

RELIGIOUS.

From Rev. R. Hall's Sermon on a National Fast.

ALARMING SYMPTONS OF NATIONAL DEGENERACY.

Among the most alarming symptoms of national degeneracy, I mention a gradual departure from the peculiar truths, maxims and spirit, of Christianity.

Christianity, issuing perfect and entire from the hands of its Author, will admit of no mutilations nor improvements; it stands most secure on its own basis; and without being indebted to foreign aids, supports itself best by its own internal vigor.

When under the pretence of simplifying it, we attempt to force it into a closer alliance with the most approved systems of philosophy, we are sure to contract its bounds, and to diminish its force and authority over the consciences of men. It is dogmatic; not capable of being advanced with the progress of science, but fixed and immutable.

We may not be able to perceive the use or necessity of some of its discoveries, but they are not on this account the less binding on our faith; just as there are many parts of nature, whose purposes we are at a loss to explore, of which, if any person were bold enough to arraign the propriety, it would be sufficient to reply that God made them. They are both equally the works of God, and both equally partake of the mysteriousness of their author.

This *integrity* of the Christian faith has been insensibly impaired; and the simplicity of mind with which it should be embraced, gradually diminished. While the outworks of the sanctuary have been defended with the utmost ability, its interior has been too much neglected, and the fire upon the altar suffered to languish and decay.

The truths and mysteries which distinguished the Christian from all other religions, have been little attended to by some, totally denied by others; and while infinite efforts have been made, by the utmost subtlety of argumentation, to establish the truth and authenticity of revelation, few have exerted in comparison to show what it really contains.

The doctrines of the fall and of redemption, which are the two grand points on which the Christian dispensation hinges, have been too much neglected. Though it has not yet become the fashion (God forbid it ever should) to deny them, we have been too much accustomed to confine the mention of them to oblique hints, and distant allusions.

They are too often reluctantly conceded, rather than warmly inculcated, as though they were the weaker or less honourable parts of Christianity, from which we were in haste to turn away our eyes, although it is in reality these very truths, which have in every age inspired the devotion of the church, and the rapture of the redeemed.

This alienation from the distinguished truths of our holy religion accounts for a portentous peculiarity among Christians, their being ashamed of a book which they profess to receive as the word of God.