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Communications.

**THOUGHTS ON THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE CONDITION
OF THE JEWS.**

The providence of God unfolds its ample pages for our instruction. Written with the pen of infinite wisdom, it is replete with the richest discoveries of divine truth, and will amply repay the time and pains that may be bestowed on the study of its contents. But while the meanest understanding may find many passages in it level to its comprehension, the loftiest intellect will meet with some so inexplicably mysterious, as to defy the deepest investigation. "Thy way," exclaims the pious king of Israel, addressing his God, "thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

In the history of the Jewish people we find one dispensation of Divine Providence awfully mysterious. In looking at it we shall see light mingled with darkness, mercy and judgment wonderfully combined. If we contemplate it with a temper like that of Paul's, it will be a subject of profitable meditation; and, with feelings of deep humility and adoring reverence, we shall exclaim, as he did, while meditating on this very subject, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

How highly were the people of Israel formerly distinguished! By what a train of miracles were they delivered from bondage, and sustained in the wilderness! Egypt is desolated by judgments; the Red sea opens a way for them; manna descends from heaven to feed them; and water, gushing from the flinty rock, follows them in all their wanderings in the wilder-

sus in his human nature, returning from his labours, his sufferings, and the silence of the tomb, should be admitted into the immediate presence of the Father. Having finished the work which was given him to perform, having made an end of sin, having brought in a perfect righteousness, and having triumphed over death, he ascended to a company of angels who were waiting for him in the lower skies. These heavenly hosts surrounded him as he went up, and when they approached the holy of holies in the third heavens, demanded in his name, as a conqueror, reception, saying, "Lift up your heads," &c. A glad choir within demanded, to make their returning companions proclaim the God of salvation again, and again, "Who is this king of glory?" The cloud of convoying angels say, "The Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory." In this light, the close of the psalm appears to have been a prediction of the exaltation of Messiah. The heavens have lifted up their everlasting doors, and received our brother, in the character of our representative and precursor. Let us fix our thoughts and affections on him where he is; let us live and die in his service; and then with songs of praise and victory we shall be escorted to his presence, to be like him, and to be ever with the Lord. Amen.

JESUS, THE CHIEF AMONG TEN THOUSAND.

Splendid and imposing crimes have often been applauded by the indiscriminating multitude; and whilst a religious sense of moral obligation, so necessary to true dignity of character, is frequently thrust into obscurity, and esteemed of little worth; censure is engaged in trumpeting the celebrity of political intriguers; in decking the brow of literary pedants, or in fabricating an apotheosis for valorous knights, whose fame is the blood and the tears of the slaughtered and bereaved.

In the estimation of the world, character is dignified by a proficiency in science unconsecrated to the service of God; political art and manœuvring in the cabinet; or intrepidity in the field of rout and carnage.

Man is not a fit subject for high-wrought encomium; his heart the Pandora-casket of every pestilent passion, ready to burst forth into open and brutal violence.

But there is one, whose name was known to Abraham, and whose fame has reached us; whose memorial shines in the grandest movements of nature and soothes in the most beneficent dispensations of Providence; to whose underived dignity the heavens could give no accession, and from whose glory the manger could subtract no lustre; who in his external appearance was man in the humblest sphere of life, yet in his irre-

sistible operations was *God*: “without controversy great was the mystery of his person; God manifested in the flesh; justified in the Spirit; seen of angels; preached unto the Gentiles; believed on in the world; received up into glory;”—and this is *Jesus*, the “chiefest among ten thousands,” at whose shrine homage may tender her offerings and eulogy chant forth her praises.

His name is the charm of the believer’s pilgrimage, none other is so loved by the heir of glory, furnishing a theme, to which heaven’s fullest and most thrilling quire could not do justice.

To describe him, I would portray under the first representation a lovely youth, in all the glowing bloom of vigorous health; his heart throbbing with ardour, his bosom swelling at the prospect of the stupendous work he was to perform; docile and obedient, under the guidance and control of earthly guardians he remains, until all lesser considerations are absorbed in the mighty one, that he is to be engaged in his Father’s business. Then at an humble distance I would follow his footsteps through the spacious courts of Jerusalem’s pride and glory, the Temple of God, until I see him amidst the literary pride of his country. The impertinence of youth has no place in his character, yet I behold him, with a resolution disproportioned to his years, his gesture striking, his countenance beaming with expression, beckoning attention. He speaks—every eye is fixed—there is no arrogance, yet he presumes to teach, whilst hoary wisdom and reverend experience regard with mingled veneration and awe the youthful and mysterious stranger.

In this youth, I recognise the visitant, whose introduction into our world was announced by the enrapturing tones of angel music; whose birth-place was lit by the brightest star in “night’s diadem.”

Presented now to the public, he exhibited a person eminently prepossessing, and a mind which in itself afforded the conclusive evidence of an intimate alliance to Divinity. Here, however, were but the buddings of a glory which, in future years, was to be more fully developed—but the faint delineations of a character, which afterwards shone so conspicuously.

When the period of his seclusion had expired, he was manifested to the world as a moral phenomenon. In whatever point of view we contemplate him, whether as a public or private character, we observe every thing to rivet the attention and to excite the loftiest admiration. In him every moral virtue shone brilliantly; he was tender, merciful, sympathising, intrepid; he possessed none of that sickly sensibility, which could weep over the tale of imaginary distress and recoil from the exhibition of real misery; for to the leprous he was a healer, to the distress-

ed a consoler, to the mourner a friend, to the endangered a deliverer.

Of every possible variety of amiableness of character, in him might be found a lively specimen. Now elevated in sentiment above the reach of finite minds—again condescending to become the intelligible instructor of the most illiterate; now surpassing the sagest of ancient philosophers, in his profound elucidation of ethical science—again familiarly explaining to his disciples the instructive parable. At one time we see him withstanding the doctors of Jewish law, and confounding by his superior wisdom the effrontery of impertinent literati; at another, receiving into his embrace little children to bless them.

Under every varying circumstance of life he exhibited something novel and instructive; evidencing a mind unparalleled in its resources, and nobly directed in its pursuits. He could assume the dignity of a public instructor, and in a moment conciliate the affections, by divesting himself of his awe-inspiring mien, and unbending his mind in the tenderest and most unreserved familiarity of social converse.

He could be terrible, and yet sympathizing; now sweeping the Temple of the profane and sacrilegious, and again bending his tearful eye over the grave of departed friends. With the glance of intuition he could grasp a subject in its full development, his judgment was formed, his stand taken; and when that stand was taken, like the adamant rock, amidst the lashing of the billows, he was immovable. Threatenings could not deter him, persecutions could not affect him; like the globe we inhabit, though racked with convulsions and earthquakes, his course was uniform and steady.

With a godlike disposition “he loved his enemies, blessed them that cursed him, and prayed for them who despitefully used and persecuted him;” ever inculcating that a spirit of retaliation should be renounced and execrated by the honest heart.

In his noble movements he exhibited a character, in which for ages the piercing scrutiny of friends and enemies has not been able to discover one reprehensible trait. None have been more frequently cited to the tribunal of rigid investigation—none have stood the test so honourably; as a just man, and holy and merciful and good, he has been adjudged and applauded.

In systems of ancient philosophy, which have received such unbounded applause, and which the temerity of impiety has frequently dared to bring into comparison with the gospel; we invariably discover sufficient imperfection in precept and principle to determine the fallibility and limited knowledge of their authors. The most noted of these luminaries, even when glowing in their meridian splendour, have exhibited a dark spot on

their disc; in the moral heavens of heathenism, they were phenomena, but their light was flickering and uncertain—portentous of their final extinguishment.

Without depreciating the merit of ancient sages, our opinion must be, that in the general principles of their philosophy they were erring; in their dogmas trite; in their morals grossly defective. Yet they are popular. Enveloped in the charm of antiquity, they have received the tender of profoundest veneration; their conceits have been commented into sage remark, their quaintness into wisdom, and even their impenetrable obscurities into beauties.

O God! avert thy threatening bolts from the daring fronts of impious moderns, who have compared these men with thy Son, and in the comparison have given them the pre-eminence.

But Jesus framed a system admirable in itself, and of which he was the greatest ornament. In his deportment he displayed firmness without austerity; mildness without effeminacy; heroism without insolence; knowledge without arrogance. The apathy of the stoic, the looseness of the epicurean, the shallowness of the mystic alike rejected; his philosophy was characterized by all that could elevate, ennoble, illumine.

In him we behold a sun, in magnitude and effulgency, scattering the mists from the moral horizon, and diffusing its light over a darkened world.

He assumed the high dignity of a teacher, and his example spoke as loud as his precept; the whole system of his instructions, was but the expression of his own blessed character—but the explanation of himself the glorious model.

In the dissemination of his doctrines, he was mild, persuasive, benevolent; he employed no false colouring to recommend his thoughts; but carrying with them the majesty of truth, they recommended themselves, in the artless language of feeling.

In the scheme of Mahomed we observe every thing congenial to the desires of a depraved heart; we see a sensual life on earth and a sensual heaven; yet this scheme was propagated only at the point of the sword. But in the system of Jesus, every precept is counter to our natural feelings and darling pursuits; yet whilst virtue has a voice, this system must be cherished.

All the voluptuousness and luxuriance of eastern imagery were necessary to recommend the Koran to the grovelling intellect of Musselmen, but the character and doctrines of Jesus are introduced with success to the most enlightened and discriminating by the mere unadorned narrations of illiterate fishermen.

In these narrations we see this wondrous personage, under every modification of character; now in retirement, again in

the glare of public life; his history excites every variety of feeling—we alternately weep and rejoice; are indignant and again sympathize; we venerate, love, and adore; we are carried forward irresistibly; our conclusion is, that the *subject of the biography is God under a mysterious exhibition of character.*

When we reflect on the object of his mission, we must be struck with astonishment and admiration. We behold the King of heaven clothed in our nature and sustaining its infirmities, in order to accomplish the most stupendous plan ever devised by Deity—the most heavenly, that was ever revealed to the fallen creature.

His object was the promulgation of truth, and if ever truth appeared in its native majesty, it was when it fell from his lips—when it was exhibited in his life. He promulged it, though aware that by so doing he was combating the powerful influence and the more powerful prejudices of a *nation*, and arousing the lion fierceness of an arrogant priesthood. Truth was wed to his soul, and to protect so darling a treasure, he waved his claims to popularity, and denied himself the comforts of even a shelter from the tempest. One grand object he had in view, that was to be attained at every personal hazard; from the pursuit he was not to be allured by the proffer of a crown, nor to be deterred by the threats of the populace.

Such steadiness of resolution brought upon him the execrations of a deluded multitude and the infliction of the most unheard-of sufferings. Yet in these sufferings he shone pre-eminent.

About the expiration of his ministry, dangers thickened, and every presage was given of an approaching tempest, which in its tremendous operation was to sweep excellence from the world, and involve in its perdition the very demons who had conjured up the storm. Here the character of Christ is represented in a new light.

Virtue loses much of its lustre in the sunshine of prosperity, but in the darkness of adversity its brilliancy is conspicuous. Jesus appeared in much magnificence of character, when he was saluted by the hosannas of an enthusiastic populace; but when the plaudits of the fickle multitude were exchanged for the repeated, blood-thirsty demands for his death, he appeared in his more than human character.

A bold and powerful combination is formed; their system is matured; it is supported by the wealth and talents of a *nation*—its object the death of Jesus. These sanguinary vampires, not glutted with the blood of prophets, thirsted for the blood of Immanuel. No scheme of bolder outlines was ever conceived, since the rebellion in heaven, when the prince of fallen angels kindled the flame of war and battled with Omnipotence.

In order to a complete execution of their design they insidiously entered the household of their victim, there to find an instrument for their bloody purposes. Such an one was found; a disciple who had reclined at the table of his Lord, traitorously conspired against the life of that Lord.

Oh! how overwhelming such a circumstance! The mighty spirit of a Cæsar in a similar situation was unable to sustain the convulsive shock. In the senate house he intrepidly resisted the threatening poignards of ferocious conspirators, until among their number he beheld one whom he loved, one whom he had honoured; when enveloping himself in his pierced mantle, he relinquished the contest and his life, with the affecting, heart-bursting complaint, "And thou too, *my son!*" Jesus saw a traitor among his avowed friends, yet still he was unmoved.

Night adds solemnity to sorrow. At the close of the day, when all nature was hushed in repose, we may hear the slow and solemn tread of a little mournful company, which had just risen from the table, at which they had all supped together for the last time. They bend their way to the Mount of Olives, they repair to the garden of Gethsemane, the master retires apart from the rest—but, oh, here language must fail to picture the scene!

From the nature of a covenant engagement, Christ, for the accomplishment of man's redemption, was to endure the consuming wrath of God, and the utmost malice of man. Under the accumulated weight of such misery, we see this wondrous personage, in the garden, bending to the earth! How overwhelming his sorrows! how fierce that agony of soul, which wrung the very blood from his temples! Had he been a mere man, the weight would have crushed him into annihilation, *but he was more than man.* There was a connected series of aggravating circumstances in his misery.

The malady of the sick man is soothed by the watchful cares of a friend, when the taper of midnight casts its sickly lustre around, and pain has driven sleep from his eyelids; but Jesus, when the solace of friendship would have been most grateful, agonized in body and spirit, at the dread hour of midnight, had not one to watch with him *one hour.* Still he is firm!

The darkness of the night is at length partially dissipated by the distant glimmering of torches; the crisis arrives, and Jesus is singled out as the object of pursuit, by a traitorous kiss.

His dignified aspect intimidates his murderers, and his short but kingly declaration "I am he," unnerves them and strikes them to the ground; the opportunity for escape is favourable; yet he spurns it, suffers them to recover, bind him like a culprit, and lead him away.

Do we not see the disciples, superior to any sense of personal

jeopardy, irritated at the indignity shown their Master, and making a noble effort for his rescue? Alas! he beholds them fleeing with the utmost trepidation and panic, and leaving him to his ill-boding captivity—and yet he is unmoved.

To the palace of Caiaphas and the judgment-hall of Pilate he is led, to bear the contumely of that multitude, that had on a preceding occasion hailed with hosannas his entrance into the Capitol. If ever there was a scene that was calculated to inspire the deepest veneration and awe, it was Jesus, in the midst of an armed soldiery, and more sanguinary judges, unmoved and stately in his demeanour, looking on his enemies with a calm yet dignified countenance.

He could endure the revilings and buffetings of the mob, but every circumstance was calculated to destroy the equanimity of his mind. He was in the midst of his foes; there was not one pitying look, one relenting visage; but a marked determination to effect their barbarous designs. At length he descries one, who, partially recovered from the shock at Gethsemane, had followed his Lord to the judgment. But here the only circumstance calculated to soothe, is made an instrument of his increased suffering; for he heard, even at that awful conjuncture he heard, Peter, the most magnanimous of his disciples, who had often boasted of his fidelity, denying his discipleship. His countenance is still unruffled, not even a flash of indignation passes over it; but with a half-complaining, half-pitying look, he melts that denying Peter into tears.

Deserted by his friends, he is left solitary and alone, to contend with his malicious foes! At length, through evidence extorted by bribery, he is condemned by prejudiced judges for an imaginary crime; he listens to the solemn sentence with undauntedness, endures the sharpest scourgings without a murmur, and bears his own cross to Calvary. Will they, oh will they crucify the Lord of glory? They are permitted. Jesus is suspended a spectacle for heaven and earth, inhumanly murdered under the most ignominious circumstances! Do angels weep? here they must have wept. The earth was convulsed, the planets veiled their lustre, the mid-day light was lost in the shades of night. A heathen philosopher, far removed from the scene of action, observing the appearances which an affrighted world presented, exclaimed, as if by a spirit of inspiration, "The God of nature suffers, or sympathizes with some noble sufferer!" Oh it was a scene of startling horror; yet in the very article of death this wondrous personage, turning his languid, dying eyes upon his murderers, then slowly lifting them towards heaven, with heavenly benignity uttered, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do:" as one observes,

“If Socrates died like a philosopher, Jesus Christ died like a God.”

The most lauded heroes wither under the grasp of death; their laurels are destined to fade on the tomb; their memorial may remain, but it is like the recollection of a long-past, severed dream; the grave is the boundary line of their triumphs, the termination of their mighty prowess. But this “chiefeft among ten thousand,” left an imperishable memorial, unclasped the fetters of death, and by an irresistible energy triumphed over the monarch of terrors; he arose, he arose gloriously triumphant, demonstrating that He who permitted himself to be slain, was too powerful a subject for the grave to control.

Such was the eventful life of that wonderful person, who was Mediator, who was God; by his death he consummated salvation, and now heaven is purchased for believers.

And this Jesus, my soul, is the author of thy hopes, the refuge of thy sorrows, the blest pavilion of thy safety, where thou mayest shelter from the tempest!

And is the religion of Jesus a delusion, as some would persuade? Oh, to it have I fled as the only soother of my griefs, as the only earnest of my immortality, and is it a delusion? Then am I content to be enshrouded in its thickest mantle; for if a delusion, 'tis still a rapturous one! W. M. E.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF REVELATION.

After St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans,* has passed a condemnatory sentence, on all that religion among the Jews, which consisted merely in external observances; and has also, put the stamp of divine approbation, on all that religion among the Gentiles, which embraced cordial obedience to God; he anticipates a plausible objection, which he knew, would not be overlooked by a Jewish antagonist. If—such an antagonist would reply—if our descent from Abraham; our circumcision in the flesh; and our exact conformity to the customs and traditions of Judaism; be no more available, than has been represented: and if the Gentiles may secure the divine favour, without such distinctions and conformity—“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?”†

The apostle's answer was prompt. What advantage? “Much;” said he, in his peculiarly pointed manner. It is not my intention to frustrate the immense kindness of God to His chosen people. The objection proceeds upon a misapprehen-

* ii. 26—29.

† Rom. iii. 1.