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"When the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then shall they fast in those days." Accordingly, we find from the Scriptures how fully this prediction was realized by the Apostles and early Christians. Saint Paul, in particular, makes frequent mention of his *fasting*. And we learn from the history of the Church in the first century, that *fasting* was frequently had recourse to ; and, indeed, was associated with her most sacred acts.

Thus then, though our Saviour enjoined no especial fast, fasts have always been observed in the Church ; either privately, by an individual, or particular congregations,—or publicly and generally, by civil authority, when circumstances occur which it is conceived render such fast expedient.

The present is one of these cases. And with the view of assisting you in the proper observation of the *fast*, this day appointed, and thus further conforming to the laudable intention of Government, I shall

FIRST, Lay before you the history of the text, from which we may derive a model for our own conduct.

SECOND, Call upon you, as being in some sense similarly circumstanced with the Ninevites, to the discharge of the like duty ; and

THIRD, We shall offer some observations as to the *manner* and *spirit* in which that duty should be performed.

At the time the prophet Jonah received the particular instructions to which we are indebted for the book, that bears his name, Nineveh was the principal city of one of the earliest and perhaps proudest Kingdoms of the Earth : it was the Capital of the Kingdom of Assyria. It was also a very ancient city. Moses, in Gen. x. ii. expressly says, that Nineveh was founded by Asher, the son of Shem. And if so, Nineveh at the date of the text, had existed for more than twelve centuries. It was favourably situated on the bank of the river Tigris, which was annually conveying to this great *mart* the immense wealth and miscellaneous commerce of the East. At the time Jonah visited it, a population of six hundred thousand souls was supposed to have been comprehended within its gigantic walls ; which, with the height of an hundred feet, surmounted by fifteen hundred towers, and so broad withal that three chariots could safely drive abreast upon them, traced a circuit of eighteen leagues round ! Associate in your minds the power, splendour, and resources necessarily connected with this description, and you may form some idea of the then city of Nineveh.

But amid all this earthly grandeur there was one thing deficient : they were ignorant of the one true God. They might indeed, in later times, when the *Twelve Tribes* settled in the