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DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE WARREN ASSOCIATION,

MET AT WARREN,

ON

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1812.



BY ASA MESSER, D. D. LL. D.

PRESIDENT OF BROWN UNIVERSITY.



PROVIDENCE:

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1813

DISCOURSE.



I. PETER, V. 1. 2. 3. 4.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being Lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

AN elder, in the literal sense, is a man advanced in life; and a man advanced in life, we are apt to hope, is a man advanced in wisdom, experience, and gravity. Hence, as there should be a correspondence between the literal and the figurative sense of words, an elder, signifying an officer in the church, should possess, if not age itself, at least some of these important appendages of age.—Peter, when he wrote our text, was about sixty years old. In the literal sense, therefore, he was then an elder. At that time he had been a disciple of Jesus about twenty years; and from this circumstance alone might we not infer that he had then had much experience in the religion of Jesus? If, indeed, the experience of even little children in the faith is sometimes such as will induce them to say that,

in one day, or one hour, it had given them more satisfaction than every thing else had ever given them, what must have been the experience of the Apostle Peter in twenty years?—On this subject, however, we have something better than conjecture. Peter had been *a witness of the sufferings of CHRIST*. For a long time, he had seen him, though *GOD manifest in the flesh, despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief*. At length he had seen him, after “sweating as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground,” and almost sinking under the dreadful agony of Gethsemane, delivered by a traitor into the hands of his murderers. And, if he had not seen him nailed to the cross between two thieves, or heard him crying, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me*; he had seen at least some of the wonderful events attending his crucifixion; the quaking of the earth, the rending of the rocks, the darkening of the sun, the opening of the graves, the rising of the Saints. O what a piece of experience was this!—Peter had also been *a partaker of the glory that should be revealed*. In common with many others, he had felt “the joy unspeakable and full of glory,” which on earth is a foretaste and a pledge of heaven; and besides this, he had, on the mount of transfiguration, seen Moses and Elias, and become, we might say, a companion of these glorified inhabitants of heaven. Hence, in a special sense, he was partaker of the glory that shall be revealed; and hence, how rich must his experience have been in things of God!—Men, without any of this experience, are more ready to complain, than to rejoice; and to relate the sorrows they endure, than the favours they

