No. 39.
On giving the heart to wisdom.
Prov. iii, 26. — "My son, give me thine heart, & let thine eyes observe my ways."

To what does the monarch of Israel here invite us to give our hearts? — To wisdom, that is, to virtue & religion. It is one of those numerous exhortations to the same purpose, which Solomon gives in the book of Proverbs, — a book, which far surpasses more than any other written by man, displays a profound observation of human nature, an intimate acquaintance with the workings of passion. — The invitation in the text is made in the person of a parent, & with all the tenderness & solicitude of an affectionate parent. — "My son, give me thine heart, & let thine eyes observe my ways." — It is as if we saw the venerable form of the aged king rising before us, & heard him, with the earnestness & sincerity of one who had learned from experience the folly & misery of vice, & the happi-
ness of virtue, saying to us, "Give your heart to wis-
don, follow his directions with a full purpose of
souls, yield to them an unresisting, cheerful, un-
conditional obedience, choose his paths deliberately,
walk in them firmly, turn not aside to snatch
the passing forms of vicious pleasure, nor will thing
around you."... Such is the meaning of the exhortation whr we are
now to consider. We see that it makes a demand
upon our affections, that it requires us not merely
to acknowledge the beauty and worth of virtue, but
to love it with our whole hearts, to embrace it with-
your without reserve, to give it the utmost place
in our souls. But perhaps it will be said that
our affections are not in our power, that we cannot
force them arbitrarily on what we will, that we have no control over the objects to which they
are directed. You will say perhaps, that no event
by a mere act of the will can cause us to press
a passion or affection of the mind, as we can regu-
late for instance the motion of a hand. Why then,
it may be demanded, are we required to give our
hearts to wisdom, when our hearts are not at our
own disposal? We find on many occasions, that
the endeavors to excite a good affection, however car-
nest & strenuous, are not attended with immediate
success, that our minds instead of being moved
we would have them appear immovable; if that
on the other hand, when we would suppress some
troublesome or sensually passion, our endeavors are of no
form being successful, that they rather exaggerate
of swell the passion. In a certain sense, if a certain
degree, this is true. But still it is by some means
ture, that our inducements & affections are actuated,
not merely by the direction of reason. If this
were the case, then it would appear that God has
left man, the noblest work of His hands, in the
world, in a most deplorable helpless condition. Our
affections are wholly at the mercy
of blind chance, or what so entruth no better.
if they are unalterly determined to any certain
direction by a fatality of our natures; then truly the
question may be asked, where is the merit of the
merit of our inducements & passions, & why are we
called upon to give our hearts to wisdom? But
have been reasoned with, convinced of the error, in many cases the error they had conceived has been entirely removed. It was only necessary to dispel the clouds, & then the main range of the pure bright light shone upon their breasts. In the same way the mistaken estimation of some persons for peculiar objects or characters may be changed into dislike, & by the affliction of some unknown mysteries power immediately to the affections; but by placing that in a true light & before itsORIGINAL appearance to the mind a false one, in other words, by enlightening the mind of that by the unbiassed exercise of the reason & good sense. We know that, by argument & information, we can influence the hearts of others, more than, by casual and serious attention, can we affect the minds of others? Have we not, by reflecting & reasoning, sometimes placed objects in such a light as to minds, that even those affective & had obtained a deep & strong hold there, have yielded themselves to such an extent, that judgment is allowed. He who knows nothing of this firm experience, must indeed be a stranger to the discipline of the breast. — Now let us apply these remarks...
their general scope to the subject before us.

We complain that we cannot, according the injunc-
tion of the King of Israel, free our affections on mo-
mot the mind, no, it does not perceive, or will not
acknowledge, the attractions of virtue & religion, must
be entangled in prejudice, constituted by piace, or be
imprisoned in darkness. If then you break down this
prejudice, banish the vice,- by dispel this darkness,
you will leave your heart open to the impressions
of religion, that they may enter in & dwell there.
And surely it is in your power to do this; it is
in your power to correct erroneous views & to remove
groundless aversions; & when you have done this,
you have done enough to prepare your hearts to
feel, that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleas-
antness & all her paths peace. Then, therefore,
we are required to give our affections to religion,
are required to do nothing but what is
perfectly practicable, that is, to use these means,
wh God has given us for exerting & maintaining good
affections in the heart. Let him, whose conscience
holds him that he has not these affections, or
he does not love religion, but loves every thing oh
religion would condemn, let him with unyielding
constancy examine himself.- I believe he will
find, that he has not used with application,
perseverance, these means of enlightening his mind.

You, if you apply his heart, will the mercy of Heaven be the
seen within his reach, let him answer to himself the
principle of religion? Has he been converted?
and by the power of this connection, divine institutions,
and influence has he been associated with the age of solemn
humility to the foundation of light for guidance? for
and has he done all this with the same firmness,
the same devotion of soul, with which he would put
up some favor in worldly interest? - If he has laid
less the result has been, that he has renounced
his immost heart, if he has not how could
be safe to love virtue or to feel the charms of reli-
gion? - If you shut your eyes, you cannot see the
stainless & splendid sunlight, nor those stars which
are so beautiful in the heavens; so if you
shut your minds against the means of religion, not
surely, you will not see the attractions of religion vis-
dom, nor will your hearts be given to her cause.
We see then that it is in our power to obey the precepts of Solomon—yea, who will deny that it is necessary for us to obey it, if we would be any thing else than the mere hollow-hearted professors of religion? By the demands of our hearts, we will accept nothing but our hearts. It is in vain for us to offer to be the victims of idle professors—of the parade of ceremonies—at the name of solemn forms. We can imagine that we have done all that our religion requires us to do. No sense rises to the theme of the unity that we are part of the divinity of the heart. How can we make a compromise with conscience? We know that we are made of the heart, because we have17 been convinced that we must accept us, because we are very conscious of our own peculiarities. We make it the matter of pride to profess to believe a great deal more than others believe. A large creed with a bad heart is very much like the Jewish phylactery. It may make an imposing show while worn on the external garment, but it is the expression of flattened hypocrisy. All these substitutes for the religion of the heart are the

godlike and noble refuge of those, who, while they do to the world's most varieties, would fain be thought to bow their wills to the will of God. To trust in them would be to build the edifice of your hopes on the sand. Only allow us a little space to return to the place where it was. If in the hour of trial you should flee to them for safety, you would find that they had vanished as the clouds disappear when the sun looks upon it. Nay, nothing short of the religion of the heart will answer our purposes as immortal beings; we must give our hearts to religion, or we may as well give nothing.

Such is the necessity of giving our hearts to this world.

Of some of its advantages.

1. If we give our hearts to wisdom, we shall find ourselves prepared to obey the will of God, and our duty, with ease and satisfaction. And one knows the difference between the service which is performed cheerfully and willingly, and that which is drudgery from a scrupulous, religious disposition. If we adopt it, it will be from the pure and simple desire of religious truth and religious spirit, and not from a feeling of duty, or from a desire to escape from the restraints of duty. Moreover, if opportunity occurs, our efforts must be made.
offensive, than to walk before the world, with the
change of carrying into execution all the artifices of
a bad heart; and to cover its insincerity, to wear a
stare like that of a most passively cold, obtuse
leaves, and to leave you exposed in all your deformity, to present a
most

foul

feature, when all below is dark, to test what is
true, to struggle in efforts against inclination, to close
the eyes that may detect the minuteness of falsehood;
not, even though the

stealthily covering of falsehood, which we have overspread our
actions?—Yet all this, so much more, must the sinner,
who has not given his heart to religion, yet strives to save
before the world, the appearance of virtue. In such a
man, to use the language of the Apostle, “the flesh
wrestles against the spirit, and the spirit against the
flesh: if these are contrary the one to the other, so
the man cannot do the things which they would.” When
the exorbitant demands of a corrupt heart are satis-

fied, notwithstanding our pretenions to religion,
then is conscience deeply wounded, the moral condi-
tion despairs, and the worst effects are

ruined. And it is plain, that in proportion to
the strength of vicious habits and propensities, will be
the difficulty and reluctance with which men will feel in

peace, & irregular. On the other hand, in whatever
service we engage, if we have but a vigorous resolution
of heart, the difficulties will vanish; & laborsecome pleasurable. It is so in the common affairs of
life, & it will ever be so in the affairs of religion. What
is the reason, that many, whose moral characters pass
uncontrasted among men, are yet, far, far from hav-
ing reached the mark of true purity, or the gospel
has established? It is because their religion is a religion
of convenience. No, not a religion of the heart, because
they submit to the laws of God only so long as they think
their satisfaction: if their views may require it. They
may view the first occasion which allows them to
hasten the indulgencies of sin without the danger of
exposing to exposing, it of themselves or their existence. They
consider their religion as a heavy but tolerable
burden, to throw it off the moment they are removed from the
watchful eye of public opinion. Now this habit of
adapting such a miserable substitute for goodness, has
its source in that disposition which makes men unwilling
to give their heart to wisdom. The posseinity is the most
tolerable solitude to which man can subject himself.

What can you imagine more object, more\slash\slash
attempting to reform their lives & to follow the path
of duty. We shall find it not only a useless, but a
burdensome & painful task, if we try to please
the world & to please God at the same time.
But often, by frequent communion with our minds
by breaking up those false associations we have
in the way of these, by that devoted &
reverent attention to sacred truth & humble prayer
& sincere & sincere 
prayer, by the prayer of the soul to the Father
of all spirits for assistance & for grace, or when by these
methods the conviction of what we ought to do has
flashed upon our minds, then, from sincere resolutions
are formed if the heart is engaged in the side of relig-
ion, then the main point is carried. One may wage
war against our sins with an animating hope, because
we do it with full purpose of soul. Then we shall
begin to relish the pure gifts of duty. By unceas-
ined application & resolution perseverance in well doing all
our duties will go over to the side of virtues & good
affections; the practice of religion will become easy
& delightful. The mind will be fixed in that state
where it can act with freedom, with tranquility
& with hope. Thus smooth & pleasant is the
path of duty, because when we give our hearts to
wisdom. But let us not forget that when
we have surrendered our hearts to wisdom, all
feelings must be immediately, or indeed even entirely
by removed. The best of the present men will still
have severe trials in various shapes, by various hands.
This path will yet be surrounded with perilous
subtle enemies, & we shall need the sin hardy & the
true aim to pass successfully against the numberless
temptations which are vast & work for us.
Our presence of
sinner is not a state of perfection, so neither is it a
state of cemented faith & peace. But whenever
say, that if our inclinations & tendencies are deeply
engaged in the side of virtue, the path of duty will
become easy & pleasant, we mean, that we may be
established in the ways of religion, as is course
in general may be so enjoin'd your taste for one;
so well formed & strengthened, that we may be
prepared to proceed in well doing, not only with pain-
ful reluctance, but with joy & satisfaction. Would
'to God that it was impressed on every mouth, that
righteousness is the very soul of the book, that we are
made for delight in the practice of virtue. Nor will this be a mere useless profession; for in many cases, the non-religious man that endeavours bravely and sincerely to imitate the practice of it in strictness, is because he imagines that it will rob them of the enjoyments of life, because they transformed themselves that they cannot be religious, or be happy at the same time. Never was there a more gross delusion than this (Religion takes from us something; pleasure in a mere man would much to retain). Purity is in truth the only happiness. It deserves the name; if we will leave this "fruit of great price" to seek the counterfeit treasures of "greater enjoyment", we shall find, that through the fiction we have chosen we give a moment's sweet, yet in the end, "it turns out like a serpent, & death like an adder!" Let it be remembered, that as men have given their hearts to "delight", they will lose all interest in the ways of wisdom, sure of adorning the face of the 8th being happy here & hereafter. It is the declaration of wisdom, that "he loves them that love him" & that "they who seek, & seek earnestly shall find him." It is the promise of J.C. that they who hunger & thirst

after righteousness shall be filled: that they shall receive, they who seek shall find; if the hungry knocketh, it shall be opened. No man need to fear that he shall not succeed in the practice of religion, if he gives himself to it with earnestness of purpose. When good affections possess the soul, they stimulate the active powers to exert that necessary Script. tells us is good. In doing this there is a deep felt, pure pleasure, that will more engage the heart of the practice & strengthens the by affections. So that the more men love virtue, the more they will practice it; the more they practice it, the more they will love it; & thus the love & practice have a strong mutual influence on each other. The love prepares the soul to the practice; the practice increases & strengthens the love. Hence we see that our spiritual life was intended to be progressive. Yes it will go on less by death, by neglect, or presumption. It is with this, as it is with animal life, that when preserved from hurtful accidents & furnished with proper nurture, will thrive & grow to its perfection - but still its
vigour may be withered & its growth stopt by
carelessness or misconduct. - Do there are in our mor-
al life principles & powers which tend to a glorious
perfection - yet the progression of these principles
powers may be checked - But if it is so, it is always
by our own fault - for it is the singular happiness of
the moral & spiritual life, that nothing can inflict
upon it a fatal injury, but our own unworthily
ignorance.

In reflecting on this subject, may we not
remember the advantages of our religious condi-
tion. We are not surrounded with the darkness of
Pagan superstition as we are given access to the most
glorious truths of spiritual ceremonies. - The joys of saving grace
accords to us the law of peace - the obedience
of this law our best powers & affections are summoned
in all their strength & with their best success.
To this obedience we have every motive not the
love of God & the cross of Calvary supply every en-
couragement not can be derived from the assur-
ance of a happy immortality & from the promise

of divine assistance & divine grace. - Let it not
then, my friends, be our condemnation that otherwise
our sins, have tempted us not to give
our hearts to wisdom, if that we have preserved
our own dark & worldly wandering imaginations
into the pure pleasures of religion. - Let us remem-
ber, that the day is not far distant when
we shall be called to account for the work we
have made of the means of grace & the opportunities of
improvement & God has placed within our reach.

Reason grants, that we may so use them, that when
that day does come, our sentence may bring to our
hearts peace & joy, instead of sending them with anguish.

Oct. 1819
Oftest, she hast formed us for thy service, & hast prescribed to us the hands of eternal rectitude, & hast illuminated our minds with the light of reason. By her, she sent thy Son, so that he instructs us in the high and noble purposes of our being, & in the way to their favourable acceptance. We pray that by the assistance of thy good Spirit we may be enabled to give our hearts to true wisdom. May we present to thee the only offering of devotion, which thou will accept, the offering of sincerity and humility. Let our souls be engaged in the duties, and elevated by the helps of our holy religion. May we ever keep in view the standard of excellence with the God presents.
assistance may we aspire to reach it.

While we remember that our religion teaches us, that denying ungodliness whereby lusts we should live righteously, soberly, and godly in the present evil world, may we never be contented with an empty profession of it, but may have it with all our hearts, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength, that thus we may be prepared for thy favor and blessing hereafter through J.C.
At home, Oct. 31st, 1819—afternoon.
At home, April 25th, 1822—afternoon, weighing.