No. 29.

"Letting the Lord always before us."
Psalms xxvii. 8. "I have set the Lord always before me."

And it would be well, the f. if we would all do so. As we dwell in truth set the Lord always before us, we should not have so many impure or frivolous thoughts as we now have, we should not offend so many laws of holy, i.e.liness, & guilt as we now do. In retirement & solitude we should not think great, as if secrecy could afford any security for iniquity, or build us up as if the gate of the world & the brightest beam of day were upon us, with the impression that the Eye of the Almighty was fixed upon us, we should desire little else but his approbation, & feel little else but his disapprobation. And while engaged in the labours of the world, if the thought of God was habitually before us, we should be afraid to sacrifice the welfare of our souls to the acquisition of gain.
learn to despise the ridicule of the thoughtless of the race of the
profane. There is something so abasing in the idea of the Almighty, the presence of the
power of the Omnipotent, that no thought of sin can ever
arise in the mind. As long as the voice of conscience
reminds us of our mortal condition, we shall never
forget that thought or idea.

The resolution of the Psalmist in the text is a most
noble and elevating resolution. Encompassed
with enemies, and lying in the toils of death,
and pursued by God, in the midst of confusion of
thought, he says, "I have set the Lord always before me."--

Isaiah xii. 5. The hand of the Lord is ever
on us, even in our mortal and earthly
condition. It becomes therefore a question of deep
interest, how may we set the Lord always before us? There is
indeed no sense in which God is ever contrary, whatsoever
thought or idea we may entertain. This is always
true, that God has been looking on a heart, and was
never penetrated with the sense of his presence, and ever
glowed with an emotion of gratitude and devotion
to the Guardian of our lives, the Source of all good.

It is not necessary in this sense that the Psalmist
resolves to set the Lord always before him, but that
we should always contemplate the presence and
grandeur of God in our minds as effectively as we please,
and may set our hearts against every thing like a
thought of sin. The

of the soul to Heaven, no man pass an anxious,
and the hand of the hand which first created us, or anyone
thought, so we may be, we cannot
exclude the omnipotent from the dominion of our
presence. He will always be with us, and over us, as
no thought of sin should ever cross our minds, and
in which the eye is not fixed upon
us, if we shall one day know how dreadful it is to

be, that God has been looking on a heart, and was
never penetrated with the sense of his presence, and ever
glowed with an emotion of gratitude and devotion
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constant inmate of the breast. Understanding the text in this sense, I shall now proceed to point out some of the ways, in which we may set the soul always before us.

1. We may set God before us as the object of God's love, i.e., we may contemplate the glorious attributes, that fulness of perfection by which He is embodied in His own nature; all that is good, lovely, excellent. And souls, sometimes histrionic, are sublimated, than when they are set to exalt God. We are taught to regard him as essentially happy and glorious in himself, & as the source of felicity to all His creatures; therefore He becomes the centre & object of our most devout aspirations, & our noblest desires.

There is no being besides God, in whom all the qualities that describe the character of being good, are combined. Search the universe around, & you will find that imperfection, in some shade or other, adheres to every thing below the throne of the Eternal. There are those, among our fellow men, whose characters call forth mirth or every feeling, that is associated with what is praiseworthy & excellent in human nature. Yet when we look as to the great landmarks of what man has done or can do. But whilst we think on the excellences of the best of mankind, 

& thank Heaven that there are some such redeeming spirits among our species, a feeling of deep regret & in vain do we attempt to cleanse these corrupting and lingering in the brightest & purest dreams.

Is every thing human there is much to pardon & much to pity. And even if we rise higher & come to the glorious idea of the heavenly host, even their capacity is humble, & even they are imperfect in the presence of Him whose throne they surround. Behold, says the Saviour, let us trust in His name. It is by faith in the power & wisdom & love of our Father, that we shall estabish our souls in his service. His angels are charged with folly.

This is, that Being is God. This is the idea of the Deity, & in this sense it is, that we should cultivate such a habit of meditating on his perfections, that He should always be present to us as the chief good. This is setting the Lord always before us. This is the habit of presenting Him to our minds the idea of the Almighty, & as the chief good, that most
effectually creates & strengthens the love of God, that grace of the soul which the kind of a plant contains within it all the future growth of the plant life, yea, our Lord's words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart & with all thy soul & with all thy might." For what can more surely kindly maintain in the heart the divine fire, that is the image of God, as the supreme good, dwelling in the heart & burning up all its better affections? Love is nothing else but an inclination of the soul to what is deemed good & of course if God is the supreme good, he must dwell from us supreme love. It is true we may think any certain object as good & with it may not attach supreme love, because it may come in competition with some other object, which may seem a greater good. But this competition cannot exist with respect to our views of the Deity, for there is he who will desire to have any certain good, in comparison with him, who fills heaven with glory, with all blessedness? But those who set God before him as the supreme good must necessarily effectively love him, as he who looks upon sin as the greatest of evils, must necessarily effectively hate them dislike it. Why is it then that we are so overcome, so held in triumph by the beauty of earthly things? It is because we set them before us as the supreme good, because the image of them dwells in our hearts & is cherished there. It is an act of the mind, where are usually unwillingly, sometimes unable to make, to go beyond what has immediately before us, to break down resistance which has been raised by the long array of sensible objects in the midst of which we spend our lives to rise on the wings of faith to the contemplation of Him, before whom there is no place in their faces. Now if we would make our hearts more spiritual & less earthly, we must set God before us as the supreme good. We must learn to think so purely of all the creatures, as we give our souls to the contemplation of the perfections of God. Never does heaven's greatness of all that man talks of as being great & good, appear with so much cleanness & conviction as when we reflect in the holiness & excellency of the Lord, who want to flight all the lustre of the world, as the light of a taper is overwhelmed by lost in the splendor.
of sunshine. It is very pleasant to repose in the beam, where vision of earth's happiness are continually fluctuating before us; but it is a dream, from the heart's view; at some time or other amable to our being, for it is the delight of the heart; in which it had regarded itself. Then we have no hold on the objects, in which we finally deemed most lasting, if feel the game, or which had stood with confidence breaking from us, at such a time, were we able to reflect, but to the belief of greater of God, than we can understand the infinite and all the deficien-

cy of finite objects; the more the conviction, that these produce. And there is another point of view from above we may see the advantage of getting the mind always beforehand as the supreme good. It is a perfect feeling source of relief to the soul of consolation to the mind. Those times, we can't avoid them; when the soul is bursting and

comes over our hearts, in the solace anguish of a sound spirit, we feel that desolation is around us, unless one can look to God. It is a great privilege, some of whom, but these all have the pity to resolve an Heaven, so easy, to raise the eye, that is dimmed with tears; see beyond

the multitude of the heart, the globe of contention, nature summits seat the brightness of any will shine from the divine perfection to do ever vanquish the sorrowful of mortification soul.

Let us set the Lord before us, as the supreme good of this world, has nothing for us to fear. Not much that we should delight to keep our.

2. We may set the Lord before us, as an example of pattern. Thus we do, when we contemplate the moral attributes of God, with such attention & love, that are become as the Scripture expresses it, transformed with the same image, by become unto our hearts, the impressions of the divine perfection, though from the nature of man that impression must be weakly imperfect. It is the moral image of God, which is represented to us, both by the light of nature & the light of revelation, on the first part of our renovation & there. Other attributes, it is true, the Duty possesses us must possess; He is eternal, He is omnipotent, He is omnipresent. But these are perfections of the Divine nature, which are served from the union with other perfections, have no revelation to special excellence, & cannot in any sense be imitated by man.
No; indeed, we hope to imitate even the moral attributes of God, but in a degree extremely humble and remote. The excellencies of the Divine nature are immeasurably beyond the reach of man. It is only by a high and sublime rising of the soul, that we can once contemplate these excellencies; it shall be presumed, that we can catch any thing more than a shadow of those perfections, or it costs us a most excellent effort of mind to view and reflect upon. No man can adore, but it belongs only to God to possess these attributes. Yet, by the blessing of Heaven, we may make the moral character of the Being, whom we worship, the model for imitation, the pattern of our lives. There is an incessant idea, one of venerable tenderness, nor is very apt to arise in the mind at the suggestion of imitating the Deity. We are overawed by the greatness and glory of the infinite, the eternal God. You deem it high above, than inscrutable. Suppose that one can carry into our lives these perfections, should the theme of the infinite, the theme of eternal righteousness. But because we confound these things, it might be hitherto distinct; the

qualities to be imitated, of the degree to that imitation may be extended. Nor is it the nature of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we are to keep in view, when we are called upon to sit before us as an example and pattern, not the degree in which they exist in the Sovereign of the Universe. They must be merciful, though we are too corruptly perverse to be so merciful as we see in Him; we may be holy, though we cannot be free as the stainless source of purity; we may be both, though we cannot be holy as He is, the character itself. Yet, the infinite degree of the character on which we are commanded to copy. Begetting this distinction in view, where we reflect on the perfection of God as a model of our imitation, though we may, if indeed our hearts be right, cannot feel ourselves elevated into the humility of adoration at the view of such a brightness of moral glory, yet we cannot but be convinced that in these soul-subduing attributes we may find a infallible, unattainable standard of what we ought to be. And it becomes to cherish this conviction that we may always have before us an unceasing guide, an infallible, unattainable standard of what we ought to be.
duty. Everyone knows the force of example; for it is a matter of common everyday experience. A rule does but direct — an example persuades; a rule instructs the judgment, but an example never stimulatates the affection: the former shows us what to do, the latter tells us how to do it. God, then, is the example we are to steer by, the latter fells the sail's unsureness. And if such be the influence of example in general among men, what might we be the effect when we consider the character of our Saviour. Fallen in the light of an example? — Should it not kindle, warm, animate, the heart? — Would it not call forth storms after them while brands of blot, blot the most holy of the Most High? We beheld in the moral character of God. Can we think of that many who has given us existence of all that makes existence a blessing, yet show no mercy, no benevolence to our fellow men? God in his infinite compassion received to the doors of his love the returning penitent — yea, we feel disposed to turn the eyes of every one in those who have offended, yet, what is the minutest claims of justice? If we are so disposed, let us think what we should be if God should deal with us by the measures of justice, instead of those of mercy.

Do we contemplate the character of God as having perfect righteousness? And shall we then suffer the poison of vice and the pollution of sin to spread themselves through our hearts? Indeed, it is almost impossible to encompass all the immensity in which the moral perfection of the Deity may be considered as affecting an example by a model of imitation to man. "Thou perfect, thy ways are God:" as our Lord, who is in heav'n, is perfect: — if we act, the evil struggling from us as a pattern we make, then we may hope that our lives will be adorned with some conformity.

3. We may get God always before us as an observer, i.e. we may maintain such a sense of his presence in our hearts, as to be continually conscious, that were acting under his inspection. He is indeed always present to us, whether we think of him or not; but if we do not cherish in our breasts the constant feeling of his presence, it will lose all the influence and it ought to have more conduct to our lives. If one would relatively be a teacher of serious virtue, purity to our souls, we must be filled, saturated, imbued with the thought, as David was when he said, "Of God.
then hast searched me & known me; thou hast not arrayed mine iniquity before me. Thou hast made known to me my transgressions, and my sins are not hid from thee.

I have cast off my ways as my lying in my bosom, and am acquainted with all my ways. For as a bear is caught in the net, being caught, is it yet a thing that I should1 be as the bear, or as the children of the Median, that I should forget his presence, & then mine own don't. For we cannot suppose that any man would be hardened, as to rush into sin, at the very time that his heart is penetrated with a sense of that Being of infinite holiness, who is looking upon him. Nor, if he does, could we suppose God to appear visibly to us, when we are alone, doubtless the appearance would strike us with most solemn & reverent thoughts. In the very beat of full care, if temptation should stand in our way, why, we may ask, should not God's seeing us have the same influence in us, as his own seeing us have the same influence on us.

We see that infinitely less than this was seen on seeing God? We see, that infinitely less than this will sustain us from sin in the eye of the world, you to set in your character against the presence of God, after he had sinned? but it is as true, that he also

went out before, for had he dealt harshly all things of the Lord's presence from his mind, he could not have done.

And the same is true of us all when we sin: we are first out from God in our thoughts & then in our actions— we first forget his presence, & then our own duty. For we cannot suppose that any man would be hardened, as to rush into sin, at the very time that his heart is penetrated with a sense of that Being of infinite holiness, who is looking upon him. If, then, he does, could we suppose God to appear visibly to us, when we are alone, doubtless the appearance would strike us with most solemn & reverent thoughts. In the very beat of full care, if temptation should stand in our way, why, we may ask, should not God's seeing us have the same influence in us, as his own seeing us have the same influence on us.
8th, through constant prayer in the presence of the Supreme city of heaven & earth, we can go on ceaseless & bold in our sins. This flagrant inconsistency arises from not setting the Lord before us, as an observer, as the inspector of our hearts. We are total, that when God appeared in the glory of his presence to the children of Israel on Mt. Sinai, they were deeply affected with the solemnity of the scene. & what was the consequence? they were prompt to its earnest and solemn sense of obedience, for all the people answered, "Moses unto me voice & speak, all the people worship the Lord hath said, we will do & so long as the immediate presence of God was with them, doubtless they were obedient. & thus they continued, as long as they maintained the sense of that presence. These who habitually & wilfully transgress the laws of God, though they may be piously disposed, are void of divine presence as a speculative truth, do not, cannot consider, weigh it, reflect upon it, &

often sense from the number of quills, they may see, in the minds of the Patriarchs, when awakening from sleep, "Surely the Lord was in this place, & I knew not it." E'en now, if we set the Lord before us, as an observer of our conduct, we shall not easily dare to indulge in the most concealed sins; for why should men delay the happy estate before him, the who can discern the premeditated sinne of the wise? Observe, under his boundless kingly grace & the unanswerable commands of the formal sectary under his long prayer? — o bo.

Have spoken to you, thinkest some of the methods we have set the Lord always before us. & when sometimes some of the happy effects of such a habit? He was before good, He has exemplified. & He is the observer of our conduct. The heart, which lives such meditations, is not easily seduced, and is dismayed by the objects which start up around the path of life. The smile of prosperity cannot ensnare, not turn of adversity determine us. We are who sets the Lord always before him, when he is gladdened by happiness, feels it to be the best portion of his happiness, that he can claim and reliance to his Creator, & when the writer, on whom he may be cast an
Other all-wise & all-powerful, whose sovereignty sustains, whose presence animates, whose gracious influence blesses the universe, we once before thee to pray that the influence of thy good Spirit may pervade & purify our breasts, y guide our erring steps. Enable us to set thee, the Deity, always before us, know ing that while thou art on our right hand we shall not be moved. May we look up to thee as to the Source of all grace. May we so contemplate thy character, by which we may discern through its glories, the greatness of thy perfection, that the sense of thy majesty may ever be impressed on our hearts. May we set thee before us as the pattern of all holiness, that thus we may be transformed into the same image, & may strive to be perfect according to the measure of our capacity, as our Father in Heaven is perfect. Help us to remember indulgently that thee too act on us by the witness of our conduct, that we may ever act in a manner consistent with our profession, that there may never be any nullification of our profession, that there may ever be such excellence in our conduct that our professions may be such as to convince all observation. I understand our thoughts of an
off. ... grant Ogy that by thus cultivating the sense of the presence here, we may be admitted to the glo-
mon prese hereafter - though.
At home, Jan 30th, 1820, afternoon.
At home, April 28th, 1822, afternoon, very rainy.