
but a God of all grace, can bear up, and bear on, and bear home the tried and buffeted child of God, against the roaring lion *Satan*, and sometimes the more raging lusts of sin, which arise in our fallen nature? Blessed be the God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory by CHRIST JESUS!

THE
SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL
OF
P E T E R.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

IF there were any real doubts entertained by the Church of GOD, concerning the authenticity of this divine record of GOD's Holy Word, the several parts of its own internal evidence, must have carried every objection before it. For the grand testimony, after all, to the truth of GOD is, GOD's own testimony, in divine teaching. For this comes home to the heart. GOD speaketh in the word, and by the word. And when the LORD's word is accompanied by the LORD's power, and the heart is made to receive *the truth, in the love of it*, here is the threefold witness, by which, as the Scripture saith, every word is established.

This Epistle of the Apostle *Peter*, like the former, is not addressed to any one in particular, but to the Church in general; and therefore called, *The General Epistle*. It is to *them that have obtained like precious faith* with the Writer; consequently, the regenerated Church. The Reader should note this in every Epistle.

There are some very blessed and precious points of doctrine, beside the more general, which are insisted upon somewhat more largely in these Chapters. And very blessed they have proved, and must prove, to the people of GOD, who have read, and are taught by the HOLY GHOST the gracious knowledge and enjoyment of them.

The *time*, in which it was written, is generally supposed to have been about *two years* after the *former*; not above *three* or *four* years before the overthrow of Jerusalem; and but little more than a *year* before the Apostle suffered martyrdom. Reader! let us enter upon its perusal in prayer; and this will encourage us to hope that we shall close it in praise.

CHAPTER I.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle opens his Epistle in a short Salutation of the Church, and immediately enters upon the blessed Subject of Regeneration. He dwells upon the glorious Manifestation made to him in the Mount of Transfiguration; and concludes the Chapter, in declaring of GOD the SPIRIT'S speaking by Holy Men of old.

SIMON Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

There are two great points to be attended to, in the very opening of this Epistle, and which are contained in this verse; namely, *first*, of the Persons to whom this Epistle is sent; to *them that have obtained like precious faith* with the Apostles. And, *secondly*, the great object of that faith; GOD, and our SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. Of the *former*, nothing can be more plain and evident, than that this faith is the faith of God's elect; Titus i. 1. which is the one, and only faith, both of Apostles and Prophets, and the whole Church of GOD; and, consequently, this whole Epistle is directed to no other. And of the *latter*, it is equally plain and evident, that GOD and our SAVIOR here spoken of, is CHRIST, the great object of faith; for his righteousness can be the only righteousness for the Church to lean upon, and trust in. And Reader! think what a glorious object of faith, CHRIST is; and what a righteousness for the Church to obtain, through the free gift and sovereign grace of GOD? Oh! be it my portion to go forth, in the Church here below, and when called upon to enter into the eternity above, to cry out with him of old; *I will go in the strength of the LORD GOD, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even thine only.* Psm. lxxi. 16.

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life, and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue;

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 ¶ And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

I stay not to observe in this place, the very sweet manner with which *Peter*, as well as the rest of the Apostles, address the Church, in their prayers and benedictions, for grace and peace. But having, more or less, called the Reader's attention to this, in every preceding Epistle, it will be the less necessary in this place, to add any further remarks. But I very earnestly intreat the Reader, to attend with me, to what the HOLY GHOST by the Apostle, hath here so blessedly set forth, concerning the work of regeneration. The first call of grace, by GOD the SPIRIT, is here expressly said to make, the highly favored objects of this divine love, *partakers of the divine nature*; and with that, of all things *that pertain unto life and godliness*. Reader! pause over the marvellous account; and when you have pondered it well, mark down in the memorandums of your inmost soul, the several vast blessings, as far as present apprehension can trace them, of what are included in this unspeakable gift of GOD.

It is GOD the HOLY GHOST, by his quickening and regenerating grace, in giving spiritual life, to *the dead in trespasses and sins*, which brings the child of GOD, into the first discovery of GOD the FATHER's electing love; or GOD the SON's betrothing and redeeming grace. For although the everlasting love of GOD the FATHER, had been running in streams of grace from all eternity; yet, as a river underground, the blessed properties of it were neither known, nor seen, nor regarded, until at regeneration, GOD the HOLY GHOST opened the eye of the child of GOD, to see the original, and eternal purpose of GOD the FATHER, in choosing the Church in CHRIST, before the foundation of the world; and in predestinating the Church in CHRIST, to the adoption of children. Ephes. i. 4, 5. And never till this blessed period, when GOD the HOLY GHOST brought forth the child of GOD, in the new birth of grace, had the poor sinner any apprehensions, either of the Person of CHRIST, or of his betrothing love, or redeeming mercy. But, as the Apostle *Paul* expresseth it, in his Epistle to *Titus*; *after that, the kindness and love of GOD our SAVIOR toward men appeared; not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the HOLY GHOST, which He shed on us abundantly, through JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOR; that we, being justified by his grace, should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life.* Titus iii. 4—7.

I pray the Reader, not only to pause over the contemplation of this vast mercy; but, day by day, to ponder it again and again, in his walk of faith through life. Oh! the unspeakable grace, when called from darkness to light; and from the power of sin and Satan, unto the living God.

Now I beg the Reader to observe, with me, how sweetly the HOLY GHOST, by the Apostle, hath marked the gracious effects, which arise out of regeneration. Before this great work of the new-birth is wrought, there is not a spiritual mercy we can claim; no, nor even know. As it was in the old creation of nature, darkness was upon the face of the deep, before the SPIRIT of GOD moved upon the face of the waters, and GOD said, *let there be light*: Gen. i. 2, 3. so, in the new creation of grace, it is all darkness upon the face of our mind, until that GOD, that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, *hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD, in the face of JESUS CHRIST*. 2 Cor. iv. 6. But, when this is accomplished, the new-born soul, is brought into all the privileges of his heirship. Pardon, mercy, and peace, instantly follow. He is justified freely. CHRIST is then seen, and known, and enjoyed, (at least there is the new birth-title to all,) as made of GOD to his people, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. 1 Cor. i. 30. Hence the Apostle, speaks so blessedly in this Chapter, *to them that have obtained like precious faith*; they are according to his divine power, even GOD the SPIRIT, who communicates the blessings from his quickening life, imparted to them, *made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruptions that are in the world, through lust*. And not only so, but they have *all things given to them, that pertain to life and godliness*. And they are *called to glory and virtue*. And there are *given unto them, exceeding great and precious promises*. And hence, all those additions the Apostle speaks of, and which are the natural effects and consequences resulting from this one first cause, namely, regeneration, must and will appear. The child of GOD, by this first quickening life, from GOD the HOLY GHOST; and by the daily renewings of GOD the HOLY GHOST, keeping alive the grace he first imparted, will add to his faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. But, Reader! remember these are the fruits and effects of justification; and not in the least degree contributing, as a part cause, to our justification. The Apostle saith, that being by regeneration, made partakers of the divine nature, and thereby having escaped the corruption, that is in the world, through lust; we have all things *given* unto us, that pertain to life and godliness. Hence, what is GOD's *gift*, cannot be brought into any account of man's *merit*. And, therefore, when the Apostle adds, giving all diligence, to add unto faith, virtue, and the like; these are considered, as so many fruits and evidences of our new-birth character. And the consequence will be, that if these things be in the LORD's people, and they abound in them, they themselves, will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Mark the Apostle's expression! Believers shall not be barren, nor unfruitful in the *knowledge* of CHRIST. He doth not say, that their

aboundings will be recommendations to GOD; much less, so many party causes, in the promoting their salvation. That salvation is all along considered wholly in CHRIST. And their regeneration, by which they are made partakers of the divine nature, is wholly from GOD the SPIRIT. So that all that is here said of virtue, and brotherly kindness, and the like, are spoken of, but as *effects*, arising out of the first glorious *cause*, and only so many precious testimonies of the renewed life. And therefore, the man that lacketh these things, lacketh the sweet tokens of his christian character, and can give no proof of a work of grace in regeneration, having passed in his heart.

I have been the more particular upon this point, than I should otherwise have been, had I not known, that men are apt to make great errors herein. I wished therefore to state, and place these important truths, on their own proper basis. Faith and all graces, are no party cause of salvation. They are *fruits*, and not the *root*, *effects* not *causes*. Salvation is wholly of CHRIST. Not a work wrought *in* us, but *for* us. And our new-birth, the blessed consequence of having been given by the FATHER to the SON, before the foundation of the world; redeemed by the SON, in the time-state of our *Adam*-nature from the fall; and therefore quickened by the HOLY GHOST, for the everlasting enjoyment of GOD, in grace here, and glory for ever. All spiritual pride, all pharisaical righteousness, all supposed merit in ourselves, these things are done away, in those precious views of our mercies, and our salvation from end to end, is hereby known and enjoyed as the whole of grace; *not of works, lest any man should boast.* Ephes. ii. 8, 9.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall;

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

These are very sweet verses. And they contain a most salutary direction. When a child of GOD can prove his *calling*, he thereby fully proves at the same time, his *election*. For it is an infallible truth of scripture, *For whom he did predestinate, them he also called.* Rom. viii. 30. And every new-born child of GOD is himself a living witness of being *called*. But having already, very largely dwelt upon both *election* and *calling*, in this *Poor Man's Commentary*. I have only to refer the Reader, to the same. Rom. viii. 30. and 1 Thess. i. 4, with the notes on both.

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth.

13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting *you* in remembrance;

14 Knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.

17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice, which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

What a delightful portrait is here drawn of the Apostle? What a firmness of mind, in the prospect of his approaching death? He knew, that he should end his days by martyrdom. See John xxi. 18, 19. But *Peter* knew also, the sure ground upon which he stood. See Chap. iii. 12--14. And every child of God by regeneration, is sure of the same. 2 Cor. v. 5. But, what I beg the Reader more particularly to remark, in the Apostle is, the refreshing views he had of the manifestation CHRIST made to him, in the Holy Mount. The glories of CHRIST'S PERSON, which he then saw, and his own personal interest in CHRIST, came with a full tide of remembrance, upon his mind, in the view of his death, and gave him holy triumph. Reader! it is so with all the people of GOD. *Bethel* visits, once made by the LORD, refresh all the after stages of life. *Jacob* when a-dying, remembered this. Gen. xxviii. 11 to the end, with Gen. xlviii. throughout. *Moses* also had his soul refreshed, when he called to mind, his first view of GOD in CHRIST at the bush. Exod. iii. with Deut. xxxiii. 16. But over and above these, let the Reader particularly attend to the evident design of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in thus appointing *Peter*, to leave this blessed testimony, as his dying testimony, for every regenerated child of GOD to be refreshed with. Here are no cunningly devised fables: no arts, no folly of human philosophy. What *Peter* records is the relation of himself and companions, who were eye-witnesses of CHRIST'S majesty. Reader! let you and I attend to his relation.

And *first*. What I would beg the Reader to observe, is the Apostle's account of this solemn and glorious scene, in the Mount. He expressly saith, that it was *the power and coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST*; and that he, and his companions, were *eye witnesses of his majesty*. Hence it will undeniably follow, that it was the *personal glory* of the GOD-MAN Mediator, CHRIST JESUS. Not the *essential*

glory of JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of PERSON, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. *For no man hath seen God at any time.* John i. 18. But the *Personal* glory of CHRIST, as GOD-MAN Mediator. And which the voice that came to CHRIST, from the excellent glory, confirmed. This voice, both proved indeed, CHRIST to be GOD, and no less at the same time, the GOD-MAN Mediator. It proved CHRIST'S GOD-HEAD, for GOD cannot find an object of complacency, but in himself. Hence, CHRIST is *One with the FATHER, over all, God, blessed for ever.* Amen. Rom. ix. 5. And it proved CHRIST to be the Mediator; for this account of him, as his beloved SON, corresponded to the LORD'S proclamation of Him, by the Prophet, when he called him *his servant, and his elect, in whom his soul delighteth.* Isa. xlii. 1. Let the Reader duly ponder these things, in one point together; and then let him attend to another view in this most blessed scene, as GOD the HOLY GHOST hath represented it.

Secondly. Several days before this transfiguration of CHRIST took place, the LORD JESUS prepared the minds of his disciples, to expect some glorious manifestation of himself. These were the LORD'S own words: *Verily, I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.* Mark ix. 1. Luke ix. 27. Now, nothing can be more plain, than that these words of JESUS referred to some striking, though transient views, of the glories of his kingdom; in which he will appear, *when he comes to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe.* 2 Thess. i. 10. JESUS intended it as a glimpse, a fore-view of his personal glory, in the great day of his kingdom. And, that the Apostles considered it the same, is equally evident, in that *Peter* calls it, the *power and coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.* Think, Reader, what a sweet pledge and earnest this was to the disciples, of the sure coming of our LORD? And, how blessedly did the Apostles feel it then; and by them, in the record of the HOLY GHOST, how blessedly hath it wrought ever since, and will work, in the fullest confirmation to our faith, on this great point, to endless generations?

Thirdly. Let us, under the light of scripture, consider, what this glory of CHRIST was, which the Apostles saw, and which *Peter* calls being *eye-witnesses of his majesty.* I have before said, it could not be the *essential* glory of the GOD-HEAD, for GOD is invisible. But, it is most evident, that it was the GOD-HEAD, shedding some beams of glory, and brightness, in CHRIST'S human nature. Not a mere *outward* glory, shining *upon* the person of CHRIST, but the GOD-HEAD, shining forth from *within.* The glory of his *divine* nature, manifested through the medium of his *human,* and both forming in one glorious person, CHRIST. *Paul,* under the HOLY GHOST, hath blessedly expressed it, when he saith, *In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the GOD-HEAD bodily.* Coloss. ii. 9. Such, *Peter* saw. *James* did not live long enough to give his testimony, being soon cut off, after the return of CHRIST to heaven, and the descent of the HOLY GHOST. Acts xii. 1, 2. *John's* account is in exact correspondence with *Peter's.* *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory; the glory, as of the only begotten of the FATHER, full of grace and truth.* John i. 14. And *Paul,* to whom CHRIST spake from heaven, and manifested forth his glory at the time, saith, that *it was above the brightness of the sun,*

Acts xxvi. 13. Indeed, it made him blind for three days. Hence, then, it must follow, that this manifestation of CHRIST, at this time, in the Mount, was his glorified body; and such as He will appear in at the last day, when *the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed*; that is, both shall blush, and be eclipsed, at the superior glory of CHRIST, GOD and Man in one person; *when the LORD of Hosts shall reign in Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his antients, gloriously.* Isaiah xxiv. 23.

Lastly. That I may not trespass. As this manifestation of the personal glory of CHRIST was evidently designed for the comfort and joy, not only of those highly favored Apostles, to whom the LORD granted this great blessing, but for the consolation of the Church of GOD, in all ages; so the LORD's bringing from the dead (or from heaven, it is the same thing,) those two men, *Moses* and *Elias*, to be with JESUS at the time, as plainly proved, that when CHRIST shall come, at the last day, to his kingdom, all his redeemed shall be with him, CHRIST's personal glory is, and ever must be, personal; that is, perfectly incommunicable in its very nature. But, there is a glory in that upper world, which is communicable from CHRIST, as Head, to his body, his members; precisely the same as grace in this lower world is communicable, and JESUS is for ever communicating it to them all, according to the measure of the gift of CHRIST. So, then, this glorious transaction in the Mount, was plainly intended by our LORD, as a fore-taste of that glory of CHRIST's person, in which he shall one day appear, and all his redeemed shall appear with him in glory. Well might the remembrance of it refresh the dying saint, in the opening prospect then before him. And, why not refresh all the faithful, in the sure testimony here given, since GOD the HOLY GHOST hath so graciously caused it to be recorded, as the departing consolation of the Apostle to the Church. LORD! make it very blessedly so to my soul!

If I detain the Reader any longer on this sweet passage, it shall only be to offer one or two thoughts which arise out of it, for our great encouragement and comfort. And the first, and highest of all thoughts, must be, to notice, and always keep in remembrance, the love and grace which JESUS manifested to all his Church, by this act. It was, in effect, saying, that if, before these my servants taste of death, I will give them a glimpse of my personal glory, that in them all my people may have a fore-taste of the blessedness they shall all be brought to hereafter. *Moses* and *Elias*, shall come out of the other world, by way of shewing them, that all gone before of mine, as well as all that are yet to come, are alike interested in it. Precious LORD JESUS! was this the love of thine heart? And is this the manner of men, O LORD GOD!

Secondly. Let the Church of the faithful here learn, from *Peter*, that we do not follow cunningly devised fables. We know the power, and coming also, of our LORD JESUS CHRIST! We are now witnesses, *heart-witnesses* of his majesty, and the sovereignty of his grace, and shortly shall be *eye-witnesses* of his glory. Oh! the blessedness of regeneration, which brings with it the earnest of the SPIRIT.

Thirdly. Let the Church seek for grace, everlastingly to keep in remembrance this precious testimony of our CHRIST's own personal glory. It is CHRIST's person, which is the great object of our faith.

All our high hopes of everlasting happiness and joy are centered in Him. He is our hope, our joy, our confidence. And, if we are witnesses now to the power and coming of his grace, we shall in due time be witnesses of his divine presence, in glory. *Beloved!* saith John, (and every new-born child of God may say the same,) *now are we the sons of God. And it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* 1 John iii. 2.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as *they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

It appears to me to be a great beauty in the plan of this scripture. The Apostle had opened the Chapter, in giving glory to the HOLY GHOST, concerning his great work of regeneration. He then adverted to the glory of the SON of GOD, as manifested in the Transfiguration of CHRIST's own personal glory, and his people's interest in him. He next called the Church to the contemplation of GOD the FATHER's testimony to his dear SON. And now, in conclusion, he calls upon the Church once more, to GOD the HOLY GHOST, as the Founder of the Church, and the Almighty Minister in the Church, in the appointment of all the means of grace, by his holy word, his ordinances, and his whole train of prophecy. Reader! what an evidence here is, at once, both of the GODHEAD of the HOLY GHOST, his Person, his Agency, his Almighty Sovereignty, and the divine authority of his Word? Hence we learn, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation. Oh! with what veneration is the Church called upon to receive the prophecies of GOD. And, while we bless GOD for all that is fulfilled, to be on the look-out, with humble, faithful watching, for all that remains to be fulfilled. Methinks, I would say for myself, whenever I open at any time the scripture prophecies, these are not the words of men, but what they have delivered here, is as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST!

REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED and HOLY LORD GOD Almighty, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST! Praised be our Covenant GOD in CHRIST, for his unspeakable gift. What everlasting love, adoration, and praise, do thy people owe thee, O FATHER of mercies, and GOD of all grace, for having chosen the Church in CHRIST, before the world! And thee, no less, thou glorious SON of GOD, for having taken thy Church into union with thyself, when the LORD possessed thee, in the beginning of his ways,

before his works of old; and for redeeming thy Church from the Adam-fall of ruin, in which, in this time-state, she was involved. And thee, with equal love and praise, O thou eternal SPIRIT, for thy gracious act of regeneration, in quickening the Church, in every individual of her members, whereby alone each child of GOD is brought into an apprehension of the FATHER's love, the SON's grace, and the SPIRIT's fellowship. Blessed, for ever blessed be GOD.

And we specially praise thee, dearest JESUS, for thy mercies to all thy Church, in this grace of thine to the Apostles, in the Mount of Transfiguration. It was surely for thy Church, in all ages, as well as for their personal comfort, so glorious a display of thy glory was vouchsafed. GOD, our FATHER, be praised, for the precious testimony then given to thy SON-ship. And GOD the HOLY GHOST, in causing *Peter*, with his dying testimony, to bless the Church once more in the relation. And now, O LORD, may thy Church, and especially in the present awful day, be blessed of our GOD, with grace to receive and treasure up so sweet a record of the glory of our risen and exalted SAVIOR. Oh! LORD, continually make known to all thy members in grace, thy power and coming. Make known to us, in the blessed prophecies of our GOD, and in all the ordinances of his house of prayer, this power and coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Oh! to be heart-witnesses of CHRIST's majesty here on earth, till we come to be eye-witnesses of his majesty in heaven. Amen!

CHAP. II.

CONTENTS.

We have in this Chapter a very awful Account of the latter-day Heresies. But, while the HOLY GHOST graciously informs the Church of those Seasons, he as graciously teacheth the Church how to discern their Features, and discover them from the Faithful.

BUT there were false prophets also among the people, even, as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgement now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them*

into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement;

5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.

6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly:

7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds.)

Let the Reader begin the Chapter with prayer, for the spirit of discernment. And he will find, as *John* said, that there is a sure way, under GOD, of discovering false prophets. See 1 *John* iv. 1—6. And let him first remark, that the Apostle is not speaking of the true, and real Church of CHRIST, which is made up only of regenerated believers; but of a mere nominal professing Church, which have been from the first forming of the Church in *Egypt*, all the way through, and will continue to the end. A *mixed multitude* went up out of *Egypt*. *Exod.* xii. 38. After the descent of the HOLY GHOST, there were the *Ananiah's* and *Sapphira's* in the visible Church. *Acts* v. 1, 2. And there must be, the Apostle saith, *heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.* 1 *Cor.* xi. 19. Tares will grow with the wheat. But, as of the Church of old, all were not *Israel* in the promised line, which were of *Israel*, naturally, and nationally considered; so it is now. *Rom.* ix. 6, 7. Mingling in the same congregation is a perfectly distinct thing from belonging to CHRIST. All men, generally speaking, are born Christians, that are born in Christian countries, and under the meridian of the Gospel. But this doth not constitute a real Christian. Before any man is a real Christian, he must be new-born. Birth by nature, gives no right to grace. Hence, the real Church of CHRIST is only composed of real regenerated believers. All that join the congregation of CHRIST without this qualification, only constitute what may be called a professing Church.

But we must not stop here. The Apostle saith, that in such a Church, there will not only be mere nominal worshippers, but there shall be *false Teachers*. As there were in the old Church, false prophets, in the *Hananiahs*, and the *Amaziahs*, who impudently stood up to minister in the LORD's name, without the LORD's authority, yea, and in defiance to the LORD's truth; (*Jerem.* xxviii. *Amos* vii.) so the latter-day dispensation is to be distinguished with *false teachers*

among the LORD's people. What an awful consideration! Reader! ponder it well, for the time is come. *False teachers!* not mere hearers, not the mere congregation, but those who stand up to teach. Oh! how earnest ought the people of GOD to be in prayer to the LORD, to keep his Church from such delusions! Oh! LORD! send I pray thee, *Pastors according to thine own heart*, and according to thine own promise, *which shall feed thy flock with understanding and knowledge!* Jerem. iii. 15.

But it is our mercy, that the same LORD who hath forewarned the Church of these awful times of heresy, hath also fore-armed his people with the source of security, for their defence. The persons here spoken of, are said to be *false teachers among the people*. Look at this, as the *first* standard by which to ascertain their real character. They are not to spring out of the heathen. They are not from among the antient enemies of CHRIST, the Jews. But these false teachers are to arise up from among persons professing Christianity. *There shall be false teachers among you.* *Secondly:* observe, that as those men are not heathen men, which want to establish heresy from without; but men calling themselves, like yourselves, Christians in name, and wish to praise up heresy *within*; so, the leading feature of their teaching GOD hath graciously marked, they *privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the LORD that bought them.* There are several points here marked out, which, if duly attended to, will throw a light over the whole passage, and enable the Church, under GOD's teaching, to discover who they are here described. *First.* They are said *privily* to bring in damnable heresies. Now *privily* means an artful, sly, insinuating way. Their plan is deep laid, and done with caution. It is *privily*; that is, done plausibly, so that their real intention, of subverting the truth, is not immediately discerned. Now, it is worthy observation, that such was the method of false teachers which sprung up in the Old Testament Church, in the *Sanballats*, and *Tobias*, and *Geshems*. Nehem. vi. 10, 11, 12. Yea, the Serpent himself began with deceit, in the first lie ever told in the world, which he practised on our Mother. Gen. iii. 4. And our GOD hath warned his people against the insinuation of all false teachers. *O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts!* Ezek. xiii. 4. And the Church, aware of this craftiness, cried out, *take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.* Song ii. 15. So much for the craft made use of, in the false teachers *privily* bringing in their heresies.

Secondly. Let us look at the features of those heresies, which GOD the HOLY GHOST saith, those false teachers shall bring in. The LORD calls them *damnable*. And they are proved to be so, for they bring upon themselves *swift destruction*. And the LORD shews wherefore they are so; for the first relation of the heresy is, *even denying the LORD that bought them.* There are several subordinate ones mentioned, such as *coveteousness* in making merchandize and profit of the people, and using *feigned words*, soft and insinuating words, as if wishing above all things the good of the people they are endeavoring to ruin; complimenting with feigned words their good sense, in appealing to their reason and understanding, under the name of *rational* christianity and the like. But the grand object of all their aim, and, therefore, the grand discriminating feature by which the HOLY GHOST hath

marked them, is their denial of the LORD that bought them; and by which they bring upon themselves swift destruction.

The question is, what is implied in this heresy? And this is best answered by the similar passage, in *Jude 4. denying the only LORD GOD and our LORD JESUS CHRIST*: that is, not denying the Being, and existence of GOD, and of CHRIST; but denying the scriptural testimony of GOD, in his threefold character of Persons, and as manifested in covenant transactions in JESUS CHRIST. These damnable heresies, which these men privily bring in, (Jude saith they have crept in unawares in this deed,) level all distinctions of personality in the GODHEAD; they deny the GODHEAD of CHRIST, atonement by his blood, the Person, work, and offices of GOD the HOLY GHOST. So that, while affecting to be called Christians, they would rob the SON of GOD of all his glory, in the denial of his GODHEAD; and their own souls, and the souls of all the redeemed of their happiness, in denying the efficacy of his redeeming blood. They reduce the Gospel to a mere system of ethics, mere moral duties, and count the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of grace! Reader! how can it be otherwise, than that such men should bring upon themselves swift destruction, since, if there be no hope of redemption in the blood and righteousness of CHRIST, *where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* 1 Pet. iv. 18. Rom. iii. 19.

By the expression of *the LORD that bought them*, must not be supposed, as having any allusion to the redemption by CHRIST. Had JESUS indeed bought them with his blood, he would have regenerated them by his SPIRIT. The sheep of CHRIST, marked in his blood as his property, must have been the objects of his care. But by the buying them, simply hath reference to his providences over them. Like *Israel* of old, as a nation, all the children of *Israel* were included in their deliverance from the *Egyptian* bondage; and as such, might be said to be bought out of that bondage, by the LORD's deliverance of them. Deut. iv. 32—34. Hence *Moses*, in allusion to this, saith to *Israel* nationally considered, *Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee and established thee?* Deut. xxxii. 6.

Reader! ponder these things. Look at what is here said, and contemplate the present day; and then say, whether in the present day, which may well be called a CHRIST-despising generation, the features could have been more accurately described? Had this scripture been written but yesterday, it could not have more suited! And, Reader, look again! *Peter* saith of them, that *their judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.* And *Jude*, in yet stronger language saith, *that they were before of old ordained to this condemnation.* Jude 4. An awful account, to trace them up to their first, and original stock. What a decided account, indeed, ordained of old to this condemnation! And the Apostle draws a parallel line between those ordained men, and fallen angels. They are all of the same family. As the one was cast down from heaven; so these are cast out of the Church of GOD. As the one is reserved in everlasting chains of darkness; so these are reserved unto the judgment of the great day. As the fallen angels are cast down to hell; so CHRIST-despisers, and the bringers in of damnable heresies, are reserved for the blackness of darkness for ever. Yea, if there be

a misery in hell, greater one than another, surely they, that like *Chorazin*, were once exalted to greater Gospel privileges in the ordinances of a Gospel Church, and despised them, shall have it. Reader! do observe one thing. Despisers of God's truth, who have had greater privileges than others of God's mercy, (as this land evidently affords,) will have greater condemnation. Perhaps no nation ever had the views of divine truth more clearly unfolded, than *Great Britain*. Perhaps no heretics ever came up to those of this country. The greatest reptiles and monsters are found under the tropics. The greatest infidels, where the Sun of Righteousness shines with most glory!

I must not further trespass, but it is a solemn close to this scripture which the HOLY GHOST makes, by way of confirming the sure judgment of CHRIST-despisers; that the destruction of angels, the overthrow of the whole world by the flood, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, and infinitely, and above all, as might have been added, the death of CHRIST, for the salvation of his people; these loudly proclaim the LORD's determination to take vengeance on sin.

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished:

10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.

12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption:

13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, *as they* that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots *they are* and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;

14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: a heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are

gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the son of Bosor*, who loved the wages of unrighteousness ;

16 But was rebuked for his iniquity : the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest ; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

18 For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption : for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again ; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

I admire this very beautiful, and gracious scripture, introduced in this place, as a blessed relief to the mind, in the midst of the many judgments. Reader ! do not overlook it. Amidst all the exercises of the present awful day, do not lose sight of this ; *the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations*. Here is enough for a child of God to repose in for ever ! But the HOLY GHOST is engaged in this Chapter in an awful subject, and the Lord pursues it again. I do not think it necessary to dwell particularly upon the several features of character, which the HOLY GHOST hath drawn, of ungodly men. They are all of them very strong and expressive.

Balaam is introduced, to shew what convictions of head-knowledge there may be, void of all heart-influence. This monster of iniquity, while convinced in head-knowledge, that the Israel of God was blessed of GOD in CHRIST; hired himself out for the sake of gain, to curse them. And, when he found all would not do to accomplish this end, he recommended *Moab* to a plan which he thought would effectually answer. By advising the Moabites to invite the sons of Israel to come to their sacrifices, they laid a trap to catch *Israel* with the beauty of *Moab's* daughters; and this he knew, would lead *Israel* into idolatry, which would do more to the ruin of *Israel* than all the curses of *Balaam*. Compare Numb. xxiii. xxiv. and xxv. with Rev. ii. 12—17.

I shall only detain the Reader with a short observation, on the close of this Chapter, in the three last verses of it. If the Reader will diligently attend to what is here said, he will discover, that the HOLY GHOST, by the Apostle, is speaking all along of mere nominal professors, as distinguished from the LORD's own people. The outward form of godliness had done enough to induce, in mere professors, a wish for an outward garb of godliness. The reputation of being somewhat religious, had an effect to restrain them from the open commission of more daring offences before men. They had set up somewhat of a reform, observed perhaps family prayer, attended ordinances, and now and then the sacrament of the LORD's Supper. But here it ceased. No awakening by grace, no regeneration of the heart, no union with CHRIST. Hence, though they had escaped the open and notorious acts of pollution which were in the world, yet no work of saving grace was ever wrought in the heart; and, therefore, what begins only in nature, can arise no higher, neither will it ever end in grace. The dog, when sick, and vomits up, soon returns and swallows down again what must everlastingly make sick. And the sow, however you may wash her, will not be easy until she return to wallow again in her favorite mud. It is her nature, and nature never ariseth above her own element. The sheep may fall into the mire, but it will never lay there. But the sow is in her native soil when there, neither can any keep her from it. Oh! how sweet is distinguishing grace!

REFLECTIONS.

READER! what an awful thing it must be, in a Church, calling itself Christian, to be under the direction of false teachers! Professing the name of CHRIST, and yet denying his GODHEAD! Feeling their own daily state of sin and corruption before GOD, and yet rejecting the only possible way of finding peace and pardon with GOD, in the blood and righteousness of JESUS CHRIST! *My soul! come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly mine honor be not thou united.* Oh! for grace, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, to brave every opposition of men; and faithfully, fully, and unceasingly, to proclaim the LORD our Righteousness.

Precious LORD JESUS! let thy name be as ointment poured forth. And, as thou knowest how to deliver the godly out of temptation; do thou keep them now, O LORD, in these awful seasons, when the HOLY GHOST is admonishing the Church, that false teachers will arise, even among the people. LORD! give us grace, to discern

grievous wolves from true shepherds, and those that love the flock from those that live only to fleece them. My soul is relieved in the view, that JESUS knows his sheep, and is known of them. He will keep them in the dark and cloudy day. He will watch over them for good. He will bring them home, and bring them in, to his everlasting kingdom. Precious LORD JESUS! how safe and secure are all thine, kept by thine own power!

C H A P. III.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter the Apostle closeth his Epistle, and a beautiful Close he maketh of it. He foretells of the last Days being marked with Scoffers. He assureth the Church of the Certainty of the LORD's coming, and the Suddenness of it; and ends all in giving Glory to CHRIST.

THIS second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.

5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

If there were no other authority than what the opening of this Chapter affords, in testimony, that the Apostle *Peter* is the inspired

writer of it; this would be enough. For it proves, *first*, that he had written a former Epistle; *secondly*, that it was to the same persons to whom he sent his first, and in both which he calls them *beloved*; and, *thirdly*, he tells them, that the object of both was one and the same, to stir up their minds to remembrance. And his adverting both to the Prophets of the Old Testament, and to himself and his brother Apostles under the New, shews what a beautiful harmony is in both.

Reader! it is worthy your observation, how much the Apostle's mind was directed by the HOLY GHOST, to admonish the Church of the latter-day heresy, and of heretics. Scoffers are very awful characters. And nothing can more pointedly manifest the bitterness of the heart. The scoffing of men is, in human nature, in correspondence to the hissing of the serpent in his. The devil is the author of both. But we have not simply the sneer, but the contemptuous language of the enemy to contend with. *Where is the promise of his coming?* Alluding to what Jesus said before his departure. John xiv. 3. And so blind, and given up to a deluded mind, are such men; that God's Covenant with the earth, which he made after the destruction by the flood, and which the Lord frequently alludes to, in confirmation of his Covenant of grace, they pervert to the very reverse of the LORD's intention. Every man upon earth is this day a living testimony of the *former*. Gen. viii. 21, 22. And God makes this an argument for the belief of the *latter*. See Jerem. xxxi. 35, 36. with Gen. ix. 11—15.

But what I more particularly desire the Reader to notice, in confirmation of this Covenant in CHRIST, as all along shadowed forth, under every dispensation, and more especially in this of *Noah* is, that the HOLY GHOST, by *Peter*, refers to it in this very scripture. He expressly declares, that this ark, in which *Noah* and his family were saved, represented CHRIST, while the Patriarch and his household represented the Church. And however inattentively regarded by men, and though, according to philosophers, the rainbow may be accounted for on physical principles, yet GOD, from the first, designed it as a token of his Covenant. And every child of God ought to regard it as such, upon every renewed occasion, when that beautiful arch is seen by him in the heavens. God saith, that he will look upon it, and remember his everlasting Covenant, and so ought all his people. Gen. ix. 11—16. And it is a further inducement for the child of God so to do, not only to bear him up against all the sin and folly of scoffers, but to lead his heart on to the contemplation of JESUS, whom that bow represents. The New Testament Church, in, and through, the ministry of the beloved Apostle, is invited to behold that Rainbow which *John* saw round about the throne, meaning CHRIST. Rev. iv. 3. And this representation of JESUS was intended to teach, that as it encircled the throne, so that no dispensations can issue from the throne but what must pass through it, neither can any manifestations of God, in all the departments of nature, providence, grace, or glory, come forth, but in, and through CHRIST. Yea, all the views of JEHOVAH, with which he beholds his Church, must be in, and through Him. Reader! what a thought is this to refresh the soul of the regenerated child of GOD, not only against the blasts of ungodly scoffers, but under all the exercises and trials which the faithful meet with in their way to glory.

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

10 ¶ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

How sweetly the Apostle turns from scoffers, in answering them, in order to comfort the faithful. And what a blessed plan hath he adopted in doing it. The comparative statement of a thousand years, and of a day, is chosen by way of manifesting, that in relation to His Being, and existence, who inhabiteth eternity, all calculations of time lose their very meaning. I AM, which is the Lord's distinguishing name, renders past, present, and future to Him, but as one eternal *Now*. And it should not be forgotten by his people, that it is the eternity of his nature, and the unchangeableness of his purpose, counsel, will, and pleasure, which gives being and accomplishment to all his promises in CHRIST. The people of God, therefore, have an everlasting bottom to rest upon, in the assurance both of CHRIST's coming, and his coming to perform all his gracious intentions to his Church. And so sudden, as well as sure, will be his coming, that that great day, or night, will be to all the earth as unlooked for, and unexpected, as when the midnight thief breaks into the house while men sleep. Alarm will rouse up the whole of the unregenerate world, and those awful events will take place with them all, which in various scriptures are so described. Matt. xxiv. 27 to the end.

11 ¶ *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness.

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for

such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

15 And account *that* the long-suffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

16 As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures unto their own destruction.

17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

I beg the Reader not to overlook the tender solicitude of the Apostle, directed by the HOLY GHOST, towards the Church. Like the pillar of cloud in the camp of *Israel*, which became light to God's chosen, and darkness to their foes; so here the great day of God, which even for a moment, if thought on, damps all the prosperity of sinners, is, and must be, to every justified child of God in JESUS CHRIST, a subject of endless and unceasing joy. Reader! I never can say enough to you, (under the presumption that the LORD hath wrought a saving work of grace upon your soul,) on this great point of faith and assurance in the LORD's promise. Depend upon it, *Peter* could never have said, that he was *looking for*, and *hasting unto*, the coming of the day of God, had he entertained the least doubt, or been at any uncertainty as to the issue of his own everlasting happiness in that day. The Apostle knew the certainty of the ground on which he stood. He had already passed from death unto life. He had gone under the sentence of God's holy law, which he had broken. He had found redemption in the blood of the cross, and stood perfectly, freely, and fully justified in the righteousness of CHRIST, his Head and Surety. Hence, he had long maintained through grace, fellowship, interest, and communion with God in CHRIST; and he now only waited for that great day of God, when JESUS would confess him before God and men, among all his redeemed in glory. Reader! is it so with you? *Peter's* privilege was not singular. All CHRIST's redeemed ones are the same. And every child of God who hath been saved, and called with an holy calling, is supposed to be daily, and hourly, living in the faith and enjoyment of it. Yea, the Church is said to be risen with CHRIST, and made *to sit together in heavenly places in CHRIST*. Ephes. ii. 6. And very sure I am, that it is not only among the triumphs of faith, so to live, and so to walk with God, in full assurance of hope; but it is a duty they owe to God, in giving the credit of believing him as God, in accepting

and trusting to the record which the LORD hath given of his dear SON. *And this is the record, that he hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his SON. He that hath the SON hath life.* And this, as surely in the life that now is, as in that which is to come. 1 John v. 11, 12. John iii. 36. Oh! for grace then, that, like *Peter*, yea, like all the faithful gone before, to be always looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of GOD. And, as the Apostle saith, to be diligent in the use of all the appointed means of grace, that agreeably to our GOD and FATHER's original and eternal purpose, who hath chosen us in CHRIST, we may then be found in CHRIST, having peace in the blood of his cross, and being washed from sin, and robed in Him, we shall be without spot, and blameless.

And, Reader! what a sweet note on *long suffering* the Apostle dwells upon. And what child of GOD, but in his own experience, can, and doth, sing the same. Oh! the long suffering of my GOD, in the long, long years of my unregeneracy! Was not this salvation? And observe also the love of *Peter* to *Paul*. How sweetly hath he here endeared *Paul's* writings to the Church, and how delightfully doth he determine concerning the supposed difficulties in *Paul's* writings. Hard to be understood, he saith. But by whom? Not by any who are taught of GOD. None of those who are come to CHRIST. For JESUS saith, that *every man who hath heard and learned of the FATHER cometh to him.* John vi. 45. None of those taught of GOD the SPIRIT. For *John* saith, that the regenerate have *an anointing from the SPIRIT, and know all things.* 1 John ii. 27. Who then are these, the unlearned, and unstable, spoken of? Namely, the self-taught, the wise, and learned of this world, from whom divine truths are hidden, and who wrest the word of GOD, yea, all the scriptures to their own destruction. Hence JESUS thanked the FATHER when upon earth. Matt. xi. 25. And all the faithful thank him now.

18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Reader! what is it to grow in grace? Grace is an humbling principle. And what then can a growth in it be, but to be increasing in humbleness. If this growth was formed in any attainment of our own, I fear, that instead of an increase of humility, it would make me proud. Moreover, grace is wholly of GOD, and not of men. If I grow in grace, it must be growth in the grace, that is, in CHRIST JESUS. As such it is wholly out of myself. Moreover, the LORD saith, that in the close of our warfare, *we shall remember and be confounded, and never open our mouth any more because of our shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the LORD GOD!* Ezek. xvi. 63. I humbly conceive, therefore, that to grow in grace, is to grow more and more humble before the LORD, from this growth in grace bringing the LORD's people into a deeper acquaintance with the plague of their own heart. Our first discoveries of ourselves, under grace, bring us but a little way in our exploring of our own corruption. The LORD doth by us, in the early manifestations of his grace, as he did by *Israel* when he brought them out of *Egypt*. It is said, that GOD *led them not through the way of*

the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. Exod. xiii. 17, 18. So it should seem, for the most part, the LORD doth by his redeemed now, in bringing them out of the spiritual Egypt of sin and death. If the LORD were to bring us through the land of the *Philistines*, I mean, in bringing us at once to behold the depths of corruption in our fallen nature, what soul could survive the sight? But by little and little, leading us down, with increasing discoveries, to view the pit of our own corruption; how increasingly precious CHRIST becomes, in every new insight of our sins, and his mercy. Is not this to grow in grace?

But this, according to my view of this sweet scripture, will appear yet more confirmed, when we connect in our apprehension of it, what the HOLY GHOST hath connected with it. But grow in grace, and *in the knowledge of our LORD and SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST*. Surely, if by growing in grace, I grow more and more out of love with myself, I shall, by that grace in JESUS, grow more in love with JESUS. Exactly in the proportion I loath myself for my defilements, shall I love JESUS more for his holiness. As a growth in grace makes me more self-loathing, and self-abhorring, will not my knowledge of my LORD, and his suitableness to me, render Him more desirable? Suppose *Job* were to tell the Church about his growth in grace? When were his highest attainments, but when in the view of CHRIST, he lay lower in self-abhorrence than he had ever done before, and cried out in dust and ashes! *Job* xlii. 5, 6. Suppose *Isaiah* were to give in his testimony of his apprehensions of the same subject? When were his thoughts of himself lowest, and of CHRIST highest? Was it not in that vision, when he cried out, *Woe is me, I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips. Mine eyes have seen the king, the LORD of hosts!* *Isaiah* vi. 5. Let *Daniel*, holy *Daniel*, give his evidence. And when was his growth in grace at the highest pitch, but when he declared *his comeliness was turned into corruption?* *Dan.* x. 8. When was *Paul's*? Surely, when after more than *twenty years* had passed from his conversion, he summed up his account of himself, in saying, that *in him, that is, in his flesh, dwelt no good thing*. And, under the weight of it, he made that lamentable cry, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death.* *Rom.* vii. 18—24. Reader! let your own heart say, if so be the LORD hath taught your heart, what is a growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, but, like *Paul*, to feel daily more and more the plague of the heart, and therefrom to be more humbled in ourselves; while growing in the knowledge of CHRIST, and his all-sufficiency, to take increasing joy in him, and, with *Paul*, say, *I thank GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD!*

I shall only detain the Reader one moment longer, to observe, that the short but expressive doxology, with which the Apostle closeth his Epistle, I would recommend the Reader not to pass hastily over, and consider it as so many words of course. Certainly, the sacred writers could never intend such things by such praises. To hallow the LORD's name is the first strain of praise in the LORD's prayer. And the cause wherefore the holy men of old so often burst forth, in the midst of their writings, and at the beginning and end of them is,

because their souls, being full of God's glory, their mouths in speaking, and their pens in writing, could not refrain to set it forth. It should be our desire, as it is our privilege, to do the same. Both these great Apostles, *Peter* and *Paul*, thus unite in praises to God and the LAMB. *To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.* Ephes. iii. 21.

REFLECTIONS.

GLORY be to GOD, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, *Israel's* God in covenant for ever and ever! What praises thy people have now to offer, and what praises to all eternity, for thy love to the Church, in CHRIST! Praises to the FATHER's love, in his choice of the Church, from everlasting! Praises to the SON's grace, in marrying his Church, and redeeming her from all iniquity to himself, by his blood! And, praises to the HOLY GHOST, for his love in regenerating mercy, and all his watchful care over the Church, from grace to glory!

And, LORD, while we praise thee, in thy distinguishing mercy, in founding the Church in CHRIST, presiding over it as the Almighty Minister, in the appointment of ordinances, and means of grace; and giving the whole scriptures of our GOD, by inspiration, to make thy people wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in CHRIST JESUS, we find renewed cause to praise thee, O thou eternal SPIRIT, for raising up this blessed scripture, by the instrumentality of thy servant *Peter*, to comfort thy Church with those glorious truths herein contained. Yes! most gracious LORD! it was not only meant to refresh the dying Apostle, in bringing to his recollection CHRIST's glory in the Mount; but the record of it was designed, as it hath often proved, still is proving, and will, to the end of time, be proved a blessed testimony to refresh the souls of thousands! LORD! let it frequently refresh my soul also! And, amidst all the scoffers of the present awful day, let thy people be always on their watch-tower, waiting the LORD's coming. And, in the mean time, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Farewell, *Peter*, while we bless thy LORD, and our LORD, for thy ministry, we find no less cause to bless the LORD for all the improvements in grace we receive, under divine teaching, for all that is recorded in thine history. The Church of God, in heaven and earth, have profited by it. And, ere long, will all join together in the same song of glory, praise, and power, to GOD and the LAMB, for evermore. Amen, and Amen.