Nos. IV, V.

Christian Race.

Heb: 12: 1, 2. Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, & the sin that doth so easily beset us, & let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author & Finisher of our faith.

1822.

Oct. 13. A.M. Britain, (Berlin,) Con.

Nov. 24. A.M. Methuen. Mass.

1823

Jan. 19. 2. South Reading. Mass.

Feb. 23. P.M. Andover, Chapel.

Mar. 2. A.M. Wilmington Mass.

Oct. 12 A.M. New Haven, North. Con.

" 26 P.M. Southington Con.

Dec. 7 A.M. Andover, N.P. Mass.

1824

Feb. 22. A.M. Newby Port, Mc Dinnick

June 27 A & P.M. Charlestown, Mass. Mr Sing.

Oct 10. A & P.M. Kensington, (Berlin) Con.

Dec 5 P.M. Andover S.P. Mass.

1825

Aug. 14 A & P.M. Dedham, Mr Burgess.

Oct 23. A.M. Wolcott Conn.

The epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to the converts to Chy from among the Jews. These persons, on acct of their belief in the divine mission of our Ld J. C., had been called "to endure a great fight of afflictions;" (Heb. 10:32) - and had been driven from Jerusalem & the region round about, & dispersed among various nations. It is recorded (Acts 8:1) that, after the barbarous murder of the holy Stephen, "there was a great "persecution against the Church which was at Jerusa-"lem, & they were all scattered abroad throughout "the regions of Judea & Samaria, except the Ap.s" "And they who were thus scattered abroad," it is further stated (Acts 11:19) upon the persecution that arose "about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, & Cyprus, "and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews "only." It was to ~~these persons~~, individually, like these, who were ~~both~~ converts from Judaism, or to some church of these, which cannot now ~~made among these brethren, whoever they might be found~~, with certainty be determined, that the Ap. Paul addressed this letter.

These persons had been educated in all the ceremonies, & observances of the law of Moses; - they had looked upon themselves & upon their nation, as a peculiar people, to whom alone the true God had of old revealed himself; - & now, when the long expected Messiah

had come, they thought that he also had come for them alone; — that he had come, not to supersede the worship of their fathers, but to give it his sanction, & establish it forever. To men like these, who had been brought up in the constant performance of minute & tedious ceremonies, — who had been taught to believe these ceremonies essential, ~~[illegible]~~ both in themselves, & as forming a wall of separation (Eph. 2:14) between the Jewish people & every other nation; — to such men, the simple requisitions of Chy. were not enough. It was the religion of the heart, while they could have no conception of a faith divested of outward ~~observances~~ rites. They therefore wished to fasten on the new, or rather, as they thought, the additional religion which they had embraced, some of the most important ~~rites~~ observances of that in which they were born.

This propensity in the Jewish Converts had ever been a ~~[illegible]~~ cause of trouble to the Ch. & to the Apts. It seemed to be the perpetual & fertile source of controversy, wherever the gospel was made known. In the Ch. at Antioch especially, the dispute & dissension respecting circumcision had run so high, that Paul & Barnabas were despatched on a solemn embassy to Jerusalem, to lay the case before the assembled Apts.

But, although after discussion & mature deliberation, the Apts. decided unanimously against the introduction of the rite; — yet this solemn decision, emanating from the highest earthly authority, which acted too under the immediate influence of the Spt of God, was not sufficient to overcome the deeply rooted prejudices of Jewish believers. They continued to act in accordance with the same propensity, & to enforce even on Gentile converts, the observances of their ancient worship. In consequence of this fact, we afterwards find St. Paul addressing the Ch. of the Galatians in a strain of censure, for yielding to these unauthorized requisitions, & consenting to live after the manner of the Jews. "Stand fast," says he to them, "in the liberty "wherewith Ch. has made us free: behold, I, Paul, say "unto you, that if ye be circumcised, C. shall profit you "nothing." (Gal: 5: 1, 2.)

It was the natural, & indeed the necessary consequence of these unholy prejudices & propensities, to occasion great hindrance to the Jewish Converts in their Ch. course. To eradicate these errors, & to implant & cherish better principles, became therefore a great & favorite object with the Ap. Paul. For this end, he wrote an epistle expressly to these Hebrews; and boldly tells them: "Ye are dull of hearing; for when for

"the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one "teach you again, which be the first principles of the "oracles of God: and are become such as have need of "milk, & not of strong meat." (Heb. 5: 12, 13) He then goes on to urge ~~them to rest~~ the superiority of Christ's priesthood, in which that of Aaron, its forerunner & type was merged & lost; — & to exhort them to a closer walk with God, & a firm confidence in his promises. — like the long series of holy men, whom he enumerates, who all lived by faith, & who are now in the enjoyment of the promised blessedness. "wherefore", says he, "seeing we also are compassed about with so great a "cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, & "the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run "with patience the race that is set before us, looking "unto Jesus, the Author & Finisher of our faith."

In discussing from this text we will consider the following particulars.

I. The nature of the race that is set before all Chr.

II. How they are directed to run.

III. The motives by which the Ap. would persuade them to run in the manner directed.

I. What is the nature of the race which is set before all Chr.?

By the term race, the Ap. here evidently intends the

whole life of the Chr, from the moment when he is born into the kingdom of Christ, to the hour when death is swallowed up in victory. This Chr life is represented in the Scr under various figures. In our text, & in a few other passages, it is a race, — in which those who run must exert every muscle & strain every nerve, in order to reach the goal & win the prize. In other places, it is a state of personal combat: — indeed the most frequent & favorite figure by which the Chr course is denoted, especially in the writings of St. Paul, is a state of war; — because this state naturally calls forth the highest & most vigorous exercise of all the powers both of body & of mind. The object of all these figures & figurative representations undoubtedly is, to impress upon the mind of the follower of Ch. the necessity of constant & strenuous exertion; — that he is never to sit down in sloth & consider his warfare as accomplished; but is always to be advancing in knowledge & grace; — & always to be subduing one appetite & passion after another; — & overcoming one snare & temptation after another; — & repenting & praying for the forgiveness of one sin after another; — & always to be "forgetting those things which are "behind, & reaching forth unto those which are before, "& pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high

"calling of God in C. J." (Phil. 3:13,14). Such is the character of the true Ch^n; — such were the character & feelings of St Paul himself: — who declares that even he was not already perfect, (Phil. 3:12) — although his hope was firm. "I, therefore, so run," says he, "not as uncertainly; so fight "I, not as one ~~that~~ beateth the air; but I keep under "my body, & bring it unto subjection; lest that by any means "when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast "away. (1 Cor. 9: 26, 27).

The race which the earliest Ch^n were called to run, brought them in contact with obstacles, ~~facing~~ and exposed them to dangers ~~from~~ which we, my bn, are happily exempt. Their lot was persecution. "Without were fightings & within were fears." (2 Cor. 7:5) They were so accustomed to look death in the face, ~~that they~~ became familiar with his presence. That portion of the history of the Church, which is contained in the N.T. closes before the severer persecutions had taken place: but the martyrdom of Stephen, & the violent death of James, were but the beginning of sorrows. Later history informs us, that of all the Ap^s, it was the lot of St. John alone to die a natural death. Of the sufferings which St. Paul endured, he has himself given us an ~~outline~~ enumeration. "Are they ministers of C.?" says he, "I am more: in labors more abundant; in

"stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in "deaths oft. Of the Jews five times rec^d I forty stripes "save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was "I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night & a day "I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils "of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own "countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the "city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, "in perils among false brethren; in weariness, & pain-"fulness, in watchings often; in hunger & thirst, in fas-"tings often, in cold & nakedness. (2 Cor. 11: 23-27) All these sorrows Paul endured, & at last, laid down his life in behalf of the gospel which he had preached. The Ap^s, it is true, as being more active, & more prominent members of the new & despised sect, which the Imperial power of Rome had determined to extirpate, were exposed to the earliest & heaviest vengeance of their adversaries. But the fury which was now enkindled did not limit its outrages to individuals who were active & influential: it ~~spared~~ regarded neither age, nor sex, nor character, nor rank; it burned against the very name of Ch^n, & swept over their dwellings, with such terrible desolation, that the description which St. Paul has given of the sufferings of former Jewish martyrs, may be transferred literally to the earliest Ch^ns. "They had trial

"of cruel mockings & scourgings;—yea moreover of bonds
"& imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder,
"were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered
"about in sheepskins & goatskins;—being destitute, afflic-
"ted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:)—
"they wandered in deserts & in mountains, & in dens, & in caves
"of the earth." (Heb. 11: 36–38.)

Thanks be to God, that to us these things are un-known, except on the pages of history. To us, indeed, "the "lines have fallen in pleasant places, & we have a goodly "heritage." (Ps. 16: 6) We are permitted "to sit every man "under his own vine, & under his own fig-tree, & there is "none to make us afraid." (Mic. 4: 4) If, at times, there may be fears within, there are no fightings without. But, my bn, in the midst of this temporal security, is the race that is set before us less arduous? — or are we less exposed to fail in the prize which we should all be struggling to win? Is it not an established truth, that in the midst of the fiercest & most savage persecution, the chn character has broken forth & shone with the most radiant splendor? — and that in the midst of safety & ease to the body, the soul of the chn has often resigned itself to sleep, & instead of advancing in its course, has at length found itself receding from the goal? Yes, my bn, the world, when it puts on

the mask of friendship, & spreads before you its allurements, & holds out to you its invitations, is ten thousand times more destructive to your immortal welfare, than when it arms itself with its terrors, & strives to force you to a compliance with its terms. In the one case, you are put upon your guard, & you trust in your God; — in the other, you are not alarmed, & you trust in yourselves: — & the inevitable consequence must be, that you will be drawn within the vortex of the world, — your Chn hopes & graces will be frittered away; — & ere you are aware, you have mingled with the multitude, who are crowding down the avenues of everlasting death. Yes, my bn, the race set before the Chn in our day is perhaps more arduous than that of the earlier martyrs. The world now throws its charms around us, — relaxes our high tone of Chn feeling, — & sinks us to a level with itself. The Chn ~~cause~~ is like the traveller in the fable: — in ancient times the rude north wind bore down upon him with all its force & fury, — & the effect was only to make him gird his Chn garments the more closely around him; — while ~~now~~ in the present ~~day~~ age — the south wind, with its soft & enervating breezes comes gently over him, — & induces a state of lassitude, & causes him to regard his Christian garments as a burden to be cast off forever.

III. How are we directed to run the race that is set before us?

1. We are told to "lay aside every weight." The figure is still taken from a race; — because he who was to run took care to disencumber himself of every thing which might tend, in the least degree, to retard his speed. So the Chn is to lay aside every thing which may by possibility impede him in his progress. The world, with its cares, & its pleasures, & its affections, its prospect, & its promises is to be renounced forever. The habits, the prejudices, the propensities of our own hearts, — all that we value, & all that we love, — are to be "counted but loss for the excellency of the "knowledge of C. J. our Lord; for whom we are to suffer "the loss of all things, & to count them as dross, that "we may win C." (Phil. 3:8.)

[In one particular, included under this direction, our lot, my bn, when compared with that of either the Jewish or Gentile converts, is highly favored. The former were educated in the observance of the Mosaical institutions, — accustomed to the daily offering up of blood as a sacrifice for sin, — separated from all the nations by the rite of circumcision, by a multitude of minute interdictions, — & taught, from their earliest infancy to look upon these ceremonies & restrictions

as meritorious in the sight of God, and as fundamental principles of their religion. How very difficult it was for them to subdue these feelings, — to overcome these prepossessions, — to lay aside this weight, we have already seen. Nor did the converts from Paganism find it an easier task to lay aside the similar weight, which must have hung heavy upon them. Although their gods were gods of wood & of stone, & it might not cost much exertion to give them up, — yet there were trains of thought, & of feeling, & of action, which had been inculcated, & pursued, & venerated as the course of duty, from the commencement of moral being. All these were now to be broken off, & the whole tide of emotion & of action to be turned into another & an opposite direction. How hard it must have been for them to effect all this, & to disencumber themselves of this long-cherished burden, we may judge from the example of the Jewish Chrs: — and we can readily account, in this way, for many of the absurd practices, & superstitious fancies, which were by degrees engrafted on the stock of pure Christianity

To us, however, who are born & educated under the light of the gospel, the particular hindrance which we are now considering, does not exist. In the

very dawn of moral intelligence, - when the name of God first falls upon our ear, - we are taught his character, his attributes, & his requisitions. We are taught that "God "is a Spirit, & they that worship him, must worship "him in Spirit & in truth." (John. 4:24) - that "there is "one God, & one mediator between God & man, the man "J. C." (1. Tim. 2:5). In these instructions, repeated day after day, & Sabbath after Sabbath, do we grow up; - in them the bent of our mind is formed; - & however we may neglect them; - however hard it may be to eradicate the evil affections of the natural heart, - still the converts of our day in Christ lands have not to encounter the prejudices of education, nor burst the shackles of an earlier, though false belief. Here is a privilege, in which we are indeed exalted far above the millions of our benighted brethren in heathen lands; - & it becomes us to acknowledge & adore that goodness which has thus distinguished us; - & to feel the dread responsibility which rests upon us for the use we make of all these mercies, - knowing, that "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much "required." (Luke 12:48.)

The term weight, in our text, may at this day be referred, particularly, to ~~the~~ external encumbrances; - not those which the believer has no agency in pro

ducing, & which he has no power to avoid; — such as the calamities which his Heavenly Father may see fit to lay upon him; — & which, instead of a weight, are designed to arouse him, & speed him on his way: — but rather to those things which the world contrives to fasten on the Ch^n, in hopes to retard his progress, — as the fear of the world, or its allurements, — its honors, its pomps, its vanities, its pleasures, & its riches. The time has indeed passed away, as we trust, forever, when the followers of Ch. had any occasion to fear those who kill the body, or to endure for his sake the severer persecutions, — such as tortures & death: — but there remains, even in our day, enough of the appearance of tribulation & of persecution because of the word, — there is enough in the scoffing & contempt of unholy men, to give offence to the stony-ground hearer, & prove to himself, & to the world, that he had "no root in himself." (Matt. 13: 21). But the great impediment to the growth of the good seed sown in our day, we apprehend to be the thorns. It is a day of peculiar danger, lest "the cares of this world, & the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, & he" who has once rec^d it, "become unfruitful." (Matt. 13: 22.) These are the weights, which, above all things, it behooves Ch^ns to lay aside.

(a.) Of these cares of the world, one is, the desire of the honors & distinctions of this life, & of the respect and applause of our fellow men. The thirst for these weighs down the soul, when it should be lifted up to God. The love of precedence & of power, — the desire of making a noise, & of being regarded as a thing of importance in some little corner of this little globe, exerts a most surprizing influence over the minds of men. For this they forgot that they are mortal, — that this world, & all that is therein, endureth but a little time, & will then vanish away forever. For this, they forget that there is a God, & that he will soon call them hence to a state of eternal existence, where all that this world values, will be known no more. Now so far as the Chn indulges himself in these propensities, so far does he neglect to lay aside a weight that will impede him in his course. Not that he is to seek after the contempt & the reproaches of the world; — for let him do his duty as a conscientious Chn, & he will have enough of these; — but he must not be eager for the honors & the applause of men. The object of his hopes, — his only treasure is in heaven, — his heart should be there also; — & his business with this world, is only as a stranger & a sojourner, who has a right, indeed, to its privileges, & may use it as not abusing it; —

— but who asks not its honors, & advances no claim to its favors. "Woe unto you," says C. to his disciples, & the spirit of the warning may be extended to every Chn, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you; "for so did their fathers to the false prophets." (Luke 6:26)

(B.) Another care of the world, which often weighs down professing Chns, are the pleasures, the enjoyments, the amusements of this life. All these, so far as they are compatible with the Chn warfare, instead of being diminished to the believer, are, on the contrary, ~~enjoyed by him~~ augmented, & are enjoyed by him with a double relish, — both from the gratification which they afford in themselves & as being the gift of God, and a manifestation of his goodness. There is probably no appetite, nor desire, nor passion, implanted in the human frame, which in its proper exercise, — I say, in its proper exercise, — is otherwise than beneficial. Indeed, the just regulation of all his desires & passions constitutes one great part of the Chns duty; because it is the excess of these passions that marks most strongly the corruption of the natural heart of man, & fills the world with violence & bloodshed. But do you here ask, how the Chn is to ascertain the precise limits within which he is to walk; — within which indulgence is virtuous, & beyond which it is sinful?

The word of God is open before him; — let him read & practise. Is he ever at a loss, in a case where the word of God has given no express declaration, whether he may lawfully indulge in any pleasure, or partake of any amusement? In such a case, there is one short & simple rule, which may always be applied, & which will never lead him wrong. Let him reflect, whether he can with a sincere & holy heart, implore the blessing of God on that which he is about to do. If he can, — let him thus ask, & go forward. If he cannot, he will find a weight upon him, that will retard him in the race that is set before him. "Take heed to your "selves," says our Saviour, "lest at any time, your hearts "be overcharged with surfeiting, & drunkenness, & cares "of this life, & so that day come upon you unawares." (Luke 21:34.) This precept, (as you are aware) in the comprehensive & emphatic language of our Lord, extends to the least excesses in our meats & in our drinks, — & by ~~it would~~ a very customary generalization, to the least tendency to excess in any of our appetites or passions, whether physical or moral. Even the indulgence of the purest affections of the human heart, our Saviour declares, is not to be but in competition with the great object of securing the prize of eternal life. "He that loveth "father or mother more than me" says C., "is not wor-

"thy of me; & he that loveth son or daughter more than
"me, is not worthy of me; & he that taketh not his
"cross, & followeth after me, is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10.37, 8)

(y.) A third weight, which often hangs heavy on Chrs, is that which our Lord styles, the "deceitfulness of of riches"; — by which he intends an eager desire for for an abundance of this worlds goods. This would seem to be, in our Saviour's view, an encumbrance peculiarly calculated to hinder his followers in their course: — for it was in a case of this kind, that he uttered his affectionate & striking exclamation, after the young rich man had gone away from him grieved; "How "hardly shall they that have riches enter into the king-"dom of God"! (Mark 10:23): — & to give to the exclamation the greater emphasis, he immediately repeats the words: "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in "riches to enter into the kingdom of God! — it is easier "for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than "for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10: 23-25.) Here it is evidently not riches, in themselves considered, that our Lord is thus denouncing; — but an overweening trust in wealth, & a greediness for heaping up its useless hoards. The young man could not give up his wealth, even for the certainty of eternal salvation; — he preferred a treasure on earth

to a treasure in heaven; & on this account, our Lord con-
demns him. To the same purpose, St Paul, after adv-
ising that "having food & raiment, we should be therewith
content", goes on to say: "But they that will be rich,
i.e. who are eager to be rich, "fall into temptations &
"a snare, & into many foolish & hurtful lusts, which
"drown men in destruction & perdition: for the love of
"money is the root of all evil; — which, while some co-
"veted after, they have erred from the faith, & pierced
"themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:8, 9)
This eagerness for wealth, — this hankering after the goods
of this world, the Ap. warns Timothy, & through him,
every professing Chn to avoid. "But thou, O man of God,
"flee these things, & follow after righteousness, godliness,
"faith, love patience, meekness." (1 Tim. 6:11.)

My Chn bn, it is an important question, & one which
we all should put to our own consciences; — whether we
all have not need of the Ap's caution; — whether under
the pretext of laying up a provision for old age, or for
your families; — or of enabling yourselves to live de-
cently in the world, you are not making haste to be
rich, & desiring that all men speak well of you. If
so, there is a weight upon you, which will clog your
exertions, & impede your progress in your Chn course.
It is the direction of the same Ap. in another place,

not to be slothful in business, — but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; distributing to the necessities of ~~the~~ saints, — given to hospitality." (Rom. 12: 11, 12). He who follows these precepts will not need to hasten to be rich. In the ordinary course of Divine government in relation to human affairs, competency, & even wealth will flow in upon him; & while it enables him liberally to repay to the Lord, by distributing to the "necessity of saints", & aiding to spread the gospel in the world, — it will also put in requisition all his watchfulness over his own heart, & all his fervor of supplication, lest there come a weight upon his soul, to prevent its flight to heaven.

As an ~~[illegible]~~ inference from the particulars which we have now been considering, I would remark in passing, that we are hereby furnished with a simple & excellent rule of Ch^n practice, in regard to any undertaking, or course of life upon which a follower of Ch. may be invited to enter. He has only to ask himself the question: — will this undertaking, or course of life, prove to me a weight in the race that is set before me? If after serious & prayerful inquiry, he is satisfied that such will be its tendency, he is bound to reject it: — having a full assurance, that much as he apparently may be neglecting his

interests in this world, he is securing to himself an inheritance beyond the grave, "eternal in the heavens."

Part. III.

(5.) We may notice a fourth danger to which Ch are exposed, & which is often apt to prove a weight upon them in their race. It is an exclusive devotion to the callings in which God may have placed them. God has given every man work enough to do, — he has left no room for idleness, especially for the followers of Christ, — but yet, he has so ordered the world that there shall always be time, & time enough, for devotion. The most busy & absorbing employment, — provided it tend to promote those interests which we are bound to serve, whether public, or private, — is a work which God requires us to perform, with fidelity & diligence. "Be not slothful in business," says the Ap. — "but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." (Rom. 12:11.) Now obedience to this precept constitutes a very prominent & essential part of true religion; so that he who acts in the spirit of this command, can never "complain "that his calling takes him off from religion; his call- "ing itself, & his very worldly employment in honest "trades & offices is a serving of God, & if it be "moderately pursued, & according to the rules of Ch "prudence, will leave room enough for the prop-

ers & retirements of a more spiritual religion."
(Jer. Taylor's Holy Liv. c. 1 sect. 1.)

But the danger is, that the Chn will not pursue his worldly calling moderately, & according to the rules of Chn prudence. There is danger that he will become too diligent, & too "fervent in spirit", from the mere love of diligence, & busy occupation; so that he will come to view his employment, not as a means by which he is to "serve the Lord"; - but as the prime object of all his thoughts & exertions in this life. There is danger that he will become so absorbed in his ~~every~~ day business, as to forget the prayers & retirements of a more spiritual devotion. This is a weight in respect to which Chn cannot be too much upon their guard. The devotions of the closet, are the very life-blood of the Chn soul. The constant sense of the presence of God, & the constant communion with him by ejaculatory petitions, is the proper sustenance on which the soul of the Chn feeds, & by which alone it is sustained in the business & turmoils of life. When these are neglected, - when the Chn suffers the cares of the world, or even the too diligent ~~performance~~ execution of a useful employment, to intrude upon his moments of private devotion, or to banish from his mind this constant sense of the presence of his maker, - then

a cloud comes upon his soul; — the flame of his de-
votion fades — & languishes, — & dies: — there is a weight
upon him, & he cannot advance in the race that
is set before him, untill he has roused himself to ex-
ertion, & cast aside the burthen.

[It is related of the excellent Col. Gardner, that
he made it his regular custom to rise at 4 o'clock, &
spend 2 hours in reading the Scriptures, meditation & pray-
er: thus devoting the two first & best hours of every day
to immediate communion with his Maker. But the pa-
ticular fact which places this part of that good man's
character in a striking point of view, — & for which
indeed, I have here brought it into notice, is the follow-
ing; viz., that whenever, as was often the case, his troops
were under orders to march at 4 o'clock, — he never failed
to rise at 2, — that he might give his usual time to God.
It was not enough for him, to devote 2 hours to God, in
any other part of the day — after he had done his du-
ty as an officer & a soldier, — They must be his 2 first
& best hours: — & in this course he ~~persevered~~ continued as long as he
lived. Now in looking at his example, may we
can any one say that he gave up too much time
to his devotions? — or that he was thereby unfitted for
the due performance of all his duties during the day
— or that his principle of giving up the best of his time

is not worthy of being adopted by every Chn? It is true that every Chn may not be in a situation where he can ~~properly~~ with propriety follow such an example in every respect; — but it is no less the duty of every Chn, to examine himself closely, as to the time which he does spend with God, & see whether it is as much as God requires of him; — & whether he makes his best hours God's, or reserves them for himself. Let every Chn ask himself whether he does not often hurry through the devotions of his closet, or of his family, — whether he does not choose a shorter chapter, & make a shorter prayer, in order that he may the sooner go away ~~from~~ carnestly & without the fear of God, & engage in his worldly business. This is a danger, my bn, of which I would warn you, — this is a weight which the Ap. exhorts you to lay aside, in order to run your course with alacrity & joy.]

Thus far, my bn, we have considered some of the things which may be included under the term weight in our text, & which the Ap. directs us to lay aside, that there may be no external encumbrances to hinder us in our Chn race. We now advert, with the Ap. to the internal temper of mind which it becomes us to entertain, in order that we may press forward with the greatest speed, & the best hopes of success.

2. In order that we may run the race that is set before us, we are directed to "lay aside the sin which doth so easily beset us."

I am aware that the interpretation usually given to this ~~passage~~ precept, applies it to the favorite sin of every individual, — that to which he is most addicted, & which he last gives up. Nor is there, perhaps, any great impropriety in urging the precept in this application; though, in that case, it would more properly come to be included among those external encumbrances, — those weights, which we have already considered. I apprehend, however, that if we regard the scope of the Ap's reasoning, & his preceding exhortations, we shall be led to give to the passage a meaning somewhat different; & to consider the sin to which the Ap. here refers, as that which he elsewhere terms an "evil heart of unbelief" (Heb. 3:12), — ~~a sin too~~, or what is worse, — a distrust or forgetfulness, of the promises of God.

The very form of the expression refers us back to something which the Ap. had been before considering: "Let us lay aside the sin that so easily besets us." Now throughout the whole of this epistle, it is the object of the ~~Ap.~~ writer, to strengthen the faith & confidence of those whom he was addressing, by animating exhortations, & by solemn cautions.

"Therefore" says he (2:1) "we ought to give the more earnest
"heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any
"time we should let them slip:" & (10:23) "Let us hold fast
"the profession of our faith, without wavering;" & again,
(10:32–38) "Call to remembrance the former days, in which,
"after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of af-
"flictions: partly, whilst ye were made a gazing stock, both
"by reproaches & afflictions: & partly, whilst ye became
"companions of them that were so used: for ye had com-
"passion of me in my bonds, & took joyfully the spoil-
"ing of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have
"in heaven a better & an enduring substance. Cast not a-
"way therefore," says Paul;— in view of all these things, "Cast
"not away your confidence which hath great recom-
"pense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that
"after ye have done the will of God, ye may receive
"the promise. For yet a little while, & he that shall come
"will come, & will not tarry: now the just shall live
"by faith;— but if any man draw back," i.e. draw
back from his faith, — "my soul shall have no pleas-
ure in him." The Ap. then goes on to enumerate a
host holy men, who had trusted in the promises of God,
& obtained a good report through faith:— & then, in
immediate connexion with the passage just quoted
comes our text: "Wherefore seeing &c ——— & the sin

which doth so easily beset us." what sin? The other of course, to which the Ap. had before alluded; — the sin of casting away their confidence, (10:35) — of not having patience, that after they had done the will of God, they might receive the promise; (10:36) — of not living by faith, — of drawing back from their faith unto perdition. (10:38, 39).

This sin of forgetting, or distrusting the character & the promise of God, that "all things", even afflictions, "work together for good to them that love God;" (Rom. 8, 28.) would seem to be a sin to which the people of God, in every age, are peculiarly liable. When God had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, & through the midst of the Red Sea, "then believed they his words, they sang his "praise: — they soon forgat his works, they waited not "for his counsel." (Ps. 106: 12, 13) ["They forgat God, their Sav-"iour, which had done great things in Egypt; wondrous "things in the land of Ham; — terrible things by the Red "Sea." (Ps. 106: 21, 22.)] To this sin also, the Jewish converts to Chy would seem to have been very prone to yield, if we may judge by the earnestness, with which the Ap. warns them against it; & the pains he has taken by adducing the examples of patriarchs, & of prophets, & of C. himself, — to prevent them from falling into despondency, & consequent distrust, under the severe

persecutions, & afflictions to which they were daily ex-
posed. "For consider him," says the Ap. "who endured
"such contradiction of sinners against himself, — lest
"ye be wearied, & faint in your minds. Ye have not
"resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye
"have forgotten the exhortation, which speaketh to you
"as unto children: My son, despise not thou the
"chastening of the Lord, nor faint, when thou art
"rebuked of him: for whom the L. loveth, he chast-
"neth, & scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If
"ye endure chastening, G. dealeth with you as with
"sons: for what son is he whom the father chasten-
"eth not? — But if ye be without chastisement,
"whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, & not
"sons." (Heb. 12: 3-8) "Now no chastening for the present
"seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward,
"it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness, un-
"to them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore, lift up
"the hands that hang down, & the feeble knees." (Heb. 12: 11, 12)
"Follow peace with all men, & holiness, without which
"no man shall see the L: looking diligently, lest any
"man fail of the grace of G; lest any root of bitterness
"springing up, trouble you, & thereby many be defiled."
(Heb. 12: 14, 15.) That there should have been occasion for
the Ap. to address the Jewish Chrs in the language of this

passage, goes, we think, to shew their proneness to disbelieve the existence, or the benevolence of a superintending Providence, & to forget through "an evil heart of unbelief," the promises of God.

The heavy calamities under which those early Chrs groaned, & which let them to indulge to often this besetting sin, have, as we trust, through the mercy of God been banished forever from the roots. ~~forever~~ But with those calamities, may be, has this sin of unbelief been banished from the heart of Chrs? Are there not, at the present day, professing Chrs, in whom it may at times be found? & to whom the solemn warnings & exhortations of the Ap. which have just been read, are ~~not only~~ applicable, ~~but~~ & even necessary? May be, I will put the question in its boldest form. Is there any Chr, who at all times, both in faith & practice, exercises unwavering confidence in the promises of God, — & believes with unhesitating assurance ~~faith~~, that "all things" do indeed, "work together for good to them that love God"? — When worldly hopes & prospects fail; — when your harvests are destroyed by the tempest, — & your flocks & your herds fall before the pestilence; — when sickness invades your person or your family; — when death himself approaches, & tears from your bosome one & another, & another, ~~& another~~ of your children,

your kindred, of your friends, — are you not ready to exclaim with the distrusting patriarch of old; "all these things are against me"? Do you resign yourself, with perfect, unwavering submission, to the will of God, without one murmuring or repining thought? If not, you are distrusting his promises; — you are distrusting his goodness & his truth; — and as you do this in every day of your lives, you fall within the injunction of the Ap. to lay aside the sin that so easily besets you, in order that you may run the race that is set before you.

3. We are directed to run the race that is set before us, with patience.

The term patience, as here used by the Ap. stands opposed to what we have considered the besetting sin, pointed out in the preceding clause of our text: we are therefore to understand by patience, a persevering, an enduring trust in the promises of God: — or, as the original word is sometimes rendered, a patient continuance in the faith. (Rom. 2:7) On this duty we have already dwelt so fully, as to preclude the necessity of a more extended discussion. It is here necessary only to remark, that it is a duty most insisted on by the Sacred writers, as essential to the Chn character.

Our Lord himself after having foretold to his disciples, the treachery, & sufferings & hatred to which they would be subject from all men for his sake, — goes on to add: "there shall not an hair of your head perish: in your patience possess ye your souls." (Luke 21:16-19) St Paul likewise, in enumerating the blessings which rest upon those who are justified by faith, — i.e. who have recd through faith the gratuitous mercy of God, — makes this one of the principal, — that now they can rejoice even in afflictions, — because afflictions afford an occasion of patience; & the fruits of patience are acceptance with God, & a hope which will never disappoint them. (Rom. 5:3,4.) To the very same effect, in a passage almost parallel to that of St. Paul, the Ap. James also writes: "My bn, count it all joy when ye fall into "divers temptations: knowing this that the trial "of your faith, worketh patience. (Jas. 1:2.)

[On comparing these two passages, an important idea suggests itself, which, although not directly connected with our subject, I will not refrain from laying before you. The Apls are both magnifying the importance, & the necessity of the chr virtue of patience. But patience, they affirm, is occasioned by, & cannot exist without, the presence of evil, — of that, at least, which

men call evil. Angels & glorified saints in heaven, cannot exercise this virtue, — there is no opportunity for them to manifest patience. Since then God has created mankind as they are, — & has placed them in a world where they are to prove themselves worthy of an everlasting reward, by the exercise of every other virtue; — & since for the very being of those virtues, the existence of evil is necessary, — therefore God determined that evil should exist. We call it evil, but we know that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" (Rom. 8: 28) — we know that it is intended to brighten all our other graces, & make us meeter heirs of heaven, — we know that it is intended to display in a more glorious manner, the character & attributes of the most High God. "My bre, count it all joy when ye fall into divers "temptations; knowing that the trial of your faith "worketh patience." (Jas. 1: 2.)

The Ah. then proceeds: "But let patience "have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and "entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, "let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, "and upbraideth not; & it shall be given him. But "let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that "wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the "wind & tossed. For let not that man think that he

"shall receive any thing of the Lord." (Jas. 1:3-7) Patience
then, in the Ap's view, is essential to the efficacy of prayer
& consequently to the perfection — I may say, to the exis-
tence of the Chr character. Without this unwavering
faith, — without this habitual, persevering confidence
in God, — you cannot be a Chr. How can he be a Chr
— how can he hope for an answer to his prayers, who
is constantly, by his conduct, questioning the veracity
of the most High? — who, in every disappointment,
& in every trial that is common to all men, forgets
his own demerit, & his own need of chastisement, &
acts as though he would make God unjust, & un-
mindful of his promises? My bn, let us exam-
ine ourselves, & see if there be in us any repining
thought, — any "evil heart of unbelief"; & let us pray
to God for his grace that we may be delivered from
it; — & let us, every, trust in God, & run with patience the
race that is set before us.

IIII. We are to consider the motives by which
the Ap. would persuade us to run the race that is set
before us in the manner directed.

The prize for which we run, — the object of
all the toils & sufferings of the sincere & humble follow-
er of Xt., is eternal life, through the salvation purcha-
sed by a Saviour's blood. Now it would seem to be a

sufficient motive for the most strenuous exertion, that by no other means, & on no other condition, can we obtain this prize. But the Ap. Paul, who was "made all things to all men, that he might by all means save some," (1 Cor. 9:22) – & who, being strong himself, was wont to bear with the infirmities of the weak, (Rom. 15:1) was accustomed to lay before those whom he addressed, every possible encouragement & motive, to induce them to "press toward the mark" with ardor "for the prize of the high calling of G. in C. J." (Phill. 3:12) Of such motives, the Ap. in our text ~~contd~~, has brought forward two, which we will give a brief consideration.

1. The first which he adduces, is the "cloud of witnesses"; whom he has enumerated & described in the preceding chapter. He quotes the examples of the patriarchs & prophets, as having had faith, & as having been accepted of God, on acct of it. Now this faith was not a single, transient emotion in the hearts of these holy men, but an habitual, a constant, a persevering trust & confidence in God; – & they being "fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able also to perform." (Rom. 4:21) It was this faith that supported them in afflictions: it was in this faith that Abm, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: it was in this faith that Mose, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

"choosing rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God,
"than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming
"the reproach of Co. greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."
(Heb. 11: 25-26) — & it was by this faith that all that
host of martyrs, to whom he afterwards alludes, endured
all those cruel mockings & scourgings, & bonds, & imprison-
ment, & tortures, & death, to which they were sub-
jected. That faith, then, on acct of which those holy
men obtained a good report, & were accepted of God, in-
cluded that patience, which we have been contemplating.
If then these holy men of old possessed their souls in
patience, & through faith, a confidence in Gods prom-
ises, obtained a good report, not having seen the ful-
fillment of the promises, — how much more shall we,
— is the inference of the ap. — how much more shall
we, — to whom the promise is come in the fullness of
the gospel of C, — "lay aside every weight & the sin
that doth so easily beset us, & run with patience
the race that is set before us"? we have before
our eyes the example of all those holy men, who had
only seen the promises afar off, & yet were persuaded
of them & embraced them; & confessed that they were
strangers & pilgrims on the earth; and many of
them endured, with patience, persecutions & torments;
& laid down their lives in confirmation of the sincer-

ity of their faith: — let us therefore take courage in our course; — believing that "our light affliction, which "is but for a moment, will work out for us a far "more exceeding & eternal weight of glory: — while we "look not at the things which are seen, but at the "things which are not seen; — for the things which "are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not "seen, are eternal." (2 Co. 4:17,18). Such would seem to be the scope of the Ap's reasoning; & such the use which he would make, & which we ought to make, of the examples of the patriarchs & prophets, — of that "cloud of witnesses", by whom we are encompassed.

2. The other motive assigned by the Ap. in our text ~~& context~~, is ~~the~~ example of our Lord J.C; — that we should look unto, or consider ~~the~~ Jesus, the Author & Finisher, — the ~~beginning~~ source & the end of our faith; — "who "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, "despising the shame, & is set down at the right hand "of the throne of God. For consider him," says the Ap. "that endured such contradiction of sinners against him "self, lest ye be weary & faint in your minds." Indeed, what more powerful, — more animating motive can be held out to the chr, desponding under the wt of affliction, than the example of our Lord Jesus, when on earth? Whose sorrows can be equal to his sorrows?

whose sufferings can be equal to his sufferings? — whose dejection can be equal to his dejection; when in the garden, his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground? "Ye," says the Ap. "have not 'resisted unto blood, striving against sin'?" — but the L. J. poured out his blood, a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. If then the Son of God himself has condescended to be a "man of sorrows & acquainted with grief" (Is. 53:3) — & has endured the cross, despising the shame"; — how much more shall we ~~run with patience~~ bear up against the disappointments, & vexations, & light afflictions of the present world; — how much more shall we run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus; who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, where he ever liveth to make intercession for all those who come unto God by him. (Heb. 7:25)]

[Thus, my bn, have I endeavoured to set before you, the obligations which rest upon us in regard to our Chn race. I have described the nature of this race, — that it embraces the whole course of the Chns life. I have pointed out some things in which the race set before us at the present day, differs from that which the early Chns were called to run, — & some things through

whose influence we are more exposed than they were, to fall of the prize; — because to us the world holds out her charms, while to them she displayed only her terrors. We have considered the weights, which it behoves us to lay aside; — the love of honors & of applause from our fellow men; — the love of the pleasures, the enjoyments, the amusements of life; — the love of money, which is the root of all evil; — & even an undue & exclusive devotion to those worldly employments in which our God has made it our duty to engage. ~~placed us~~. We have set before you that sin which so easily besets us, — that evil heart of unbelief, which makes a mock of God, & charges him with falsehood; — we have dwelt on the necessity of patience in our race; & of course perseverance have urged the motives which the Apostle advances — the example of the long line of patriarchs & prophets, — & the still greater example of our Lord & Saviour. I.e. "wherefore, my bn, seeing we also are compassed about &c _____ the Author & Finisher of our faith."

1. My chn brethren: the subject which we have now been contemplating, calls for our most serious & prayerful attention; — because the Ap. is addressing himself, not only to the Jewish converts, but through them, even to us; "for unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them." (Heb. 4:2.) The scriptures are ad-

dressed ~~unto~~ to men who dwell upon the earth. The long series of those to whom, in ages past, there have been made effectual unto salvation, & who have left this world, are now enjoying brighter views & a more perfect vision, than revelation could ever give to mortal eyes. It is then the mortals of the present day, — of the present moment, — to whom the Lord are now addressed. It is the Chrs of the present day, — the Chrs of this land, — the Chrs in this house, whom the Ap. is urging to lay aside every weight, — to renounce the world with all its cares, & all its allurements; — its honors, its pleasures, & the deceitfulness of its riches, — & to cast off the besetting sin of unbelief, which keeps us from the presence of our God, & robs us of the joys of his salvation: — it is the Chrs in this house whom he is exhorting to run with patience the race that is set before us, — to rely with unwavering faith on the veracity of God, & wait with confidence for the fulfilment of his promises; — to receive disappointments & afflictions, as the faithful chastisements of a father's rod, — as a mark of the attention & kindness of our heavenly Father, in thus fitting us beforehand to be meet partakers of "the kingdom which he hath prepared for us before the foundation of the world": (Matt. 25:38.) — in short it is the Chrs in this house,

whom the Ap. is inviting thus to run our race, by the example of holy men of old, & by the brighter example of our Lord. Now, my bn, shall all these warnings, & exhortations, & motives, be lost on us? Let us "rather" take the more earnest heed to the things which "we have heard, - lest at any time we should let them "slip." (Heb. 2:1) - & "having also, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new & living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the "veil, that is to say, his flesh; & having an high Priest "over the house of God; - let us draw near with a true "heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts "sprinkled from an evil conscience, & our bodies washed "with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our "faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that "promised;) & let us consider one another to provoke unto love & to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; "but exhorting one another; - & so much the more, as "we see the day approaching." (Heb. 10: 19-25.)

2. Are there any now present ~~before me~~, to whom this subject does not directly address itself?, - any, who are yet behind even the poor Jewish converts, having never yet learned even the first principles of the oracles of God? My bn, how can you bear that

the promises of God, — those promises which afford an assurance of salvation, — of a happy & eternal state of existence beyond the grave, — how can you bear that these should be addressed to your kindred, — your parents, your brothers, your sisters, — to your friends, — to your neighbors, — & not to you? How can you bear, that to you, there should be addressed only threats of eternal woe & everlasting death? How will you endure, when these threats shall be carried into execution? Have you ever reflected on this matter? Have you never felt, either in your gayest, or in your saddest moments, that the bible was true? How then do you think to escape from the denunciations which it pours out against you? There is no way but one. There is no way but that which the bible points out. There is no way but to repent of your sins & believe on the Lord J.C. with a saving faith. Do this, & you shall live forever. Do this, & the congregation of God's people on earth will embrace you with the warmest affection. Do this, & the redeemed in heaven will welcome you: — angels will tune their golden harps & rejoice over one more repenting sinner. There will you meet the approving smile of the Saviour; — there will you gain a title to immortal joys at the right hand of God on high. Amen. Oct. 11 & 12. 1822. Repd Nov 23. & Jan. 1823.

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God of eternal love. S. M. Ps. 104. 24.

My God, my portion, & my all. C. M.

Strait is the way, the door is strait. C. M.

Awake our souls, away our fears. L. M.

Stand up my soul, shake off thy fears. L. M.