners with a serious expostulation. I mean such as are living, secretly or openly, in covetousness, injustice, lewdness, drunkenness, profaneness, or any known sin; who remember not to hallow the Sabbath, to read the Scriptures, to worship God, to relieve the poor, or to do any other known duty: or who proudly trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others, and neglect Christ and his salvation. Oh, make no more excuses or delays: "Flee from the wrath to come." "Evil pursueth sinners:" if it overtake you in impenitency, eternal misery is your dreadful portion. Yet, yet a long-suffering God has patience with you: the gospel invites, and Jesus stands with open arms to receive you; complains that you "will not come to him, that you may have life affirms with an oath, that "he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner," and, as with tears of compassion, adds, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Do you then love death? Will you slight such warnings, such expostulations, such invitations, such compassion? Well, if this prevail not, I must with reluctance leave you, as Paul did the Jews: "Your blood be upon your own head, I am free."

V. I now turn to thee, poor weeping penitent, who art almost inconsolable, and sinking in despondency. Thou scarcely canst hope that God will pardon so great a sinner; the expectation seems to border on presumption: yet still thy humiliation appears to thyself slight, and thy repentance superficial, and thy heart insensible: yea, though it is almost melted within thee, it feels like a very stone; and still thou pleadest, "Oh! take away the

heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh.” Behold, I bring thee glad tidings of great joy; and I shall share thy joy, if I may but be the instrument of administering peace and comfort to thee: “Come unto me,” saith Jesus, “all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Behold, he calleth thee; be of good courage. All who will, may come; he hath given thee the willing mind, and will “in nowise cast thee out.” He will bind up thy broken heart, and “give thee the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” Only wait his time; let him probe thy wounds to the bottom; catch not impatiently at comfort; beg for still deeper humiliation: use every means of increasing thy abhorrence of sin and watchfulness against it; and it shall not be very long before “he will shed abroad his love in thy heart,” and cause thee “to abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” In the meantime reflect that whilst thou art mourning on earth, heaven resounds with joyful acclamations and praises on thy account: wait then and pray, and thou shalt ere long rejoice and praise too, and that for ever.

VI. But some perhaps will say, I have not this work to do now, I repented many years ago. What, art thou still a sinner and hast thou no need to repent! The true Christian can indeed thankfully say, My repentance is effectually begun: but only the saint in glory can truly say, My repentance is finished. The more a true believer knows of God and Christ, and the law and gospel; and the larger his experience is of his own depravity, and of the Lord’s goodness, the more he hates sin; the more he recollects of his former sins, the quicker sense he hath of present sinfulness, and the deeper and purer is his repentance. He rejoices in the Lord with penitent joy, and mourns for sin with sweet and joyful mourning. His humility increases his thankfulness and admiration of the love of Christ, and enhances his consolation: for “it is a pleasant thing to be thankful.” But if the thought that thy sins were pardoned, finished thy repentance, and dried up thy tears, thy repentance needs repenting of, and thou art awfully deceived.

Finally, My fellow Christians, let us frequently renew our recollection of former sins, our self-examination, our meditations on those subjects, which first excited our abhorrence of iniquity; especially our meditations on a bleeding Saviour. Let us daily renew our acceptance of Christ, in all his offices, seeking forgiveness of our daily transgressions through his blood; and exercising ourselves to have a conscience void of offence towards God and man. Thus, as true penitents, endeavouring to glorify God, adorn the gospel, and serve our generation, we may hope to live in com-

fort, die in peace, and have “an entrance ministered to us abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX.

Concerning Hallowing the Sabbath.

THROUGHOUT this Discourse, it hath been supposed, that there is in force a divine mandate of hallowing the Sabbath, which all are bound to obey, and contract guilt by neglecting. But the change in the dispensation, since the fourth commandment was given; the alteration of the day, from the seventh to the first of the week: and the manner in which that alteration was introduced, have afforded some persons an occasion of arguing against the obligation: the judgments of others seem unsettled, and perplexed about it: and those who profane the Sabbath, are by these things furnished with some plausible excuse, and preserved from remorse of conscience on that account. For these reasons, I judged it might be useful to subjoin a few brief hints upon the subject.

I. It should be noticed, that the Sabbath was appointed long before the ceremonial law, even from the creation of the world; and therefore cannot, in its own nature, be ceremonial. Gen. ii. 1-3. That the words of Moses should thus be understood, may be confirmed by the prohibition of gathering manna on the seventh day, Exod. xvi. 22-30. previous to giving any part of the law. The very language of the fourth commandment, “*Remember* the Sabbath-day to keep it holy,” as well as the reason assigned in the close, evinces the same. And this is corroborated and illustrated by the general custom in many nations, through revolving ages, of computing time by weeks, or periodical returns of the seventh day. Of this fact, no reason can be assigned so satisfactory, as supposing it to be the effect of an original institution, handed down by tradition, amongst all the descendants of Adam and Noah; which continued even after the appointment that gave rise to it was forgotten.¹

II. The observation of the Sabbath, being made a part of the Mosaic dispensation, is interwoven with the whole system. It is enforced in the moral law of ten commandments, as delivered from Mount Sinai; introduced in the midst of the positive institutions; and enforced by temporal punishments to be executed by civil authority. This shows its importance;

¹ The pains taken, by express edicts and by a new division of time, in a neighbouring nation, to form an exception to this rule, by men who are avowed enemies to Christianity, may help to show the force of this argument.

and evinces, that it partakes of the excellency of the moral law; forms an eminent part, and is fundamental to the maintenance of, all instituted worship: is typical of, and preparatory for, the heavenly Sabbath: and on every account is proper to be enforced by the authority of the magistrate, who may not draw his sword to propagate systems of doctrine or formulas of worship, but who may and ought to use his authority to repress immorality and profaneness, and to promote the public worship of God in the land. The substance of this commandment is of a moral nature. To separate some known, stated, and periodical portion of our time to religious purposes, when, all other engagements being postponed, men should assemble to worship God, and learn his will; is evidently an appointment resulting from the reason and nature of things. The glorious perfections of God; the rational nature of man; our relations and obligations to our Creator, Benefactor, Governor, and Judge; the honour which he requires, and which we owe him; our relations to each other, as social creatures, who can instruct, assist, affect, and animate one another by joining together in one common exercise; and our situation, in such a world as this,—all render such an ordinance indispensable. Repeal this commandment, prohibit this practice; you render public religion a matter of indifference, or you destroy it. Such a repeal or prohibition implies an absurdity; which cannot be said of the repeal or prohibition of any ceremonial precept. The honour and worship of God, the interests of religion and morality, and the best happiness of mankind, would be inadequately provided for, without such an observance.

III. We cannot, indeed, from the reason and nature of things, demonstrate, that exactly one day in seven, and neither more or less, is required for this moral duty. But the plain matter of fact, that God hath under every dispensation allotted that proportion invariably, amounts to the fullest demonstration, that infinite Wisdom judged it the best possible. And experience proves, that the conscientious observance of this proportion does not interfere with the advantageous management of either agriculture, manufactures, or commerce; is exceedingly favourable to the cause of liberty and humanity; tends greatly to civilize mankind as social creatures; and fully suffices for maintaining and advancing religion in the world, as far as it is generally and strictly observed.

IV. But whether the day to be observed be the first, or the last, or any other of the seven, is evidently in itself indifferent. Only some one day must be pitched upon, either by him that gives, or him that receives, the law. Nothing can be more reasonable, than that the Lawgiver should de-

termine this matter, and all his subjects acquiesce. Nothing more desirable than to be, by his determination, delivered from uncertainty and disputation about it. But if he who first instituted one day, afterwards changed it for another, his authority demands our submission. He, who from the creation appointed the seventh day, in remembrance of its completion, appears to have changed that day for the first, when an event had taken place of still greater consequence to fallen sinners. We now every week commemorate the triumphant resurrection of our divine Redeemer. To avoid needlessly shocking Jewish prejudices, this, (as some other changes,) in the wisdom of God, was effected silently and gradually, by example, not by express precept. As Christians, all seem to have observed the first day of the week; the Jewish converts were connived at in observing the seventh also, together with circumcision, and their other ceremonies. Our risen Lord repeatedly met, and spake peace to his disciples, who on the first day of the week were assembled, if not the first time, yet, probably, afterwards by some intimation from him. It appears to have been on the first day of the week, when the disciples being of one accord in one place, the Holy Ghost came visibly and audibly among them. “On the first day of the week,” they met to break bread, as well as to hear the word preached. On the first day of the week, they were directed to lay by for the poor, as God had prospered them in the preceding week. St John dignifies this day with the title of “the Lord’s Day,” which name alone shows in what manner and to what purposes it should be observed.² The *first* is the only day of the seven mentioned afterwards in the Scripture by way of favourable distinction; Sabbaths being spoken of as abrogated ceremonies. And as both ecclesiastical and civil history, with concurring evidence, represent it as the distinguishing practice of Christians, in all ages and nations ever since, to observe this day as sacred to religion.

V. Having determined its obligation, let us briefly consider how it should be hallowed. The Lord of the Sabbath hath himself repeatedly allowed of works of necessity and mercy; and in thus relaxing the rigour of the ceremonial part of the commandment, hath enforced the moral part, and implicitly prohibited all other works. But works of necessity must be so in reality, not in pretence. Settling accounts, writing letters of business or on common subjects, paying labourers, making provision for the indul-

² μ , “The Lord’s Day.” Rev. i. 10. *Gr. Com.* ,
 “The Lord’s Supper.” 1 Cor. xi. 20. The one in remembrance of the Lord’s death,—the other his resurrection.

gence of pride and luxury, with many more things of this kind, which create so much “*necessary*” work for the Lord’s Day, are as bad as keeping open shop, and working at a trade, nay, worse, though less scandalous. No works which are done out of covetousness, pride, or luxury, can consist with hallowing a day to the Lord. Committing known sin is serving Satan, and to employ the Lord’s Day in Satan’s service, proves a man his faithful, willing, and indefatigable servant. Diversions and trifling visits, (and indeed all visits the direct object and tendency of which is not to glorify God, and edify one another,) are inconsistent with hallowing the Sabbath. But men have no leisure on other days! that is to say, they have so much to do in the world, and for their bodies, that six days are too little; and so little to do about their souls, and for God, that one day is too much; and therefore they must borrow time from the latter to eke out the former. Idleness is as bad, or worse: for it implies, that we have nothing to do with spiritual things or with and for God; or nothing worth doing. But indeed we have enough important, profitable, and pleasant work to do on that day. “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure, on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a Delight, the Holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD.” Extraordinary diligence and earnestness in searching the Scriptures; examining our hearts and lives, our state and conduct; meditation and secret devotion; if we have families, instructing and praying for and with them; and repeatedly attending on public ordinances, will, even with early rising, require much of this holy day. Edifying conversation, joined with social worship, and acts of charity to the bodies and souls of men, demand all the remainder that can be spared from unavoidable avocations. He who values his immortal soul, or has any love to God, desire of his favour, delight in his service, or zeal for his glory, will not complain of being required thus to hallow one day in seven, as if it were a galling yoke; but will complain of himself, if depraved nature seem weary: and he will deem it the best and most pleasant day in the week.

The general profanation of the Lord’s day proves the dislike men have for religion, and the contempt which they have for the authority and commandment of the Lord. Of those who pay decent respect to the day, multitudes, we allow, are formal hypocrites; and Christians, indeed, serve God every day: but shall we, on such pretences, undervalue this divine appointment? God forbid!—That degree of reverence, small as it is,

which is now paid to the Christian Sabbath, is so far a public protestation against Atheism, infidelity, and profaneness, and a profession of Christ's religion, which puts public honour upon God and his worship. All business being by appointment suspended, servants, labourers, mechanics, and tradesmen, that is, the bulk of mankind, have leisure and opportunity to assemble and hear the word of God; and faith comes by hearing. Multitudes crowd the places where the word of God is preached, and many are converted. True Christians, being sanctified but in part, lose much of the vigour of their affections, by their unavoidable intercourse with the world; which decays are repaired, together with an increase of knowledge and grace, by statedly and seriously hallowing the Sabbath. Could we but witness the universal hallowing of the Sabbath, we might reasonably hope for a proportionable increase of real religion.—Were it totally neglected, profaneness, ignorance, and infidelity, we may confidently foretell, *would*, barbarity, tyranny, and slavery, probably *might*, deluge the world. Let impartial judges then determine, from this imperfect sketch, who are the best friends of mankind; they who would tolerate and vindicate its profanation, or they who would enforce its strict observance.

With great satisfaction I would add, in closing this subject, the words of a celebrated writer, who has, with great effect, employed his talents in the cause of practical Christianity;³

“Let us appeal” (says he) “to that Day which is especially devoted to the offices of Religion; do they” (the bulk of nominal Christians) “joyfully avail themselves of this blessed opportunity of withdrawing from the business and cares of life, when without being disquieted by any doubt, whether they are not neglecting the duties of their proper callings, they may be allowed to detach their minds from earthly things, that by a fuller knowledge of heavenly objects, and a more habitual acquaintance with them their hope may grow more “full of immortality?” Is the day cheerfully devoted to those holy exercises for which it was appointed? Do they indeed “come into the courts of God with gladness?” and how are they employed when not engaged in the public services of the day? Are they busied in studying the word of God, in meditating on his perfections, in tracing his providential dispensations, in admiring his works, in revolving his mercies, (above all, the transcendent mercies of redeeming love,) in singing his praises “and speaking good of his name?” Do their secret retirements witness the earnestness of their prayers and the warmth of their

³ See a Practical View of Christianity, by William Wilberforce, Esq. M. P.

thanksgivings, their diligence and impartiality in the necessary work of self-examination, their mindfulness of the benevolent duty of intercession? Is the kind purpose of the institution of a Sabbath answered by them, in its being made to their servants and dependents a season of rest and comfort? Does the instruction of their families, or of the more poor and ignorant of their neighbours, possess its due share of their time? If blessed with talents or affluence, are they sedulously employing a part of this interval of leisure, in relieving the indigent, and visiting the sick, and comforting the sorrowful; in forming plans for the good of their fellow-creatures, in considering how they may promote the temporal and spiritual benefits of their friends and acquaintance; or, if theirs be a larger sphere, devising measures whereby, through the divine blessing, they may become the honoured instruments of the more extended diffusion of religious truth? In the hours of domestic or social intercourse, does their conversation manifest the subject of which their hearts are full? Do their language and demeanour show them to be more than commonly gentle, and kind, and friendly, free from rough and irritating passions.

“Surely an entire day should not seem long amidst these various employments. It might well be deemed a privilege thus to spend it in the more immediate presence of our heavenly Father, in the exercises of humble admiration and grateful homage; of the benevolent, and domestic, and social feelings, and of all the best affections of our nature, prompted by their true motives, conversant about their proper objects, and directed to their noblest end; all sorrow mitigated, all cares suspended, all fears repressed, every angry emotion softened, every envious or revengeful or malignant passion expelled; and the bosom thus quieted, purified, enlarged, ennobled, partaking almost of a measure of the heavenly happiness, and become for a while the seat of love, and joy, and confidence, and harmony.

“The nature and uses, and proper employments of a Christian Sabbath, have been pointed out more particularly, not only because the day will be found, when thus employed, eminently conducive, through the divine blessing, to the maintenance of the religious principle in activity and vigour; but also because we must all have had occasion often to remark, that many persons, of the graver and more decent sort, seem not seldom to be nearly destitute of religious resources. The Sunday is with them, to say the best of it, a *heavy* day: and that larger part of it, which is not claimed by the public offices of the church, dully drawls on in comfortless vacuity; or without improvement is trifled away in vain and unprofitable dis-

course. Not to speak of those who, by their more daring profanation of this sacred season, openly violate the laws and insult the religion of their country, how little do many seem to enter into the *spirit* of the institution, who are not wholly inattentive to its exterior decorums! How glad are they to qualify the rigour of their religious labours! How hardly do they plead against being compelled to devote the *whole* of the day to religion, claiming to themselves no small merit for giving up to it a part, and purchasing therefore, as they hope, a right to spend the remainder more agreeably! How dextrously do they avail themselves of any plausible plea for introducing some week-day employment into the Sunday, whilst they have not the same propensity to introduce any of the Sunday's peculiar employment into the rest of the week! How often do they find excuses for taking journeys, writing letters, balancing accounts, or in short doing something, which by a little management might probably have been anticipated, or which, without any material inconvenience, might be postponed! Even business itself is recreation, compared with religion, and from the drudgery of this day of Sacred Rest, they fly for refuge to their ordinary occupations.

“Others again who would consider business as a profanation, and who still hold out against the encroachments of the card-table, get over much of the day, and gladly seek for an innocent resource in the social circle, or in family visits, where it is not even pretended that the conversation turns on such topics as might render it in any way conducive to religious instruction or improvement. Their families meanwhile are neglected, their servants robbed of Christian privileges, and their example quoted by others who cannot see that they are themselves less religiously employed, while playing an innocent game at cards, or relaxing in the concert-room.

“But all these several artifices, *whatever they may be, to unhallow* the Sunday and to change its character, (it might be almost said to ‘relax its horrors,’) prove but too plainly, however we may be glad to take refuge in religion, when driven to it by the loss of every other comfort, and to retain, as it were, a reversionary interest in an asylum which may receive us when we are forced from the transitory enjoyments of our present state, that *in itself* it wears to us a gloomy and forbidding aspect, and not a face of consolation and joy; that the worship of God is with us a *constrained*, and not a *willing* service, which we are glad therefore to abridge, though we dare not omit it.”