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FUNERAL SERMON,

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Hon. RICHARD STOCKTON, Esq.

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T R E N T O N:  
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I HAVE SEEN AN END OF ALL PERFECTION ;  
BUT THY COMMANDMENT IS EXCEEDING  
BROAD.

**T**HIS is a confession which all men will be constrained to make, when they come to be pressed by severe affliction ; or are drawing near to their great change. They will find reason to complain equally of the imperfection of their own righteousness, compared with the extent of the divine commandment, by which they shall be judged ; and of the imperfection of all human things, considered as a source of happiness, which is only to be found in true religion.

IN each of these views may the passage, which  
I have

I have read, be taken.—In the first place, it may be a reflection made by the sacred writer, after feeling in his own experience, and after seeing in the life of the greatest and the best of men, the imperfection of our righteousness, and the weakness of our virtue, when brought into comparison with the extent, and the holiness of the law of God. He had seen them *live*—he had seen them *die*—he had seen their utmost improvements in the divine life; in goodness of heart, and sanctity of manners: yet, O God! I am constrained to confess that thy most holy and perfect law extends far beyond whatever I have seen in them; or whatever I have been myself!

THE other light in which we may consider this passage, arises from taking the term *perfection* here, according to the common ideas of the world, to imply the prosperity and the splendors of an earthly fortune.

THE king of Israel had tasted, and, whenever he pleased, could command, all the enjoyments that the greatest and the happiest earthly condition can yield. He was a great prince, he  
was

was a fortunate captain, he was a powerful monarch, and was himself the principal ornament of a polished court. Surrounded, the greatest part of his days, with pleasure and with splendor—would not the world say, that this is the perfection of human felicity? He himself, seduced by prosperity, once judged with the world, and said that his *mountain stood strong*, and that *he should never be moved*. But afterwards affliction, concurring with divine grace, made him wiser; and he saith, “ I have seen an  
 “ end of all perfection.” I have tasted of all the enjoyments that the world affords; I have tried the utmost they can yield; and I find that they are easily exhausted, and in the end leave the unsatisfied soul to reach after a happiness which they do not contain. In their best state their pains, their disgusts, their disappointments, are even more than their pleasures. But, were they infinitely better than they are, they cannot endure, and they are so uncertain and transitory in their nature, that a man must be both foolish and wicked, to make them his *chief-good*. We daily see, in the afflictions, or the death of those who have been most fortunate and happy in the world, *the end of all human perfection*. “ But  
 “ thy

“thy commandment is exceeding broad.”\* That is, the *word of God*; or, *that system of religion, which is contained in the holy scriptures, is a treasure of unspeakable and inexhaustible happiness*; † in opposition to the world that is deceiving, uncertain, miserable, and full of *imperfection*. And, especially, in those numerous afflictions that are ever rising out of it, religion affords the only true and effectual consolation. It is not improbable that the holy writer made this reflection

\* The original may be translated—“is of unlimited extent.”

† That this is not a forced interpretation, becomes probable when we consider the meaning of these phrases *the law, the commandment, the testimonies of God, &c.* throughout this psalm, in which they are used indiscriminately for each other, and generally signify the whole *word of God*, or that system of *religion* which is contained in it, with all its hopes, its duties, and its promises. And several verses immediately preceding the text give great countenance to this view of the subject: “Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in my affliction.” v. 92d. “The wicked waited for me to destroy me; but I will consider thy testimonies.” v. 95th. And then, in the same strain, immediately adds, “I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.” In this view perhaps the meaning of the passage is not only, in general, that religion is the source of real and lasting happiness in opposition to the world that falsely pretends to be so; but, particularly, that in affliction, which most visibly shews the “end of its perfection” that is, its utter imperfection; and which therefore robs us of our happiness in it, religion affords the only proper and sufficient consolation.

reflection while he was yet fore from some great and recent calamity, and that he designs to signify, that although he is forsaken of his earthly comforts; yet he is sure of finding a perfect and unshaken happiness in the Word, and commandment of God, which is *exceeding broad*, and comprehends an infinite source of consolation, in the doctrines which it teaches; in the joys with which it fills the heart; and in its promises, and its eternal hopes.

I W I L L apply this subject to the present mournful occasion, and endeavour to answer the pious intentions of that good lady who suggested it, by shortly illustrating it in each of these views.

Ist. IF we take it in the former view, in which it is generally understood by divines, it contains one of the most important, and fundamental doctrines of the christian religion. For on the weakness of human virtue, and the imperfection of human obedience compared with the holiness, and the extent of the law of God, is founded the necessity of the Redeemer's sacrifice, and of the righteousness of the gospel. If  
man

man were perfect, or in this fallen state were capable of being so, Christ would have “ died in vain.” Wherefore a Saviour, if man be able, in his own person, to fulfil the precept of the divine law, or to answer the claims of divine justice? Must it not arise from an unworthy idea of the holiness and perfection of the nature, and of the commandment of God, that writers are sometimes heard to extol the efficacy and the merit of the imperfect obedience of an offending worm of dust? This sentiment, at once the offspring and the nurse, of self-flattery, can arise in the mind, only when God is out of view, or his glory is not understood. A true penitent, on the other hand, considers that “ the Heavens are not clean in his sight” --- “ how much less should man be pure, whose foundation is in the dust,” and who descends an impure stream from a corrupted source? One of the wisest and the best of men hath said, “ if thou Lord should’st mark iniquity, O Lord! who shall stand?” And what are *we*, my brethren, that *we* should boast a *merit* to which the most eminent *saints* have not dared to lay in a claim? A just sense of the power and majesty of the infinite Creator, such as may be derived

derived merely from contemplating the works  
 of nature, will overwhelm the mind, and teach  
 us that, as worms of the dust, we can demand  
 nothing from him on the score of *merit*; and,  
 that we can have no reasonable hope which is  
 not founded on his compassion, or, merely on  
 the general goodness of his nature, that is often  
 kind to the unthankful and unworthy. “ When  
 “ I consider the Heavens which thou hast or-  
 “ dained; the moon and the stars which thy  
 “ fingers have framed; Lord! what is man that  
 “ thou art mindful of him, or the son of man,  
 “ that thou visitest him?” But when we con-  
 sider *the holiness* and *the justice* of his nature, as  
 they are revealed to us by his word; and espe-  
 cially, as they are seen in the cross of Christ,  
 the great theatre of their exercise in this world—  
 when we consider the purity and the extent of  
 his *law*, which “ is exceeding broad;” and  
 with it compare our words and our actions,  
 the thoughts, the purposes, and the affections  
 of our hearts well examined and impartially  
 brought to the bar—what a contrast of Glory,  
 and of vileness! of holiness, and of sin! of un-  
 created perfection, and of created imperfection!  
 Under the proper and the deep impression of



these views, on what shall we found our hope of salvation? On his *equity* to our *virtues*, or on his *pity* for our *miseries*? On his *justice* to our *merits*, or on his *free* “*grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus?” On his *grace* without doubt—The humbled penitent, conscious of himself, and of his God, will think that he can never sufficiently condemn his own vileness and ingratitude; nor sufficiently exalt the obligations which he owes to his Creator’s mercy.—“I have seen an end of all perfection.” I have seen the utmost that human obedience can do—I have seen the goodness of man carried to its greatest height in this world; yet I see it mingled with many frailties and imperfections which arise more from the *corruption*, than the *weakness* of our nature—nay, its weakness springs from its corruption. “But thy commandment is exceeding broad.” It not only extends to all our actions, but it reacheth to every thought, to every purpose and principle of our conduct. It obligeth us, not only on certain marked and solemn occasions, but equally at every moment. Let a man lay his hand upon his heart; and can he appeal to that

law

law by which he shall be judged, and to that God who shall be his judge, that he is free from sin?—that he hath not offended in many actions?—that many actions, otherwise fair and good, are not condemned by their motives?—and that, at innumerable times, a vain, an idle, and a foolish heart hath not led him astray? The commandments of God are *exceeding broad*: and whoever examines them fairly, and with them compares himself; will find them so extensive in their obligation, and so holy in their precept, as to constrain him to seek, from the *grace* and the *Spirit* of God, the assistance necessary to obey them; and, after his best obedience, to seek, in the righteousness and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the proper merit and purchase of his salvation. My brethren, the obsequies in which we are engaged, ought to remind us how interesting these truths will be found to be in the hour of death. When our relation to this world is dissolving—when all that is terrible in death is before the soul, and eternity is opening upon our view; with what concern must we be filled about our future state? how anxious must we be to know on what foundation we may rest our eternal hopes? This change cannot be made  
with

with indifference—it is of too much consequence. And because so much depends upon it, the mind is not easily satisfied in her inquiries. She becomes quick-sighted to her own faults, and discovers innumerable errors, weaknesses, and sins, and innumerable imperfections in her best duties, which, during health and life, while the necessity of self-inquiry was less urgent, escaped without notice, or escaped with approbation.—As she approaches nearer to God, he appears more holy, and more just—as she approaches nearer to her last judgment, his law appears more pure, more extensive, and more awful. It is then that, weakest in herself, she best discerns the value of the great Redeemer; and that, most conscious of her own unworthiness, his righteousness appears to be the most precious. Believe it, my brethren, when the world is forsaking us, and our final destiny is going to be decided by the lips of eternal truth and justice; the only sure, and comfortable foundation upon which we can rest our hope of life, is the *Lord Jesus Christ*, whose dying merits have satisfied divine justice, and opened the gates of Heaven; and whose grace, sanctifying the heart, hath made us fit for its possession,

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on, and intitles us to its promise. It is a great confirmation of this truth that so many wise and good men have, in their last moments, added to it their dying testimony. I have confessed *their own unworthiness* and their confidence in *his grace*—have confessed that *they were nothing*, and that “*he is all in all ;*” and have “*desired to be found in him, not having on their own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*” This day adds another example to all the former, in a man, who, whatever was the fairness and uprightness of his life, which was tried in many situations; whatever was his wisdom and knowledge, for which he was long distinguished among you, yet, confessed that his goodness was not to be mentioned before that God who “*chargeth his angels with folly ;*” that it never could be considered as the purchase of those immortal hopes which the christian religion offers to our faith ; and that his expectation, in death, was in the *grace* of Jesus Christ his Lord. In such examples, we *see the end* of the utmost *perfection* of human virtue—How little is it to  
be

Be boasted in, if *they* have not ventured to boast in it ? And how *exceeding broad* are thy *commandments*, O God ! how extensive, and how *holy* is their obligation, if even the singular piety of thy dying saints is constrained to confess its own imperfection, and to repose its hope in the mercy and the merit of thy eternal Son !

II<sup>dly</sup>. I F we take this subject in the second view which has been mentioned, it implies, 1<sup>st</sup>. a reflection upon the vanity and the transitory nature of every source of earthly happiness ; and, 2<sup>dly</sup>, a confession that *revealed religion*, as it furnishes to a reasonable and immortal mind, the most real and durable pleasures ; so, particularly, it possesses those hopes and reflections which are best fitted to alleviate, and to console us in, the great and heavy afflictions of life.

1<sup>st</sup>. T H E vanity of the world, as a source of happiness, hath been observed, in all ages, by the moral writers. It was, indeed, impossible not to observe it, filled as it is with discontents, and wants, and sufferings. It is, however, a subject so trite, and so obvious to experience that

that it is much easier to say a great deal upon it, than to say any thing that is new, and therefore capable of striking the *thought*. But whatever is wanting in the subject, or in the speaker, is supplied by the occasion. That melancholy object before your eyes, those emblems of death, and the tears of so many afflicted mourners, how strongly, and how movingly do they preach this truth to the heart! Death is forever teaching lessons of the same kind to the world, in the different little circles into which mankind are divided; but he seldom proclaims it with such a loud and general voice as he does at present; because, there are few such men to die. In the death of the great, the fortunate, and the wise, we perceive the real value of worldly enjoyments in their most exalted state.

I AM not now to expose to you the low and grovelling nature of sensual pleasures; the eternal chagrins and disappointments that attend the pursuit of them; and the innumerable evils that render the world, in its best state, but an uneasy and a miserable portion. I shall confine myself to a few reflections on its uncertain and transitory

sitory nature, and on the afflictions that often result from thence, which such instances as the present, set in a strong, and an affecting light.

• IN the death of our coteremporaries we have a lively view of the short and precarious duration of earthly things ; because, it affects the sense. In the death, or the afflictions of those who have been successful in the world, we see the falsehood of the pretences by which it attaches mankind to it as their happiness ; because, if it cannot make its *favourites* happy, and secure to them their felicity, all *others* must be miserable. These are obvious reflections ; they are reflections that are a thousand times made, and forgotten—their familiarity makes them pass from the mind without fruit. But now, when they are verified and enlivened by such an example of the frailty of human life, and of human perfection, let us make them productive by remembering *how soon* those, who most forget these truths in the hour of fulness and enjoyment, will be constrained, by their own afflictions, or by the approach of the king of terrors, to say, “ I have seen an end of  
“ all perfection.” What though you rise to  
honour?

honour? what tho' you live in pleasure and abundance? It is enjoyed but a moment; and in a moment it perishes forever!—If such is the fate of the lords of the earth, and of those who once possessed its splendors and its power, how much more will it be so of the common croud of mankind? Look back thro' the history of past ages, and ask, where are the men who then filled the world with their fame? Where are the conquerors who subdued the earth? Where are the wise who spread the empire of science, wherever the conquerors spread the dominion of the sword? Where are the eloquent tongues who ruled, with so much glory, the republics of Athens and of Rome? Where are the great legislators who established and governed the nations of the ancient world? Nay, where are those nations themselves? And then ask, in how short a time shall our posterity, in like manner, search for *us* and *we* shall not be found? They shall tread over our silent and insensible dust, as we do over that of our ancestors! How doth it strip the false colouring from human greatness? What a picture doth it exhibit of the weakness and the transitory nature of mortal things, in their best condition! Behold, my brethren, be-



fore your eyes a most sensible and affecting picture of the same truth, in the remains of a man who hath been long among the foremost of his country for power, for wisdom, and for fortune ; whose eloquence only wanted a theatre like Athens, to have rivalled the Greek and the Roman fame ; and who, if what honours this young country can bestow, if many and great personal talents could save man from the grave, would not thus have been lamented here by you. Behold there “ the end of all perfection ! ” And let the view create within you the wise and pious resolution of seeking for your portion beyond the grave, where it will not be liable to the changes and the wastes of time !

FROM the transitory and uncertain condition of these mortal goods, many afflictions flow to mankind. Human life is *filled* with sorrow ; not only because the pleasures of the world fatigue and disgust the mind in their enjoyment, and disappoint it in their pursuit ; but still more, because it attacks us with many direct and immediate pains ; and its precariousness and mutability expose us, by being robbed of whatever we esteemed most *perfect*, and most dear  
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in it, to have the heart torn by more bitter and cruel griefs, than if we never had been happy. And how often in the present state, in which, if we consider ourselves independently of religion, we seem to be born just to be miserable and to die ; do our griefs follow one another in such quick and terrible succession, that we are still bleeding from the last, when the heart is opened by a new wound ? This day affords us an example of one of the severest miseries that are incident to mankind. That concern which is visible on the countenance of this assembly, shews how much you take part in the distresses of others, and, in them, are convinced of the vanity of human things. Those especially must be persuaded of this truth whose interest in the deceased, whom they most tenderly loved and honoured, renders their hearts more open to the impressions of grief, and to those lessons of religion which affliction conveys : and above the rest, the *partner* of all his joys and cares in life. Overwhelmed with a bereavment that can never be repaired to her with any thing that is human ; a mind enlightened by religion, assisted by a sensible heart, enables her *to see the end of all perfection*. A subject that hath been familiar

liar to her thoughts, during this long and painful illness, which she hath nursed and alleviated with an assiduity and tenderness which is truly a model of conjugal affection. It is probable that the recent experience of some severe calamity drew from the sacred writer this reflection upon the emptiness and vanity of the world. Being robbed of that treasure in it upon which he had chiefly set his heart, and his fairest hopes being blasted, he gave up his prospects from it ; and henceforth all its happiness with regard to him was ended—*he had seen an end of all perfection in it*—But in his God, and in religion, he found that consolation in his affliction which the world could not afford—for *thy commandment is exceeding broad*, and is an infinite source of comfort and of happiness, when all things else have failed.—An extreme calamity, and similar pious reflections to those which supported his mind, have suggested the subject of this discourse to that afflicted lady\* with whose grief we all sympathize. She looks at the world with other eyes than she did, not long since, when all things were prosperous and happy about her.

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\* This subject was chosen at the request of Mrs. Stockton.

An universal gloom overspreads the scenes of her former delight. She sees herself widowed, and deprived of what was the dearest to her in life ; and of what, indeed, gave the world its principal charms when she was most happy in it. Perhaps, she is ready to say “ I shall never more see good in the land of the living ! ” — “ I have seen an end of all perfection ” here ! — But this calamity, severe as it is, may be productive of a blessed fruit, if, separating her affections more from the uncertain and deceiving pleasures of the world, it attaches them solely to religion, and to the ineffable consolations that spring from the *commandments* of God.—And to his beloved children let me say that you cannot have a more true and expressive image of the vanity and imperfection of human things, than while you are weeping round that clay which is still dear to you. O let the precious and lifeless remains of a *father* persuade you, as his living tongue once did, to seek your portion, and to place your happiness, not in the world that is fading and unsubstantial, but in religion whose pleasures are perfect, and whose hopes are eternal. Make the same improvement of affliction which was made by this religious prince ; and  
 derive

derive your comforts under it from the same source. For,

II<sup>dly</sup> ; “ T H E commandment of God is exceeding broad,” and the consolation which it affords in adversity is great and inexhaustible.

I M I G H T take this part of my subject in a large and general view, and consider religion as offering to us a perfect and durable happiness, in opposition to the world which is vain and transitory and full of imperfection. But as religion stands here opposed to afflictions which, while they set the things of time in their true light, would overwhelm the mind unless she were supported by the reflections and the hopes that it yields to a true believer ; I shall at present, consider the *commandment of God* in this single view, as affording those considerations which are best able to alleviate affliction and to console us under it. And indeed under great and pressing calamities, like the present, religion affords the only certain and real consolation. Shall we look into ourselves for relief under them ? It is our own frailty that gives them  
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the power to afflict us—shall we look to the world? Its vanity and mutability make it the origin, instead of being the cure of our miseries—shall we look to philosophy and reason? Every topic that they contain hath been exhausted, for this purpose, by the ancient philosophers and masters of reason; but they have been found to be too uncertain in their determinations, and too doubtful in their hopes. It would be hard to suffer, if suffering were to be the only compensation for our patience. It would be hard, on these terms, in order to break the force of suffering, to wean our affections from the world, if religion offered no reward to balance the loss; since we find, by experience, that the loss of the world is able to create us so much misery. Patience and resignation must be founded on better views and hopes of things. These hopes and views are to be derived chiefly from the Word of God; and are such as may enable a christian, not only to bear adversity with submission, but even to mingle along with its bitter waters, many rich streams of comfort and delight.

I. IN the first place, we find in that belief  
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of God, and of his providence over the world, which is taught us by religion, a great alleviation of all our afflictions. The soul, conscious of his sovereign dominion, and of his right to dispose, as he pleaseth, of the things which he hath created, is easily reconciled to the severity of its lot: especially, when we know that this right will never be exercised, but with wisdom and with goodness. It falls down in his presence, and, absorbed in the grandeur of his infinite power, and in the unsearchable wisdom of his ways, complaint is dumb before him. *Right, and power, and glory* in the Ruler of the world, if these considerations do not absolutely conciliate the mind with sufferings, they make it revolt less against them, and even endure them with patience.

AND because we believe that his dominion is the government of perfect *reason*, altho' we may not always be able to discern the causes and the ends of his dispensations; yet, being assured that they are ordained by infinite wisdom, they come, on that account, not without their consolation to a good man whose heart is subdued to wisdom and reason by divine grace.

A H U M B L E christian will find, in the *justice* of the divine government, another alleviation of his afflictions. He is able to bear the exercise of its severe and awful rights, because, he believes it to be *just*. While he confesses his sins he is astonished at the divine patience ; and, in the ingenuousness of his heart, considering his sufferings as less than he deserves, he views them as a species of mercies ; because, they *might* have been *more severe*. The mind is so taken up in the *justice* of the punishment, that the *punishment itself* is in some measure forgotten. There is even a secret satisfaction in seeing the sins which we detest, and which prosperity, perhaps, had rendered dangerous to us, meet with some just correction ; as if, by suffering cheerfully, we ourselves chastised their folly, or could make any reparation to the injured glory of our Maker.

W E derive, likewise, a rich consolation from that view which religion exhibits of the goodness and mercy of the divine providence, even in its severest dispensations. When we believe that “ it is of the Lord’s mercies that we are “ not consumed”—how sweet is that paternal

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goodness



goodness which corrects us only for our own advantage ! The effusions of a grateful heart in some measure drown the sensations of grief ; and every calamity appears light that is short of the extremest sufferings. But the goodness of the providence of God in our afflictions extends much farther. They are not always to be viewed as punishments ; they are often the effects of his mercy. For “ to those who love “ God, who are the called according to his purpose,” that is, to every sincere christian, “ all “ things shall work together for their good.” In all that they enjoy or suffer, he intends ultimately their interest and their happiness. If adversity overtakes them in their course, it is because adversity, at that time, is better adapted than prosperity to the *general end* of their happiness. For such is human nature, that it is obliged to be led through the road of suffering to its perfection and glory. We are not to judge, like the friends of Job, that he hath abandoned those on whom his providence seems to frown. Often it is the symptom of being the most favoured and the most beloved. “ God,” like an indulgent parent “ chastiseth,” for their benefit “ every son whom he receiveth.” And  
tho’

tho' "no affliction, for the present, be joyous but  
 "grievous ; yet afterwards it worketh the peace-  
 "able fruits of repentance." On some occasi-  
 ons, it may not be without a relation even to  
 our temporal interests ; but, its principal tenden-  
 cy evidently is to promote the interests that are  
 future and eternal. And since the great desti-  
 nation of our being lies beyond this life, is it  
 not a fruit of the divine goodness to wean us  
 from our attachments to present things, which  
 too much loved, are dangerous temptations, by  
 embittering them to our taste ?—Shall we say  
 that the means are severe ? Surely not—for  
 where the object is so important as our salvati-  
 on—where the danger of losing it is so great ;  
 and that danger chiefly arises from a prosperous  
 world smiling on indulged appetite, those means  
 are the most gracious, although they may seem  
 harsh, that most effectually discover to us the  
 vanity of every pleasure, and of every hope, that  
 is not founded on religion. When therefore,  
 we consider the end which God hath in view in  
 the afflictions of his children—or although we  
 cannot always immediately discern this end in  
 our own case ; yet, if we believe in his merci-  
 ful providence, and in the gracious promise of  
 his

his *word*, which assures us that these temporary ills are stored with a secret, a future, and a glorious blessing ; what alacrity will it not give a real christian in bearing all his Father's will ? He is equally gracious whether he sends prosperity or suffering ; for “ all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the “ world, or life, or death, or things present, “ or things to come, all are yours, and you are “ Christ's, and Christ is God's.”—Here let the pious mourners, who weep not in rebellion, but who, while they feel all that the tenderest sensibility can feel, submit to the will of Heaven, behold in their possession the *sum of all felicity*, in the room of whatever they have lost on Earth. In this view, patience is not the whole that is required of you, you ought rather to rejoice in affliction, since, to the *deceased*, death is no evil, and to *you* the end of sorrow is life and happiness. It leads by secret and unknown ways, in the providence of God, to a rich and glorious reward.

2. IN the next place, religion possesseth many direct and immediate comforts to assuage the griefs of those who believe in the *grace of God*.

T H E

THE grandeur of divine things is fitted to occupy, and to inflame the mind, and their beauty to ravish and transport it, more than all that is grand or beautiful upon earth. And just as we see, in common experience, great pleasures obliterate the sense of smaller pains ; so the true believer, in the contemplation and the enjoyment of these, perceives a sweetness, and a fund of unspeakable joy that far overbalances the afflictions which arise from the world. The “ beauty of holiness,” the conscious pleasure of doing our duty, the contemplation of the divine glory, the sense of the Redeemer’s love, and the sweetness and satisfaction that attend the exercise of the same heavenly affection in our own breast, all contribute to remove our griefs, or to mingle with them a glory, and a sacred pleasure ; like the sun that dissipates the vapours of the clouds, or gilds their darkness with brightness and with beauty. The pleasures of religion, in the estimation of a christian, are as much superior to the pleasures and the pains of sense, as the one exceeds the other in the grandeur and importance of its objects. What a delightful resource hath he, then, in his God and in his duty, against all the evils  
that

that can befall him in life ? A delight that doth not grow merely from considering them as objects of contemplation without him. No, he *feels* their impressions in his heart, he *tastes* their sweetness, he possesses an *interest* in them, he rejoices in them as his *portion* and *inheritance*. Religion, as it is a delightful subject of thought and meditation only, affords a great relief in all the sorrows that can affect the mind ; but when we consider our *interest* and *portion* in the “ favour ” of God “ which is life,” and in the love and the atonement of the great Redeemer which gives all the blessings of salvation to our possession ; it fills the heart and such a solid joy, and is such a compensation for all that we can suffer or lose in this world, that it changes the nature of affliction, and renders it incapable of destroying the peace and happiness of the soul. Doth it please God to take away our health, and to lay us upon a bed of pain ? How little shall we repine at this, if “ He is the strength “ of our heart, and our portion forever ? ” Doth he threaten, in his providence, to take away our life ? What an infinite comfort is it to have, in “ his favour ” and “ his loving-kindness,” that life which is liable to none of the changes  
of

of time, and is beyond the power of the king of terrors ? Doth he frown upon our earthly fortune and blast the flattering prospects which we had from the world ? Not to mention that we have no right to form such expectations from the world as are capable of rendering us unhappy by their disappointment, what are these small and momentary losses compared with an interest “ in the inheritance of the saints in light ? ” Hath he taken from *you who mourn* the dearest part of yourselves ? a beloved husband ? an indulgent parent ? But is not *he* who hath given, and at his pleasure hath taken, these dear relations, in the room of all ? A protector, a guardian, a husband of the widow, a father of the fatherless, an unspeakable consolation---and to say all in one word—a God ?

IN affliction, the exercise of a pious temper, and of the duties of religion, affords a sweet employment to the mind that greatly mitigates its grief—The very spirit of submission, and the act of resignation to the divine will, singly, is a great softening of sorrow—The meditations of God and of divine things, and the hope of our interest and portion in them, as they bring a  
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consolation to the heart unequalled by whatever this world contains, so they support and refresh the mind in calamity, and take away whatever is most painful from our afflictions. Afflictions, indeed, seem peculiarly to dispose the mind to taste the *highest* comforts that religion affords. They make it tender, and they make it humble; qualities the most favourable to religious joy—Awakened and agitated by distress, it is more susceptible of impression—and cut off from its worldly pleasures, it is left to attach itself entirely to the higher pleasures of religion. Thus do our afflictions often aid religion in their own cure.

3. IN the last place, the hope of immortality affords a rich and unspeakable consolation to a real christian in all the griefs that can touch the mind. Without this hope, indeed, life itself would be our misery, by the continual fears of losing it forever. On the other hand, suffering will be borne with alacrity, if we believe that “our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” What are these momentary pains, if we are continually expecting

ing when they shall be swallowed up in immortality and life? The glory and the nearness of this hope so fills and occupies the mind that their evils have not time to make a deep impression, or their impressions only serve to enliven our faith, and to inflame our desires of the happiness of Heaven in which all the troubles of life shall cease; **and** which, at present, consoles us with its hopes in enduring them. How easily are infirmity and disease to be borne, if we consider them as shortening our passage to immortal rest? What a consolation is it in the death of our dearest friends, if we “sorrow not as those who have no hope”—if we believe that they still live with Christ, and that God hath separated them from us, only in a little time to unite us again forever? How will it enable us to look Death himself in the face with confidence, if we believe that he is about to join us to all that was most dear to us upon earth? And that the terrors of a short conflict shall bring us “to Mount Zion, and to the heavenly Jerusalem the city of the living God, to an innumerable company of Angels, to the general assembly of the church of the first-born who are written in Heaven, to God the judge of  
E “ all,



“ all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,  
 “ and to Jesus the Mediator of the new-cove-  
 “ nant ?” Observe how this blessed hope en-  
 couraged the apostle to expect his change—  
 “ For we know that if our earthly house of this  
 “ tabernacle were dissolved, we have a build-  
 “ ing of God, an house not made with hands  
 “ eternal in the Heavens. For we that are in  
 “ this tabernacle do groan being burdened ; not  
 “ for that we would be unclothed, but clothed  
 “ upon, that mortality might be swallowed up  
 “ of life.” Death must have been terrible to  
 those who had no hope, or only a doubtful one,  
 of a future life ; and all the sorrows of the pre-  
 sent, must have been doubled. Death must be  
 still more terrible to those who, believing a  
 future state, have no hope of happiness there.  
 But the lively faith, and the comfortable expec-  
 tation of those abodes of felicity where every  
 tear shall be wiped from every eye, hath a hap-  
 py influence to wipe out from the mind all the  
 sorrows that can afflict a real christian. And  
 with regard to our friends who sleep in the  
 Lord, it administers a consolation to our faith  
 which nothing but the christian religion can  
 yield. Would you wish them back from those  
 con-

consummate pleasures that employ their perfect spirits—No—rather pray that *you* may be joined with *them* in their eternal habitations of peace and love. Rather imitate their “faith and their “patience,” that at length you may come, with them, “to inherit the promises.”—

C H I L D R E N of his love! be this especially your prayer and your resolution! Now, while your hearts, softened by the impressions of a lively grief, feel all the importance of religion, let it take full possession of them, that it may fit you to follow your departed parent. And, as the counsels of no other person can have so much weight with you as his, you will remember, and surely you can never forget it, that to this purpose he instructed you, and entreated you, and prayed for you on his dying bed. And this counsel he hath left with you as his first and richest legacy in his last testament.\*

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\* An extract from the beginning of Mr. Stockton's *will*.

“As my children will have frequent occasion of perusing this instrument, and may probably be particularly impressed with the last words of their *father*; I think it proper ~~he~~ not only to subscribe to the entire belief of the great ~~and~~ leading doctrines of the christian religion, such as, the ~~be~~ing of a God, the universal defection and depravity of human nature, the divinity of the *person*, and the complete-

Can religion preach to you in a more solemn and interesting manner? And to you madam! who suffer the most upon this occasion, your piety will have already suggested and improved every subject of consolation that I have mentioned. I would here just add my voice to the testimony of your own experience, that in *religion*, even under ~~the~~ greatest trials of life, you will find the sweetest and the most delightful employment for your thoughts, and for your heart, till you arrive at the possession of its promised and future rewards. God hath deprived your heart of its richest source of earthly happiness, only that you may entirely devote it to him. And although you have “seen an end of  
“all perfection,” I doubt not but you will always find that “the commandment of God is  
“exceeding broad,” not only as a law of holiness, but as a source of infinite and eternal consolations.

M Y

ness of the redemption purchased by the *Blessed Saviour*; the necessity of the operations of the divine spirit, of divine faith accompanied with an habitual virtuous life, and the universality of the divine providence; but also in the bowels of a father's affection to exhort and charge them to remember, that “the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.”

M Y brethren, so much has been said of the character of the deceased, in the body of this discourse, that the less shall be said at present— And I have need to say the less, because, in his private life he was perfectly known to you ; as in his publick life he was known to all America, for the high trusts that he sustained, and for his abilities in executing them. It were to be wished, indeed, that this honour had been paid to his memory, not by one who is only just beginning to enter upon the world, but by a man whose established reputation in the republick of letters would have given dignity to this solemnity, and authority to whatever he should say. † But I am persuaded that you will forgive me, if in the execution of a task that hath devolved upon me by accident, I fail to do justice to his character ; or fail to do it in that manner in which a man of science, and an eloquent orator ought to be celebrated.

IT was one of his earliest honours to have been a son of this College, and it was one of the first honours of this College to have given  
 birth

† Dr. Witherspoon was attending his duty in Congress at the time of Mr. Stockton's death.

birth to such a son.—After having adorned the place of his education by his talents, he soon rose to the board of its trustees, and hath, ever since, been one of its most distinguished patrons.

Y O U N G gentlemen !\*—Another of the fathers of learning and of eloquence is gone—He went before you in the same path in which you are now treading, and hath since, long presided over, and helped to confirm the footsteps of those who were here labouring up the hill of science and of virtue. While you feel and deplore his loss as a guardian of your studies, and as a model upon which you might form yourselves for publick life—let the memory of what he *was* excite you to emulate his fame—let the sight of what he *is*, teach you that every thing human is marked with imperfection ; and that in religion alone you will find true honour and a real and durable happiness, when the eclat of talents and distinctions have ceased to command the admiration of the world.

A T the bar he practised for many years  
with

\* The Students of the College.

with unrivalled reputation and success. Strictly upright in his profession, he scorned to defend a cause that he knew to be unjust. A friend to peace and to the happiness of mankind, he has often with great pains and attention reconciled contending parties, while he might fairly, by the rules of his profession, have drawn from their litigation no inconsiderable profit to himself—Compassionate to the injured and distressed, he hath often protected the poor and helpless widow unrighteously robbed of her dower; hath heard her with patience when many wealthier clients were waiting; and hath zealously promoted her interest without the prospect of reward, unless he could prevail to have right done to her, and to provide for her an easy competence for the rest of her days.

E A R L Y in his life, his merits recommended him to his prince and to his country, under the late constitution, who called him to the first honours and trusts of government. In council he was wise and firm, but always prudent and moderate. Of this he gave a publick and conspicuous instance, almost under your own observation, when a dangerous insurrection, in a neighbouring

bouring county,\* had driven the attorneys from the bar, and seemed to set the laws at defiance. While all men were divided betwixt rash or timid counsels, he only with wisdom and firmness seized the prudent mean, appeased the rioters, punished the ringleaders, and restored the laws to their regular course.

THE office of a judge of the province was never filled with more integrity and learning than it was by him, for several years before the *revolution*. Since that period he hath represented New-Jersey with dignity in the Congress of the *United States*. But a declining health and a constitution worn out with application and with service obliged him, shortly after, to retire from the line of publick duty, and hath at length dismissed him from the world.

IN his private life, he was easy and graceful in his manners; in his conversation affable and entertaining, and master of a smooth and elegant style even in his ordinary discourse.—As a man of letters, he possessed a superior genius highly cultivated by long and assiduous application.

\* Monmouth county in the year 1769.

cation. His researches into the principles of morals and religion were deep and accurate, and his knowledge of the laws of his country extensive and profound—He was well acquainted with all the branches of polite learning ; but he was particularly admired for a flowing and persuasive eloquence by which he long governed in the courts of justice.

As a christian, you know that, many years a member of this Church, he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ—Nor could the ridicule of licentious wits, nor the example of vice in power, tempt him to disguise the profession of it, or to decline from the practice of its *virtues*. He was, however, liberal in his religious principles. Sensible, as became a philosopher, of the rights of private judgment, and of the difference in opinion that must necessarily arise from the variety of human intellects ; he was candid, as became a christian, to those who differed from him, where he observed their practice marked with virtue and piety.\* But if we follow him

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\* I cannot better illustrate this part of his character than by producing an extract relative to it, from among the advice which he left to his children. After recommending to



to the last scene of his life, and consider him under that severe and tedious disorder which put a period to it ; *there*, the sincerity of his piety, and the force of religion to support the mind in the most terrible conflicts, was chiefly visible. For nearly two years, he bore, with the utmost constancy and patience, a disorder that makes us tremble only to think of it. With most exquisite pain it preyed upon him, till it had eaten its way into the passages by which life is sustained:‡ yet in the midst of as much as human nature could endure, he always discovered a submission to the will of Heaven, and a resignation to his fate that could only flow from the

them an early attention to religion, he adds—" As Almighty God has not been pleased in the Holy Scriptures, to prescribe any *precise* mode in which he is to be publicly worshipped, all contention about it generally arises from want of knowledge, or want of virtue. I have no particular advice to leave with my children upon this subject, save only that they deliberately and conscientiously, in the beginning of life, determine for themselves with which denomination of christians they can most devoutly worship God ; and that, after such determination, they stately adhere to that denomination, without being given to change, and without contending against, or judging others who may think or act differently in a matter so immaterial to substantial virtue and piety."

‡ The disorder of which Mr. Stockton died was a cancer in the neck, and for many months the pain was so extreme that he could not enjoy the smallest repose but by the help of anodyne medicines.

the expectation of a better life.—Shall I descend to his domestick virtues? The tears, the afflictions of his family, of his beloved children, and of a *spouse* inconsolable by all other considerations, except those of religion, witness them. And I am assured that the tender ideas of husband and of father, which he hath impressed upon their hearts, will never be effaced.

Such was the man, my brethren, whose remains now lie before us to teach us the most interesting lessons that mortals have to learn—the vanity of human things—the importance of eternity—the holiness of the divine law—the value of religion—the certain and the rapid approach of death. May the Good Spirit of God give these truths their proper energy and impression upon our hearts?—Remember, I beseech you, that ~~that~~ rigid, insensible, and lifeless clay is but a picture of what we ourselves shall shortly be—And that the immortal mind, which lately inhabited it, is gone but a little before our own, to her last account, and her unchangeable destiny.—Let us be so convinced of the solemnity of dying, of the neighbourhood of death, and of the perfection of that law  
by

by which we shall then be judged, that we may always stand prepared, in the righteousness of the great Redeemer, waiting till our change come!—Let us be so persuaded of the vanity of human things, that we may not inordinately set our affections upon goods that will certainly deceive them; but, that we may seek our happiness in the “commandment of God,” which will be our joy in prosperity, our consolation in sorrow, and, when the joys and sorrows of time are ceased, our *eternal life*.—For this purpose, let us heartily unite our prayers to Almighty God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! AMEN!

THE END.

*Mrs. Stockton, whose poetical talents are generally known, and, whatever I may say in their favour, will be better judged of by the following little pieces of composition, has favoured us with a short elegy to the memory of her husband, and a sudden production, the effusion of her heart while watching by his bed, which, I am persuaded, the publick will not be displeased to see at the end of his funeral sermon.*

**W**HY does the sun in usual splendor rise  
To pain, with hated light, my aching eyes?

Let sable clouds inshroud his shining face,  
And murmuring winds re-echo my distress;  
Be Nature's beauty with sad glooms o'erspread,  
To mourn my *Lucius* number'd with the dead.

Mute is that *tongue* which listening senates charm'd,  
Cold is that *breast* which every virtue warm'd.  
Drop fast my tears, and mitigate my woe;  
Unlock your springs, and never cease to flow:  
For worth like his demands this heart-felt grief,  
And drops like these can only yield relief.

O! greatly honour'd in the lists of fame!  
He dignified the judge's, statesman's name!  
How ably he discharg'd each publick trust,  
In counsel firm, in executing just,  
Can best be utter'd by his country's voice,  
Whose approbation justified their choice.\*

\* That is, their approbation of the manner in which he executed his trust, justified their choice, which raised him to it.

And now their grateful tears shed round his hearth,  
A nobler tribute yield, than loftiest verse.

But ah ! lamented shade ! thy private life,  
(Thy weeping children, thy afflicted wife  
Can testify) was mark'd with every grace  
That e'er illumin'd or adorn'd the place  
Of *husband, father, brother, master, friend,*  
And swell those sorrows now which ne'er shall end.

Can we forget how patiently he bore  
The various conflicts of *the trying hour* ;  
While *meekness, faith, and piety* refin'd,  
And steadfast *hope* rais'd his exalted mind  
Above the sufferings of this mortal state,  
And help'd his soul in smiles to meet her fate ?  
O fatal hour ! severely felt by me—  
The last of earthly joy my eyes shall see !  
*The friend, the lover, every tender name*  
Torn from my heart, the deepest anguish claim.  
*Drop fast my tears, and mitigate my woe ;*  
*Unlock your springs, and never cease to flow :*  
*For worth like his demands this heart-felt grief ;*  
*And drops like these can only yield relief.*  
To me in vain shall chearful spring return,  
And tuneful birds salute the purple morn.  
Autumn in vain present me all her stores ;  
Or summer court me with her fragrant bowers—  
Those fragrant bowers were planted by his hand !  
And now neglected and unprun'd must stand.

Ye stately elms and lofty cedars mourn !  
Slow through your avenues you saw him borne,  
The friend who rear'd you, never to return. }

Ye muses ! whom he lov'd and cherish'd too,  
 Bring from your groves the cypress and the yew,  
 Deck, with unfading wreaths, his sacred tomb,  
 And scatter roses of immortal bloom.

Goddeſs of ſorrow ! tune each mournful air ;  
 Let all things pay the tributary tear ;  
*For worth like his demands this heart-felt grief,  
 And tears alone can yield a ſad relief.*

*Morven, March 9th, 1781.*

*A ſudden production of Mrs. Stockton's in one of  
 thoſe many anxious nights in which ſhe watch-  
 ed with Mr. Stockton in his laſt illneſs.*

I.

**S**LEEP, balmy ſleep, has clos'd the eyes of all  
 But me ! ah me ! no reſpite can I gain ;  
 Tho' darkneſs reigns o'er the terrestrial ball,  
 Not one ſoft ſlumber cheats this vital pain.

II.

All day in ſecret ſighs I've pour'd my ſoul,  
 My downy pillow, us'd to ſcenes of grief,  
 Beholds me now in floods of ſorrow roll,  
 Without the power to yield his pains relief :

III.

While through the ſilence of this gloomy night,  
 My aching heart reverb'rates every groan ;  
 And watching by that glimmering taper's light,  
 I make each ſigh, each mortal pang my own.

IV.

## IV.

But why should I implore sleep's friendly aid ?  
 O'er me her poppies shed no ease impart ;  
 But dreams of dear *departing joys* invade,  
 And rack with fears my sad prophetick heart.

## V.

But vain is prophesy when death's approach,  
 Thro' years of pain, has sap'd a *dearer* life,  
 And makes me, coward like, myself reproach,  
 That e're I knew the tender name of wife.

## VI.

Oh ! could I take the fate to him assign'd !  
 And leave the helpless family their head !  
 How pleas'd, how peaceful, to my lot resign'd,  
 I'd quit the nurse's station for the bed.

## VII.

O death ! thou canker-worm of human joy !  
 Thou cruel foe to sweet domestick peace !  
 He soon shall come, who shall thy shafts destroy,  
 And cause thy dreadful ravages to cease. •

## VIII.

Yes, the Redeemer comes to wipe the tears,  
 The briny tears, from every weeping eye.  
 And death and sin, and doubts, and gloomy fears,  
 Shall all be lost in endless victory.

