No. 7.

The light yoke & easy burden of X.
Matth. XI. 30. "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The instructions of J.C. during the short and crowded space of his ministry, must, to say the least, have excited feelings of wonder and surprise; for they were as new as they were grand and interesting. It is perhaps hardly possible for us, at this distance of time, to conceive the great moral revolution which the Gospel must have produced, when received in sincerity as the director of life. It was first promulgated among the Jews by the Saviour himself. And what were the feelings, and the situation of these Jews with respect to their religious duties? Their history fully discloses the peculiarities of their character and condition. They were a nation selected as the instruments of accomplishing the designs of Heaven. Among them was deposited that sacred trust, the knowledge of the one true God; and by them this precious deposit was to be preserved and transmitted to successive generations. To them the character of God was revealed.
in that manner and to that extent, which was best suited to their circumstances. But the Jewish theory was instituted in the infancy of the world. It required an effort, of which, at that early period was incapable without much powerful assistance, to retain just and consistent views of the Deity, and to adhere unalterably even to his known and acknowledged attributes. Men in a rude and ignorant age must be influenced by such objects as he saw in the narrow circle of their thoughts and comprehension. According to we find that the doctrines and duties of the Jewish religion were guarded and fenced around with a long train of various and complicated ceremonies; and sensible objects of the most striking and portentous kind were made use of to lead the worshiper to the great invisible Spirit. The Jewish system, though intricate and cumbrous, was rendered necessary by the character of the times, and the peculiar condition of the nation. Yet it failed in time to produce the effects for which it was designed. At the period of our Savior's ministry the religion of his countrymen had lost its moral influence on their minds, and consisted in the severe observance of external rites, accompanied by the absurd additions and oppressive injunctions of their Doctors and Rabbinics. The dry, technical, and mechanical observances, and consequent he found in the ordinances of his religion nothing but an unmeaning and burdensome task. It was probably in allusion to these circumstances that Jesus proclaimed the gracious invitation "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In my gospel is easy, and my burden is light."

He saw the laws of God invested to serve the unhallowed purposes of those who professed to be his followers. He saw his countrymen was thrown upon it; he saw the countyman was made to believe that he who understood the trap was the true believer, and his spirit crushed under the load of false and artificial glosses which covered the real sense of things. He saw them excluded from the society of the world, the designing, and hypocritical Pharisees. He came to deliver them from that bondage.
of all others most intolerable, the bondage of the soul; and to offer them "the glorious liberty of the children of God." This instruction, though by some, doctrine so encouraging, pure, elevating, and venerable ceremonies were no part of this system; for the true character of that service which God requires, and taught them where they might work, be assigned religion its proper residence in the affections of the heart, where alone it can live and grow and flourish. There was, indeed, a religion, which the wisest could never have imagined, and for which the most virtuoses could only have hoped. Among the multitudes who listened to the discourses of X, there were any who, in spite of education, had strength of mind sufficient to detect, and boldness enough to dispute, the gross impositions of Ptolemaic teachers; any who felt by the importance of knowing something more correctly of the character of God and of the nature of his service, who were agitated by that uncertainty in the mind, is usually left after having employed its energies in discovering and rejecting error without being able to substitute any thing in its place; who came to X with the trembling and wishful anxiety of doubt and expectation; — how must they have been

See Jer. v, 5 and Ecclesiastes 2:15, 26.
and a light burden.

1. It is so, because it conveys that true and dignified freedom, which consists in peace of mind and inward satisfaction. It frees us from the slavery of sin. There is no among mankind a more submissive, devoted, degraded slave, than he who has dismissed all regard to the laws of that God who gave him being, and of that Saviour who died to lead the way to heaven, who wishes to find within us a well-meaning, wise, and innocent person, who has broken down the strong defence which conscience had reared to guard the sanctuary of the breast. The exhibition, it may be, in the midst of his degradation, the appearance of spirit and freedom from restraint, but it is the effort of conscious guilt to conceal from others, perhaps even from himself, the wretchedness of his condition. It is true, we do not very frequently find instances of iniquity so hardened as to have progressed all regard to the moral laws of God; but in proportion as we relax the firmness of our hold on religion, virtue, we are tending toward. I will not say to the corruption and de-
and a light burden.

1. It is so because it conserves that true and dignified freedom, which consists in peace of mind and inward satisfaction. It apprehends redeem us from the slavery of sin. There is among mankind a more submissive, devotedly degraded slave, than he who has dismissed all regard to the laws of that God who gave him being, and of that Saviour who died to open the way to Heaven, who wishes to find virtue, but a well planned deception, and innocence an idle mockery, who has broken down that strong defence which conscience had reared to guard the sanctuaries of the breast. For exhibits, it may be, in the midst of his degradation the appearance of spirit and freedom from restraint, but it is the effort of conscious guilt to conceal from others, perhaps even from itself, the meekness of its condition. It is true, we do not very frequently find instances of iniquity so hardened as to have proscribed all regard to the moral laws of God, but in proportion as we relax the firmness of our hold on religion and practice, we are tending downward. I will not say to the corruption and decrepit, but to the rigorous, oppressive course of vice. If we will throw off the gentle and easy chain which binds us to God and to duty, we must expect to wear the fetters of a captiver to the service of the enemy; God's means of souls is indeed a severe and constant task master. Have you but just commenced the course of enquiry, but just acquiesced therein as enough to refuse you read to the call of duty and the word of God, while the way of guilt is yet untrodden. Believe me, you have before you a path which not only leads to shame and ruin, but which is surrounded with toil and danger, and difficulty. You must contend with the passions of others, as fierce, malignant, and unshraven as your own. You must stock to court and flatter those whom you despise; you who perhaps will not lay your homage on contumacy and indulgence. You must learn to be distasteful with no meanness, to be shocked with no degree of brutality. You must subject yourself to a constant and unnatural effort to wear the appearance of prosperity, for after all, you are not need, and must endeavor to obtain, an interest in the sympathies of your fellow creatures. You have not even hope for the approbation of your Maker: you finally lose all the confidence

Naked; you finally lose all the confidence...
kindness of those whom you cannot but regard with esteem; and remorse comes to rend your heart with the convulsive agitations of despair. God is not a God of peace, look abroad on the world, seek for the brave, and find they are no resting place. Such is the scene of agitation the days of peace, like the patriarchs, sent forth in the wild tumult of the oceans, lands no resting place; but here is not the end of the abode.

...no take away. Say not then that the way is hard, is shame; I say rather it is the sensible, easy, better, and more proper. We are able to perform our duty in any situation of life because it is our duty, and exercise them. I pretend that the requisitions of it, rightly interpreted, are irremovable. The body is not like that, tyrannical Egyptian king, who exacted of the Israelites their usual labor, while he denied them the means of accomplishing their task. What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God, and will you say that you have not sufficient means, opportunities, and ability to be religious? It does not exempt her followers from trials and difficulties, remember that this circumstance is not peculiar to it. Such is the condition of life, that excellence of every kind is to be obtained only by toil, and self-denial, and strenuous effort. Education is the price of enjoyment. You must combat and conquer before you can claim the reward. Remember too, that religion imposes upon you no restraint, and no labour which will not
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The burden of our religion is light and easy, be
cause it requires of us no more than we are able to
do, without any peculiar difficulty, and because it
affords such objects and employment to our facul-
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you no restraint, and no labour which will not
be for your own ultimate good, the demands of your nature, and the sacrifice which it will not be for your interest to make, and calls you to the trial, without which you should not be glad to support. Besides, when you have commenced a course of good virtues, living, then comes habit, with all her mighty power to assist and establish you, and it should not be doubted that the formation of good habits is a constant source of the most heartfelt pleasure. For every new step you take in the path of virtue, attended with all the delight of self-affection, while the habits of the senses, as they grow in strength, are attended with all that is delightful in array of honour, which reserve and shame command, at every new advance in the ways of virtue, before he can proceed, he must crush some remnant of virtuous sensibility, or burst some good unsevered tie, which had hitherto bound him in some degree to his God and his duty. — Religion is as best fitted to make the source of true felicity. There is no condition in which a human mind can be placed so durable as that of restlessness and vacancy. To be happy we must have some object of pursuit, something that will engage our attention and excite, something that will call into action our hopes, our fears, and our wishes. The mind which is left unengaged is left to prey upon itself and to become a fit habitation for those foul spirits who will not fail to enter in and dwell there. This object of pursuit too must be something that will carry us beyond ourselves. Attention must be fixed on other objects, and those feelings by which we are connected with the possible around us, must have their action ascended. Say what one will about the selfishness of man there is not in creation a being more unsatisfied, querulous, and restless, than he, whose only object is whose primary care is his own gratification and pleasure. No one can be really happy without the sympathies of benevolence. But it is not enough that we be merely engaged in the enjoyments of pursuit. It is by means of this activity that we are made. In order to give us the greatest quantity of happiness, it must be such as is attended with a sense of power, ability of success, and such a sense that gratifications, inconsistent with ourselves, with other gratifications of which our natures are capable. — Now, my friend, what, but religion will give us employments and objects of such a character? What but love to God, love to man, a character? What but love to God, love to man, a character?
for permanent felicity is soon cured of his delusion. Appetite is puffed, his heart with indulgence, and his mind is degraded and polluted by the contaminating influence through which it has passed. Nor are the pleasures of the ambitious man durable and satiable enough to make him happy. "He is eager in the chase some glittering toy which when he has caught it, he throws away as not worth the seeking, and his mind is disqualified for those nobler and higher enjoyments, are it's peculiar province of delight."

The instance of the same kind might be adduced. On the contrary, devotion to God, love to our fellow creatures, and the dictates of conscience engage in the noblest and best pursuits, pursuits on which we are led on with increasing acuity and satisfaction and which terminate in gratifications that are not only permanent, and consistent with themselves, but are continually growing more vivid and delightful. Thus it is, that the management of the affections, and the course of active duty, which preserves, call for the best exercise of our best dispositions, is equivalent to those faculties which, my friends, the religion of Jesus has turned our inward powers and feelings on a course of unexhausted exertion directed towards high and noble objects, and the employment is easy and full of delight, because it is almost invariably successful and, because when we have reached the pleasures it promises, we are not stingy with the reflection that they are purchased at the expense of others more exalted and valuable.

5. There is another consideration, which illustrates the truth and force of our Saviour's declaration that his yoke is easy and his burden light. To all the conditions to which he may expose his followers, he promises an ample recompense. He who stands forth in the face of day determined courageously to acknowledge himself, the disciple of Jesus, and to adhere with composure fidelity to the cause of his Master, may sometimes find himself involved in trials surrounded with difficulties, which it will require the efficacious aid of divine truth to endure and subdue and reestablish. He may be obliged to encounter the ungracious scorn of those who affect to esteem it the pride of philosophy, to despise whose exterior appears to other venerable and sacred, and his delicate sense of virtue, his conscientious regard to duty, may expose him to the sneers of those who, while they profess religion, are glad to dispense with the obligation to be religious. Although perhaps, in general the true plan has the best prospect of success even in the affairs of this world, yet there are times, when the prevailing firmness of religious principle may stand in the way of temporal interest. Power, wealth, and fashion are but too
often on the side of immorality and vice, and he who will not abandon the service of his God and go over to the camp of the enemy, at least, maintain the indecent pretexts which the devil is no longer able to contrive. To illustrate and defend this truth is likewise not unprofitable, by a dangerous and tasksome office. Few men are sufficiently aware of the religion in all its external rigour, with which it comes from the hand of its author, who ventures to contumeliously beleiveth, be great unknown enemies. I contend earnestly, perhaps, the vengeance of bigotry and prejudice may be brought upon his head, and frustrate his mortally be perjured, and plans all his mediocrity happiness. Yet the difficulties, to which the profession or defence of religion is liable, should furnish no subject of complaint for its present gloom, and through the cloud of the world. 

Trials like these constitute a large part of our mental discipline; and to confirm the strength of the act and principle, it is necessary that we learn to suffer as well as to bear, to be patient as well as to prompt and vigorous. But above all, my friends, remember that when you have espoused the cause of religion, she freely defies you in all that you suffer on her account. It may be said to be fraught with compensations. The request you make for whatever graces you may imbibe, for whatever misfortunes you may suffer in her service, will be more than amply rewarded, by that unbounded satisfaction which it gives, that ungrudging to confer, in this world, and by the foretastes which she discloses in the world to come. The man of religion can pass unnoticed the scorn and indignity of men, because while here he is conscious of going the approbation of his Lord, because so beloved that he isarrayed up for him, while his father's house are many mansions, and the Father's house is one. And beyond the cloud of the world, beyond the clouds of terms of the age, the rainbow of peace, the pledge of that felicity which it is beyond the power of man to reap or to assault. 

We then, my friends, as well as these denizens of the hidden light, the government of religion is not delicate and easy as well as noble and salutary. They are bearing us from the slavery of things that are, from the sordid and the abject employment, that free us from the slavery of the affections. It amply com
pensates us for whatever evils we may be called to suffer in its cause.

I shall close with suggesting two reflections.

1. Let us beware of making the burden of our religion heavier for ourselves, by corrupting the simplicity of the Gospel. The history of man, and nation, and organization may prove, that there are and have been those who have constructed systems of faith so unsanctioned as to overwhelm reason and every good feeling of our natures, and have imposed on us as the name of duties, service as subversive to common sense as they are opposite to the Spirit of evangelical truth. Religion has been made to consist in the unsatisfactory belief of complicated and unintelligible creeds, in the practices of unmeaning of ceremonies, forms, and exercises. To these ends speak to us in the hard words of warning and condemnation. The laws, which he delivered to his followers, were plain, simple, unembarrassed with difficulties. Yet it not by our condemnation to have弯曲, the spirit of the Gospel under the impositions which usurp in exactions of passions may dictate. Let us see that we are not engaged in the service of a harsh and tyrannical master: let them "take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus."

2. The subject we have considered should remain

as of the obligation and importance of attending in earnest to the requisitions of our Saviour. The command from God with all the sanctions recommended of divine authority, but our faculties of the general constitution of our natures, that divine service is perfect freedom, easy and light as well as exalted and important. Still however we may not forget that to be a static indeed, requires the constant exercise of watchfulness and the undeviating diligence of effort. We must be industrious in seeking opportunities of doing or of becoming good. Saviour teaches us every occasion of sin. It is thus that we may best hope to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless. Truly that gracious injunction of "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: ye shall find rest unto your souls,"

January, 1818
Most high, & holy G. our Creator, & Benefactor
our Father & our Friend. – we thank thee for
all the mercies thou hast shown us in the
blessed name of the son. – we bless thee that the
despised of the sin. – we bless thee that the
benefits, the promises, the purposes, the promises,
the motives, the purposes of our holy religion are adapted to the most
gracious manner to our condition & capacity as
moral accountable beings. – grant that we
may gladly take upon us the yoke of Christ
is easy of light & burden of those who are wise &
knowly that we may find rest to our souls.
Make us sensible that we are engaged in the
service of one or more service is perfect freedom
may we have as our dearest privilege that we
may be free as the children of God to make
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At Watertown, Jan. 31st, 1819, afternoon.
At home, Nov. 12th, 1820, afternoon.
At home, Feb. 21, 1836, afternoon.