

mised, were ingenious, that they were urged with plausibility, and rendered diverting by wit? Alas! my brethern, we are informed in the same passage, that the strength of their deception is part of their very crime. God placed evil and good truth and falsehood before them, and gave them means of judging between them, and embracing that which they should choose; and the having forsaken good for evil, and the truth of the gospel for the vain sophistries of men is the very crime of which they are accused. *And for this cause, (says the Apostle,) God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.\** It is then that the divine Shepherd will forever separate the goats from the sheep, that the blessed Husbandman shall purge the floor of the garner with his fan, that the Captain of our Salvation shall leave no spies in his camp, and the King of our Glory endure no traitors in his territory.

The concluding verse of the Psalm vindicates in a few words, the promises which have been made to the righteous, and the judgments which have been denounced against the ungodly. *For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.* The omniscience of the Deity is the touchstone by which the merits of the righteous and the guilt of the wicked shall ultimately be determined.

No false opinions formed concerning them during life, can deceive that unerring Judge; no counterfeit, however brilliant, can pass for pure gold; no forgery, however ingenious, can supply the place of the testimonial which he demands. *The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.* He was perhaps lightly esteemed among his fellow-men, considered as an unsocial and scrupulous devotee, an enemy to free investigation, because he walked not by the counsel of the ungodly; a severe censurer of harmless levities, because he stood not in the way of sinners; a foe to innocent mirth, because he sat not in the seat of the scorner. Let him nevertheless come boldly, before the heavenly Judge. He knoweth his ways. When his left hand knew not the good deeds which were wrought by his right, the Lord beheld them. His eye was upon him in solitude and secrecy, and his spirit guided him during his daily and nightly meditations on his Law. At the time when the righteous was perhaps most misconstrued by his brethren of men, he was most acceptable to his heavenly Father, who knew his way—not his actions only, however secret, but the principles upon which these actions were founded.

Again, let not the wicked confide in the refined hypocrisy with which he may have been able to deceive men, nay, perhaps to cheat himself, by blending actions of apparent merit, and sentiments in themselves praiseworthy, with a course of life, such as that which the Psalmist has denounced. If he be an underminer of God's law, and a scoffer at his commandments, what will it avail him, that he has given alms, and distributed to his poorer brethren the food that perishes, while he was dashing from their lips, and trampling, in their presence, upon the bread of eternal life? Good deeds, whether done to be seen of men, or flowing from the natural disposition of the human heart, to relieve itself from the pain attending the sight of distress, however applauded by those who witnessed them, will sink to their proper level and estimation in the eyes of the Divinity, which will not view them as an atonement for a life spent in the habitual breach of his Law, and contempt of his Commandments. *The way of the ungodly shall perish.*

Wherefore may we all find grace in God, for the sake of Christ Jesus, to labour and improve the time, until we pass into the awful presence of Him who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins.

\* 2 Thess. ii. 11 12.