No. 94.

On the parable of the labourers in the vineyard.
Matthew XX, 1. "For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder;" 

Concerning the object & meaning of this parable, there has been a variety of opinions & conjectures. At first sight it certainly presents difficulties, not only insuperable, if it is one of the numerous passages of Scripture, but how much the more important it is to consider well the occasion on which any discourse was uttered, or the connexion in which it stands. It will not do to divide the sacred writings into little fragments, or view each by itself as a separate whole, with no relation to the rest. It is only from a mass of regard to the principles, by which we interpret other books, that strange en-
and insensible constructions have been made from those phrases before us, of that such consequences have been drawn from it, as in the eye of reason must imply, the existence of the moral government of God. We are not to suppose that it teaches any thing, from which one can infer that the Deity is regardful of moral distinctions, or disposed to govern in an arbitrary manner. Some suppose, that this parable relates entirely to the apostles. God, they say, is represented by the husbandman; yes, the barren, the vineyard is the Jewish nation; of the labours are the apostles of Christ. Among the dancers, there were some, who, because they were first called by x., appointed to the office of leaders of the Church; or, of his religious, thought that they claim was higher, so that their reward should be more ample, than that of those who were summoned to the same duties at a later period. These are they who complain that they have borne the burden of deaths of the day, while others, who came in at a later hour, receive the same recompense. Although this parenthesis might receive some

countenance from the disposition of mind, in which it

must stand during the life time of our Lord, for we know that from their false and imperfect views they were then

filled with jealousies, which upon each other, with something

like the spirit of vindictiveness; still this accounts of the

meaning of the passage before us seems to be too limited

for the expression. The S. D. "many are called, but few are

chosen," can hardly be applied to the apostles. Others

think, that by these labours we understand the vineyard are meant, the Jews, by these who went hitherto,

publicans and Gentiles, & that our S. E. intended thus to teach,

that these Jews, who were proud of this distinction, if the

divine favour with they had so long enjoyed, is stated to that

distinction, without having much regard for justice or the

fruit of a good life, & that notwithstanding the damage of being first called would be in the first judgment of

God be hearkened above the Gentiles. Again, it seems to

thought that the parable refers to the Gentiles being ad-

mitted to the same privileges, as the Jews under the same de-
...
are thought to be last, or least, shall be exalted in the first. The meaning is, that the honors of reward of this world to come, shall not be assigned according to the justly, established standards of excellence that may be set up by men, but by the principles of divine and immortality, thus they who are first in this world, may appear among the first of inhabitants in the kingdom of God, and on the other hand the men may appear among the first of inhabitants in the bright train of saints above. Such is the sentiment desired to be conveyed by that paradoxical expression also as far as shall be last, is the last first. Now let it be observed, that it was to illustrate this sentiment, that the paradoxical reasoning was given: for, though it is born into and another chapter, yet it does stand in immediate connection with the last verse of the last chapter. Wherefore, though it be four-page, the ten verses must be considered as a part of the last chapter, and the ten verses of the last chapter as a part of the whole book.
mistreads the common reader; we should not pay any attention to these divisions at all, as they did not belong to the records.

He in its original state, but were introduced at a later period of the world. This parable then, must be considered as a

reunion with what goes before, as intended to teach the

Afrotes this general truth: that the peculiar advantages attending their situation or circumstances would of themselves give them no superiority to others, or that they were not to imagine that because they were first in professing faith and
giving duty, or that account only, they would be end
led to higher rewards than others; that it is not by

privileges of situation, but by the grand principles of justice

that God will judge men.

How was this general truth taught? By the following

narration. A householder goes out to purchase labourers for

his vineyard. He hired a number early in the morning, at
different times during the day he collected more, of all

meet at the close of the day, he found some still waiting

for employment, and sent them into the vineyard likewise.

In the evening he orders his steward to call the labourers, pay
ne them all the same wages. At this, those who had been hired to lady in the morning were offended, and complained that they late received no more than others, who had not laboured so long.

To their complaint the householders answer, "Have I not fully filled the terms of my agreement with you? And if I want done it right to give to these last as much as to you, is not my generosity to them an injury to you? Don't you think for me to do what I will with my own? Have you a right to complain, because I choose to recompence the labours of others, as liberally as you do yours?"

Such was the instructive fiction, by which Saës illustrated the principle, whih he wished to inculcate in the minds of his hearers. By labouring in the vineyard we must probably understand the receiving of Es, & by those who went early to the morning to work the first disciples of Xr, the first professo desiders of Xr. And they were thus taught that if they presumed, on such mere alms, to arrogate to themselves the highest distinction & first rank in his kingdom, to enjoy the same equal share of his liberality, they might find them selves disappointed like the foolish labourers on the vineyard.
who demanded more than was their due; - For the dignity remarkably with God had the savior men, not to be confined in conformity with whatever good opinion of them own they might have, but according to the several pos
tive, all are eternal and inviolable authority. “Prescient of God in the less dispersion is like that of a master of a family, who goes out in the morning to have labours to work in his compound: if the general design of the parable seems to be to show that at whatever time men come to the belief of the truth, whether in the early days of the men, or later ages, their reward will be the same; the merit consisting in keeping the faith, whereas it was given at the time of the call depending upon the will of him who made it.” Then who were born early in the morning, or resent the first converted to the first disciples? They who were born at the third, ninth, eleventh hour, replication of later ages, or when the reward will be conveyed as well as in the others. Was it does not mean to say, that the peculiar hate of sufferings of the Apostles would go unremembered? Remembered? No, the days in which they lived were days of constant peril of danger, - if they went to pri
to death with cheerfulness, in the cause of reason. Each man surely would not lose their character, of the in
cent vice of their excellence. They were the heroes; they received the warm of their, that warm is brighter, more valuable for their sufferings. Still we must remember, it was not till after the death of I that they had been was not till after the death of I, that they had received the renewal of their, of proper
devout ideas respecting the religion of Jesus, of proper
feelings respecting their own duty, as his disciples. Before that time, these minds, like those of the rest of their
countrymen were filled with pride, and their arrogant
eachone, expressions. Now let it not be forgotten that it was to meet this state of mind, that gave the parable before us, thereby preparing them to become of imagining, that because the were the first, to express its cause, they were in that accounts to be rewarded to the chiefe.

of others who embraced it at a later period, for in regard to this matter, these who were last in order.
of such importance, who have sometimes been given of this parable, and
the consequences, who have sometimes been drawn from it.
It has been supposed to relate to the several ages from
the beginning, who are convicted in youth, manhood, and old age;
and hence it has been inferred that it was intended to teach
that a late repentance was as acceptable to God as any other.
It is first time of morning. But from the
explanation, it will be seen that it relates to no such thing, but to
such consequence can be drawn from it. We must remem-
ber that a deliverance was given to the new-born
of his Apostles, not in preference to the particulars of the religious character of each individual at
the present day; that he is here speaking of the most
times, who embrace the Son at different periods of
time, as it becomes known to them - out of those whom
are in the countries I have grown up in the midst of
the light of the Sun, and as they pass from those ages in the course
of their lives turn their attention to religion. Nothing
can be inferred from this parable, that his precept to continue one moment longer in his sins, with the delusive idea that in the evening of life it will be time enough to repent before it is too late. It is true, it is not for us to limit the mercy of God. The wise man, has declared himself to be long suffering, generous, & everready to embrace in his pardoning love the returning prodigal to the repentant criminal. But let us remember that we are not called to this vineyard - now is the accepted time - now is the day of salvation - the very first moment - that time, & its warnings, from that moment we are called to the vineyard of our Lord. At that time has already a long time come to all souls, because we have all been brought again to the light of knowledge. Those nations, who have not yet become acquainted with the divine truths of our religion, of course cannot receive them, so many of them today will not enjoy the light of privileges. It is till a late period, till the close of the year. But as soon as they are many human beings do enjoy it, so soon we are bound to use it.

The concluding sentence of this parable may need some explanation: it is this, 'for many are called, but few chosen.' The word, 'chosen,' here refers to the beneficiaries of God's grace, or those who are made acceptable to him. It is the elect, the chosen ones, who are externally the followers of Christ - but few are chosen, i.e., few are really the followers of Christ. For how the true faith, obedience, of justice, and will render them acceptable to God. Few are in hearts of this life sincere believers. This is the use of the word 'chosen,' or 'elect,' as very common in the New Testament, as it is in common conversation among men of the word - as we say, a man has a choice, select, or precious character. It designates the actual state of the character of another; it occurs in the sacred writings, it almost always signi
The moral lesson which we are to learn from this passage is, that through our present reception of it, we lose in its cause, will part of its due remuneration. Yet it is a very bad sign of our sincerity of goodness, if we arrogate to ourselves the favor of the Deity, and design of limiting the extent of his mercy of liberality to any of the rest of mankind. Let us not like the envious laborers in the vineyard, conspire, because others enjoy the same advantages as ourselves, "Let us not think that we are ungently treated, because others are raised to a level with ourselves, nor cease to be distinguished from our brethren; let us rather rejoice that the divine liberality extends its bounty to so many. To take pleasure in thinking, that we ourselves are the favored favorites of heaven, that others are excluded from this blessing, discovers a narrow, selfish spirit, altogether foreign to the right spirit. Praise be ascribed to the Deity, the source of all goodness.

May Almighty God, in whose hand are all things, be our care and protection. May the merciful and benevolent Deity extend its favor to us, and direct our steps in all our undertakings. May we be guided by true principles, and be enabled to act with wisdom and discretion. May we be strengthened in our resolutions, and enabled to persevere in good works. May we be preserved from all evil, and be blest with all the blessings of this life. May we be prepared for an happy eternity. Amen.
worthy of esteem. At the same time, then, that we endeavor to discharge any particular office with fidelity and industry, let us beware of entertaining the least degree of presumption, or vain confidence in regard to ourselves, of any unreasonable hopes to the rest of mankind. Let us study to preserve a humble opinion of our own qualifications, and a lively sense of our own defects, for this, best remember, is the temper of minds Resigned to obtain the favor of others, who respect the brave, but exalt grace to the humble."

Feb. 1821.
At home, Feb. 18th. 1821. forenoon.